



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

COPYRIGHT AND USE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis must be used in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Reproduction of material protected by copyright may be an infringement of copyright and copyright owners may be entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

Section 51 (2) of the Copyright Act permits an authorized officer of a university library or archives to provide a copy (by communication or otherwise) of an unpublished thesis kept in the library or archives, to a person who satisfies the authorized officer that he or she requires the reproduction for the purposes of research or study.

The Copyright Act grants the creator of a work a number of moral rights, specifically the right of attribution, the right against false attribution and the right of integrity.

You may infringe the author's moral rights if you:

- fail to acknowledge the author of this thesis if you quote sections from the work
- attribute this thesis to another author
- subject this thesis to derogatory treatment which may prejudice the author's reputation

For further information contact the University's Director of Copyright Services

sydney.edu.au/copyright



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Faculty of Education and Social Work

The University of Sydney

**Today We're Alive – generating performance
in a cross-cultural context,
an Australian experience.**

By Linden Wilkinson

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

2014



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

Faculty of Education and Social Work

Office of Doctoral Studies

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- I. this thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctorate of Philosophy.
- II. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
- III. the thesis does not exceed the word length for this degree.
- IV. no part of this work has been used for the award of another degree.
- V. this thesis meets the *University of Sydney's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) requirements for the conduct of this research.*

Signature:

Name: Linden Wilkinson

Date: 17th September, 2014

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge my supervisors, Associate Professor Dr Michael Anderson and Dr Paul Dwyer, for their support, rigour and encouragement in relation to this project. I would also like to thank my family for their patience.

And I would like to express my profound gratitude to everyone, who shared their time, their wisdom and their memories so willingly to this undertaking. The Myall Creek story goes on...

Finally to the actors – to Fred, Anna, Lily, Genevieve, Aunty Rhonda & Terry in 2011, to Bjorn, Rosie, Frankie & Russell in 2013 – thanks for your skill, your trust, your imagination and your humour. And thanks for saying, “Yes.”

Today We're Alive

generating performance in a cross-cultural context,
an Australian experience

Abstract

Using a mixed methods approach this thesis explores the construction and dissemination of a cross-cultural play within the Australian context. The experience of developing and performing this play confirms, I believe, the valuable contribution performance could make to the contentious domain of competing epistemologies within decolonizing research methodology.

Performance is able to interrogate the encrypted language buried within the emotionally complex terrain of decolonizing intent. By celebrating through story a shared humanity, performance can demonstrate both the on-going pain and shame of shared history and the possibility of moving beyond the negative towards a more positive collective future. Although this study did not find a reconciliation narrative, it did locate the beginning of one. Through an exploration of the Myall Creek massacre of 1838 and the Memorial erected to commemorate it 162 years after the event, this study found a narrative about the power of acknowledgement. This study also suggests that the cultural impediments to reconciliation lie within five persistent narratives intrinsic to the Australian colonization process.

Predominantly reliant on performance ethnography as the principle research methodology, the play at the heart of this research endeavour, *Today We're Alive*, is verbatim theatre, where only the words that were spoken in the field and extracts of documents in the public domain contribute to the performance text. The voices that tell this story include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, descendants of massacre survivors, descendants of the massacre perpetrators and informed others recommended to me in the field.

The first draft of the play was taken back to the primary research field to a community hall near the massacre site over 600 kilometres from Sydney for a performed reading. The six actor/co-researchers, three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal performers, delivered a performance that exceeded all expectations.

Several factors, I believe, influenced this outcome. Therefore this draft of the play is embedded in the body of this thesis, as the script and the performance of it are critical to the analysis of the research findings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Prologue	1
i.) A little white history	1
ii.) The lure of arts practice	1
iii.) In the cross-cultural classroom	2
iv.) Culture shock	4
1. The Road to Myall Creek	6
1. Introduction	6
1.1 Investigating decolonization through multiple perspectives	6
1.2 Research question	8
1.3 Research expectation	9
1.4 Purpose of this study	10
1.5 The research challenge	10
1.6 The research plan	12
1.6.1 Locating the content	13
1.6.2 Definitions of significant terms used	14
1.7 The ordinary world	16

1.8	First steps	19
	1.8.1 Parallel learning	20
	1.8.2 Based in Redfern	20
	1.8.3 Fate and funding intervene	21
1.9	The Memorial at Myall Creek	24
	1.9.1 Not set in stone –deconstructing memorials	24
1.10	The research framework	27
1.11	Overview of this dissertation	29
1.12	Conclusion	30
2	CONFRONTING THE SAVAGE	32
	- the colonial legacy in a changing state	
2	Introduction	32
2.1	The colonial legacy	33
2.2	In the beginning...	35
	2.2.1 Cook's first great voyage	36
	2.2.2 An enlightened mind	39
	2.2.3 Settlement in era of Enlightenment	40
	2.2.4 Real destruction begins	41
	2.2.5 Genocide	44
	2.2.6 Governor Gipps' parting gift	45
	2.2.7 The 'savage' at the end of the century	48
2.3	Protection and segregation	49
	2.3.1 Five persistent narratives	51
2.4	The constraint to legitimacy	54
	2.4.1 Conversations of the research frontier	56

2.5	From fixed to fluid worlds	57
	2.5.1 Hybridity	57
	2.5.2 Uncertainty	59
	2.5.3 Performativity	60
2.6	A very useful model	60
	2.6.1 The emergence of traditional knowledge	62
	2.6.2 A sense of The Dreaming	63
2.7	Conclusion	65
3	A BRUTAL BUSINESS	66
	- contests, memory and accommodations on the colonial frontier	
3	Introduction	66
3.1	A colonial past?	67
	3.1.1 Surviving first contact	69
	3.1.2 The convict lot	71
3.2	A contested space	73
	3.2.1 Beyond the Limits	75
	3.2.2 Nunn's campaign	77
3.3	A shaft of light	78
	3.3.1 The outcome	81
	3.3.2 The backlash	83

3.4	Len Payne's long shadow	85
	3.4.1 Fifty years of Aboriginal activism	87
	3.4.2 The first freedom ride	89
	3.4.3 The 1967 referendum	90
3.5	Bringing on the understudy – convicts and national identity	91
	3.5.1 Only holding the fort	94
3.6	Conclusion	95
4	LIVING IN HISTORY	96
4	Introduction	96
4.1	Gaining consensus	97
	4.1.1 Wave Hill	97
	4.1.2 Generational change	101
	4.1.3 From sightless to seeing – understanding exclusion	102
4.2	The end of Assimilation	104
	4.2.1 The tent embassy	106
4.3	Self-determination – the rhetoric and the reality	107
	4.3.1 Reconciliation – symbols over substance	109
	4.3.2 Balancing acts	111
	4.3.3 A meagre estate	113
	4.3.4 The History Wars	114
	4.3.5 Sorry – reconciliation revisited	116
4.4	Closing the Gap	118
	4.4.1 Unfinished business	119

4.5	The Northern Territory Emergency response (NTER)	121
	4.5.1 Sanctioning cultural violence	123
	4.5.2 Power politics	124
4.6	Conclusion	127
5	METHODOLOGIES	128
	- finding the first draft – quests and compromises in the play-making space	
5.	Introduction	128
5.1	Interpreting the nature of collaborative practice	128
5.2	Research theory	130
	5.2.1 Narrative Inquiry	132
	5.2.2 Positioning the larger landscape	134
	5.2.3. Integrity and elasticity – the practice of script development	135
	5.2.4. Interpreting personal narratives through performance	137
5.3	Performance ethnography	138
	5.3.1 Audience participation	140
	5.3.2 Performing rites	142
	5.3.3 Devil in the detail	144
	5.3.4 Verbatim theatre – an overview	146
	5.3.5 A brief history of verbatim theatre	148
	5.3.6 Verbatim theatre – emergent significance	150
	5.3.7 Dominant voices	153
	5.3.8 The problem with the word	155

5.4	Doing decolonizing research, presenting drama outcomes	156
5.4.1	Limitations – of the draft	158
5.4.2	Limitations – of the verbatim technique	159
5.5	Validity, reliability and generalizability	160
5.6	Conclusion	162
6	TODAY WE'RE ALIVE	
	<i>Stories from the Memorial to the Myall Creek Massacre (first draft)</i>	163
7	FEELING THE SPACE	195
	- taking the show on the road	
7	Introduction	195
7.1	The Redfern read	196
7.2	Damage control	199
7.2.1	A singular regret	200
7.3	On the road	202
7.3.1	At the Memorial	205
7.3.2	The breakfast read	207
7.3.3	At the memorial hall	210
7.3.4	The performed reading	211
7.3.5	Roger's arrival	214
7.3.6	The feedback session	216
7.4	The road home	218
7.5	Conclusion	221

8	MOVING ON	223
	- reflections from the field	
8.	Introduction	223
8.1	But what did <i>you</i> get out of it?	225
	8.1.1 Addressing the questions	228
	8.2 Telling stories	228
	8.2.1 Common threads	230
8.2	Conclusion	232
	Epilogue	234
	i.) A little black humour	234
	REFERENCES	236
	APPENDICES	258
	Appendix i.) Map of research area	258
	Appendix ii.) The Redfern Speech	259
	Appendix iii.) <i>Today We're Alive</i> – touring draft	263
	Appendix iv.) Interview with David Williams and Dr Paul Dwyer	286
	Appendix v.) Interview with Rosalyn Oades	289
	Appendix vi.) Ethics approval, 2011	293

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context, an Australian experience

Prologue

i) A little white history

Prior to this investigation I had no real interest in Australian history. I knew what I had been taught and had ventured no further: 1770, Captain Cook claims Australia for Great Britain; 1788, the first convicts arrive, my ancestors among them; 1851: gold is discovered bringing wealth, mass migration and more bushrangers; 1915: Gallipoli delivers defeat and the iconic ANZAC narrative with its code of courage, mateship and sacrifice. And I knew this history had shaped us.

I knew about the struggle for workers' rights; I knew about our egalitarian ethos; I knew about the heartache brought by isolation, by drought; and I knew colonization had been a catastrophe for Australia's First Peoples. I never knew that with my uninterrogated smattering of history I was and continued to be a product of this same colonization process.

In 2007, just before this study began, my focus was, as usual, on the future.

ii) The lure of arts practice

Having just completed my Master's degree, which explored the creation of a verbatim theatre play, (Wilkinson, 2008) it was not my intention to hasten a return to the research world. Instead I wanted to bring research skills into the world of arts practice. Inspired by the commercial interest in personal testimony plays like *Vagina Monologues* (Enslar, 1998) or Nora and Della Ephron's *Love, Loss and What I Wore*

(2008), I had begun to think about exploring the nature of women's resilience, particularly in the performing arts, where image is so critical to employment.

I began collecting stories from actors, who were still passionately engaged in their craft despite long periods without meaningful work. I returned to teaching drama and had the opportunity of travelling to New Zealand. My job was to teach Improvisation¹ for a week and, from that work, develop a film script from our class exercises.

Then a particular incident in a drama classroom changed everything; and as the following account demonstrates, from a teacher I became an ethnographer, from being a witness, I became inquirer. I watched a performance that changed my understanding of culture and inspired questions the event itself could never answer (O'Toole, 2006).

iii) In the cross-cultural classroom

In New Zealand late in 2007 I watched second year drama students at Toi Whakaari, the National Drama School in Wellington, perform the school haka. It was a way of acknowledging the teaching and learning that had taken place over the previous week. It came as a complete surprise to me; one minute the students were leaving the classroom, the next they had assumed a formation, told me where to stand and the school haka began. I was unaware then of the school's history.

Toi Whakaari had moved to a more cross-cultural way of working in 1988 (Tweddle, 2007). It was a way of developing a tradition unlike the inherited English Drama School method, where teaching was compartmentalised into voice, movement, scene work and history of theatre. The inherited British model reflected exactly my own actor training in Australia at the National Institute of Dramatic Art, where I had been a student in the 1970s.

¹ According to Hodgson & Richards (1987) improvisation, or the creation of scenarios through the imagination, serves to inform the practice of teaching character creation and through repetition of an experiential and emotional repertoire supports character integrity in text-based scene work. Spolin (1999) maintains that improvisation accesses intuitive knowledge through this same spontaneity of inter-active play and it is this knowledge that generates inspiring, creative performances.

Instead Toi took on tikanga māori², integrating Māori cultural practice of movement and voice. For actor training this meant a focus on wholeness, working the body and the voice in tandem, accepting that the discovery of movement is at the heart of everything. Through movement actors come to a deeper appreciation of feeling, marrying the inner life of the work with the outward expression of the work. Over the three years of Drama School at Toi there is an increasing emphasis on a student-led understanding of these movement-centred connecting principles operating between the otherwise isolated facets of an actor's craft (Tweddle, 2007).

The twenty-five students I had spent the week working with were of different ethnicities, Pākehā³, Māori, Pacific Islander, even an Australian; it was roughly an even gender split and most were in their early 20s. The improvisation course I was teaching was intended to familiarise the students with an area of training they had infrequently visited. Our aim was to develop possible scenarios and characters that might generate collaborative content for a third year film exercise in six months' time. I was only involved with the students in my classes and had no understanding of the kinds of work being done elsewhere in their course. I had often used improvisation in classes for both actors and writers and have always found it to be a liberating experience for students. Spolin (1999) suggests that the improvisational process, blending games, structure and interpretive freedom, generates moments of pure imaginative response:

Through spontaneity we are re-formed into ourselves ... the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly. In this reality the bits and pieces of ourselves function as an organic whole. It is the time of discovery, of experiencing, of creative freedom (1999, p.4).

Improvisation demands trust, imagination and self-reflexivity; it is story-telling through the body and is, in my experience, a traditional teaching tool. Groups were imposed on the students later in the week; before that students worked in pairs or trios they selected themselves.

² Tikanga māori: "the correct or customary way of doing things." (O'Donnell, 2007, p.271)

³ Pākehā: "New Zealanders of non-Māori descent, usually – but not always - taken to refer to those descended from – or descended from settlers from – the British Isles and Western Europe." (Halba, 2007, p.207)

We finished late on a Friday evening; from my point of view as teacher/facilitator the students' work had been outstanding. The haka, a dance of exquisite precision and intense vocal resonance, seemed to spontaneously emerge from the student body. Just prior to it starting, I was led to a chair, told to stand on it, so I could see properly, and was playfully warned that "most people usually cry."

iv) Culture shock

It was a breath-taking experience to be so close to a dance of such ceremonial focus and potency. But once I had dealt with the shock of the event itself, I realised I was witnessing something even more amazing to me than a haka. I was watching students of diverse backgrounds step out of their Pākehā way of being, way of sounding, way of expression and collectively step into inhabiting for those three or four minutes Polynesian culture.

At that moment I realised that all week I had watched Māori and Islander students move between cultures, their own and European. I had been conscious that in their improvisations, which generally involved performing stories that happened within their culture of origin, their characters, particularly in terms of body language, were different to how these same students presented in the classroom. In their performed scenes the men adopted more aggressive postures, the women more passive and in both cases the characters they captured expressed sentiments that reflected their physical change. However such generalised observations were fleeting impressions only; the focus in class was on the story being played out. As writer of the forthcoming film project, my focus was on content not character.

But now, as the week ended, I was seeing Pākehā students, male and female, performing the school haka slip into another culture. And this culture, to me, exuded a confidence and authority that these same students had not previously demonstrated. They were expressing themselves with a physicality I hadn't seen, making sounds I hadn't heard. In those three or four minutes I had been given insight into my own hegemonic mindset and, in recognising that limitation, I had grasped the potential for change. I was both acutely conscious that I had found shifts in cultural ways of being, ways of behaving as normal for some students but not for others.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Furthermore, if I had seen Pākehā students inhabit Māori or islander characters in class work, I would have found it embarrassingly politically incorrect. But witnessing the same action through ceremony I was given an insight into unity not division, possibility not discord.

I told myself this was the gift of cross-culturalism, to be watching a haka while simultaneously being given a transformative insight into my own limited perspectives. If I could register these disparate sites of experience at the same time, standing on a chair in a drama classroom, if I could be aware of the suddenly limitless, to my eyes, performance potential of cross-culturalism and the narrow interpretive funnel, again in my experience, of cultural hegemony, could I be part of creating a similar experience in my own country? If I could, what would it look like?

For the first time as a drama teacher I was consciously aware of the performative limitations embedded in the dominant inherited theatre culture on all students, Pākehā, Māori and Islander alike, and that to encourage flow between cultures through ritual and ceremony could create work with a distinct national and regional nuance. This is not a reflection on the limitations of the students or on any suggestion there had been an implicit practice of self-censorship but on the narrow range of exercises I had asked them to do.

If, as Denzin and Lincoln (2008) maintain: “the performative is where the soul of a culture resides” (2008, p.14), what I was witnessing was the potential for culture to celebrate difference, inclusion, respect and acknowledgement and that realisation could inform my future work. A journey had begun.

I wanted to explore cross-culturalism in the Australian context. So I would go where? In the beginning I had no idea.

Chapter One

The Road to Myall Creek

**“...and I always say that the path to Australia’s future
passes through its past” (“Gerry,”⁴ 2011)**

1. Introduction:

This study investigates the evolution of a verbatim theatre play in an Australian cross-cultural context. The play, *Today We're Alive*, concerns an 1838 Aboriginal massacre in north-west NSW and the Memorial⁵ erected to commemorate it 162 years later. The draft submitted in this research study is devised for six actors, three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal, and runs approximately seventy minutes. The play text is predominantly edited transcripts derived from the research participants' narratives; however this draft also includes some documentary material sourced from the public domain. The choice of these few additions reflects a desire to support the actors' transitions between passages of time and between stories rather than an attempt to augment the emotional potency of the stories themselves.

1.1. Investigating decolonization through multiple perspectives

Concerned with understanding decolonization as being a gradual process (L.T. Smith, 1999), this study also examines the historical and cultural contexts in which these two events occurred: the massacre itself and the Memorial erected to commemorate it in the year 2000. To assist this investigation of decolonization

⁴ From an interview with “Gerry”, not his real name, who participated in this study and is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. All references to “Gerry” are from an interview with him held in Gladesville, NSW, October 13th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁵ The Memorial that now stands overlooking the massacre site at Myall Creek is not the first memorial to the massacre but it is the one that survives. Therefore this Memorial is distinguished from an earlier one by a capital “M”.

occurring over time, this study engages with multiple perspectives of the shifting interactions between colonized and colonizer, from the personal in Chapter One, to the theoretical in Chapter Two, to the acts of individuals in Chapter Three and finally the practices and policies governing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Chapter Four. As one of the aims of this study is to locate a reconciliation narrative, it is hoped that teasing out these contextual strands will deliver insights into the decolonizing process. Through an examination of those factors that both enhance and inhibit the journey arc of decolonization, it is possible that this study will deliver a greater understanding of the complexity of the reconciliation initiative within an Australian context, as revealed by the Myall Creek stories submitted here.

Finally this study explores the experience of performing the play and the events and transactions that took place within the performance space, a tin shed 600 kilometres from Sydney and 500 metres away from the massacre's probable site. It was found that the performance and the feedback session after it deepened the insights into those factors mentioned above, which either enhanced or hindered a sense of affinity. The unexpected and revelatory dynamic of performance and the nature of the audience response both during and after the reading of *Today We're Alive* supports the proposition that performance as a methodology has a profound contribution to make in decolonizing research. Therefore the play, as Chapter Six, is embedded within this thesis.

Eighteen months after this performance the play was given the opportunity to tour. The NSW Department of Education & Communities funded a two week rehearsal process and four venue tour for north-west NSW schools and communities, which were situated within reasonable proximity to the Memorial. The play was edited into a new draft to meet budget, cast and time requirements. This draft is included as an appendix (see *appendix iii*).

The Myall Creek massacre story is told in Chapter Three, as well as in the play; its significance is not in the number of deaths or the number of perpetrators. Its significance springs from the massacre's disclosure and investigation at the time. Its unique legacy is its paper trail. It remains the only massacre in Australia's history where most of the perpetrators were arrested, tried and, in an attempt to break their code of silence, some were hanged. The erection of the Memorial to the massacre is

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

seen as an act of reconciliation, a “goodwill landmark in colonial and heritage history.” (Harris, 2009, p.7) The committee formed in 1998 to design and build the Memorial had – and continues to have – equal Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership; the initiative to recognise the massacre, to have something that remained, came from Sue Blacklock, a Kamilaroi Elder and a descendant of a massacre survivor.

It would seem to be an appropriate research site to have within it a story about reconciliation.

1.2. Research Question

Applying the rigour of verbatim theatre within a performance ethnography framework, how can a site-specific cross-cultural reconciliation story in the Australian context be told and what voices emerge to tell it?

Within this over-arching concern are other implicit research questions including:

What kinds of reconciliation narratives are illuminated by this research?

How do the non-Aboriginal participants in this study reconcile themselves in the present to the brutality of the Colonial past?

How do the Aboriginal participants deal with the horror of the past and its inter-generational repercussions in the present?

How do both parties unite in a common cause?

How are these stories of shared history and on-going dispossession received by an audience in a performance space?

And finally: how are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors/co-researchers impacted in terms of their performance practice by both the emotive content of the drama and the experience of performing it?

1.3. Research expectation

My expectation was that by interviewing the Myall Creek Memorial Committee members, I would be able to focus on the Memorial and contain the 1838 massacre as a background or trigger event. As I wanted to investigate a possible reconciliation narrative or narratives, I assumed that the massacre could be seen as occupying a space of past trauma and that being involved with the Memorial would bring with it a certain catharsis

I was conscious that I was seeking a neat three act structure for the play with the Memorial as the centrepiece – the play that would evolve from field interviews would emphasise the events that preceded it, the proposal to erect it, the relationships it inspired, its legacy in the lives of those, who made it happen.

I had anticipated that the play would illuminate multiple experiences of coming together, that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Committee members would have diverse motivations and histories. I expected that the decisions around the design of the Memorial would have been difficult. And I hoped that this difficulty would create informative content around the nature of inter-cultural tension and the challenges of consultative practice.

I had also expected that the annual anniversary services, held on the weekend closest to June 10th, the day the massacre took place in 1838, would be regarded as significant celebrations. I assumed that a key event in the play's story will be the 2005⁶ desecration of the Memorial, when the words "children", "murdered" and "women" were chiselled off one of the plaques by vandals in an attempt to make the words unreadable (Sydney Morning Herald , 2005). I intended to focus on this event and the Memorial Committee's responses to it; I believed it would provide a structural turning point in the research play.

I expected that the play would end on a triumphalist note, when the Memorial was recognised with a National Heritage listing in 2008 and received further listing on the NSW Heritage Register in 2010.

⁶ There are different dates given for this event: Schlunke (2006) suggests it occurred in 2003; the Sydney Morning Herald (Sydney Morning Herald, 2005, line 8) reports that this same act of vandalism occurred in 2005.

1.4. Purpose of this study

As an arts-informed/narrative inquiry this study aims through its choice of research site and its data collection and data analysis processes to contribute to a counter-hegemonic way of understanding a shared history event and its on-going resonances for modern-day Australia. Because of its cross-cultural context, this research study also aims to make a contribution to the evolving domain of decolonizing methodologies through performance.

As I am a non-Aboriginal Australian of free settler and convict ancestry the content of this thesis is strongly influenced by my investigation of previously unknown history. As I am a writer and performer the play's content and structure reflects prior as well as concurrent learning. As I am a researcher I have consciously struggled to address the legitimate concerns that caution dominant culture participation in this contentious research field. I believe this struggle has sharpened my appreciation of the gap between the fractious political and social histories of Australian race relations and the rich potential for cross-cultural engagement offered through arts practice. I remain grateful to those researchers, whose methodological and philosophical guidelines make participation possible (Chilisa, 2012; Grande, 2007; McCaslin & Breton, 2008).

1.5. The research challenge

Having raised the issue of addressing the research challenge, it would seem to diminish it by not clarifying its location at the outset of this project. The representational crisis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) inherent in qualitative research is further heightened in this decolonizing sphere by issues of epistemological perspectives and the pervasive dominance of the Western tradition's insistence on its superiority (Ladson-Billings, 2000; L.T. Smith, 1999; Spivak, 1988). In decolonizing research focus now shifts from confronting how the researcher's ideas are shaped to how ideas, beliefs and values have shaped the researcher. Data therefore needs to be continuously interrogated by a process of self-reflexivity (Chilisa, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Freire, 1996).

Although this dilemma is examined in greater depth in Chapter Two, which investigates the relationship between early colonial Australian history and theories of cultural change in the decolonizing space, it is important to recognise that movement across cultures is problematic (L.T. Smith, 1999). In the Australian context long-term disruptions to cultural cohesion as a result of colonization invite even less inter-cultural investigation, either through Aboriginal resistance to stereotyping or non-Aboriginal disengagement. Aboriginal playwright, Jane Harrison (2012), argues:

Ever since white contact Aboriginal people and culture have been systematically ignored, condescended to and negatively stereotyped. It follows therefore that non-Aboriginal people should approach Aboriginal topics with caution. It is proper that they manifest symptoms of anxiety and doubt around their ability and authority to speak for Aboriginal subjects (2012, p.34).

Germaine Greer (2003) attempted to spark debate about the need for white Australians to embrace Aboriginality in order to locate true nationhood in her essay, *Whitefella Jump Up*, but, according to Harrison, the debate was not sustained (Harrison, 2012). Greer (2003) explains: “The whole Aboriginal question ends up consigned to the too-hard basket, and there we are content to let it stay.” (Greer, 2003, cited in Harrison, 2012, p.53) Underpinning both these examples of a cultural divide, I suggest, are indications of an absence of relationship across cultures. Awareness of this absence of relationship has a particular relevance to the stories I tell later in this chapter in regard to generating play creation first as an artist, then as a researcher.

Therefore to continue this study with a belief in its potential for positive outcomes, I have framed my research around sound advice:

...a researcher must have a solid understanding of themselves, their own culture, beliefs, values and epistemologies. Only then can a proper understanding of another culture be attempted (Parr, 2002, cited in Chilisa, 2012, p.178).

This recommendation offers a research site to those, like myself, who come from dominant culture paradigms; where with attention and rigorous reflexivity new understandings may evolve through re-examination of inherited assumptions. My research focus is therefore not only the play I and my co-researchers created through performance but the circumstances which impacted on its development, the

stories from the field that informed its content and the blurred, incomplete history I hitherto unknowingly carried.

1.6. The research plan

With an emphasis on performance ethnography as the primary methodology, this study interweaves Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal narratives about the Myall Creek massacre and the Memorial erected to commemorate it. The play that results from this process remains a piece of verbatim theatre, where the original voices from the field, although presented as edited transcript and distilled into composite characters, remain intact.

This research outcome is informed by a parallel process of self-reflexivity, which impacts on the choice of data and influences the play's structure. This process is supported by reflections on the relationship between the play's content and the presence of or resistance to the five persistent narratives, which I identify as emerging from the research. These narratives are investigated in Chapters Two and Four. Finally this study incorporates a third methodological tier of analysis through an exploration of my own play-building praxis through self-study.

The play text included in the body of this thesis includes some documentary material but otherwise adheres to verbatim theatre techniques, as articulated by Paget (1987), where diverse narratives from the field are interwoven to present a complex picture of shared history, delivering in the Australian context insights into history's obfuscation and the consequences of recovering its 'lost' stories.

However the original intention in the research plan had been to investigate key moments of conflict in the verbatim draft through a process of negotiation, collaboration, story-telling and improvisation with my actor/co-researchers. This approach, I believed, would address some of the key epistemological and methodological concerns of leading researchers in the decolonising research field (Chilisa, 2012; L.T.Smith, 1999; Spivak, 2003). The proposed outcome therefore would have been a play within a play; the data collection and analysis process would integrate the field work experience and its exploration would occur through the

laboratory-like intensity of a rehearsal room, a space that privileges memory, stories and the imagination; a space with which all of us involved in this study were familiar.

Regrettably ethical, financial and time constraints prevented this research endeavour from developing beyond its verbatim foundation. Though the actor/co-researchers' reflections give some insight into the experience of performing the play, investigating that experience through a further play-making process was not possible.

However had more resources been available, the play included in this thesis would not have been presented as verbatim theatre. Referencing Pink's (2009) notion of sensory ethnography, at the outset the vision had been to harness the collective memories and imaginations of my co-researchers, my six actors, as well as myself, and build a performed work on a verbatim base.

But to abandon the research project, because it would not meet the initial vision, was never an option. The event that inspired it, as illuminated in the Prologue, was too powerful.

1.6.1. Locating the content

I sought and gained permission from the Myall Creek Memorial Committee to begin the field work in 2011. A film company⁷ was seeking permission to film on the Memorial site, so I was invited to attend that same meeting in February. Held at the memorial hall, a corrugated iron shed five hundred metres away from the massacre site and 600 kilometres away from Sydney, not all committee members were present but those who were expressed enthusiasm for both projects. The memorial hall was built in 1923 to remember the First World War fallen and is not connected to the Myall Creek Memorial, despite its proximity to the massacre site. The hall however figures prominently in annual Myall Creek services, as it is a meeting place for those who wish to participate in the pilgrim walk to the Memorial. The memorial hall is also where the first draft of *Today We're Alive* was performed in November, 2011. Once I had permission I contacted all Committee members by mail, informing them of my

⁷ December Films made a series of three drama-documentaries for television on three trials of significance, the Myall Creek trial of 1838 being one of them. The series *Australia On Trial* screened on ABC in April, 2012.

project. I then met all those members present personally at the 2011 Memorial Service in June, and requested an interview. The response continued to be positive.

The play's content is derived from interviews with twenty participants, nine of whom are Aboriginal and eleven are non-Aboriginal. The interviews were approximately an hour long and were semi-structured; my questions acted as prompts, frequently seeking clarification in the participants' narratives, rather than demanding answers to pre-determined areas of inquiry. I always began interviews with a question about the Memorial and the responses deviated from there. I transcribed all the interviews in their entirety, with all pauses, repetitions and emotional responses to narrated content included in the transcript and I included this emotional punctuation in the performance draft. Most of the actors consistently observed this notation.

The interviews continued over a period of four months, beginning immediately after the 2011 Memorial Service and concluding a month before the scheduled date of the first performed reading. Although there was no time to develop characters, I had always wanted the first reading to be performed by six actors, three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal, and within those two groups to have two women and one man. This did not reflect the gender ratio in the field but the genders of the actors I knew and felt comfortable with. As there would be little time to work on the script together before the performed reading, I knew, if I were to progress the draft, I would need to have feedback from actors, whose aesthetic I understood and with whom I had a relationship that was candid and constructive.

Choices I made in structuring the draft presented in this thesis are analysed in Chapter Seven.

1.6.2. Definitions of significant terms used

As Empire and Capitalism are two on-going drivers of current globalization (Grande, 2007; McLaren, 1997), just as they were for Colonialism, decolonization is used in this dissertation as opposed to post-colonialism. As L.T. Smith (1999) points out, "post-colonial discussions have ...stirred some indigenous resistance ...to the idea that colonialism is over, finished business." (1999, p. 24)

Because some participants in my field work disliked the word “Indigenous” when applied to Australian Aboriginal people, I have used “Aboriginal” where possible. In recognition of Torres Strait Islanders as also included in the word “Indigenous” but not in the word “Aboriginal”, I have used the word “peoples”, as in “Aboriginal peoples”, out of respect for others’ preferences and as a reminder to myself to be conscious of the potency of language.

Thirdly, as stated in a footnote earlier, I have used a capital “M” for the existing Myall Creek Memorial to distinguish it from other memorials, including the one that preceded it in 1988. That memorial’s story is told in Chapter Three.

Finally the use of metaphors to suggest exploration of unfamiliar territory recurs in this thesis. Words like “journey”, “discovery” and “frontier” reflect terminology used by scholars in the decolonizing field (Grande, 2007); however such words also reflect prior learning, where writing drama for theatre and television entailed creating stories located in the realms of the imagination. In Vogler’s (1992) text, *The Writer’s Journey*, a tribute to Joseph Campbell’s⁸ study of mythology, the mythic story begins with the introduction of the hero in what Vogler (1992) terms: ‘The Ordinary World’. (1992, p.19)

Following the example of placing a story in a context, a context from which the story then departs, this study also begins with a depiction of the ordinary world, not only mine but other non-Aboriginal participants in this research project. The narrative included in the following section also, I suggest, delivers an insight into the ordinary world of Aboriginal people as well.

1.7. The ordinary world

At the end of 2007, when I returned from New Zealand, I had never engaged with anyone, who identified as Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Nor did I

⁸ Joseph Campbell (1904 – 1987) explored the universal relationship between myth, religion, symbolism and the creation of knowledge. Campbell’s analysis of the Hero’s Journey as a monomyth common to all cultures and explored in his seminal work *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1993) sought to generate a sense human understanding across time and across cultures.

consider this unusual. Occasionally, when an artefact appeared unearthed on a building site or an early sunset created an ominous gloom in the suburban bush of my childhood, there was, as researcher Peter Read (2000) so sensitively suggests: “the uninvited voice ever threatening to remind us that the land we loved was previously lost to others. We kept it at a distance.” (2000, p.1) And this was not difficult to do.

Although government policies and their impact on Aboriginal peoples are discussed at length in Chapter Four of this thesis, a brief reference is made to them here. Policy is a backdrop to the following; even though the focus below is on personal experience, policy determined the ordinary world. These stories, mine and “Tom’s”⁹, inform the nature and intent of Aboriginal policy and its effectiveness over time in segregating not just people from each other but people from the truth of the past.

A policy of Assimilation, begun in 1937, was still in place as Tom and I were growing up, he in the country and me in the suburbs. The aim of Assimilation was to make the ‘Aboriginal problem’ (Pearson, 2010, p.1) gradually disappear, so that mixed-blood Aboriginal people would lose their identity in the wider community. Laws segregated Aboriginal peoples into separate living areas and under Assimilation the forcible removal of their children in order for them to be placed in foster homes or non-Indigenous institutions increased (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.). Denial of the dispossession, of Indigenous culture, of the massacres created a narrative of avoidance, which Read (2000) maintains for the colonists “was part of a genuine attempt to foster emotional possession of the land.” (2000, p. 180) For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders it meant that only by a loss of identity, by surrendering “what it was that made them a distinctive people,” (Manne, 2009, p.5) could they hope to enjoy the same rights and privileges as other Australians. It was assumed they would probably do this “inevitably and probably willingly.” (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d., p.3)

Most of the non-Aboriginal research participants, who were on the Memorial Committee, emerged from a similar background to my own. The presence of

⁹ “Tom” is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, whose name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to him are from an interview held at Warialda, NSW, June 9th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

Aboriginal people was peripheral to their lives, if present at all. They had only become aware of their lack of connection once they began their careers as teachers, as clergy, as volunteer health and education workers. In other words once had begun working in vocations that generated contact with 'The Marginalised Other'.

Of these stories Tom's is distinctive and worth sharing here, because it embodies not just a piecemeal view of history but an appreciation of Aboriginal humour and resilience as well. Tom had been a high school teacher and is an active non-Aboriginal member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. At the time this story takes place in 1966 it was during the Vietnam War. Tom then was around 19 or 20 and therefore eligible for conscription. He actively supported the Country Party¹⁰, which was pro-Vietnam and pro-conscription:

...I'd always had an interest in the past generally and including the Aboriginal past. There were no Aborigines in the area where I grew up. None at all at Dungog. There were none at the school. I don't think we ever saw an Aborigine. There were none at Hurlstone Agricultural high school, where I went for the last years of my secondary education, ah, the only references that were made really in the Primary school social studies book were things about how Aborigines were hunters and gatherers and their houses were gunyahs and whatever and I think there was probably a mention of the Myall Creek massacre in those early studies but of a very general nature ...

As a young teacher I was sent to Moruya and ...I well remember an occasion when it was the 1966 Vietnam election...and because I'd come from a struggling farm at that time I was more interested in supporting the Country Party. And ah I was handing out how to votes for the Country Party at the election and I must have known something because I went to the lunch with the Labor blokes and ...one of the Labor fellas said, and I was a young man, I was 19, early 20s. And there was this man and this had never occurred to me, he was a man double my age in his early 40s or 50s, and I heard him say to one of the other people who were in the group...we were having a drink over lunch... he said: "That young man is old enough to go to Vietnam, if he believes we should be there." You know. And it rocked me. I hadn't thought about this other issue at all, Vietnam.

Anyway pertaining to our story of interest in Aboriginal things, there was a bloke in our group: Percy Davis, who was introduced to me as the last aboriginal full-

¹⁰ The Country Party was a conservative, centre-right party supporting rural interests and is in coalition with the Liberal Party; It became known as the National Party in 1975. At this period above, in the 1960s, the Country Party enjoyed a time of considerable influence. This declined in the 1970s as the rural population declined (The Nationals for Regional Australia, n.d.).

blood on the south coast. He was a smallish man, who'd been a jockey for many years and was shiny black with pink hands...quite out of my experience altogether. And I ...and he said: "Whatcha doin', boy?" And I said: "I'm up there handing out how to vote for the Country Party." And he looked at me and said: "Vote Labor, boy, and keep Australia white" (Tom, 2011).

The sense of irony in Percy's comment to young Tom, suggesting he votes 'to keep Australia white', refers to the White Australia Policy¹¹. The nature of a burgeoning social conscience at the time (Manne, 2009) was stronger in the cities than in rural areas, where this conversation between Tom and Percy took place. The Davis family still live in this area today (Aboriginal People, 2006, pp.15-34).

This story still caused amusement for Tom, when so many of his other stories didn't. But it serves as a fine introduction here to the potential richness of interaction that accompanies the challenge of confronting the many legacies of dispossession and histories half known from the personal to the national level. This is a story, too, about the unmaking of strangers; it disembeds the work of colonization (Bauman, 1997). An interaction such as the one articulated above between Percy and Tom illuminates the performative potential of expressing racial difference, validating Lo's (2006) assertion that the body is an effective site of analysis in postcolonial study, an assertion this study develops in Chapters Five and Seven.

It is also interesting to note that this exchange between Tom as a young man and Percy Davis occurred one year before the 1967 referendum¹², explored later in this study. The success of this referendum officially allowed the inclusion of Aboriginal people in the national census. Inclusion not only ensured their population statistics would become known but data on their health and standards of living was gathered for the first time. The referendum also implicitly acknowledged that Aboriginal people were not going to become "a melancholy footnote in Australian history,"¹³ (Stanner,

¹¹ The White Australia Policy was a means of restricting immigration from particularly Asian countries and favoured migrants from Britain. It became law in 1901. Race was finally removed as a factor in Australian immigration policies in 1973 (Fact Sheet 8 – Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy, n.d. pp.1-4).

¹² The 1967 referendum allowed the Commonwealth Government to make laws for Aboriginal people, ending State-only legislation, and also allowed the inclusion of Aboriginal people on the census, thereby finally recognising their presence (National Archives of Australia, Fact Sheet 150, p.1).

¹³ This frequently-used expression McKenna (1997) attributes to J.A. La Nauze (1959), who observed that "Aboriginal Australians had appeared in Australian history as a 'melancholy anthropological footnote.'" (La Nauze, 1959, cited in McKenna, 1997 p.3)

1968, p.176) or that their extinction was inevitable. Simultaneously during the 1960s the Aborigines presumed date of occupation of Australia “was pushed back from 10,000 to 40,000 and 50,000 years.” (Gammage, 2011, p.xxii) From virtual invisibility, Aboriginal culture was now recognized as the oldest living culture in the world. And yet Percy was introduced to Tom as the last full-blood on the South Coast (of NSW).

But before ever meeting Tom, ever hearing this and many stories, ever considering a research project that would begin at a massacre site, I decided to explore cross-culturalism through professional practice. In Vogler’s (1992) terms, I prepared to leave the ordinary world.

1.8. First steps

Immediately after returning home from New Zealand in 2007, I wrote a script for a short film. Entitled “*Stop, Revive, Survive*”, a popular road safety slogan, it was about a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, mostly strangers to each other, whose lives intersect at a roadhouse one night in a storm.

I heard about a new theatre company based in Redfern, NSW. I took the script to them in 2008. I include this story here, because it marks for me the beginning of genuine relationship. Therefore I adopt an ethnographic voice once more, as I aim to share the following experience analytically as a researcher and emotionally as an arts practitioner (O’Toole, 2006). The story demonstrates a willingness for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists to come together using performance as a mechanism to cross the cultural divide. Three years after the meeting and the workshop we shared, described below, Fred, Lily and Aunty Rhonda came with me to read the first draft of *Today We’re Alive* in the memorial hall near the massacre site.

1.8.1. Parallel learning

When I approached Moogahlin Performing Arts in 2008 with “*Stop, Revive, Survive*”, I hoped for a reading. Key Moogahlin personnel, Artistic Director Frederick

Copperwaite, Lily Shearer and Rhonda Dixon Grovener agreed to support the short film and advised me to seek funding for a one-day script development workshop through the City of Sydney's Quick Response Grants Program. What I didn't understand then was Moogahlin's heritage and its vision. As Behrendt (2007) argues, interconnectedness is a strong traditional belief in Aboriginal culture; and Moogahlin sees itself as standing on the shoulders of theatrical greats, those artists who began Black Theatre in Redfern in the 1970s.

1.8.2. Based in Redfern

Redfern is the inner-Sydney centre of the national Aboriginal diaspora and a highly politicised area historically. For over two hundred years it has struggled to cope with the legacy of colonial dispossession. Considered a ghetto for years, it is now being gentrified at a rapid rate (Gorman, 2014, para.1). Redfern is the birthplace of the Aboriginal Legal Service, the Aboriginal Medical Service and, as mentioned above, Australia's first Black Theatre. For its time it was a vocal and significant political forum for the exploration and celebration of contemporary Indigenous identity. National Black Theatre; it opened in 1972 and closed after the withdrawal of Government funding in 1977.

A transcript from a recent television program from the Australian Broadcasting Commission (Message Stick, 2012, p. 7) summarises the theatre's impact in the short period of its existence, using the voices of those still here to tell the story:

Gerry Bostock: Before Black Theatre, there were kids who tried to venture out from Redfern and go to the State library. They'd walk into the State library and they'd see all these white faces. And they would just turn around and go back to Redfern. So Black Theatre gave them the opportunity to mix with the rest of Australia.

Bronwyn Penrith: What really strikes me from those days, though, is the rawness and the passion of the people who were involved. I think that's something that still drives us as Aboriginal people today. I look forward to the day when Aboriginal history's embraced... embraced by the wider community, because in the end it is one history.

Lillian Crombie: Jack, Bryan, Uncle Bob and Carol - they had instilled

something in me to stand up for yourself, to have a voice. And that's where I found my voice.

Louise Aileen Corpus: Thank God we had the Redfern blacks, because, you know, they were defiant. They had guts. They had dreams.

Rachel Maza: There is a long way to go in this country. We have only... we've only scratched the surface of the stories that need to be told... What our challenge as artists is to stay strong in our vision, in our courage to tell those hard stories, to have the courage to stick to those visions and inspire everyone else to come to the party.

Gerry Bostock: The most important legacy of Black Theatre is confidence in being able to be Aboriginal.

Louise Aileen Corpus: Thanks, Redfern!

Moogahlin's founding members see the performing arts company as a continuation of the National Black Theatre, honouring the legacy and vision of those earlier theatre-makers and are strongly committed to generating Indigenous performance work for Indigenous performers. The interest in "*Stop, Revive, Survive*" was seen as a short term exercise by all of us; developing work with a non-Aboriginal writer was not in their brief and I was grateful they had offered a day in what experience had taught me was the long haul of film script development.

1.8.3. Fate and funding intervene

Our funding application was successful; our September 2008 workshop was held at the Redfern Community Centre, who gave us support-in-kind. We began with a reading of the draft, so, as Lily said: "the blackfellas in the script would sound like real blackfellas and not like some characters made up by a whitefella". Facilitated by Fred, as director, the reading developed into a series of improvisations, where the performers investigated the script in their own words.

And it was one of these improvisations that took the script, over time, in an unexpected direction. As scripted in that film draft, into this roadhouse on that stormy night came three elderly women, two Aboriginal, one non-Aboriginal. They were

taking a road trip, because all of them were sooner rather than later facing death from unspecified causes. They were known in the script as The Aunties; they were “Toots”, “Dolly” and “Col”. Lily played “Toots”, Aunty Rhonda played “Dolly” and I was “Col”.

Late in the afternoon Fred wanted to know why these three women were together, a point not clarified in the script. What were two Aboriginal women doing with one, who was non-Aboriginal? It struck Fred as odd. I explained that they were marginalised women, impoverished and had banded together because of shared occupancy in low socio-economic group housing. This explanation wasn't enough for Fred; the mix of races in an urban setting was too foreign. It had to be explored; otherwise for Fred the relationship was too provocative, too dramatically inconvenient and not based, for him, in the real world. What remained unspoken between us was our shared history of distance from each other, the legacy of colonization, dispossession, disadvantage and discrimination. History was an unseen but omnipresent character, the elephant in the room. What we were charged with investigating through improvisation was that same lack of relationship alluded to earlier in this chapter by both Germaine Greer and Jane Harrison.

We set up an improvisation, where the two Aboriginal women, “Toots” and “Dolly”, were in a craft group in an aged care facility. They wanted to go back to “Dolly's” country but had no means of transport. “Col”, the prickly non-Aboriginal woman, had a van. The object of the improvisation was to persuade “Col” to take them all on a trip to “Dolly's” country.

The improvisation succeeded, enriched not just with dialogue but with potent and persuasive silences that generated affection and most importantly, humour. Connecting emotionally and imaginatively, we, Lily as “Toots”, Aunty Rhonda, as “Dolly”, and myself as “Col”, found a bond, a creative freedom and a sense of shared purpose that surprised us all. It was this one scene that gave rise to a play over a five year development period; “*Stop Revive Survive*” became “*The Aunties' Epic*” and then a mainstage production in 2013. Called “*This Fella, My Memory*” this play and its development process is discussed further in Chapter Eight. But in that room in 2008 we only knew we had found a truth, a foundation for relationship; we didn't know whether there was a future.

Problems with the script became obvious over the course of the day, as the working environment became increasingly collaborative and participatory. We achieved a common understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the draft and agreed to continue developing the work, should more funding become available.

The experience invited a greater investment of time, of endeavour, of commitment but it did not invite research. And yet the situation did. The scenarios we had been working with were too delicate, too nuanced for the detached analysis of inquiry. Nevertheless as we shifted between scenes of harmony and scenes of discord, there was a sense that we were creating a new story, not something we had seen before. It was clear that whatever evolved from our shared story-telling would need time and space, safety and support to surface. I knew I could not be an actor, a writer and researcher and expect to be able commit myself fully to all roles; as a writer I might be too anxious to wait for an ending to emerge and so force one into existence; as a researcher I might miss creative or imaginative opportunities in favour of cognitive clarification. Besides whatever happened with “*Stop, Revive, Survive*” would depend on further funding and that in September 2008, was a remote possibility.

However my interest in investigating the cross-cultural space as a researcher had now fully emerged; I was gaining my own new understandings of Aboriginal perspectives and knew I wanted to document this ‘learning’ or perhaps ‘un-learning’ curve. On that one workshop day I had experienced an unfamiliar sense of simultaneous inclusion and responsibility and, because I was in this unexpected place emotionally, I had become more responsive to what was being offered creatively, more willing to remain open to possibilities.

A research project on the other hand, I decided, had to be a story that already had an ending; I had to find an existing cross-cultural story and map the narratives within it. To progress my understanding of the cross-cultural space, therefore I had to investigate a site, where there had been some kind of reconciliation event in the factual as opposed to a fictional world.

And it was at this time I remembered hearing about Myall Creek. There had been a massacre there, I had read a play (Summons, 1994) about it years before, and now there was a Memorial to commemorate it. I had seen television coverage of the commemorative service in 2000. The committee, who designed the Memorial, I

remembered, was comprised of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members. This had to be a reconciliation story, and it had a beginning, middle and end: it had a Memorial.

1.9. The Memorial at Myall Creek

Physically the Memorial sits on Crown Land amid grassland in a remote but serene rural setting. It consists of a series of seven small stones set along a winding path, each of the stones bears a plaque, and together the plaques tell the story of the events leading to the massacre, the massacre itself and its retribution. The story is told through art and through language, both in English and in Kamilaroi; the twenty-eight massacre victims were Weraerai¹⁴ people and a clan group of the Kamilaroi nation. The path leads to a large granite boulder, which also bears a plaque. This final plaque recognises a shared history and that the memorial represents an act of reconciliation. The Memorial story is developed more fully in Chapter Six, the play script *Today We're Alive*.

But as Harris (2009) points out memorials tell more than one story.

1.9.1. Not set in stone – deconstructing memorials and their meanings

All memorials are grounded, Harris (2009) maintains, in a minimum of two narratives: the narrative of the original event and the narrative of the time in which they were memorialized. In the Myall Creek case there are at least four – the narrative of the event, the narrative of the colonizer, the narrative of the colonized and the narrative of denial elsewhere in the country. Because the Memorial was erected one hundred and sixty-two years after the event, the plaques' narratives reflect an evolving understanding of the truth of the past.

The word “massacre” appears twice on the seventh boulder’s commemorative plaque. Elsewhere in Australia colonial conflicts between settlers and Aborigines are referred to as “battles”, if they are mentioned at all. As the word “massacre” is still so contentious elsewhere (Harris, 2009), because of conflicting accounts between

¹⁴ Spelt as Wirrayaraay on the Memorial, “Weraerai” is the spelling Millis (1994) uses and to my mind is closer to the received pronunciation.

colonizers and those colonized, the Memorial at Myall Creek was always intended to represent a shared history for all Australians (Batten, 2009), for it is the one and only site in the country, where historical documentation and oral history concur.

As Tunbridge & Ashworth (1996) argue, memorials to historic conflicts between colonizers and colonized, so often concerned with societal notions of battles, victory and heroism, now represent sites of contested heritage. So although the Memorial's existence for the colonizer represents an acknowledgement of past wrongs, implying the present is a better place, yet for the colonized, because this Memorial is unique, it recognizes that the brutality of the past remains profoundly present. This interpretive contradiction, according to Harris (2009), is inherent in all memorials, where the so-called truths memorials tell are continually subject to re-interpretation. This might be either over linear time by the victors or within the never-ending time of the traumatized vanquished, who re-experience the traumatizing event in a way that is both parallel to but unrelated to linear time (Edkins, 2003).

However the Myall Creek Memorial's unique message of culpability and shame can nevertheless be "swiftly subsumed" (Harris, 2009, p.7) by the introduction of yet another narrative: the super narrative of national progress. Heritage Minister Peter Garrett's speech marking the one hundred and seventieth anniversary of the massacre concludes:

The fact that the descendants of some of the people massacred on that horrific day in 1838 and the descendants of those charged with the crime come together in their own peaceful and personal reconciliation gives me great hope for our country and makes me very proud to be an Australian (Garrett, 2008).

Interpreting the Memorial's meaning as a positive contribution to a comfortable historical narrative of cultural maturation, Harris (2009) believes, nullifies the continuing effects of violent colonial relationships and contributes to a disregard for Aboriginal versions of the past. The desire, however, to acknowledge the past, to contemplate the terror experienced by twenty-eight Indigenous men, women and children as, roped together and defenceless, they were hacked to death by twelve white men one June afternoon in 1838, appears nevertheless to motivate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous travel to the Memorial site. Testaments by visitors to the Memorial surveyed by Batten (2009) suggest that the site is a profoundly spiritual

place, “almost a pilgrimage or journey of understanding into Australia’s past and its role in the present.” (2009, p.94)

Edkins (2003) argues that if we are to remain open to different perspectives, we must resist wanting to resolve the past. We must accept that sites where atrocities have been committed will always exist in trauma time; “events from the period of the trauma are experienced...simultaneously with those of a survivor’s current existence.” (Edkins, 2003, p.40) Edkins (2003) further elaborates on the complex nature of trauma, offering a deeper understanding of the experience of the Weraerai, who had come to Myall Creek seeking and for some time receiving sanctuary:

An event has to be more than a situation of utter powerlessness...it has to entail something else. It has to involve a betrayal of trust as well...What we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us and give us security become our tormentors (2003, p. 4).

In terms of decolonizing research these sites therefore offer instances where hegemonic certainties are dispelled and awareness of immense suffering is heightened; sites where stories are truly heard and the resonances from the past resound in the present. At such places there is no resolution, no closure, because the multiple narratives they evoke challenge inherited identity both for the colonized and the colonizer.

Batten’s (2009) surveys suggest in the Myall Creek case, closure is not sought; it is acceptance and understanding. The impossibility of resolution, Harris (2009) maintains, creates a dramatic tension, which manifests as an opportunity for interactive healing. Shifts in consciousness brought about by the interplay between thought and feeling create empathic pathways, where new transformative learning can occur (Arnold, 2005). This might manifest itself in action, in new perspectives or, as Krog, Mpolewni-Zantsi and Ratele (2008) experienced in their investigation of particular testimony presented in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, new ways of knowing each other through the debunking of the master narrative in favour of foregrounding diverse First Nation culture, belief and language.

It was the exploration of the Myall Creek Memorial site’s dramatic tension and the possibility of documenting interactive healing that I intended to be at the heart of *Today We're Alive*.

1.10. The research framework

Most but not all of the twenty participants, who contributed to the first draft of *Today We're Alive*, were Memorial Committee members. Some lived in the North-West of NSW in or near Bingara in towns like Inverell, Moree and Warialda (see map, appendix i). Some lived and worked in Sydney, some in Canberra and one had re-married and moved overseas. Each interview was approximately an hour long and with two exceptions, when I spoke with married couples, all interviews were with myself and one participant.

The six actors included in this study as co-researchers became involved in the play a week before we took it back to the primary research hub, the memorial hall adjacent to the massacre site, in late November, 2011, for a Sunday morning's performed reading. All the participants had been invited to attend this reading, four were able to come and they brought family and friends. Additional audience members came, because they knew of the project through word of mouth. Other than minor edits after a first reading held several days before we left Sydney, where only some of the co-researchers were able to be present, none of the actor/co-researchers had input into the draft's content.

The three Aboriginal actors, Frederick Copperwaite, Lily Shearer and Aunty Rhonda Dixon-Grovener, are all members of Moogahlin. As mentioned earlier in this chapter all of us had come to know each other through the "*Stop, Revive, Survive*" workshop and our relationship continued through that project's development. The three non-Aboriginal actors, Terry Brady, Anna Volska and Genevieve Mooy, are all professional colleagues, as well as personal friends; we have all worked together at some point as performers in our professional lives, now spanning over thirty years. Each one of the two groups, the three Aboriginal actors and the three non-Aboriginal actors, knew each other but I was the only one, who knew and had worked with everyone.

The events of the weekend away, the play reading itself, the audiences' responses, the actor/co-researchers' reactions to the reading, plus the site visit to the Memorial

and the ramifications for the re-drafting process are discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight.

However because of the opportunity to develop *Today We're Alive* into a touring draft, it was possible to revisit this research process. Changes to the touring draft reflected learnings gained in the memorial hall reading; all documentary material was cut along with extended narratives about the trials that led to the convictions. In terms of craft, the memorial hall reading confirmed the importance of the massacre, as opposed to allowing the story to slip into a celebration of British justice.

I am conscious that this research project, because it has been allowed to evolve, has been greatly enriched by an increasing sensitivity to the importance of relationship in the transformative cross-cultural space. In undertaking both a research initiative, *Today We're Alive*, as well as an artistic endeavour, *This Fella, My Memory*, new understandings of epistemological hegemony and counter-hegemony have surfaced; new appreciations of doubt and anxiety have emerged as having both an inhibiting and enabling potential (Davies & Spencer, 2010). In my experience both emotional states can be addressed through dialogue, through relationship, through consultation. Without questioning the old order remains.

But the greatest learning of all has come through the investigation of my own culture and my own inherited but incomplete history. This investigation therefore underpins both my research and my artistic practice¹⁵. As supported by Chilisa (2012), knowing another can only come through knowing the self. Though this is confronting, according to Reynolds (1999) we need “to know and understand the incubus which burdens us all.” (1999, p.258)

1.11. Overview of this dissertation

This first chapter along with the Prologue gives some background into the genesis of this research study, beginning as it did initially in another country and in another

¹⁵ I am making a distinction here between artistic and craft practice; artistic practice refers to the concept of art creation, the idea the work is intended to explore; craft practice refers to its manner of execution, how the work is made.

culture. It briefly examines the decolonizing research field and the factors, which influenced the selection of the Myall Creek site.

Chapter Two examines the process of decolonization through a theoretical framework, navigating the slow transition from the rigidity of colonized social structure to the fluidity of the present. Using the first fifty years of Australian colonization, from 1788 to the year of the Myall Creek massacre, 1838, this chapter addresses the persistence of certain colonial narratives within the context of counter-hegemonic elements identified by significant cultural scholars. The chapter then returns to the research field to identify counter-hegemonic narratives present in participants' world views, suggesting that beneath the dominance of Western mindsets there stirs a desire for change; reinforcing notions of fluidity and their examination through the performative.

Chapter Three tells the story of the Myall Creek massacre and the attempts over time to memorialize the event. The persistent colonial narratives identified in Chapter Two return, as the actions of a few 'good men' fail to change the actions of many, ensuring the forces of colonization remain unchallenged for 160 years.

Chapter Four examines the forces of decolonization from a policy perspective, concentrating on significant shifts in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relationships from the 1960s to the present. Where possible Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices are juxtaposed as a way of subverting the inherited histories enmeshed in the philosophies of dispossession and the on-going policies and practices that have fostered them.

Chapter Five investigates the appropriateness of the methodologies used in this study, principally performance ethnography, with an emphasis on the suitability of verbatim theatre as a mode of delivery and how that addresses the representational challenges accentuated by researcher positioning.

Chapter Six is the play script, *Today We're Alive*, which was read in the memorial hall.

Chapter Seven maps the research field, telling the massacre and Memorial stories from the participants' perspectives. It illuminates the decisions made in relation to the selection of data for the play, *Today We're Alive*. It also re-creates the performance

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

experience, focusing on the events of the day itself, the feedback session and the actors' reflections.

Chapter Eight concludes this study with a reflection on the dynamic nature of the cross-cultural performance space and the kinds of learnings gained through performance itself. This chapter then addresses the two play-making experiences: *Today We're Alive* and *This Fella, My Memory*, introduced in Chapter One, noting how the craft practices reinforced each other. Finally this chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the content of both of these play-making ventures, noting that despite final arbiters from different cultures, myself in *Today We're Alive* and Fred in *This Fella, My Memory*, similar outcomes were realised.

An Epilogue bookends this study; it includes another reconciliation story and focuses on the evolution through performance of the final scene in *This Fella, My Memory*. Rather than navigating the emotional complexity embedded in subtext, this story suggests that reconciliation might best be understood through the use of a particular preposition.

1.12. Conclusion

The intense level of engagement with the play, especially during the feedback session, suggests that the story, particularly through the performative, can create new knowledge, new understandings. Performance demonstrated the on-going presence of the past and yet showed that this grief could co-exist with a kind of optimism, because it was recognised and experienced by all parties, who shared the history. The Myall Creek story is also about the actions of a few good men and one Aboriginal woman's capacity to inspire, enthuse and initiate change.

A frequently researched site in multiple contexts, (Batten, 2009; Millis, 1994; Schlunke, 2006) the Myall Creek story, from massacre to Memorial to now still hovers I believe at the margins of national consciousness. It is this positioning that the Memorial Committee is determined to change. Building the Memorial was not an end but part of a continuing story, a key narrative in the gradual process of decolonization in Australia.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

The following chapter begins that story with an investigation of how colonization occurred and a discussion of the principles that drove it.

Chapter Two

**Confronting the Savage –
the colonial legacy in a changing state**

... “they said there was bad people in the world. Good and bad.

Just be aware” (“Sally,”¹⁶ 2011)

2. Introduction

Just as Chapter One progresses a gradual personal journey so this chapter charts another, more complex journey: from the cultural rigidity of colonialism to the relative fluidity of the contemporary world (Bhabha, 1996; Rutherford, 1990; Werbner, 1997). Although opposite in scale, both journeys involve a slow transition through positional accommodations, as old certainties dissolve in the wake of either elected or imposed structural change. L.T. Smith (1999) contends that these accommodations involve both a renegotiation of a complex history as well as a continuous interrogation of present perspectives.

Through an examination of early colonial history in Australia, the principles that drove it and the persistence with which some of these principles remain, this chapter explores the colonization process in the Australian context. Resistance to change is then addressed through a return to the epistemological challenges to research mentioned in Chapter One, discussing both their legitimacy and the methodological means of non-Indigenous agency. Referencing the major decolonizing forces recognised by cultural scholars (Bhabha, 1990; Bauman, 1997; Papastergiadis, 1997; Rutherford, 1990) this chapter then pursues a greater understanding of how these same forces engendering fluidity might influence the possibilities for decolonizing research, particularly in relation to the performative as a mode of delivery.

¹⁶ “Sally”¹⁶ is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. Her name has been changed to protect her privacy. All references to “Sally” are from an interview with her held in Tingha, NSW, August, 24th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

Finally as a way of interrogating notions of fluidity, this chapter concludes on a positive note. Being mindful of theory and returning to personal worlds, an examination of narratives from the Myall Creek field suggests that new understandings of interconnectivity focusing on belief systems across cultures have the potential to not only forge new relationships but simultaneously by-pass old barriers to engagement.

2.1 The colonial legacy

Said (2003) suggests that colonization for the colonized brings a ruthless, streamlined and effective domination:

which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and their treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power (2003, p.36).

To confront and address the wrongs of the past are therefore the goals of the decolonizing process (Denzin, Lincoln & L.T. Smith, 2008). Embedded in such research endeavours are their capacity to make colonizers accountable for the traumas of coercion, exploitation and systemic and institutional racism passed down from generation to generation (McCaslin and Breton, 2008).

And yet deficit-driven research, “which chronicles only the pain and hopelessness of the colonized...entrench existing structures of domination.” (Chilisa, 2012, p. 160) Denzin (2005) argues that hope “as a form of pedagogy, confronts and interrogates cynicism, the belief that change is not possible or is too costly” (2005, pp. 332). Its absence makes all struggles to change the world meaningless. And therein lies the challenge: to acknowledge the past and its on-going legacy yet contribute to a positive self-determinist future for indigenous people.

Decolonizing research is concerned with celebrating survival, democratization, remembering, sharing, naming, protecting and restoring lost histories and cultural practices (L.T. Smith, 1999). The inter-generational history of dispossession, disenfranchisement and trauma might be sordid, suggests G.H. Smith (2011), but hope teaches us “new ways of doing, new ways of learning from our history, even though it is still here ... we can learn from it.” (G. H. Smith, 2011, p.4)

Learning from history demands knowing it; in the Australian context the 'complex history' referred to earlier (L.T. Smith, 1999) involves the history as was told and the history that was lived. It becomes the responsibility of the non-Aboriginal researcher to not only re-examine the history that was taught and the history that was omitted but to also understand why there continues to be a difference between the two. Disconnected and fragmented though our knowledge may be, those fragments maintain separation and preserve the colonized order. Perspective is a choice: colonization either began with invasion or discovery. That choice determines the nature of engagement with the past, the present and the future.

Researchers, artist Mathieu Gallios and anthropologist Gaynor McDonald (2012), address the bewilderment of first contact in their extensive account of the Wiradjuri People of Wellington, NSW, in their 2012 Wellington Project¹⁷. They conclude:

It is hard to conceive of two social and cultural worlds more different from each other in terms of their understanding of the world, their economies, core values and understanding of space and time. In the ... eighteenth century world [they] were cosmological opposites (2012, p. 10).

In the Aboriginal world view all things are living, all things have equal value; this includes rocks, wind, clouds, as well as fauna, flora and people. As J. Milroy (2011) explains:

... country is alive and everything has feelings – all things, especially country can be happy, sad, feel pain, grief, joy. Everything has spirit. Everything has Law. Everything is interconnected (2011, p.11).

Land therefore for Aboriginal peoples has spiritual sustenance. Mick Dodson (2012) in a recent keynote address¹⁸ stressed that attachment to place, to country, is integral to Aboriginal identity and survival. The forced removal of Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands under colonization "... was not just a physical parting. It also severed profound religious and spiritual connections reaching well back to the earliest organised societies." (2012, p. 14) Land for the colonizer on the other hand

¹⁷ The Wellington Project was ethnographic research about Wellington, NSW. It was presented as a local newspaper and was realised through both Government funding and the support of the Wellington Valley Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation.

¹⁸ Professor Mick Dodson gave the keynote address at Victoria University's Place and Displacement Conference, November 21-23, 2012.

was an economic resource; it reflected entitlement, it generated income and bestowed status (Gallios & McDonald, 2012).

Raised on a farm in irrigation country, Participant “Ian”¹⁹ reflects on the core difference:

...I don't think our family ever felt, you know, bound to the land. When Dad got to retirement, he sold it (*laughs*) and moved into town. It was a resource that had been used and it had been looked after and used carefully and wisely but I don't know...I don't know...I mean I don't have the same...that connection to thethe aboriginal connection to the land is a different one. Mmm (Ian, 2011).

Such an understanding took a long time to become common parlance. For the nineteenth century colonists, Reynolds (1998) argues, the relational agenda was not to understand but to eliminate. He elaborates:

Colonists were hellbent on extermination...they literally wanted to clear the land of the indigenous people who reminded them of the manner in which the country was acquired, the uncertainty of title and the dubious morality of the dispossession (Reynolds, 1998, p. 247).

So the conflict embedded in first-contact began. Reynolds (1999) suggests little changed in regard to recognition of Aboriginal custodianship of the land either politically or intellectually for the next 150 years. The following focuses on the evolving rationale for that lack of recognition over that time frame.

For Aboriginal people the loss of land and the loss of life were inseparable. But from the British point of view initial relations were intended to be cordial, even educative.

2.2. In the beginning....

When Lieutenant James Cook raised the Union Jack on what he designated Possession Island on August 22nd, 1770, he was claiming the whole of the Australian East Coast for the Crown and King George III. With neither consent nor conquest of

¹⁹ “Ian” is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to “Ian” come from an interview with him held in Canberra, 14th July, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

the native peoples, he was fulfilling his brief and creating the optimal terms for British settlement. And despite having seen Aboriginal people the whole way up the coast, his acts of “discovery and symbolic taking of possession” (Simsarian (1938) cited in Eklund, 2001, p. 1) made legitimate in the eyes of European law at the time the doctrine of terra nullius: this was empty land, land belonging to no-one.

Although the doctrine of terra nullius was finally overturned in 1992, its legacy and the power of unassailable ownership that it bestowed on the colonizer underpin the lack of consensus in framing an acceptable alternative. Questions of ownership continue to create division, dissent and delay (Foley & Anderson, 2006; Malezer, 2012). Questions of responsibility continue to be dwarfed by the immediate humanitarian concerns prioritized by the variable realities of disadvantage.

Terra nullius alleviated first the British then all subsequent Australian Governments of the moral obligation of a treaty or treaties, of reparations, of recognition, of respect. It set in train and perpetuated for Australia's First Peoples the cycle of dispossession, forced removal, disintegration and despair. Eklund (2001) acknowledges the potency of terra nullius:

...terra nullius [was] a concept first developed to rationalise colonial expansion. It soon took on an ideological life of its own, which subsequently outlived colonialism. The British settlement of Australia was based on its assumptions, and the people of Australia – Aboriginal and colonial alike – have struggled with its residue for over 230 years (2001, p.1).

Although Cook is attributed with using the term, he was in fact the instrument that allowed its appropriation by the British Government. When Cook sighted The Great South Land his primary concern was strategic not the nature of settlement.

2.2.1. Cook's first great voyage

From Cook's point of view, locating Australia was fortuitous, the result of a speculative excursion to be undertaken after charting the 1769 Transit of Venus from Tahiti. Suspicion that there was a great southern continent abounded; Dutchman Abel Tasman had named the east coast of Australia New Holland in 1644, sighting the land as he sailed north. But although the Dutch had landed in the

west, their colonial expansion focused on countries to the north, modern Indonesia particularly. However the question of a continent's existence and the wealth it might bring proved alluring to the British Admiralty; so to maintain the greatest secrecy in view of competing colonial activities by the Dutch and the French, the scientific expedition to Tahiti provided the perfect cover.

Cook doubted the existence of Terra Australis Incognita or unknown south land. (Cook's Journal, March 31, 1770) but as ordered to do after Tahiti, he broke the seal of his secret instructions. Thus he was informed his mission had another purpose. He was told to proceed southward to locate a continent or land of great extent north of latitude 40° and west of New Zealand (Hawke, E., Brett, P. & Spencer, C. 1768), land sighted and named by Tasman in 1642.

Britain was on the rise as a dominant Colonial power; at the time of Cook's first voyage, 1770. The American colonies still belonged to the mother country and the revolutionary war was five years away from erupting. For Cook, Australia was not claimed as a dumping ground for Britain's unwanted, as it came to be seen by 1788, it was a barrier to French colonial expansion in the South Pacific. So for Cook, the presence of Aborigines themselves did not present a problem, it was Britain's owning the land that was the solution.

When his ship, Endeavour, moored in what became known as Botany Bay on April 29th, 1770, landfall on the Kurnell peninsula proceeded with what must have been for the local Kameygal and Gweagal people an extraordinary performance: the daily raising and lowering of the British flag. Observed but not attacked, Cook was dutifully attending to the rituals of first contact. His instructions from the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain challenged him to:

...observe the Genius, Temper, Disposition and Number of the Natives, if there be any and endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a Friendship and Alliance with them, making them presents of such Trifles as they may Value inviting them to Traffick, and Shewing them every kind of Civility and Regard...

You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take Possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the Name of the King of Great Britain: Or: if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for his Majesty by

setting up Proper Marks and Inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors. (Hawke, E., Brett, P. & Spencer, C. 1768, p.1).

Taking some four months to complete his task, mapping thousands of kilometres as he did so, on what he named Possession Island in the Torres Strait, Cook left the flag flying – and he left stories as well. According to Heritage (2008) stories of Cook's arrival "exist in parts of Aboriginal Australia the explorer never visited." (2008, p. 1) Meanwhile the Kurnell Peninsula in some stories is called 'The Foot', acknowledging that this is the place of Cook's first physical connection with country. Stories about Cook recur in some of the participants' narratives, stories where his arrival heralds not just the white invasion but where he himself has become personally responsible for all the ills that followed.

Elder and Participant, "Uncle Lionel"²⁰, identifies Cook as the author of the first great fiction on which all other lies have been based:

Why is it that Captain Cook discovered Australia? Why did Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth cross the Blue Mountains? When they took a look across to the other side they found 5,000 other tribes and 800 dialects²¹....This is a nation of people, of 5,000 tribes and 800 dialects; we knew where the gold was, we knew where the oil was, we knew all those things. And we did trade. Therefore we must have been a nation of people. Captain Cook lied when he got here; he wrote in his report: Australia was terra nullius. Yet when he landed in Botany Bay there was Blacks all along the beach (Uncle Lionel, 2011).

A vivid image, the Blacks along the beach; an image, which recurs in explorers' stories (Tench, 1788): an image of people watching and then, unless provoked, leaving, slipping away into the scrub. Cook decided this behaviour suggested timidity; Blainey (1975) echoes Cook when he assumes that "Aborigines reacted to the sudden appearance of whites with the 'calm apathy' of people who had lived so long in isolation 'that intruders were inconceivable.'" (Blainey, 1975, cited in Reynolds, 2006, p. 33)

²⁰ "Uncle Lionel" is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to "Uncle Lionel" refer to an interview with him held at Moree, NSW, on 21st August, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

²¹ Numbers vary, as do the divisions they refer to. J. Milroy (2011), for example, refers to 250 separate nations and 250 separate languages. Stanner (1968) refers to "600 and more tribes" (1968, p.197).

Reynolds (2006) refutes both these propositions; from his knowledge of Aboriginal culture he concludes:

...across wide areas of Australia displays of overt curiosity were considered the height of rudeness. Among many tribes it was customary to totally ignore visitors when they first arrived in camp...Decorum not apathy determined Aboriginal behaviour (2006, p. 33).

But Cook was more perceptive than the above observation might suggest.

2.2.2. An enlightened mind

This very reluctance of Aboriginal people to aggressively connect allowed Cook to make more profound observations in late July, 1770. Although the following citation from his journal is lengthy, it reveals a great deal about the humanity of the man and the era in which he was writing:

From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans, being wholly unacquainted not only with the Superfluous, but with the necessary Conveniences so much sought after in Europe; they are happy in not knowing the use of them. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for Life. They covet not Magnificent Houses, Household-stuff, etc.; they live in a Warm and fine Climate, and enjoy every wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Cloathing; and this they seem to be fully sensible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth, etc., left it carelessly upon the Sea beach and in the Woods, as a thing they had no manner of use for; in short, they seem'd to set no Value upon anything we gave them, nor would they ever part with anything of their own for any one Article we could offer them. This, in my opinion, Argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessarys of Life, and that they have no Superfluities (Journal entry, late July, 1770).

For Cook his recognition of Aboriginal peoples' balanced existence and his simultaneous denial of their territorial occupancy were not the response of a mind conflicted. His perspective reflected two significant Enlightenment principles: that of the "noble savage" and that of the prime life purpose being to cultivate wealth.

As Murray (2007) argues, Australia is a colony founded on two integral pillars of the Enlightenment, as ascribed to English philosopher, John Locke²²: firstly, the capacity of human nature to reach perfection, secondly that although “the earth and its fruits are given in common to all human beings...one owns whatever one has mixed one’s own labour with.” (Murray, 2007, p. 4)

It’s not that Aboriginal people were invisible to Cook; they clearly inhabited the land, “living in a state of perfect freedom and equality.” (Murray, 2007, p.4) They just didn’t own it.

2.2.3. Settlement in the era of Enlightenment

Elevating science and reason, promoting education and progressing democracy, eschewing superstition and espousing rationality, the Enlightenment was to have its greatest impact in the eighteenth century.

Murray (2007) observes that the rapid developments in science and technology made at this time would have created a culture infused with optimism. The advances in science, technology and agriculture had yet to lead to the squalor of the Industrial Revolution; similarly the massive subjugation and exploitation endemic to colonialism was yet to come.

Although Enlightenment principles led to revolution in France and in the American colonies, in post-revolutionary Britain an outstanding consequence of such a liberal and humanitarian discourse was the abolition of the slave trade in 1833. Less obviously so, prior to this, was the establishment of Australia, over ten thousand miles away, as a penal colony.

According to Bentham²³, punishment, could only be justified if there was an element of reform in its execution. The transportation of convicts therefore through the lens of utilitarianism was not just, as Gallois & McDonald (2012) suggest:

²² John Locke (1632 – 1704) published his major work, *Two Treatises on Government*, in 1690. His first treatise argued against absolute monarchy; the second treatise concerned the power of the governed, the right to property and the inherent right to freedom (Murray, 2007).

²³ Jeremy Bentham’s (1748 -1832), a British Enlightenment philosopher; his most significant contribution was utilitarianism (Murray, 2007). In this theory Bentham advocated as a society and as

an expression of a dysfunctional and deeply distressed nation ...struggling to meet the costs of, and to find the space for, the incarceration of its many disadvantaged, restless and discontented subjects (2012, pp.11).

Transportation as a sentence could have been seen as an opportunity to progress.

The assurance of human progress, Murray (2007) deduces, is a compelling Enlightenment conviction that underpins colonial settlement in New South Wales, where “the energy to settle and farm what can only have seemed a hostile land came at least in part from Enlightenment ideas.” (Murray, 2007, p.8) Marrying progress and religion, Enlightenment principles on the frontier merged with those of entitlement. Exclusivist and legal defender of the Myall Creek perpetrators, Richard Windeyer, as Milliss (1994) demonstrates, could state with unquestioning conviction in 1838 that colonization was based on the principle laid down by “the first great legislator in his command to man to multiply and replenish the earth.” (Windeyer, 1838, cited in Milliss, 1994, pp.463 - 464)

2.2.4. Real destruction begins

When Captain Arthur Phillip, Commander of the First Fleet and first Governor of the Colony of New South Wales, sailed from England in April, 1787, it was, in regard to the ‘natives’, with the instructions:

You are to endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. And if any of our subjects shall wantonly destroy them, to give them unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations, it is our will and pleasure that you do cause such offenders to be brought to punishment according to the degree of the offence (Historical Records of New South Wales, 1787 cited in Brook, 1999, p. 1).

Most of the passengers on board the First Fleet disembarked in Port Jackson²⁴ on January 26th, 1788. The emaciated cargo of Britain’s unwanted arrived with their chains and their gaolers, bringing their diseases, their loneliness and their stoic determination to survive. The real destruction of pre-contact life for Aboriginal

individuals all institutions, policies and actions should be judged on the greatest levels of happiness they delivered to the highest numbers of people they affected.

²⁴ After finding only a poor water supply in Botany Bay, Captain Phillip moved the First Fleet north to Port Jackson.

people was now underway without a shot being fired. In the beginning contact seemed reciprocal.

Watkin Tench (1788), an officer with the First Fleet, reports that:

Our first object was to win their affections, and our next to convince them of the superiority we possessed; for without the latter the former we knew would be of little importance (1788, Chapter 8, p. 2).

The British, Tench (1788) comments, initially entertained strong hopes of bringing about a connection (1788). However all did not remain so congenial:

...the Indians for a little while after our arrival paid us frequent visits, but in a few days they were observed to be more shy of our company. From what cause their distaste arose we could never trace (1788, Chapter 10, p.2).

William Dawes, a fellow officer and one who made a study of the local languages, recorded snippets of conversation. Not just concerned with naming things, Dawes' notebooks reveal the feelings of the people he interacted with (The Notebooks of William Dawes, n.d.). So he becomes aware that the local people want the British to leave; they might choose to disappear but, as Reynolds suggests earlier, this was not out of fear. No doubt Aboriginal peoples hoped the British would follow their example. As Reverend William Watson later records in his diary of 1835, a Wiradjuri man, Gungin, demands: "What do you want here? What do you come here for? Why do you not go to your own country?" (Watson, 1835, cited in Gallios & McDonald, 2012, p. 10)

Although overtures were made and some successes had through the standard naval practice of hostage-taking²⁵, the initial wave of fatalities from first contact was from diseases. Smallpox, influenza, measles, whooping cough, tuberculosis, leprosy and syphilis were unknown to Aboriginal peoples. Within two years of the British arrival it is estimated that between 20% and 75% of the Eora (Sydney Basin) people had died from a disease akin to smallpox (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.) Governor Phillip writes:

²⁵ Phillip kidnapped two Eora men, Bennelong and Colbee in November, 1789, in an attempt to fraternise with the local Aboriginal people. Bennelong sustained relationships with the British until his death in May, 1813.

It is not possible to determine the number of natives who were carried off by this fatal order, it must be great; and judging from the information of the natives now living with us, and who had recovered from the disorder before he was taken, one-half of those who inhabit this part of the country died; and as the native always retired from where the disorder appeared, and which some must have carried with them, it must have been spread to a considerable distance, as well inland as along the coast. We have seen traces of it wherever we have been (Phillip, 1790, cited in *Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*, n.d., p.3).

Too often, J. Milroy (2011) argues, this particular experience of first contact has been extrapolated to explain the rapid decline of the Aboriginal population. No doubt disease played its part, as did other “by-products of colonisation,” (J. Milroy, 2011, p.7) such as dispossession, loss of economic resources, poor health, lower birth rates, infertility, malnutrition, early mortality and grief. However, J. Milroy (2011) maintains, what has been ignored are the massacres, poisonings and the deliberate introduction of smallpox.

Reynolds (1998) insists that colonists were prone to hypocrisy, unwilling to grasp the reality of dispossession (1998, p.244). Death rates from disease helped to create the illusion Aboriginal people were a “doomed race.” (Maynard, 2005, p.3) So the persistent narrative that underpinned policy and ignored practice until the 1930s was in place within two years of the arrival of the British. Just like the fiction of terra nullius, it grew from presumption into fact.

Disease came in waves, just as the colonists did, making it difficult to determine the causes of population decline. As participant “Nathan”²⁶ observes:

We don't just have one contact period; we don't have one invasion place. We have many. We think of the cultural bomb that hit Sydney in 1788....every time they broke into another tribal land, they were invading other people's countries as they went (Nathan, 2011).

Settlement proceeded at a rapid rate; the land therefore needed to be secured. By the 1830s terra nullius embraced not just entitlement but imperial duty:

²⁶ “Nathan” is not a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee but was recommended as an Aboriginal historian by Committee members. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to “Nathan” come from an interview with him held in Ultimo, NSW, August 8th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

The abstract rights of the Aboriginal inhabitants, who never made any use of the land, except to rove over its length and breadth, and to subsist upon the herbs and wild animals which it produced in a state of nature, does not enter the present question: which is the right of the British nation to the soil, having been the first to take position of it as a vast waste, and the consequent right of the nation to dispose of it (Windeyer, 1838, cited in Milliss, 1994, p. 495).

After the colony of New South Wales was established in the east, successive declarations of terra nullius followed: Swan River Colony (Western Australia) in 1829, South Australia in 1836, which included the Northern territory until 1911; Tasmania in 1841, Victoria in 1851 and Queensland in 1859.

The legal effect of terra nullius was to deny Aboriginal sovereignty; the actual impact was to deny Aboriginal people their humanity.

2.2.5. Genocide

The dire implications of the terra nullius doctrine to Aboriginal peoples surfaced in several participant narratives. Nathan talks about the significance of the Myall Creek trial in relation to Aboriginal status before it:

This brings me to the point where: how significant that was for Indigenous people Australia-wide. Previous to that they argued: why was it a crime to um to kill Aboriginal people? We could kill them like you would shoot a duck or shoot a dog, something like that, because nobody was ever brought to trial for doing that up until then (Nathan, 2011).

In his investigation of the Myall Creek massacre in 1838, Edward Denny Day reports an incidence of poisoned flour being given to the local Aboriginal people that had occurred the year before and was now common knowledge (Milliss, 1994). By the time the Myall Creek perpetrators were hanged, apocryphal stories of poisoning were in the daily news.

The Aboriginal population in 1788 for the area now known as NSW has been estimated as approximately 250,000 (Parbury, 1986, p.56). Tabling its decline charts a compelling picture:

1788	250,000
------	---------

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

1800	155,000
1810	145,000
1820	110,000
1830	70,000
1840	45,000
1850	10,000

Martial law was declared around Bathurst, New South Wales, in 1824 and in Tasmania between 1828 and 1832, giving some indication of reprisals and retaliation, as conflict over land escalated and Aboriginal resistance took the form of guerrilla warfare (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.). But although figures remain contentious, anecdotal evidence suggests that “from the 1850s ...punitive expeditions were common.” (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d., p.2)

Fuelled with good intentions and offerings of accord, successive British Governors arrived with orders to address and maintain peaceful relations. But the power imbued by terra nullius was firmly in place; overtures of cordiality only emphasised the hypocrisy of the Colonial enterprise.

Morally, legally irrefutably self-centred from the beginning of settlement, the British, in their own eyes, owned everything (Stanner, 1968). But this was not quite how London understood it to be.

2.2.6. Governor Gipps' parting gift

In this same Second Treatise mentioned above, Locke developed an extensive argument for the creation of personal wealth through property rights and it was the correct role of government to protect them. Clearly the young colony encouraged enterprise but feared land occupancy would quickly become land control.

Philosophically it was left to the Government of the day to steer a course between the conflicting demands of fairness and of wealth accumulation.

Later in the nineteenth century this ceased to be an issue, as evangelical aspirations of justice and fairness were dwarfed by the mercantile ethos that accelerated non-Aboriginal prosperity at the expense of Aboriginal occupancy. Yet even in the flagrant land-grabbing that so characterised nineteenth century settlement in Australia, that caused so much destruction to First Peoples and so much violent antagonism between Governor Gipps and the squattocracy, there remained glimmerings of Enlightenment ideals.

As he departed for his return to London in 1846, Governor Gipps attempted to introduce a system of competitive pastoral purchases into New South Wales. Under his proposal, squatters would be allowed to purchase 'homestead portions' of the land they were already occupying every eight years but only at open auction (Milliss, 1994). The squatters protested against this supposedly ruinous course of action; Gipps was replaced by Governor Fitzroy but nevertheless a new system of pastoral leases was introduced, if not at open auction, as Gipps had wanted.

The new Governor Fitzroy received a dispatch from Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Earl Grey, in February, 1848. Earl Grey, having consulted with Gipps on his return to London, insisted that it was:

...incumbent on Government to prevent ['the Aboriginal Tribes'] from altogether being excluded from the land under pastoral occupation...leases are not intended to deprive that natives of their former right to hunt over these Districts, or to wander over them in search of subsistence, in the manner in which they have been heretofore accustomed, from the spontaneous produce of the soil except over land actually cultivated or fenced in for that purpose (Grey, 1838, cited in Mabo – the native title revolution, n.d., para.3).

Falling short of actual possession, the leased land was for grazing only, which did not interfere with the grazing of sheep and therefore the prosperous wool trade. Under the lease the pastoralist had no authority to deny access to the customary owners, whose rights to pursue their traditional way of life had to be respected. Historians are conflicted as to whether the leases were intended to recognise prior Aboriginal occupancy (Mabo – the native title revolution, n.d.) or simply there in the public interest. Regrettably the leases did not deliver an improvement in the Aboriginal peoples' increasingly perilous situation.

In theory they represented a compromise between competing interests but in practice they meant Aboriginal peoples became scapegoats; they were held responsible for missing livestock and were subsequently murdered. The leases did nothing to protect them. Bruce Elder (2003) explains:

Realistically a group of Aboriginal people, given the right to move freely across a vast 8,000 hectare run and given the right to kill livestock when native fauna was not available, would have made little impression on the profits of a successful white landholder. Ironically the cattle killed, livestock rushed, and man-hours involved in hunting Aboriginal people was almost certainly more expensive than a policy of live and let live. But this was not to be (2003, p. 149).

Linking acts of genocidal intent to settler guilt helps to explain the ferocity of the frontier racism. Rarely was the presumption of British sovereignty, nor British superiority, questioned by those infused with the rhetoric of imperial triumphalism (Millis, 1994). Reynolds (1998) examines another brief period of humanitarianism in the 1880s but by then, he suggests:

Colonial society...was far more assertive about its achievements. It was taken for granted that the frontier settler would replace the 'savage' and that the displacement was both inevitable and for the better (1998, p.113).

Nandy (1983) argues that colonization was not a static environment; it produced shifts in consciousness as new cultural hybrids evolved within the single dominant model; there was never a neat division between colonizer and colonized. Though Nandy (1983) is concerned with the English colonization of India, his observations are of interest in understanding the increasing ferocity of frontier settlement noted by Reynolds (1998). Nandy (1983) continues:

The conflict of interests between colonizer and colonized was also a conflict between the parts and processes of identity. It promoted a self-image and form of consciousness that was defined in opposition to the putative characteristics of the 'Eastern man', and exaggerated the qualities of masculinity, hardness, distancing and responsibility (Nandy, 1983, cited in Papstergiaridis, 1997, p.265).

By the end of the nineteenth century over 95% of Aboriginal peoples had 'disappeared'. (J. Milroy, 2011, p.6) The massacre at Myall Creek is the only one in the nineteenth century to have left a detailed court record, nevertheless, as seen

below, savagery leaves a stain in word as well as deed. However as the Aboriginal population dwindled, the masculine ideal changed, as Nandy (1983) observed, from hardness to responsibility. For surviving Aboriginal peoples, the change brought on-going marginalization rather than murder.

2.2.7. The ‘savage’ at the end of the century

By the end of the nineteenth century Stanner (1968) suggests that “a good half of the continent’s 600 and more tribes ...had been more or less obliterated...The great wrecker was the pastoral industry.” (1968, p.197) He elaborates:

Over this long period...the justification of what was being done to them – was more violent and moralistic than before or since...This was the time of greatest talk about the law of progress and the survival of the fittest. What was happening in the remoter parts of the continent was at best peripheral to the great affairs – the trade union struggles, the debates over social justice, the industrial disturbances, the approaches to Federation - which so occupied the urban public mind of the time (1968, p.197).

Perhaps some insight into the potency of the vitriol levelled at Australia’s First Peoples at this time can be speedily gleaned from a lengthy footnote to Cook’s journal entry included earlier in this chapter. Admiral Sir William Wharton, Fellow of the Royal Society, Fellow of the Royal Geographical and Astronomical Societies, Hydrographer for the British Navy, edited Cook’s Journal in 1893, one hundred and twenty years after Cook had presented his journal in triplicate to the Admiralty at the end of his first voyage. Wharton made changes to the content, paring away text that wasn’t Cook’s, adding minor corrections.

But the following entry, in stark contrast to Cook’s, illuminates not just Wharton’s racism but the profound shift in attitudes over Australia’s first century as a British Colony. Wharton had never been to Australia himself but was able with authority and without conscience or rebuke to add the following for posterity:

The native Australians may be happy in their condition, but they are without doubt among the lowest of mankind. Confirmed cannibals, they lose no opportunity of gratifying their love of human flesh. Mothers will kill and eat their own children, and the women again are often mercilessly ill-treated by their lords and masters. There are no chiefs, and the land is divided into

sections, occupied by families, who consider everything in their district as their own. Internecine war exists between the different tribes, which are very small. Their treachery, which is unsurpassed, is simply an outcome of their savage ideas, and in their eyes is a form of independence which resents any intrusion on THEIR land, THEIR wild animals, and THEIR rights generally. In their untutored state they therefore consider that any method of getting rid of the invader is proper. Both sexes, as Cook observed, are absolutely nude, and lead a wandering life, with no fixed abode, subsisting on roots, fruits, and such living things as they can catch. Nevertheless, although treated by the coarser order of colonists as wild beasts to be extirpated, those who have studied them have formed favourable opinions of their intelligence. The more savage side of their disposition being, however, so very apparent, it is not astonishing that, brought into contact with white settlers, who equally consider that they have a right to settle, the aborigines are rapidly disappearing (Wharton, 1893, cited in Cook's Journal, late July, 1770).

But as Admiral Wharton was writing about cannibalism and treachery, Wiedemann (1990), writing about the Myall Creek area specifically, suggests settlers' attitudes were softening on a wide scale:

In 1894 reportedly only two old gins (women) of the Inverell tribe were left, and provisions were always inadequate. By then a feeling of profound sympathy was held for the aborigines and deaths of venerated old people were frequently reported in the newspaper (Wiedemann, 1990, p. 64).

As is seen in Chapter 4 this steep decline not only reinforced the belief that extinction would be the fate of all full-blood Indigenous people, it also marked a time of policy reversal. Instead of turning a blind eye to extermination, Colonial Legislatures on a state-wide basis introduced Protection Boards. But the idea of protectionist practices had been in place since Gipps took up his posting as Governor in 1838.

2.3. Protection and segregation

Gipps knew on his arrival in the colony in 1838 that one of Buxton's recommendations was the appointment of a small number of full-time Protectors of Aborigines (Milliss, 1994). The system failed to provide security for Aboriginal people under Gipps but soldiered on in a highly localised fashion offering charity to a demoralised and shattered race (Brook, 1999). Appointed by executive order and

often involving missionaries and later police, Aboriginal Protectors in the second half of the nineteenth century were responsible for supplying remnant populations around towns with some rations, blankets and medicine (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d.).

By the end of the century administrators were increasingly concerned with racial purity and its demise. They recommended the biological absorption of a growing mixed-descent population through the removal and institutionalisation of children, while segregating full-descents on reserves or in missions (Paisley, 1997). Land was to be set aside for Aboriginal people to grow food for their own consumption and farming such reserves “would prove a powerful means of domesticating, civilising and making them comfortable.” (Brook, 1999, p. 7)

By 1883 more formal and more extensive policies were introduced ultimately allowing state-based Aborigines Protection Boards total control over the management and occupancy rights of the reserves. Although written in 1884 the first report issued by the Aborigines Protection Board²⁷ in New South Wales succinctly illuminates the position taken by its members in regard to Aboriginal people. It's not unreasonable, given Protection Boards' actions in the years to come, to suggest that its undertone influenced subsequent generations of administrators:

... The difficulties which the Board encounter, in their endeavours to befriend the aborigines, arise chiefly from the inability of such inexperienced people to protect themselves...They are, owing to their natural simplicity, subject to imposition, and from their low moral standard are constantly liable to become victims of debauchery and immorality....From these evils nothing can protect them but some controlling power (NSW Legislative Assembly, 1884, cited in Brook, 1999, p. 18).

Now on reserves, Aboriginal peoples were out of sight and out of mind. Policies of Protection and Segregation were legislated in Victoria in 1867, in Western Australia in 1886, in Queensland in 1897, in New South Wales in 1909 and in South Australia and the Northern Territory in 1910 -11. The policies were amended many times (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d.) as Protection Boards turned from an

²⁷ Although the Aborigines Protection Board was first established in NSW in 1883, it did not gain legal power until the Aborigines Protection Act of 1909.

underlying paradigm of philanthropy to one of control between 1910 and 1920 (Vickers, 2005).

Protection Boards determined who Aboriginal people could marry, their place of residence and their employment; they could stop non-Aboriginal people from associating with mission or reserve populations and enshrined a level of paternalism that infantilised Aboriginal people, continuing to portray them as helpless children (Maynard, 2005) adrift in a world of sophistication and complexity incomprehensible to the so-called primitive mind.

Paternalism manifesting as welfare continues. Trudgen (2000) in his poignant study of the Yolgnu people in Arnhem Land, *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*, considers it as exerting a greater violence:

To me, institutionalised violence has been and remains the worst form of violence. It is subtle and almost hidden, wrapped up in the ethnocentric paternalism of the dominant culture. Welfare and the dependency it creates is the worst form of violence. It has created a living hell (2000, p.175).

By the end of the nineteenth century, after one hundred years of colonization, this research reveals, I suggest, that five particular narrative strands, of which paternalism is one, had become embedded in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal interaction.

2.3.1. Five persistent narratives

Although the language around these persistent narratives has changed over time, their essential discriminatory substance has not and they continue to impact negatively on the Australian decolonization process. Leading Indigenous rights activist, Les Malezer²⁸, disputes that decolonization has occurred at all. He considers Australia to still function as a colony, because:

²⁸ Les Malezer is Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, a peak advisory body established to help steer Government towards self-determination for Aboriginal peoples. He was awarded the Australian Human Rights Medal in 2008; he has been the Chairperson for the Pacific Region Indigenous Peoples' Caucus at the United Nations and since 2006 the Chairperson of the Global Indigenous Peoples Caucus at the United Nations. He steered the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples through to the General Assembly. This was formally endorsed by the Australian Government in 2009 (Hart, 2009).

...all the institutions that we have in Australia – whether it be in the parliaments, whether it be in the courts, whether it be in other matters of social life and legal life – are British off-shoots. And at no time have those institutions and foundations taken into account of the fact that a First Peoples exist in this country and exist with rights (Malezer, 2012, p.6).

This then is the contentious environment in which this research is pursued and a reconciliation narrative is sought. Although my review of the literature ultimately created despondency, my field work did not. In order to be able to understand why the field work – and the play it produced – generated the positivity and collegiality it did, I found it necessary to consider as normal the everyday reality and division Malezar recognizes as on-going colonization. I looked for systemic barriers to decolonization, I looked for patterns in distant and recent history. Rather than seeing the arc of the past to the present as a journey of progress, I sought to understand it as a choreographed motif of faltering reform frequently ending in ultimate stasis.

The fact that *Today We're Alive*, the play, seemed to circumvent that stasis, as discussed in Chapter Eight, supports Lederach's (2005) contention that there is a connection between arts practice and conflict transformation. Identifying the capacity for "the creative transformation of conflict as 'moral imagination'" (Lederach, 2005, cited in Cohen, Varea & Walker, 2011, p.11), Lederach recognizes that through artistic practice individuals can simultaneously remain grounded in the trauma of the here and now, while imagining and working towards a more positive world.

As the participants recognised, telling the truth in history is liberating and leads to action. And that is part of the story within *Today We're Alive*; however even in that experience so full of hope, the persistent narratives returned, as seen in Chapter Seven.

All the persistent narratives, the barriers to decolonization, identified below reflect themes of power, fear, hypocrisy, entitlement and lack of vision. How these narratives undermine current policy and practice is examined in Chapter Four. How they became institutionalised is established in this chapter. They are concerned with:

- Land Rights
- Aboriginality – the recognition of difference and respect for the right to be so.
- Paternalism - the supposed supremacy of non-Indigenous epistemology

- The denial of the on-going presence of the past in the now
- The inconsistency of vision in non-Indigenous leadership

This chapter introduced terra nullius and genocide; the inconsistency of vision in non-Indigenous leadership has a stronger presence in Chapter Four. Of the remaining two, the denial of the on-going presence of the past in the now is powerfully captured in part of “Aunty Narelle’s”²⁹ interview. Although she concentrates on the flaws in reconciliation policy, it is the policies of child removal, introduced under Protectionism and detailed in Chapter Four, that caused the greatest grief. Actual words used have been deliberately misspelt to convey the vehemence of her delivery:

...for a lot of Aboriginal people, you look at the past acts and policies that have been drawn up for Aboriginal people – there’s Protect – shon; there’s Assimilat – shon; Self-determinat – shon. And now you’ve got Reconciliat-shon. They all end in “shon” and to Aboriginal people reconciliation is just another word. Like all the other acts in the past, it’s just like all those other acts. Wherever Aboriginal people carry the hurt, Reconciliation is like just a bandaid to put over your heart. It’s like your heart is hurting, your heart is breaking. But the word Reconciliation is just a bandaid. Because it will never take away the hurt. It’s there forever. A mother loses a child, she never gets over it. That hole is in her heart forever. Reconciliation is not going to help me get over the fact of how my people were treated (Aunty Narelle, 2011).

Policies of child removal were just one of the recurring practices under both Protection and Assimilation and continued until 1969. As Aunty Narelle’s narrative above indicates, the pain continues long after such policies were abandoned.

However in terms of decolonizing research and the quest of this thesis to contribute to appropriate methodologies, it is the assumed superiority of non-Indigenous epistemology that is of the greatest concern. Easy to recognise in policy and practice, is it as easy to recognise in one’s own work? Is a researcher’s inherited positionality alone sufficient to discount or diminish contribution?

Swander & Mutua (2008) recognise that in decolonizing research the colonizer is under the research spotlight along with the colonized. Although, as alluded to earlier,

²⁹ “Aunty Narelle” is not a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee but was recommended by Tom as an important and politically astute Elder. Her name has been changed to protect her privacy. All references to “Aunty Narelle” come from an interview with her held in Moree, August 21st, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

decolonizing forces are at play in the cultural and therefore policy landscape, these forces do not, as L.T. Smith (1999) argues usher in a time when colonialism is in the past. The researcher needs to consider the colonizing forces of globalization as the new imperialism, as old empires disintegrate, new ones take their place but what remains intact is the epistemological supremacy of the West.

Therefore before progressing this study, there is a need to confront once again the research challenge, as it appears in the literature, by returning to scholarly writing on participation in the decolonizing space.

2.4. The constraint to legitimacy

This constraint to legitimacy then, like the crisis of representation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), does present researchers with a paradox: how can one understand and potentially heal divisions if political correctness reinforces them? If out of respect for the Other, distance is maintained and investigation eschewed? If, as Lorde (2003) postulates:

...what does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable (2003, p. 25).

L.T. Smith (1999) suggests that this movement across cultures is inherently problematic because of “the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial processes” (1999, p.2). Said (2003) recognised that “institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles all support to the Western discourse (2003, p.2).

Said (2003) further illuminates this inescapable interpretive bias in his extensive exploration of the West’s creation of, distortion of and obsession with the Orient:

For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstance of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second (2003, p. 11).

The dominant paradigm, the Euro-American epistemological tradition, Ladson-Billings (2000) contends, is “more than just another way to view the world – it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world” (2000, p. 258). And it is this resistance to other world views, which continues to obfuscate “the links between globalization, poverty and human rights abuses.” (Madison, 2005, p.400)

However Grande (2007) demands inclusion; resistance to diverse perspectives needs to be negotiated. From the lived reality of an Indigenous perspective Grande (2007) argues that “abandoning emancipatory agendas and the struggle against capitalist exploitation” (2007, p.318) ignores the acute disadvantage endured by over half the world’s population, “the 2.8 billion people living on less than two dollars a day and the 100 million people in the industrial world living below the poverty level.” (Grande, 2007, p. 318)

Ladson-Billings (2000) suggests the resilience of dominant culture discourses on racial and class superiority stems from allowing social prejudices to become legal ones, which in turn “define, distance and objectify the other” (2000, p. 259). The objectified other, alienated and unable to participate in society (Grande, 2007), become dehumanized. This dehumanization echoes Trudgen’s (2000) notion of welfare violence. The objectified other, F.L. Brown (2004) further elaborates, inherits “emotional pain ...and a distorted, inaccurate negative view of the self and identity based on colonialism and oppression” (2004, p.205). Negativity creates a desensitized self, where learning on all levels becomes blocked: cognitively, psychologically and in terms of vision and self-determination.

Lorde (2003) might deplore ‘the Master’s tools’ Grande (2007) on the other hand argues that “the Master’s tools are necessary.” (2007, p. 330) Grande (2007) questions whether the challenge to indigenous scholars is to engage in “the grammar of empire without replicating its effects.” (2007, p.330)

This then is the challenge we share; the frontier that calls us all.

2.4.1. Conversations on the research frontier

In contrast to Lorde's (2003) approach, L.T. Smith (1999) addresses the question of the tools themselves. L.T. Smith (1999) vigorously advocates supplanting old methodologies, addressing not the possibility of research but the inadequacy of inappropriate research tools; thereby she creates hurdles but not barriers to cross-cultural research. The principles that underpin all indigenous resistance to neo-colonial pedagogy are reflected. L.T. Smith (1999) suggests, in Kaupapa Māori research³⁰. These principles, identified by G.H. Smith (1990), ensure all research is culturally attuned; foreground Māori language and culture; illuminate sites of resistance and emancipation and have self-determination as the goal; a goal G.H. Smith sees as located within "the struggle for autonomy over our own cultural well-being." (G.H. Smith, 1990, cited in L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 185)

Meanwhile Lewis & Mills (2003) in acknowledging the problematic sensitivities aroused in race research, particularly in the light of colonial subjugation and Western privilege, suggest that inertia is not an option: "White guilt is one of the least productive responses to this history." (2003, p. 8)

Duck (2009) further refines the critical issue of intention; she warns that an examination of suffering is not to be confused with its amelioration. She urges us, researcher and researched alike, not to shy away from the pervasive nature of grief. Rather than seeing melancholia, a response to past trauma, as a condition "to be embraced or denigrated," (Duck, 2003, p. 107) she suggests that it offers potential insight into problems that are both social and psychological.

In his seminal work on cultural liberation through education Freire (1970) urged educators to subvert "the culture of silence," (Freire, 1970, p.16) the legacy of elitism and exclusion from colonial days, and encourage those, who are marginalised by it, to participate in a dialogue with the dominant social system responsible for it. However, as McCaslin & Breton (2008) observe, systems of oppression and dehumanization impact unilaterally; objectification of some leads to objectification of all:

³⁰ Kaupapa Māori theory is based on ancestral knowledge and continues to be reproduced and transformed (He Whakamārama, n.d.).

...colonizers ... start treating themselves as objects as well – objects that are judged successful or not, objects that command high or low salaries, objects that hold high or low positions in hierarchical societies. We who are White, who are colonizers, desperately need decolonization too (2008, p. 513).

But when people are emerging from contexts of conflict and estrangement, when the past offers no guidelines for an imagined future, all constructive understandings must be attained in a shared present (Krog, Mpolewni-Zantsi & Ratele, 2008). Learning and unlearning is therefore collaborative, grounding decolonizing research in the performative; “it is enmeshed in activism.” (Swandener & Mutua, 2008, p. 33) Embracing activism, locating decolonizing research in the performative aligns with notions of fluidity so apparent in cultural theory and which are addressed below. Borrowing from Grande (2007) and her advocacy of seeking relationship between Indigenous and Western knowledges, decolonizing research, it could be said, occupies a liminal borderland, where researchers come “to remember, redefine and reverse the devastation of the original colonialist encounter.” (Grande, 2007, p.331)

A new order evolves from new forces of change.

2.5. From fixed to fluid worlds

We now inhabit fluid worlds of negotiated as opposed to fixed meanings as in the past; “moving between these universes...we are compelled to make constant choices and constantly learn quite new social languages.” (Werbner, 1997, p. 9).

Significant theoretical concepts that explain this fluidity include hybridity (Rutherford, 1990; Bhabha, 1990; Papastergiadis, 1997); uncertainty (Bauman, 1997) and performativity (Bhabha, 1994). These forces, I suggest, implicitly support theatre-making as an appropriate research site.

2.5.1. Hybridity

According to Rutherford (1990) in the post-colonial globalized world both the colonized and the colonizer revoke a former identity; we are no longer in theory born

into bounded positions of privilege or powerlessness. Old relations of subordination and discrimination continue to be transformed as so many certainties and cultural, sexual and political identities are challenged. Rutherford (1990) further maintains: “all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity.” (1990, p. 211) In this fluid state with which we negotiate our own narratives, individuals are liberated from notions of fixity and purity of origin (Papastergiadis, 1997).

However the degree to which the concept of hybridity is applicable to post-colonial study is deeply contested. Spivak (1993), confronting the degree to which dominant power systems define knowledge, maintains that there is no point of connection between the profoundly damaged, oppressed and dispossessed colonized and the well-meaning gestures of those eager to dismiss the on-going legacies of colonization.

Therefore for Spivak hybridity is a concept that is both limited and easily translated as an idealised possibility shared by First World intellectuals but not by the Third World disenfranchised. It becomes another constituent of the dominant culture’s power base, which “exalts its theoretical constructs to a position of universality.” (Greenwood, 1999, p. 284)

How re-inventions and transformations might occur opens the way to Bhabha’s (1990, 1994) third space, a liminal or in-between space, where cutting edge translation and negotiation occurs. Moreover, according to Bhabha (1996), these liminal spaces have within them a counter-hegemonic agency: “at the point at which the coloniser presents a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy opens up a third space of/for rearticulation of negotiation and meaning (Bhabha, 1996, cited in Meredith, 1998, p.3). The implication here is both colonized and colonizers participate in interpretive, interrogative and enunciative third space exchanges and what emerges is entirely new (Bhabha, 1994).

The third space however is not necessarily a safe space; in the drama context, as is explored in Chapters Seven and Eight, the personal carries a racial dimension making even silences carry unintended meanings. However Bauman (1997) contends that this lack of a sense of safety needs to be accepted as inherent in the post-colonial world.

2.5.2 Uncertainty

Concerned with the way all societies deal with strangers, and the threat these strangers pose to the certainty of the State, Bauman (1997) proposes that “We live today ...in an atmosphere of ambient fear.” (1997, pp. 50-51)

And that fear is projected on to the most vulnerable, recolonizing the mind, the community and the State into counter-productive ‘us and them’ paradigms. Our only solution, Bauman maintains, is to acknowledge uncertainty and recognize that postmodern strangers are here to stay. We need to recognize that they are not economically or strategically but culturally produced. Integral to the world that has created “us”, that same world has also created “them”. Rutherford (1990) concurs, he suggests that through the transformation of relations of subordination and discrimination, we gain insight into “the otherness of ourselves.” (1990, p. 26)

In emphasising the role of the stranger’s presence, Bauman addresses Bhabha’s (1990) concern that in the past just as Western modernity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was creating its great Enlightenment narratives, it was producing another history of itself through colonialism and the despotic power it exercised. The legacy of this repressed history is challenged now, as post-colonial people return to the metropolis, becoming visible, becoming irrefutable witnesses to the mythology of civilization (1990, p. 218). The prevalence of fear relates to the past as well as the present.

For Bhabha (1994) our cultural potency rests on how we negotiate and translate difference: between us and them, between The Self and The Other, between our origins and our encounters. Renewal, according to Bhabha (1990) depends on our ability to sustain this negotiation of difference as on-going acts of transformation rather than passive but potentially divisive modes of acceptance.

For the researcher Bhabha’s (1990) model provides an understanding of what is possible, focused as it is on what might be produced through the mediation of affinity and difference within a dynamic of exchange and inclusion (Meredith, 1998, p.3). For the drama researcher, Bhabha’s (1990) emphasis on transformation through the performative is an invitation.

2.5.3. Performativity

The performative privileges multiple and simultaneous ways of knowing and ways of being; it also serves to legitimate indigenous world views (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and illuminates the complexity, hypocrisy and uncertainty implicit in fragmenting First World cultures. In recognising hybridity as generating a productive not a reflective space (Meredith, 1998); a place of action and engagement, Bhabha(1990) acknowledges that new meanings are co-created through the performative, meanings that are inadequately understood through received wisdom (1990, p.211).

For Bhabha the performative refers to the enunciatory present, marked by the repeated attempts to turn the mundane details of daily life into the signs of national culture (Lo, 2004). Together with the pedagogical, or the narrative embedded in tradition, these two forces, the performative and the pedagogical, generate a liminal form of social representation that unearths destabilizing counter-discourses, the impetus for transformation. In this liminal third space “the process of hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 216)

This is third space then is where cultures overlap, where there are multiple subject positions of difference and affinity to be acknowledged and negotiated. Aboriginal Arts practitioner and academic, Liza-Mare Syron (2008), suggests that meaning in contemporary Australian drama practice, particularly in relation to Aboriginal content, can be derived from at least two sites of knowledge: Traditional and post-contact Contemporary. Fragmented and personalised though they may be, influences from both are intrinsically present in any negotiation

2.6. A very useful model

Using a model of three intersecting circles Syron (2008) separates Traditional Indigenous performance practices and Contemporary Indigenous theatre and performance practices into two different entities. Both of these merge with each other and in the act of drama creation with non-Aboriginal players they intersect with a third circle, one she labels: Non-Indigenous Theatre traditions and performance styles. Recognising that ‘traditions’ in this instance incorporates ways of doing, ways

of knowing, then each of these three circles encompasses culture, and culture, as we have seen is how we structure our world, our stories, our histories, our identity (Lotman, 1991, cited in Papastergiadis, 1997, p. 268). Researchers from all identities have therefore the responsibility in a cross-cultural research endeavour to bring into the research process knowledge of themselves and what has shaped them, as well as the intention of investigating transformative influences (Chilisa, 2012). The whole circle is of significance, not just the overlap.

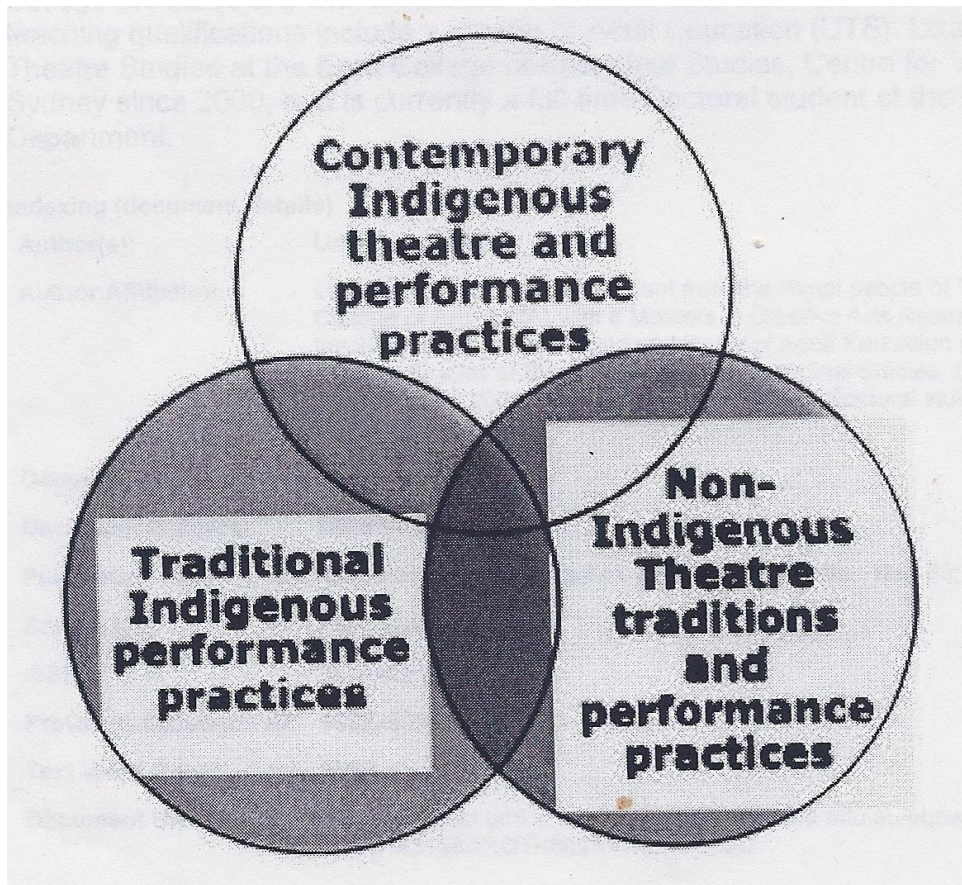


Fig. 1 The Syron Model (2008) Australasian Drama Studies (53) pp.74-85.

As stated above, to fully embrace the learning opportunities offered by this model, the whole circle needs to be investigated. For me, that meant rediscovering settler history as one of conquest; not only understanding it as the struggle to survive in an alien land or as the struggle for respectability after shrugging off the convict stain; colonial histories, which told some of the story but not all of it; histories that Bhabha (1990) referred to as “received wisdom.” (1990, p. 211)

Syron (2008) clarifies her use of the word Traditional as referring to “practices that existed pre-colonisation or have a strong connection to cultural practises and ceremony that existed pre-colonisation.” (2008, p.1) Therefore the use of the term “cross-cultural” does not only refer to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interaction. “Cross-cultural” continues to respect the authenticity and authority of multiple world views, addressing both ancient and modern ways of knowing, as well as physicalized performance practices, as contributing to a living, evolving, interactive cultural site, that may or may not include Non-Indigenous traditions and performance practices.

Certainly other researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Brown, 2004; Greenwood, 1999; L. T. Smith, 1999) emphasise the critical importance of research methodologies that recognize and include traditional knowledge as integral to any articulation of cultural perceptions. A further significance of Syron’s model is the suggestion of flow across these multiple sites, what she refers to as “a constant process of motion and illumination;” (2008, p.7) so echoing notions of affinity and difference (Meredith, 1998), where no one site is subsumed by another and all knowledge co-exists.

This chapter has focused on the knowledge gained from loss; this chapter concludes with a discussion of the knowledge that survives.

2.6.1. The emergence of traditional knowledge

Syron (2008) suggests that in the decolonizing world there is “a constant process of motion and illumination” (2008, p.7) across the cultural boundaries. What some of the participants’ narratives reveal is an awareness of two profound aspects of Traditional Aboriginal knowledge: the Dreaming and the on-going presence of the numinous. What is of great interest is that these aspects occur in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal narratives, indicating the fluidity of cultural understandings across time and identities.

The inclusion of the numinous is addressed within the play, Chapter Six; a significant number of the participants experienced a heightened awareness of a spiritual dimension during their interactions with the Memorial. These same interactions are replicated in my actor/co-researchers’ narratives, sufficient to profoundly impact on

their performance practice. But because the Dreaming is of particular significance in relation to performance in Aboriginal culture, it is appropriate here to expand on its omnipresence within the traditional Aboriginal world view.

2.6.2. A sense of The Dreaming

Gaining an understanding of the complexity embodied in the term: the Dreamtime or the Dreaming is difficult in both its universality and its multiple meanings. Aboriginal beliefs around creation, country and time are contentious in the non-Indigenous space and are destined to remain so, as these beliefs strike at the core of owning, belonging and distancing oneself from the past, potent themes in the colonial creed.

Stanner (1953) places The Dreaming at the heart of the Aboriginal world view and is “a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happened; and a kind of principle of order transcending everything significant for Aboriginal man.”(Stanner, 1953, cited in Manne, 2009, p. 9) Musicologist Jill Stubbington (2007) suggests The Dreaming has a significant relationship to the role of performance. Stubbington (2007) explains:

For a Westerner a ritual performance taking place in the present is in a certain sense always a recreation, a re-enactment of something that first took place in the past. For an Aboriginal person, however, unhampered by Western notions of linearity, the performance in the present is continuous with the original creation, and partakes of the essence of the original. This identification with ancestral heroes is not an identification with something, which is external to themselves, it signifies a part of what they are, as human beings (2007, pp.39-40).

Yanuwa Elder, Mussolini Harvey (Harvey, 2011, cited in J. Milroy, 2011) further explains the relationship between The Dreaming, country and performance:

The Dreamings are our ancestors, no matter if they are fish, birds, men women, animals, wind or rain...The Dreamings named all the country and the sea as they travelled, they named everything they saw. As The Dreamings travelled they put spirit children over the country...It is because of these spirit children that we are born, the spirit children are on the country and we are born from the country. In our ceremonies...we are keeping the country and The Dreaming alive (2011, p. 10).

Embedded in this belief system, so contingent on continuity, is the possibility of locating new knowledge. As Stubbington (2007) explains

Knowledge, especially knowledge of songs, is never more than partial: no single person could possibly know more than a fragment of all there is to be known....The possibility of new evidence and of new understandings is always present. Not that this is regarded as new knowledge, however, merely a finer appreciation of what The Dreaming has always held (2007, p. 44).

These two principles – continuity and the possibility of new knowledge – mesh in two of the participants' narratives to satisfy contemporary understandings. Aunty Narelle connects with her ancestors through one faith, Nature:

With Aboriginal belief I can believe that the plants, the animals were all created, because they're all there and they're all evolving all the time. And the Dreamtime is part of creation. And the way things evolve we are still within the Dreamtime, because things are still being created. Things are still evolving, so the Dreamtime goes on (Aunty Narelle, 2011).

Gerry, a non-Aboriginal memorial Committee member, supports his sense of belonging to the Myall Creek story by adopting the same profound principles of continuity and evolution:

I mean ...I'm a custodian of the story and I'm passing the story on... you are part of the on-going nature of it ...you are part of the new chapters being written (Gerry, 2011).

A practising minister in the Uniting Church, Ian sees a powerful theological connection across cultures but does not see that as being a universal understanding. He is concerned that non-Aboriginal Australians pay lip-service to Aboriginal spirituality and links to the land (2011). He continues:

We buy dot paintings but I don't know Australians understand the connection... the creation mythology that underpins Aboriginal culture and that could really open up our understanding of the inter-relatedness of life. Probably the churches should be doing more than they are (Ian, 2011).

"Aunty Essie"³¹ fully embraces both her Aboriginality, the past and Christianity. She explains:

³¹ "Aunty Essie" is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. Her name has been changed to protect her privacy. All references to "Aunty Essie" come from an interview with her held in Inverell, 20th July, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

I know a lot of our people, who to the day they die will never forgive the white people for what they done to our people... (*laughs*) but you see, I'm different, yes. And my Christian walk with the Lord makes it easier for me... that's what forgiveness has done for me ... the grief will always be there for our people for what they have suffered, we have to forgive and that's what I have done, that's what - I have done (Aunty Essie, 2011).

As these participants demonstrate, on its deepest level decolonization occurs through shifting and continual engagements with multiple perspectives in the present, in the doing of life, in the performative.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter charts a course from the principles of colonization as it occurred in Australia to an examination of current cultural theories and the concept of fluidity. Notions of fluidity were then discussed in relation to epistemologies, addressing the challenge to the resilience of dominant culture orthodoxy. To support the possibility of a shared research frontier, where multiple perspectives might be included, this chapter returned to the Myall Creek field, where participant narratives revealed an evolving inter-relationship between belief systems.

But as L.T. Smith (1999) argues, changes in perspectives in the decolonizing space occur through a continual re-engagement with a complex history. Chapter Three develops an understanding of that complex history at Myall Creek.

Chapter Three**A Brutal Business****contests, memory and accommodations****on the colonial frontier**

“But unbeknownst to me then, my people were not classified as humans. You know what I mean?” (Nathan, 2011)

3. Introduction

The Memorial at the centre of this research project was not the first memorial to have been attempted at Myall Creek; but it was the first to survive. In 1937 a cinema projectionist, Len Payne, came to live and work in Bingara. With an interest in local history he began asking for stories and he opened up a contentious past.

For over 23 years he agitated for a memorial to the Myall Creek massacre; he achieved some success in 1988, when he held a public ceremony at the supposed massacre site but the event proved unsustainable. Support dwindled to nothing after two years. Yet five years after his death in 1993 the call for a memorial was raised again, this time, as we discovered in Chapter One, by Sue Blacklock, a Kamilaroi Elder and a descendent of a massacre survivor. Within eighteen months the Memorial that now exists was built. Its commemoration ceremony received national press and television coverage. Services held every anniversary of the massacre continue to do so.

How did this happen? What was the nature of this transformative journey? In addressing these questions this chapter focuses on three events associated with Myall Creek's history: the massacre; the trial that followed it and the failed memorial story. As the triumphant Memorial story is the substance of the play, *Today We're Alive*, and is incorporated into this study as Chapter Six, it is not included here but the decolonizing influences that contributed to its existence are emergent in Len Payne's era. Despite the over-arching themes of hegemony, injustice and conquest,

this chapter foregrounds those individuals, who raised their voices against the popular discourse at their time in history and, as the participants' narratives reveal, influenced the generations that followed. As Madison (2005) argues, ethnographic performance embodies the experience of being in a unique location, for within that space "its history, rules, dangers, joys and secrets" (2005, p.401) elicit diverse impressions of received knowledge that merge in the script development process.

So this chapter continues to develop the ethnographic field from which *Today We're Alive* emerges through an on-going exploration of history and how it impacted on the participants' lives and how it shaped inherited understandings derived from accounts of lives that went before.

3.1 A colonial past?

As we have seen in Chapter One, the imperialist forces of globalization challenge notions of independent statehood, implicitly perpetuating the inescapable reality of on-going colonization through capital, innovation, migration and media (Madison, 2005; McLaren; 1997). And as we have also seen in Chapter Two leading human rights activist, Les Malezer, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, considers Australia to still be a British colony, as there is no Constitutional recognition of First Peoples' prior occupancy of the land.³² However for the purposes of this chapter the conventional view of Australia as an evolving nation state is maintained.

Established as a penal colony in 1788 for the punishment and reformation of British criminals (Clark, 1963), by the end of the nineteenth century Australia's six colonial states, with varying degrees of complicity, moved towards Federation. By January 1st, 1901, Australia became a nation; her membership of the British Commonwealth enshrined the deep cultural, parliamentary and economic ties to Britain but endorsed a new level of independence and identity.

³² There is not yet constitutional recognition of Aboriginal peoples' presence in Australia prior to British occupation, despite the acceptance of archaeological evidence from 50,000 years ago. The prospect of Constitutional change is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

However an appreciation of Australia's inability to accommodate all aspects of the past is a narrative strand within this thesis. Though there is now a definite movement away from denial of the injustice of the past, as examined in Chapter Four, there is not yet an acceptance of its complex legacy, as the delay in constitutional recognition of Aboriginal peoples would attest. What does emerge as significant in this chapter is the lingering presence of the past, not in relation to Aboriginal peoples but in regard to the convicts.

Beginning with the massacre itself, the following account explores the unique repercussions the trial generated through Colonial New South Wales at the time. Examined through Turner's (1974) notions of bound and unbound social structures, this chapter questions whether the punishment of the perpetrators helped solidify rather than fragment the colonization process.

The story of the preceding failed memorial tells us a great deal, I believe, about the nature and strength of these forces of colonization. Len Payne's humanitarian impulses though thwarted in his own lifetime, inspired a generation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people that followed. His actions are seen as a link with the past, bringing the past into the present. As participant Gerry comments:

..so I feel a responsibility for what I'm doing, you know.... I don't think the massacre and the Memorial can be separated. I think they're ah of a piece. They're connected with one another (Gerry, 2011).

Currently the Myall Creek Memorial Committee is attempting to raise funds for an acknowledgement and educational centre to be built on a site adjacent to the Memorial. The centre is to tell the true story of first contact. A more immediate concern for some members is a national apology for the massacres. A recent email from a Myall Creek Memorial Committee member discusses a meeting agenda:

This meeting will aim to set up a board to take the education centre forward. I want to suggest that actually the main focus may rather be to form a 'board' to take forward the apology for the massacres, with the education centre as a follow-on – i.e. the need to have some place that represents that apology. In this sense Myall Creek then has this wider significance, which it always did (Cordiner, G., 3.3.14).

This commitment to consolidation of past, present and future exemplifies the Memorial Committee's determination to address the violence of the past on a national scale.

But beginning as a penal colony, institutionalized violence was not only perpetrated against the original inhabitants; it was endemic (Castle, 2008). Jeremy Bentham describes the transportation of England's criminal class as an experiment, where "a sort of excrementitious mass was projected as far out of sight as possible." (Bentham, 1812, cited in Hughes, 1988, p.2). Misery came with the cargo.

3.1.1. Surviving first contact

When the First Fleet³³ arrived, the Aboriginal population on the coastal strip was the first to receive the full brunt of first contact. According to Government records at the time, by 1845 of all the tribes that comprised the Sydney Basin's Eora nation, there were four full-descent Aboriginal people remaining Milliss (1994). Meanwhile the non-Aboriginal population had increased from just over 1,000 in 1788 to 80,000 by 1838, about half of whom were convicts.

By the 1830s Milliss (1994) describes the colonial forces of the time endured by Aboriginal people:

...the combination of exotic disease, dispossession, the depletion of their traditional food resources, the musket and the rum ...saw them reduced in a generation to a ragged and pathetic remnant wandering the town for hand-outs (1994, p. 44).

They were a traumatized people; experiencing colonization on multiple levels, they were now powerless and objectified, "the most degenerate, despicable and brutal race of beings in existence." ('Anti-Hypocrite', 1838, cited in O'Leary, 2010, p. 63) More than the destruction of the outer world, colonization had by the 1830s disordered, in common with all First Nations people, Aboriginal social relations, destroying their ways of "thinking, feeling, and interacting with the world." (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 13)

³³ 26th January, 1788, marks the arrival of the First Fleet of 11 ships bringing with it approximately 1,030 British officers, families, settlers and convicts, of these 504 were men, 192 were women.

As L.T. Smith (1999) further argues, imperialist notions of hierarchy automatically assumed superiority across all aspects of identity and sociocultural interaction as part of the colonization process. Christian fundamentalism, monotheism and white male supremacy (Grande, 2007) underpinned the colonizer's belief in his, as opposed to her (Haggis, 2003), moral and ethical supremacy in the masculine world of "settlers, soldiers and slavers." (O'Leary, 2010, p. 56) The elite's hegemonic power might tolerate criticism but demanded compliance (Reynolds, 1998), as the enterprise of domination, expansion and material acquisition was zealously carried out.

Thus colonizers were able to reinforce their own world view and implicitly ridicule and destroy views that might challenge their perspective (L.T.Smith, 1999). F.L. Brown (2004) suggests that the very nature of Western knowledge, where reason is privileged over feeling, further accentuates the destruction of the inner world. Negating spiritual beliefs and supplanting them with others is damaging enough but denying the emotional potency of their loss destroys the emotional self. And this destruction, F.L. Brown (2004) argues, was not just inevitable but essential for the successful subjugation and exploitation of an indigenous people. For F.L. Brown (2004), it is this emotional self that "contains key elements that must be destroyed to dehumanize and colonize a people." (2004, p.19) It is the loss of hope, F.L. Brown (2004) maintains, accompanied by the introduction of fear and pain that triggers the disintegration of the self and identity.

If, as McCaslin & Breton (2008) point out, under colonialism, all people are colonized by a system that at its core is coercive and exploitative: "It is about oppressing certain groups, classes, or peoples in order to benefit others", (McCaslin & Breton, 2008, p. 518) then it is important to recognize the hierarchical and discriminatory nature of colonization in New South Wales as our first story is about to begin. However in the penal colony NSW it wasn't only the Aboriginal people who suffered.

Fear of the frontier, a need for moral certainty and the threat of chaos and destruction should hierarchy and order collapse created a high tolerance for institutionalized violence (Castle, 2008). Executions for a wide range of crimes were in place until 1833; these included cattle stealing, forgery and certain types of theft. It

was not until August, 1838, the capital punishment was limited to murder, rape and certain classes of aggravated robbery. Castle (2008) concludes:

...executions sanctioned by the criminal law allowed the state to meet the threat of violence from lawless men by a carefully constructed display of violence at the scaffold (Castle, 2008, p.2).

3.1.2. The convict lot

Convict hangings in the new colony began in February, 1788; one month after the First Fleet had arrived³⁴. Between 1826 and 1836 there were 363 public hangings in New South Wales; though 80% of these were convict men, this figure includes one woman and four Aboriginal people (Castle, 2008). In one year alone, 1830, there were fifty hangings, a figure that “exceeded the 46 executions recorded in the whole of England and Wales for that same year” (Castle, 2008, p.2). Castle (2008) suggests that the ready acceptance of these public executions demonstrated not only the government’s authority but “fears about the level of male violence in the frontier colonial society.” (2008, p. 1) He continues:

... the executions sanctioned by the criminal law allowed the state to meet the threat of violence from lawless men by a carefully constructed display of violence at the scaffold (2008, p.2).

But by the middle of the 1830s there had been a shift of moral consciousness, mirroring major reforms in English criminal law. Considered a dynamic period of change in the colony (O’Leary, 2010; Reynolds, 1998) Christian Evangelism was on the ascendant in the mid-1830s. Characterized by notions of ‘good works’, along with white supremacy and monotheism, it enabled a climate of literary commentary and participation that foregrounded voices of dissent, which included those of women (O’Leary, 2010). One such voice was that of Alexander Harris, who elected to write a memoir anonymously, presenting himself as an emigrant mechanic.

³⁴ One of those hanged in the that first year of settlement, Samuel Peyton, twenty-four years old, a convicted thief and a great-great-great-great-great uncle of mine; one of three ancestors who arrived on the First Fleet “below decks” as my grandmother would say.

*Settlers and Convicts*³⁵ was first published in 1847 after sixteen years in the Colony of NSW. Historian Manning Clark suggests the work is probably part fact, part fiction (Clark, 1963), however it does give an insight into first impressions of colonial life. Arriving in Sydney in probably the 1830s, Harris distinguishes the burgeoning town by its Government buildings and its profusion of convict labour. After commenting on the prevalence of rum, he turns his pen to reporting a conversation concerning convict discipline and the cat;³⁶ the emigrant author, Harris, questions a gentleman, whom he describes as being “reduced to the condition of a farm overseer.” (1977, p.9) The gentleman explains:

“But the fact is flogging in this country is such a common thing that nobody thinks anything of it...I have now got a man under me who received 2,600 lashes with the cat in five years, and his worst crime was insolence to his overseer....Some years ago, a little way up the country, a man actually died under the cat: of course it was all quietly hushed up....”

“One can hardly conceive such things possible”.

“Ah! You must not judge of this country by England...” (An Emigrant Mechanic, 1977, pp.11-12).

Ward (1978) points out that at this time in the Colony practically all lower-class people were convicted criminals. This served to intensify levels of class hostility beyond those experienced in Britain, the stratified society they all traditionally came from.

Nevertheless most of the convicts flung on to this remote shore and forced into servitude and slavery knew when their sentence would end. With luck and good management they would still be alive to immerse themselves into an emergent culture of greed and opportunism they absolutely and strategically understood. With an insight rare for the time Harris (1977) addresses the Aboriginal perspective of colonial expectation:

³⁵ *Settlers and Convicts* – recollections of sixteen years' labour in the Australian backwoods by An Emigrant Mechanic was first published in 1847, reprinted in 1852, 1953, 1964, 1969 and 1977. In his foreword Manning Clark declares this work to “be one of the best descriptions of the way of life and the values of those men who helped to build the colony of New South Wales by the labour of their hands” (1963, p.v).

³⁶ The cat o' nine tails; the whip used in convict floggings. With nine knotted lashes a sentence of one hundred lashes effectively meant nine hundred lashes,

Avarice and covetousness are vices unknown to the savage; and he can only regard the man labouring under them as one infected with some shocking and mysterious disease... They understand no theories about capital and labour, and pauperism and emigration; all they feel is that they are wronged; all they see, the fact that it is done by those who are rich already, and do not want the soil for subsistence; not by the poor, who might be justified (An Emigrant Mechanic, 1977, pp.232-4).

As Reynolds (1998) notes: "Colonization ...was not for those of tender or restless conscience. The brutal business had to be done." (1998, p.xv) A frontier ethos empowered both poor and prosperous with a creed of greed, anger and wrath (Shaw,1978, cited in Castle, 2008, p. 10). And though the convict system was brutal for those imprisoned within it, convict lives, as units of free labour, were valued. Not so those of Aboriginal people.

3.2. A contested space

Money, opportunity, distance, the breaking of old ties now created a certain fluidity in colonial society not reflected "at home." (Ward, 1978, p. 63) The reformist agenda being pursued in the Mother Country, examined in greater detail below, heightened existing tensions between competing interests. Migration from Britain accelerated; the colonial population grew by almost 70% between 1836 and 1841; the ratio of free people to convicts rose from 2:1 to 4:1 (Cochrane, 2006). Emancipation, a wool boom and labour shortages generated opportunity for the struggling free settlers and ex-convict under-class. For the moneyed elite increasing uncertainty about labour supply and land control generated disquiet. Becoming known as the pure merinos,³⁷ their wealth, power and influence would grow to challenge that of the government and its reformist agenda.

Cochrane (2006) describes Sydney in the late 1830s as a compact city of 35,000 people, where no corner of it was "unreachable on foot." (Cochrane, 2006, p. 27)

³⁷ "Pure merino' ...was applied to mark a class who were not only free and unconvicted but who could boast have no collateral relationship or distant affinity with those in whose escutcheon there was a blot. These pure merinos formed the topmost round in the social ladder." (Therry, 1863, cited in Ward, 1978, p. 312) It was the name given to the wealthy landholders and merchants (Milliss, 1994, p.103); known also as the exclusivists and the squattocracy. Their interests opposed those of the emancipists or ex-convict, until the emancipists became landowners themselves. In these cases their interests were shared but never their social standing (Cochrane, 2006).

Politically, Cochrane points out, this was significant, as it was “the hub of colonial ambition and the centre of colonial agitation.” (Cochrane, 2006, p.29) The concentration of population, Cochrane (2006) maintains, enabled the crowd to identify as a radical energised voice demanding change.

A “highly stratified and fractious society,” (Milliss, 1994, p.7) after a short stay in 1836 Charles Darwin commented it was “rancorously divided into parties on almost every subject.” (Darwin, 1836, cited in Milliss, 1994, p. 7) Cochrane (2006) considers a source of much of the agitation stemmed from the colony’s passionate desire for self-rule pitted against imperial interests; predominant amongst these was the control of land. Britain wanted the land for its surplus population and its revenue for the imperial purse; the colonists wanted the land for themselves.

In anthropological terms the colony of New South Wales was at this time a betwixt and between world (Turner, 1974), a liminal space, a place of contestations and contrasts, a place of “conflicting and concurring wills and intelligences, each relying on some convincing paradigm.” (Turner, 1974, p. 14) That it would remain a British colony was not in doubt; the uncertainty concerned power-sharing between the players and the counter-players within the dominant colonial model (Nandy, 1983).

Rituals of punishments, where public floggings and hangings, convict chain gangs and military parades were the norm, had created a societal structure that remained bound, holding people apart (Turner, 1974). Introducing reforms to address these radical forces antagonized the old order, whose vested interests lay in “cheap land, cheap labour and ...security of tenure over their crown lands and leaseholds.” (Cochrane, 2006, p.23)

As Reynolds (1998) observes, those who denounced the treatment meted out to the convicts, who condemned the taking of Aboriginal land and the on-going violence perpetrated on the dwindling survivors threatened the morality of the colonial enterprise: “They burrowed beneath that sense of certainty necessary to push one’s fortune in the new world.” (Reynolds, 1998, p. xv) Moreover they challenged the principle of self-betterment (Cochrane, 2006), the ethos that fuels ownership, competition and control, fundamental forces of separation (Saul, 2008).

The events at Myall Creek challenged the emergent humanitarianism and triggered turmoil (Milliss, 1994). As the massacre and its aftermath demonstrate, it was a society without the unbound spirit of solidarity, of *communitas* (Turner, 1974) the desire for connection. This is the modality Turner (1974) insists needs to be present to engender new egalitarian social and cultural forms.

Not only was *communitas* absent, the colony, when faced with the concurrent crises of drought, a collapse in wool prices and an end to transportation, moved further away from acquiring it and back towards structure, that charged field, which keeps hierarchies maintained and people apart (Turner, 1974).

3.2.1. Beyond the Limits

Physically the colony of New South Wales was vast; it stretched all along the eastern seaboard from Cape York to Melbourne. By the 1830s surveyors and pastoralists had gone west beyond the Big River, the Gwydir, beyond the Limits of Location,³⁸ beyond the reach of the Law. The pastoralists or gentlemen squatters were now a law unto themselves; aware of their numerical inferiority and living with a siege mentality, “any news of Aboriginals clashing with whites or interfering with livestock could be a spur to action.” (Stubbins, T. & Smith., P. 2001, p.2)

The standard practice was to send an overseer and a couple of assigned convicts up country to locate a suitable tract of land and then build a hut and stockyards (Milliss, 1994). Herds of cattle or flocks of sheep followed; wool was brought back after shearing, cattle driven down to market, when they were fattened. By 1835 there were around a million sheep on the North West tablelands, the so-called Big River Country.

The Kamilaroi were the traditional owners of this country; a warrior people, attacks and reprisals had been reported from first contact in the late 1820s. These attacks were never officially documented nor investigated. However, as Milliss (1994) notes, frequently attacks by Aborigines were reprisals for the abuse, kidnapping and

³⁸ Limiting the spread of colonization to Nineteen Counties had been an attempt to curtail and control the taking of crown land. Surveying the land had begun in 1829 and was completed in 1835 but with the wool boom, when sheep needed three acres/head, “the gentlemen squatters surged across the artificial barriers and sat down where they liked” (Milliss, 1994, p. 112).

forcible detention of Aboriginal women by white station hands. These kinds of attacks were included in the Aboriginal 'outrages' against which the pastoralists by 1837 were demanding government action. Reynolds (2006) also comments that "the sudden intrusion of an almost womanless white population added considerably to existing tensions." (2006, p. 136)

In February, 1838, into this restless and turbulent colonial outpost came a new Governor, George Gipps, and drought. It was known that Governor Gipps was bringing with him further reformist shifts in Government policy but unlike Governor Bourke before him, Gipps' agenda not only concerned rehabilitation and eventual emancipation of the convicts but conciliation with the Aborigines. Young Queen Victoria had ascended to the throne in 1837; the British Empire was on its solid trajectory to glory. Having redressed the evils of the slave trade by abolishing it in 1833 at the cost of twenty million pounds, receptivity had increased towards an examination of the impact of Empire and "the oppression of natives of barbarous countries." (Buxton, 1837, cited in Milliss, 1994, p. 229)

Prior to Gipps' arrival a letter had come from Baron Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies; it was opened by Acting Governor Lieutenant Colonel Snodgrass and it challenged the known order. The letter contained the most far-reaching affirmation of Aborigines' legal equality, reflecting the ascendancy of the liberal and humanitarian movement, articulated by the Buxton report,³⁹ of which Glenelg, Bourke and Gipps were part. The letter's content made clear that:

...all the natives ... must be considered as Subjects of the Queen...To regard them as Aliens with whom a war can exist, and against whom H.M. Troops may exercise belligerent right, is to deny that protection to which they derive the highest possible claim from the Sovereignty which has been assumed over the whole of their Ancient Possessions (Milliss, 1994, 218).

Even more confronting to Colonial conduct was the proviso that should any Aborigine die in an armed clash, this death was to be investigated as if he were a white man (Milliss, 1994). This would create huge controversy "as a substantial part

³⁹ Thomas Fowell Buxton tabled his report in the British House of Commons in July 1837, which deplored Britain's method of colonization and wanted to see that trade, commerce, peace and civilization was achieved through "a policy of temperate conduct and justice towards our neighbours." (Buxton, 1837, cited in Milliss, 1994, p. 229). In terms of Australian Aborigines Buxton advocated that a portion of money earned by the Crown in land sales should contribute to their education and protection.

of the white population – perhaps even a majority – did not believe that killing Aboriginal people constituted murder.” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 63)

Rather, their disappearance was seen as an inevitable consequence of successful colonization (Reynolds, 1998). As discussed in Chapter Two, land ownership was regarded as the colonists’ right. And as Aboriginal people had bestowed no labour on the land, they had “no right to the land.” (Windeyer, 1838, cited in Reynolds, 1998, p. 19) Their presence was a problem that needed to be dealt with.

3.2.2. Nunn’s campaign

What Gipps had yet to discover was that late in 1837 in response to complaints about the aforementioned Aboriginal outrages in the North West Acting Governor Lieutenant Colonel Snodgrass had ordered Major James Winniett Nunn to repress as far as he had power these reported aggressions by Aborigines. Attacks against the Kamilaroi people had begun in earnest.

With his troopers and volunteer stockmen Nunn was responsible for a series of genocidal onslaughts, particularly at Waterloo Creek near present day Moree on January 26th, 1838. While numbers for this massacre will never be confirmed, Milliss (1994) suggests ‘a figure of two to three hundred is by no means beyond the bounds of credibility.’ (1994, p. 190) With a chilling irony in faraway Sydney town on this very day, known in 1838 as Foundation Day⁴⁰ in honour of the arrival of the First Fleet fifty years before, the populace were revelling on the harbour foreshores enjoying the first-ever declared public holiday and waiting for the firework display that evening.

Nunn returned to Sydney in February, 1838, and, “after 53 days on duty,” (Milliss, 1994, p.197) on hearing the tide had turned in relation to Aboriginal deaths, failed to file a detailed report. However rumours of his brutality followed his return; missionary Lancelot Threlkeld⁴¹ suggests that as many as 500 Aborigines, men, women and children, were murdered on this campaign, the worst event of which occurred at

⁴⁰ January 26th became known in all states as Australia Day in 1946 (Australia Day in Australia, n.d.).

⁴¹ Lancelot Threlkeld (1788-1859) originally serving with the London Missionary Society was posted to Lake Macquarie in New South Wales. Despite a fractious relationship with the church, he remained an outspoken critic and chronicler of Aboriginal massacres, learning the local dialect of the Hunter River people, while posted there (Gunson, 1967).

Slaughterhouse Creek, prior to Waterloo Creek. As this particular massacre lacks any non-Aboriginal historical corroboration it is now currently lost to shared history (Milliss, 1994). But on the strength of the rumours this campaign generated, Gipps ordered an inquiry into Nunn's supposed atrocities.

Apart from Nunn's own actions however, his murderous campaign engendered a pattern of ruthless vigilantism that reignited on the Gwydir three months after his departure. This reign of terror became known as "The Drive" or the "Bingara Bushwack"; (Stubbins, T. & Smith, P. 2001, p.2) attacks on Aboriginal people were perpetrated by mounted and armed groups of stockmen, who assembled for the purpose on the thinnest of pretexts. The massacre at Myall Creek was just one of these assaults. It occurred on a Sunday afternoon, June 10th, 1838, when eleven armed stockmen rode in on just over thirty people, most probably Weraerai,⁴² all women, children and old men, who were camping at Myall Creek station.

The story of the massacre itself is so vividly told in the participants' narratives, as both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Committee members revisit the stimulus for the Memorial, that elaboration now would only diminish these narratives' potency and significance to the findings in this study. However what does need to be questioned here is the nature and pervasiveness of the burgeoning humanitarian impulse that flickered in the middle of 1838 only to be snuffed out by the year's end.

3.3. A shaft of light

A newly acquired part of his pastoral empire, Myall Creek had been occupied by squatter Henry Dangar's men from early 1837. Three weeks before the massacre in May, 1838, the Weraerai had arrived seeking sanctuary. One of Dangar's men, Charles Kilmeister, a convict, persuaded the other three employees – overseer Hobbs and convicts Burrowes and Anderson – to let the Weraerai stay. Hobbs was absent at the time the Weraerai arrived but capitulated to their presence on his return; Anderson's initial response, like Burrowes', isn't recorded but all three

⁴² Weraerai or Wirrayaraay or Wolroi people were part of the Kamilaroi nation. Research participants suggested that the victims might also have been Kwambil or Eucambil people. The group are likely to have been survivors from previous assaults at Gravesend, Slaughterhouse Creek and Vinegar Hill (Milliss, 1994).

convicts made friends with the new arrivals, attesting to the reports of their 'passivity'. At the time of their deaths three weeks later many of the Weraera were known by European names: Daddy, King Sandy, Martha, Charley but George Anderson's Weraera lover was always and only Ipeta.

The fact that this massacre came to light is an historical accident. Six white men all from different classes of colonial society at the time directly contributed to bringing this case to trial and therefore leaving its details to posterity through the court records. These men included the lowly convict and hut-keeper, crucial witness for the Prosecution, George Anderson; the outraged farmer, Frederick Foot⁴³; the reluctant overseer and witness for the Prosecution, William Hobbs; the zealous Police Magistrate, Edward Denny Day; the adroit Attorney General and Chief Prosecutor, John Plunkett; and the new, evangelical Governor, George Gipps. Six men, who were ultimately victimized by the system they hoped to subvert. Anderson remained in protective custody for the next seven years until he received a conditional pardon in 1846, then disappeared from all records; Hobbs was fired by Dangar before the trials and took eight years to find another job; Gipps never accumulated a power base and left a broken man at the end of his term in 1847.

However George Anderson and Frederick Foot particularly, feature prominently and are greatly admired in the participants' narratives. Participant and Memorial Committee member Gerry explains:

I mean, what they did, it was just like this incredible aligning of – you know, the stars lining up and they all lined up in a line and, and...justice was done. You know, it was like there was this shaft of light in history. And after 1838 it dissipated and those links could never be made again. And ah – but every one of those men or pretty well every one of them paid a price for what they did. They all – standing up – for Myall Creek cost them something. They all paid a price for that. So I found that inspiring. That was really inspiring (Gerry, 2011).

Although Hobbs is frequently credited with reporting the massacre, he in fact hesitated. He did however visit the massacre site and identify the charred remains of skulls he knew to be those of children. He was able to later take Denny Day to it,

⁴³ Frederick Foot rode 500 kilometres to report the massacre to Governor Gipps directly, having been told about it by Foster, a local overseer on a property neighbouring Dangar's Myall Creek Station (Milliss, 1994).

even though by then most evidence had been removed or destroyed. It was Foot's report that reached Governor Gipps first.

Sent out by Governor Gipps to investigate, Edward Denny Day left Muswellbrook six weeks after the event. He spent another month investigating the crime and arrested eleven of the perpetrators, all of them convict or ex-convict stockmen and only one of them, Charles Kilmeister, employed by Dangar. The rest worked on neighbouring properties all owned by prominent landholders; members of the squattocracy these same men became members of the Black Association, a group of wealthy colonials who joined together to pay for the perpetrators' defence.

The fact that Kilmeister joined the perpetrators and Anderson did not, especially in the light of the jeopardy of reprisal in which Anderson then placed himself, is a remarkable act. That he had formed a genuine bond with Ipeta and had recently been the recipient of 'two lots of fifty'⁴⁴ for a minor infringement on one of Dangar's other properties cannot be overlooked as factors motivating his subsequent determination to seek justice for the slaughter of the Weraerai. A thief from the London slums, illiterate and twenty-four years old, Anderson denied on the stand he was testifying for his liberty: "I neither expect nor hope for my liberty; I do not ask for anything, only for protection." (Queen v. Kilmeister, 1838, cited in Millis, 1994, p. 513)

By the time Day reached the massacre site it had been swept clean; all that remained were bone fragments. Day collected the largest samples possible: part of a lower jawbone, a child's rib and a number of teeth. These items were the only physical evidence and critical in the trials to come. Once arrested the accused men remained silent, exemplifying "the solidarity of the convict netherworld, the embryonic ethos of bush comradeship." (Millis, 1994, p.324) They walked the three hundred kilometres to Muswellbrook in leg-irons.

⁴⁴ Charged with absconding and failing to keep his sheep hurdles as required, Dangar personally ensured Anderson received an excessive sentence of one hundred lashes in February, 1838. Anderson was sent to Myall Creek station in April, 1838 (Millis, 1994).

3.3.1. The outcome

Riding ahead of his troopers, Day took Anderson with him, fearing what would happen to him if he remained unprotected. After Muswellbrook the eleven men then walked a further one hundred and forty kilometres to Newcastle, were put on board a ship to Sydney and by mid-September were in gaol and awaiting trial. Leader of the massacre, free-born, a squatter and only twenty-two, John Fleming was the only perpetrator never to be arrested. Protected by his extensive family, he became a respected citizen of the Hawkesbury district despite the reward for his capture never being lifted.

Accused of the murder of one Big Daddy, in the absence of a body, the first trial led to an acquittal of all eleven men. The jury took fifteen minutes to deliver their not guilty verdict. A second trial was ordered immediately and began two weeks later with only seven of the perpetrators on the stand. An effort had been made to break their silence by pitting them against each other. The attempt failed, even though the perpetrator considered most violent, James Lamb, had been left in the cells. On the strength of an identifiable child's rib bone Day found on the massacre site, the still-silent men were tried for the murder of the little boy, Charley; all seven were found guilty, sentenced to be hanged and the colony was in an uproar.

The manner of the victims' deaths was now common knowledge – they had been hacked to death with swords, while tethered to a rope, old men, women and children. The slaughter couldn't be disguised in the colonial myth of noble colonists forced to defend their property. According to O'Leary (2010) the Myall Creek massacre was "a defining moral issue, and ethical crisis that went to the heart of the infant colony's identity and prospects." (2010, p. 64)

Questions of the example set by Nunn, the squatters' complicity and reports of increasing Aboriginal aggression dominated a vitriolic press; humanitarian voices struggled to find balance. Five days before the hanging was due to take place, Eliza Dunlop had a poem indirectly supporting the executions published in the liberal newspaper, the *Australian*. Entitled "*The Aboriginal Mother*" it attempts to put forward an Aboriginal perspective, according to O'Leary (2010), by drawing:

...on the language of pathos and sentiment to produce an Aboriginal mother with whom the reader is invited, even compelled to sympathize...dismantling some of the negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people at the time (2010, pp. 64-5).

Meanwhile four days before the execution Governor Gipps was presented with five petitions:

...seeking clemency for the condemned men, these petitions represented a carefully orchestrated attempt to exert maximum pressure on the Governor, making him personally responsible for deciding the men's fate (Milliss, 1994, p. 555).

The seven accused were hanged in December, 1838, on the gallows near the jail at the end of George Street, Sydney. On that same morning Gipps ordered a military parade to distract the populace and two newspapers report a supposed conversation between citizens openly now discussing poisoning the blacks as a "safer game." (Millis, 1994, p. 558) The turmoil continued unabated and fearing social unrest Gipps gradually retreated from his reformist Aboriginal policies.

Charges against the four remaining accused were dropped in February, 1839; the Nunn inquiry was discontinued in June after a one-day hearing in April; Gipps became immersed in struggles with the squatters over Crown Land leases – and lost. And from 1840, after the drought, the Colony was plunged into a three year Depression.

Of the four against whom all charges were dropped, three were still convicts. One received a conditional pardon in 1846; the other two in 1848. Gipps was recalled to London in 1846 and died in 1847. Nunn escaped any further inquiry into his 'excursion' into the north-west and left the colony for service in India in 1844; he died of disease in February, 1847, four weeks before Gipps.

Meanwhile free-born John Henry Fleming, at twenty-two the leader of the massacre was the only perpetrator to escape any form of prosecution, protected as he was by his large and prosperous family network. Despite his documented history a brief account of his life in a family history (Roberts, 1990) is informative. The account recognises his participation in the massacre, however it concludes:

John Henry died on 20th August, 1894 'after a long illness attended by much suffering'. His obituary stated that: in early life he was engaged in pastoral pursuits in Queensland: stirring tales he recounted of the old days; problems with the "blacks" in New England. The deceased would be greatly missed because of his kindness and generosity to the poor.

John Henry and Charlotte⁴⁵ being childless, he left his estate to various nieces and nephews. Judging by the number of children named after him he was a popular family member, and he was voted a 'favourite cousin' by some who apparently could not have seen him very often. If, as family legend has it, he entertained young relatives with blood-curdling tales of being pursued by Aborigines, spears whistling about his ears, 'Myall Creek' could have been, in his view, an act of self-defence (1990, p.174).

What is particularly significant here is that the above account was written at the end of the twentieth century and not the nineteenth.

3.3.2. The backlash

Historian Manning Clark suggests that these executions of the Myall Creek perpetrators directly contributed to what became known as an actual war of extermination (Marsh, n.d.). Called by Clark the payback killings, he writes:

[The executions] only served to make blacks so outrageous that great numbers of them fell victim in 1839 to the vindictive spirits kindled in the hearts of white men (Clark, 1973, Vol. 3, p.149).

Failure of the Government to tackle the real but intractable problems of dispossession morally or legally accelerated the worst of colonialism in terms of Aboriginal people. Gipps turned his attention to the Crown Lands Occupation Bill of 1839 in an attempt to regulate squatting and, as trade-off to the imperial agenda introduced border police to deal with incursions between Aboriginal people on one hand and pastoralists and their employees, free or otherwise, on the other.

The dominant squatter class lost the battle to stay the executions of the seven accused but they effectively won, in Gramscian⁴⁶ terms, the war of position

⁴⁵ Charlotte Dunstan became John Henry's wife in October, 1841 at Wilberforce, NSW.

⁴⁶ Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), Italian philosopher and scholar, saw the state as being made of two overlapping spheres: political society, which rules by forces, and civil society, which rules through consent. In civil society bourgeois hegemony is reproduced in cultural life, perpetuating the power of

(McLaren, 2007) against the Government. Cultural hegemony, the culture that permitted genocide either by active engagement in it or complicit silence about its occurrence, was tightly in the grasp the aforementioned old order, whether that 'old' referred to the length of colonial occupancy or tenacity with which its values were embraced. The real power in the Colony belonged to the class that generated capital. As Milliss concludes: "Nothing could be done about the blacks without their cooperation...The only hope now lay in compromise." (1994, p.613.) As Gramsci observed in the twentieth century Northern Europe:

...the bourgeoisie had attained a hegemonic position of leadership; they did not need to run the state themselves....the rulers recognised the hegemonic structures of civil society as the basic limits of their political action (Cox, 1993, p.51).

The poisonings and massacres of Aboriginal people continued into the 1920s⁴⁷ and no perpetrators were ever punished. Not all of the population was complicit in the cover-up of these activities but no other outcry reached the magnitude of Myall Creek. Instead of meeting vigorous justifications of God-given rights to land and white superiority however, voices of protest encountered another form of cultural resistance. Anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner recognised a change in tone from the confrontations met by the fledgling humanitarian movement in the mid-nineteenth century to those experienced later:

[A] gleaning of the records of 1820-50 produces scores of sorrowful expressions of regard for the real welfare of that helpless and unfortunate race but ...these expressions were...overwhelmed by expressions of contempt and indifference....In the second half of the century feelings grew even more brutal and coarse (Stanner, 1968, cited in Manne, 2009, p.13).

As Manne (2009) suggests, Stanner came to recognize white Australia's refusal to acknowledge its complicity in the destruction of Aboriginal society as a form of apologetic sightlessness that "sticks out like a foot from a shallow grave" (Stanner, 1968, cited in Manne, 2009, p.13). To name the failure of scholars and citizens alike "to integrate the story of Aboriginal dispossession and its aftermath from the course

the ruling class. Knowledge is therefore a social construct to legitimate social structure (powercube, n.d.).

⁴⁷ The Coniston massacre of 1928 is considered to be the last recorded massacre of Aboriginal people. A police party admitted to the killing of seventeen Aborigines as a reprisal for the killing of a white dingo hunter in Central Australia. "What was particularly unusual about this incident was the public outcry it triggered in capital cities." (Hall, 1997, p.3)

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

of Australian history,” (Manne, 2003, p.1) Stanner coined the term ‘the great Australian silence,’ which is discussed in Chapter Four.

Non-Aboriginal Australia effectively dealt with the moral dilemma of dispossession by not only ignoring it, but by giving the pioneer “...immense moral authority as the creator of wealth and industry.” (Reynolds, 1998, p. 113) The nature of conquest was mythologized: the long-suffering pioneer was pitted against the harshness of the country itself and not against the desperation of its First Peoples.

It was these two culturally hegemonic forces, the power of position and the potency of myth, that Len Payne pitted himself against in 1965.

3.4. Len Payne’s long shadow

Len Payne came to live and work in Bingara in 1937, ninety-nine years after the Myall Creek massacre. Collecting stories, oral histories, in the district Len made the connection between the Myall Creek massacre and Major Nunn’s state-sanctioned incursions, which participant Tom refers to as “the gradually increasing cycle of violence against Aboriginal people.” (2011) What Len refuted therefore was the possibility of dismissing Myall Creek as unique, a ‘one-off’; for Tom this is Len’s most significant contribution and part of the on-going challenge for the Memorial Committee. Tom elaborates:

And as I say the tragedy is the idea of Myall Creek as an isolated incident which was dealt with through the system of justice at the time still prevails – it is still the conventional wisdom. And that’s what – that’s one of the things, I think, we’ve got to do at Myall Creek is to challenge that conventional wisdom. We need not just interested people, not just scholars to know that there were widespread massacres; we need it to be part of the national conscious to know (Tom, 2011).

As seen earlier in this chapter, a national apology for the massacres is still on the Memorial Committee’s agenda.

Incensed by a prominent Bingara local’s views on the irrelevance of the convict past, which had been published in the local newspaper in January, 1965, Len’s activism now began to leave an influential trail (Payne, 1965). A visit to a paddock on the still-

existing Myall Creek Station the year before with a third-generation stockman, Cecil Wall, led to a discovery. Two enormous gate hinges were found buried in this old stockyard. Len was now convinced by the veracity of Wall's claims, held since childhood, that this was once the very stockyard, where the massacre took place. Now disputed by the Myall Creek Committee and other interested parties (Blanch, 2000; Milliss, 1994), the concern here is the story of Len's memorial, not that of the location of the actual massacre site.

Len began agitating for a memorial using the gate hinges in the mid-1960s; the front of the gate would tell the story of the past; the gate would swing shut with a new creed on the back:

Let the gate swing face out with the story: till a LEADER rises up in the land with the guts and understanding of the demand for JUST RECOMPENSE that besmirches the national conscience. Then let such a man swing back the gate to show the other side which can then carry and exhibit proof of the establishment of HONOUR AND DECENCY as a new creed for ALL AUSTRALIANS (Payne, 1965, p.12).

The memorial idea failed to gain significant traction; Tom suggests with gentle understatement, "he met opposition from the community pretty widely, I feel." (Tom, 2011) Keen to dissociate themselves from the past, community members refused to discuss it. Participant Nathan describes the community reaction as it was related to him by Len, when Len tried to display the gate hinges in a shop window:

Well, it caused a bit of an uproar. They were going to run him out of town. "Take those things out of here! Those things never happen here! How can you prove those things were part of a gate?! How can you prove those were part of a stockyard?!" All those things were hitting him, so he eventually took them and he left them at his place...that's where I first saw them (Nathan, 2011).

Although the response is in part a rejection of the town's violent convict past, Nathan considers there to be a more racist undertone:

Len was blacklisted because he dared to say this sort of thing happened...[Len was one of those] non-indigenous people, who dared to speak (Nathan, 2011).

Even Aboriginal people maintained the silence. Aunty Narelle gives some clarity to the absence even today of Aboriginal people in Bingara:

...and it took me a long while to realise Aunty Lizzie was talking about Bingara. She'd say: "Oh no, no. Bad place. Bad place. Bad spirits". And I'd say: "But why?" "Oh, just don't go there. Aboriginal people don't go there" (Aunty Narelle, 2011).

Despite the ferocity of the community response, Len didn't tire of his mission. Many of the participants, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal recalled meeting Len and acknowledged him for his personal warmth and his tireless activism. "Uncle Clayton"⁴⁸ feels he owes Len a great deal:

It's a case of I honour *him*. Because if he didn't keep persisting....if reconciliation didn't come into play, I most probably would have taken another direction (Uncle Clayton, 2011).

What Uncle Clayton could be alluding to here are the extraordinary achievements Aboriginal peoples made over this time in pursuit of recognition politically, which had little impact in the small country town of Bingara.

In the cities it was a different story.

3.4.1. Fifty years of Aboriginal activism

Protectionism enforced marginalization but it didn't prevent pregnancy. The mixed-descent population grew and child removal practices increased. Maynard (2005) considers the grief caused by this policy, in force from 1915 in NSW, to be a catalyst for instigating both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal protest. Despite fierce opposition (Paisley, 1997), it remained in place for over sixty years. Responsible for creating the Stolen Generations⁴⁹ the practice tore families apart but brought people together. By 1924 Fred Maynard formed the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) and held its first conference in 1925. As

⁴⁸ "Uncle Clayton" is a member of the Myall Creek memorial Committee. His name has been changed to protect this privacy. All references are from an interview held at Inverell, NSW. July 19th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁴⁹ It is estimated that as many as 100,000 mixed-descent Indigenous children were taken from their families and raised in institutions or were adopted into non-Aboriginal homes (Stolen Generations Fact Sheet, 2007). Destined to provide a cheap labour force the *Bringing Them Home Report* (1997) found physical and sexual abuse was common and for most children removal ensured "life-long negative consequences." (Stolen Generations Fact Sheet, 2012, p.3)

President, Fred Maynard addressed an assembled crowd of 250 Aboriginal peoples:

...We want to work out our own destiny. Our people have not had the courage to stand together in the past but now we are united, and are determined to work for the preservation of all those things which are near and dear to us (Maynard, F., 1925, cited in Maynard, J. 2005, p. 16).

The AAPA survived three years; harassment from the Protection Board ensured its failure. However it would re-surface many times in new guises (Foley & Anderson, 2006). As the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA) it organised the “Day of Mourning” on Australia Day, 1938, joining forces with the Victorian-based Australian Aborigines’ League (AAL), petitioning King George VI for the loss of land, of life, for “the rape of our women by the white invaders.” (Petition, 1938, cited in McKenna, 1997, p.47)

Protectionism had morphed into undefined Assimilation policies by the 1930s promoting a gradual absorption of mixed-descent people into the settler population. But the often coercive practices inherent in protection and segregation, the forced removal of children under laws of State Guardianship, for example, remained the same (Chesterman & Douglas, 2004). Furthermore civil rights were still denied: Aboriginal children had separate education, reserves had curfews and alcohol bans, wages were low and there was no social security (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.).

Assimilation policies assumed that “Aborigines would inevitably, and probably willingly, become like white Australians,” (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d., p.3) in terms of their manner of living, their customs and their beliefs. This proved ill-founded; Aboriginal people survived and so did their culture. As Professor Helen Milroy (2011) comments in relation to all policies and practices of colonization and is particularly applicable here: “What is often not understood is the incredible resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in surviving such adversity.” (Milroy, H., 2011, p. 29).

It wasn’t until Assimilation was actually defined in 1961 that expenditure increases began delivering improved Aboriginal peoples’ health, housing and education programs. Like all Australians they had ceased being British subjects in 1949; unlike

all Australians this did not translate as equal civil rights. Gradually however through the 1960s some of restrictive and discriminatory legislation that enabled Protectionism to continue was phased out. Aboriginal people had access to social security in 1960 and were able to vote in federal elections in 1962. Aboriginal people had access to alcohol and in most jurisdictions they were entitled to full award wages. Entitlement did not guarantee payment however; wage claims by pastoral workers meanwhile are still being fought in Queensland and Western Australian courts.

Through these piecemeal gains the non-Indigenous public was slowly becoming increasingly aware of Aboriginal disadvantage. What was not understood then by the wider non-Aboriginal community was the pervasive and degrading nature of this disadvantage and non-Aboriginal Australia's complicity in its continuation.

It took a bus trip and a group of thirty university students to puncture "Australian smugness, borne of ignorance, that racism did not exist in Australia." (Freedom Ride, 1965, p.2)

3.4.2. The first freedom ride

In February, 1965, Aboriginal student, Charles Perkins⁵⁰, and a group of non-Aboriginal students all from Sydney University hired a bus for a fact-finding mission. Their primary intention was to investigate racism in NSW country towns and they had excellent media access. This became Australia's first Freedom Ride, in line with civil rights movements in the United States at the time. The towns they visited included: Wellington, Walgett, Gulargambone, Kempsey, Bowraville and Moree. The conditions they then televised revealed over-crowded shanty housing with no plumbing or electricity; they broadcast exclusion zones, like pubs and cinemas; and they showed the frequently vitriolic confrontations with local non-Aboriginal people, as the students attempted to desegregate public spaces. Notable landmarks

⁵⁰ Charles Perkins (1936-2000) a leader and controversial activist, he was the first Indigenous Australian to graduate from a tertiary institution in Australia in 1965, the same year he retired as a professional soccer player. He emerged as a national leader of Aboriginal people after the Freedom Ride and began a significant career as a bureaucrat, becoming head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in 1984. He was awarded the Order of Australia in 1987 and given a state funeral in 2000 (skwirk, n.d.).

targeted for national press coverage included the Walgett RSL, for denying Aboriginal veterans membership, and the Moree swimming pool, for denying access to Aboriginal children.

The Freedom Ride made urban Australia aware, as nothing else had done, of racial discrimination in the bush: ...”and strengthened the campaigns to eradicate it which followed.” (Freedom Ride, 1965, n.d., p.2) In the light of Len’s struggle and its continuation the most significant campaign heralded the 1967 referendum.

3.4.3. The 1967 referendum

In 1944 the Post-war Reconstruction and Democratic Rights referendum proposed to alter Commonwealth power in a number of areas, one of which concerned Aboriginal peoples (Gilbert, 2005). The referendum was lost but the defeat was considered a sign of mainstream Australia’s on-going ignorance of Aboriginal plight and stressed the importance of inclusion, if genuine structural change was to be realised.

Two Indigenous women, Pearl Gibbs⁵¹ and Faith Bandler⁵², were already friends and colleagues, when they were instrumental in founding the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) in 1956. The AAF aims were to have Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people work together on equal terms for the betterment of both, including the repeal of laws that discriminated against Aboriginal peoples socially and economically (Gilbert, 2005). Its great power was its access to a wide non-Aboriginal support base politically, socially, through the intelligentsia and the privileged middle class.

⁵¹ Pearl Gibbs (1901-1983) knew and worked with every major Aboriginal activist in the twentieth century. Her network included prime ministers, parliamentarians, union leaders, feminists groups and the media. Steering a course across the racial divide, she urged all Australians to become aware of and fight against Indigenous disadvantage. Gilbert (2005) argues that her Aboriginal identity was at the core of her imagining, her methods and her presence” (2005, pp.108); Gibbs saw her struggle as one for human rights, colour and creed were incidental, so diffusing the racism that plagued Aboriginal access and cohesion. In bringing disparate interests together to fight for those rights for Aboriginal people, Gibbs “lived reconciliation before it was ever conceived as part of Australian political life.” (Gilbert, 2005, p.124)

⁵² Faith Bandler (1919- 2004) activist, networker and prominent committee member in Aboriginal lobby groups (AAF, FCAATSI); like her mentor, Gibbs, she believed that the battle for Aboriginal recognition was a battle against racism and that could best be fought through racial coalitions rather than Aboriginal groups with exclusive membership....”For her, the 1967 referendum was a high point” (Taffe & Miller, 1996, p. 4); passionate in her determination to make the issues clear, Bandler in 1965 commented “People in Australia have to register their dogs and cattle, but we don’t know how many Aborigines there are.” (Bandler, F. 1965, cited in Australian 1967 Referendum, n.d. p.6)

It took ten years of intense lobbying and organisation for the Federal Government to agree to hold a referendum to change the Constitution to include Aboriginal peoples as citizens in the census and to have the Federal rather than State Governments as the primary law-making body for Aboriginal peoples. Constitutional change would mean that Australia's Aboriginal Peoples would no longer be grouped with flora and fauna (Australian 1967 Referendum, n.d.) It became "a huge exercise in public education over Aboriginal civil rights...the referendum campaign was symbolically about a broader notion of Aboriginal citizenship." (Foley & Anderson, 2006, p.87)

It would win the largest YES vote for Constitutional change in Australia's history. Its ramifications are discussed in Chapter Four but its result warrants a return to Len Payne and his struggle in Bingara.

Perhaps he was in conflict with more than a town that did not want to remember. Incriminating the perpetrators of the massacre would reflect on their complicit employers and those same families were still in the district. And, as we have seen, the old order had won the war of position in the 1830's and nothing had happened to change that status. Although these two forces in themselves would be powerful enough in a small country town with a dwindling population to determine the outcome that eventuated, to leave the discussion there is possibly simplistic.

Perhaps it might be possible to consider that Len had stumbled into an even bigger picture. By a coincidence in historical timing, Len was on the losing side of a emergent culture war. For it was exactly at this time the shameful convict of the past had come to embody 'the Australian spirit' (Ward, 1978) and, possibly, all because of a war to the north.

3.5. Bringing on the understudy - convicts and national identity

Believing the war in Vietnam to be symptomatic of aggressive Communism advancing down the South East Asian peninsula, the Conservative Liberal Government in Australia, a party that had been in power for a continuous fifteen years at the time, introduced conscription in 1964. Having begun participating in the increasingly unpopular war in 1962, the highly divisive conscription campaign broadened in May, 1965, to include overseas service; by 1966 overseas included

Vietnam. For the first time in any war twenty year old men could be drafted for active service outside Australian territory. As we saw in Chapter One, Tom supported the Conservatives despite being eligible for conscription; this was not usual at the time. Conscription struck a shattering blow not just to freedom and grassroots entitlement, but it was an assault on the profoundly cherished culture of military honour through volunteerism.

Courage, mateship, endurance, sacrifice are all prized attributes of the Australian national identity, which had been forged on the battlefields of the First World War (Adam-Smith, 1978; Carlyon, 2006); they are concepts which remain pivotal in Anzac Day⁵³ celebrations and qualities that are remembered with solemnity. But these qualities alone represent a two dimensional identity. The full picture needs the anti-hero element to engender adulation from mere respect. Along with the valour comes the nonchalance, the swagger, the egalitarian disregard for authority. Here Les Carlyon (2006) visualises the World War 1 soldier through the imagined eyes of the French:

There was a lankiness, a looseness in the way they moved...War and the old world of Europe had failed to impose all of its formalities on them. They were good at war but in a way that offended the keepers of the orthodoxies: lots of dash, not much discipline away from the battlefield...They didn't much like saluting: it didn't seem democratic (2006, p. 4).

But this identity, resurrected so securely in this century (Inglis, 2008), was under attack in the 1960's. Although public protests about conscription and Australia's participation in the Vietnam War peaked in 1969, defacement of war memorials had already begun by 1965. In 1968 a Melbourne memorial was spray-painted with the words VIETNAM WAR EXPLODES ANZAC MYTH; the same statement "was held aloft by demonstrators on Anzac Day that year beside the cenotaph in London" (Inglis, 2008, p.358). Although protests focused division and outrage, the desecration of memorials generated violence (Inglis, 2008).

Because of war memorials' iconic significance in the national narrative, what was under attack, it could be said, was cultural identity. This burgeoning civil crisis, pitting one generation against another, one institution against another and members of all

⁵³ 25th April, the day of the first Gallipoli landings in 1915 and Australia's participation in its first major campaign of World War 1 – a campaign the Allies lost.

institutions against each other, threatened more than stone and plaques. To borrow from Bourdieu (2003), during the Vietnam era, the state in Australia was losing control of cultural production, the means by which the state is able to direct our identity and how we interact with the world around us (Webb, Schirato, Danaher, 2002).

With particular regard to Len's failing endeavour, despite the fact he was seen to be by some as an inspirational man with a just cause, it could be argued that in foregrounding convict violence he was tarnishing an emergent hero. Manifesting similar characteristics to the iconic soldier – adaptability, mateship, hatred of affectation, resourcefulness, egalitarian collectivism (Ward, 1978) – the bushman was evolving as alternative source of the idealized Australian identity. Historian Russel Ward (1978), whose seminal work, *The Australian Legend*, inextricably links bushmen and convicts:

...in the last century an admired (not necessarily admirable) group of character traits came to be seen as typically Australian. These traits were first identified by contemporaries as being characteristic of the first (white) Australians, the convicts, and of the pastoral proletariat most of whom before 1850 were convicts or ex-convicts or the native-born offspring of convict parents (Ward, 1978, p.11).

Whether as Ward asserts "the convict-derived bush ethos grew...to become the most important basic component of the national mystique" (1978, p. 23) is contentious. When a return to transportation was mooted in Britain in 1846 after its cessation to New South Wales six years before, Cochrane (2006) indicates there was fervid hostility towards the proposal from diverse quarters of society. Certainly the drop in criminal activity within that time had significantly reduced the appeal of increasing the despised underclass: arrests had declined by 45% and convictions had dropped by 64%. However through both the trade union movement and through literature, Ward maintains, "the attitudes and values of the nomad tribe were made the principal ingredient of a national mystique." (1978, p.35)

The point here is not the veracity of Ward's (1978) argument but the fact that it challenged conventional thinking of the time and it used popular culture, stories and ballads to do it. The bushman was independent, a defiant departure from the Imperial aspirant. If it weren't for the violence, the bushman, as a euphemism for the

convict, and the soldier could be seen as part of a continuum. But the violence was an essential component of the truth; its absence from Ward's (1978) narrative, Reynolds (1999) acknowledges, "was not just a case of serious omission." (1999, p.130) It was ignored to manipulate the myth; once Aborigines are included in the narrative "the situation changes." (Reynolds, 1999, p.132) Nevertheless, Ward (1978) paved the way for history's reinterpretation; "his influence on Australian historiography was profound...no work had ever sold so well." (Jordan, 2004) Popular culture responded well to Ward's whitewashing of the erstwhile convict stain.

3.5.1. Only holding the fort

Whether Australians whole-heartedly embraced their convict ancestry as opposed to the radical nationalist essence of Ward's frontier identity is in doubt; the soldier has returned⁵⁴. As Reynolds (1999) suggests:

Australians no longer need to cling to those comforting legends of the empty land, peaceful settlement, the heroic and bloodless conquest of the inland, the unarmed frontiersmen singing to the cattle (1999, p.246).

By the 1960s Historian Ken Inglis assumed ANZAC ceremonies would wither away... I did not foresee the imminent resurgence of commemoration." (Inglis, 2008, p.9.) Positions for the 100th anniversary Gallipoli landings are limited by Government ballot to 10,500 (Saurine, 2003).

Tranter & Donoghue (2003) suggest that identification with convict ancestry is divided along class lines and is overall fading. Certainly those participants in this study, whose convict ancestry is crucial to the unfolding of the current Memorial story, discovered their lost forebears late in life through curiosity not family stories. As their forebears happened to be some of the perpetrators of the Myall Creek massacre, it is not surprising their stories were not passed on. But investigation brings risk; violence and silence are threads in the same frontier fabric. Ward however over the 1970s and 1980s had his time in the sun, while Len Payne remained in shadow.

⁵⁴ No memorials were built to honour the Vietnam dead until the Vietnam veterans started doing in themselves in the late 1980s (Inglis, 2008).

The current custodian of the gate hinges, participant Nathan, met Len Payne 1987 and together in 1988, the year of the Bicentennial⁵⁵, they marked the sesquicentenary of the massacre by the laying of a wreath resembling the Aboriginal flag in the old stockyards. With the assistance of the Armidale Aboriginal Land Council Nathan hired a bus and collected parties of people interested in marking the event. The ceremony petered out; the following year there were only seven people there, by 1990 it was all over due to lack of interest. Len and Nathan planted a tree, a sapling. It was trampled down by cattle. But for Len, Nathan insists, his dream was fulfilled.

Nathan, like many Committee members is adamant that Len's contribution as an activist is vital to the current Memorial's success. Nathan refers to the annual ceremonies held now: "Whatever positive things that event is now emitting, it was all done through Len." (Nathan, 2011)

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter shares the history of the massacre at Myall Creek and explores the nature of the forces that kept it locked away, despite the determined agitations of one man and despite the significant changes in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal policies. Suggesting the emergence of new and more complex hybrid identities as reflecting the current decolonizing era of fluidity adheres to observations made by cultural theorists (Bhabha, 1990; Papastergiadis, 1997; Rutherford, 1990), which were addressed in Chapter Two.

What has yet to be revealed despite the progress politically is the profound distrust that remains a component of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships. Understanding this distrust, where it comes from, how it is manifested and how the Myall Creek Memorial Committee continues to try to overcome it is the content of Chapter Four. It is in knowing the history, the joys and the secrets (Madison, 2005), that the ground is made ready for cross-cultural play creation.

⁵⁵ The year-long Bicentenary celebrations, with a budget of \$48 million, commenced on January 26th, 1988. It created a platform to celebrate mainstream diversity; it was an opportunity for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to come together and honour survival.

Chapter Four

Living in History

“I think the whole experience just changed me really. It will change you, too.”
(“Peggy,”⁵⁶ 2011)

4. Introduction

This chapter progresses the restless history shared by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians from the 1960s to the present. Gains made in land, civil and human rights continue to chart an erratic course, as old narratives of paternalism and entitlement reincarnate to jostle with new concepts of institutional and societal responsibility for inequality, injustice and the perpetuation of perceived cultural dysfunction.

This chapter foregrounds the more contentious struggles, particularly those over land rights. It is through this period that all the participants in this study grew up, became aware and ultimately decided to participate, trying to affect a dominant culture they, as individuals, saw as unjust. As Chapter Three told the story of places they have come to share, the colonial frontier and Bingara specifically, Chapter Four tells the story of a shared time, illuminating the context in which the participant narratives in *Today We're Alive* emerge. Where appropriate their narratives are interwoven into the events that have led to the movement towards reconciliation, which officially began in 1991.⁵⁷ It was during this decade-long initiative they all met and found a focus for their shared resolve.

⁵⁶ “Peggy” is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. Her name has been changed to protect her privacy. All references to “Peggy” are from an interview with her held September 6th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁵⁷ Achieving bi-partisan support the Commonwealth Government established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) in 1991. The Council had ten years to raise public awareness about reconciliation and Indigenous issues; to foster an on-going commitment to address Indigenous socio-economic disadvantage and to provide Government with a document of reconciliation. CAR had 25 members, predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a smaller representation from the wider community, including Government representative from major parties (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.).

In seeking an apology for the massacres, the Memorial Committee is still determined to bring an aspect of colonial history in from the shadows. It is not, as participant Ian argues, just about the murders; there is great symbolism involved:

I think Myall Creek bestows an integrity and a dignity on a people that have had it ignored for so long. It's terrible to have those sorts of things denied and if those massacres have been denied, then all the treatment that followed after has been denied as well (2011).

For all of them, as is seen in the play, the decision to participate in building a Memorial to a massacre was stepping into the unknown. In terms of performance theory (Langellier, 1999, cited in Madison & Hamera, 2005, p.xix) this action, as examined Chapter Five, constitutes a shift in their identities and their experience. One participant, "Brian,"⁵⁸ recognises that: "this is the most important thing I've ever been mixed up in, actually. It can change Australia." (Brian, 2011)

Returning to the 1960s and concluding with the Northern Territory Emergency Response of 2007, this chapter addresses the changing Australia in which the participants continue to play a role. Determined to seek a national apology for the massacres is the Memorial Committee's way of addressing the presence of the past and exposing the truth of colonization. This is the Committee's commitment to ensuring current narratives encompass the legacies of grief and denial.

Learning from the success of the 1967 Referendum, appealing to a higher moral purpose seems key to gaining mainstream support.

4.1. Gaining consensus

Of the forty-four referendum proposals that have been put to the Australian people between the first in 1906 and the most recent in 1999 only eight have obtained the requisite double majority. Mick Dodson (2012) suggests that the three key ingredients essential for a positive outcome of a referendum include: bi-partisan

⁵⁸ "Brian" is not a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee but his wife, "Letitia", as a descendent of a massacre perpetrator is a significant player in annual services at the Memorial. Both "Brian" and "Letitia" attend the services every year. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy. All references to "Brian" and "Letitia" come from an interview held at Epping, NSW, October 18th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

support, popular engagement generating ownership and clarity about the proposal and the message. The 1967 Referendum had all three.

With 90.77% YES vote for the inclusion of Aboriginal peoples in the census, the 1967 Referendum was the most successful in Australia's history to date (Right wrongs, write yes, n.d.). As reported earlier it also allowed the Federal Government to legislate and provide services for Aboriginal people, not just the States, addressing both budgets for service provision and delivery, as well as ending discriminatory state-based policies and practices (Australian 1967 Referendum, n.d.).

Central to the success of the 1967 campaign was Pearl Gibbs' emphasis on the struggle for human rights as opposed to attacking the history of discriminating policies (Gilbert, 2005). With human rights as a creed, potential forces of opposition were ennobled by the campaign's appeal to a higher moral purpose, so generating the essential voter ownership that Mick Dodson above identifies as a critical component of a successful referendum formula. Skilfully the 1967 campaign avoided the divisions endemic to accusations of racism and its concomitant responses of guilt, blame and disengagement.

In this endeavour the 1967 campaign was aided not just by footage of the violent racism experienced by the Freedom Riders in 1965 but one year later in 1966 the urban middle classes caught a glimpse of Aboriginal working conditions in remote Australia through the media – and the discrimination was now inescapable.

4.1.1. Wave Hill

On August 22nd, 1966, head stockman on Wave Hill Station, a vast cattle property in the Northern Territory, Gurindji elder, Vincent Lingiari asked his employers, representatives of the British Meat magnate, Lord Vestey, for a salary increase for his men (Egan, 2012). Even if they had received the requested \$25 per week, it would still have been less than the amount paid to non-Indigenous workers.

Having lived in humpies without running water for \$6 per week and rations, complaints by the Gurindji people about conditions had been on-going for over forty

years (National Heritage Places, n.d.). Lord Vestey's pastoral company had leased the land from the Government in 1914 and had simply absorbed the original occupants as its workforce. There had even been an inquiry in the 1930s that was critical of Lord Vestey's employment practices (Aboriginal people strike, n.d.). And yet nothing had changed. But by 1966 the mood had.

On the morning of August 23rd, Lingiari initiated a walk-off. Leading two hundred workers and their families to the Victoria River, some thirteen kilometres away, and then to Wattie Creek/Daguragu⁵⁹ (Egan, 2012), Lingiari began the longest strike in Australia's history. Lasting eight years it would morph from a wage and conditions dispute into the first land rights claim (Aboriginal people strike, n.d.).

Wattie Creek/Daguragu part of Wave Hill, was on Gurindji land. In 1967 the Gurindji demanded five hundred square miles around Wattie Creek/Daguragu, because it was a sacred place. And they demanded that they be allowed to live autonomously. The Gurindji claimed "this land was morally theirs...their people had lived here from time immemorial and their culture myths, dreaming and sacred places ...evolved in this land." (Aboriginal people strike, n.d., p.2) A year after this demand for Wattie Creek/Daguragu the Commonwealth Government offered them 1.5 square miles of barren land near the Wave Hill Police Station, which they refused. Against all expectations (*This Day Tonight*, 1968, January 1st) the Gurindjis were prepared to fight for what they believed to be rightfully theirs.

Supported by the North Australian Workers Union, influential novelist, Frank Hardy, and unions as well as demonstrations in the south, the strike exposed more than the appalling conditions; it revealed the irregularities in the law. Not only was it illegal to pay equal wages to Aboriginal workers, it was customary to pay government benefits into the pastoral company's accounts (Treaty Republic, n.d.). It was also illegal to pay Aboriginal workers their entire salary in money and their rations of salt beef, bread and tobacco (*This Day Tonight*, 1968) perpetuated their welfare dependency.

Although the Wave Hill revelations contributed to the Government's impetus to change the Constitution through the referendum the following year, stipulating that the Commonwealth and not the State Governments were responsible for legislating

⁵⁹ Wattie Creek is also known as Daguragu to the Gurindji people.

for Aboriginal peoples, the first offer of land, the 1.5 square miles of barren land, was not an encouraging beginning to a new relationship. The land rights claim would not be settled until 1975.

The source of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal songs (Egan, 1971; Kelly & Carmody, 1991) and stories, Lingiari was honoured for his heroic confrontation “of the vast economic and political forces that were arrayed against him and his people.” (Treaty Republic, n.d., p. 2) He received an Order of Australia Medal in 1976 for services to the Gurindji (National Heritage Places, n.d.).

ABC's Current Affairs program, *This Day Tonight*, referred to by Graeme Turner (2005) as the Gold Standard of Current Affairs journalism, travelled to Wattie Creek/Daguragu for the first bulletin of the New Year in 1968. The archived television segment reports that the Gurindji struggles at Wave Hill had effectively made the nation aware of the possibility of Aboriginal land rights:

‘Blackfella country’ – until recently, few people realised that there might be such a thing. The idea that the Aborigine might own some of the land he discovered 100,000 years ago is one of the rude awakenings for Australians in the 1960s (Reporter, *This Day Tonight*, 1968, January 1st).

The combination of Wave Hill and the 1967 referendum ushered in, as seen below, almost three decades of land rights reform pursued through the judiciary. In 1967 non-Aboriginal Australia had expressed an overwhelming desire for change; Victor Turner's *communitas* – the spirit of humanity so absent in 1838 was now abroad one hundred and thirty years later.

Reflecting on this period Manne (2009) suggests: “for the first time in Australian history moral consciousness awoke for very many members of an entire non-indigenous generation.” (2009, p.6) And for this generation, Manne (2009) continues, the most authoritative teacher, introduced in this thesis in Chapter Three, was anthropologist, W.E.H. Stanner. The nation had committed itself to inclusion; now it was to be given the words and the metaphors it needed to understand why this had not happened before.

4.1.2. Generational change

Particularly through his series of Boyer lectures⁶⁰ in 1968, Stanner tackled the pervasive attitudes of indifference and contempt for Aboriginal people. With a humanistic approach to Aboriginal ways of being, ways of seeing, which refuted the predominant hierarchical belief that modernity equated with progress, Stanner roused his non-Indigenous audiences. He invited them to consider the tragedy to all Australians inherent in the loss not just of Aboriginal society but of the Aboriginal imagination, with its insight, its spirituality, its rich mythology (Manne, 2009).

Stanner had taken the opportunity of conducting fieldwork in remote Aboriginal communities in the 1930s and so had experienced a way of life that was sustainable, unalterable, its rhythms defined by the environment and food supply; a way of life that would have existed one hundred and fifty years before. And he had seen that way of life destroyed through policies of protection and segregation. But what excited him in the 1960s was reversal:

...something very remarkable has happened: the fact that Aborigines have been out of history for a century and a half are coming back into history with a vengeance (1968, p. 182).

Despite the “homelessness, powerlessness, poverty and confusion” (Stanner, 1968, p.206) delivered by colonization, Aboriginal people had survived and non-indigenous Australia had begun to recognise it. What was and remains so potent about this realization, that Aboriginal people still existed, was the language Stanner chose in his second Boyer lecture to articulate it. In his perceptive, non-confrontational style he addressed not what was emergent but elected instead to name the societal forces that had so powerfully inhibited collective non-Indigenous awareness until this point in time:

...inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness on a national scale...a story over which the great Australian silence reigns (1968, pp.188-9).

⁶⁰ The Boyer lectures, an annual series of six lectures delivered by a prominent intellectual and broadcast on ABC radio, began in 1959. Initiated by ABC Board chairman, Richard Boyer, they are intended to stimulate discussion and reflect key issues and values of their time.

Manne (2009) recognises Stanner's frequently observed "systematic strangulation of national conscience" (2009, p. 13) as making a powerful contribution to understanding the source of a pervasive apathy:

In the anthropological exploration of non-indigenous Australia, Stanner's 'great Australian silence' was perhaps the most important discovery ever made. It provided the vital clue to the puzzle at the heart of Australian national identity (2009, p.14).

Stanner's influence was profound; the hundreds of books and articles after Stanner's Boyer series incorporating the Aboriginal experience of the national past effectively shattered the silence he so abhorred (Curthoys, 2010).

However Curthoys (2010) reminds us that in 1968 Stanner was one figure in the already fragmenting landscape of the national discourse. She urges us to respect not just the words he spoke but the diverse oratory he united:

the change that occurred was at least as much driven by Aboriginal people, voices and politics and ... Stanner was an important register and publicist of these voices and these changes rather than their sole originator (2010, p.235).

As Foley & Anderson (2006) insist, no initiative addressing the many legacies of dispossession can be fully appreciated without the inclusion of contemporaneous expressions Aboriginal resistance. If not as a singular white narrator, perhaps then Stanner's greatest gift, Manne (2009) suggests, was not only the truths he told but his imagination and his lack of sentiment. Stanner's work was accessible, empathic and engaging, he stepped out of the academy and pamphleteering to seek more public forums for his ideas and so enlightened and empowered a generation not necessarily into activism but into understanding.

About the same time Stanner was delivering his Boyer lectures, a young high school teacher we have already met was meeting Aboriginal students for the first time.

4.1.3. From sightless to seeing – understanding exclusion

Some thirty years before Tom became an active member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, he was a young school teacher. He tells a story about the

emotional impact of first witnessing the human cost of segregation policies. As Tom had spent his entire life in the country; the marked absence of Aboriginal peoples in his early experience indicates both the effectiveness of government segregation policies and their tacit acceptance by the non-Aboriginal population – until this time. Over forty years later telling this story still reduces him to tears:

As a young teacher I was sent to the Nimbin⁶¹ central school ... the Nimbin school held a sporting excursion to another town up near-by ... a different year each time... And I was the acting sports master on that trip, wasn't I, and anyone who knows me well will know what a joke that was. But the Deputy Principal of the school took me out for a drive in the afternoon and he took me out to the local Blacks' camp. On the side of a hill out from town and ah... old motor cars and housing with sheets of iron, you know, generally a marked step down in housing quality of several grades from the rest of the community and very much an outer fringe and I was, you know, I felt the injustice of that... um... and he made some remarks how difficult it was to get the kids to do much at the school. And so on - the aboriginal kids.

Anyway the next day there was a... sporting carnival and there was this one name of this kid who was... who kept getting all the events. You know? And somewhere along the way I worked out or was told that he was an Aboriginal boy. And we ... (*he cries*) and there was a dance that night and he was the only aboriginal child that came... (*he sobs*) and ah... he hung about outside... I tried to get him to go in but he... hung his head and wouldn't... (*cries*).... Anyway that's a memory obviously that still moves me. And he was a very good looking, very athletic young man. And, of course, you look back now and what would be that boy's future? You know? (Tom, 2011).

Like so many non-Aboriginal Australians prior to this experience, Tom had been what Stanner called: 'sightless.' (Manne, 2009, p. 13) After 50,000 years successfully inhabiting the driest continent on the planet, Aborigines, cut lose from their own culture and not accepted into another, now struggled to meet basic needs.

From his early field work in the 1930s Stanner recognised that contamination with non-Indigenous culture was destroying tribal life and once a tribe has "attached itself in parasitic fashion to a cattle station, mission, farm or settlement... the tribes will never return to the old nomadic life in the bush." (Stanner, 1938, cited in Manne, 2009, p.134) Instead, as Tom observed, Aborigines languished as invisible fringe-dwellers in appalling conditions.

⁶¹ Nimbin is a small country town in rich rainforest country in Northern NSW. About the time "Tom" was there in 1968 it was transforming into an alternative counter-culture haven.

Policies of separation bred not only ignorance but active dislike. “Uncle Roland”⁶² recounts a story about prejudice and discovery:

When I left home, when I left the mission, I had a hatred for white people. I hated especially white women until the time I was playing in bands all over Sydney. And during that time I met this one white man – he was there with me all the time; he was a fan, he liked my music. He did things for me that I didn't look at – and he opened my eyes up to, to humanity, I guess. He was what I call a sincere white person. Because he said he was white that's it, nothing else. But the one I grew up under, he said I'm white, I'm boss, I'm superior to you. That's the difference, that's what opened my eyes up. He didn't know how significant he was. I went to visit him in hospital, I shed a tear for him, when he passed away. I've got a picture of him here on my wall today.

Same with Myall Creek, there were white people there, who did things, who reported investigated, who stood and supported those people (Uncle Roland, 2011).

As Tom taught his classes in the country and Roland played the pubs in town, the policies that assumed Aboriginal peoples would become ‘white’ were finally discredited. The intergenerational legacy of institutionalised disadvantage made expectations of ‘absorption’ naïve and ill-informed. Census data collected in 1971 under the 1967 changes revealed just how great Aboriginal disadvantage was in health, housing, education and life expectancy.⁶³

Assimilation policies adopted in the late 1930s with their “paternalism and arrogance” (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d., p.3) were over.

4.2. The end of Assimilation

The language of assimilation, with its assumption that Aboriginal equality could only be achieved through the loss of Aboriginal identity, was abandoned. The Aboriginal Protection Board was finally abolished and, inspired in part by civil rights movements in the United States, Australian black power advocates in the early '70s initiated the

⁶² “Uncle Roland” is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to “Uncle Roland” come from an interview with him held October 17th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁶³ Infant mortality rates were found to be amongst the highest in the world; Aboriginal male life expectancy particularly was considerably lower than the rest of the population – and remains so – and cardio-vascular disease was two and half times higher (Australian 1967 Referendum, n.d., p.4).

development of self-help organisations, like free legal services, medical clinics and housing associations that expanded across the country over the next decade (Foley & Anderson, 2006). This is consistent with activist history; Foley & Anderson (2006) maintain:

all the major advances of the long land rights movement *and* civil rights movements have been driven by Aboriginal voices and Aboriginal-controlled organisations (2006, p. 99).

In response to Aboriginal activism, the census data and an increasing acceptance of and demands for expressions of diversity in the non-Aboriginal population, policy language shifted once more. Integration was used to reflect increasing recognition of Aboriginal peoples' rights to their languages and customs, to the maintenance of their own distinctive communities and to co-exist in a contemporary Australia.

Now at university in New England, Gerry became aware of Aboriginal peoples for the first time, appreciative of their difference and responsive to changing his own narrow frame of reference:

The story I think began in '72 when I tutored some Aboriginal children - *ah* - just as something worthwhile to do – to balance out the rest of my life that I was living up there [in Armidale, NSW]. And when I saw these little children and they were kind primary, maybe 7, 8 year olds – 5 or 6 Aboriginal kids *ah* that's when I started asking the question. I saw them every week: who are these people? Where do they come from? What's their story? Because I grew up in Gladesville. And back in the '50s this was an Anglo world and the school that I went to was an Anglo school and we learnt all the '50s versions of history, in which Aboriginal people didn't get a mention really. *Ahm*, so suddenly going to Armidale and meeting up with Aboriginal kids – it just kind of floored me in a way. And I was immediately connected with their story. I had to know more about who they were (Gerry, 2011).

But the rhetoric of Integration, although it meant increased funding for health, education and employment programs, it did not mean land rights. Integration was not about to address the fundamental problem of dispossession. But Aboriginal activists were.

4.2.1. The tent embassy

Wave Hill was just one of the on-going land claims issuing from the Northern Territory in the 1960s. In 1963 the Yolgnu people at Yirrkala delivered two bark petitions to the Commonwealth Government, one in English and one in Gumatj. They sought the Government's recognition of Yolgnu land ownership over the demands of a Swiss/Australian Alumina mining company, Nabalco. Unlike the petitions presented in relation to the census, for example, these petitions were the first to combine traditional art, bark painting, with typed text and are seen as a bridge between cultures (Documenting Democracy, n.d.). The petitions were unsuccessful in their purpose but increasingly significant in their provenance; they came to represent cultural survival and formalised the coherent tension between the competing forces of protecting an ancient, sacred relationship and generating national prosperity.

Having failed in their appeal to Government, the Yolgnu turned to the courts. Their case here also failed; in 1971 the judiciary decided that although the Yolgnu had established their occupancy of the land in Aboriginal law, Australian law only recognised terra nullius. The seeds were sewn for protest; the land had now been recognised as ancestral, as having a deep and profound spiritual significance; the words "stolen" and "compensation" surfaced to take a prominent place in the public discourse.

Foley & Anderson (2006) suggest that Prime Minister Billy McMahon was so rattled by the public reaction to this judgement and the year of protest before it, he chose Australia Day, 1972, as a deliberately provocative symbolic occasion to reject the notion of Aboriginal land rights. Within hours of this rejection, activists from Sydney established the Aboriginal Tent Embassy on the lawns in front of Canberra's Parliament House. The Tent Embassy became a powerful symbol of dispossession and "was to catalyse the most symbolic development in the Aboriginal movement of the early 1970s." (Foley & Anderson, 2006, p. 90) Despite two violent interventions from the police to remove the Tent Embassy, it remained for two years and has been resurrected at different times for political and awareness-raising campaigns.

In 1992 the Tent Embassy became a permanent fixture; in 1995 the Embassy achieving a listing on the Australian Heritage Commission's National Estate.

According to Reconciliation Australia's website: "It is the only place recognised nationally for the political struggle of Aboriginal people." (Reconciliation Australia, 2012, p.1)

Although the first tentative steps towards granting land rights were taken in 1972 through the judiciary, the inclusion of Aboriginal voices in policy-making had to wait for an historic election victory.

4.3. Self-determination – the rhetoric and the reality

The election of the Whitlam Labor Government at the end of 1972 meant the end of twenty-three years of continuous Conservative rule. The Whitlam Government's policy of self-determination, which recognised that Aboriginal peoples had a right to be involved in decision-making about their own lives, was then perceived as "a quite radical political act." (Sanders, 2002)

Successive governments changed the emphasis from self-determination to self-management; self-management meant that Aboriginal peoples controlled local funding and steered government projects but had little say in what projects could be created (Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, n.d.). With echoes of old paternalism, the transfer of power was conceived as a slower, educative process rather than an acceptance that Aboriginal communities might prefer to decide the pace and nature of their future development. Significantly however even Conservative governments did not philosophically step back into the past.

A Royal Commission into Land Rights led to the passage of the first Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act in 1976. Although there were significant adjustments to the Commission's recommendations in relation to land use and its control in favour of mining and other non-Indigenous interests, "it was widely recognised as a significant step forward." (Foley & Anderson, 2006, p. 91) Meanwhile, prior to his being ousted as Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam in 1975, under Stanner's advice (Hart, 2009), poured sand into Vincent Lingiari's hand, symbolising the return of Wattie Creek/Daguragu to its traditional owners. The then Lord Vestey had

surrendered part of his Wave Hill lease to the Gurindji people. The eight year strike had come to an end.

Since the late 1970s Government policy has blurred the distinctions between self-determination, self-management and consultation. In the light of the Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007, discussed later in this chapter, principles embodied in these policy directions have been seriously undermined, as their efficacy is increasingly contested by members of the wider community. Labelled a failure of self-determination (Jarrett, 2013 (a); Johns, 2011), what is of great concern is whether or not self-determination is a policy failure or whether self-determination has actually ever been implemented.

But at its time of proposed introduction self-determination reflected choice, acknowledging Aboriginal peoples had a right to retain their racial identity, their traditions, their right to be involved in decision-making about their own lives (Australian Law Reform Commission, n.d.). Choice then was not contextualised by an understanding of the long-term challenges derived from welfare dependency, fuelled by lack of leadership and perpetuated by the inter-personal violence due to intergenerational trauma and cultural disintegration (Hart, 2009).

Uncle Roland shares his understanding of the painful legacy of intergenerational trauma:

We don't have strong leaders because over the years we've been going through a lot of grief and pain and that's been passed on through different generations, too. We have to put a stop to that, to work on the younger generation, find some strong black leaders to encourage them - to lead with strong black counselling. It all goes back to knowing who you are; self-knowledge can create a lot of self-meanings. It can create self-confidence, self-love, self-respect. Being in the true of knowledge of who you are can make you strong; to make you acknowledge your somebody-ness. We've come a long way but we've got a long way to go. If you ignore all this, you just repeat it. If there's going to be a change anywhere, there's going to be a change everywhere (Uncle Roland, 2011).

Like F.L. Brown (2004) and his experience of colonization's destruction of the emotional self, discussed in Chapter Three, Uncle Roland makes the same links between human capital, self-esteem and lack of leadership. Disaffected youth are more likely to enter the criminal justice system (Butler, n.d.); normalization of

incarceration and contact with police fuels opportunities for and allegations of racism and race-based victimization, perpetuating a cycle of Aboriginal marginalization and non-Aboriginal indifference (Aboriginal prison rates, n.d.). However despite anecdotal evidence, a 1987 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody failed to implicate police violence as a causal factor but attributed death rates to socio-economic factors like poor health (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, n.d.).

But this Commission initiated a new Government strategy, one that would directly impact on all the *Today We're Alive* research participants. The Commission's terms of reference allowed it to thoroughly investigate social, legal and cultural factors which may have impacted on the deaths investigated. Although other recommendations addressed procedure at the time of arrest, the final recommendation, number 339, advocated initiating a formal process of reconciliation between Aboriginal people and the wider community (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, n.d.).

The recommended process of reconciliation offered the Government of the time under Prime Minister Bob Hawke an ideal diversion. Having failed to honour its commitment to Aboriginal peoples to national land rights and a treaty, trumpeting a reconciliation process enthused the non-Indigenous electorate and betrayed those the process was supposed to support (Gunstone, 2005; Foley & Anderson, 2006).

The persistent narratives of poor leadership and denial of land rights are masked by conciliatory gesture.

4.3.1. Reconciliation – symbols over substance

Critical of the narrow approach of the entire process, Gunstone (2005) argues that the 1991 Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) repeatedly avoided issues most pertinent to Aboriginal peoples, issues they had clearly expressed as wanting to be part of the national conversation: issues of sovereignty, a treaty, self-determination, customary law, land and power relationships and constitutional recognition.

Ignoring the primacy of these demands for substantive change indicated the Government's failure to understand the relationship between history and socio-economic disadvantage. Another persistent narrative endemic to policy failure returns; wilful colonial complicity that later became Stanner's sightlessness had evolved into a celebration of symbols without substance. The reconciliation discourse urged all Australians to walk together as one but, as Gunstone (2005) powerfully articulates:

This discourse failed to recognise that historical factors, such as the invasion, colonisation, massacres, genocide and theft of land and children, and their continuing contemporary discussion ensured that there will continue to be conflicts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (2005, p.5).

Despite its failures, there were some successes; the Reconciliation Movement achieved wide-reaching engagement amongst communities, schools and churches and it was one such initiative in the Uniting Church in 1998 that led to the Myall Creek Memorial. "The Reverend"⁶⁴ shares his story:

In 1992 I was invited by the Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress, which is the aboriginal people in the Uniting Church. Their organization. To engage in a process of covenanting or reconciliation in the Uniting Church. I visited every area of the Uniting Church right across Australia. Every region...In 1998 I came to the conclusion that we really needed to go back to the hard places of our history together, groups of aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people, and acknowledge the truth of what happened in those painful parts of our history...On one occasion I made this proposal to my supervising committee, which was a mixed group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in NSW, and they said, well, why don't you come to Myall Creek. The person who said that was a descendant of those who had been murdered, Sue Blacklock.⁶⁵ So I said great; let's try it (The Reverend, 2011).

Aware of the failure of Len Payne's memorial, Sue recalls speaking to the Reverend about Myall Creek and wanting to represent the massacre with a symbol of permanency: "We want someone to do something...something to really stay." (2011)

⁶⁴ "The Reverend" is a co-founder of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. His name is not given in full to protect his privacy. All reference to "The Reverend" come from an interview with him held in Canberra, July 14th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁶⁵ Sue Blacklock, whom we met in Chapter One, is a co-founder of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. She is a Kamilaroi woman, an Elder and a descendant of a massacre survivor.

What began for the Reverend in 1992 and hadn't stopped troubling Sue Blacklock since the cattle trampled down the sapling planted by Len Payne and Nathan in 1990, were reflections of significant events happening on the national stage. They involved Murray Island man, Eddy Mabo, the judiciary and a Prime Minister.

4.3.2. Balancing acts

In 1991 the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) still had nine years to report but, as Manne (2003) considers, and the Reverend's Australia-wide fact-finding mission that began in 1992 attests to, there was evolving: "[A] deepened historical consciousness and a sharpened moral conscience concerning the dispossession." (2003, p. 1) Manne (2003) suggests this played a vital part in the struggle for reconciliation. The Hawke Government initiative to investigate the reconciliation process might have begun a smoke-screen but it was quickly seen as a gesture of both goodwill and urgency. The following year, 1992, evolved into a year when the nation responded positively to events of practical and symbolic significance that addressed what High Court Justices Gaudron and Deane referred to as "Australia's legacy of unutterable shame." (Manne, 2003, p.1)

The 1960s delivered civil rights, in the 1990s terra nullius finally came to an official end. The Mabo case might not have addressed the Land Rights issues nor did it "challenge the basis of the colonial land grab" (Foley & Anderson, 2006, p.95) but it did put an end to the first great fiction of non-Indigenous settlement.

Two judgements in the High Court, Mabo in 1992, and Wik, discussed below, in 1996, revolutionised Australian jurisprudence and the way the colonization story was told. After a ten year battle Torres Strait Islander, Edie Mabo, established his long uninterrupted sixteen generational ancestral line of ownership of Mer or Murray Island in the High Court.

The Mabo decision established that when the Crown claimed sovereignty over the land, it did so only over the tiny areas actually occupied. The continent as a whole was in the possession of Aboriginal nations, whose ownership was extinguished in a piecemeal fashion over time. When settlers occupied land they were both trespassing and dispossessing the original owners. Therefore Indigenous

communities either own land under Native Title or have done so in the past and have a moral if not legal right to compensation. If those rights have not been extinguished, and a connection to the land could be proven, then Native Title has survived.

Mabo was not the only significant event in 1992. Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Park speech in the heart of the urban Aboriginal diaspora in December, 1992, launched the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People. In front of predominantly Aboriginal peoples he acknowledged for the first time at prime ministerial level the dark aspects of Australia's past (McKenna, 1997). At the heart of the speech was an apology:

... the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing, we took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us (Keating, P. 1992).

The entire speech is included in this dissertation (*Appendix ii*), as its significance in capturing time of hope and inspiration featured in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants' narratives. However it ushered in a backlash. In 1993 historian Professor Geoffrey Blainey commented that the triumphalist view of settler history had given way to something more divisive and sinister.

A further decision in the High Court galvanised forces opposed to the emergent view of colonial history as one of violence. Metaphorically Reynolds' (1998) singing stockmen were once again cheerfully massing on the ridge of the old frontier.

The Wik decision, supporting the claim to traditional lands of the Wik and Thayorre peoples of the Cape York Peninsula in Queensland, was made four years after Mabo in 1996. A High Court ruling of 4 - 3 upheld the legality of pastoral leases, first proposed by the departing Governor Gipps in the 1840's, which in principle recognised that Aboriginal occupancy and pastoral pursuits could co-exist over the leased land.

Land impacted by the Mabo decision was usually vacant Crown Land, like the site on which the Memorial is built, land for which in over 200 years settlers had failed to find

an economic use. But the Wik decision was a different story: pastoral leases covered 40 per cent of the land surface in the continent, including some of the best grassland in the country (Reynolds, 1999).

However neither Mabo nor Wik have brought the outcome Aboriginal peoples wanted. Both decisions continue to threaten long-held positions of hierarchy and subordination (Reynolds, 1999) stoking those embers of entitlement that reconciliation has failed to douse.

4.3.3. A meagre estate

The recognition of Native Title, according to Les Malezer (2012), has not resulted in a significant increase in the Aboriginal estate. The Native Title laws of 1993 that followed the Mabo decision and clarified diverse legal positions of land-holders, have become an impediment to land rights. Malezer (2012) continues:

...in many cases Aboriginal people who should have land returned to them under land rights are now being denied, because they can't meet the rigorous legal hoops that people have to jump through to get a native title decision (2012, p.3).

So although 1992 was a landmark date for Australian First peoples neither Mabo nor Wik has provided Aboriginal people with the power and status they promise (Malezer, 2012) and land rights remain critical to the cultural identity of Aboriginal people. For Foley & Anderson (2006) current Land Rights legislation is not just irrelevant to most Aboriginal people, failure to log a successful claim "legitimises dispossession". (2006, p.100)

According to Reynolds (1999) terra nullius might have been finally over-turned as a legal principle, nevertheless its legacy lingers both in the legislature and in the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people:

It is obvious that the doctrine of terra nullius still holds sway. It may have been expelled from the courts but it still resides securely in many hearts and minds. As a nation we find it very hard to recognise our own distinctive forms of racism. They exist in ... ways of thinking which are often taken as no more than common sense (Reynolds, 1999, p. 222).

In 1996 the new Prime Minister, John Howard, borrowing from the American neo-conservative movement (Manne, 2003), re-directed the national discourse away from issues of diversity, race and minorities and foregrounded what he understood to be the mainstream. In doing so he amended the Native Title Act, excluded Aboriginal political leaders from the process of negotiation and was affronted by suggestions of generational culpability after the release of the *Bringing Them Home Report*⁶⁶ in 1997. Any suggestions of genocide were rejected (Manne, 2003). To support this view, Howard elevated historian Geoffrey Blainey's benign and bloodless view of the colonial enterprise and the History Wars began.

4.3.4. The History Wars

The emphasis on the violence of Frontier expansion strike at the heart of what Blainey (1993) referred to as: the black armband view of history, one that “represented the swing of the pendulum from a position that had been too favourable to an opposite extreme that is decidedly jaundiced and gloomy.” (Blainey, 1993, cited in McKenna, 1997, p. 2)

Although estimated Aboriginal deaths from the frontier wars stand at twenty thousand (Parbury, 1986), and the European toll at some 2,500 settlers and police, viewing our history as one of invasion and extermination, Blainey (1993) maintains, is divisive. It presents an unacceptable alternative to the traditional idea of peaceful settlement and seeks to undermine national social cohesion (Reynolds, 1999), “to have threatened the moral legitimacy of the nation state” (McKenna, 1997, p. 3) and is “intent on permanently dividing Australians on the basis of race.” (Blainey, 1993, cited in McKenna, 1997, p.9)

⁶⁶ Initiated by the previous Keating Government, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission *the Bringing Them Home Report* into child removal policies and practices was released on May 26th, 1997. It is estimated that between 20,000 and 25,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their homes between 1910 and 1970 (Stolen generations – bringing them home, n.d.). The estimated number of children removed varies; although 100,000 is a figure mentioned (Stolen Generations Fact Sheet, 2007); other investigations suggest the figure is lower (Stolen Generations – bringing them home, n.d.). This largely unknown history of The Stolen Generations aroused intense public concern and the report sold more copies than any comparable document (Stolen Generations – bringing them home, n.d.).

This threat of national division as a consequence of acknowledging all aspects of the colonial past powerfully reflected John Howard's 1988 initiative, *Future Directions* (McKenna, 1997). Sensitive to what he perceived to be the destructiveness of guilt, he linked history's narrative to engendering a national powerlessness:

Taught to be ashamed of their past, apprehensive about their future, pessimistic about their ability to control their own lives let alone their ability to shape the character of their nation as a whole, many came to see change as being in control of them instead of them being in control of change. With it, hope and confidence in the future were transformed into concern and despair (Howard, 1988, cited in McKenna, 1997, pp. 4-5).

Were Howard to have been addressing Aboriginal history at this point, his insight into the relationship between narrative and spirit would have made a significant contribution to the accelerating forces of reconciliation. He was however addressing his non-Aboriginal constituency and arguing for a kind of protectionist view that would screen out a different reality.

Once in power in 1996, Howard recognized that Australian history "has its flaws – certainly – but which broadly constitutes a scale of heroic and unique achievement against great odds." (Howard, 1996, cited in McKenna, 1997, p. 7)

But for members of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, who by 1998 were together embarking on plans for the Memorial through a series of public meetings in the memorial hall, the reality of the reconciliation journey was staring down rage and this was stirring up doubt. Fragmenting the old triumphalist discourse did not come without conflict. Peggy remembers the anxiety of confrontation:

When we first started having the meetings and slowly people started coming into the hall and there would be so much anger. And people would start yelling out – and there was this man and he'd come to the door of the hall and scream abuse and then he'd just walk away. He'd just walk away. And none of us said anything. We'd just let it go. And then eventually it was Lizzie Connors⁶⁷ who stood up and said: we're here to do this for us. So if you can't sit down and listen, then just go away. It took probably three meetings before that anger went away, it was like you were sitting there thinking, Oh gawd, am I doing the wrong thing here? And I can understand why people were angry.

⁶⁷ Lizzie Connors is a Kamilaroi woman, an Elder and a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee.

People just had to learn to trust, I think. And it was a way from them to vent their anger. Where it was safe (Peggy, 2011).

The meetings continued, the good will was there – along with the anger, the doubt and a political environment that wanted a return to past colonial certainties. By 2000 Howard's vision was conspicuously out of step with public opinion. Ironically John Howard's refusal to accept diversity, to foreground minorities, to include contested histories succeeded in creating the divided nation he so vigorously warned against.

In May, 2000, over a quarter of a million people marched for reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. They stopped along the way to watch an aeroplane write SORRY in the sky. It was a word Howard had vigorously denied his needing to offer, because it was not his nor his generation's fault that the 'bad things' in the past had happened. However disengagement with the past did not have universal appeal. Other capital cities mobilised; there were other bridge walks: almost a million people across the country participated (Reconciliation Australia, 2010).

4.3.5. Sorry - reconciliation revisited

In May, 2000, the day before the bridge walk at the Opera House in Sydney, the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) delivered two documents: the Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation and the Roadmap for Reconciliation. What is clear in both documents is the understanding that reconciliation is a process achieved through change over time and that "the journey of healing" (Final Report, CAR, 2000, p. 1) occurs through a two-way exchange: an apology for past injustices and an acceptance of that apology (Final Report, 2000).

A month later and six hundred kilometres away, the Myall Creek Memorial Committee held the first commemorative ceremony with a crowd of 500 attending (Stubbins, T & Smith, P., 2001). Sue Blacklock's children painted up and danced, there was a smoking ceremony and one by one the plaques were unveiled. At the Memorial rock, the boulder overlooking the massacre site, two descendants of massacre survivors and two descendants of massacre perpetrators embraced with the words:

We acknowledge our shared history. We seek reconciliation between our peoples, and healing of the wounds of the past (Commemorative Service, 2000).

Then everyone was invited to join in with:

This is the history of every one of us; we are all heirs and survivors, beneficiaries and victims of its injustices and misunderstandings. We too want reconciliation and healing (Commemorative Service, 2000).

The Reverend had always been concerned that local people would resent this history now making national news; for decades Len Payne had faced opprobrium and now this service was happening just seven years after Len's death. The Reverend became increasingly vulnerable, as he told this story:

Initially there was some negativity from the local community, Bingara, Myall Creek, you're targeting us, you're labelling us you know, we're...it was never said overtly...but I heard rumours of feelings: this will... this will be bad for the community to have all this history told. I heard some of that. Um...so after that first ceremony, we went back down to the hall, we had our meeting. I went back up to the Memorial alone. And I found three local families at the memorial. With little children. They'd brought flowers and put them on the Memorial and one of the little boys ...I suppose he was eight...he said to me we're going to look after this forever. (*Cries*). So I choked up a bit.... So even if there was some negative reaction, you're targeting us, you're going to give us a bad name, there were others in the community who said: it's time we did this (The Reverend, 2011).⁶⁸

Although Gunstone (2005) disputes the efficacy of the CAR initiative, citing its failure to tackle the critical issues embodied in Aboriginal peoples' dispossession, the long-term view expressed in the Reconciliation documents mentioned above have helped to change the narrative. In 2008 'Sorry' became a key word in the then new Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's speech to the Stolen Generations and their families.

A stirring and emotional speech,⁶⁹ it addressed not just the acts of the past but the failure of the previous Howard Government to respectfully and responsibly react to the previous *Bringing Them Home Report*. Although Rudd ruled out reparations in

⁶⁸ The Gwydir Shire Council, based in Bingara, is now a strong supporter of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee and has recently financed a history walk of the site. The walk, involving headphones and edited narratives, is to be available by June, 2014.

⁶⁹ The speech is available at <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html>

the speech, it generated a powerful sense of national unity and healing. In the words of Aboriginal writer, Glenn Iseger-Pilkington (2013):

The declaration that the Australian Federal Government and State and Territory Governments engaged in practices that have caused and continue to cause an unquantifiable amount of trans-generational trauma and collective pain brought a sense of closure and peace (2013, p. 131).

'Sorry' has opened a dialogue. But in light of the following, that dialogue, as Gunstone (2005) anticipated, resonates with symbolism. It does not yet demonstrate a substantive commitment to understanding or valuing the relationship between rights, history and difference.

Under John Howard's leadership two more policy initiatives were launched, both in 2007, both in response to reports on Aboriginal peoples' acute disadvantage

4.4. Closing the gap

Leading Aboriginal spokesperson, Noel Pearson, maintains without equality there can be no reconciliation. A raft of current Government policies being pursued under Closing the Gap⁷⁰ initiatives aspire to deliver the kind of equality Pearson (2010) so clearly articulates:

I hope for the day when Aboriginal children will have the same expectations of life as their fellow Australians – to develop their unique cultural, social and economic capital – secured by a new framework of Aboriginal rights and responsibilities, embraced in a national settlement (Pearson, 2010).

Celebrating the fifth anniversary of the Closing the Gap Campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality. Co-chairs Dr Tom Calma and Mick Gooda, both prominent Aboriginal leaders, shared the podium at the high-profile forum, the National Press Club. Together they suggested that the Campaign's success to date

⁷⁰ Closing the Gap is a commitment by all Australian governments, State and Federal, plus over 150,000 individual Australians and organisations to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians. The initiative was launched in 2007 following Dr Tom Calma's 2005 Social Justice Report, which he delivered in his then role as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. A budget of \$4.6 billion was made available in 2008 for initiatives in health, housing, early childhood development, economic participation and employment, education and remote service delivery. Of that budget \$1.6 billion is directed towards health and in particular closing the life expectancy gap of 17 years.

in raising awareness of Aboriginal disadvantage and harnessing wide ranging community and government support for alleviating it is attributable to three factors working in harmony: political will, Indigenous leadership and its consequence, Indigenous empowerment (Calma & Gooda, 2011, March 10).

But socio-economic statistics, indicators of disadvantage and marginalization tell the same old story. The life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is seventeen years; prison populations reveal a story of chronic systemic dysfunctionality, characterized by high rates of recidivism, mental illness, police racism, biased criminalization of trivial offences and non-Aboriginal indifference (Aboriginal prison rates, n.d.). Furthermore incarceration rates have been rapidly increasing since the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody report of 1991.⁷¹

The past remains in the present. The persistent narrative is intact despite the new rhetoric of reconciliation. As Aboriginal leaders Les Malezer (2012); Noel Pearson (2010) and Mick Dodson (2012) reiterate: the old way has not yet come to an end.

4.4.1. Unfinished business

There is still no treaty, no Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal peoples' status as First Australians and no reparations on the table for land that was taken. Australia is poised for another referendum in 2015;⁷² the proposed changes to the Constitution will recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, affirm their full and equal citizenship and remove the last vestiges of racial discrimination from the Constitution (Report from the Expert Panel, 2012). The proposed changes have bipartisan support.

⁷¹ At that time Aboriginal people made up 14% of the total prison population; by 2008 this increased to 24%. In that same year Indigenous peoples were 13 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to be in prison and in Western Australia that figure increased to 20 times more likely; this figure is far worse for juveniles in Western Australia, where Indigenous boys are 48 times more likely to be imprisoned than their white peers (Aboriginal prison rates. (n.d.). p.2.).

⁷² The nineteen member Expert Panel for the Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples was appointed by the then Gillard Labor Government in December, 2010, and reported back in January 2012. The report suggests that recommended constitutional changes "are capable of gaining overwhelming public support" (Report, 2012, p v).

Symbolically through a successful referendum, according to Pat Dodson, Aboriginal co-chair of the Expert Panel, Australia would embrace the cultures, art, languages and heritage of Indigenous people as “the nation’s soul.” (Dodson, P., 2012) Failure, the Report from the Expert Panel emphasises, “could seriously harm national unity and our capacity to achieve lasting reconciliation. It could also cause deep hurt to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.” (Report, 2012, p.224) Decisions on whether to go ahead with a public awareness campaign supporting the referendum will be made in September, 2014 (Reconciliation Australia, 2014).

Australia might have finally endorsed the 2007 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination in 2009 but those rights are still not a reality.⁷³ As Australians, we have yet, according to Mick Dodson (2012) “to abandon the old settler colonial societal thinking and come with a good heart to the task of resetting the relationship in line with ... the global standard.” (2012, p.3)

What remains singularly disheartening is the unlikelihood of self-determination becoming a reality in the near future. Malezer (Hart, 2009) points to the lack of capacity, particularly in terms of human capital and infrastructure, within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Consequently communities are too easily and too quickly held responsible for their failures, whilst their struggle under the burden of generational “servitude and dependence” (Hart, 2009, p.5) is overlooked. Co-existence and the ability to independently make changes are two principles integral to self-determination (Behrendt, 2011). But both rely on a level of trust; still today a scant commodity. Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda (2011) comments:

Key findings of the 2010 Australian reconciliation barometer include some really good news: 87% of all Australian agree the relationship between black and white is important ...But we still don’t trust each other. Just 9% of all Australians feel that trust between the two groups is good (2011, p.8).

Perhaps what is fuelling this lack of trust is the controversial 2007 Northern Territory Intervention (NTER), which has re-opened for Aboriginal peoples generally old

⁷³ Unlike Canada, New Zealand and the United States, Australia has no Constitutional recognition of Indigenous peoples, no Indigenous treaties (Kauffman, 2003). By 2013 the United States had 250 Native American tribal courts across 32 states; in New Zealand Maori has seven seats in National Government for which only Māori can vote; Canada has the Assembly of First Nations to ensure a greater degree of power in their own communities (Bellear, 2013).

wounds of paternalistic disempowerment. For the already traumatized, remote and disenfranchised population (Altman & Russell, 2012), the policy has meant that: “Our people are again being shamed...We have been left with nothing.” (Aboriginal Elders, 2011)

For non-Indigenous people it means media attention with concomitant negative stereotyping is focused on around 12%⁷⁴ of the Aboriginal population (Price & Price, 2013), while the remaining 88% is ignored. And in such a climate, intolerance and indifference perpetuate a societal gap that undermines any understanding of genuine partnership (Malezer, 2012).

The Northern Territory Emergency Response, or Intervention as it is also known, troubles participant Ian, because it stands as an anomaly compared to advances made elsewhere in the nation:

I'm very optimistic. If we look back 30 years, how far we've come as a society. I mean I think we are making progress. Sadly not in the Northern Territory, I think we've gone backwards. ...We have gone physically backward. Twenty years. And I think it was misguided altruism that caused it. Sadly (Ian, 2011).

I used part of that speech in the play. One of my Aboriginal actors, Lily, had the line. When she came to it, she extemporised: 'twenty years' became 'forty years'. Both twenty and forty have remained in the play, as way of expressing outrage – just as Lily did 'on the day'.

Although it started as a Howard Government initiative, NTER has been endorsed by all subsequent Governments.

4.5. The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)

Triggered by the release of the *Little Children Are Sacred Report*⁷⁵ in the Northern Territory in 2007, which tabled wide-ranging sexual abuse of Aboriginal children on remote and semi-remote communities, the Howard Government, facing an election,

⁷⁴ Malezer (2009) divides the remote/non-remote Indigenous population into 20% and 80% respectively. For the purposes of consistency, the figures will remain at 12% and 88% for this chapter.

⁷⁵ The *Little Children Are Sacred Report* represents the findings of a 2006 Northern Territory Government Inquiry into the Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse (Northern Territory Intervention, 2007).

launched a Federal emergency response⁷⁶ (Altman & Russell, 2012). The *Little Children Are Sacred Report* offered ninety-seven recommendations focusing on the areas of education, alcohol reduction and rehabilitation, family support services, empowerment of communities and the appointment of a commissioner for children and young people (Aboriginal Elders, Walk With Us, 2011). Not one of the recommendations laid out in the Report was adopted (Northern Territory Intervention, 2007).

Deploring the Howard Government's actions, Pat Anderson, one of the co-authors of the *Little Children Are Sacred Report*, criticizes the lack of consultation and the refusal to adopt a partnership approach with Aboriginal communities. But the pattern was set for further Governments to follow. The passage of the 2012 \$3.4 billion Stronger Futures legislation, three related bills which "will, in essence extend many of the provisions of the NTER until 2022," (Biddle, 2012, p.1) continues to attract condemnation for its lack of meaningful consultation (Aboriginal Elders in Walk With Us, 2011). Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, acknowledges that the failure of the Australian Government to recognize the right to self-determination for Indigenous people, a key element of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples, undermines all other initiatives that have been introduced to address disadvantage (Pillay, 2011, cited in Aboriginal Elders, 2011, p.65).

However all stakeholders agree that federal action was "long overdue." (Northern Territory Intervention, 2007, p.1) The *Little Children Are Sacred Report* (Overview, 2007) targets a breakdown of Aboriginal culture due excessive consumption of alcohol, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, boredom and overcrowded and inadequate housing as factors which lead to excessive violence and "in the worst case scenario ... the sexual abuse of children." (2007, p.12) Of significance here is the report's (Overview, 2007) insistence that:

The violence and sexual abuse occurring in Northern Territory Aboriginal communities is, as we have said, a reflection of historical, present and continuing social dysfunction...The origins of such dysfunction are not so

⁷⁶ The response included seizing control of 73 prescribed Aboriginal communities in the Northern territory for five years; sending the police and army in to deal with law and order; banning alcohol; quarantining welfare payments, so that the government could control how welfare money is spent.

clear...The best (the Inquiry) can hope to achieve is to present meaningful proposals...so that Aboriginal communities themselves, with support, can effectively prevent sexual abuse of their children (Overview, 2007, p. 14).

So far the Intervention has not led to a measurable improvement in the lives of the 45,000 people it affects (Stop the Intervention Myths and Facts, 2012). Yet anecdotal evidence (Price, 2013, cited in Jarrett, 2013 (a); Price, 2011, cited in Johns, 2011) suggests that life is easier, safer for women and children. Hudson (2011) observes that in some communities alcohol restrictions have acted as a circuit breaker; she points to two communities, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing, where restrictions were reinforced by strong local women and alcohol-related crime has decreased by up to 40%. The attention now given to male-perpetrated violence, Price & Price (2013) consider, has helped create awareness amongst the men themselves, leading to incremental cultural shifts in attitudes towards abuse.

What the Intervention has seemed to polarize and politicize are attitudes towards cultural violence, whether it be institutional or reactionary. Extreme positions are held by those researchers (Johns, 2011; Jarrett, 2013 (b)), who consider Aboriginal culture itself to be the primary cause of policy failure. It is with a brief discussion of these neo-assimilationist views (Gunstone, 2005) that this chapter concludes.

4.5.1. Sanctioning cultural violence

For neo-assimilationists Johns (2011) and Jarrett (2013, a & b), a primary focus in a policy era of self-determination remains on Aboriginal culture and its failings. Not concerned with distortions in traditional culture that might have evolved through the intergenerational trauma of colonization; they condemn Aboriginal culture outright. In failing to distinguish between contemporary and traditional violence, Jarrett (2013, a & b) presents a barbaric culture that is in destructive decline. Johns (2011) considers Aboriginal culture: “best relegated to museums and occasional ceremonies” (2011, p.23) and extols an implicit return to paternalism. He suggests that the delivery of services to Aboriginal people through what he considers to be the failed processes embedded in policies of self-determination have been so frequently adjusted in order to:

...accommodate Aboriginal culture, that there are no more tweaks to be had, The time has come to call a halt to sensitivities in the delivery of services because those services are, in practice, rewarding people who behave badly (2011, p.176).

Yet neither of these researchers, both motivated by their exposure to the trauma of field work in remote Aboriginal communities, attempts to position their condemnation of Aboriginal culture, especially in relation to women and children, in neither a broader global nor historical context.

Research indicates that “violence against women is a universal phenomenon that persists in all countries of the world and the perpetrators of that violence are often well-known to their victims.” (Garcia-Moreno et al, 2005, p. vii) Mitchell (2011) emphasizes that domestic violence “cuts across social and economic boundaries and the data on the effect of education, employment status and income are mixed.” (2011, p. 5) This is not to diminish the suffering perpetrated on Aboriginal women and children, particularly on remote communities, but it is a plea for a greater consideration and inclusion of global factors in order to create a deeper, more sophisticated analysis of the complex problems, which continue to exist as toxic residue left by the receding tide of colonization. Without this complexity researchers run the risk of reinforcing stereotypes of an earlier era, when paternalism smothered the onus of shared responsibility.

But to assume mainstream society is without violence, inequality, poor education and racism is naïve. Perhaps the changing world created by the invasive dominant culture is still so insistently omnipresent, it continues to escape condemnation, whereas its victims do not.

4.5.2. Power politics

Perpetuation of the current top-down, monolithic and paternalistic approach, as exemplified by the Northern Territory Intervention, threatens to impede the development of productive Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal dialogue. Relationships remain uncertain; the humanitarian crisis in the Territory continues; no side in the policy argument is wholeheartedly accepted or respected. Gallios & McDonald's (2012)

contention that we are no closer to understanding each other now than we were in 1788 is arguably sustained. Or, as Stanner observed in 1958:

Those Aborigines I know seem to me to be still fundamentally in struggle with us. The struggle is for a different set of things, differently arranged, from those which most European interests want them to receive. Neither side has clearly grasped what the other seeks (Stanner, 1958, p.147).

Yet the diversity of particularly Aboriginal voices invites engagement: Pholi (2013) decries the stigmatisation of Aboriginal identity and assumed disadvantage, and urges the introduction of less positive discrimination and more equitable career pathways. Leading Educator, Dr Chris Sarra (2003) deplores a culture of victimhood and encourages active bi-cultural participation. Playwright Jane Harrison (2012) welcomes cross-cultural exploration but strongly asserts that in view of contact history it is politically incorrect to criticize.

But for non-Indigenous leadership old habits die hard; without an established hierarchy, there is no easy way to demonstrate superiority. Without genuine power-sharing, collaboration and genuine consultation remain stymied.

On the morning of December 18th, 1838, a military parade had been timed to coincide exactly with the hanging of the seven accused perpetrators in the Myall Creek massacre. It was, as Millis (1994) suggests, a spectacle to draw crowds away from the scaffold. But it was also a demonstration of Empire; a reinforcement of authority and of order.

Altman & Russell (2012) intimate that the Intervention of 2007 manifests similar political intentions: the then unpopular Prime Minister, John Howard, was facing an election in November of that year; the knee-jerk response to the *Little Children Are Sacred* Report was enacted in haste and without consultation. It was a show of force; a demonstration of law and order neoliberal authoritarianism (Hyatt, 2011, cited in Altman and Russell, 2012, p.19). The result, Altman & Russell (2012) conclude, is more about allaying urban concern rather than remote community well-being:

...the Intervention is just as much about mainstream Australians as Indigenous Australians, used as a means of persuading and comforting them that something productive is being done by the Australian Government with

unprecedented financial commitments to address acute problems in remote Indigenous Australia (2012, p.18).

Altman and Russell (2012) suggest that the Intervention has failed to meet benchmarks and that report findings on income management, for example, have been heavily qualified in order to obfuscate evidence. As Casey (2012) points out: “The major outcome of the intervention has been a trebling of mining exploration on land that was previously controlled by Aboriginal people.” (2012, p. 63)

Yet it remains in place. Regrettably the Intervention embodies all the persistent narratives that have ebbed and flowed throughout our shared history: questions of land ownership and Aboriginality; paternalism and a denial of the past; the inconsistency of non-Aboriginal leadership with its characteristic opportunism and lack of vision. The tragedy is in the virulence with which they have returned and remained. And it sets a deeply regrettable precedent.

For the Myall Creek Memorial Committee the Intervention confirms the lack of non-Aboriginal Australians’ willingness to change. Participant “Patrick”⁷⁷ argues:

The point is we’ve been making the same mistakes. It’s arrogance and cultural ignorance that lead to these policies that we’ve been implementing for 200 years: our ignorance of Aboriginal culture and our arrogance that we know best. It’s not just the Aborigines that need to be educated it’s us that need to be educated. It’s two-way traffic. We need to learn about their culture and there are so many wonderful things in Aboriginal culture and they’d be huge pluses for our culture. And that’s one of the things in 2011 that we still don’t get. Our ignorance is as much as a problem as the lack of Aboriginal education (Patrick, 2011).

Because of the lack of knowledge or even the awareness of its absence, Gerry considers the Memorial to have a greater significance to non-Australians:

I always think from my point of view, Myall Creek is not about healing Aboriginal hurts, it’s for white Australians to find out what it really means to be Australian. To find their identity. As an Australian. So in that sense we need Myall Creek ah perhaps the most. Yeah (Gerry, 2011).

⁷⁷ “Patrick” is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to “Patrick” come from an interview with him held in Sydney, September, 26th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

4.6. Conclusion

As Australia evolves into a multicultural society, problematic as that concept has proven to be (Grehan, 2001), shifts in policy reflect changing perceptions. From the pain of segregation, child removal and State-based discrimination to the growing recognition of the importance of inclusion on all levels and the probability of another Referendum, institutional change moves us all slowly into unfamiliar territory.

In this transitional process diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices call for balance (McKenna, 1997), justice (Foley and Anderson, 2006), recognition (Pearson, 2010) and respect (Dodson, M., 2010; Behrendt, 2011). Emergent Aboriginal voices condemn aspects of Aboriginal peoples' culture – its violence (Price & Price, 2013); its victimhood (Pholi, 2013).

The Intervention is a policy anomaly; its continuation in a climate of robust intellectual debate suggests that there is still a national divide; the persistent narratives have matured but remain. The dominant culture now has no difficulty in accepting an Aboriginal presence; however it remains challenged by Aboriginal difference.

It is within this energised field of multiple authorities that a performance ethnography about a massacre and a Memorial makes its contribution.

Chapter Five

Methodologies

Finding the First Draft – quests and compromises in the play-making space

Is this what you're saying? (The Reverend, 2011)

5. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodologies employed to support the creation and presentation of the first draft of the play, *Today We're Alive*. The content of this draft reflects editorial contributions from my actor/co-researchers not collaboration. This is a consequence of decisions made early in the research journey; these decisions are discussed later in this chapter. However despite this limitation, I suggest that performed research has a contribution to make in the decolonizing methodological spectrum, because of its capacity to present multiple truths and reveal the nuanced ambiguities buried within past and present hegemonic narratives.

5.1 Interpreting the nature of collaborative practice

Decolonizing researchers stress the importance of collaboration in all phases of the decolonizing research journey (Battiste, 2008; L.T. Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). Although this study does not address this challenge in depth due to budgetary and time constraints, the creation of drama through community stories involves collaborative practice (Barndt, 2008). Furthermore, researchers Denzin & Lincoln (2008) consider the performative to be a method of research delivery, that constitutes a participatory mode of knowing, “which serves to legitimate indigenous world views.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p.14) Therefore the failure to include collaborative research practices does not, in my opinion, exclude this performance

ethnography from offering exciting possibilities in the evolving decolonizing methodological arena. Apart from drama being a collaborative art form in its own right, there can be within performance, as understood as a particularised, constructed manifestation of the performative, or way of being, the potential to demonstrate an emotional collaboration between actor and script, and actor and audience. This form of collaboration, of receptivity to craft demands, forges new ways of understanding through relationship in the decolonizing play-making space. Emotional or relational collaboration in the performance of the first draft of *Today We're Alive* was viscerally present, as is discussed both in this chapter and in more detail in Chapter Seven.

The decolonizing play-making space is a site of intense engagement; the researcher as the researched is in sharp focus, the sense of on-going injustice perpetrated by colonization never far from the edges of the creative consciousness. It is a space that demands respect and delivers confrontation. And yet, as was discovered in the *Today We're Alive* play-making space, it is a research site of great positivity, collegiality and energy. Although we were all together for such a short time, we developed a camaraderie, which resonated, I suggest, from a commitment to a shared purpose. It is a camaraderie common to members of the Memorial Committee.

So despite the lack of rehearsal draft,⁷⁸ the lack of time and financial constraints, which together inhibited the development of innovative practice, the performance the actor/co-researchers delivered at the memorial hall that Sunday morning in November, 2011, exceeded all expectations. Why that might have been so is addressed in Chapter Seven but the audience's appreciation of the actor/co-researchers' work, their enthusiasm for the play itself and the potency of their emotional engagement with stories they knew so well suggests that together we recreated something of lived experience. For that particular audience we told the truth as it had been told to me.

⁷⁸ A rehearsal draft refers to the draft, which is taken into rehearsal and from which a performance draft evolves. Depending on the nature of the development process a first draft usually precedes a rehearsal draft. Usually a play is read many times by colleagues as well as actors before it is considered for production.

This chapter begins with an appraisal of the methodologies that supported the creation of the first draft of *Today We're Alive*. Although the emphasis is on performance ethnography in general and verbatim theatre in particular, as it is applied in the creation of this draft, this chapter also addresses some of the other techniques that have evolved to deliver verbatim plays (Hammond & Steward, 2011). This is followed by a brief discussion on the methodological limitations of the research tools applied to this draft and how these limitations might be addressed.

The chapter concludes with a contextualization of validity, reliability and generalizability in the cross-cultural play-making space.

5.2. Research theory

The research in this study is qualitative in nature as it subscribes to the “socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints which shape inquiry.” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.8) This study integrates multiple narratives about a shared experience and translates those narratives into a dramatic form. Therefore the interpretive paradigm which frames this study is that of constructivism, where “knowledge is regarded as being constructed by the individual such that the individual creates meaning of the world, rather than discovers meaning from the world.” (Gale, 1995, p. xii) Constructivism therefore recognizes that there are multiple realities and the researcher and the participants are co-creating meaning (Neuman, 2003).

In drama research there are many players, as fieldwork evolves into performed text, whether that text is verbal, virtual or choreographed. Every participant influences the data to varying degrees in my experience. Participants in the field impact on the content, participant/performers affect its delivery; participant/audience members influence the re-drafting process through direct feedback or their general receptivity as perceived by the playwright/researcher. And all this is without responses or reflections from learned colleagues. But it is important to distinguish here between the co-creation of meaning and the co-creation of content.

The co-creation of content is of great significance in decolonizing research, because it privileges egalitarian exchange through collaborative practice. However, as noted earlier, content collaboration was not possible in the sense of its co-creation through co-researcher involvement in the data-gathering process. But at this early stage of defining the theoretical scaffolding for this research project co-creation of meaning is relevant, as it supports both my co-researchers' involvement in data analysis, or performance, and my position as researcher/playwright as the ultimate decision-maker on all levels of the research process. This difference between co-creation of content and co-creation of meaning recognizes, as Madison (2005) makes explicit, the difference between a play text, when the writer is not present, when the play is already in the public domain, and ethnographic study, when the writer /researcher is present and continually re-engaging with a script as it evolves from fieldwork to performance. Madison (2005) continues:

The play is already written. The ethnography is not. It is always writing and re-writing itself through the rehearsal process. Therefore, the ethnographic performance not only constitutes the ethics of representation, it not only illuminates field experiences, but it is an act of data making (2005, p. 402).

In performance meaning is therefore co-created but in ethnographic play-making content decisions ultimately rest with the final arbiter; in the case of *Today We're Alive*, I was that final arbiter. Although my actor/co-researchers commented on the text, making recommendations on edit points, they did not participate in the data gathering nor read the participant transcripts.

As an arts-informed inquiry (Diamond & Mullen, 1999) the play and the findings it delivers are not only concerned with exploring the multiple ways participants engage with the world around them, the research project acknowledges the “presence and signature of the researcher.” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61) Its focus is on the act of art creation in a specific environment and the analysis of the complex contestations and expectations, which continually interact to address the demands of discovery and delivery.

Furthermore as an arts-informed inquiry it is a direct descendant of narrative story telling (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and educational criticism (Barone & Eisner, 1997), which have both helped to legitimate it as a research approach in the fields of education, sociology and social-psychology (Cutcher, 2004,

p.44). Because narratives collected in the research field form the basis of the data, it may be further distinguished as an arts-informed/narrative inquiry, thereby embracing both its intent and its origins.

5.2.1 Narrative Inquiry

Chase (2003) argues that narrative is ubiquitous and its purpose is universal: "...all forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning." (2003, p.273) L.T. Smith (1999) further celebrates Indigenous story-telling as an appropriate decolonizing research methodology, as stories have a deeply powerful temporal significance:

Stories are ways of passing down the beliefs and values of a culture in the hope that the new generations will treasure them and pass the story down further. The story and the story-teller both serve to connect the past with the future, one generation with another, the land with the people and the people with the story (1999, p.145).

Both Indigenous and Western cultures stories embrace the contemporary and the mythic, sometimes simultaneously; they forge relationship and they embody drama. Maufort (2007) recognises an emergent complex First Nations aesthetic of magic realism in Indigenous plays, a kind of narrative that is:

...a skilful blend of Absurdism, historiography, metadrama, myth, and the uncanny or gothic mood ...based on the subtle balance between Western and Native techniques of expression (2007, p.266).

Such an aesthetic, Maufort (2007) maintains, eludes conventional classifications but represents exciting possibilities for cross-cultural understanding through performance. Just as relationships are understood through the shared language of thought, word, feeling and movement; the essential qualities of drama: suspense, tension, humour, clarity, rhythm, economy and surprise, create stories with the potential to travel through time and across literal and metaphorical frontiers.

If arts-informed inquiry created the research project, *Today We're Alive*, narrative inquiry supported the creation of the data. Although the first draft of the play, submitted within this study, includes documentary material, the little it did contain was edited out in the in the draft we took on tour (*Appendix iii*). The documentary

material proved superfluous to the power and authority of the participants' narratives; all essential historical data was already present, a discovery discussed in Chapter Eight. Like pieces in patchwork, every narrative was both unique in aspect and at the same time enriched the whole. The documented history was a distraction, creating a voice of (non-Aboriginal) authority that diffused the participants' narratives of history's lived legacy.

Narrative inquiry recognizes that research is three dimensional – inward in its focus on feelings, attitudes and moral dispositions; outward in the recognition of the external environment; and temporal in its understanding of the researcher's journey over time. Narrative inquiry is also a way of understanding experience, through "living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social....narrative inquiry is stories lived and told." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20)

Supporting the complexity of multiple truths and cultural influences embedded in personal stories, Chase (2003) stresses that the narrative does not equate to responses elicited in an interview and recommends that there be a change in consciousness and receptivity in researchers. If it is accepted that we make sense of our lives through stories, then participants should be allowed to tell them. Chase (2003) advocates that: "in-depth interviews should become occasions, in which we ask for life stories." (2003, p.274)

Narrative inquiry also acknowledges and supports the shift in researcher-participant relationships, recognizing that the relationship will manifest disruption, as it evolves from intense engagement through to objectivity.

Inevitably, narrative inquirers experience this tension, for narrative inquiry is relational. They must become fully involved, must "fall in love" with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81).

This inherent tension in the researcher-participant relationship creates a compelling complexity in the evolution of the data into art, which must reflect economically and meaningfully multiple stories. Just as different participant stories vary, so too can the researcher's understanding of 'the larger landscape.'

5.2.2. Positioning the larger landscape

Decisions around what to include and what to discard are challenging. Verbatim theatre practitioner, Alana Valentine (2010), identifies finding the balance between making her massaged⁷⁹ verbatim play, *Parramatta Girls*, a creative contest between integrity and uncertainty. To create a play about the institutionalization of young women and the sexual, physical and emotional abuse they endured, Valentine immersed herself in these women's adult lives for a period of four years before developing her script. In an interview (Oades, 2010) she was torn between content that revealed their litany of suffering and interactions that revealed through humour their resilience. To focus too much on the latter risked making the suffering too palatable. The 'larger landscape' therefore refers to the necessity of finding a through-line in the final work that reflected all the stories collected.

Valentine found a balance between re-creating the horror of the past and demonstrating its long-term damage using the gruff stoicism of vernacular humour; she also created a narrative that swung between the past and the present. In Valentine's *Parramatta Girls* the 'larger landscape' is not the sociocultural environment that permitted institutionalization without accountability; this is a presence but not an examined one. The larger landscape, I suggest, is long-term trauma.

However the sociocultural 'larger landscape' is a component of *Today We're Alive*. The discovery of the violence and silence of the colonial world influenced the participants and their commitment to the Memorial. Although the play's structure is focused on the Memorial, the how and why it came into being, a common thread in the participants' narratives is the sense of empowerment they as individuals experienced once the past has been revealed to them. The 'larger landscape' in *Today We're Alive* is this collective experience. Individual narratives which demonstrate bitter incidences of racism, of police harassment, of bigotry, of

⁷⁹ 'Massaged verbatim' is a term Valentine uses to distinguish her play, *Parramatta Girls* (2007) from her previous play, *Run Rabbit Run* (2004), which is 'pure verbatim'. In *Run Rabbit Run* the interviewees stories are transcribed and edited; in *Parramatta Girls* Valentine shapes her collected interviews around an invented structure, which facilitates duologues and multiple character interaction (Oades, 2010).

marginalization are either not included or limited, because they would have privileged one individual's story over this same collective experience.

Even though at the outset of this research endeavour I was looking for responses to the person or persons unknown, who damaged the Memorial, this proved to be an event of little consequence for the participants. Like seeking out individual stories of bigotry, to foreground the vandalism with its racist undertones was not reflecting the research field as it presented itself. Nor did the individual experiences of racism enhance the collective story: the healing experience of building the Memorial itself. And that story, the positive story, was the one I felt I needed to tell, if I was to stay with my goal of locating a reconciliation narrative. Furthermore when I had sought permission from the Memorial Committee to embark on this project, the intention, I explained, was present a verbatim play that investigated how they came together, how they overcame what might have driven them apart. I gained their approval for the project, because the play was ultimately to be uplifting.

However as discussed later in this chapter, to include certain stories, particularly about racism and how it was deflected rather than defeated, was tempting. Therefore the selection process for the play content created indecision: what were the contextual and ethical boundaries? How tolerant was the play structure of contradictory narratives? Could I juxtapose cohesive with corrosive experiences and preserve the integrity of the intention, as well as truthfully reflect the complexity of the 'larger landscape'? How broad and how accommodating was the research field in terms of locating a reconciliation narrative?

Answers to these questions came as the draft developed.

5.2.3. Integrity and elasticity – the practice of script development

Reimer (2007) maintains that what emerges to bridge the gap between story and play-making is a commitment to the integrity of the work itself or "ethical behaviour....the capacity to decide what is proper, positive, generative, even humane, to do in the creative act." (2007, p.126) Artistic decisions need to be made with sincerity and with a rejection of artifice, sensationalism and cliché. It is useful to return again to Madison (2005) here, for artifice, sensationalism and cliché may be

elusive when on the page. They could suggest character conviction or vernacular familiarity or an attempt to engage through humour. But in the intense reflexivity of the re-drafting process it is likely, in my experience, their lack of truth will be revealed. The following two examples relate to decisions made during the re-drafting process and reflect editing sections that, while scripting in isolation, I considered added story complexity but in performance played out as artifice and diffused the dramatic intent.

The first edit point in *Today We're Alive*, substantiating the above, became immediately apparent during the reading before we went away, referred to later as the Redfern read. Originally in Scene 8, entitled 'Condemned to Swing' I interwove commentary on the hapless fate of convicts with the judgement of the trial judge, Justice Burton, which was on the public record. But as we never meet the convicts, we don't care about their fate. The scene read as artifice, affecting a level of gothic Victorian melodrama that simply got in the way of the real story, which belonged to the Weraerai.

Perhaps because I unhesitatingly edited Scene 8 out before we left, I didn't appreciate the problems with Scene 9, thinking that the sudden lethargy in the script was all attributable to Scene 8. Like Scene 8, Scene 9 included documentary material, again like Scene 8, Scene 9, entitled 'Hoo-ha', slowed the momentum. Even though it contained information about the on-going slaughter of Aboriginal people, it was in a way, telling us what we already knew; that the Myall Creek arrests and trials made the situation far worse for Aboriginal people on the frontier. Furthermore, because the exchange between the 'Citizen' and the 'Countryman' in Scene 9 was intended to shock at the time, published as it was the day after the hangings in 1838, it had a level of satirical yet dated bombast that undermined the authenticity of the present-day voices in the field. Most important of all, we had in these two scenes lost the Aboriginal voices; the Aboriginal actors waited like shadows for the scenes to be over, so they could be brought back into the action again. It was their voices that created the tension in the play at this point; the audience wanted to hear the voices they had not heard before, voices in the present that addressed the brutality of what had happened in the past. This is why, I suspect, Scene 11, 'Re-imagining the Massacre', worked so well, because the Aboriginal actors finally had a chance to drive the story.

What makes arts-informed/narrative inquiry a particularly valuable research methodology is its capacity to illuminate just such tensions, the conflicts between what is usually said and what usually remains unsaid. However in regard to the liminal 'larger landscapes' of merging cultures, it is performance that demonstrates the complexity of transmitting these new understandings of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives; or those things that are usually said and usually unsaid.

5.2.4. Interpreting personal narratives through performance

Therefore as its primary methodology this particular research study uses personal narratives to create a performance ethnography, a play shaped around the spoken and unspoken word. Using verbatim theatre as a mode of ethnographic delivery, the scripted text might indicate the silences, the hesitations, the self-corrections and the emotional intrusions, but it is the performance of the scripted text, which demonstrates the emotional and cultural subtext. Through juxtaposition the performed text can connect the certainty of the past to the upheaval of change. And it is the point of change, how that change occurs, what holds it in place, what forces generate resistance to it; that is the essence of drama. Through performance, to borrow from Conquergood (1991), we experience the struggle for new meanings in the gaps between old certainties; through drama, borrowing from Denzin (2003), we explore moments of cultural disruption, moments of epiphany or moments of crisis. Combining the two, through performance ethnography we create a complex, multi-layered investigation of crisis in the field through the personal narratives of those involved.

Why this methodology is particularly relevant in the decolonizing space is because meanings can be embedded in both text and silence, as was clear during the silences of the Aboriginal actors in the instances cited above. Conquergood (2013) maintains that the hegemony of textualism needs to be exposed and undermined. He continues: "Transcription is not a transparent or politically innocent model for conceptualizing or engaging the world." (2013, p.35)

Therefore performance ethnography is an appropriate methodology through which to not only investigate cultural shifts and change but also the epistemological hegemonies in the dynamic inter-cultural decolonizing context.

5.3. Performance ethnography

The term, performance ethnography, as Sallis (2010) indicates, has many variations. O'Toole (2006) mentions just three alternatives: performed ethnography, ethnographic performance and ethnodrama (2008, p. 42), Sallis (2010), locates fourteen terms. The differences between these terms might indicate differences in intentions and data or script development techniques (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 2008) but Sallis considers all of the terms indicate that the research:

originates from a study of real people and their culture...that the text is written or devised to be performed and that its presentation re-performs the real life experiences and situations of the research participants (2010, p.72).

Performance ethnography has evolved from the understanding that “cultures travel in the stories, practise and desires of those, who engage in it” (B.K. Alexander, 2005, p.411). In re-working the personal narrative through performance, the personal reveals the cultural (Denzin, 2003) and “opens the intercultural and ethnographic dialogue to all.” (Fortier, 2011)

Conquergood (1991) pays tribute to Victor Turner’s insight into the research opportunities offered by performance to ethnography. According to Conquergood (1991) performance allowed ethnography to move away from preoccupations with structure and form and towards particular practices and the people that performed them. Investigating Turner’s relationship with Richard Schechner’s theatre company, The Performance Group, in the 1970s, Fortier (2011) recognises Turner’s innovative re-enactment workshops, where participant/actors re-created particular cultural rituals.

As diverse cultural practices imprinted similar experiences of power and personal meaning, the performers forged greater inter-cultural understandings. For Turner the movement towards performance was liberating and at its core: decolonizing. It was a way for:

...representatives of one generic modality of human existence, the Western historical experience, to understand on the pulses...other modes hitherto locked away from it by cognitive chauvinism or cultural snobbery (V.Turner, 1982, in Fortier, 2011, p.2)

Largely responsible for laying the foundations of performance ethnography, (Jones, 2005), Conquergood (1991) elaborates on the activism of performance, the kinds of knowledge it delivers and the world it constructs:

the performance privileges the particular, participatory, dynamic, intimate, precarious, embodied experience grounded in historical process, contingency, and ideology....performance-centred research takes as both its subject matter and method the experiencing body situated in time, place and history (1991, p.187).

Whereas B.K. Alexander (2005) defines performance ethnography as: “the staged re-enactment of ethnographically derived notes” (2005, p.411), Mienczakowski (2001, 2003) questions the relationship between researcher notes and researched dialogue. Mienczakowski (2003) proposes that performed ethnography offers clearer and more accessible research findings than is the case with written reports. He further suggests:

The construction of ethnographic narratives into a dramatized form is, arguably, a logical extension of the current reinterpretation of ethnographic practice and of the exploration of how ethnographic representations are constructed. (2003, p.419)

Central to all definitions of performance ethnography is however the primacy of the body as a research site. B.K. Alexander (2005) considers that finding ways to display through performance the relationship between a culture and how it is experienced offers the researcher “a body-centred method of knowing.” (2005, p. 411) Jones (2005) agrees that performance ethnography “rests on the idea that bodies harbour knowledge about culture, and that performance allows for the exchange of that knowledge across bodies.” (2005, p.339)

It is the body that becomes the primary site in performed ethnographic research; it is the body that conveys “information, transmission and transformation.” (Jones, 2005, p.340) Having Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors together, I discovered, so powerfully reflected the history of dispossession, that the actual history of the failure of Myall Creek to institute change after the trials of 1838 didn't need to be developed.

Just having Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors occupying different areas of the stage said all that was required. I too had a similar discovery as an actor in my work with Moogahlin, when my presence alone, as a non-Aboriginal person, created a character far more powerful than I actually felt, a character that had to be resisted. In the world of the play, *This Fella, My Memory*, discussed in Chapter Eight, I was projecting a domineering quality I, as an actor, did not intend.

Thus hearing and seeing narratives spoken – performed - as opposed to reading a written report creates the opportunity for performance to generate multiple truths, where what is said and not said, how it is heard and responded to offer new understandings of cultural interaction. Audience members can become attuned to different voices telling multiple narratives (Nicholson, 1999); through performance new sites of possible interrogations and interruptions of old interactions are demonstrated and challenged.

The role of the audience becomes a key variant in performed ethnographic research.

5.3.1. Audience participation

Some proponents of performed research like Mienczakowski (2003) invite audience participation as an extension of forum theatre;⁸⁰ the script therefore is constantly updated and never has a definitive, authoritative set of “fixed social meanings.” (2003, p. 422) Whether the audience participates or not, B.K. Alexander (2005) considers that:

The power and potential of performance ethnography resides in the empathic and embodied engagement of other ways of knowing that heightens the possibility of acting upon the humanistic impulse to transform the world (2005, p.412).

Empathy in the drama context emanates from the audience and the actors’ readiness to identify and engage with the characters/performers emotionally, to be able to walk in the characters’ shoes (O’Toole, 2003), to relate to the characters’

⁸⁰ Forum Theatre is one of Boal’s (1970s) techniques to counter oppression and follows on from Freire’s (1970) understanding of the role of language and empowerment. In forum theatre each scenario is played twice, once by actors, the second time audience members (spect-actors) are invited to enter and intervene, thereby finding the language to change an oppressive or disempowering outcome. The technique now has broad applications.

struggles as they “reinvent their ways of being in the world.” (Madison & Hamera, 2005, p.xii) For transformative learning to occur, as B.K. Alexander (2005) suggests it can through performed ethnographic texts, Arnold (2005) recognises that both emotional and cognitive stimuli need to be present in order to sustain empathy and therefore allow possibility of responding to new knowledge. It is in sustaining engagement that performed ethnography practitioners benefit from a regard for the aesthetics inherent in the theatrical realisation of mainstream drama like tension, momentum, stage craft, conflict, economic dialogue and humour (Mienczakowski & Morgan, 1994; Saldaña, 2005; Behar, 2008). Researchers need to marry intent with the execution of craft.

Of primary importance in this dynamic relationship is the choice of research site; from this all else evolves. With a massacre and the building of a memorial to it as pivotal points in my elected case study, I hoped I had given the play at least two crises: the story of the massacre and the challenge of building a memorial, an exercise I assumed had invited dissent and compromise. It became clear early in the interviewing process that the graffiti etched in the plaques not only hadn't caused a problem but had been anticipated. The Reverend dismisses it: “Well, it was vandalised once. Only once has anyone done any damage to it.” (2011) Peggy gives more detail but is equally unruffled:

We had designed it – we knew that was going to happen and we were expecting it...when it happened, I had been away for the weekend and there was all these messages on my phone. I had one message from this man and he was on this cruise ship in South America. I got a phone call from him. “What's going on?” I had no idea. I had all these newspaper people and I didn't know. I rang the police, actually, in Inverell. I didn't get angry over it, I'd learnt over time to – I just expected it. Okay, we can get new plaques. That's why we had them laser printed; we designed them so you can take them off, whack it back on (Peggy, 2011).

However I still looked for my second crisis as one around resolving dissent. When there proved to be narratives around spiritual experiences in the memorial hall, which were so very powerful, I thought I would just have to go without my second crisis. So fixed had I become on the interpretation of dissent as equating with crisis, I had ignored the possibility of an epiphany as being a transformative moment of a different complexion (Denzin, 2003). And that moment of epiphany became the final

turning point for the play. Had we had a rehearsal period, that cathartic moment would have been clear before the performance in the memorial hall.

Madison (2005) considers her rehearsal practice to be a significant site of data creation for performed ethnographic research. It is her way of elevating her work from the qualitative research practice of accumulating interviews to interrogating the encrypted information embedded in narratives from another culture, “the symbols and practices of a lived space.” (2005, p.401)

In terms of a useful contribution to decolonizing methodologies this inclusion of an examined rehearsal process is significant. Although there is no prescribed uniformity in performance choices that might stem from this examined practice, what such practice does is open the performance draft up to multiple representational opportunities that can easily incorporate multiple ways of understanding encrypted personal narrative content across epistemological spectrums. The ‘magic realism’ of Indigenous knowledge that Maufort (2007) refers to could sit quite comfortably beside dominant culture rationality in ways that both surprise and stretch an audience’s expectations.

It is through rehearsal that research to be performed could answer those questions Krog, Mpolwani-Zantso & Ratele (2008) ask in relation to their investigation into a case before the South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission: “How do we read one another? How do we hear one another...? How do we overcome a divided past in such a way that ‘the Other’ becomes ‘us’?” (2008, p.531)

Rehearsal therefore in the decolonizing context can become a process of re-investigation and re-interpretation, as data is decoded and hegemony is addressed.

5.3.2. Performing rites

Madison (2005) is committed to demonstrating through performance ethnography the links between globalization, poverty and human rights abuses; she considers the importance of this, her ‘larger landscape’, to be of greater significance than the daily routines of her participants. She explains her practice thus:

To recreate for the stage the living performances of everyday remembrances, imaginings, and deeply felt encounters of ethnographic fieldwork is a radical act of translation. The substance of such a translation is only surpassed in its significance by the overwhelming necessity of purpose and ethical obligation (2005, p.397).

Though she is concerned with the body “performing in and against a circumscribed space,” (2005, p.401) through performance she privileges the unacknowledged relationship with the global space over the recognized but conflicted relationship with the cultural space. In her investigation of traditional practice and perceived human rights abuses with marginalised Ghanaian women and girls Madison (2005) is traversing the sensitive frontier terrain not of direct colonial oppression but of oppressive cultural belief.

For Madison (2005) the scripting process meant combining “intuition, performance technique, rhetorical strategy and beautiful art.” (2005, p.400) Entering this space with a draft derived from field notes, she develops the performance draft through a ‘doing and reflecting’ process with her cast of Ghanaian university students, a process that requires “an active intellectual, emotional and empathic” (2005, p. 403) engagement with the material.

For decolonizing researchers in the performance ethnographic field Madison’s practice is illuminating, as in the writing and re-writing process collaboration with her cast is enmeshed with a deepening understanding of issues and beliefs. Through the on-going investigation of the interplay between field work without and emotional memory within, through “the dialectical process of doing and reflecting, experiencing and interpreting” (Pineau, 1994, in Madison, 2005, p.403) the performers and Madison, as writer/director/researcher, can build to a final draft. The performance work is therefore grounded in the research site but not exclusively in the researcher’s perspective.

Madison (2005) recognises that through performance the actors present a symbolic reality, but perceives this reality to heighten not detract from the project’s authenticity:

...evoking for the audience expanded meanings, implications and consequences beyond that original moment of field experience...rewriting [ethnographic data] through sound, motion and flesh... Symbolic reality is the

culminating creation that celebrates ... the inseparability of fiction and nonfiction (Madison, 2005, pp.404-5).

Despite Madison's (2005) conviction that her performed research created a heightened reality, which expanded meanings, a performance is always to some extent artificial. The tension between reality and its dramatic representation remains a significant counterbalance to claims of authenticity in performed research. As verbatim theatre practitioner Paul Brown (2001) acknowledges, by the time the truth has become a play it is already "a fabrication." (2001, p.xx)

5.3.3. Devil in the detail

The perception of authenticity is complex and subjective; it relates to expectations of content and opportunities to engage in different dimensions. For some drama practitioners (O'Toole, 2006; Spolin, 1999) the artificiality of performance is unproblematic, as tensions around its fabrication are diffused by its purpose. Its artificiality simply creates an arena of mystery, an embarkation point, where a journey inward begins. The representation of the physical or known world is a familiar place from which an audience can access new experiences, new understandings of human relationships both with the self and with others.

Reflecting on Conquergood's (1992) notions of the multiple ways in which performance can be understood as imitation or mimesis, construction or poiesis, and kinesis or interruption, Denzin (2005) shifts the researcher/performer from a place of dramaturgical staging through an interpretive phase of liminality to the final stage of socio-political reconstruction. Denzin (2005) elaborates:

Viewed as struggles and interventions, performances and performance events become gendered transgressive achievement, political accomplishments that break through sedimented meanings and normative traditions (2005, p. 327).

In this three-tiered approach, applied to performed research, the emancipatory intention harnesses the imagination. It is the means through which an old reality is economically conveyed and a new one created. The intuitive mystery essential to art creation, the force involved in transposing one world into an imagined other, the journey inward mentioned above, is embraced as an enabling tool rather than

condemned as an instrument limited to generating fiction. Providing ethical and critically reflexive considerations are met (Denzin, 2005), the performance text has the potential to “more than invoke empathy, it interrogates, criticises and empowers.” (Denzin, 2005, p.330)

However along with the potential for performed research to deliver transformative pathways, particularly through practical applications of applied theatre techniques Balfour (2009) warns against over-reach. He considers the term a “theatre of little changes” (2009, p.356) a more liberating concept for practitioners, challenging the rhetorical alliance between theatre and empowerment. This is a timely caution; returning the focus of research to intentions rather than outcomes. It reminds us that performance creation is an arts-informed practice and therefore driven by the subjective; it is not a formula through which to deliver a prescribed result.

In terms of decolonizing research, if we as either the colonized or colonizers are to see ourselves in new ways, as Saul (2008) argues it is imperative we must, then performance ethnography would seem to provide just such a means to do so. It is able to address not only the relationship to each other but our relationship to ourselves and within the context of a potentially unexamined world using a text that “re-engages the past, and brings it alive in the present.” (Denzin, 2005, p.330)

The inter-play between recalled experiences of the past through the diverse voices of the ethnographic field, as the experience of performing *Today We're Alive* suggests, can allow both sides of the colonial divide to engage empathically with multiple points of view. In *Today We're Alive* the massacre sequence, for example, is repeated; the story is told first through the contemporary voice, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, reciting colonial history, then second through the re-inhabited grief of the Aboriginal participants, which is supported by the shared imaginings of the non-Aboriginal participants. The intention is to increase audience receptivity by avoiding the politics of blame and shame, and stress the on-going nature of inter-generational trauma, bringing with it the continuing emotional presence of the past, felt by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants. One version of the past is full of facts, the other full of pain; repetition makes pain a fact that is shared. Yet clearly this would not have been shared in the past. It is an intention of the play to honour the possibilities offered by the Memorial to re-imagine the past. Yet the repetition of the

massacre event is in a pure chronological sense: manipulative. In Madison's (2005) creation of 'beautiful art', she allows performed research to generate a symbolic reality. Perhaps not all performance ethnography can be so accommodating. Verbatim theatre is concerned with real people and real events, (Wake, 2010); the use of theatre aesthetics has to ensure the text's truth-telling function is not compromised.

In the applied and verbatim theatre contexts therefore authenticity is even more complex; it relates not only to the capacity of the work to initiate an inward journey but also to whether the work in the physical world genuinely reflects the specific environment that generated it. And this places a particular demand on its participant/actors.

5.3.4. Verbatim theatre – an overview

Verbatim theatre is one way of delivering performance ethnography and, as Wake (2010) suggests, can be seen to be on a spectrum of theatre practices concerned with presenting Reality Theatre. It is useful in clarifying the hybrid nature of *Today We're Alive* to mention other theatre forms along Wake's (2010) Reality Theatre spectrum.

Distinguishing each kind of Reality Theatre by the proximity of the writer to the performer, the first designated category is autobiographical performance, where the writer and the performer are the same; then comes community theatre, where performances are made by and with community members; then verbatim theatre discussed below; fourth sits documentary theatre, where content comes from information in the public domain and may or may not include interviews; fifth is tribunal plays, where content comes from official transcripts of judicial proceedings; and finally history plays, set in the past but dealing with actual events.

In terms of verbatim theatre, although they may have different intentions, as a general principle their play texts are the words spoken by real people. Hammond & Steward (2011) further explain the script development process shared by verbatim plays:

The words of real people are recorded or transcribed by a dramatist during an interview or research process, or are appropriated from existing records such as the transcripts of an official enquiry. They are then edited, arranged or re-contextualized for a dramatic presentation, in which actors take on the characters of the real individuals whose words are being used (2011, p. 9).

Wake (2010) suggests three different kinds of relationships between actors and text in verbatim theatre: the first is where the interviewees and the actors are the same people; the second is where the actors are the interviewers and therefore have personal contact with the real people they will be performing; and the third the actors will have never met the interviewees but first 'meet' them through edited transcripts. *Today We're Alive* predominantly follows this third example of actor/interviewee association, complicated by the fact that twenty voices, or twenty participants, were distributed between seven actors – my six actor/co-researchers and in one instance, myself. The play's content also included edited transcripts of documentary material in this first draft. In principle, through the juxtaposition of different accounts, whether from an actual person or a documentary source, spoken data is presented in a theatrical form and multiple meanings are created, enhancing audience connectivity to the research site through identification, recognition and empathy (Cheeseman, 2005; Mienczakowski, 2003; Paget, 1987).

Although our performed reading in the memorial hall was exactly that: a performed reading, it was my intention to create a play for mainstream theatre. I wanted it to look like a conventional play. Actors, having rehearsed the scripted material, would address the audience and each other, where possible. Unlike Valentine's (2007) 'massaged' verbatim in *Parramatta Girls*, it was not my intention to contrive scenes based on research but to select material that allowed interaction. Maintaining characterisations that resonate truthfully with the original interviewees, whom the actors may or may not have met, adds another layer of difficulty to verbatim theatre. The challenges in regard to performance style and actor focus are discussed below, but it is essential character integrity is not compromised by craft choices that might, in other forms of theatre, be literally applauded. Authentic data risks being undermined by parody and as a performance model, Stanislavsky's⁸¹ emphasis on

⁸¹ Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) developed an approach to acting that synthesized the emotions, imagination, intellect and the body in order to generate truth. He was concerned with empathic immersion, actor within character, audience with the play. For the actor, character creation means psychology and physicality are all part of the one continuum (Merlin, 2001).

inner-life creates, in my experience, an energised but contained character portrayal. The simplicity with which verbatim characters are best embodied reflects the more recent developments of a technique that first emerged through the realist drama written in late-eighteenth century Germany (Garde, Mumford & Wake, 2010). The focus on the vernacular to express idiosyncrasy continues to be characteristic of verbatim text.

5.3.5. A brief history of verbatim theatre

Influenced by radio documentary, innovative British verbatim theatre practitioner, Peter Cheeseman, first experimented with the verbatim technique in provincial England the 1960s. Sharing diverse perspectives of local stories with the community that generated them, stories told in that community's language and with that community's regional references, Cheeseman recognized that local stories told theatrically and in the vernacular reinforced a sense of identity, enriched cultural awareness and supported "that sense of pride and self-confidence that every district outside London desperately needs – so you don't feel a non-entity." (Cheeseman, 1987, in Paget, 1987, p. 322)

Fifty years on and verbatim continues to offer narrative possibilities as web technology, multi-national media ownership and threats on a global scale have created common language, common concerns and broadened the concept of community itself. Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project's *The Laramie Project* (2000) about a hate crime in Wyoming, David Hare's *Stuff Happens* (2004) published in 2013, about the events leading to the invasion of Iraq are two examples of verbatim plays that have found international audiences; in Australia Paul Brown and the Workers' Cultural Action Committee's *Aftershocks* (2001) about the 1989 Newcastle earthquake has not only found audiences outside Newcastle but was also made into a television drama by SBS⁸² and screened on three anniversaries of the event.

⁸² Founded in 1975, the Special Broadcasting Service is a hybrid-funded public broadcasting and radio network. Its charter is to reflect through multilingual and multicultural programming content that informs, entertains and educates Australia's culturally diverse population.

Although verbatim theatre has a transformative intent, it is not concerned with reconstructing the known world. Instead it focuses on representing the known world's untold stories; stories that might, for example, illuminate social injustice (*Through the Wire*, 2004); political subterfuge (*The Wages of Spin*, 2004); corruption (*Table of Knowledge*, 2012) or human aspiration (*I'm Your Man*, 2012). A challenge then for verbatim theatre is to reveal the known world and simultaneously maintain a dramatic narrative that will keep an audience engaged.

Recognising a growing maturity in the form, verbatim theatre company version 1.0 co-founder, David Williams,⁸³ considers theatre to be a set of representational acts. In executing those representations the company increasingly uses media spectacle as an innovative theatrical device to heighten not just the specificity of the location of the performed work but the dramatic narrative the work is creating. In their recent production, *The Vehicle Failed to Stop* (2013), which concerns the privatization of war and the lack of accountability demanded of mercenaries/security forces, recurring video footage created not just a sense of place – a road in Baghdad – but heightened the sense of imminent danger of death and later a corresponding anxiety around its cover-up.

Lighting, sound and a vast stage created an on-going sense of isolation and detachment, supporting the thematic intention of exploring the desensitization that occurs once warzone activity is out-sourced and so-called defence becomes the province of mercenaries rather than the military. The audience is forced to confront murder disguised as handling a perceived security threat multiple times within the three tiered structure identified by version 1.0 dramaturg, Paul Dwyer (2011) as forming the spine of an Inquiry show. Dwyer (2011) summarises the structure:

Here's the story as we know it; here is the telling of that story within the frame of Inquiry; and here is the story of a group of people trying to come to grips with those stories (Dwyer, 2011).

And so, for the audience, they are left with questioning their own ignorance – and the motives of those in power, who keep that ignorance in place.

⁸³ All references to David Williams refer to an interview with him and Paul Dwyer held in Carriageworks, Redfern, NSW, on November 11th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson and is included as *Appendix iv*.

5.3.6. Verbatim theatre – emergent significance

Two particular features of verbatim theatre have increased its proliferation as a technique of delivering stories: its truthfulness and its focus on the politics of injustice (Wake, 2010). Once it was a way of presenting communities, who had no voice. Now it is seen as a way the public can respond to a reductionist ethos in a globalised media (Anderson & Wilkinson, 2007). Verbatim practitioner Robin Soans (*Talking to Terrorists*, 2005) examines this relationship between the truth, content and audiences' expectations:

...the audience for a verbatim play will enter the theatre with the understanding that they are not going to be lied to. They may be unsettled by the unusual way the play is constructed, but they will be compensated for the lack of convention by the assumption that what they are looking at and listening to is revelatory and truthful (Soans, 2011, p.19).

Nicholas Kent, as Artistic Director of the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn, North London, has commissioned and directed many 'tribunal' plays, which dramatize official inquiries for the stage using verbatim testimony (Norton-Taylor, R. 1999. *The Colour of Justice*; Brittain, V. & Slovo, G. 2004. *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom*). He suggests that actors meet the challenges of verbatim text with a restraint that matches the honesty of a film close-up, creating a sense of being closer to the truth through a style of "hyper-realism." (2011, p.156). He elaborates:

For actors it's not like being in an ordinary play...they come with such a commitment to the truth and the project that the minute anyone sees anyone acting, everyone knows – so no-one acts; it's like there's an unwritten pledge that in no way will anyone do anything for effect (Kent, 2011, pp.155-6).

Soans (2011) suggests that identification can ultimately lead to transformation for within the truth lie the small human details that "hook an audience." (2011, p. 41) He continues:

Great drama gives playgoers a heightened emotional experience when strong narrative combines with the empathy that comes from recognition. A kind of enlightenment results. This is my aim: to use people's real words to move us to a new understanding of ourselves (Soans, 2011, p.41).

The question of parody in performance remains and practitioners have developed techniques to anchor performances in 'the real'. Early advocate of verbatim theatre,

Max Stafford-Clark, created *Yesterday's News* in 1975, the first of his plays to use verbatim techniques. His actors become like journalists, going out onto the field, and then returning to the group to perform the people they had interviewed (Hammond & Steward, 2011). Wake (2010) recognises this technique as an approach both to play content and characterisation. Initially Stafford-Clark's process could result in "laborious self-criticism;" (Hare, 2011) twenty-eight years later for *The Permanent Way* (2003) the process had become more streamlined and Hare, as the writer, was able to work directly from the actors' post-interview improvisations (Hare, 2011). The distancing of the writer in this case from the interviewees problematizes the notion of authenticity, as the writer's received text has already been re-interpreted by the actor, who has returned from the field.

A more recent variation on content and character creation comes through applications of technology. Rosalyn Oades,⁸⁴ who feeds her actors edited transcripts through headphones, developed her work in London in 2001 through director Mark Wing-Davey and verbatim pioneer performer, Anna Deavere Smith. She continues the story, when she arrives in Britain having been working as an actor in Australia for two years:

I came across Mark Wing-Davey, he's a director and actor and director of the London Actors Centre at the time, 2001. He'd been working with Anna Deavere-Smith, a one woman verbatim practitioner, very political. She used head phones, was a consummate performer, she would acknowledge all the details, play all these different characters. Mark, who had been directing her, thought: I find it really interesting when she has the headphones on, because she's not acting, she's not interpreting, she's listening and repeating. And there's something that happens when she takes them off, it becomes more of performance, more of an interpretation. And when he became director of the London Actors Studio he ran a workshop in this idea, 'Theatre Without Paper', was the name of the workshop. And myself and one other actor in particular, Alecky Bligh, have gone on to form companies using this technique called recorded delivery.

I joined a company with Mark, called 'Non-fiction Theatre' and for about year we workshopped material and put together a show and then I had to come back to Australia (Oades, 2011).

⁸⁴ All references to Rosalyn Oades are from an interview held in Minto, NSW on October 20th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson and is included as *Appendix v*.

Oades brought the technique to Australia, eager to develop it further, as, she explains:

I like the fidelity of the vocal print being preserved. It's still recorded like any other verbatim form but it's never transcribed. I give the actors CDs and now ipods. They learn the script like a piece of music, it's like a score...I think there is as much information in the way people tell a story as there is in what they are saying...I feel like this technique actually prevents parody (Oades, 2011).

Oades acknowledges not all actors are suited to this approach. She sees it as demanding considerable discipline; an actor has to be able to trust that all the information is embedded in the story and this can be conveyed through the breath and through the body, as well as the words, all without embellishment. She explains: "...in this process you just use your ears and your body. Not your heart and your mind, which is what you're taught to do as an actor." (2011) Two of the actors she has worked with the longest have come from physical theatre.

Oades practice makes the actor's challenge clear: it is to be a vehicle for and not an interpreter of the script. One of my actor/co-researchers, Genevieve⁸⁵, expressed this same relationship as a function of the interview process:

You put yourself to the service of the play as the performer, there was no time to do anything other than serve the play and there's a great deal of freedom honouring just the work, the piece. The notion of doing the ums and errs and ahs were very important. Because it's somebody else's voice thinking on the run, it's stream of consciousness and it's different to dialogue (Genevieve, 2011).

Like the ethnographer, the actor needs to be "deeply involved in the cultural setting in which they re-perform." (Denzin, 2005, p.329) Part then of the researcher's brief is to familiarise the cast with that setting, either by site visits or by interactions with the original interviewees. Without that support, in my experience, the risk of parody through stereotypical characterisations increases exponentially, especially if there is limited time to engage with the transcripts.

Given that verbatim text is concerned with crisis and its resolution, the heightened engagement of interviewees with their own experience might generate narratives

⁸⁵ Genevieve refers to Genevieve Mooy. All references to her come from an interview held at Arncliffe, NSW, December 5th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L.Wilkinson.

that are beyond the experience of the actor/participants. To compensate for their own lack of understanding, actors may instinctively reach for experiences they have seen portrayed elsewhere. As actor/participants are working alone through edited monologues and not through developed dialogues, characterizations lack exposure to usual stylistic checks and balances and can subtly drift into cliché. Although I did not find that to be an issue in *Today We're Alive*, I have, as a drama teacher found parody to be a problem when dealing with other verbatim texts. Providing class times allow it, improvisation and Stanislavsky techniques supporting the development of an inner world, diary writing for example, have been useful in establishing empathy and as a consequence, truth in characterization.

A contributing factor to this interpretive reductionism reflects the current media landscape, which simultaneously maximizes volume and eliminates diversity in content (Anderson & Wilkinson, 2007). An absence of diversity encourages stereotyping, which impacts on both representation and identity.

5.3.7. Dominant voices

A dedicated television station, National Indigenous Television (NITV) and the outstanding success of mainstream television dramas like *Redfern Now*⁸⁶ and *Mabo*⁸⁷ continue to constructively address the former absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the media. However outside television a deficit-driven mindset continues to permeate many Aboriginal communities and this same negativity reverberates amongst non-Indigenous Australians as well (Gorringe, Ross & Fforde, 2011). The impacts of negative stereotyping have been found by Aboriginal researchers Gorringe, Ross and Fforde (2011) to affect health and wellbeing, social and economic development, as well as foster notions of helplessness and lack of agency.

⁸⁶ *Redfern Now*, in its second series and screened on ABC National television, is part of Rachel Perkins and Darren Dale's production company, Blackfella Films. Committed to excellence in Indigenous program-making, the company was established in 1992. *Redfern Now* tells current urban stories and its key creative are Indigenous writers, directors and performers. The first series won multiple awards, including TV Week's 2013 Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Drama Series.

⁸⁷ *Mabo*, a fifty-five minute telemovie made by Blackfella Films,, tells the story of Eddie's Mabo's life and his struggle for land rights. It screened on ABC in 2012.

Gorringe, Ross and Fforde (2011) argue that the conversation needs to be shifted “towards one that is based on strength...and requires Aboriginal-led initiatives to effect change.” (2011, p.14) One area of weakness identified by the researchers concerns identity: that being urban and educated means being ‘less black’. The researchers Gorringe, Ross and Fforde (2011) elaborate:

Words which undermine Aboriginal identity are commonly used as insults and tools of social exclusion (such as ‘coconut, ‘text-book black or ‘air-conditioned black’) as are accusations of supposed privilege and favouritism applied to those perceived as (or even accused of being) ‘real blackfellas’. In doing so, a sense of division is created between individuals, groups, communities and even geography – thus the language/no language, remote/urban or north/south ‘divide (2011, p. 5).

So this confusion around identity means for Gorringe (2011) that: “[I]t seems we are buying into what mainstream is imposing on us.” (2011, p. 3) As Gail Wallace (1995), Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee writes:

It is not incorrect to state that stereotypical messages produced by media sources influence all facets of our community, including service provision in the private and public sectors (Wallace, 1995, pp.1-2).

Madison (2005) recalls both Stuart Hall (1992) and Conquergood (1997) acknowledging the same relationship between representation and policy as a factor influencing her clarity around the social justice imperative in her performed ethnographic work in Ghana, discussed earlier. Botham (2008) suggests that verbatim testimony, by presenting in public a voice of authority and truth, represents a “serious effort to reclaim the public sphere.” (2008, p.312)

Graeme Turner (2009) however emphasises that negative stereotyping is inherent in popular culture formats. The stereotype therefore has a pervasive platform, as popular culture formats can be disseminated through global media. Hare (2003) encapsulates the reductionist ethos of mass communication:

Contemporary consumer culture makes us feel that people don’t run very deep. The whole endeavour of advertising, newspapers, television, cinema, is to make it seem that people are no longer very profound and mysterious. It is to make us seem more alike ...We are reduced in some way to less than what in our searching moments we know human beings to be (Boon, 2003, p.163).

Bowles (2006) further describes representation in the media as the end point in a series of production choices; the final product has “some kind of relationship to something else we call reality.” (2006, p.64) Furthermore Bowles suggests:

...as our real experiences of the world are necessarily more limited than the range of experiences presented to us in the media, we have no way of judging their accuracy and are more likely to accept them as realistic, adjusting our impression of the real world accordingly (2006, p.66).

Aboriginal playwright, Jane Harrison (2012), observes that non-Aboriginal writers also perpetuate stereotypes:

...the mythical, spiritual Aboriginal character seems to be an attractive exemplar, particularly in film. S/he is mystical, earthy, wise, often uneducated, natural has a profound relationship with the land, is spiritual, mysterious, esoteric, unfashionable, innocent, non-consumerist, working-class, family-oriented and fringe-dwelling...Perhaps the spiritual Aboriginal is an extension of the ‘noble savage’ construct, whereby traditional Aboriginal people are more ‘noble’, more ‘inherently good’, and non-Aboriginals are civilized and hence degenerate? (2012, pp.18-19).

These complex forces: the proliferation of text and its simultaneous unreliability in terms of bias add to an already challenging interpretative landscape for the text-based arts-inquiry researcher.

5.3.8. The problem with the word

Because cultural knowledge is seen as depending on what is in the external world of human beings juxtaposed with what are inner life experiences, there has been in recent history an increased interest in hermeneutics, or the understanding that language is situational. Language here refers to all forms of communication: texts that are written and spoken; body language; the personal or subjective intention and the collective framework or shared system of beliefs and interpretations. Central to the hermeneutic point of view is that any interpretation of meaning must take place with a context. As J.K. Smith (1993) explains:

In the paradigmatic case of the interpretation of texts, ... to understand an individual part of a text requires that one understands the whole text; yet it is equally clear that to understand the whole text requires that one understand the

individual parts....this means that interpretation can only be pursued with a constant movement back and forth between the expression and the web of meanings within which that expression is lodged. (1993, p.16)

But that web of meanings might be difficult to locate. In the cross-cultural field, as Conquergood (1991, 2013) vigorously argues, text is not transparent; it does not reveal all meanings. It becomes essential for the researcher to investigate encrypted meanings, the language that reflects hegemonic repression, as well as that of subtle resistance. Madison (2005) investigates encrypted meanings through the rehearsal process, locating new meanings through movement and image; Fortier (2011) recognises “that powerful things can be said without words.” (2011, p.2) For verbatim practitioner Rosalyn Oades information is embedded in the breath; she encourages her performers to listen not only to what is said but how the voice and the breath work together to create unique meaning.

Delivering truthfulness in verbatim theatre depends on language, its words and its rhythms, its silences and its hesitations and that depends on performance. Knowing these basic principles, I still went ahead with the first draft reading under-rehearsed, over-written, fearful I created stereotypes and with a text unexplored for encrypted meanings. Why had I agreed to proceed, when such significant developmental milestones had not been met? Because I believed others had been: I had a draft that reflected the research field and I considered it ready for its first review from that field.

5.4. Doing decolonizing research, presenting drama outcomes

As a discipline, drama is concerned with depicting and understanding human behaviour; the forces that construct it, the forces that constrain it and the forces that change it. Questions of perception and bias become even more problematic therefore when in the decolonizing frontier the researcher also becomes the researched. When I took the play back to the memorial hall, I needed to know about my own bias. Confronted by the history, the injustice, I went to the hall wanting to discover whether the draft's content told ‘the truth’.

To support the intensity of the necessary reflective and reflexive data-gathering and analysis practices, self-study as a methodology and self-reflexivity as a partnering

process recognise the rigour integral in making researcher positionality “accessible, transparent and vulnerable to judgement and evaluation.” (Jones, 2005, p.343)

Self-study addresses the relationship between learning and prior experience (Pinnegar, 1998; Wilcox, Watson & Paterson, 2004). As a methodology self-study recognizes that current learning is filtered through a continual recognition of the influences of past experiences in multiple fields. Although certain kinds of knowledge are generated through the performative: meaning but not context, for example, self-study embraces reflection and analysis beyond the immediate practice arena. In the case of drama creation, the process of self-study informs both content and structure of play text. Content, in this case the play, *Today We're Alive*, therefore is the embodiment of both learning and experience (Ewing & Smith, 2004; Waterhouse, 2000). Structure was influenced by past practice (Wilkinson, 2008).

Self-reflexivity enables an on-going relationship between the object of research and the nature of the researcher's engagement with it. Useful in particularizing the emotional dynamism inherent in the construction of performance ethnography, self-reflexivity encourages a thorough sensory investigation of Meredith's (1998) moments of affinity and moments of difference, or Syron's (2008) constant process of motion and illumination. Self-reflexivity therefore enables a level of immersed engagement, as the senses become the primary site for the emplaced memories enmeshed in the research experience (Pink, 2009).

Conquergood (1991) also urges the ethnographer to be less of an observer and more of a participant; to challenge “the visualist bias of positivism” (1991, p.183) with speaking and listening. Citing Rosaldo (1989) Conquergood reminds us that “the eye of ethnography is connected to the I of Imperialism.” (Rosaldo, 1989, cited in Conquergood, 1991, p. 183) Chilisa (2012) emphasises that the colonized Other needs to be understood in a local context, not through the generalised, individualistic assumptions of the West. Therefore recognising “the diversity of culture and contexts should be seen not as promoting fragmentation of knowledge but rather as giving voice to all.”(2013, p.161)

What neither self-study nor self-reflexivity addresses however, is the role of researcher as the final arbiter. Within the primacy of the collaborative exchange the final decisions in the play-making space should be a negotiation, I suggest, and not

an assumption. In *Today We're Alive* no-one challenged my authority. My decisions were uncontested, possibly because there was no time to do otherwise.

5.4.1. Limitations – of the draft

Travelling to the memorial hall for the Sunday reading in late November reflected a logistical decision made months before. In July, when the interviews were underway, I had been invited to present the draft as a work-in-progress for the annual general meeting of the local Arts Council to be held that last weekend in November. That meeting was to be on a Saturday. Our travelling over 600 hundred kilometres to get there early enough proved impossible, no matter how flexible the Arts Council's meeting time could be. I had to let go of the opportunity of having a guaranteed audience but I stayed with the date, because the memorial hall had been booked so that the participants could attend a performance the following day.

The actor/co-researchers did not receive a draft until days before the due departure date, because key participants were overseas and unavailable until October. Their testimony proved critical to the play's moment of epiphany prior to the Memorial's first commemorative service. So these two decisions impacted on both the play's structure and the timing of the first performed reading.

To handle the content I divided the edited transcriptions into 17 scenes; the first 11 establish the past; the next two are about Len Payne and his influence; the final four tell the Memorial story. Because over twenty hours of testimony from 20 participants was concertinaed into six voices and we had no time to locate characters, I distributed text amongst my actor/co-researchers as I felt appropriate for their performance strengths. Therefore the actor's real name is in the draft as an indicator of who had to read.

I also read; there was a particular speech, which encapsulated several thematic strands – racism, ignorance, the rise of consciousness and resolution – and its inclusion is as an alternative to other incidences of racism particularly that I feared might be divisive. One of those stories, about the angry man at the hall, has already been shared in Chapter Four; the other, also one of Peggy's, follows:

I had this experience before the Memorial opened, this woman that I knew, I knew her husband was a racist bastard, he used to say things in front of me, you know, like nigger-lover and stuff. I knew he was horrible but she wrote a letter to the paper, this was just before it opened, saying: “Oh, reconciliation is great but what about those people who are getting paid to be bussed over from Moree and all these places?” And I couldn’t believe it; no-one was getting paid anything. And I was furious and I rang this woman lucky she wasn’t at home – lucky for her and lucky for me – and I rang Lyall Munro⁸⁸ and I said to Lyall: “I suppose you’ve been putting up with this shit for years, mate, and I’ve only just started getting it, so what am I upset about?” “If you can, just laugh it off.” Then: “Why am I so angry?” And he says: “No, it’s not worth it, mate.” And I said: “Well, I’m only just getting an inkling of what it must be like to be Aboriginal in this country.” “God, this is nothing compared to what people get.” And I calmed right down.

And I got a letter in my mailbox about being a coon-lover, just a few things, Then there was this woman in the paper, who wrote a long letter using religious reasons why she wouldn’t go to the Memorial opening and I gave it to the Reverend and I said: “Read this letter. I think you better reply to it, because I’ve only got two words to say to that woman: “Stupid Bitch.” So I think you’d better write. You’ve got evidence from the bible” (Peggy, 2011).

Having heard the play read, the humour in the above would seem to ameliorate its vitriol. And humour was a critical component in the success of the draft’s reception.

5.4.2. Limitations – of the verbatim technique

Acknowledged limitations of verbatim theatre technique arise from the fundamental principles of its creation from interviews, often held in isolation and with privacy, and its usually localised content. David Hare (2011) refers here to documentary theatre but the same limitation exists in verbatim: “One of the problems with some documentary theatre is that it tends to lack scenes between people. It involves an awful lot of direct address.” (2011, p.63) This creates problems both for staging and engagement; developing scenes between characters from narratives told individually risks distorting the premise that what is being told is the truth. Yet not having character interaction can make a play didactic, risking audience disengagement.

⁸⁸ Lyall Munro is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, a Kamilaroi Elder and a descendant of a massacre survivor.

Verbatim theatre's tendency to deal with current content can make them short-lived (Wake, 2010); however changes in external events can give plays another life.

Parramatta Girls (2007) talked about a specific place; more recent controversy⁸⁹ around all institutionalised children makes the play an important text for understanding surviving such circumstances.

A third limitation in its application for research purposes, particularly in the decolonizing field, is the need for infrastructure. All plays need development, the evolution of the script is an on-going interactive process. But for performed ethnographies, no matter how they are ultimately presented, to really investigate encrypted meanings collaboratively, as Madison (2005) demonstrates, a rehearsal process needs to be factored into the research budget and time-frame. How that rehearsal process might be executed depends on the work itself and explicit negotiations around identifying the final arbiter, discussed in Chapter Eight.

To conclude this chapter, what also needs to be discussed is the reframing of reliability, validity and generalizability in arts-informed research. Reference is made here to the potential contribution made by re-performed research, or performances staged by other casts for other audiences, to support the impact of its execution, how it is received, and the authenticity of its content, how it is performed.

5. 5. Validity, reliability and generalizability

As arts-informed research embraces subjectivity and makes questions of objectivity and single truths inadequate, the tenets of reliability, validity and generalizability cannot be applied in their traditional sense and must be reframed (Ewing and Hughes, 2007; Ewing and Smith, 2004; O'Toole, 2006;). H.A. Alexander (2003) continues:

To ask about the 'accuracy' or 'reliability' of this sort of presentation of data is to ask the wrong sort of question. What we want to know is ... whether it rings true, whether it captures the dynamic form of something present in the experience of the whole (2003, p.12).

⁸⁹ Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced a Royal Commission into the cover up of the sexual abuse of children in schools, churches and institutions in 2012. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse commenced in September 2013.

Eisner (1996) uses the term 'referential adequacy' instead of reliability: "That is to say, if you went out to look at such places, whether you would see what in fact the person has described as existing there." (1996, p.404)

Non-Aboriginal researchers (Batten, 1999; Read, 2000; Schlunke, 2006) explore sites that speak of a lost and violent history; their findings evoke reverence for Aboriginal survival and despair at institutional denial. The emotional responses of both the actor/co-researchers, as well as the audience/participants for the first reading of *Today We're Alive* mirrored the above findings, viscerally confirming a shared resonance and therefore that the play has 'referential adequacy.'

David Smith (2002, p.11) however recommends replacing reliability with 'relatability', reflecting the extent to which the work resonates with its audience. The audience feedback generated by *Today We're Alive* suggests that 'relatability' is present and is one of the strengths in the work. Prior to finalizing this thesis, *Today We're Alive* enjoyed another performed reading at the Artistry, Performance and Scholarly Inquiry at the University of Melbourne in July, 2014. This cast, again two Aboriginal and two non-Aboriginal actors, read a slightly modified touring draft of the play with the benefit of six hours of rehearsal. The predominantly academic audience's positive reception to the work reinforced my belief in not only the relatability of the play but also in its internal validity.

Validity in arts-informed inquiry can be considered in terms of trustworthiness (Mishler, 1990, pp.419-437). Triangulation of data can improve trustworthiness, as it delivers multiple perspectives on the event being researched. Such a process is inherent in the verbatim theatre form, as the transparent juxtaposition of differing points of view both propels the drama and creates connectivity. Furthermore, as alluded to above, the actors' performance choices, made with minimal rehearsal time, sufficiently mirrored those choices made by the touring cast to reaffirm notions not just of trustworthiness but also transportability. The Melbourne performed reading suggested that different casts would still effectively deliver the same work.

The question of particularizability and generalizability is potentially difficult in arts-informed research. However, although the research is particular in nature, themes usually emerge that may pertain to more than the case itself (Ewing, Hughes & McGeoch, 2007). The violence of Aboriginal dispossession is at the heart of Andrew

Bovell's play, *Holy Day* (2002) and Kate Grenville's novel *Secret River* (2005), which recently was adapted for the stage (2012). Jack Davis' plays: *The Dreamers* (1982) and *No Sugar* (1985) explore Aboriginal resilience under oppressive government policy. In terms of verbatim plays exploring lost colonial histories and Aboriginal disenfranchisement, *Today We're Alive* stands with Nanni's & James' *Coranderrk* (2012); in terms of documentaries concerned with massacres, genocide and denial, Gillian Coote's film *Island of Lies* (1991) explores similar terrain.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter focuses on the methodological mix employed in this study. Through this confronting research journey, performance ethnography evolves as a pivotal methodology, because it embraces both text and the encrypted meanings within it. It is active and body-centred; it conveys relationship and context; multiple accounts reinterpreted as script triangulate data and, providing a rehearsal process can support deeper textual investigation, participant/audiences are able to endorse authentic re-creations of a "symbolic reality." (Madison, 2005, p.405) The choice to create a verbatim theatre play reflects the depth and vision embedded in the participants' narratives, experience with the technique and the desire to engage as a researcher and an artist in the decolonizing space with an accessible and transparent study.

Although collaboration is considered a fundamental practice for decolonizing research endeavours, how this collaboration might occur within the ultimate hierarchy of arts-inquiry is, as yet, not explicit. Collaboration in the data gathering process did not occur in this project, however I would like to suggest in the play's performance an emotional collaboration between the actor/co-researchers and the play text delivered an experience that both endorsed the content and transcended expectations.

Chapter Six is the first draft of *Today We're Alive*; it was performed in the memorial hall adjacent to Myall Creek on Sunday 27th November, 2011.

Chapter Six**TODAY WE'RE ALIVE*****Stories from the Memorial to the Myall Creek
Massacre******Nov. 27th draft******Written by Linden Wilkinson***

Today We're Alive

First draft

Scene 1: Who are these people?

Six chairs – three DS left (Rhonda, Lily & Fred); three US right (Gen, Anna & Terry)

Rhonda: With Aboriginal people you only have one faith: nature. Nature is our faith (*laughs*). With Aboriginal belief I can believe that the plants, the animals were all created, because they're all there and they're all evolving all the time. And the dreamtime is part of Creation. And the ways things evolve we are still within the dreamtime, because things are still being created. Things are still evolving, so the Dreamtime goes on.

Gen: Aboriginal history is probably the oldest in the world.

Anna: Aborigines from the Latin meaning from the beginning.

Lily: We didn't become Aboriginal until the colonizers labelled us as such. Actually we're Originals.

Fred: Current estimates of the Aboriginal population in 1788, prior to the British invasion, are between 750,000 and 1,000, 000 people.

Lily: And we weren't one people, we were 250 separate nations, with 5,000 tribes and 800 dialects.

Rhonda: There were 300 dialects in the Kamilaroi nation but we understood each other, we communicated, it didn't stop us getting on well. That's why I believe there was stability across this whole continent. There had to have been stability for our people to have survived for so long. Sixty thousand years.

Lily: Why is it that Captain Cook discovered Australia? Why did Blaxland Lawson and Wentworth cross the Blue Mountains? We knew where the gold was, we knew where the oil was, we knew all those things. And we did trade. Captain Cook lied when he got here; he wrote in his report: Australia was terra nullius –

Anna: Empty land or land belonging to no-one.

Rhonda: Every part of the country was owned, loved and cared for. Terry Hie Hie – place of little birds, Warialda – place of wild honey; Moree – place of water holes.

Fred: When he landed in Botany Bay there was blacks all along the beach.

Terry (as Capt Cook): Sunday, 6th May, 1770: In the evening the Yawl return'd from fishing, having Caught 2 Sting rays weighing near 600 pounds. The great

quantity of plants Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander found in this place occasioned my giving it the Name of Botany Bay.

The Natives do not appear to be numerous, neither do they seem to live in large bodies, but dispers'd in small parties along by the Water side. However, we could know but very little of their Customs, as we never were able to form any Connections with them; they had not so much as touch'd the things we had left in their Hutts on purpose for them to take away.

Late August, 1770: From what I have said of the Natives of New Holland they may appear to some to be the most wretched People upon Earth; but in reality they are far more happier than we Europeans. They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition. The Earth and Sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for Life. They live in a Warm and fine Climate, and enjoy every wholesome Air, so that they have very little need of Cloathing; and this they seem to be fully sencible of, for many to whom we gave Cloth, etc., left it carelessly upon the Sea beach and in the Woods, as a thing they had no manner of use for; in short, they seem'd to set no Value upon anything we gave them. In my opinion, they think themselves provided with all the necessaries of Life.

Rhonda: We see all things as living including rocks, wind, clouds, and all things are equally important, equally valuable.

Fred: If you disrupt Aboriginal people's relationship with their country you're not just removing economic sustenance from them, but you're removing spiritual sustenance.

Lily: Country is alive and everything has feelings – all things, especially country can be happy, sad, feel pain, grief, joy. Everything has spirit. Everything has Law. Everything is interconnected.

Gen : Sadly I don't think the Christian Church is grabbing hold of that. That all of life is inter-related. Aboriginal spirituality and culture could really lead into that – our understanding that our identity and culture is tied up with all of life.

Lily: Earth,

Like your father or brother or mother,

Because you born from earth.

You got to come back to earth.

When you dead,

You'll come back to earth.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Maybe little while yet ...

Then you'll come to earth.

That's your bone, your blood.

It's in this earth,

Same as for tree.⁹⁰

Gen: Probably the Churches should be doing more than they are.

Scene 2: Too late to find out

Fred, Lily and Rhonda move their chairs US left. Same level as others but separate. Anna and Terry spread their chairs out.

Anna: Often seen to be the result of the by-products of colonization: dispossession; loss of economic resources; poor health; low birth rates; infertility; malnutrition, early mortality; grief; by the late 1880s, after 100 years of colonization, it is estimated that there were 60,000 Aboriginal people left – nearly 95% of the Aboriginal population had “disappeared.”

Terry: Aboriginal people were dispensable.

Fred: Aboriginal people? They were just something that had an adverse effect on the land of the newcomers' dreams. We could kill them like you would shoot a duck or shoot a dog.

Anna: *Ahm* the analogy I use it's like a home invasion. So it's like when we arrived, there's this house and then we came in and we pushed the occupants out – we killed them or we banished them or whatever and we set ourselves up in the house. And then this is our house and then in time we convinced ourselves that really there was nobody in the house when we arrived. We just came in and occupied it.

Lily: Knowing how my people were treated in the past, it hurts, it still hurts. I get around it but you still carry the hurt with you. You never get over it.

Gen: I mean there's all sorts of stories of things that happened in the early days of the British Commonwealth. There are a lot of events in our history that would not be tolerated today. So what's happened has happened.

Rhonda: These people were just killed for doing what they had done for thousands of years.

Gen: I think we should learn from the past, live in the present and look forward to the future and that's the way I've always operated.

⁹⁰ Neidjie, B. (2002). *Gagudju Man*. (p.39). Melbourne: JB Books..

Anna: But underneath you never feel you belong in that house. Because of the history. We kind of sit on top of the land instead of being connected to the land, so it's almost like it's a restlessness within the Australian psyche in some way. And that's because of the history – until you deal with the history, you can't really belong here. And I think for Aboriginal people that's kind of kindergarten stuff...

Lily: "Our nation must have the courage to own the truth, to heal the wounds of its past –

Anna: - so that we can move on together ...

Lily: ...at peace with ourselves." Paul Keating, Prime Minister, December, 1992. The Redfern Speech.

Fred: What is often not understood is the incredible resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in just surviving.

Scene 3: Just surviving

Fred, Lily and Rhonda maintain eye contact with each other where possible.

Rhonda: I often tried to picture them in my mind, the old ones, hunting and what they looked like. Oh (*laughs, sighs*) it's amazing. But that generation is all gone.

Fred: We've got a terrible country when it comes to the System. It would be nice if the System was honest but it's not.

Rhonda: Nothing was ever – nothing was ever told to us. We were outcasts.

Fred: So here I am in 1977, I think it was, at the Armidale Teachers College and as part of our reading, for a particular course, mainly centred around history of the local New England area, we were given this great big book called New England readings. Great big – half a metre by a third this way. And then there was one part of it, where it looked at Myall Creek. And what happened at Myall Creek.

Scene 4: Waking up to a shared history

More eye contact between the actors across the divide.

Terry: In the early or middle part of 1837, Myall Creek Station was established by Henry Dangar and became part of his pastoral empire.

Fred: Oh My God! I come from a town in the Hunter Valley where one particular person, Henry Dangar, practically owned most of the town, you know what I mean? Dangar Street, Dangar Hospital. A pioneer of the Singleton area. I know where he's buried and all that (*laughs*).

Rhonda: I heard about Myall Creek – but that's just it. You heard about it. Something happened there. Some people were killed there. And that's it. The schools didn't tell us nothing.

Lily: I had an Auntie who worked for all the top farmers across NSW, she died when she was 100, she never ever mentioned Myall Creek. I think because the manner in which the people were killed. It was a shock that went through the system of black people. And it was never told.

Fred: Now I went through the bit on Myall Creek and I don't know how many times I threw that fucking book across the room, because of what I was reading and thinking to myself: why did they do that to my people?

Rhonda: The Weraerai are our people, our country - part of the great Kamilaroi Nation –

Fred: You know, this is the first time that I am now coming in contact with non-Indigenous perspectives of my people.

Gen: Now I understand that in those days Aboriginal people were considered vermin. The stories you hear – the murders, the poisoning. But they were convicts, I suppose in a way you've got to feel sorry for them. They were just doing what they'd been told to do. But *hm*, they thought it was a normal thing to do – shooting kangaroos and shooting Aborigines.

Anna: The people who were the guilty ones were also the landholders like Dangar, like Scott, the multi-nationals of their day. That was the driving force. You could argue it wasn't racism that was the key ingredient, it was greed.

Fred: This ignores the deliberate means employed by the colonizers, which include massacres, poisonings, the deliberate introduction of small pox.

Rhonda: Major Thomas Mitchell reports seeing the sickliest group of Aboriginals he had ever seen in 1835 out near Quirindi. Smallpox. They were trying to escape small pox.

Fred: So here I am in 1977, reading these stories for the first time. And I was always angry; I was really angry. Because I didn't understand: why would they do this to groups of people who were human? But unbeknownst to me then my people were not classified as humans. You know what I mean?

Lily: When I left home, when I left the mission, I had a hatred for white people. I hated especially white women until the time I was playing in bands all over Sydney. And during that time I met this one white man – he was there with me all the time; he was a fan, he liked my music. He did things for me that I didn't look at – and he opened my eyes up to, to humanity, I guess. He was what I call a sincere white person. Because he said he was white that's it, nothing else. But the one I grew up

under, he said I'm white, I'm boss, I'm superior to you. That's the difference, that's what opened my eyes up. He didn't know how significant he was. I went to visit him in hospital, I shed a tear for him, when he passed away. I've got a picture of him here on my wall today. Same with Myall Creek, there were white people there, who did things, who reported investigated, who stood and supported those people.

Scene 5: Massacre history- looking for the mindset

Chairs brought closer together. Now they are in a row, Fred, Lily & Rhonda on one side, Gen, Anna & Terry on the other. Fred, Lily and Rhonda are more inclusive than Anna, Gen and Terry.

Anna: Myall Creek interested me because *ah* I think even at the beginning I knew that this was unusual, people had been brought to justice. That the trial had actually happened and people were actually tried and hung for the crime. So that was unusual.

Fred: If we can respect Aboriginal history the same as we were respected in the court case, then I think our kids will grow up in this country saying that this is a country based on honesty.

Lily: Quirindi, Gunnedah, Moree, Narrabri, the heart of the Kamilaroi Nation.

Fred: You're looking at one of the richest areas in the colony of NSW at the time, 1835 There were probably four to five thousand people or squatters or whatever out this way. And of course they had with them at that particular point in time nearly a million sheep. Of course there were skirmishes with Aboriginal groups, of course. You would expect this. The squattocracy, Dangar, Scott, was putting pressure on the government –so they sent -- and so they sent in Major Nunn with a contingent of people...Major James Winniett Nunn.

Lily: Major Nunn was told "just do what you want with the problem". Major Nunn's way of solving the problem was anything black and it moves, just shoot it.

Lily: Three hundred blacks slaughtered at Waterloo Creek, 26th January, 1838. That was Major Nunn; he had trained Aborigines, stupid Aborigines to shoot their own people.

Fred: Stories about Waterloo Creek, saying there was 500 massacred, there were 3,000 massacred, there were 200 massacred – no-one is going to know the full extent of it.

Lily: Then Slaughterhouse Creek, Myall Creek....

Anna: I think Myall Creek was a story that was written before white people ever came to Australia. Absolutely. In the Industrial Revolution you had this kind of

psychopathic thing that whatever happened to your workers didn't matter and I think the convict culture came out of that.

Lily: Then the McIntyre River massacre in June just days after the massacre Myall Creek, and perpetrated by the same men.

Terry: A gradually increasing cycle of violence against the Aboriginal people that culminated in a period of weeks in May, I think, with the Bingara Bushwacks and during that time there were *um* more incidences at places like Slaughterhouse Creek and Gravesend mountain and so on.

Anna: If you go to Port Arthur and see the mindset that could create Port Arthur, you begin to understand ah how this story, you know, how it happened.

Scene 6: The Massacre at Myall Creek

Shared eye contact.

Lily: My Granny, Lizzie, never talked about anything to us kids. Born in NSW under the Aboriginal Protection Board. If you were born in Queensland, you'd be under the Noxious Weed Act. In those days it wasn't called Bingara, it was called Bin-gar-a. And it took me a long while to realise Aunty Lizzie was talking about Bingara; she'd say: oh no, no. bad place, bad place. Bad spirits. And I'd say but why? Oh, just don't go there. Aboriginal people don't go there. And all those people knew about the Myall Creek massacre but they wouldn't talk about it. It was even bad to talk about it!

Fred: The people at Myall creek, the Weraerai, were blamed for certain things, if you know what I mean. But, as evidence revealed later, they were very passive people and were not involved in cattle rushing, cattle spearing. Cattle rushing? You die rushing cattle.

Rhonda: We was told that they shot them, because they were stealing from them. Stealing their cattle. This is what my Dad told me. That's what they were accused of, that's why they killed them.

Terry: Now what happened was that a local squatter's younger brother named John Fleming from further west, from a property named Mungie Bundie, nine miles this side of Moree, was *uhm*...leading a party or parties of people attacking aborigines. Some of these may have been involved with Nunn, when he was active. So Fleming and his group and certainly at Myall Creek he was the only freeman there, whether there were other freemen, who joined these expeditions from time to time I can only assume that that may have been the case. But Fleming and his group were out on the hunt. They carried pistols, rope and swords. And they had found *um*...so many people had been displaced and killed that *ah*...they I imagine that they were finding it difficult to find targets. And they had developed a lust for killing.

Anna: I've read everything on it and I think it can be proven, the convicts were the soldiers who were sent in and they were sent in by the squatters.

Fred: In the case of Myall Creek the station superintendent was William Hobbs and he was assisted by two assigned convicts, George Anderson the hut-keeper. And Charles Kilmeister, 25, a stockman. Hobbs left Myall Creek on Thursday, June 7th, 1838, to move some cattle. Meanwhile a group of ten convicts, all employed by local squatters, were gathering on a near-by property.

Anna: It was all organised.

Fred: And off they rode to Myall creek because somebody told them there was a group of people down at Myall Creek.

Gen: On the evening of Saturday, June 9, Myall Creek was visited by neighbours Thomas Foster, and William Mace. They wanted some workers for bark cutting. They left the next morning, Sunday June 10th, with about ten of the blacks from Myall Creek.

Fred: That left a group of 28 people there: men, women and kids. Women and children mostly. But there were two adult males, Sandy and Old Daddy

Anna: Old Daddy, a very old, big tall man.

Lily: So many of them had European names, virtually all of them had European names. So they were known to the whites in the area and they spoke, some of them spoke a little bit of English. And this was one of the key things in getting a conviction in court. .. the fact that Anderson and Hobbs could sit there and list off the names, the characteristics.

Terry: And on the evening of...Sunday, June 10, 1838, the vigilante group happened on Dangar's Myall Creek station.

Fred: The terrified Weraerai people raced into Anderson's hut, were trapped, tethered to a long rope and led off. Apparently Kilmeister chose to go with the perpetrators of the crime but Anderson stayed. And he held back a little girl.

Anna: Russell told Anderson; "we will only take them over the range to frighten them".

Fred: So fifteen, twenty minutes later two shots were fired but they weren't going to waste any more bullets on Aboriginal people. They all got together with their cutlasses ...

Rhonda: So when the massacre took place at Myall creek they couldn't understand why these two young Aborigines escaped. Jimmy and his brother, John. They hid in the creek. Old Athol Munro in Moree took them the two boys from Moree to Myall Creek, their Mum was tribal ... Athol was a white fella and the first Munro in the

district. Anyway, the two Munro boys escaped, because they could understand what the convicts were talking about. ... so they then escaped the first massacre, straight after that there was another one at McIntyre station. They escaped that, so the Europeans then decided to send the Munro brothers back to a safer place.

Gen: When ...Hobbs, came back a few days later he asked where the Aboriginal people were and Anderson gave him to understand what had happened and pointed in the direction they had been taken - this is court testimony now. And Hobbs came upon the bodiesthey were decapitated and there had been a crude attempt to burn them which had failed because of the *ah...*wet logs, you know. It had been raining.

Fred: The story then goes into an investigation into who did it, why did it happen, when did it happen and what have you.

Scene 7: The trials x 2

All remain sitting.

Lily: Luckily we had a Governor at that time who was probably the most forward thinking Colonial Governors, Governor Gipps. And he was religious. And he would have had a different perspective on what is a human and what isn't a human. Six weeks after the murders, he sent out the local police constable or magistrate, a fellow called Day, Edward Denny Day. So a few weeks after that they went out to all these outer-lying properties and started taking the people who were involved in it. Russell, Blake, Lamb, Parry, Foley, Palliser, Hawkins, Kilmeister, Oates, Johnstone, Telluse.

Gen: James Parry was heard to say several times: "We settled them." "We had a shot at the blacks." "I will never have a hand in that again." That's what witnesses said. Other than that, the men didn't speak. Ever.

Anna: Day encountered enormous difficulties, especially from hostile whites who resented the intensity of the inquiries. He later reported to the Attorney General, John Plunkett, that he had had to encounter:

Terry as Day : "every obstacle that unwilling witnesses could possibly throw in my way."

Anna: The one who got away, John Fleming, disappeared from history. The story is that he was handed down through members of the family and he ended up in Tasmania. He actually went home to the Hawkesbury, married his cousin in Wilberforce and died childless in 1894. Day reported to the Colonial Secretary in September 1838 that Fleming was with friends in the Windsor district and

Terry as Day: “intends to fly from the colony should the trial prove unfavourable to the parties now in custody.”

Gen: But he didn't have to. The convicts remained the scapegoats. I often think about the convicts and when they were arrested they had to walk to Newcastle. They walked to Newcastle in chains. Sometimes you feel sorry for all convicts and they way they were treated as well. But I don't say that in front of the Aboriginal people in case they think I'm making excuses for them.

Terry: Day took Anderson with him. He was afraid if Anderson was left alone at Myall Creek “any evil-disposed person might feel inclined to put his testimony beyond reach.”

Fred: And eventually the court case did get underway in Sydney. November 15, 1838. 11 men indicted for the wilful murder of one Daddy, an aboriginal black native. For the prosecution: Attorney General John Plunkett, the first Catholic to hold a high office in the colony, and Roger Therry; for the defence: Messrs Foster, a'Beckett and Windeyer.

Rhonda: Henry Dangar and Robert Scott formed the Black Association to help the convicts. I don't think they had any loyalty to them, it just didn't look good that they were hanged.

Fred: Also Dangar had stated publicly that the Aboriginal is a worse pest than the native dog.

Lily: So the trial got underway in Sydney.

Gen: The jury returned a verdict of not guilty having retired for about a quarter of an hour, the prisoners were immediately remanded for trial for the murder of the little boy, Charley. News of the second trial caused a sensation.

Fred: Monday, November 29th, the second trial. Only seven men were charged, one objective apparently being to encourage the other four to come forward with incriminating evidence. But Robert Scott had visited all the men in jail before the trial and told them not to fear, that they were in no danger if they were but true to one another and did not split. So they didn't.

Terry: The seven were found guilty in the second trial and they eventually swung. They included Kilmeister, Parry and Foley. The four still in the cells were Blake, Palliser, Telluse and Lamb.

Lily: The jury took three quarters of an hour this time.

Anna: The seven men were hanged on December 18th. They held hands on the gallows.

Scene 8: Condemned to swing

Terry helps Gen get to her feet. Terry leaves Gen.

Gen: It's so sad. It's so sad for the people and for the convicts themselves. They were so oppressed ... then they come out here, they had these horrible masters and overseers over them and I just feel for them. They came from one country to another country and they end up dying and they didn't have a chance in the world. It was a horrific thing for both sides.

Gen returns to her seat. Lily stands.

Lily: Sir Roger Therry in his reminiscences published later stated that while awaiting execution "the prisoners confessed to the gaoler that they were guilty, but declared that they did not know their action in killing the blacks was unlawful, as it had so often been done in the colony before."

Scene 9: Hoo-ha

Lily remains standing. Anna and Terry stand.

Anna as Country man: Well, have they hanged these men this morning?

Terry as Citizen: Yes, I understand they have.

Anna as Country man: It is a d...d shame, but we have taken on a safer game in our part of the country.

Terry as Citizen: Indeed. Pray, what is it?

Anna as Country man: Oh. We poison them.

Terry as Citizen Good God! Poison them?

Anna as Country man: Yes. We have done so with a good many already, and serve them right , too.

Lily: The Sydney Gazette, December 19th

Anna: The other four accused were discharged in February, 1839. All the hoo-ha and the court case and everything else and the Governor found the people were against him for what had happened...Blake went to work in Goulburn. We don't know what happened to the other three.

Terry: The tragedy is the idea of Myall Creek as an isolated incident which was dealt with through the system of justice at the time. This is still the conventional wisdom. And that's what – that's one of the things, I think, we've got to do at Myall Creek is to challenge that conventional wisdom. We need it known that it happened only three

lifetimes ago. We need it to be part of the national conscious to know that there were widespread massacres.

Fred stands.

Fred: Myall Creek was the first and it made all Aboriginal people Australia-wide human in the eyes of British law at the time. Actually made human. And as far as I'm concerned that massacre day should be commemorated every year. Our special date should be June 10th of every year. This should be Indigenous Day.

Lily: Hate that "Indigenous" word.

Lily sits where Anna had been, Anna sits where Fred had been, Terry sits where Lily had been.

Fred: Aboriginal People's Day. We became human in the eyes of British law at the time.

Fred sits where Terry had been.

Scene 10: The Whistleblowers

Anna: Looking at Myall Creek initially, I thought: aw gee, what a dark story. *Uhm...*but I kept getting surprised by...you know the night sky had stars in it. And one was in the story the white people who brought it to justice. Because when – when the gang rode in to Myall Creek to carry out the massacre, there were basically two men on the ground, who – that was *er* Kilmeister and Anderson, both convicts, both had suffered abuse, *ah* and one of them joined the gang. And one didn't. *Um* and so I could ask myself the question: well, which man would I have been in that situation?

Lily: Obviously, obviously the key guy is George Anderson. Without him all they have is Hobbs' evidence: there were some Aborigines *ah* camped at his station and he found some bodies which he believed to be theirs. So Anderson is crucial and even though he admits to being absolutely *um* terrified by the whole thing, and there is no doubt there was enormous threats against his life and the fact that Fleming got away and he knew that Fleming got away and he knew that Fleming was a squatter and he knew the power of the squatters, he was terribly courageous to still – knowing there was a squatter on the loose – to go ahead and give evidence against the men, what he did was just amazing. Hobbs then too is crucial because he *um* decided to report it.

Fred: Foot's role, he's *um* very important. He rode 500 ks to report the massacre. He had to ride under fear of ... reprisals from other farmers. You know. They wanted to keep it covered up, these people were under threat. But they did it.

Gen: And then Gipps, being idealistic and new in the Colony. And Day was obviously a very diligent policeman, he did a wonderful job of rounding all those men up.

Lily: He was prepared to go against the flow and treat a criminal as a criminal on the basis of the crime, rather than walking away from it: *Ah*, well...they were only Aborigines – he didn't do that.

Rhonda: Um then *ahm* obviously John Plunkett too because he was a huge supporter of what Gipps was doing and had the knowledge to *ah* to put a legal case together. It didn't get through the first time, it got through the second time. So there was a real alignment of the stars.

Anna: The stars lining up and justice was done.

Terry: You know, it was like there was this shaft of light in history. And after 1838 it dissipated and those links could never be made again. And *ah* – but every one of those men or pretty well every one of them paid a price for what they did. They all – standing up – for Myall Creek cost them something. They all paid a price for that. Dangar fired Hobbs in the August, this is before the trial, and it took him eight years to find another regular job. So I found that was really inspiring.

Fred: But it took years and years for people to understand true history.

Scene 11: Re-imagining the massacre

In their own time the actors get to their feet; they find a space to visualise the terror.

Lily: Before the massacre, the people were scared and they hid in gullies, where they couldn't see them, you know? Near the creek, that's where they had their camps, where people couldn't see them. And by day they'd all scatter, come back together at night and um and there was always someone on watch and then they went to Myall Creek station....

Terry: We know at Myall Creek at that time of the year it is pretty consistently cold and miserable late on a Sunday afternoon.

Rhonda: Like sometimes I picture like those who were massacred –

Terry: I've tried a few times, several times over the years, to be there at the site at that time of night that the massacre actually happened, in the afternoon just before sunset or just on sunset.

Rhonda: - like they was all you know camp fires at night, kids running around playing and *um* people cooking and just doing their – making their dinner or something...

Terry: And I just stand there and reflect on what happened all those years ago and how horrific it all was.

Fred: I've also seen what walks there. It's like we were out there one time at the creek – this is before Myall Creek started – and it was like you could feel the people and the kids coming down to the edge of the water and our kids are saying: "Oh, look at all them other kids there!" So that's where we set up camp, where we saw them goonjas.

Lily: What would it have been like to be those people? Especially the kids...

Terry: They arrived there, Fleming and his party, I think, at ...as the Aboriginal people were getting their evening meal together, you know. *Ah...* say four o'clock or something that order.

Lily: They were just living their lives and these people just came along and for no reason

Rhonda: And they came upon them and they never had a chance. When they came upon them they just never had a chance.

Gen: They captured them and tied them up to this long rope and led away over a slight rise. Anderson in the hut couldn't see what happened.

Fred: These guys only had three swords. And I mean that's - and Anderson only heard two shots. So I mean you know when you kill 28 people with just two shots you know and only 3 swords and those poor people had to wait a hell of a long time for their turn to be slaughtered. You know, tied to a rope...an absolutely horrific crime.

Terry: The convicts rode at this tied-up group with their swords and ah...decapitated then from horseback. I think that's ...I don't know of course...

Terry sits.

Rhonda: Yeah....(*cries*)...just thinking what those people went through.

Lily: I s'pose, after they done it, all the pots would all still be boiling, the fires going but there would be no sound. And they made a bonfire of their bodies. *Um.* Must have been terrible, you know?

Fred: And then the men came home looking for their wives, their kids ...

Anna: The men of the tribe who'd been away cutting bark, when they came back they found all the women and children massacred ... then there's this little picture in the trial records, where this man came back and found his daughter alive and he breaks down and weeps. It's the little girl, Anderson the hut keeper shoved back in the hut, when the gang rode in and took the people away. There was this little girl, a

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

couple of women and the two little boys hiding in the creek. And the descendants come from those people.

Anna sits.

Rhonda: My father – I think his great-great grandfather, was one of those that got away, one of those boys.

Lily: Amazing that he survived. God, God saved him for a purpose. My mother was a Munro. Yes, yes. My mother was a Munro.

Rhonda: There was two of them. Around 9 or 10.

Lily: Must have been very traumatic for them, to have been left all alone.

Rhonda: Two brothers.

Fred: Jimmy and John Munro. John was my great-great grandfather.

Lily: I would have loved to have known his Aboriginal name.

Fred: I always knew there was a connection with the Munros but I went to school in Delungra and Delungra is a hop step and a jump from Myall Creek, but my father and my grandfather never ever mentioned Myall Creek, never mentioned it.

Rhonda: My Mum and Dad, they told us. Aunties and Uncles with our story times at night. But it was a warning, because they never really – they said it was bad, there was bad people in the world, there was good and bad. Just to be aware.

Scene 12: Enter Len

Terry offers his seat – Rhonda takes it. Terry remains standing. The others sit.

Terry: The actual original picking up of the story again after 1838 was by Len Payne, a white man in Bingara. His family were involved in the movie business in showing pictures in Newcastle and he came up here to install or repair something at the Regent theatre at Bingara.

Gen: He was quite conservative, soft-spoken, well-spoken...

Terry: He came to be the proprietor of the Regent theatre. At Bingara. And he became interested in the *ah* the story of Myall Creek and other stories of massacres that had occurred in the area. And he set about collecting this oral history and putting it together.

Lily: Lenny Payne, he done his own work on history. A fascinating man.

Fred: Oh old Len was a lovely old guy. He used to wear a little peaked cap and he'd whistle to himself and sometimes (*laughs*) I'd catch him talking to himself.

Lily: I talked with him a few times. Had the privilege of shaking his hand, you might say.

Terry: He made that connection from oral local history between Nunn and Nunn's example to the locals. And to what followed... Len pointed out that it was part of a pattern, a pattern that had gone on for months in this area and it continued in this area after Myall Creek ...and as we all know it continued on the frontiers of contact well into the twentieth century. Wherever the interests of the pastoral economy conflicted with the Aboriginal people and wherever there was insufficient supervision of employees in the pastoral industry and wherever there was leadership from *um...* people such as Fleming from the *um...* supervisory or ownership class ... *um* these attacks tended to be systematic.

Gen: You know he wanted to put a memorial up?

Terry: *Ah* he met opposition from the Community pretty widely, I feel.

Terry sits.

Fred: Len was black-listed because he dared to say this sort of thing happened. A non-indigenous person who dared to speak.

Anna: In 1965 Len Payne developed a proposal to erect a memorial consisting of ...gates. He had found what he thought were the hinges of the gates of the stockyard at Myall Creek Station and he believed that the massacre took place at the stockyard.

Gen: He approached the Lions Club for funding and the Lions Club got back to him and said... "The people of Bingara should be more involved in remembering those who died in the war past and putting the orange trees, which are a memorial, that line the street; they should be more thinking about the soldiers than the Aboriginal people who died a long time ago." So the Lions Club withdrew their support from Len and Len typed up a three page document refuting all their claims. The newspaper said: oh, I don't want a rock through my window and refused to print Len's refute.

Terry: He was effectively silenced.

Fred stands.

Fred: In the mid-1960s he decided to display them in the window of one of the stores in town. Well, it caused a bit of an uproar. They were going to run him out of town. "Take those things out of here, those things never happened." So he eventually took them and he left them at his place, then. And that's where I first saw them in 1987.

Lily stands.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Lily: His being persistent in an environment of aggro. I can really appreciate his point in that struggle.

Fred: And I just said: oh, for fuck's sake No! My God! I'm looking at these things. And I had to ask the question, like anyone would ask the question: are they really from the stock yard?

Anna stands.

Anna: He and several other people, including some Aboriginal people ... *hmmm....* Met where the old stockyards were, on the anniversary ... of the massacre ... and lay a wreath on June 10th in memory of those who had been massacred.

Rhonda stands.

Rhonda: This was in 1988. The Bi-centennial.

Anna: I'm not sure that that is the actual site of the massacre but they believed it was and they held that ceremony there.

Anna sits.

Fred: We went through the ceremony and he said: you keep the hinges, you've fulfilled my dream, I've always wanted to open this up.

Lily: 1990 hardly anyone turned up.

Lily and Rhonda sit.

Fred: Eventually Len and I stopped having contact so much. He was suffering from ill-health. We drifted apart. We planted a tree there, wire mesh round it. That wasn't going to stop cattle. The sapling didn't make it.

Fred sits.

Scene 13: Len's Long Shadow

Rhonda: It didn't work. The tree was trampled down by cows. By cattle. Everything they tried failed. My feeling was that we had to do something. Something that would stick. And *um* that we could have there forever with our histories, putting our peoples to rest, because we believed their blood was crying out for – out from the ground for – someone to recognise them.

Gen: I was born in Bingara. I'd heard about Myall Creek but didn't really know much about it. And I didn't really know Aboriginal people either. When I first started on this there was nobody there really identifying as Aboriginal in town.

Fred: Oh, as soon as you identify as an Aboriginal – oh, really? Oh, how quaint. Oh, you look a bit Mexican to me.

Anna: The story I think began in '72 –I tutored some Aboriginal children ah that's when I started asking the question. I saw them every week: who are these people? Where do they come from? What's their story? 26 years later Myall Creek found me.

Terry: My interest began in 1978. I was teaching at a school, a girls' high school in southern Sydney and *um* I was doing some research in the library and I came across an account of the Myall Creek massacre. As soon as I read that, I was shocked, amazed and everything else. I was just shocked principally at the horror of the deed itself. But I was particularly even more shocked by the fact that I as a teacher then and as a history teacher knew virtually nothing about it.

Lily: This is the thing with Myall Creek, you keep meeting stories like this, people like this.

Terry: And I thought: boy, is this, you know, this is a skeleton in the closet of Australia's history – this whole thing. A feature film should be made about it, so that people knew, you know?

Gen: I was just at home and I really need to – do a degree. At the end of my degree I did a unit on visual design. And I decided to design a memorial. I wanted to do some design around the Myall Creek massacre. As part of my art study, you know, you had to go out there to Myall Creek Station and walk around the place, and get a feel for it. I wrote to the owner, and asked could I go on to the property. And he wrote me this very terse letter saying: you are not permitted on to Myall Creek Station for the reasons: no, you're not allowed on to my property. So I thought bugger that, I'm not taking that. So I used to sneak out there and take photos and collect leaves and collect soil samples and I can remember sneaking out there and the quails would jump out of the bush and frighten the life out of me. So I'm sneaking around the bush trying to get photos. So I thought I'll go down there to where stockyards are and get a feel of the place. Anyway I just climbed the fence and this bull charged me and I thought: right, that's it.

So finally I got on to some universities to find out what sort of memorials existed for Aboriginal massacres, and I could find nothing. I could find lumps of granite for soldiers that had died and I could find orange trees in the street, in fact the memorial hall at Myall Creek is our memorial for the soldiers who had died in World War 1. So here I am surrounded by memorials to dead white men but nothing to Aboriginal people.

So then I went to Moree and approached a few Aboriginal people at the Lands Council, and I said: you know, what about putting a Memorial up. And they said oh, the Council has tried that, didn't work. Maybe you should talk to the Inverell people, it's nearer them.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

So I went over there and it was like: no, it's not our place, it's not our place.

Fred: There's people still into denial. That these things happened.

Gen: And I thought I can't get anywhere with this. I don't know if I have the energy, the resources, the time, I don't know if I should be doing it, I'm not Aboriginal and whether it's my place to be doing this – so I left it.

Fred: Everyone was nice and social, politically correct. They're doing stuff with yas. But in your absence they're glad to get away from those eyes.

Scene 14: Right time, right place

Anna stands.

Anna: Now this is another part of the story starting from a different perspective. In 1992 I was invited by the Uniting Aboriginal Islander Christian Congress, which is the Aboriginal people in the Uniting Church, their organization, to engage in a process of reconciliation in the Uniting Church. In 1998 I came to the conclusion that we really needed to go back to the hard places of our history together.

Rhonda stands.

Rhonda: I was in Sydney. Doing studies in Sydney and I just said to the Reverend: why don't you come and do Myall Creek. And then we left it for a while and then she contacted me about six months after and she said:

Anna: Did you really mean it?

Rhonda: And I said: Yes. We want someone to do something, something to really stay.

Anna: So I said great; let's try it.

Gen: The Reverend was amazing really.

Anna: So I began then for the next six months to organize a conference there *um...* with a view to acknowledging the history. We had a three-day conference on the long weekend in October 1998; I had advertised this widely in the media and some people who had had an interest in this history for a long time came...

Fred: ... From all over NSW, a substantial number of Aboriginal people from the region... and a descendent from the magistrate, Edward Denny Day, also came.

Anna: *Um...* and wanted to be part of anything we did.

Lily stands, moves DL.

Lily: Myall Creek – the one place where true history was dealt with in the courts, now on the land. Somehow somebody I think had sent me some information on it. I was at the original meeting

Gen: My sister, who is a lawyer in Sydney, sent me a fax: there was a gathering at Myall Creek in October. They were talking about just building a cairn there. Everyone brought a rock.

Anna: I had invited people to bring rocks from their places all over the country as a symbol of their acknowledgement that these massacres occurred all over the country.

Anna moves DR.

Gen: It was quite an interesting meeting – all these Aboriginal people under the trees and all these white, white, white men with their pink shirts and shorts and sandals all in the hall and there's like rift distance - the whities over here and the Aboriginals- so anyway...as the weekend kind of progressed, people kind of moved. A lot of them were staying at Inverell. So I gave them my visual diary. My visual diary was this thick, jammed with all this information, and they passed it from hotel room to hotel room. The next day I had all these people lined up talking to me about it. Oh, we really should build a Memorial. And they said: do you know where the massacre site was? And I said I know where Len thought it was.

Terry stands.

Terry: I feel we can be pretty sure it didn't happen in the stockyard. (*Laughs*) I mean it's petty and it's trivial but we need to be as accurate as we can.

Gen: And I said Oh well, we'll go up, I'll take you up there. (*Laughs*) They were lovely people really, lovely people. So okay, let's walk. And the Elders were put on to a bus and we walked. And this is where the whole ceremony of walking came from.

Fred stands.

Fred: It was a little bit of a pilgrimage thing walking up to the site, yeah, just a joint activity. With the Aboriginal Community and the wider community. So that was the important part...I think it's the relational side of it, really, that's been the important part of it for me.

Gen: So I'm halfway up the hill and I turn around and I look down and this stream and I get really emotional even now, because there was this whole stream of people behind me and I thought: this is just brilliant because, you know, all that time I'd done it on my own. I'd parked the car behind the bushes, you know, I'd sneaked down through the bush, you know. So we got to where the road turns and I said, because according to the owner, this was trespassing: Those who want to be arrested, follow me. If you don't want to be arrested, stay here.

So I went over to the bus and I said to the Elders: you've got to come. And they said: no, we don't like it. It's a bad place. Bad place. And so – which I really understand, I really do. I really do understand that.

Lily: The owner was wrong. It was Crown Land.

Rhonda: We had a claim on that land. One day we thought we'd have a Memorial there, we didn't think it would happen straightaway.

Gen: And the Reverend said: this is where we should have it.

Lily: You sort of stand there and look out over those paddocks.

Terry: It was a convenient and beautiful grove, a convenient spot on Crown Land. And we say that the massacre occurred somewhere on the slopes below.

Fred: Separate from the actual site itself. Look, no-one can be sure which little gully it was, right? But a local guy actually spent an enormous amount of time researching ...but *ah* whether it's this little gully or the next little gully...

Rhonda: We did a cairn first.

Terry: I was horrified...that something as small as that was going to be erected....I certainly wasn't going to let it pass with just a cairn of stones....what are you going to do with those stones?...I said: I'll look after them....till you need them... We packed them in the car...we had them in the boot, under our feet, kept them here at the farm....

Anna: So those stones rocks were kept with a view to erecting some sort of a permanent Memorial.

Lily: Some people drew attention to the fact that they could have a memorial to World War 1 but not the massacre.

Rhonda: Then we called the Elders together. We talked about it, all the other Elders, I asked their permission first. And they gave me the go-ahead and they said they wanted something big.

Lily: (*Laughs*) Something as big as the hall.

Rhonda: So we formed a committee.

Fred: When I got involved I said we have to convince the people of Bingara that there was no people in Bingara when the massacre took place and so they've got no need to worry that they're going to be criticised about it. I did it through the press.

Anna: We met in January to push forward the proposal to erect a Memorial. We decided a number of significant things at that meeting.

1. We owe it to all Australia to tell the truth of our history, the hard parts and the bad parts, as well as the proud episodes and the good parts of our history. We must tell the truth of our history.

2. We want to work together as a group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, we gave the Aboriginal people who were related to this ...an opportunity to say: look, we want to do this ourselves. *Um...*and they were absolutely unanimous: No, this must be something we do together.

We met several times – I don't know it might have been six public meetings over the next year...

Gen: We decided that as the Committee we would discuss stuff but we would never make any decision until we went back to the big group.

Anna: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together.

Gen: We agreed to meet in February – at that time I had a very old house, a huge old federation house, a big dining table that seated twelve and I can remember I'd made all these quiches and I'd cut up fruit and I had a whole lot of tea and coffee and plain biscuits and we just expected a committee meeting. And the next thing we've got people come knocking at the front door, we've got people coming in the French doors, and I'm saying to my kids: quick! Here! Take my purse (*laughs*) – go over to the shop, get me some more fruit, get me some more tea, get me some this and they'd get back with a supply of food and I'd say: you've got to go again! People kept streaming in and so that was the day we decided what we were going to do and that we were going to put a Memorial up and where. And that was really wonderful. And we had to ask Sally, because they had a land claim over that land and we had to ask permission. And the Reverend said: well, Sally, can we have permission to put a Memorial on that site? And Sally says:

Rhonda: Yes.

Gen: A woman of few words. And it just took off from there and we decided we wanted to have the opening in June, 2000, and I think the Saturday happened to be the anniversary of the massacre...and we decided who we wanted to have there and no-one wanted John Howard there (*laughs*).

Anna: We always met at Myall Creek at the hall.

Terry: February and that's the first meeting that I went up to. My mother saw a mention of it in the Catholic Weekly. So *um* I worked with the committee and we discussed at length what the Memorial should look like etc, etc. I worked with them in terms of the wording for the Memorial stones along the walkway. And I had one of the most *um...*interesting *um...* spiritual experiences of my life. We were having a ceremony in the memorial hall itself. And it had been sort of grey and overcast all day but there had been absolutely no rain whatsoever. And they started *um* they

started *ah* praying and they're very good the way they pray in terms of Byami, *um* it's a very inclusive sort of ceremony *um* and it's *um* and they had I think a couple of children, a couple of Aboriginal children I think, lighting these candles and *um* the moment these children lit these candles as part of the prayer, it absolutely started bucketing down out of the heavens, absolutely bucketing down and you couldn't hear people over the noise in the roof. And *um* I was absolutely staggered and *um* every time I tell this story I get emotional like I am now. *Um* I was sitting there thinking: this is absolutely amazing. And I said; the test is going to be what happens when they blow these candles out, and they finished this prayer (*laughs*) as loudly as they could given the noise of the rain on the roof – and then sure enough when they finished the prayer, they then blew the candles out and literally within ten to fifteen seconds that rain stopped completely. And I walked outside and I was talking to one of the Aboriginal women Elders and I said to her: how amazing was that?! With the rain while those candles were alight... And *um* she said to me, she said: that was just the spirit ancestors weeping tears of joy that something is finally going to be done about this. And *um* that certainly stuck with me. It's now what? 12 years ago, I remember those words perfectly. And I've a lousy memory (*tears*). So that was fantastic.

Lily: I remember sitting in the hall and the rain bucketed down. I mean, it was one of those meetings when there was really some spiritual dimension going on there that was almost palpable. I mean, Aboriginal people have no trouble with this – talking in these terms – the tears were of grieving and all this *ah* unresolved pain and loss was coming out; it was like a release with the rain. Tears of joy. Well, grief and joy.

Rhonda: We walked outside we could hear the didgeridoos, the old fellas singing.

Terry: The hairs stood up on the back of my neck.

Terry sits.

Rhonda: Talking about everything in the hall, we was having the meetings about what we wanted on the plaques, all these white cockatoos just sort of flew up out of everything and I believed their spirits was released, they are released knowing that we haven't forgotten them. Knowing that we carry them on from day to day.

Rhonda and Anna sit.

Gen: The big thing was getting the wording right. I don't know how many meetings we had. Indigenous, non-indigenous. The Lions Club would come and do the barbeque, which is a bit ironic, really. But everything needed permission. Trees. Everything.

Fred: At the same time they were talking about visual art. What I said was: I want the privilege and honour of doing it. We started talking with the Reverend. The text that I was given was verbal: "as simple as possible": so I added one part: "maximum impact" to "as simple as possible" and created the sketches from there.

Lily: Then we got the architect.

Lily sits.

Fred: The architect's main contribution was to introduce the idea of a serpentine walk, a symbol of the creator serpent in Aboriginal thought and culture. A winding path between stones with plaques that tell different stories of what happened at the time. A path that led to a huge boulder.

Fred sits.

Gen: The Reverend and I would be out there, digging bloody holes. So focussed all the time. Then the next bit wasn't expected:

Scene 15: Enter the final players

Terry stands.

Terry: I found out about Myall Creek from Myall Creek. In 1996 I found out that my great-great grandfather was a convict. Which had always been denied within the family. And we thought it was quite funny, knowing some of our old people and knowing how snobbish they were about convicts. The family researcher in Sydney then *ahm* was looking through archives and sort of found this ancestor was tied up with Myall Creek. I gave the talk to the grandchildren at school, I did that twice, I think. Then that school teacher, who was sort of tied up in Aboriginal reconciliation saw an article in Walkabout how the Myall Creek Committee had been formed to build a Memorial about Myall Creek. She sent it to me, so I then rang up Bingara ...

Gen: I was the secretary of the Committee.

Terry: I asked her what it was all about.

Gen: Oh we're having people from here, having people from there – descendants from Denny Day...

Terry: Then I said: Well, how would you like someone from the other side...? She said:

Gen: What do you mean?

Terry: And I said: well, John Blake was my great-great grandfather. And that fairly stunned her. John Blake was the only one who was married, had children. He committed suicide in 1852; he's buried in some unknown grave; no-one knows where it is. I said: I'm quite happy to acknowledge what has happened and say who we are but it'll be up to the Aboriginal people to accept us or not. And so they had a meeting before we went there and said: no, that was a good idea. That's what it was

all about as far as they were concerned. Reconciliation. And so that's when I became part of it.

Anna stands.

Anna: It was six months before the memorial was due to open but we knew nothing about it. But I'd found out about Edward Foley from a book in the Inverell library. It was eerie to tell you the truth. It fell open at a large page about the Myall Creek massacre. John Foley is my great-great grandfather. John and his brother, Edward Foley, were both transported to Australia in 1832. Both were convicts. When they landed here, John Foley was assigned to Edward Harper at Wallis Plains, near Newcastle. Edward Harper was good, he was honest, John Foley never reoffended. He became a freeman, married etc. But Edward was assigned by the older Fleming Joseph, but he re-assigned Edward Foley to his younger brother, John Fleming. And John Fleming was to lead the raid at Myall Creek. My husband and I, we decided we would follow their tracks; we'd go to Myall Creek. We went to the local map shop in Inverell.

Then I got a phone call from the Reverend. That happened through word of mouth, I spoke to someone at Myall Creek, who wasn't interested in the Memorial but she must have passed the message on. The Reverend said there was an important meeting with all the Aboriginal elders and the people involved and would I like to join them?

Rhonda: The families of the perpetrators came to ask forgiveness.

Anna: And I was really frightened, really, really frightened of going over there, because I didn't know how they'd accept me.

Rhonda: You know, you don't expect things to be done for Aboriginal people.

Anna: How they would feel about me? Anyway we went along...

Rhonda stands. Then they all stand to watch. Rhonda embraces Anna.

Gen: When Letitia⁹¹ met Sally⁹² not one person didn't cry.

Anna: Sally and I, we became very emotional. It was very emotional.

They hold hands.

Anna: Sally told me when we were alone, she said: I've never had a sister but I consider you now my blood sister. So that was special; that was really special.

Rhonda: I think there was a reconciliation there.

⁹¹ A character name was introduced here to protect the participant's privacy.

⁹² A character name was introduced here to protect the participant's privacy.

Anna: Somebody said it must have been very cathartic for you, but not really, no. My family broke up over it. They wouldn't accept it. They didn't want people to know they were descended from a murderer.

Terry: Anyone was in Australia at that time, taking it back a few generations, and on the land and thinks that they're um their people weren't involved in it, by carrying it out or covering it up, well, they're kidding themselves. And *um* that was the way I felt about it.

Anna: My first response was I didn't want to know, it was shameful but I knew I couldn't let it alone. There was something in me that had to do something about it. I did feel that very, very strongly.

Lily: So what I thought when Sally hugged Letitia was in that embrace was like reconnecting with the land. It's like through that embrace, it's like through that, connection and belonging to Australia is really established. And it can only be done through Aboriginal people. Accept the embrace, remember the history, know what it's cost.

Rhonda: And it all just come together.

Scene 16 Countdown

All remain standing using the whole stage.

Gen: It was just like bedlam until it opened.

Rhonda: We went out looking for the boulder

Gen: Transgrid offered to move the rock but they said they could only move 20 tonnes. And I'd send a fax to Sydney. No, you can't have that, it's 50 tonnes. And ner-ner-ner. And the Reverend and I went out and we were climbing everywhere and we both turned round and said: that's the rock. Right. I'm not going to fax Sydney. Bugger it. I've got God on my side, even though I'm an atheist, I've got God on my side. I've got the Reverend. Transgrid came out and said: Yes, you can have that rock.

Rhonda: And the Elders agreed to it, they had a look at it, before we went further ahead.

Terry: It was difficult to get it into that grove.

Gen: They had the rock on this big crane and they swung it in over the trees and nothing had to be cut down and they swung it in and they dropped it. Is that right? Ah just a little bit to the left! You know, a bit of fun. And the night before the ABC rang. How will we find you with our helicopter and I rang the police and one of the

policemen when he finished his shift at midnight drove out there and got the GPS reading, so I phoned the ABC. Here's the GPS. And people were just ringing all night, trying to find where we were and all kinds of stuff.

And that day – I saw amazing things happen. My mother came out, she had a big batch of scones for people to eat and she met Aboriginal people for the first time. Amazing things.

Terry: That first walk up the hill - you're all part of the one thing.

Rhonda: Our kids was the first ones to dance there since they was all massacred. It was my grandchildren that danced. We had a big celebration. They done an Aboriginal corroboree dance. They painted up. We got the red wattle; that was the blood that was shed there. I just feel that because it was the first one where the perpetrators was punished, it was really, really - a relief. Like a peace

Linden: My son and his family had arrived the night before from down the coast and I said: Oh, I have to go to this ceremony and it was a day just like this – it was awful; and when it came to the point I thought: oh, do I really want to do this? And my son said: Oh, I'd like to come. I said: Oh, that's nice. And he said: We'll bring the kids, it'll be a good experience for them. And he said: Oh, are you going to take a stone from this property to put there at the memorial? And I said: What for? Because I hadn't been following it and he had. And he said: Oh, it's a sign of reconciliation. And I said: oh well, I don't really think I've got anything to say sorry for. I said: I know where all my ancestors came from and although there was the odd convict, but *um*, no, oh, we were all well away from this area and not involved in pastoral pursuits. We didn't do any of this. Meanwhile my son, who was quite a wise young man he must have been in his late twenties, said: Mum, where were you in the early 1970's? And I said: You know, we lived here on the property. And he said: Where did the Aboriginal people live? And I said: Oh, they lived in Tingha, they lived in humpies, none of them had houses in Tingha, they lived down by the mining holes, dirt floors, no power and he said: And what did you do about it? And that was all he said. And suddenly I thought: my goodness, I have got a reason to ask for forgiveness. I went and embraced Sally afterwards and said: I'm sorry, too, for my own attitudes. Not doing something at a time when I could. It's your own personals, it's what you yourself does that's relevant.

Lily: Initially there was some negativity from the local community, Bingara, Myall Creek, you're targeting us, you're labelling us you know, we're...it was never said overtly...but I heard rumours of feelings: this will, this will be bad for the community to have all this history told. I heard some of that. *Um*...so after that first ceremony, we went back down to the hall, we had our meeting. I went back up to the Memorial alone. And I found three local families at the Memorial. With little children. They'd brought flowers and put them on the Memorial and one of the little boys ...I suppose he was 8...he said to me: We're going to look after this forever (*cries*).

Rhonda: Ngiyani winangay ganunga. We Remember Them.

Fred: Just everybody that's come, that's had anything to do with it, not just white Australia or Black – I've met people that have not been to the Memorial, not even to this area but who know of it so well. I've talked to Chinese who've known about it, I've talked to English, I've talked to Pakistanis, and there's people that when you think they're from the countries they are, you wouldn't think when they got here, they wouldn't have time to worry about things like that. But they took the time to learn about it and I think: Oh. I take my hat off to those people and I take my hats off to the Committee for promoting it so well.

Gen: We wanted to tell the truth, this is a terrible part of our history.

Fred: What we're trying to put there is put the moral fibre back into a nation's ideology. We had it on paper with the trial, we just didn't have it in practice.

Anna: I think Myall Creek bestows an integrity and a dignity on a people that have had it ignored for so long. It's terrible to have those sorts of things denied and if those massacres have been denied, then all the treatment that followed after has been denied as well.

Lily: But now I picked up a Bingara tourist brochure for the town and here's Myall Creek Massacre prominent on page 3. And these are, you know, conservative country people.

Fred: I feel that that monument is great. It's great. To think that it's there and to recognize the fact that those people were massacred, right? But it doesn't take away the fact that they were...

Lily: Because the forces of the massacre continue. The Stolen Generations; the Northern Territory Intervention. We've gone physically backwards. Twenty years.

Anna: Occasionally I feel less confident in dealing with Aboriginal people, because I think I'm still dealing with the fact that, you know, that it's taken so long to get round to doing it. But, yes, it has changed me. And the change was in making me more sensitive to ...the weaker voices, the fainter voices, I guess.

Terry: It's not just the Aborigines that need to be educated it's US that need to be educated. It's of great concern to me and to people like me that up at the Memorial site the introduction to the walk refers to the massacre and the perpetrators being brought to trial and it refers to William Hobbs and *um* George Gipps. And it doesn't mention Anderson. Now when we are reporting that massacre in a place like the Memorial, we give credit to the two white free men, Gipps and Hobbs, but not to the convict, we ignore the convict. So we've still got, you know, this huge psychological problem there where you know (*laughs*) we treat convicts one way and free men another way.

Fred: We've come a long way but we've got a long way to go.

Linden: I've been to a number of the Memorial days at Myall Creek, had minor involvement there and my concern is Edward Denny Day surely played a significant role in the development of that story in history. And there seems little recognition of the role that he played.

Lily: Divide and conquer.

Terry: There's still this *um...ah...* essential attitude between convicts and free people, you know. Hierarchies of perceived power.

Lily: The British were kind of masters at this. It allowed them could play up the clan hatreds, to the point where under white command, Aboriginal police from a different tribe would come in and carry out massacres of other Aboriginal clans. These vendettas go right through the family, right through the schools on for generations, and that's not our way. It's not our way. We've got to get rid of the family and make it the community.

Fred: It's our people, we have to be reconciled with each other, before we can reconcile with anyone else. We're the ones who were separated and we're still separated today. Disharmony and distrust doesn't only pervade Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships, it pervades all relationships. It turns us against each other. Divide and conquer. Aboriginal people have to let go of – rebrainwashing, unbrainwashing...we've no-one yet to lead us. Go ahead and see for ourselves, go ahead an experience for ourselves. See with our own eyes, hear with our own ears. Make decisions based on that, not on what other people say. We have to work on the younger generation. Education. I used to blame teachers but I've changed my thinking. Parents should be involved in every phase of school life. The only way we can achieve is through education. Because tomorrow belongs only to those who prepare for it today.

Rhonda: That's why we have the schools' program. Kids submitting art or poetry or stories on a theme. To make them think. It's judged before the Memorial Day then put up in the hall. This year it's: We're All the Same on the Inside.

Lily: I mean one thing that strikes me about the Myall Creek story is what happened in 1838 was not a full-stop, it was like a semi-colon in the story. The story actually goes on.

Rhonda: Myall Creek – it's a story for the world. You confront the worst but you can be inspired by the best in the same story.

Anna: So we decided that we would erect a large building, an educational and cultural centre ...

Terry: There's such a huge number of people in the population that remains ignorant about this stuff. It's staggering.

Anna: The first section will be about the massacre at Myall creek, the story, and the erection of the Memorial; the second section is about the wider history in Australia ...of massacres across the country; the third is the effect of this on Aboriginal people, the fourth is the invitation to make your own commitment to reconciliation both by understanding the history, telling the truth of the history, challenging distortions of the history and making your own commitments to reconciliation.

Lily: We've consciously reconciled, I think - as a committee. We're on the same team, battling for the same things. So now we're really focusing on what we can do together.

Scene 17: Peace

Gen: After the Memorial was built, I used to take a lot of people out there. I would say to people, this is like your church, you step through here and it's a church. Aboriginal people will tell you and that's why the Elders wouldn't get off the bus that first day, because there was a blackness over the place. And then after the Memorial opened people started going there. And they would go there and they would say to me: the black cloud has lifted.

Lily: I feel a strong spirit there. Because it's a place where things happened. That we just don't understand. You see things, you hear things. But I feel there's a strong spirit there. I feel there's a lot of healings happen. ..

Fred: Well, put it this way. I'm comfortable there. I feel happy there.

Lily: It's a good spirit, the goodwill, the good intentions of people going there. And you go away from there feeling, knowing that we give our respect to these people, the one time of the year we grieve for those people, for all that pain and anguish.

Terry: It's interesting but by the end of the day often, people who have come for the first time, they're sort of buoyant, you know. Sort of feeling you know, I've done this, I'm part of this. Which is a really encouraging thing.

Gen: I had been quite cynical about it all my life, about spiritual experiences. I had this experience at the Memorial of a piece of the sky opening up and these women – Aboriginal voices coming through to me and then singing – and then it just kind of closed up again and I didn't say anything about it. Finally I asked; I was told that the women were coming to thank me for what I had done out there. I think the whole experience just changed me really. It will change you, too.

Anna: Myall Creek – the descendants came forward. That is remarkable. People are still – we keep all our skeletons in our cupboards. We still do it.

Gen: Other places have copied it. Almost like a McMyall Creek McMemorial. The Reverend was asked to come and put a Memorial up at Slaughterhouse Creek. She said: "I can't do it." You've got to have your heart in it. I was driven by my heart. It was like I didn't have any choice in it, it was what I had to do. And you've got to have more than just money. You've got have all different things. And we all came with different motivations. You know, Sally had lost her ancestors.

Rhonda: Some time I think about, I sit down and think ... I know there's a peace there now. You feel a peace there now, when you walk there, because I believe that no-one really cared to do enough. Um and that's why I decided to do what I'd done, go out and check it all out, and get the Elders approval, because it was the first one where the perpetrators was punished. I just feel good. That we've done it.

Fred: A shaft of light in history.

All: Ngiyani winangay ganunga. We Remember Them.

Chapter Seven

Feeling the Space -

taking the show on the road

“You’re all part of the one thing” (“Raymond,”⁹³ 2011)

7. Introduction

This chapter examines the performance in the memorial hall, presenting a detailed analysis of the events that contributed to its success and how insights from watching the performance contributed to a new appreciation of the potency of performed research. Beginning with a summary of the first read-through, when not all the cast could be present, the chapter then briefly addresses my own practice as an actor and theatre-maker, and how that influenced the production choices I made once we were on the road to Bingara.

The chapter then explores in detail the actor/co-researchers’ responses to the research experience, noting the differences and similarities between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actor/co-researchers particularly in their reactions to being at the Memorial and how that impacted on their performance the following day.

The chapter continues with an analysis of the feedback session after the performance and how the session contributed to an understanding of those factors, which would enhance dramatic content in subsequent drafts (*see Appendix iii*).

Finally this chapter concludes with a discussion on the play’s potential audience; as only one Aboriginal man responded to the invitation to attend the reading, I question

⁹³ “Raymond” is not a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee but he is a descendant of a massacre perpetrator. His name has been changed to protect his privacy. All references to “Raymond” come from an interview with him held in Sydney on October 17th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

Aboriginal actor/co-researchers Lily⁹⁴ and Fred⁹⁵ about the play's appeal cross-culturally and question myself as to whether the Myall Creek story is of greater significance to a non-Aboriginal audience.

7.1 The Redfern read

As discussed in Chapter Five, it was necessary to wait for two key interviewees to become available. This delayed the scripting process and a first draft read-through could only be scheduled to occur four days prior to departure. As both of these interviewees, called here "Letitia" and "Raymond", are descendants of massacre perpetrators and their stories therefore are strongly connected to the convict past, their interviews did influence the draft in ways I didn't appreciate until the Redfern read. This is a reflection of both of their stories' contents and my own relationship with my convict ancestry, which, as was the case for Letitia and Raymond, is something I had only gradually become aware of, as the reconciliation movement gained momentum.

The draft I took to the Community Centre in Redfern was two pages and probably eight minutes longer than the draft I took to the memorial hall. However it already had the same scene structure, which I had imposed on the material to support my navigation through the interviews. Two cast members weren't able to attend; one had sent a replacement and a personal friend, who had expressed interest in the project, offered to read in the other cast member's place. As she believed at the time she could have been related to one of the massacre perpetrators, this added an extra tension to the read and gave us all a sense of discovery, which helped the focus.

What didn't help was the amount of history I had included; I had become so immersed in particularly the convict history, as intimated above, that I had mistaken

⁹⁴ Lily refers to Lily Shearer, one of the Aboriginal actor/co-researchers, who took part in this project. All commentary from Lily refers either to the feedback session held after the Sunday performance in the memorial hall or to an interview with her held in Redfern, December 16th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

⁹⁵ Fred refers to Fred Copperwaite, one of the Aboriginal actor/co-researchers, who took part in this project. All commentary from Lily refers either to the feedback session held after the Sunday performance in the memorial hall or to an interview with her held in Glebe, December 16th, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

imagery for drama. Letitia's partner, Brian, was able to say which properties all the convicts had come from. He was able to say what men had been employed by what squatters and how far they had all ridden to come together to form the vigilante group and, if he couldn't remember exactly, he knew where to find the answer. His story firmly established the conspiratorial nature of squatter complicity in the Bingara Bushwacks; however what worked so well on the page was just a list in a play. By editing out the list, I lost a story. Unfortunately what also had to go was Brian and Letitia's account of driving around to those old squatter properties, or what they had become, and collecting a stone from each one to place on the Memorial at the first service. It might have been a very visual story but it was inappropriate for this particular play.

Another history story that was also cut after this read, after much discussion with the cast, was the story of the event that is believed to have triggered the Bingara Bushwacks three months after Major Nunn's genocidal campaign of early 1838. The opinion shared amongst the cast was that, as this was hearsay, it risked undermining the authority of the rest of the play's content. Although this story is in Milliss (1994) it had only been told by one participant and I was looking to lose time, so out it went. This was Nathan's story:

But the stories from Len – the actual event that brought about these 12 people going in on a vigilante on the New England area, the New England Plains then was brought about by a young boy being killed and his body was stuffed, was stuffed in something – a wood pile and logs were put on it and all that sort of thing, but that young boy from what I hear was killed all right but certain things had happened to that young boy before he was killed – being a very male-centred frontier, if you get my drift. And of course they were not going to blame themselves. Who were the people to blame? Who were the most vulnerable people? And so they blamed the indigenous people (Nathan, 2011).

Much more history would go, as the script developed, but I still felt at the time of the Redfern read that it was relevant, that history was where our understanding of the Myall Creek story would come from. None of the actors were part of the scripting process prior to the first reading; there had been no discussion about characterizations or performance level. Everyone seemed to accept their co-researcher role as, at this point, privileging reflection over performance.

Nor were any of the actor/co-researchers, apart from Terry⁹⁶, aware of the historical significance of Myall Creek or the Memorial. How Terry had become acquainted with the Memorial is included in this chapter, as it illustrates both the marginalization of Aboriginal people in the teaching of colonial history until recently and the significance of individuals in subverting that institutionalized model.

As intimated in Chapter One, and clarified in Chapter Five, my original idea for a three-act structure pivoting around the 2005 desecration of the Memorial, mentioned in Chapter One, had disintegrated after the initial participant interviews in July. Nevertheless I was still looking for dissent to form a second crisis in the story after the massacre, but only Peggy had included stories of racism as the Memorial got underway first a concept and then as a construction. As discussed in Chapter Five, I was reluctant to explore conflict on the strength of only one participant's interview. But the meeting between Letitia and Sally prior to the Memorial's opening ceremony had been mentioned in several participants' narratives. Once I had transcribed Letitia's interview, and realised just how much inner-conflict had been created for her by the discovery of her ancestor, Edward Foley, I understood why both women, Sally and Letitia, had cried. Even using verbatim transcriptions, the scene played well on the page as a stylised duologue. But at the Redfern read I still failed to appreciate its significance as the emotional heart of the play. I continued to think that rested with the Aboriginal version of the massacre – as visualised in Scene 11 by the participants, seeing pots on the stove and hearing only silence.

By the end of the Redfern read, apart from knowing a few edit points, I became overwhelmed with the logistics of the research project. Two actor-co/researchers missed the read. What would happen if I had to manage with a reduced cast size for the memorial hall? Despite acknowledging that the draft submitted as Chapter Six was a work-in-progress, I was concerned about its structure before the Sunday reading; good to read in silence, it hadn't read well around a table. However this concern was dwarfed by the anxieties surrounding the endeavour itself; the closer we came to leaving town, the more fixated I became on what could wrong rather

⁹⁶ Terry refers to Terry Brady, one of the non-Aboriginal actor/co-researchers, who took part in the project. All commentary from Terry refers to either the feedback session held after the performance of the play, November 27th, 2011, or an interview with him held at Chippendale, NSW, on December 23rd, 2011. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

than what I could make better. I knew how dependent I was on my actors to carry my gratitude for the participants' time and trust.

7.2 Damage control

In amongst making the logistical arrangements of transporting a cast, hiring a hall, finding accommodation and performing a play, there was time to remember that an actor's primary relationships are concerned, I believe, with content, context and character. These are the cognitive, relational and emotional building blocks intrinsic to an actor's craft. It is Stanislavsky's view of the fundamental aim of the art of acting: "the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in an artistic form." (Myer-Dinkgräfe, 2001, p.39) The imaginative bedrock of character creation, the essence of interpretation, but by not even investigating character ideas, let alone inner lives, I had virtually ignored these fundamental requirements for an actor to execute his or her craft. I identified the actors' lines in the script using their own names; they were players on history's stage, I explained, and their speeches drove the play forward not their characters.

Because of the nature of the data collection process, I explained, frequently their lines represented composite characters and it would be up to them how they chose to represent them. Advising everyone to keep their portrayals as simple as possible and just let the lines do the work, I knew from my own experience that without some kind of emotional investment such a direction could lead to very static, potentially declamatory performances. With nowhere for an actor to focus his or her inner world, an actor is potentially reduced to a mouthpiece as opposed to being recognised as a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional story-teller.

The inner world is the one through which a relationship with the text is established, where meaning is negotiated, where emotion and its renewal is located in order to generate dramatic tension and audience engagement. And what the Redfern read established is this inner world was clogged with history. The play's story was lost in those sections that described the event rather than played its action. Yet I could not tell after one read, what history could stay and what had to go – and most of the history had been part of the participants' narratives. There were documentary

additions – Scene 9, Hoo-ha, for example, as discussed in Chapter Five, and Cook's journal extract – but much of what had been added slightly elaborated what had been said.

However I also knew that this blurring of an interpretive pathway inward accentuates interdependency between actors, if there is a shared commitment to the work itself. If the story cannot be developed through character, then perhaps it can be creatively interpreted through performer interaction should the opportunity arise; in other words, if the road into character is muddied, the energy to engage can still be present and directed outward.

Without prior knowledge of the other cast members nor having the advantage of familiarization through rehearsal, evolving trust in and engagement with the text through interdependency alone is problematic. Supporting the relationship with each other and with the Myall Creek world therefore, I believed, would serve the actors and serve their work. Because of the demands I was placing on them physically and creatively, the actor/co-researchers rather than the draft became my primary concern. As part of this intention I included in the stage directions in the draft opportunities to make eye-contact. I hoped this usually abhorred practice of dictating action rather than allowing its discovery would help – on the day.

Fortunately the attention paid to nurturing a shared world reaped great rewards for the actors, for the play, for the audience and for the project. But it didn't happen through the stage directions and the script's structure was even less helpful.

7.2.1. A singular regret

The decision to structure the play into chapters or numbered segments reflected past practice with my Master's play (Wilkinson, 2008), and also the abundance and quality of field data. At the time of drafting the script, I imagined that whoever spoke first in the scene would announce the segments or scene number and title. At the Redfern reading, when the actors who were there were listening to the script for the first time, their focus was on their own dialogue. The scene titles were an unhelpful addition, so I chose to read them instead.

Of all the choices I made for the Sunday reading this was the one I regretted the most. No doubt I was aware at the first reading in Redfern how much the scene titles slowed the action, how much it forced the work to be anchored self-consciously in research. However I chose not to change the device, because I thought a pause in the flow would help the actors make gear changes in their performances, either as they changed characters or jumped across zones of time and place. As they weren't presenting character journeys, as stated earlier, I was acutely aware I had to support them any way I could during performance.

However I quickly realized, when we finally began the performed reading on that Sunday in the memorial hall, that the play had a life of its own; the play wasn't about the words on the page, the play was about the people listening to it. As Anna⁹⁷ recognized:

But what I realized when we actually did it was I didn't know how it was to people in the present. And it was so important. To be in that little hall miles from anywhere with such passionate hearers. I couldn't have predicted that, I wouldn't have known. It was their story and they just loved having it told (2011).

As I watched the actors prepare for the next scene literally from the side-line, announcing the segments, I also realized that an audience's engagement is with the moment that is about to come. Even when they know the story, listeners want to hear how it is told; it is not just the actors' words but it is their silences, their bodies, their eyes, their breath that together maintain suspense.

If the actor's internal emotional world, real and imagined, dominates whatever conventions an exterior environment imposes, then the arbitrary organization of field work, I suggest, surrenders to the potency of performance. As Madison (2005) recognizes, cultural meanings and local knowledge are latent forces trapped within actors' choices. These legacies of intergenerational colonialism's enforcement of repression and silence, of hierarchies and denial, as McCaslin & Breton (2008) argue, are understandings shared between all players in the colonial hierarchy but are not necessarily conscious or similar. So they take time and space to emerge.

⁹⁷ Anna refers to Anna Volska, one of the non-Aboriginal actor/co-researchers, who took part in this project. All commentary from Anna refers to an interview with her held at Wagstaff, NSW, on January 19th, 2012. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

It would be during rehearsal that these latent forces could be teased out and examined; without a word being spoken powerful new understandings could be demonstrated through the positioning of actors on stage, their unspoken but clearly defined relationships, the possibilities of portraying simultaneous outer calm and inner turmoil, or as my actors were able to do: consciously encourage each other by inclusive practices, a look, a smile, a nod, a pause.

Against the odds and without rehearsal, my actor/co-researchers had evolved a shared interior world that fully emerged during the performed reading, a world they were driven to create for themselves and quickly. Something I had hoped for but not been responsible for had happened on the road to Myall Creek.

7.3. On the road

Because the distances involved were so vast, at least eight hours driving each way from Sydney to Myall Creek, I arranged for a friend, Jo, to come with us. I hired an eight-seater Tarago and together Jo and I left home at 5am on the Saturday morning in order to collect the six actors from designated points in the inner-city. It would be in this cramped van that they would all meet each other for the first time. Added to this was pouring rain. Prolonged and unseasonal the state-wide rain was now causing flooding in exactly the region to which we were headed; major towns were threatened with evacuation, minor towns were now isolated. However all the cast members were at their appointed meeting place and that was a relief.

Fred was the last one to be collected; he was waiting on his verandah at 6.30am as arranged. We were still on schedule; our first meeting was to be with Colin Isaacs,⁹⁸ the Memorial artist, at 4pm at the entrance to the Memorial path. We just had to hope that no roads would be cut and no detours enforced. Fred streaked through the pouring rain and clambered into the now-stifling van. He glanced at the tentative smiles of his still-sleepy fellow actors. "Who'd want to miss out on this!" he exclaimed. And we all laughed.

⁹⁸ Colin is a Myall Creek Memorial Committee member as well as being the Memorial artist. He is a Dharug/Noogah (W.A.) man, an Elder and married to a Kamilaroi woman.

I chose not to talk about the work, the play or my process, other than to answer questions. I had made draft changes between the Redfern read and the script I was now giving them but they were cuts, no new material had been added. I chose instead to foster a sense of camaraderie, or rather not get in the way of its developing. In her interview Genevieve prioritized the evolving relationships:

They were the most interesting aspect of the whole weekend. I knew Fred and Lily but got much, much closer to them very quickly. Lily came to understand who I was; I came to understand who she was. Fred – I thought I'd found a very naughty brother. He kept me amused for the whole time, quite frankly. There was so much joy and fun and hysteria really around him, he was the galvanizer, he was the one who kept us all together (Genevieve, 2011).

Some of the actors expressed apprehension about visiting the Memorial in their interviews and this apprehension must have been an undercurrent in their thoughts on the journey. Aunty Rhonda⁹⁹ was most affected by the story and her grief was compounded by the Memorial tour; the intensity of her emotional response was apparent during the performed reading but she gave no indication to me of its potency prior to that. Hearing of her reaction to the draft in her subsequent interview makes her preparedness to come on the journey notable. The following response is in answer to a question about her first reaction to the draft:

I first saw the script a couple of nights before we left - I was highlighting it and feeling it and that sort of thing. And I found it pretty powerful, I had to put it down. Especially in the section where it talked about the mothers and the children and that. I had to put it down. And how they killed them with the swords and how they had to wait and see the others being killed and oh I just cried and cried. I couldn't sort of go back there (Aunty Rhonda, 2012).

Whereas for Terry, this visit to Myall Creek would be his third time. Significantly in his interview he reveals an awareness of difference rather than Genevieve's appreciation of burgeoning relationship or Aunty Rhonda's identification with trauma.

When I was a kid at school in the '60's I had a teacher called Mrs Patch and for some reason Mrs Patch talked about Myall Creek and there was some killing of Aboriginal people at Myall Creek. And I always remember her, because she was a such a wonderful woman; I think, too, a wonderful person and if you like someone, I think you remember what they tell you. You want

⁹⁹ Aunty Rhonda refers to Aunty Rhonda Dixon-Grovenor, one of the Aboriginal actor/co-researchers, who took part in the project. All commentary from Aunty Rhonda refers to an interview with her in Newtown, NSW, on January 10th, 2012. The interview was conducted by L. Wilkinson.

that knowledge. And I remember her talking about that. And then I didn't think any more about it until about 11 years ago, when I first went there. And I was driving along towards Bingara and it happened to be at that time [of day] and it was winter and it just happened to be all those things that Myall Creek was about – and I didn't think about it then but I think about it now...I was there in the winter, in the cold, by myself ...and I thought I was driving along the road and I saw the sign Myall Creek – oh Mrs Patch! The Myall Creek Massacre.

And a lot more things make me think about it. Going back to a nursing home and talking to an old friend of my Mum's, oh, she said, you're going up to Myall Creek? I used to be a young housekeeper at Myall Creek Station.

So going back there this time and going back there with Aboriginal people was so special. This time it was emotional but for a different reason – I somehow felt – guilty is not the right word, I don't feel guilty but I felt that we ... I felt the burden of how much we have betrayed these people., the Aboriginal people in our history and let them down. And how flawed our justice system is towards them and that sort of thing (Terry, 2011).

But all such thoughts remained unexpressed.

Six hours inland and the sun came out. After my six field trips to the north-west, I had never seen the country so lush; although minor towns were still isolated by flood water, major towns now had a reprieve. In colonial times the Gwydir, the river Myall Creek flows into, was known as the Big River. Normally when looking down on to its flood plain from bridges out of Bingara, you would see a thin strip of water, a scattering of scrubby trees and grass that's slightly greener than the sloping river banks that define its course. It was hard to see where the descriptor "Big" came from.

On this day however we were fortunate enough to witness a vast expanse of water below the bridge, brown and swiftly flowing: the Big River of legend was in flood. Water must have been a powerful magnet for those early colonists in the 1830s, water and the rolling grasslands, with wool prices so high. To a colonist's eyes a vista like this would have promised enormous wealth and the appetite for riches at any cost was critical to all that happened, once the sheep and cattle began to arrive in their millions.

By the time we arrived at the Memorial, still on schedule, Colin Isaacs was waiting for us with a young non-Aboriginal man, whom he was mentoring. The Memorial tour

heralded the next part of our exploratory journey. We were also joined here by Rod Freedman, a documentary film-maker, who had agreed to film the Sunday reading for archival purposes.

7.3.1. At the Memorial

The Memorial tour proved invaluable to the actor/co-researchers' understanding of the play's context. Although it began in sunshine, we stayed long enough for late afternoon shadows to consume the translucent glow of a serene, rain-soaked pastoral landscape. The actor/co-researchers quickly became, as Batten (2009) observed with her participant pilgrims, emotionally attuned to the site's history. All of them acknowledged this site visit impacted positively on their performance practice the following day, even though their individual responses varied at the time.

Respecting the convention of ceremonies at the Memorial, using clap sticks and a chant, we were sung on to the land by Colin's assistant. Colin had also planned to use smoke as well but the vegetation was too wet to permit it. For most of us this ceremonial ritual helped heighten our receptivity to the multiple stimuli now carrying us from the physical demands of the day to the journey within. I had not expected this gesture and was deeply appreciative.

Appreciation however was not a universal response. For Lily, a strong culture woman, it created an added layer of conflict. She speaks below not necessarily in chronological order but prioritizes her memories in order of their personal significance from arriving at the Memorial, the experience of walking on to it, then reading the plaques on the way to the final boulder:

I was of mixed emotions. I'd never been there before, I'd heard about it – the massacre and the Memorial. The energy for me was really mixed. I was a bit afraid, I was a bit excited, I got a bit goose-bumpy. When we got out of the bus, that's why I asked the tree for the branch, because I knew the flies were going to be bad as well. When you were reading that first [plaque] – oh, the land just came up through my feet. You could actually hear the women and the children and fought back tears. And then when we were going into the site, that was really uncomfortable. ... being sung into a site with a North Queensland song not from that area and I knew that guy wasn't Aboriginal – and then I found out he wasn't and I thought: whoa! Who gives you the right to

sing North Queensland songs on Gumalroi land? So I hid behind the videoing and waited until he'd finished singing and clapping before I walked past. Because there's no way this man is going to sing me into my mother's country. No way in the wide world and I could feel that really strongly in my spirit. I just think: protocol and whose permission do they have?

And so underneath my own breath I was singing my own song, so I was going to bounce that energy back. Then cruising along the trail and the further in you got the more emotional. I tried to deflect the emotion by having little chats, then seeing that ant devour that spider was just so reflective of what happened. I felt I had to pray at every station and halfway through there was a little puddle of water, and I had this urge to put my gum leaves in the water and give myself this little blessing, as I got closer to the cairn.

Overlooking the valley you smell death. Noisy birds when we went in, then became still by the second rock. A warning or a welcome? Bit of both. It's alright for you to come here but be prepared for the sorrow. Be prepared to feel the spirits of your ancestors (Lily, 2011).

For Anna the experience also awakened her to her ancestry but in a very different way. At this time Anna was preparing to return to Poland, from where as an infant she had fled with her mother shortly before the end of World War 2:

The only thing I felt very strongly, I suppose, was that I just kept thinking of Auschwitz when we were at the Memorial itself, which was beautiful. I saw how sad I looked in the photographs. Not just for these people for everybody who gets massacred by the people in charge. I had anticipated that but I was amazed how strongly I felt.

These feelings were related to the human psyche, how people treat each other. Just a reminder. How brutal we are to each other.

When I was young it took me quite a while to feel where I belonged and it wasn't really until I'd spent five years in England and the came back to Australia that I felt oh, what a relief, I'm home. I was 25 at the time. That's quite a while to feel I didn't understand where home was. So I felt it wasn't just a particular story, it was a general story. A human story.

I remember Colin being very proud of those images he'd drawn. And that it was local and very important to the people there. And how quaint the drawings were but so felt. I entered it with a bit of anxiety and that didn't lift. It was a sad place (Anna, 2012).

Anna's solitude didn't go unnoticed. In Fred's account of the Memorial visit he addresses both his feelings and his observations; he also alludes to his practice as an actor:

That was really good, I think. I still hadn't read the play...I remember feeling quite upset, exposed. And walking in and seeing people in the bush but I always see people in the bush anyway. I always imagine people living in the bush, walking in the bush. Hunting. So they're all there, you know. It's a terrible thing. I think it was more of a feeling. The helplessness of those people being attacked like that. Then finding out that it was planned, so there was more cruelty...so I guess it was ... yeah, so you can understand why people don't want to go there, how do you resolve that? It was both provocative and sad. The injustice of it and the ignorance of those people, that they would think to do that. But it did inform the reading; as it unfolded, it made it more powerful. I learn, I think, by starting from scratch, discovering as I go. And in the moment of performance you find that connection with the audience, the give and take, it illuminates a lot more outcomes. So rather than reading it from the point of view of knowing it, you can read it from the point of view of discovering it.

To go there first was a good thing. I was on my own. I created a gap between myself and everybody – I remember Anna was on her own too, that sort of silence, solitude, reflection, trying to kind of gather it all, feel it all. Being open to the land and imagining what it would have been like – just trying to be there, as if that day we were there – it happened on a day just like that. Just trying to imagine what if? How would that be? (Fred, 2011).

After the Memorial visit we drove the five hundred metres or so to the memorial hall, where we would be performing the following day. The actors could then have an idea of both the venue and the pilgrim walk referred to in participants' narratives. I had arranged accommodation through the generosity of hotel proprietors Andrew Sharp and Haddon Whitten, who together ran the Playhouse Hotel in Barraba about an hour away. We were to stay at Haddon's family home, which could accommodate all of us. But before we could install ourselves there for the night, we were expected at the hotel for dinner.

7.3.2. The breakfast read

Our first round table reading of the play with all the actors present would not happen until the morning before the performance. Exhaustion, physical and emotional, had

set in by the time we headed towards Barraba and the hotel. Relationships were further enriched by the hilarity of an elegant communal meal courtesy of our hosts, Andrew and Haddon. Given my own prioritization of establishing an ensemble dynamic, and given the challenge of the work at hand and its potential to generate emotional disquiet, it was imperative, I believed, to forge opportunities for cohesion, wherever they might arise.

Genevieve commented on the evening in her interview:

[It was] important to have a meal together and that's when I got to know Aunty Rhonda It's just being able to exchange and have a good laugh (Genevieve, 2011).

It hadn't occurred to me until we were driving through the pitch black trying to find Haddon's family home and simultaneously miss stray kangaroos that the house was now so intricately connected to the Memorial. Built in the 1850's within twelve to fifteen years after the Myall Creek massacre, it was a monument to colonial expansion. It had been in Haddon's family for five generations and he was now the sole family occupant. A sense of generational ebb and flow dominated the layout, with bedrooms randomly linked to each other via labyrinthine hallways, while faded photographs of other days hung askew on the walls. No-one commented on the house's history, we all went outside and gazed at the stars instead. As we had at dinner, no-one discussed politics or history, the memorial or the play; we did not analyze our purpose, we remained receptive to the moment.

The breakfast read was a shambles, far more so than the first reading at Redfern. At this point, I think, the actors were trying to make it their own; they were trying to find their own relationship to the content and doing this without the benefit of a character journey. Terry reflects on the sense of chaos that morning:

Trying to read between jam and toast – that was interesting...by that stage: I'll try this , I'll try that (Terry, 2011).

Genevieve accepted the chaos as part of the process:

That was very funny. Oh, isn't this interesting, it's like a second rehearsal, where everything falls apart. But you have to do that to get the sense of it. Get it into your brain, what you have to do but it was pretty amusing (Genevieve, 2011).

And Fred was reading the play for the first time:

It was all kind of happening to me in the moment and I'm quite happy to approach it that way. I enjoyed the way the story unfolded. I thought the piece was really well put together. It had the historical reference and the personal foundation of the story. I thought it was well-structured and quite accessible for the audience. I thought there was a lot of information and quite complex but it was done quite simply, and even though there was a lot of history fact, at the end there was a really strong emotional outcome. As a document it was really well-balanced.

In the end it's art, it's our take on the story – particularly with aboriginal work. In the end it's what do we feel about that (Fred, 2011).

By the time we finished the reading, we had to leave. The reading had taken seventy minutes; the cuts I had made to the draft after the Redfern read were inadequate, the work was sluggish, the focus still too much on history and not where the essence of the play was now really emerging: the community action to build a Memorial.

What I realised at this time was that the actors would be unlikely to have time to observe any stage directions, those ideas I had written as I imagined what the work might look like when performed. Considering Genevieve had a broken ankle and was on crutches, it was in hindsight overly-optimistic to have hung on to the expectation of a prescribed choreography for so long.

Our reading was due to begin at 11am. I had arranged for the Country Women's Association to provide morning tea and lunch; they were happy to do so for a small fee but insisted they needed to be away by 2 pm. I, of course, did not know if anyone would come; I had invited people but no-one had given me a definite response and I had heard that flood waters had now isolated Moree. It was on the frantic hour-long drive to the memorial hall that I first received a text message from Roger Knox:¹⁰⁰ he was on his way from Goondiwindi in Southern Queensland but had to by-pass Moree; he'd now struck more flood water on the back road and would be late.

¹⁰⁰ Roger is a member of the Myall Creek Memorial Committee, A Kamilaroi Elder and fluent language speaker.

7.3.3. At the memorial hall

We waited for Roger for about half an hour. There were no further messages, which could have meant either he had turned back or there was no coverage. The Country Women were adamant they wouldn't stay any longer than two o'clock and delaying the reading meant less time for discussion. Because an audience of about twenty people had actually arrived, all non-Aboriginal, I knew it would be possible to have a feedback session, if not composed of the idealized cross-cultural mix.

Most of the cast had spent this anxious time familiarizing themselves with the hall and with audience members. Known to most of them, Terry was meeting old friends; he had recently directed the local amateur theatre group in several local productions and it was those people, who had heard about the project and who now swelled our audience. Lily spent that time alone:

There was a stillness around the land, the animals, even the birds were really quiet. I spent some time by myself over at the park area and it was really still, not a breeze, not a whisper. And it was a nice meditation, a nice reflection. And very grounding....getting in touch with myself on my mother's land. My mother's from another clan group but (getting in touch with) how they would have been connected. How they would have traded, their everyday life as hunters and gatherers. And what the ceremonies would have been like – oh my gosh, the dancing, the clap sticks, the songs, being so close to the river, too, which is where 90% of our people camped, along the riverbanks. That reflection time was for me to connect with my ancestral beings, my creator being, give me strength, because I knew I was going to get emotional. It's an emotional story and I really wanted to perform and give it the justice that it deserves.

You've got that extra weight to carry when you're telling real, shared stories. I could feel that from the non-Aboriginal actors as well (Lily, 2011).

The significance of performing real stories impacted on all the actors' practice; dominant reflections vary from observations of the audience to an awareness of a shifting consciousness within. But first we began by observing Aboriginal protocol: Aunty Rhonda, the most senior Elder present, delivered an acknowledgement of country, as there was no-one there to welcome us. In turn then we announced our names and where we were from.

And we began the reading.

7.3.4. The performed reading

In their interviews all of the actor/co-researchers were asked to reflect on their practice. Both Anna and Genevieve included the audience in their reflections, prioritizing that relationship and attributing the intensity of the audience members' engagement to their familiarity with the story. Anna continues:

Because the history was so detailed, I just couldn't get a handle on it. But the listeners knowing it as well as they do, it was like having a favourite nursery rhyme told and retold and the repetition is what's important not the material itself. But I didn't understand that until we got to the reading...Looking at the range of people, all connected to the one idea at the time. What a great thing when people can be connected by ideas or concerns or care for each other (Anna, 2012).

Because of her broken ankle, Genevieve remained seated throughout the reading. This made her relationship with the audience both fixed and, as a performer, possibly contributed to a heightened sensitivity to an evolving relationship. Expressing this dynamic was foremost in her reflections on the experience a week after the event:

Feeling in the audience, the power. That you were hitting trigger points and you were ...you could feel the resonators each time you went into a new phase of the play. And that was from the go-get really, because they were invested in it of course, coming from the area and having some of the people having been your advisors, your research people. That was very powerful because then you realised you didn't have to do very much, just serve the play, serve the read, serve the task at hand....You could see them trying to ascertain who is representing whom, and as we didn't have direct character indicators, you could see them having to work: oh, that's that voice, that's that person, that's that attitude, if you like. And so that created a new energy coming from the audience, because we were so close to them, I could feel them a bit more than usual, and we'd never had any rehearsal as such, we'd had readings, so we'd never had any idea as to what the response would be, so that was very marked.

The jokes in the play were a fabulous relief for them and when they could laugh you could feel them relax. And you just keep reiterating the importance of humour, when you're talking about a serious subject that's filled with grief. You have to be mindful of how to use the humour (Genevieve, 2011).

Terry on the other hand focused more on his own work:

I would like to have known more about each character I was reading. I felt my own reading on the day was a bit bland but I certainly hope it was honest. I believed in what I was saying and there's so much to believe in. I was aware sometimes we were just standing facing front and that's when I felt we were just performing it.

But there were nice moments when you could contact people and it was lovely to get something back. I remember connecting with Aunty Rhonda - she looked and she smiled and I thought: gee, that was nice. I can connect with someone whose life, whose history this is about. It happened with Lily at one stage, yeah. More eye contact would mean we were listening to each other and it would be good if it was about that more: listening to each other. There was not enough of that on that day. Listening. But also being able to connect with the audience, telling them the story – I suppose that's what it's all about (Terry, 2011).

Like Genevieve, Fred was conscious of the humour and like Terry, aware of a growing sense of an ensemble:

I thought insightful, clear, funny. We could have been funnier but we were probably just dealing with the text. I guess it's that actor thing – at times we were really quite tight. Even though we were just bumbling around we were starting to get some of those invisible relationships that were starting to occur, that's then passed on to the audience. And I think it's probably sadder than we did it as well. I guess the immediate thing was just to get through it and reflect the text (Fred, 2011).

Aunty Rhonda, a less-experienced performer but accomplished singer, was made aware of her Aboriginality and her history in front of a non-Aboriginal audience. Continuing as she did to find the massacre story acutely painful, she blurs the events in the hall with the events in the play.

I guess it was because I was right there in that country. And it was almost like you could feel them, you know, you could feel the people; feel the mums and their children and that. Well, having ten grandchildren of my own, you know...I guess it really, really hit me. It hit me hard. But what an honour it was to be there, with these amazing actors, professional actors, who cared enough to come and travel and we had that experience of travelling together and getting to know each other...Because growing up in our day, you just wouldn't hear of these things, you know. Where non-Aboriginal people would come and do a play and then the ancestors of the people, who murdered the Aboriginal people were there in the audience and they cared to come and see the play and afterwards come up and talk with us, Aboriginal people. I mean

that's a ceremony, you know. That's a healing ceremony. Can't put it in words, just so powerful and so spiritual (Aunty Rhonda, 2012).

Lily was confronted at times with the content and with the challenge of finding a comfortable performance style. Lily found performing for a non-Aboriginal audience initially difficult, not because of the Myall Creek history but because of the politics:

I've never performed for an audience where I felt they were just looking at me constantly; and when you spoke, when you delivered your lines it was even more looking at you. I've always been engaged in a really different way. Reading scripts, it's not my practice. I come from a devised practice. And so reading the script and then looking up at the audience, you could feel sometimes the tension...sometimes I felt like, for the audience, I was being racist. That's how I felt. You know, that whole reverse racism. In not liking non-Aboriginal people. Totally stepping out of my comfort zone.

I think too it invoked a lot of internalized racism within me, because we do internalize it, prejudice not racism – those little niggly prejudices I do have. You know, all white people aren't the same, I try not to stereotype and categorize...And I suppose I sort of came in with a lot of pre-conceived stuff – cow cockies and I know what they're like, that sort of silent racism .. I grew up with it all my life, you know when they're gamin' you know when they're genuine. And some were like that, yeah. But others? Oh, wow. Really genuinely friendly, really genuinely wanting to acknowledge that part of history to change attitudes. And that's pretty powerful, because that's a really redneck part of the country (Lily, 2011).

As with the actor/co-researchers in this study, Grehan (2010) recognises a similar heightened sensitivity in the non-Aboriginal audience's engagement with Big *hART*'s production of *Ngapartji Ngapartji*¹⁰¹ (2008), suggesting that:

...work that calls upon audiences to reflect on their responses to and responsibility for Indigenous Australians by not blaming or condemning spectators but by engaging them through the use of a dramaturgical approach ... encourages a shift ...such that audiences respond to the call of the other (2010, p.48).

The above citations give an indication that those shifts in responses involve a kind of reciprocity (Grehan, 2010) which impacts on both performers and spectators. This recognizes that cross-cultural performance can deliver, as Aunty Rhonda suggests,

¹⁰¹ *Ngapartji Ngapartji*, meaning 'I give you something, you give me something' in Pitjantjatjara concerns the British-led nuclear tests at Maralinga in the 1950's and 1960's and the forcible removal of the Spinifex people from their traditional lands.

a healing ceremony for all participants in the exercise. Content that therefore balances the emotional and the political needs to be dramaturgically sensitive to the instigation of empathic responses, those that share grief and those that share humour.

Given that *Today We're Alive* is verbatim, the humour and the grief in the text came from participants, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and reflects both the conviction and resilience of those in the field. The memorial hall audience's identification with stories and voices they recognized certainly supports Grehan's (2010) view of heightened engagement through humour, through grief and through direct address, for example. However on this particular Sunday we were also blessed – literally and dramatically – by what effectively was a play within a play. And this experience was a surprise for audience and actors alike.

7.3.5. Roger's arrival

The play was more than halfway through, when a breeze ushered Roger's arrival; delayed by flood water, he had found a route to the memorial hall by going upstream rather than down. Lily felt a presence in the hall before Roger arrived:

There was other people there channelling with us. It wasn't totally us six actors, seven actors. And that breeze that came through – oh, did my hair stand up! And I was thinking: Oh my gosh, who's coming? Are we going to get stuck here in the flood? And I looked up and there's Uncle Roger. Right! The Elder has arrived! And that made me relax a bit as well, he snuck in there like an old kadachi man, a medicine man (Lily, 2011).

Genevieve sensed his arrival soothed a general tension:

The dynamic was transformed. It was interesting because there was a breeze before he walked in, as if it had been theatrically designed that way. And because he's got such a big presence, such an extraordinary presence really, there seemed to be a bit more ease (Genevieve, 2011).

But for Aunty Rhonda, Roger's arrival had a unique significance, joining up two different worlds of experience:

When Roger came in and I was doing the reading, it lifted my spirit. It just lifted my spirit up. Because we go way back; when my daughter and I used to do the jails, we used to sing with Roger. We'd open the shows, you know,

we'd do harmonies and the last one we'd done was at Long Bay Jail. Roger would have all his sons and his nephews in the band. And he'd always sing "Hey Nadine honey, is that you?" Because that's my daughter's name. Roger's a big man; he's got a big presence and a big voice. And one time one of the fellows came up and he said to my daughter: would you like to have a dance, because I haven't danced with a woman for five years. And all the other fellas were standing around and they started dancing and I'm crying and all the other fellas, there was like these big smiles on their faces. And then when you're going out and the big gates close behind you as you're going out, and you're crying because you're thinking: I'm going out and oh, my brothers. Because I'm going, you know. So me and Roger, we go way back. He was absolutely rapt, absolutely thrilled, that we were doing this play (Aunty Rhonda, 2011).

At the play's conclusion the Aboriginal actor/co-researchers invited Roger to join the cast. Roger took his place beside Aunty Rhonda and honoured us all with a prayer to the creator spirit, Byami, in Kamilaroi language. He then addressed his audience:

It's good to see everybody here. To hear this and to see my sister (Aunty Rhonda) here and to be here and I feel great. To hear that, to listen to that, to hear this coming out, that's fantastic. I get a bit emotional here as you guys are talking. And that's the truth of it and whether we can get right down to the truth is another thing. It was what I call the raw truth, which is important. And that's the only way I believe we can get together and move on. Move forward and develop some great understanding (Roger, 2011).

Roger wasn't the only one to 'get a bit emotional' at the end of the play. Genevieve was aware of the impact the play was having:

There were a number of people crying in the audience. I think they got a bit shocked at themselves, because after all we were just reading...but the feelings jumped up and bit them on the backside (Genevieve, 2011).

Terry, too, commented on how surprised audience members afterwards said they had been when they heard a story they thought they knew:

And those other people that came along from Bingara...they said how surprised they were that they were so affected by it. How emotionally caught up they became in just listening to the story unfold. Listening to the stories from the women especially (Terry, 2011).

During the performance Aunty Rhonda struggled to continue:

I was actually sobbing and I just kept trying to slow myself down and take some deep breaths and say my lines (Aunty Rhonda, 2011).

Yet despite this emotional intensity during the performance, the feedback session immediately following it took an instant turn towards the factual; old debates asserted themselves, old authority swamped new responses. The play had run for 70 minutes; we had twenty-five minutes for the feedback session before the Country Women's Association members would leave. We all knew there was a ticking clock and now the demand for historical accuracy asserted its primacy over emotion in the discussion.

7.3.6. The feedback session

In order for communities to live consciously in the present, McAuley (2008) argues memory sites, or sites of trauma, need performative acts or interventions to trigger re-interpretations of those site-specific acts of violence, which can then “subvert official and unofficial attempts at suppression of the unacceptable past” (2008, p.172). What the play had done was release an emotional response to both the colonial past and to the recognition of its violence through the building of the Memorial; theirs was a past that could now never be suppressed. Why then did a niggling discussion about historical accuracy take hold so quickly after the play's completion and Roger's acknowledgement of the play's contribution?

Because lunch was now ready, the feedback session was brief. It was however lively with many of the audience members voicing commentary. Although I considered none of it negative, several of the audience members argued about the appropriateness and accuracy of some of the content, particularly around Len Payne, the stockyard and the chronological order of the 'supposed' massacres around the time of the Myall Creek massacre. These were events, in other words, that rested in non-Aboriginal hearsay and Aboriginal oral history.

During the feedback session information was exchanged on the wisdom of including narratives that might, like the stockyard as the massacre site, prove to be at some time inaccurate. I reminded those participants that this was verbatim theatre and those stories belonged to those who had come forward. The feedback scenario

potentially opened a debate, which could diminish the experience of the play emotionally and privilege some accounts over others. If this privileging occurred, it would negate one of verbatim theatre's great strengths: its foregrounding of diversity.

It was both Fred and Lily, who prevented this from happening. Lily reminded everyone that accuracy was limited to eye witnesses at the time; Fred tried to steer the conversation back to the play:

So in this play people are contributing their version of what the story is. So what I'm hearing there, some of the countering views, so it represents some of the different views of what the story actually is. Even now: who did what, where did it happen. This is not the Bible. In goodwill – but as a document, it does take it one step further, doesn't it? (Fred, 2011).

No-one asked what the "it" was to which Fred might have been referring; the discussion swiftly returned to the necessity of my ensuring historical accuracy. Once again Fred confronted this by foregrounding truth in terms of an ethical and emotional response to the massacre, rather than simply an accurate record of historical detail. Through Fred's insistent clarity and authority, I believe the subsequent recognition of multiple truths inherent in performance ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) now created a pathway for other voices to respond to the play, voices that had previously been silent. The historical accuracy agenda was abandoned in favour of expressions of disquiet unleashed by emotion.

It was these new voices that questioned why, as non-Aboriginal people, they were not told about this nor any other massacre; voices that expressed regret at their ignorance, voices that acknowledged dispossession, violence and hope that knowing about the Memorial would foster inter-generational change. It was during this gradual shift in mood and engagement, that Fred articulated a difference between kinds of knowledges:

And what is it that we actually end up knowing anyway? I mean, I respect the fact that there is detail but if we are going to argue about someone was doing this or not doing that but in the end to me theatre is all about feeling. And connecting with people to make them feel. So if you respond emotionally to this story, then what you know is your experience. And I come away with a kind of emotional intelligence that I take with me (Fred, 2011).

I suggest with this statement Fred validated a transformative pathway, one that could have become derailed by the demand for historical detail. By privileging feeling as a mode of learning, an integral transaction in the cross-cultural third space was activated. What theatre was able to achieve was a reinforcement of that transaction. Theatre had privileged emotion not fact and this allowed aspects of the story to become ascendant, aspects that triggered an empathic response. Theatre was allowing vulnerability to be a site of learning and not a source of shame or embarrassment.

However the performance of the play was only a part of this transformative experience; it carried the audience and the cast – all the performers in the drama, if one accepts Grehan's (2010) notion of interdependency – to a safe internal place, where all individuals could confront and question their inherited wisdom. The total experience involved both the performance and the feedback session. With its suspense, its tension and its catharsis the theatrical event continued through the feedback session uninterrupted. There was a symbiosis, in other words, between the known story and the unknown experience of responding to this particular version of it. The story of the massacre was written on the plaques; that known story lingered with fresh incredulity and horror, as the non-Aboriginal stories of the numinous or the wonder of experiencing forgiveness were heard for the first time.

What all the performers, the actors and the audience members were recognizing in the feedback session especially was the presence of the past in the now. And once the demand for historical accuracy was withdrawn, the performers were free to discuss who or what might have been responsible for keeping this history hidden and why. And so the play became more than a story about a community and its past; it became about all of us – right then, right now.

7.4. The road home

We left the hall at 3 pm; only the Country Women had long gone, everyone else stayed on into the afternoon. We would arrive back in the city around midnight; at our various homes within two hours after that. The only disappointment for me was the absence of Aboriginal people in the audience. It was fantastic that Uncle Roger had

come and under such difficult circumstances but I wanted to know why others, people I had invited, had not. Fred, Lily and Aunty Rhonda all suggested in their interviews that it was cultural. As Lily said:

When you talk to country people about plays, especially blackfellas, if it's not a music concert or a barn dance or a B & S¹⁰², you're talking a foreign language (Lily, 2011).

Fred further considered that their absence was a reflection of an inability, as yet, to be reconciled with the past. Yet for himself, the event was enlightening:

And it was good that there were so many non-Aboriginal people there. Talking to Uncle Colin the day before, knowing he wasn't going to come, I guess Aboriginal people were still trying to work out what it was, but with non-Aboriginal people, once you took out that sort of factual debate I thought it was quite a heartfelt debate, that people were quite openly discussing their stuff. I guess taking responsibility for it, in that they acknowledged it and they wanted to know more about it. So I thought that was a really good reconciling event, even though there weren't any Aboriginal people there. But it was clear the non-Aboriginal people are keen to own it a bit more in whatever way they can. So that was really unexpected from my point of view. That they'd come along to hear about and go further into it. That was really promising, positive, yeah (Fred, 2011).

I suspect Lily, Fred and Aunty Rhonda were being generous; the play's failure to attract an Aboriginal audience was a reflection of content as well as structure and venue. On one level the Myall Creek story is non-Aboriginal; an Aboriginal woman initiated the building of a Memorial and that is a significant and powerful event. But the Myall Creek story, as it is conveyed here and at the Memorial is essentially about good and bad non-Aboriginal men. Certainly it manifests reconciliatory elements but this story alone, despite Aboriginal attendance at annual Memorial services, is insufficient to dilute the cultural divide and the lack of trust. But reconciliation cannot be a one-way initiative. And yet it was, as Aunty Rhonda said, a healing ceremony.

We stopped for dinner at Muswellbrook, a town still three hours from Sydney. We sat at a large round table in a Chinese restaurant and congratulated ourselves on the experience – and then, in turn, everyone thanked each other and thanked me. How can you measure that?

¹⁰² Bachelors and Spinsters Ball

Sometime later I went back to the participant interviews; I wanted to try and understand what the memorial hall experience had to say about reconciliation; I wanted to see what made it a healing ceremony. I wanted to be sure it wasn't only about non-Aboriginal people coming to terms with their past. The feedback session ended positively; Haddon, one of our hosts, understood that for him the play was talking about the future:

It's about politics, about denial. So it's about what happened at Myall Creek, which is horrific beyond belief. But the rest of the story is about how we continue (2011).

Terry followed with:

What I get from this is a real sense of hope. A real sense of hope that something will be done about this. And I think the title is a really great thing to take away from this: *Today We're Alive* (2011).

But I wanted to be sure that there was a forward momentum for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Then I came across a speech in Uncle Roland's interview that I had used part of in Scene 16. The whole speech reads:

I have a different understanding of reconciliation. You break it down: re-concile. Someone that you was with, someone you left, someone you have to come back to again. It's our people, we have to be reconciled with each other, before we can reconcile with anyone else. I mean, we weren't allowed to become part of that society, we were outcasts, we were downtrodden, we were all these things. So how could we come back to that? You know one of the greatest black leaders in the world said: you know, I wouldn't call it reconciliation, I'd call it unity in the community. That's how I see reconciliation. I suppose white people too can reconcile with each other. But if we work separately in our communities, we'll be working together really. We have to do more reconciling in our own communities. We're the ones who were separated and we're still separated today (Uncle Roland, 2011).

I came to understand then that reconciliation is not just one narrative; it's not a narrative where what happens for some is mirrored by all. I came to understand it as a series of sequential narratives and the impetus of the many stories within the narrative shifts between its many players. Myall Creek is a narrative about acknowledgement; it's a beginning and I can understand why it's not enough.

7.5. Conclusion

What the performance of the play clearly demonstrated was the relationship between telling and showing history. What had been so challenging in the scripting process, deciding what should go and what should stay, was solved by watching the actors take control. The play needed so few words to convey all that we needed to know. The trial might have been important for the non-Aboriginal story but for the collective story all we needed to know was a massacre had occurred and how it had happened. The consequence of that massacre for Aboriginal people was not about a trial – or two - but about grief and that grief could be shared. As the actors moved cautiously about the unfamiliar stage, the play began to come to life half-way through, when the massacre story was re-told and the community together began to address its past.

These findings were invaluable for the subsequent draft of the play, included here as Appendix iii, which we took on tour in 2013. With a budget from the Department of Education & Communities, a cast size reduced from six to four actors and a play length that ran fifty-five minutes plus a following Q & A of thirty minutes' duration to allow the whole performance to fit into a school double period, we visited four venues in the north-west region of NSW. The response was extremely positive.

What the touring budget also allowed for was a two week rehearsal period. Characters, as specified by the cast list at the front of the play, emerged to tell the story, a sound track supported the emotional and temporal changes, staging accentuated a sense of country. The production had more dramatic tension and more confidence but it did not stray from its origins. It remained verbatim theatre.

In this decolonizing space of multiple contestations, the clarity and transparency of verbatim text offers researchers, I suggest, a way of locating truth through subtlety, complexity and accountability. By crafting performance from resonant personal narratives distilled from a recognizable world, an audience can engage with empathy, listen without judgement and confront with transformative intent. Through the regular rhythms and familiarity of the spoken word, it is possible then to present through performance what is meant or misunderstood or interpreted by the sound of the ordinary.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

The following chapter concludes this study.

Chapter Eight

Moving On

reflections from the field

‘We’ve come a long way but we’ve still got a long way to go’

(Uncle Roland, 2011)

8. Introduction

This chapter begins by addressing the research questions that motivated this study, responding to those questions with the answers that evolved through performed research. To assist in this interrogation, the research questions from Chapter One are repeated below:

Applying the rigour of verbatim theatre within a performance ethnography framework, how can a site-specific cross-cultural reconciliation story in the Australian context be told and what voices emerge to tell it?

What kinds of reconciliation narratives are illuminated by this research?

How do the non-Aboriginal participants in this study reconcile themselves in the present to the brutality of the Colonial past?

How do the Aboriginal participants deal with the horror of the past and its inter-generational repercussions in the present?

How do both parties unite in a common cause?

How are these stories of shared history and on-going dispossession received by an audience in a performance space?

And finally: how are Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors/co-researchers impacted in terms of their performance practice by both the emotive content of the drama and the experience of performing it?

In privileging the performance as holding knowledge, I am aware that the answers I experienced as emerging from the data, the performance in the memorial hall, may not be the same answers as revealed either to others present or to others examining the text alone.

However I would like to suggest that the meeting between “Sally” and “Letitia” in Scene 15 (pp. 184 -185) encapsulates the nature of the reconciliation narratives revealed by this study, as well as the relational frame in which those narratives might be experienced. An analysis of this text supported by a contextualization of the performance as it was executed summarises these findings.

I am aware, too, that as methodologies employed determine what questions are asked, this chapter then addresses the methodological mix and returns particularly to the question of collaboration in the decolonizing space. To illuminate that discussion I again refer to the development of *This Fella, My Memory*, the play Fred, Lily, Aunty Rhonda and I were working on, mentioned in Chapter One, while I was gathering data then developing the first draft of *Today We're Alive*. Through Fred's artistic directorship of Moogahlin, the Aboriginal Performing Arts Company based in Redfern, the play, *This Fella, My Memory*, was staged in Sydney in 2013.

Not constructed as a research project, I was not the final arbiter of the play's content. But as a co-writer and performer I was integral to the work's artistic journey. A reflection on the kinds of arts practices we engaged in to develop content for *This Fella, My Memory*, suggests that the methodological mix for *Today We're Alive* might have had more collaborative strategies in the decolonizing space than first thought.

Finally this chapter returns to the five persistent narratives identified in Chapter Two (p.51). Although *Today We're Alive* and *This Fella, My Memory* were different in intent and content, they were still thematically linked and the inter-play of their themes of loss, resilience and redemption can be examined through the narratives, suggesting that although *Today We're Alive* did not have Aboriginal leadership, there is the possibility that on some level our voices can unite through performance.

8.1. But what did you get out of it?

The reconciliation narratives that emerged from *Today We're Alive*, as suggested in the previous chapter, can be collapsed into just one: that this play tells an acknowledgement story. The play is about coming to terms with the past but it also demonstrates that the past, once acknowledged, doesn't leave. Yet the participants all offer individual ways of allowing their recognition of this acknowledgement to enrich their lives. Gerry, for example, accepts the embrace and receives connection:

So what I thought when "Sally" hugged "Letitia"¹⁰³... that embrace was like reconnecting with the land. It's like through that embrace, it's like through that, connection and belonging to Australia is really established. And it can only be done through Aboriginal people. And *uhm* all we have to do is *uhm* accept the embrace. That's all we have to do, for us, it's free. The embrace is free. The cost of the embrace is for the Aboriginal people, 200 years of nightmares for a lot of them. And yet even so, "Sally's" forgiveness, the readiness to embrace, comes with a terrific cost. And so even though it's free for us we can only receive it if we really value the cost of the embrace, what it's cost. Because the forces of the massacre continue (Gerry, 2011).

Uncle Lionel and Ian, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the Memorial Committee, both value relationship. For them relationship offers an experience of reconciliation. Uncle Lionel talks about joining the Committee:

When we first started off there was farmers and Christians, all different races of people took part. When I first started with it I said: if we can't sit down and talk the truth, we can't do anything. We've got to confront it, the truth; we've got to talk about it. Shaking their hands was the best part of reconciliation (Uncle Lionel, 2011).

Ian agrees:

It's the relational side of it, really, that's been the important part of it for me (Ian, 2011).

Aunty Narelle, not a member of the Committee, has mixed feelings about the Memorial and rejects the idea that reconciliation delivers some kind of closure:

But the word reconciliation is just a bandaid. Because it will never take away the hurt. The hurt is there forever. A lot of people say: "Oh, I know how you feel." They don't know how you feel. They've got no idea how you feel. And this is how I am today. I feel that that monument is great. It's great. To think

¹⁰³ "Sally" and "Letitia" have been substituted for the participants' real names to protect their privacy.

that it's there and to recognize the fact that those people were massacred, right? But it doesn't take away the fact that they were (Aunty Narelle, 2011).

What the following scene was able to do was entwine the intention of all these narratives – even Aunty Narelle's. The slower Aunty Rhonda, as "Sally", realizes the opportunity "Letitia" offers to demonstrate forgiveness, the more of Aunty Narelle's pain she projects. The more Anna, as "Letitia", feels her family's shame at the reveal of the convict past, the stronger her redemption through "Sally's" embrace.

The scene here continues from Anna/"Letitia's" story about becoming involved with the Memorial:

Anna (cont...): Then I got a phone call from the Reverend. That happened through word of mouth, I spoke to someone at Myall Creek, who wasn't interested in the Memorial but she must have passed the message on. The Reverend said there was an important meeting with all the Aboriginal elders and the people involved and would I like to join them?

Rhonda: The families of the perpetrators came to ask forgiveness.

Anna: And I was really frightened, really, really frightened of going over there, because I didn't know how they'd accept me.

Rhonda: You know, you don't expect things to be done for Aboriginal people.

Anna: How they would feel about me? Anyway we went along...

Rhonda stands. Then they all stand to watch. Rhonda embraces Anna.

Gen: When Letitia¹⁰⁴ met Sally¹⁰⁵ not one person didn't cry.

Anna: Sally and I, we became very emotional. It was very emotional.

They hold hands.

Anna: Sally told me when we were alone, she said: I've never had a sister but I consider you now my blood sister. So that was special; that was really special.

Rhonda: I think there was a reconciliation there.

Anna: Somebody said it must have been very cathartic for you, but not really, no. My family broke up over it. They wouldn't accept it. They didn't want people to know they were descended from a murderer.

¹⁰⁴ A character name was introduced here to protect the participant's privacy.

¹⁰⁵ A character name was introduced here to protect the participant's privacy.

Terry: Anyone was in Australia at that time, taking it back a few generations, and on the land and thinks that they're *um* their people weren't involved in it, by carrying it out or covering it up, well, they're kidding themselves. And *um* that was the way I felt about it.

Anna: My first response was I didn't want to know, it was shameful but I knew I couldn't let it alone. There was something in me that had to do something about it. I did feel that very, very strongly.

Lily: So what I thought when Sally hugged Letitia was in that embrace was like reconnecting with the land. It's like through that embrace, it's like through that, connection and belonging to Australia is really established. And it can only be done through Aboriginal people. Accept the embrace, remember the history, know what it's cost.

Rhonda: And it all just come together.

What had happened in performance prior to this scene was Aunty Rhonda's crying in the massacre scene (Scene 11) had changed the whole dynamic. As one, the cast became concerned for her – and the audience's engagement intensified, as the play entered that uncertain territory of authenticity, where the real jostles with the craft. By the time the play reached this scene, Scene 15, there was a celebratory feel, both because of the content and because Aunty Rhonda had assumed command. Now everyone could cry and the epiphany was realized.

What the play then ended with was momentum and energy. Audience member, Haddon, recognised it, when he considered the play to be about the future, about "how we continue". Acknowledgement therefore is not closure; it is entering the trauma-time space of the Memorial and accepting the truth. However if we acknowledge that the past is always present, then so is the future. We might not yet know what that future looks like – but accepting the possibility that it might be different from the present motivates us in our lives, as the Committee demonstrates in the play.

As the feedback session revealed, in privileging performance as a way of knowing, the old authority of inherited wisdom was challenged; the demand for historical accuracy was displaced by the desire to express an emotional response. Pink (2009), though not concerned specifically with decolonizing methodologies across cultures, is, in her advocacy of 'sensory ethnography', endorsing attention to the

senses to create multiple ways of knowing through “the exploration of and reflection on new routes to knowledge.” (2009, p. 8)

In opening up research methodology to consider the primacy of the imagination and memory as an interpretive site, Pink moves us closer towards story-telling as a methodology and one that supports an Indigenous world view (L.T. Smith, 1999, p.144-145). The play’s performance opened us up to knowing through the experience of shared grief, shared action and shared humanity.

8.1.1. Addressing the questions

So in summary what I suggest this thesis establishes in regard to the research questions is that performance privileges not just multiple voices but multiple modes of story-telling. Entwining Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal voices in *Today We're Alive* reveals an acknowledgement narrative; a new story is told as an old story is heard anew. But it is the actors, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, who imprint on our consciousness the unspoken history of colonization and by taking us, through performance, into the intense world of the immediate present, they offer through empathy and the imagination the possibility of change.

Overall what the memorial hall performed reading emphasizes is that transformative relationships are as much a function of recognizing misunderstandings as discovering new understandings to replace them. But in the decolonizing space such realizations may not be quick or welcome or painless.

8.2. Telling stories

The Moogahlin play-making experience evolved over several years; from its tentative beginnings with my short film script, *Stop, Revive, Survive*, through its first manifestation of a stage play called *The Aunties ‘Epic* and then finally into *This Fella, My Memory*, about the journey of the human heart, the workshop day always began with stories. We were an ensemble, some of us spoke often, some rarely but everyone listened. I didn’t realise how critical it was to our process until two weeks before we were due to perform.

Fred, as director, wanted a character, “Dolly”, to have a long speech, a monologue, which explained her relationship with her deceased sister but also explained her decline into alcoholism. The relationship had to be filled with trauma. Fred called it a Sam Shepard¹⁰⁶ moment. The speech I wrote quickly one morning was based on many stories I had absorbed over the time we had been working together about police harassment, sexual abuse and fear. It was accepted, trimmed and used in the play. In performance the words allowed rage to be repressed, and the response to the brutality of her sister’s violent death to be internalized. Because of this repression, the violence became normalized; it was the speech of a woman crushed by a lifetime of disempowerment and violence. It was not a speech for a non-Aboriginal woman and I was pleased I had come to understand as much as I had.

But this wasn’t the only story I was part of. In the play I, as “Col,” had an estranged daughter. I wanted to make amends, find a relationship; the actor playing the daughter did not. I found it difficult to write a scene that suited us both. Then we did a story-telling exercise as characters; we had to tell a story of what our characters were doing six months after the play ended. I told a story about how I, as “Col” was optimistic about a meeting with my daughter. The actor playing my daughter had a very different story: as an Aboriginal actor she was playing a character, who thought she was part-Spanish. That’s what she had been told by her mother, “Col”. What she, as a character without a father, had embraced was materialism.

Her extemporized speech was about the acquisition of a new diamond ring. I felt then it was her view as an actor of my culture, where family comes lower down the list. And I, as a character, disliked coming second; yet as an actor, I was grateful for and challenged by the insight. I could be satisfied with my own insight into the effects of long-term victimization in the Sam Shepard speech but uncomfortable when faced with another’s perspectives of the cultural values I represented. It made me think about what kinds of knowledge we exchange with our stories; they encompass more than what we do, they tell us how we understand and how we are understood.

It was only after these experiences that I reflected on the trip to Bingara in the Tarago. We told stories and because we had very little in common, certainly in terms

¹⁰⁶ Sam Shepard is an American playwright, who examines estrangement through monologue; characters speak but don’t necessarily relate to each other while revealing something of their inner life.

of professional anecdotes, we told stories about our lives. And they were funny. We made each other laugh. We were using what tools we had to create an ensemble and it was from that camaraderie that trust evolved. In terms of once again returning to consider the quality of the performance, I wonder if story-telling should be considered as complementing the methodological mix. A site where the story-teller and not the researcher has control (L.T. Smith, 1999, p. 145), a site of relationship, a site of sharing knowledge; it models rehearsal dynamics without going near the work.

Both *This Fella, My Memory* and *Today We're Alive*, were well-received. Though both were about different things – in *This Fella* three women go on a journey; in *Today We're Alive* people stay in one place but move through history – there were, as suggested above, thematic links between them.

I wondered if their appeal had anything to do with how they addressed the five persistent narratives identified in Chapter Two, those narratives that consistently seem to impede Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations. To prompt this final consideration derived from this study's findings, these narratives concern:

- Land rights
- Aboriginality
- Paternalism – the supposed supremacy of non-Indigenous epistemology
- The denial of the on-going presence of the past in the now
- The inconsistency of vision in non-Indigenous leadership

I begin with *Today We're Alive* and segue into *This Fella, My Memory*.

8.2.1. Common threads

Although issues around Land Rights and Aboriginality dominate the political debate they are not discussed in *Today We're Alive*. However it is not that the first two narratives are ignored, they are just not articulated. The presence of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors together telling a story that involves acts of violence and acts of its recognition allows the play to convey more by saying less. As a body-centred methodology performance ethnography complicates and enriches its texts through multiple nodes of translation. Disadvantage and dispossession, survival and shame,

injustice, ignorance, courage and hope are thematically present within the actors themselves; meanings are left for individual spectators to decipher and the production to determine. Freed from the burden of locating authority, as I discovered through the memorial hall reading, the play can explore other cross-cultural aspects of shared history.

It is the remaining three narratives: the denial of the presence of the past in the now; lack of vision in non-Aboriginal leadership and, to a lesser extent, the unquestioned assumption of the supremacy of non-Aboriginal epistemology, or ignoring other ways of knowing, that are interrogated in the play.

As the play concerns the building of the Memorial, the past, as we have seen, is an implicit character, directing the action, demanding attention. As the Memorial is initiated by “Sally” and its significance honoured by “Sally’s” embrace of “Letitia”, the play’s forward momentum is triggered by Aboriginal leadership.

However it is the play’s representation of other ways of knowing that is of interest. As illuminated in the feedback session, in this context other ways of knowing through privileging the emotional response to the performance were elevated only after a contest. In the play itself it is other ways of knowing history that empowers and enthuses the non-Indigenous Committee members to continue working for reconciliation. Perhaps it might be possible to argue that an engagement in other ways of knowing is both the impediment to change and the gateway to transformation. When the dominant culture mindset is truly questioned, the other four persistent narratives might perhaps prove less resistant to change.

When comparing how both plays address these narratives, even when creative control rested with two different people, Fred and myself, we were of a similar mindset. This returns us to a consideration of Indigenous/non-Indigenous collaboration at all stages of a research endeavour and whether that might have some flexibility in the arts-informed inquiry space. As Pink (2009) concludes with a discussion on best practice, she suggests each research project is methodologically and ethically structured according to the desired outcome. She recognises that:

Relationships and appropriations between scholarly research, arts practices and applied interventions will depend on the aims and frames of each unique

project. They will also be contingent on the skills of individual researchers and types of collaboration they enter into (2009, p.133).

This fluidity and this honesty, I suggest, is worthwhile pursuing on the decolonizing frontier. Although it is recognised that methodological choices condition the data that is collected (L.T. Smith, 1999), variations in the researcher role within the play-making space can produce content that might look different and sound different but is still thematically linked. In other words, humanitarian and transformative intent can be realized by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous practitioners but in different ways.

This is not to reject the principle of collaboration; it is simply a request for decision-making to be open to negotiation project by project.

8.3. Conclusion

When I first visited the Memorial at Myall Creek, I thought I would be locating a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. It only occurred to me it was simply a beginning, when I truly became acquainted with the Northern Territory Emergency Response, which had then been in place for two years. I had not, until then, really appreciated the Memorial's uniqueness, because I hadn't understood how fragile the reconciliation journey still is. I was slow to realise how much of a world away Myall Creek and all that it symbolises is from the lives being engineered through contentious policies on remote communities.

Because the stories around the Memorial and the massacre that led to its being there are so strong and because the participants' narratives are so energised, the play's story, I believe, withstands the two aesthetic problems of verbatim, as identified in Chapter Five: didactic delivery and static staging. And the verbatim form's great strength, particularly in terms of what it offers research, as in being seen and heard to tell the truth, complements the nature of the play's content, which is at times both confronting and revelatory.

Becoming involved with the Myall Creek Committee and its vision has been a great outcome from my pursuing this research project. I even discovered not all my family's stories were known: my great-great-great-grandfather gave a job to Edward

Denny Day in 1851. But along with meeting the Memorial Committee members and their recommended others, the great joy in this project has been working with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors and being able to tell new stories: about us, about our experience and about our trying to find ways of sharing it.

The authority of verbatim theatre lends itself well to negotiating new territory – because of its formality in dealing with the difficult. The words spoken are not dialogue, researcher bias is present but, through the juxtaposition of texts, relatively transparent. And the formality of the text allows performers to convey encrypted meanings, as the words spoken can be represented as conscious choices.

Therefore it is verbatim theatre's capacity to present multiple meanings within the formal structure of reported speech that allows it to serve so well in this most sensitive site of cross-cultural research. As much as I wanted to be able to include improvised sequences when I began this study, at the end, at the memorial hall performance, I was glad of the rigour of verbatim only. As a non-Aboriginal researcher it was freeing to have to be accountable, to be serving the field instead of imposing upon it understandings that had come from somewhere else - from an urban life, another world away.

Epilogue

i) A little black humour

Fred and I rarely discuss politics but we did have a conversation about reconciliation. It was when I was close to finishing this thesis, so I was more attuned to the complexity of its definition, as I had failed to be able to locate a singular narrative that I thought embraced the reconciliation experience for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. I felt that the Myall Creek story had brought us all to the same table but we, as yet, didn't know how to leave the table and walk together; we don't yet have a shared vision of the future.

Fred thought the last scene of *This Fella, My Memory* captured reconciliation exactly: two characters, Aboriginal woman, "Toots", and non-Aboriginal woman, "Col", who have spent the whole play hating each other, decide to stay together, because they realise they need each other. The play was not supposed to end neatly; it was supposed to have a question mark saying: oh right, so how will this work out? The end of the play had always been conceived as the beginning of a new story; it was part of the way we had chosen to tell this story of the three women, Aboriginal "Dolly", "Toots" and "Col", on the road together. We always wanted to suggest that the story wasn't over and that there would be other stories springing from it.

The title of the play comes from a story one of our cultural consultants¹⁰⁷, who is both a Yuin Elder and author, told us about a heart operation he'd had. He was very troubled before going into the operation for a triple by-pass that his heart, which he believed held his memory, would be compromised and therefore all the memories that have been passed on to him over many, many generations would be lost. The anaesthetist, our cultural consultant told us, assured him his heart and his memory would survive the operation intact. Our consultant beamed, when he told this story; he pointed to his heart and said his memory was fine. As a company we wanted to

¹⁰⁷For *This Fella, My Memory* we had two Aboriginal cultural consultants working with us; one told us lots of stories about urban Aboriginal people wanting to go back to country; the other gave us permission to use certain ceremonies, language and spiritual references.

honour this story and this relationship between our hearts and our memories, so the play's title is there to remind us.

At the end of *This Fella, My Memory*, "Toots" and "Col" realise they have to return to those people they have wounded in the past and heal those relationships; for "Toots" it's her relationship with her nephew, for "Col" it's her relationship with her daughter, "Tamsin". At the end of *This Fella, My Memory*, after both women are exposed as liars, "Toots" and "Col" decide they are better off with each other than without.

Originally when I wrote the scene it was, I thought, to be deep in sentiment. I cried in rehearsal and so did the actor playing "Toots". In the scene just before the one below, we had witnessed "Dolly's" death; the glue, who had kept us together, had gone. The scene begins, after "Dolly", as spirit, leaves the stage:

Scene 12:¹⁰⁸

On the Mountain. Later.

Toots: Done what she came to do.

Col: Don't want to leave her.

Toots: Not going to. (*Beat*) Come on.

Col: What?

Toots: Got business in my country.

Col: Your nephew?

Toots: Thought you'd jump at the chance.

Col: You're asking me to come with you?

Toots: Shake a leg, Aunty Col.

Col: What about your tour?

Toots: No tour. Never was one.

Col: Did Dolly know?

¹⁰⁸ This scene is included here, because it demonstrates the power of performance choices more succinctly than a description of the interaction would. *This Fella, My Memory* is a work of fiction, based on real stories and the copyright is held jointly between Linden Wilkinson and Moogahlin Performing Arts Inc.

- Toots: Too right, she did. What about your Tamsin? Did you ever tell her that she is aboriginal?
- Col: Will you help me?
- Toots: (*Laughs*) Must need my head read.

The way I had visualised the scene was we would end on laughter, laughter through tears. Fred, our director, was sick of the crying in rehearsal but we girls ploughed on through the tears. Then in the dress rehearsal the actor playing “Toots” began laughing much earlier than scripted; she too, she said, was sick of crying. Out-numbered I let “Col” lighten up – and the scene finally worked; we shifted the energy into the promise of a new story developing. Wrenched out of self-pity, the scene was now about a better future and two feisty characters an audience might want to be with. It wasn't about being united through grief; it was about choosing to be together, warts and all. The scene was now about the foolhardiness and resilience of hope, rather than stasis of despair.

And we left the stage with the next story waiting to be told.

It occurred to me, after Fred's recognition of this scene as being one about reconciliation, that perhaps it's all very simple; perhaps reconciliation is not about doing things for each other or to each other or because of each other but it's all about doing things with each other. Perhaps it is all about one preposition.

References

- Aboriginal Elders, (2011). *Walk With Us – Aboriginal Elders call out to Australian people to walk with them in their quest for justice*. East Melbourne: 'concerned Australians'.
- Aboriginal People, (2006) *Stories from the Eurobodalla*. Retrieved September 17th, 2013 from www.esc.nse.gov.au/site/aboriginalheritagestudy/pdf/finalreport_stage2.pdf.
- Aboriginal people strike, (n.d).. Retrieved October 29th, 2013 from <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/politics/aboriginal-people-strike-walk-of>
- Aboriginal prison rates. (n.d.). *Aboriginal prison rates – Creative Spirits*. Retrieved July 4th, 2013 from <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/aboriginal-prison-rates>
- Ackroyd, J. & O'Toole, J. (2010). *Performing research – tensions, triumphs and trade-offs of ethnodrama*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books.
- Adam-Smith, P. (1978). *The ANZACS*. West Melbourne: Thomas Nelson Australia Pty Ltd.
- Alexander, B. K. (2005). Performing ethnography: the re-enacting and inciting of Culture. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (3rd edition), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., pp. 411-442.
- Alexander, H.A. (2003). Aesthetic Inquiry in education: community, transcendence and the meaning of pedagogy. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 37(2), 1-17.
- Altman, J. & Russell, S. (2012) Too much 'Dreaming': evaluations of the Northern territory National Emergency Response Intervention 2007 – 2012. *Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU*. Retrieved July, 3rd, 2013 from http://caepr.anu.edu.au/announces/anc12_12_19_4860.php
- Anderson, M. & Wilkinson, L. (2007). A resurgence of verbatim theatre: authenticity, empathy and transformation. *Australasian Drama Studies*, Vol.50, 153-169.
- An Emigrant Mechanic. (1977). *Settlers and convicts – recollections of sixteen years' labour in the Australian backwoods*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Arnold, R. (2005). *Empathic intelligence: teaching, learning, relating*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.

Australia Day in Australia, (n.d.). Retrieved March 8th 2014 from <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/australia/australia-day>

Australian Broadcasting Commission, (2012). *Message Stick – the national black theatre*. Retrieved December 12th, 2012 from <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/stories/s3538616.htm>

Australian Law Reform Commission, (n.d.), *Aboriginal Societies: The Experience of Contact – changing policies towards Aboriginal people*. Retrieved June 4th, 2013 from [http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/Recognition%20of%20Aboriginal%20Customary%20Laws%20\(ALRC%20Report%2031\)/3-aboriginal-societies-experi](http://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/Recognition%20of%20Aboriginal%20Customary%20Laws%20(ALRC%20Report%2031)/3-aboriginal-societies-experi)

Australian 1967 Referendum – Creative Spirits (n.d.) Australian 1967 Referendum. Retrieved October 10th, 2013 from <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/australian-1967-referendum>

Balfour, M. (2009). The politics of intention: looking for a theatre of little changes. *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 14:3, 347-359.

Barndt, D. (2008). Touching minds and hearts – community arts as collaborative research. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in qualitative research - perspectives methodologies examples, and issues*. (pp.351-362). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Barone & Eisner, 1997; Barone, T.E. & Eisner, E. (1997). Arts-based educational research. In R.M. Jaegar (Ed.), *Complementary methods for research in education*. (2nd edition) (pp. 73 - 104) Washington, D.C.: AERA.

Batten, B. (2009). The Myall Creek memorial – history, identity and reconciliation. In W. Logan & K. Reeves (Eds.), *Places of pain and shame: dealing with 'difficult' heritage*. New York: Routledge.

Battiste, M. (2008). Research ethics for protecting Indigenous knowledge and Heritage: Institutional and researcher responsibilities. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (pp.497 - 511). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Battiste, M., & Henderson, J. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Ltd

Bauman, Z. (1997). The making and unmasking of strangers. In P. Werbner & T. Modood (Eds.), *Debating cultural hybridity – multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism*. (pp. 46-58). London: Zed Books.

Behar, R. (2008). Anthropology: Ethnography and the book that was lost. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in qualitative research - perspectives methodologies examples, and issues*. (pp.529-545). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Behrendt, L. (2007). *Contemporary Indigenous Plays*. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press Pty Ltd.

Behrendt, L. (2011). *On overcoming Indigenous disadvantage*. Speech given to The Wheeler Centre. Retrieved April 4th, 2013 from <http://www.themonthly.com.au/video/2013/03/24/1364105040/larissa-behrendt>

Bellar, S. (2013, October 21st). The case for Indigenous self-determination. *The Drum* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation). (pp.1-7). Retrieved November 13th from <http://www.abc.net/news/2013-10-21/bellar-indigenous-sovereignty/5032294>

Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity – community, culture, difference*. (pp. 207 – 221). London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.

Bhabha, H. (1996). Culture's in-between. In S. Hall & P. du Gay, *Questions of cultural identity*. (pp.53-60). London: Sage Publications.

Biddle, N. (2012, July 3rd). Northern Territory Intervention extended...but is it working? The Conversation. Retrieved 9th January, 2013, from <http://theconversation.edu.au/northern-territory-intervention-extended-but-is-it-working-80>

Blainey, G. (1975). *Triumph of the nomads – a history of ancient Australia*. South Melbourne: Macmillan Company Australia.

Blainey, G. (1993), Balance Sheet On Our History, *Quadrant*, July 1993, pp. 10-15.

Blanch, R. (2000). *Myall Creek re-visited/by Russ Blanch*. Delungra: Grah Jean Books.

Boal, A. (2000). *Theatre of the oppressed*. London: Pluto.

Boon, R. (2003). *“about Hare” the playwright and the work*. London: Faber & Faber.

Bottoms, S. (2006). Putting the document into documentary. *The Drama Review* 50 (3), pp. 56-68.

Botham, P. (2008). From deconstruction to reconstruction – a Habermasian framework for contemporary political theatre. *Contemporary Theatre Review*. Vol. 18 (3), 307 – 317.

Bovell, A. (2002) *Holy Day*. Strawberry Hills: Currency press

Bowles, K. (2006). Representation. In S. Cunningham & G. Turner (Eds.), *The media and communications in Australia*. 2nd edition (pp.64-77) Crowns Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Brittain, V. & Slovo, G. (2004) *Guantanamo: Honour Bound to Defend Freedom*, Retrieved March 19th, 2014 from <http://www.bordc.org/grp/readings/gtmoscript.pdf>

Brook, J. (1999). *Shut out from the world – the Hawkesbury Aborigines reserve and mission 1889 – 1946*. Berowra heights: Deerubbin Press.

Brown, F.L. (2004) *Making the classroom a healthy place: the development of affective competency in Aboriginal pedagogy*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of British Columbia.

Brown, P. & the Workers' Cultural Action Committee (2001) *Aftershocks*. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.

Brown, P. & Wake, C. (2010). The future of verbatim theatre: truthfulness in a new era. In P. Brown (Ed.), *Verbatim – staging memory and community* (pp.18-21). Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.

Butler, T. (n.d.). Policy-at-a-glance – Incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people policy. *Public Health Association of Australia*. (pp.1-5). Retrieved March 10th, 2014 from http://www.phaa.net.au/documents/policy/101216_Incarceration%20of%20ATSI%20People%20Policy.pdf

Calhoun, C. (2003). Pierre Bourdieu. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *The Blackwell companion to major contemporary social theorists*. (pp.274 – 310). Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Campbell, J. (1993). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. London: Fontana Press.

Carlyon, L. (2006). *The Great War*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia Pty Ltd.

Casey, M. (2012). *Telling stories – Aboriginal Australian and Torres Strait Islander performance*. North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing P/L.

Castle, T. (2008). Watching them hang – capital punishment and public support in colonial New South Wales, 1826 – 1836. *History Australia*. Volume 5 Number 2 2008 (pp. 43.1 – 43.15).

- Chase, S. (2005). Narrative inquiry: multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edition. (pp.651-679). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Cheeseman, P. (2005). ...on documentary theatre. In Soans, R. *Talking to terrorists*. (pp. 104-107). London: Oberon.
- Chesterman, J. & Douglas, H. (2004). 'Their ultimate absorption': assimilation in 1930s Australia. *Journal of Australian Studies*. Vol. 81 (pp.47-58). Retrieved June 22nd, 2013 from www.kooriweb.org/foley/resources/pdfs/185.pdf.
- Chilisa, B. (2012). *Indigenous research methodologies*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Clandinen, J. & Connelly, M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry, experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass publishers.
- Clark, M. (1963). Foreword. *Settlers and convicts – recollections of sixteen years' labour in the Australian backwoods*. (pp. v-xiv). Carlton: Melbourne University Press
- Clark, M. (1973). *History of Australia*. (Vol. 3). Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Cochrane, P. (2006) *Colonial ambition - foundations of Australian democracy*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Cohen, C.E.; Varea, R.G. & Walker, P.O. (2011). Introduction – setting the stage. In C.E. Cohen; R.G. Varea & P.O. Walker (Eds.) *Acting together – performance and the creative transformation of conflict*, vol.1: resistance and reconciliation in regions of violence. (pp.1-14).Oakland, CA: New Village Press.
- Cole, A. & Knowles, G. (2008), Arts-informed research. In G. Knowles & A. Cole (Eds.) *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research- perspectives, methodologies, examples and issues*. (pp. 55-71). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Conquergood, D. (1985). Performing as a moral act: ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. *The Performance Quarterly*, 5(2), 1-13.
- Conquergood, D. (1991). Rethinking Ethnography: towards a critical cultural politics. *Communication Monographs* 58 (2) pp.179-194.
- Conquergood, D. (1992) Ethnography, rhetoric, and performance. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 78, 80-123.
- Conquergood, D. (1997) Street literacy. In J. Flood, S. B. Heath & D. Lapp (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teaching literacy through the communication and visual arts* (pp.334 – 375). New York: Macmillan.

Conquergood, D. (2013). Performance studies – interventions and radical research. In E.P. Johnson (Ed.) *Cultural Struggles: performance, ethnography, praxis*. (pp.32-44). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Cook, J. (1770). *Journal*. Retrieved April 4th 2013 from <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks/e00043.html/#ch8>

Coote, G. (Producer & Director) (1991). *Island of Lies*. Australia: Ronin Films.

Cordiner, G. (2014, March 3rd) Personal communication.

Cox, R. (1993). Gramsci, hegemony and international relations: an essay in method. In S. Gill (Ed.), *Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations*. (pp.49 – 67). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Curthoys, A. (2010). WEH Stanner and the historians. In M. Hinkson & J. Beckett, (Eds.), *An appreciation of difference: WEH Stanner and Aboriginal Australia*. (pp. 233 – 250). Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press

Cutcher, A. (2004). *The Hungarian in Australia: a portfolio of belongings*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. University of Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Davies, J. & Spencer, D. (2010). *Emotions in the field – the Psychology and Anthropology of fieldwork experience*. Stanford: Stanford university Press.

Davis, J. (1982). *The Dreamers*. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.

Davis, J. *No Sugar* (1985). No Sugar. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.

Denzin, N.K. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Denzin, N.K. (2005) The politics and ethics of performance pedagogy – toward a pedagogy of hope. In D. S. Madison & J.A. Hamera (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of performance studies*. (pp.325-338) Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.), (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (2008). Introduction: critical methodologies and Indigenous inquiry. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (pp.1-21). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Diamond, C.T.P. & Mullen, C.A. (1999). *The postmodern educator: arts-based inquiries and teacher development*. New York: Peter Lang.

Department of Immigration and Border protection,(n.d.), *Fact Sheet 8 – Abolition of the 'White Australia' Policy*. Retrieved March 1st, 2014 from <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/08abolition.htm>

Documenting Democracy, (n.d). Yirrkala bark petitions 1963. Retrieved November 6th, 2013 from <http://foundingdocs.gov.au/item-did-104.html>

Dodson, M. (2012). *Constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians*. Papers on Parliament No.57. Retrieved April 4th, 2013 from http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Research_and_Education/pops/pop57/c02

Dodson, P. (2012, January 25th). PM backs change for Constitution. *Koori Mail*, p.7.

Donmoyer, R. & Yennie Donmoyer, J. (2008). Readers' theatre as a data display strategy. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in qualitative research - perspectives methodologies examples, and issues*. (pp.209-224). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Duck, L. A. (2009). Listening to melancholia: Alice Walker's 'Meridian'. In J. Judaken (Ed.), *Naming race, naming racisms*. (pp. 105 – 131) New York: Routledge.

Edkins, J. (2003). *Trauma and the memory of politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Egan, T. (2012). Lingiari, Vincent (1919-1988). *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Retrieved October 31st, 2013 from <http://ia.anu.edu./biography/lingiari-vincent-14178>

Eisner, E. (1996). Should a novel count as a dissertation in education? *Research in the Teaching of English*, 30 (4) 403-427.

Eisner, E. (2008). Art and knowledge. In J.G. Knowles & A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in qualitative research - perspectives methodologies examples, and issues*. (pp.3-13). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Eklund, E. (2001) *Terra nullius and Australian colonialism*. Retrieved May 25th, 2013 from <http://treatypublic.net/content/terra-nullius-0>

Elder, B. (2009). *Blood on the wattle – massacres and maltreatment of Aboriginal Australians*. 3rd edition. Sydney: New Holland Publishers.

- Enslar, E. (1998) The vagina monologues. Retrieved March 2nd, 2014 from http://www.script-o-rama.com/movie_scripts/v/vagina-monologues-script-eve-ensler.html
- Ephron, N. & Ephron, D. (2008) *Love, loss and what I wore*. New York: Dramatists Play Services Incorporated
- Ewing, R., Hughes, J. & McGeoch, K. (2007). *Arts informed inquiry: exploring a new paradigm*. Paper for the International Drama in Education Conference. Hong Kong. 2007.
- Ewing, R. & Smith, D. (2004). Locating new Epiphanies. In A. Cole, L. Neilsen, J.G. Knowles & T. Luciani (Eds.), *Provoked by art: theorizing arts-informed research*. (pp. 147-158). Halifax: Backalong Books.
- Final Report (CAR). (2000). National Reconciliation documents appendix 1. Retrieved July 4th 2013 from <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/finalreport/appendices01.htm>
- Foley, G. & Anderson, T. (2006). Land rights and Aboriginal voices. *Australian Journal of Human Rights*. Vol 12.1 pp.83-105. Retrieved March 5th, 2014 from <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/AJHR/2006/5.pdf>
- Fortier, B. (2011). *On the road to a new Ethnography: Anthropology, improvisation and performance*. Retrieved June 22nd, 2013 from <http://bradfortier.com/2011/01/12/on-the-road-to-a-new-ethnography-anthropology-improvisations-and-performance>
- Freedom Ride, 1965 (1965) (p.2). Retrieved June 24th, 2013 from <http://indigenoustrights.net.au/section.asp?sID=33>
- Friere, P. (1970). *Cultural action for freedom*. Middlesex: Penguin Education
- Friere, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed, 20th anniversary edition*. New York: Continuum
- Gale, J. (1995) Preface. In L.P. Steffe & J. Gale. (Eds), *Constructivism in Education*. (pp. xi-xvi) Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gallios, M. & McDonald, G. (2012). *The Wellington project – country, spirit and belonging, the Wiradjuri in Wellington Valley*. Wellington: Wellington Council.
- Gammage, B. (2011). *The biggest estate on earth – how Aborigines made Australia*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Garcia-Moreno et al, (2005). WHO Multi-cultural study on women's health and domestic violence against women – initial responses on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. *World Health Organisation*. Retrieved March

10th, 2014 from

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/43309/1/924159358X_eng.pdf

Garde, U., Mumford, M. & Wake, C. (2010). A short history of verbatim theatre. In P. Brown (Ed.). *Verbatim – staging memory and community*. (pp.9-18). Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.

Garrett, P. (2008, June 7th). "Myall Creek massacre recognised 170 years on", media release, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Australian Government.

Gilbert, S. (2005). 'Never forgotten': Pearl Gibbs (Gambanyi). In A. Cole, V. Haskins & F. Paisley. (Eds.), *Uncommon ground - white women in Aboriginal history*. (pp. 107-129). Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

Gooda, M. & Calma, T. (2011). *Their speech to the national press club celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Closing the Gap campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity*. Retrieved June 23rd, 2013 from <http://blogs.crikey.com.au/croakey/2011/03/10/tom-calma-and-mick-gooda-their-speech-to-the-national-press-club-today>

Gorman, J. (2014). *Redfern gentrification*. Retrieved 1st March, 2014 from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/redferns-gentrification-continues-as-families-and-young-couples-flock-to-the-inner-city-suburb/story-e6frg6n6-1226806547038>

Gorringe, S., Ross, J. & Fforde, C. (2011). 'Will the real Aborigine please stand up': strategies for breaking the stereotypes and changing the conversation. AIATSIS Research Discussion paper no. 28. Retrieved December 1st, 2013 from www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/discussion.html

Grande, S. (2007). Red Lake Woebegone – pedagogy, decolonization, and the critical project. In P. McLaren & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy – where are we now?* (pp.315-336). New York: Peter Lang.

Greenwood, J. (1999). *Journeys into a third space: a study of how theatre enables us to interpret the emergent space between cultures*. Australian Digital Thesis Program. Retrieved October 7th 2009, from <http://www4.gu.edu.au:8080/adt-root/uploads/approved/adt-QGU20030226.09114/public/02Whole.pdf>

Grehan, H. (2001). *Mapping cultural identity in contemporary Australian performance*. Bruxelles: P.I.E.- Peter Lang.

Grehan, H. (2010). Aboriginal performance: politics, empathy and the question of reciprocity. *Australasian Drama Studies* 56, 38 – 53.

Grenville, K. (2005) *Secret River*. Melbourne: Text Publishing.

Gunson, N. (1967). Threlkeld, Lancelot Edward (1788 – 1859). *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Retrieved March 9th, 2014 from <http://adb.edu.au/biography/threlkeld-lancelot-edward-2734>.

Gunstone, A. (2005). The formal Australian reconciliation process: 1991-2000. Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies. Retrieved November 6th, 2013 from www.uniya.org/research/reconciliation_gunstone.pdf

Haggis, J. (2003). White women and colonialism: towards a non-recuperative history. In R. Lewis. & S. Mills (Eds.), *Feminist postcolonial theory - a reader*. (pp. 161-190). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Halba, H. (2007). "Let me feel the magic" – Hilary Halba interviews Rangimoana Taylor. In M. Maufort & D. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Performing Aotearoa – New Zealand theatre and drama in an age of transition* (pp.209-219). Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang.

Hall, R. (1997). *The black diggers –Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Hall, S. (1992). What is this 'black 'in black popular culture? In G. Dent (Ed.), *Black popular culture* (pp.21-33). Seattle: Bay Press.

Hammond, W. & Steward, D. (Eds.). (2011). *Verbatim verbatim – contemporary documentary theatre*. London: Oberon Books.

Hare, D. (2007) *The Permanent Way*. London: Faber & Faber

Hare, D. (2013) *Stuff Happens* London: Faber & Faber

Hare, D. & Stafford-Clark, M. (2011). David Hare & Max Stafford Clark. In W. Hammond & D. Steward (Eds.), *Verbatim verbatim – contemporary documentary theatre* (pp.45 – 77). London: Oberon Books.

Harris, J. (2009). Memorials and trauma: Pinjarra, 1834. Retrieved February, 25th from <http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/trauma/docs/JenniferHarris-paper.pdf>

Harrison, J. (2012). Indig-curious – who can play Aboriginal roles? *Platform Papers*, (30). Strawberry Hills: Currency House Inc.

Hart, N. (2009). An interview with Les Malezer. *IndigLawB* 12; (2009) 7 (11) *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 9. Retrieved September 11th, 2013 from <http://worldlii.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ILB/2009/12.html>

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Hawke, E., Brett, P. & Spencer, C. (1768) *Secret instructions to Captain Cook*. Retrieved April, 11th, 2013 from http://foundingdocs.gov.au/resources/transcripts/nsw_doc/1768pdf

Heritage – national heritage. (2008.) *Cook's landing site – Kurnell Peninsula more information*. Retrieved April 11th, 2013 from <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/kurnell/information.html>

He Whakamārama (n.d.). Kaupapa Māori. Retrieved February 6th, 2014 from <http://www.kaupapamaori.com/theory/6/>

Hodgson, J. & Richards, E. (1987). *Improvisation*. London: Methuen.

Hudson, S. (2011). Alcohol restrictions in Indigenous communities and frontier towns. The Centre for Independent Studies – CIS Policy Monograph 116. Retrieved November 7th, 2013 from <http://cis.org.au/images/stories/policy-monographs/pm-116.pdf>.

Hughes, R. (1988). *The fatal shore – a history of the transportation of convicts to Australia 1787 – 1868*. London: Pan Books Ltd.

Inglis, K. (2008). *Sacred places – war memorials in the Australian landscape*. 3rd edition. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.

Iseger-Pilkington, G. (2013) Sorry: keeping our histories alive. In C. Pagliaro (ed.). *My country- I still call Australia home; contemporary art from black Australia*. South Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery.

Jarrett, S. (2013 a). *Liberating Aboriginal people from violence*. Ballan: Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd.

Jarrett, S. (2013 b). Promised brides and the insolence of freedom: Aboriginal Australia and violence during cultural transition. In R. Craven, A. Dillon & N. Parbury (Eds.). *In black & white – Australians at the crossroads*. (pp.37 – 57). Ballan: Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd.

Johns, G. (2011). *Aboriginal self-determination – the whiteman's dream*. Ballan: Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd.

Johnson, E.P. (2013). *Dwight Conquergood - Cultural struggles: performance, ethnography, praxis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Jones, J.L. (2005). Performance and Ethnography, performing Ethnography, Performance Ethnography. In D. S. Madison & J.A. Hamera (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of performance studies*. (pp.339-345) Thousand oaks: SAGE Publications.

Jordan, M. (2004). *Spirit of true learning: the jubilee history of the faculty of University of New England*. Retrieved June 24th, 2013 from

http://books.google.com.au/books?id=WqAsJPeW8j8C&pg=PA102&lpg=PA102&dq=Russel+Ward+-+faculty+at+New+England+Uni&source=bl&ots=ANMP5r39Av&sig=c7PIO3uE7M6F7ucM59JkcBtiBQ&hl=en&sa=X&ei=G4AdU9CtDs3ikgWV_YDoDQ&ved=0CEkQ6AEwBg#v=onepage&q=Russel%20Ward%20-%20faculty%20at%20New%20England%20Uni&f=false

Kaufman, M. & the Tectonic Theater Project (2001) *The Laramie Project*. New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc.

Kauffman, P. (2003). Diversity and Indigenous policy outcomes – comparisons between four nations. In M. Kalantzis & P. James (Eds.), *International journal of diversity in organisations, communities and nations*. Vol. 3. (pp.159-180). Retrieved November 21st, 2013 from <http://tracker.org.au/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/10/Diversity-and-Indigenous-Policy-Outcomes.pdf>

Keating, P. (1992). The Redfern Speech. Retrieved April 15th, 2014 from https://antar.org.au/sites/default/files/paul_keating_speech_transcript.pdf

Kelly, P. & Carmody, K. (1991). *From Little Things, Big Things Grow*. (song) On Bloodlines [CD] Melbourne: EMI Festival.

Kent, N. (2011). Nicolas Kent. In W. Hammond & D. Steward (Eds.), *Verbatim verbatim – contemporary documentary theatre* (pp.133 – 169). London: Oberon Books.

Krog, A., Mpolewni-Zantsi, N. & Ratele, K. (2008). The South African Truth & Reconciliation Commission: Ways of knowing Mrs Konile. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (pp.531-547). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Radicalized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. 2nd Edition. (Pp.257-277) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Lerderach, J.P. (2005). *The moral imagination: the art and soul of building peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lewis, R. & Mills, S. (2003). Introduction. . In R. Lewis. & S. Mills (Eds.), *Feminist postcolonial theory - a reader*. (pp. 1- 21). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Liebler, M. (2001). Treaty – an honourable deal for a just future. Retrieved February 25th 2014, from <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/getfile?id=79&file=SPE-015.DOC>

Little Children Are Sacred – the Overview of the report. (n.d.) Retrieved July 3rd, 2013 from www.inquiriesaac.nt.gov.au/pdf/bipacsa_final_report.pdf

Lo, J. (2004). *Staging nation – English language theatre in Malaysia and Singapore*. Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press.

Lo, J. (2006). Queer magic: performing mixed-race on the Australian stage. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 16:2, 171-188.

Lorde, A. (2003). The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. In R. Lewis. & S. Mills (Eds.), *Feminist postcolonial theory - a reader*. (pp. 25-28). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Mabo – the native title revolution (n.d.) Retrieved 4th June, 2013 from <http://www.mabonativetitle.com/info/earlGreyAnHistoricalTeaser.htm>

McAuley, G. (2008). Remembering and forgetting. Place and performance in the memory process. In G. McAuley (Ed.) *Unstable Ground – performance and the politics of place*. (pp. 149-177). Brussels: P.I.E. Lang S.A.

McCaslin, W. & Breton, D. (2008). Justice as healing; going outside the colonizers' cage. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (pp.511-531). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

McKenna, M. (1997). *Different perspectives on Black Armband history*. Retrieved December 12th, 2012 from <http://www.aph.gov.au/About-Parliament/Parliament-departments/parliamentary-Library/pubs.rp/Rp9>

McLaren, P. (1997). The ethnographer as post-modern flaneur: critical reflexivity and posthybridity as narrative engagement. In W.G. Tierney & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Representation and the text: re-framing the narrative voice* (pp.143-177). Albany: SUNY Press.

McLaren, P. (2007). The future of the past reflections on the present state of empire and pedagogy . In P. McLaren & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical pedagogy – where are we now?* (pp.289-315). New York: Peter Lang.

Mc Niff, S. (2008). Arts-based research. In J.G.Knowles & A.L.Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the Arts in qualitative research - perspectives methodologies examples, and issues*. (pp.29-41). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Madison, D.S. (2005). Staging fieldwork/performing human rights. In D. S. Madison & J.A. Hamera (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of performance studies*. (pp.397-417) Thousand oaks: SAGE Publications.

Madison, D. S. & Hamera, J. (2005). Performance Studies at the Intersections, in D.S.Madison & J. Hamera (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Performance Studies* (pp. xi-xxv).Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Malezer, L. (2012, 15th December). The hunting grounds of the imagination. Encounter [Radio Series]. ABC National Radio. Retrieved 26/12/2012 from <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/encounter/the-hunting-grounds-of-the-imagination>

Manne, R. (2003). Whitewash. *Evatt Foundation*. Retrieved November 11th, 2013 from <http://evatt.org.au/papers/whitewash.html>

Manne, R. (2009). *W.E.H. Stanner – The Dreaming and other essays*. Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda.

Marsh, H. (n.d.) Native tears: conflict on the colonial frontier and R v Kilmeister (no 2). Retrieved March 3rd, 2013 from: https://eview.anu.edu.au/anuuj/vol3_11/pdf4/ch08.pdf p.102

Maufort, M. (2007). Recapturing Māori spirituality: Briar Grace-Smith's magic realist stage aesthetic. In M. Maufort & D. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Performing Aotearoa – New Zealand theatre and drama in an age of transition*. (pp.247-269). Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang.

Maynard, J. (2005). Light in the darkness: Elizabeth McKenzie Hatton. In A. Cole, V. Haskins & F. Paisley. (Eds.), *Uncommon ground - white women in Aboriginal history*. (pp. 3-28). Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

[Meredith, P. \(1998\). Hybridity in the third space: rethinking bi-cultural politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Retrieved on 5th March, 2014 from: http://lianz.waikato.ac.nz/PAPERS/paul/hybridity.pdf](http://lianz.waikato.ac.nz/PAPERS/paul/hybridity.pdf)

Merlin, B. (2001). *Beyond Stanislavsky – the psycho-physical approach to actor training*. London: Nick Hern Books Ltd.

Mieczakowski, J. (2001). Ethnodrama: performed research – limitations and potential. In P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont & J. Lofland (eds) *Handbook of ethnography*. (pp. 468-476) London: SAGE Publications

Mieczakowski, J. (2003). The theatre of ethnography: the reconstruction of ethnography in theatre with emancipatory potential. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Turning points in qualitative research, tying knots in the handkerchief*. (pp.415-432) Walnut Creek: Altamira press.

Mieczakowski, J. & Morgan, S. (1994). Ethnographic Drama Research. Research Combining Creativity and Performance, in *Mask*, Melbourne: Victorian Association for Drama In Education, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 13-19.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Millis, R. (1994). *Waterloo Creek – The Australia Day massacre of 1838, George Gipps and the British conquest of New South Wales*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.

Milroy, H. (2011). The health model. . In L. Nash (ed.), *An Introduction to Indigenous mental health DRAFT*. (pp.22-31). NSW Institute of Psychiatry.

Milroy, J. (2011). Introduction to Indigenous Australia. In L. Nash (ed.), *An Introduction to Indigenous mental health DRAFT*. (pp.4-21). NSW Institute of Psychiatry.

Mishler, E. (1990). Validation in inquiry-based research: the role of exemplars in narrative studies. *Harvard Educational Review*, 60 (4), 415-442.

Mitchell, L. (2011). Domestic violence in Australia – an overview of the issues. Parliament of Australia. Retrieved September 9th, 2013 from http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs?BN/20

Murray, A. (2007). *Political thinking in Britain at the time of Australian settlement*. Retrieved 12th April, 2013 from <http://www.cis.catholic.edu.au/Files/Murray-politicalThinkinginBritain.pdf>.

Myer-Dinkgräffe, D. (2001). *Approaches to acting – past and present*. London: Continuum.

Nandy, A (1983). *The intimate enemy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

National Archives of Australia, (n.d.). *Your story – our history – the 1967 referendum - fact sheet 150*. Retrieved November 21st, 2011 from <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

National Heritage Places, (n.d.) Retrieved November 4th, 2013 from <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/19705>

Neidjie, B. (2002). *Gagudju man*. Melbourne: JB Books.

Neuman, W. (2003). *Social research methods*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Nicholson, H. (1999). Research as Confession, in *Research in Drama Drama Education*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Abingdon: Carfax, pp. 100-103.

Northern Territory Intervention, (2007, November, 3rd). Retrieved 3rd July 2013 from <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/recent-issues/archives/>

Norton-Taylor, R. (1999). *The Colour of Justice*. London: Oberon

- Oades, R. (2010). Parramatta Girls: verbatim theatre about the forgotten Australians. In P. Brown (Ed.), *Verbatim – staging memory and community* (pp.59-67). Strawberry Hills: Currency Press
- O'Donnell, D. (2007). Calming the oceans – David O'Donnell interviews Briar Grace-Smith. In M. Maufort & D. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Performing Aotearoa – New Zealand theatre and drama in an age of transition* (pp.269-283). Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang.
- O'Leary, J. (2010). Unlocking the foundations of the heart – settler verse and the politics of sympathy. *Postcolonial Studies*, 13:1, 55-70. Retrieved February 20th, 2013 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688790903490876>
- O'Toole, J. (2003). *Through a glass, darkly: re-evaluating ethnodrama*. Paper presented to the fourth international Drama in Education Research Institute. July 2003.
- O'Toole, J. & the Drama Australia research community. (2006). *Doing drama research – stepping into enquiry in drama, theatre and education*. City East: Drama Australia.
- Paget, D. 1987. Verbatim theatre: oral history and documentary techniques. *New Theatre Quarterly*, 12: 317-336.
- Paisley, F. (1997). Race and remembrance: contesting Aboriginal child removal in the inter-war years. *Australian Humanities Review*. November 1997. Retrieved June 18th, 2013 from <http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-November-1997/paisley.html>
- Papastergiadis, N. (1997). Tracing hybridity in theory. In P. Werbner & T. Modood (Eds.), *Debating cultural hybridity – multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism*. (pp. 257-282). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Parbury, N. (1986). *Survival, a history of Aboriginal life in New South Wales*. Sydney: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.
- Payne, L. (1965). *The Myall Creek massacre – a correlation of known and attested facts from the past and the present concerning the infamous Myall Creek massacre of 1838*. Retrieved April 10th 2012 from <http://www.goodbyeussamarai.co./MyallCreek%20Massacre.doc>
- Pearson, N. (2010). *Sydney Festival Speech*. Retrieved March 2nd 2014 from <http://cyi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Noel-Pearson-SYDNEY-FESTIVAL-13-Jan-2010.pdf>
- Pholi, K. (2013). Who are you to speak? Silencing Aboriginal dissent. In R. Craven, A. Dillon & N. Parbury (Eds.). *In black & white – Australians at the crossroads*. (pp.57 – 75). Ballan: Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd.

Pink, S. (2009). *Doing sensory Ethnography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Pinnegar, S. (1998). Introduction to Part II: methodological perspective. In M.L. Hamilton (Ed.), *Reconceptualising teaching practice: self-study in teacher education* (pp. 31-33). London: Falmer Press.

Price, D. & Price, B. (2013). Good culture – bad culture, where do we go from here? In R. Craven, A. Dillon & N. Parbury (Eds.). *In black & white – Australians at the crossroads*. (pp.191 – 209). Ballan: Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd.

Powercube, (n.d.) Gramsci and hegemony. Retrieved March 8th, 2014 from <http://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/gramsci-and-hegemony/>

Rangahau. (n.d.). *Principles of Kaupapa Māori*. Retrieved 4th February, 2014 from <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/research-idea/27/>

Read, P. (2000). *Belonging – Australians, place and Aboriginal ownership*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reconciliation Australia (n.d.). *Australian reconciliation barometer 2012*. Retrieved February 3rd, 2014 from <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/australain-reconciliation-barometer>

Reconciliation Australia, (January, 2012) *Five fast facts: The Aboriginal tent embassy*. Retrieved November 6th, 2013 from <http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/aboriginal-tent>

Reconciliation Australia. (2014, March 11th). Personal communication.

Reconciliation Australia, (2010, 12th May). *10th Anniversary of the Bridge Walks for Reconciliation*. Retrieved March 12th, 2014 from <http://reconcile.org.au/home/resources/factsheets/q-a-factsheets/bridge-walk-anniversary>

Reimer, B. (2007). Artistic creativity, ethics, and the authentic self. In L. Bresler (Ed.), *The International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, Part 2. (pp. 1225-1228) Dordrecht. The Netherlands: Springer.

Report from the Expert Panel, (2012) *Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples in the Constitution*. Retrieved November 4th, 2013 from <http://www.recognise.org.au/uploads/assets/3446%20>

Reynolds, H. (1998). *This whispering in our hearts*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Reynolds, H. (1999). *Why weren't we told?* Camberwell: Penguin Books.

Reynolds, H. (2006). *The other side of the frontier – Aboriginal resistance to the European invasion of Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Right wrongs, write yes. The 1967 Referendum. Retrieved June 27th, 2013 from <http://museum.wa.gov.au/exhibitions/online/referendum/>

Roberts, E. (1990). The Fleming connection. In R. M. Warner (ed.), *Over-halling the colony: George Hall, pioneer*. (pp.161-175). Marrickville: Southwood Press Pty Ltd.

Rosaldo, R. (1989). *Culture and Truth: the remaking of social analysis*. Boston: Beacon.

Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, (n.d.). *Royal Commission in Aboriginal Deaths in custody – Creative Spirits*. Retrieved July 4th, 2013 from http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/royal_commission_into_aboriginal_deaths

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (n.d.) *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. Retrieved March 17th from: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

Rudd, K. (2008). Kevin Rudd's sorry speech. Retrieved March 11th, 2014 from <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/13/1202760379056.html>

Rutherford, J. (1990). (Ed.), *Identity – community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Classics.

Saldaña, J. (2003) Dramatizing data: a primer. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9, 218-236.

Saldaña, J. (2005). *The essence of ethnographic performance*. Unpublished paper, Drama Victoria conference, 2005. Melbourne.

Sallis, R.J. (2010). *The drama of boys – an ethnographic study and performance*. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.

Sanders, W. (2002). Discussion paper No. 230. *Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research*. (pp. vii – 16). Retrieved November 6th, 2013 from https://digitalcollections.anu.edu.au/bnitstream/1885/41594/2/2002_DP230.pdf

Sarra, C. (2003). Young, black & deadly: strategies for improving outcomes for Indigenous students. Quality teaching series, Australian College of Educators. Paper No.5. Retrieved November 14th, 2013 from <http://www.austcolled.com.au>

Saul, J.R. (2008). *A fair county – telling truths about Canada*. Ontario: Penguin Group.

Saurine, A. (2013) *Anzac Day Gallipoli numbers*. Retrieved October 3rd, 2013 from <http://www.news.com.au/travel/travel-updates/anzac-day-gallipoli-numberd-down-this-year-as-aussies-wait>

Schlunke, K. (2006), More than memory – performing place and postcoloniality at the Myall Creek massacre memorial. In G. McAuley (Ed.), *Unstable ground – performance and the politics of place* (pp.177-187). Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang S.A.

skwirk, (n.d.). Charles Perkins: freedom rides. Retrieved October 10th, 2013 from http://www.skwirk.com.au/p-c_s-14_u-117_t-319_c-1079/charles-perkins-freedom-rides/

Smith, D. (2002, November 23). *Arts informed inquiry: a new paradigm?* Keynote address at Arts-informed Inquiry Symposium, University of Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Smith, G.H. (2011, November 3rd). Interview.

Smith, G.H. (1990). *Research issues related to Māori education*. Paper presented to NZARE special interest conference, Massey University.

Smith, J. K. (1993). *After the demise of empiricism: the problem of judging social and educational inquiry*. Norwood. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Smith, L.T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Soans, R. (2005). *Talking to Terrorists*. London: Oberon.

Soans, R. (2011). Robin Soans. In W. Hammond & D. Steward (Eds.), *Verbatim verbatim – contemporary documentary theatre* (pp.15 – 45). London: Oberon Books.

Spivak, G. (1988). *Can the subaltern speak?* Retrieved February 24th, 2014 from http://www.maldura.unipd.it/dllags/docentianglo/materiali_oboe_lm/2581_001.pdf

Spivak, G. (1993). *Outside in the teaching machine*. New York: Routledge.

Spivak, G. (2003). Three women's texts and a critique of imperialism. In R. Lewis & S. Mills, (Eds.), *Feminist Postcolonial Theory – a reader* (pp.306 – 323). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Spolin, V. (1999). *Improvisation for the theatre*, 3rd edition. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Stanner, W.E.H. (1953). The Dreaming. In R. Manne (2009) (Ed.) *W.E.H. Stanner – the Dreaming and other essays* (pp.57 - 73). Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda.

Stanner, W.E.H.(1958). Continuity and change among the Aborigines. In R. Manne (2009) (Ed.), *W.E.H. Stanner – the Dreaming and other essays*. (pp.146-172). Melbourne: Black Inc.

Stanner, W.E.H. (1968) *The Boyer lectures: after the Dreaming*. In R. Manne (2009) (Ed.) *W.E.H. Stanner – the Dreaming and other essays* (pp.172-225). Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda.

Stolen generations – bringing them home.(n.d.). *National Sorry Day Committee*. Retrieved October 8th from <http://www.nsd.org.au/stolen-generations/history-of-the-stolen-generations/the-bringing-them-home-report>

Stolen Generations Fact Sheet, 2007. Retrieved October 8th, 2013 from <http://reconciliation.org.au/nsw/education-kit/stolen-generations/>

Stop the Intervention Myths and Facts (2012). *Media release 2012, June 21st*. Retrieved July 5th, 2013 from <http://stoptheintervention.org/facts>

Stubbington, J. (2007) *Singing the land – the power of performance in Aboriginal life*. Strawberry Hills: Currency House.

Stubbins, T. & Smith, P. (2001). *The Myall Creek massacre – its history, its memorial and the opening ceremony*. Bingara: Myall Creek Memorial Committee.

Summons, J. (1994). *Massacre at Myall Creek*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swandener, B. & Mutua, K. (2008). Decolonizing performances: deconstructing the global postcolonial. In Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y. & Smith, L.T. (Eds.), (2008). *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies*. (pp.31-45). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Sydney Morning Herald, (2005). *Vandals deface two Australian memorials*. Retrieved September, 19th, 2013 from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/National/Vandals-deface-two-Australian-memorials/2005>

Syron, L-M. (2008). 'The Bennelong Complex': critical perspectives on contemporary indigenous theatre and performance practice and the cross-cultural experience in Australia. *Australasian Drama Studies*, (53) 74-85. Retrieved October 7th, 2009 from <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk.ezproxy1.library.usyd.edu.au/searchFulltext.do?id=R04117>

Tabrett, L. (n.d.) *Vital signs: cultural indications for Australia*. Retrieved February 3rd, 2014 from <http://cmc.arts.gov.au/sites/www.cmc.gov.au/files/vitalsigns.pdf>

Taffe, S. & Miller, L. (1996). Interview with Faith Bandler. Retrieved June 29th, 2013 from <http://indigenoustrights.net.au/person.asp?p.ID-954>

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Tench, W. (1788). *The expedition to Botany Bay*. Retrieved June 24th, 2013 from [file:///C:/Users/Linden Wilkinson/AppData/Local/Temp/Temp1 t_tench_watkin-botany.zip/chapter8.html](file:///C:/Users/Linden%20Wilkinson/AppData/Local/Temp/Temp1_t_tench_watkin-botany.zip/chapter8.html)

This Day Tonight, (1968, January 1st). Two years after the Wave Hill walk-off. Retrieved November 4th, 2013 from <http://spalsh.abc.net.au/media/-/m/105332/>

The Nationals for Regional Australia (n.d.). Retrieved March 4th, 2014 from <http://www.nationals.org.au/AboutTheNationals/OurHistory/Origins.aspx>

The notebooks of William Dawes on the Aboriginal language of Sydney. (n.d.) Retrieved on 24th June, 2013 from <http://www.wiliamdawes.org/dawes.html>

Tranter, B. & Donoghue, J. (2003). Convict ancestry: a neglected aspect of Australian identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, 9, Issue 4 (pp. 555-577). Retrieved October 1st, 2013 from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1469-8219.00127/abstract;jsessionid+EC3C0943F1A33D06EB>

Treaty Republic, n.d. Retrieved October 31st, 2013 from <http://treatyrepublic.net/content/45-yrs-sand-poured-vincent-lingiaris-hand>

Trudgen, R. (2000). *Why warriors lie down and die – towards an understanding of why the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land face the greatest crisis in health and education since European contact*. Parap: Aboriginal Resource & Development Services Inc.

Turner, G. (2005). *Ending the affair – the decline of current affairs in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press Ltd.

Turner, G. (2009). Politics, radio & journalism in Australia: the influence of 'talkback'. *Journalism*. Retrieved June 6th, 2013 from <http://jou.sagepub.com/content/10/4/411>

Turner, V. (1974) *Dramas, fields, and metaphors – symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

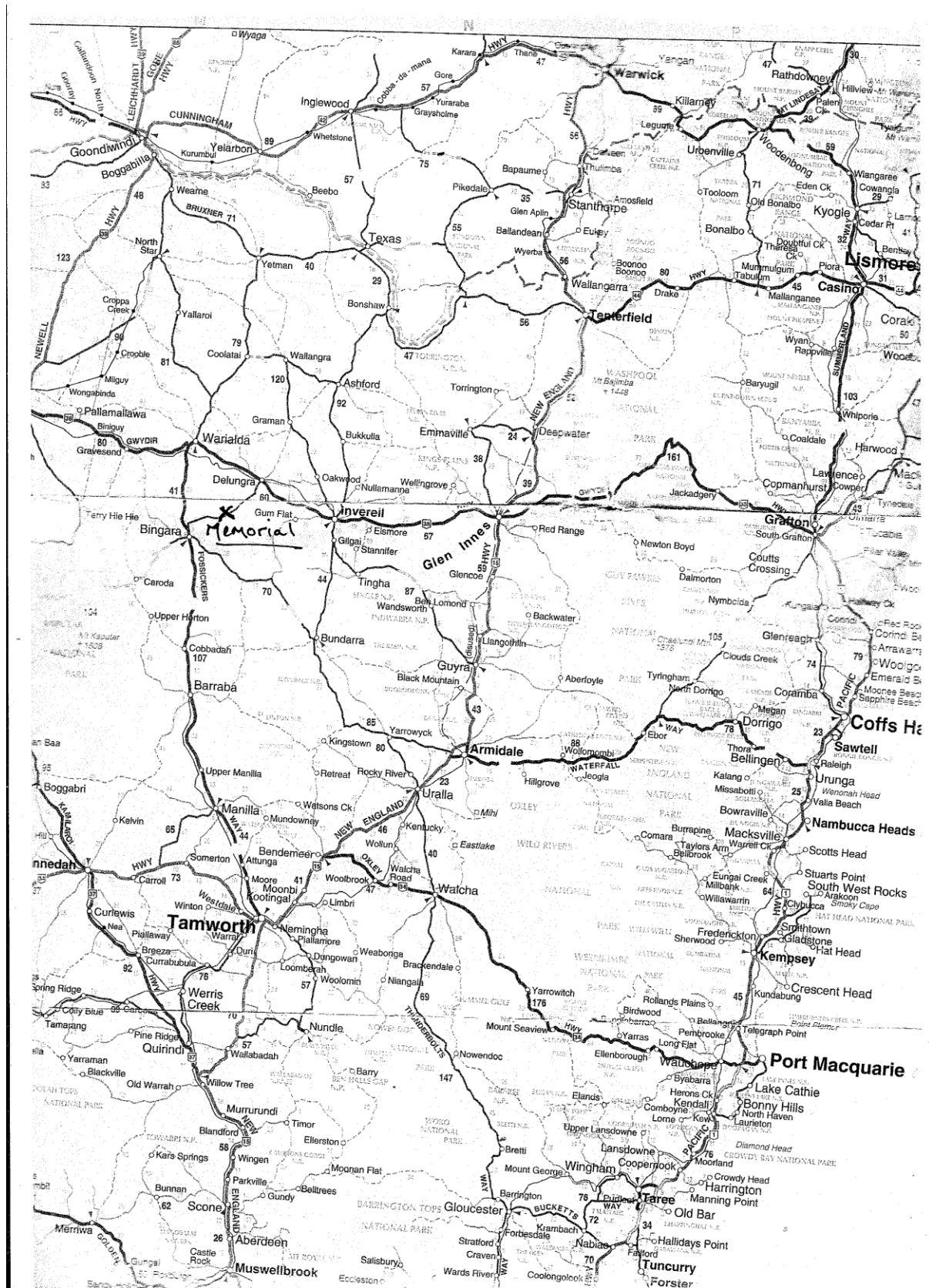
Tweddle, B. (2007). Where Grotowski meet Lecoq: 'flow' in training at Toi Whakaari: New Zealand drama school. In M. Maufort & D. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Performing Aotearoa – New Zealand theatre and drama in an age of transition* (pp.69-85). Bruxelles: P.I.E. Peter Lang.

Tunbridge, J. E. & Ashworth, G.J. (1996). *Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict*. Chichester: J. Wiley.

Valentine, A. (2007) *Parramatta Girls*. Strawberry Hills: Currency Press

- Vickers, C. (2005) The mother of the home: Jennie Parsons Smith. . In A. Cole, V. Haskins & F. Paisley. (Eds.), *Uncommon ground - white women in Aboriginal history*. (pp. 28 - 57). Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
- Vogler, C. (1992) *The Writer's Journey – mythic structure for storytellers and screenwriters*. Studio City, CA: Michael Wiese Productions
- Wake, C. (2010). Verbatim theatre within a spectrum of practices. In P. Brown (Ed.), *Verbatim – staging memory and community* (pp.6-9). Strawberry Hills: Currency Press.
- Wallace, G. (n.d.). *The racial hatred act: case study 2*. Retrieved February 24th, 2014 from <https://www.humnrights.gov.au/publications/racial-hatred-act-case-study-2-1>
- Ward, R. (1978). *The Australian legend*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Waterhouse, P. (2000). Life as research: reflections on poetry, postpostivist inquiry and professional practice. In P. Willis, R. Smith & E. Collins (Eds.), *Being, seeking, telling: expressive approaches to adult educational research*. Flaxton, QLD: Post Pressed.
- Webb, J., Schirato, T. & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Werbner, P. (1997). Introduction: the dialectics of cultural hybridity. In P. Werbner & T. Modood (Eds.), *Debating cultural hybridity – multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism*. (pp.1-29). London: Zed Books Ltd.
- Wiedermann, E. (1990). *World of its own – Inverell's early years*. Inverell: Devill Publicity.
- Wilcox, S., Watson, J. & Paterson, M. (2004). Self-study in professional practice. In J. Loughran, M. Hamilton, V. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices*. (pp. 274 -312). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Wilkinson, L. (2008) *Creating verbatim theatre – exploring the gap between public inquiry and private pain*. Unpublished master in Education thesis. Sydney University.
- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, (n.d.). *Growing in understanding: History*. Retrieved February 16th, 2013 from <http://www.workingwithatsi.info/content/history2.htm>
- Your story, our history, (n.d.). National service, 1965-72 – Fact sheet 164 Retrieved October 1st, 2013 from <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs164.aspx>

Appendix i: Map of the area showing Memorial site



Appendix ii) The Redfern Speech:

Transcript**Redfern Speech (Year for the World's Indigenous People) – Delivered in Redfern Park by Prime Minister Paul Keating, 10 December 1992**

Ladies and gentlemen

I am very pleased to be here today at the launch of Australia's celebration of the 1993 International Year of the World's Indigenous People.

It will be a year of great significance for Australia.

It comes at a time when we have committed ourselves to succeeding in the test which so far we have always failed.

Because, in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the indigenous people of Australia - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

This is a fundamental test of our social goals and our national will: our ability to say to ourselves and the rest of the world that Australia is a first rate social democracy, that we are what we should be - truly the land of the fair go and the better chance.

There is no more basic test of how seriously we mean these things.

It is a test of our self-knowledge.

Of how well we know the land we live in. How well we know our history.

How well we recognise the fact that, complex as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia.

How well we know what Aboriginal Australians know about Australia.

Redfern is a good place to contemplate these things.

Just a mile or two from the place where the first European settlers landed, in too many ways it tells us that their failure to bring much more than devastation and demoralisation to Aboriginal Australia continues to be our failure.

More I think than most Australians recognise, the plight of Aboriginal Australians affects us all.

In Redfern it might be tempting to think that the reality Aboriginal Australians face is somehow contained here, and that the rest of us are insulated from it.

But of course, while all the dilemmas may exist here, they are far from contained.

We know the same dilemmas and more are faced all over Australia.

That is perhaps the point of this Year of the World's Indigenous People: to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognise that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous Australians up without giving up many of our own most deeply held values, much of our own identity - and our own humanity.

Nowhere in the world, I would venture, is the message more stark than it is in Australia.

We simply cannot sweep injustice aside. Even if our own conscience allowed us to, I am sure, that in due course, the world and the people of our region would not.

There should be no mistake about this - our success in resolving these issues will have a significant bearing on our standing in the world.

However intractable the problems seem, we cannot resign ourselves to failure - any more than we can hide behind the contemporary version of Social Darwinism which says that to reach back for the poor and dispossessed is to risk being dragged down.

That seems to me not only morally indefensible, but bad history.

We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us.

Didn't Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? The poor of Britain? The refugees from war and famine and persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia?

Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

the problems which beset the first Australians - the people to whom the most injustice has been done.
 And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognise that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians.
 It begins, I think, with that act of recognition.
 Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing.
 We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life.
 We brought the diseases. The alcohol.
 We committed the murders.
 We took the children from their mothers.
 We practised discrimination and exclusion.
 It was our ignorance and our prejudice.
 And our failure to imagine these things being done to us.
 With some noble exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds.
 We failed to ask - how would I feel if this were done to me?
 As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us.
 If we needed a reminder of this, we received it this year.
 The Report of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody showed with devastating clarity that the past lives on in inequality, racism and injustice.
 In the prejudice and ignorance of non-Aboriginal Australians, and in the demoralisation and desperation, the fractured identity, of so many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.
 For all this, I do not believe that the Report should fill us with guilt.
 Down the years, there has been no shortage of guilt, but it has not produced the responses we need.
 Guilt is not a very constructive emotion.
 I think what we need to do is open our hearts a bit.
 All of us.
 Perhaps when we recognise what we have in common we will see the things which must be done - the practical things.
 There is something of this in the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation.
 The Council's mission is to forge a new partnership built on justice and equity and an appreciation of the heritage of Australia's indigenous people.
 In the abstract those terms are meaningless.
 We have to give meaning to "justice" and "equity" - and, as I have said several times this year, we will only give them meaning when we commit ourselves to achieving concrete results.
 If we improve the living conditions in one town, they will improve in another. And another.
 If we raise the standard of health by twenty per cent one year, it will be raised more the next.
 If we open one door others will follow.
 When we see improvement, when we see more dignity, more confidence, more happiness - we will know we are going to win.
 We need these practical building blocks of change.
 The Mabo Judgement should be seen as one of these.
 By doing away with the bizarre conceit that this continent had no owners prior to the settlement of Europeans, Mabo establishes a fundamental truth and lays the basis for justice.
 It will be much easier to work from that basis than has ever been the case in the past.
 For that reason alone we should ignore the isolated outbreaks of hysteria and hostility of the past few months.
 Mabo is an historic decision - we can make it an historic turning point, the basis of a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians.
 The message should be that there is nothing to fear or to lose in the recognition of historical truth, or the extension of social justice, or the deepening of Australian social democracy to include indigenous Australians.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

There is everything to gain.
 Even the unhappy past speaks for this.
 Where Aboriginal Australians have been included in the life of Australia they have made remarkable contributions.
 Economic contributions, particularly in the pastoral and agricultural industry.
 They are there in the frontier and exploration history of Australia.
 They are there in the wars.
 In sport to an extraordinary degree.
 In literature and art and music.
 In all these things they have shaped our knowledge of this continent and of ourselves. They have shaped our identity.
 They are there in the Australian legend.
 We should never forget - they have helped build this nation.
 And if we have a sense of justice, as well as common sense, we will forge a new partnership.
 As I said, it might help us if we non-Aboriginal Australians imagined ourselves dispossessed of land we had lived on for fifty thousand years - and then imagined ourselves told that it had never been ours.
 Imagine if ours was the oldest culture in the world and we were told that it was worthless.
 Imagine if we had resisted this settlement, suffered and died in the defence of our land, and then were told in history books that we had given up without a fight.
 Imagine if non-Aboriginal Australians had served their country in peace and war and were then ignored in history books.
 Imagine if our feats on sporting fields had inspired admiration and patriotism and yet did nothing to diminish prejudice.
 Imagine if our spiritual life was denied and ridiculed.
 Imagine if we had suffered the injustice and then were blamed for it.
 It seems to me that if we can imagine the injustice we can imagine its opposite.
 And we can have justice.
 I say that for two reasons:
 I say it because I believe that the great things about Australian social democracy reflect a fundamental belief in justice.
 And I say it because in so many other areas we have proved our capacity over the years to go on extending the realms of participation, opportunity and care.
 Just as Australians living in the relatively narrow and insular Australia of the 1960s imagined a culturally diverse, worldly and open Australia, and in a generation turned the idea into reality, so we can turn the goals of reconciliation into reality.
 There are very good signs that the process has begun.
 The creation of the Reconciliation Council is evidence itself.
 The establishment of the ATSIC - the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission - is also evidence.
 The Council is the product of imagination and good will.
 ATSIC emerges from the vision of indigenous self-determination and selfmanagement.
 The vision has already become the reality of almost 800 elected Aboriginal Regional Councillors and Commissioners determining priorities and developing their own programs.
 All over Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are taking charge of their own lives.
 And assistance with the problems which chronically beset them is at last being made available in ways developed by the communities themselves.
 If these things offer hope, so does the fact that this generation of Australians is better informed about Aboriginal culture and achievement, and about the injustice that has been done, than any generation before.
 We are beginning to more generally appreciate the depth and the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.
 From their music and art and dance we are beginning to recognise how much richer our national life and identity will be for the participation of Aboriginals and

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Torres Strait Islanders.

We are beginning to learn what the indigenous people have known for many thousands of years - how to live with our physical environment.

Ever so gradually we are learning how to see Australia through Aboriginal eyes, beginning to recognise the wisdom contained in their epic story.

I think we are beginning to see how much we owe the indigenous Australians and how much we have lost by living so apart.

I said we non-indigenous Australians should try to imagine the Aboriginal view.

It can't be too hard. Someone imagined this event today, and it is now a marvellous reality and a great reason for hope.

There is one thing today we cannot imagine.

We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through fifty thousand years or more, through cataclysmic changes to the climate and environment, and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.

We cannot imagine that.

We cannot imagine that we will fail.

And with the spirit that is here today I am confident that we won't.

I am confident that we will succeed in this decade.

Thank you

TODAY WE'RE ALIVE

***Stories from the Memorial
to the Myall Creek Massacre***

***Performance Draft
Trial Tour***

Written by Linden Wilkinson

© *May draft, 2013, Linden Wilkinson*

¹⁰⁹ A short trailer of the play is available on
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOYr1ORUMY&feature=youtu.be>

Today We're Alive

Characters

- Sally:** A Kamilaroi Elder, descendant of a massacre survivor; insightful, gentle, instigator of the Memorial.
- Patrick:** A history teacher, non-Aboriginal; reserved, tries not to be emotional but doesn't always succeed.
- Jayson:** An Aboriginal activist, an intellectual, an artist; re-connecting with his culture, his anger sits just below the surface.
- Letitia:** A descendant of a perpetrator, shy, fragile, challenges herself.
- Yvonne:** A country woman, non-Aboriginal; a research enthusiast, inclined to be shambolic.
- Peggy:** A Bingara resident, non-Aboriginal; vibrant, engaging, passionate about her involvement with the Memorial.
- Jim:** A Uniting Church minister, non-Aboriginal; has the calm of understated authority.
- Raymond:** A descendant of a perpetrator, a military man, precise, confident.

Suggested Doubling: Peggy, Yvonne & Letitia

Patrick, Jim & Raymond

Jayson & Sally remain the same throughout

Today We're Alive

Performance draft, May 2013

The actors stand alone in shadowy light reminiscent of a late afternoon. Aboriginal actors on one side, non-Aboriginal on the other.

SFX: Sound of wind through trees, bird calls.

Light shifts across the actors, as if they were in the world of the massacre site.

Sally: Before the massacre, my people were scared. There'd been a lot of killing. Major Nunn had been through not long before. Sent in by the Government and massacred hundreds of Aboriginal people.

Jayson: You want genocide to happen you get the government to promote it.

Sally: So my people hid in gullies, where they couldn't see them, you know? Near the creek, that's where they had their camps, where people couldn't see them. And by day they'd all scatter, come back together at night and um and there was always someone on watch and then they went to Myall Creek station....the Weraerai people. My ancestors. Part of the great Kamilaroi nation.

Jayson: It's only through knowledge that we can develop understanding, you know?

Letitia: Look, I understand that in those days Aboriginal people were considered vermin.

Jayson: Aboriginal people? They were just something that had an adverse effect on the land of the newcomers' dreams. You could kill them like you would shoot a duck or shoot a dog.

Letitia: The stories you hear – the murders, the poisoning. But they were convicts at Myall Creek. In a way you've got to feel sorry for them. They thought it was a normal thing to do – shooting kangaroos and shooting - Aborigines.

Sally: Knowing how my people were treated in the past, it hurts, it still hurts. I often try to picture them in my mind, the old ones, hunting and what they looked like. Oh (*laughs, sighs*) it's amazing. But that generation has all gone.

Jayson: I still see them. When I go to the bush, I can see that. It's hard to imagine it in the built environment, in the city, but in the outback, I can see - people

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

going about their business. Doing their life and a feeling maybe that the people are still there, their spirit is there.

SFX: Creek running, children laughing – fade up and under.

Jayson: And I've seen what walks there at the creek, Myall Creek. Them goonjas.

SFX: Creek running, children laughing – fade under.

Patrick: If you go to Port Arthur and see the mindset that could create Port Arthur, you could begin to understand ah how this story, you know, how it happened. That's what the convict culture came out of.

Letitia: One hundred lashes just like that...

Patrick: ... Then the isolation...the bush...

Letitia: Straight from the back lanes of London – to this....

SFX: Wind through trees dissolves into distant sheep. Haunting music.

Patrick: The people, the Weraerai, at Myall Creek were blamed for certain things.

Jayson: Cattle rushing? You die rushing cattle.

Patrick: But as evidence revealed later, they were a very passive people.

Letitia: The people who were the guilty ones were also the landholders like Dangar, like Scott, the multi-nationals of their day. That was the driving force. You could argue it wasn't racism that was the key ingredient, it was greed.

Patrick: Myall Creek, boy, this is, you know, this is a skeleton in the closet of Australia's history – this whole thing. I was teaching at a school, a girls' high school in southern Sydney and um I was doing some research in the library and I came across an account of the Myall Creek massacre. As soon as I read that, I was shocked, amazed and everything else. I was just shocked principally at the horror of the deed itself. But I was particularly even more shocked by the fact that I as a teacher then and as a history teacher knew virtually nothing about it. And I thought: A feature film should be made about it, so that people knew, you know?

Sally: I heard about Myall Creek – but that's just it. You heard about it. Something happened there. Some people were killed there. And that's it. The schools didn't tell us nothing. My Mum and Dad, they told us. Aunties and Uncles with our story times at night. But it was a warning, because they never really said – they said it was bad, there was bad people in the world, there was good and bad. Just to be aware. Aunty Lizzie talked about Bingara; she'd say: oh no, no. Bad place,

bad place. Bad spirits. And I'd say but why? Oh, just don't go there. Aboriginal people don't go there.

Jayson: So here I am at University reading stories about Myall Creek for the first time.

I didn't understand: why would they do this to groups of people, who were human? But unbeknownst to me then, my people were not classified as humans. You know what I mean? Before this, when I left home, when I left the mission, I had a hatred for white people. I hated especially white women until the time I was playing in bands all over Sydney. Yeah! That's got you thinking! And during that time I met this one white man – he was there with me all the time; he was a fan, he liked my music. He did things for me that I didn't look at, I didn't take any notice – but he opened my eyes up to, to humanity, I guess. He was what I call a sincere white person. Because he said he was white. That's it. Nothing else. But the one I grew up under, he said I'm white, I'm boss, I'm superior to you. That's the difference, that's what opened my eyes up. This guy, this fan didn't know how significant he was. I went to visit him in hospital; I shed a tear for him, when he passed away. I've got a picture of him here on my wall today. Same with Myall Creek, there were white people there, who did things, who reported investigated, who stood up and supported those people.

Beat.

SFX: Sounds from birds.

SFX: Sound of horses galloping – distant.

Patrick: Now what happened at Myall Creek was...A local squatter's younger brother, named John Fleming, from a property named Mungie Bundie, 9 miles this side of Moree, was uhm...leading a party or parties of people attacking aborigines. So...Fleming and his group of eleven convicts and ex-convicts were out on the hunt. They carried pistols, rope and swords. And they had found um...so many people had been displaced and killed that ah...they I imagine that they were finding it difficult to find targets. And they had developed a lust for killing.

Jayson: And off they rode to Myall Creek because somebody told them there was a group of people down at Myall Creek.

Sally: My people had asked the convict Kilmeister working at Myall Creek for sanctuary. Kilmeister said "yes". He saw the women, the kids – company, you know? My people had been camping there for three weeks...

Patrick: On the evening of Saturday, June 9, 1838, Myall Creek was visited by neighbours Foster and Mace. They wanted some workers for bark cutting. They left the next morning, Sunday June 10th, with about ten of the blacks, from Myall Creek.

Sally: All the young men, the boys, the fathers.

Jayson: That left a group of 28 people there: old men, women and kids. Women and children mostly. But there were definitely two adult males, old fellas, Sandy and Old Daddy. Old Daddy was a very old, big tall man.

Letitia: European names.

Patrick: Virtually all of them had European names. So they were known to the whites in the area and they spoke, some of them spoke a little bit of English. And this was one of the key things in getting a conviction in court: the fact that Anderson, the convict, who didn't participate in the massacre, and Hobbs, the station Superintendent, who was away at the time, could sit there and list off the names, the characteristics.

SFX: Fade up horses galloping.

Jayson: And on the evening of...Sunday, June 10, 1838, the vigilante group happened on Dangar's Myall Creek station.

SFX: Horses galloping and screams – fade up.

Jayson: The fear and the terror that the Weraerai would have experienced before they were killed...

SFX: Horses galloping and screams – fade down.

Letitia: All these things – we have to face all these things.

SFX: Screams – fade into parrot screeches.

Letitia: When the convicts, the perpetrators, were arrested by the magistrate Edward Denny Day, under the orders of the new Governor, Governor Gipps, they had to walk to Newcastle. They walked to Newcastle in chains in silence. Over four hundred kilometres. Sometimes you feel sorry for the convicts and the way they were treated as well. But I don't say that in front of Aboriginal people in case they think I'm making excuses for them.

Sally: Fleming, the ringleader, was never arrested. His family protected him. Kept him safe, after what he'd done.

Jayson: The court case got underway in Sydney, November 15th, 1838. Eleven men indicted for the wilful murder of one: Old Daddy. The jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty. After a quarter of an hour.

Patrick: Then the prisoners were immediately remanded for trial for the murder of a little boy, Charlie.

Jayson: Two weeks later: the second trial. Seven men were charged; the aim was to encourage the accused to come forward with incriminating evidence against the other four. They didn't. They stayed silent.

Patrick: The 7 were found guilty in the second trial and they eventually swung. They included Kilmeister and Foley.

Jayson: The jury took three quarters of an hour this time.

Letitia: The seven men were hanged on December 18th. They held hands on the gallows, you know. They held hands. Sir Roger Therry for the Prosecution in his reminiscences published later stated that while awaiting execution “the prisoners broke their convict code of silence and confessed to the gaoler that they were guilty, but declared that they did not know their action in killing the blacks was unlawful, as it had so often been done in the colony before.” It was a horrific thing - for both sides.

Jayson: Whoever says Myall Creek was a triumph of British justice –

Sally: - well, they're not Aboriginal for a start!

Jayson: The other four accused? The four still in the cells: Blake, Palliser, Telluse and Lamb, discharged in February, 1839. Discharged! The Governor, now brow-beaten and battered, the squatters had started working on him. Myall Creek was the first and it made all Aboriginal people Australia-wide human in the eyes of British law at the time. Actually made human. And as far as I'm concerned that massacre day should be commemorated every year. Our special date should be June 10th of every year. This should be Indigenous Day.

Sally: Hate that “Indigenous” word.

Jayson: Aboriginal People's Day. We became human in the eyes of British law at the time. It didn't stop the killings. Most of the massacres after that went underground. Not recorded. From my reading of it the landed gentry were the most corrupt group of men in the Australian Colony at the time, you know what I mean?

SFX: Music – blues/country interlude.

Patrick: Looking at Myall Creek initially, I thought: aw gee, what a dark story. Uhm...but I kept getting surprised by...you know the night sky had stars in it. And one, one star, was in the story of the white people who brought it to justice. Because when – when the gang rode in to Myall Creek to carry out the massacre, there were basically two men on the ground, who – that was er Kilmeister and Anderson, both convicts, both had suffered abuse, ah and one of them joined the gang. And one didn't. Um and so I could ask myself the question: well, which man would I have been in that situation? Which man?

Letitia: He's going to say: George Anderson.

Patrick: Obviously, obviously the key guy is George Anderson. *Uhm...* in some ways Anderson was like me a bit. Couldn't ride a horse (*laughs*) *uhm...* rather stubborn, bit of a loner.....So Anderson is crucial - even though he admits to being absolutely um terrified by the whole thing. And there is no doubt there was enormous

threats against his life and the fact that Fleming got away and he knew that Fleming got away and he knew that Fleming was a squatter and he knew the power of the squatters, he was terribly courageous to still – knowing there was a squatter on the loose – to go ahead and give evidence against the men. What he did was just amazing.

Jayson: White people, who did things, who stood up.

Letitia: The station Superintendent, Hobbs, then too is crucial because he um decided to report it.

Jayson: Foot's role, he's um very important. He was a local farmer. Frederick Isaac Foot. He got on the road before Hobbs had even sent his account of the massacre. Foot rode 500 ks to the Governor to report the massacre. He had to ride under fear of ... reprisals from other farmers, you know, they wanted to keep it covered up.

Sally: The Governor at the top....

Patrick: Gipps - idealistic and new in the Colony.

Jayson: And Day was –

Letitia: - obviously a very diligent policeman.

Sally: He did a wonderful job of rounding all those men up.

Jayson: He was prepared to go against the flow and treat a criminal as a criminal on the basis of the crime, rather than walking away from it.

Sally: Ah, well...they were only Aborigines – he didn't do that.

Patrick: Um then ahm obviously the Attorney General, young John Plunkett, too because he was a huge supporter of what Gipps was doing and had the knowledge to ah to put a legal case together. It didn't get through the first time, it got through the second time.

Letitia: So there was a real alignment of the stars.

Patrick: The stars lining up and justice was done. You know, it was like there was this shaft of light in history. And after 1838 it dissipated and those links could never be made again: the presence of aboriginal people conflicted with the interests of the pastoral economy. But every one of those men or pretty well every one of them paid a price for what they did. They all – standing up – for Myall Creek, it cost them something. They all paid a price for that. Dangar fired Hobbs in the August, this is before the trial, and it took him eight years to find another regular job. Eight years.

Jayson laughs ironically.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

SFX: Music – blues/county interlude.

Jayson: But it took years and years for people to begin to understand true history.

Sally: Every paddock in this country has got a story about land ...but some of the stories still haven't come. Nasty stories but people who own the land can't afford - it's still too dangerous to tell.

Jayson: If we can respect Aboriginal history the same as we were respected in the court case, then I think our kids will grow up in this country saying that this is a country based on honesty. No-one's told Aboriginal people were massacred in a wide-spread way. Ah ... the preferred way of saying it is: they were dispossessed. They were dispossessed and sometimes this dispossession was accompanied by acts of atrocity that of which the Myall Creek massacre is the best documented example.

SFX: Fade up sounds of wind through trees.

Sally: Like sometimes I picture like those who were massacred –

SFX: Fade up sounds of birds arcing above.

Patrick: I've tried a few times, several times over the years, to be there at the site at that time of night that the massacre actually happened, in the afternoon just before sunset or just on sunset.

Beat – building the atmosphere.

Sally: - like they was all you know camp fires at night, kids running around playing and um people cooking and just doing their – making their dinner or something...

Patrick: And I just stand there and reflect on what happened all those years ago and how horrific it all was.

Sally: What would it have been like to be those people? Especially the kids...

Patrick: They arrived there, Fleming and his party, I think, at ...as the Aboriginal people were getting their evening meal together, you know. *Ah...* say four o'clock or something that order.

Jayson: They were just living their lives and these people just came along and for no reason

Sally: And they came upon them and they never had a chance. When they came upon them they just never had a chance.

Jayson: Captured, tied up to this long rope, led away over a slight rise.

Patrick: Anderson still in the hut couldn't see what happened.

Jayson: These guys only had three swords. And I mean that's - and Anderson only heard two shots. So I mean you know when you kill 28 people with just two shots you know and only 3 swords and those poor people had to wait a hell of a long time for their turn to be slaughtered. You know, tied to a rope...!

Patrick: The convicts rode at this tied-up group with their swords and ah...decapitated them from horseback. I think that's ...I don't know of course...

Sally: Yeah ...(cries)...just thinking what those people went through. I s'pose, after they done it, all the pots would all still be boiling, the fires going but there would be no sound. And they made a bonfire of their bodies. Um. Must have been terrible, you know?

Jayson: And then the men come home looking for their wives, their kids ...

Sally: It's like your heart is hurting, your heart is breaking. Then the convicts kept killing; they rode after the men, who survived. My great-great-great grandfather survived both massacres. Him and his brother. Maybe nine, ten years old. Must have been very traumatic for them, to have been left alone. Amazing that he survived. God, God saved him for a purpose.

SFX: Slow fade-up '60's music.

Letitia transforms into Peggy – maybe with compact and scarf.

Peggy: The actual original picking up of the story again after 1838 was by Len Payne, a white man in Bingara in the 1960's, nearly a hundred and thirty years later. His family were involved in the movie business in showing pictures in Newcastle and he came up here to install or repair something at the Regent theatre at Bingara. He was quite conservative, soft-spoken, well-spoken... He came to be the proprietor of the Regent theatre.

Patrick: And he became interested in the *ah* the story of Myall Creek and other stories of massacres that had occurred in the area. And he set about collecting this oral history and putting it together.

Jayson: Lenny Payne, he done his own work on history. A fascinating man.

Patrick: Len pointed out that Myall Creek was part of a pattern, a systematic pattern of attacks.

Jayson: You know he wanted to put a Memorial up?

Patrick: Ah he met opposition from the Community pretty widely, I feel.

Jayson: Len was black-listed because he dared to say this sort of thing happened. A non-indigenous person who dared to speak.

Peggy: In 1965 Len Payne developed a proposal to erect a memorial consisting of ...gates. He had found what he thought were the hinges of the gates of the stockyard at Myall Creek Station. Huge. And he believed that the massacre took place at the stockyard.

Patrick: I'm not sure that that is the actual site of the massacre but they believed it was.

Peggy: He approached the Lions Club –

Patrick: Apex.

Peggy: Apex?

Patrick: Apex. You've got to be precise about these things.

Peggy: Apex for funding and the Lions Club - Apex - got back to him and said... "The people of Bingara should be more involved in remembering those who died in the war past and putting in the orange trees, which are a memorial, that line the street; they should be more thinking about the soldiers than the Aboriginal people who died a long time ago." So the - Club withdrew their support from Len.

Patrick: He was effectively silenced.

Jayson: They were going to run him out of town, take those hinges out of here, those things never happened.

Peggy: Len and several other people, including some Aboriginal people ...hmmm.... Met where the old stockyards were, on the anniversary ...of the massacre ... and lay a wreath on June 10th in memory of those who had been massacred. This was in 1988. The Bi-centennial.

Jayson: We went through a ceremony and he said to me: you keep the hinges, you've fulfilled my dream, I've always wanted to open this up.

Peggy: 1990 hardly anyone turned up.

Jayson: Eventually Len and I stopped having contact so much. He was suffering from ill-health. We drifted apart. We planted a tree there, wire mesh round it. That wasn't going to stop cattle. The sapling didn't make it.

SFX: Blues interlude.

Sally: It didn't work. The tree was trampled down by cows. By cattle. Everything they tried failed. My feeling was that we had to do something. Something that would stick. And um that we could have there forever with our histories, putting our peoples to rest, because we believed their blood was crying out for – out from the ground for – someone to recognise them.

SFX: Bird calls.

Peggy: I was born in Bingara. I'd heard about Myall Creek but didn't really know much about it. And I didn't really know Aboriginal people either. When I first started on this there was nobody there really identifying as Aboriginal in town.

Jayson: Oh, as soon as you identify as an Aboriginal – oh, really? Oh, how quaint. Oh, you look a bit Mexican to me.

Peggy: I was just at home and I really needed to – do a degree. At the end of my degree I did a unit on visual design. And I decided to design a memorial. I wanted to do some design around the Myall Creek massacre. So I thought I'll go down there to where stockyards are and get a feel of the place. Anyway I just climbed the fence and this bull charged me and I thought: right, that's it.

So finally I got on to some universities to find out what sort of Memorials existed for Aboriginal Massacres, and I could find nothing. I could find lumps of granite for soldiers that had died and I could find orange trees in the street, in fact the Memorial Hall at Myall Creek is our memorial for the soldiers who had died in World War 1. So here I am surrounded by memorials to dead white men but nothing to Aboriginal people.

So then I went to Moree and approached a few Aboriginal people at the Lands Council, and I said: you know, what about putting a Memorial up. And they said oh, the Council has tried that, didn't work. Maybe you should talk to the Inverell people, it's nearer them.

So I went over there and it was like: no, it's not our place, it's not our place.

Jayson: There's people still into denial. That these things happened.

Peggy: And I thought I can't get anywhere with this. I don't know if I have the energy, the resources, the time, I don't know if I should be doing it, I'm not Aboriginal and whether it's my place to be doing this – so I left it.

Jayson: Everyone was nice and social, politically correct.

Peggy: Yes.

Jayson: Polite.

Peggy: Always.

Jayson: They're doing stuff with yas. But in their absence you're glad to get away from those eyes. Eh? Those eyes – watching. Know what I mean?

SFX: Church music – Jim takes centre stage.

Jim: Now this is another part of the story starting from a different perspective. In 1992 I was invited by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, which is the aboriginal people in the Uniting Church, their organization, to engage in a process of reconciliation in the uniting church. In 1998 I came to the conclusion that we really needed to go back to the hard places of our history together.

Sally: I was in Sydney. Doing studies in Sydney and I just said to the Reverend: why don't you come and do Myall Creek. And then we left it for a while and then he contacted me about 6 months after and he said:

Jim: Did you really mean it?

Sally: And I said: Yes. We want someone to do something, something to really stay.

Jim: So I said great; let's try it.

Peggy: The Reverend was amazing really.

Jim: So I began then for the next 6 months to organize a conference there um...with a view to acknowledging our shared history. We had a 3 day conference on the long weekend in October 1998. I had advertised this widely in the media and some people who had had an interest in this history for a long time came...

Sally: ... From all over NSW, a substantial number of Aboriginal people from the region...

Peggy: ...and a descendent from the magistrate, Edward Denny Day, also came.

Jim: ...and wanted to be part of anything we did.

Jayson: Myall Creek – the one place where true history was dealt with in the courts, now on the land. Somehow somebody I think had sent me some information on it. I was at the original meeting

Peggy: My sister, who is a lawyer in Sydney, sent me a fax: there was a gathering at Myall Creek at the Memorial Hall in October. Everyone brought a rock.

Jim: I had invited people to bring rocks from their places all over the country as a symbol of their acknowledgement that these massacres occurred all over the country.

Peggy: It was quite an interesting meeting – all these Aboriginal people under the trees and all these white, white, white men with their pink shirts and shorts and sandals all in the hall and there's like this rift distance - the whities over here and the Aboriginals- so anyway...as the weekend kind of progressed, people kind of moved.

And they said: do you know where the massacre site was? And I said I know where Len thought it was. And I said Oh well, we'll go up, I'll take you up there. (*Laughs*) They were lovely people really, lovely people. So okay, let's walk. And the Elders were put on to a bus and we walked. And this is where the whole ceremony of walking came from.

Jayson: It was a little bit of a pilgrimage thing walking up to the site, yeah, just a joint activity. With the Aboriginal Community and the wider community. So that was the important part...I think it's the relational side of it, really, that's been the important part of it for me.

Peggy: So I'm halfway up the hill and I turn around and I look down and this stream of people and I get really emotional even now, because there was this whole stream of people behind me. So we got to where the road turns and I said, because according to the owner, this was trespassing: Those who want to be arrested, follow me. If you don't want to be arrested, stay here.

So I went over to the bus and I said to the Elders: you've got to come. And they said: no, we don't like it. It's a bad place. Bad place. And so – which I really understand, I really do. I really do understand that.

Sally: The owner was wrong. It was Crown land. We had a claim on that land.

Peggy: And the Reverend said:

Jim: This is where we should have it.

Peggy: You sort of stand there and look out over those paddocks.

Jim: It was a convenient and beautiful grove, a convenient spot on Crown land. And we say that the massacre occurred somewhere on the slopes below.

Jayson: Look, no-one can be sure which little gully it was, right? But a local guy actually spent an enormous amount of time researching ...it's not the stockyard but ah whether it's this little gully or the next little gully...

Sally: We did a cairn first.

Peggy: I was horrified...that something as small as that was going to erected....I certainly wasn't going to let it pass with just a cairn of stones....what are you going to do with those stones?...I said: I'll look after them....till you need them... We packed them in the car...we had them in the boot, under our feet....

Jim: So those stones were kept with a view to erecting some sort of a permanent memorial.

Peggy: Some people drew attention to the fact that they could have a memorial to World War 1 but not the massacre.

Sally: Then we called the Elders together. We talked about it, all the other Elders, I asked their permission first. And they gave me the go-ahead and they said they wanted something big.

Jayson: (*Laughs*) Something as big as the hall.

Sally: So we formed a committee.

Jayson: When I got involved I said we have to convince the people of Bingara that there was no people in Bingara when the massacre took place and so they've got no need to worry that they're going to be criticised about it. I did it through the press.

Jim: In January the Uniting Church took the initiative to invite the committee to push forward the proposal to erect a Memorial. We decided a number of significant things at that meeting.

1. We owe it to all Australia to tell the truth of our history, the hard parts and the bad parts, as well as the proud episodes and the good parts of our history. We must tell the truth of our history. We need it to be part of the national consciousness to know that there were widespread massacres.

2. We want to work together as a group of Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. We gave the aboriginal people who were related to this ...an opportunity to say: look, we want to do this ourselves. Um...and they were absolutely unanimous...

Sally: No, this must be something we do together.

Peggy: We decided that as the Committee we would discuss stuff but we would never make any decision until we went back to the big group.

Jim: We met several times – I don't know it might have been 6 public meetings over the next year...Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together.

Peggy: We agreed to meet in February – at that time I had a very old house, a huge old federation house with a big dining table that seated twelve and we just expected a committee meeting. And the next thing we've got people come knocking at the front door, we've got people coming in the French doors. People kept streaming in and so that was the day we decided that we were going to put a Memorial up and where. And the Reverend said:

Jim: Well, Sally, can we have permission to put a Memorial on that site?

Peggy: And Sally says:

Sally: Yes.

Peggy: A woman of few words.

Sally: One day we thought we'd have a Memorial there; we didn't think it would happen straightaway.

Peggy: And it just took off from there and we decided we wanted to have the opening in June, 2000 and I think the Saturday happened to be the anniversary of the massacre...and we decided who we wanted to have there and no-one wanted John Howard there (*laughs*).

Jayson: We always met at Myall Creek at the hall.

Patrick: February and that's the first meeting that I went up to. And I had one of the most um...interesting um... spiritual experiences of my life. We were having a ceremony in the Memorial Hall itself. And it had been sort of grey and overcast all day but there had been absolutely no rain whatsoever. And they started um they started ah praying and they're very good the way they pray in terms of Byami, um it's a very inclusive sort of ceremony um and it's um and they had I think a couple of children, a couple of Aboriginal children I think, lighting these candles and um the moment these children lit these candles as part of the prayer, it absolutely started bucketing down out of the heavens, absolutely bucketing down and you couldn't hear people over the noise in the roof. And um I was absolutely staggered and um every time I tell this story I get emotional like I am now. Um I was sitting there thinking: this is absolutely amazing. And I said; the test is going to be what happens when they blow these candles out, and they finished this prayer (*laughs*) as loudly as they could, given the noise of the rain on the roof – and then sure enough when they finished the prayer, they then blew the candles out and literally within ten to fifteen seconds that rain stopped completely. And I walked outside and I was talking to one of the Aboriginal women Elders and I said to her: how amazing was that?! With the rain while those candles were alight... And um she said to me, she said: that was just the spirit ancestors weeping tears of joy that something is finally going to be done about this. And um that certainly stuck with me. It's now what? 12 years ago, I remember those words perfectly. And I've a lousy memory (*tears*). So that was fantastic.

SFX: sound of rain.

Sally: I remember sitting in the hall and the rain bucketed down.

Jayson: I mean it was one of those meetings when there was really some spiritual dimension going on there that was almost palpable. I mean Aboriginal people have no trouble with this – talking in these terms –

Sally: The tears were of grieving and all this ah unresolved pain and loss was coming out; it was like a release with the rain. Tears of joy. Well, grief and joy. We walked outside we could hear the didgeridoos, the old fellas singing.

SFX: Fade up distant sound of singing, didgeridoos.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Patrick: The hairs stood up on the back of my neck.

Peggy: All these white cockatoos just sort of flew up out of everything.

Sally: I believe the old ones' spirits was released, they are released knowing that we haven't forgotten them. Knowing that we carry them on from day to day.

SFX: Fade down distant sound of singing, didgeridoos.

Patrick changes into Desmond during the following....

Peggy: The big thing was getting the wording right on the plaques. I don't know how many meetings we had. Indigenous, non-indigenous. The Lions Club would come and do the barbeque, yes, really. But everything needed permission. Trees. Everything.

Jayson: At the same time they were talking about visual art. What I said was: I want the privilege and honour of doing it. The text that I was given was verbal: "as simple as possible": so I added one part: "maximum impact" to "as simple as possible" and created the sketches from there.

Peggy: Then we got the architect.

Jayson: The architect's main contribution was to introduce the idea of a serpentine walk, a symbol of the creator serpent in Aboriginal thought and culture. A winding path between stones with plaques that tell different stories of what happened at the time. A path that led to a huge boulder. And from the boulder you could overlook the site. Be on country. In silence.

Peggy: The Reverend and I would be out there, digging bloody holes. So focussed all the time. Then the next bit wasn't expected:

Raymond takes centre stage.

Raymond: I found out about Myall Creek from Myall Creek. In 1996 I found out that my great-great grandfather was a convict. Which had always been denied within the family. And we thought it was quite funny, knowing some of our old people and knowing how snobbish they were about convicts. The family researcher in Sydney then ahm was looking through archives and sort of found this ancestor was tied up with Myall Creek. I gave the talk to the grandchildren at school, I did that twice, I think. Then that school teacher, who was sort of tied up in Aboriginal reconciliation saw an article in Walkabout how the Myall Creek Committee had been formed to build a Memorial about Myall Creek. She sent it to me, so I then rang up Bingara ...

Peggy: I was the secretary of the Committee.

Raymond: I asked her what it was all about.

Peggy: Oh we're having people from here, having people from there – descendants from Denny Day...

Raymond: Then I said: Well, how would you like someone from the other side...?
She said:

Peggy: What do you mean?

Raymond: And I said: well, John Blake was my great-great grandfather. And that fairly stunned her. John Blake was the only one of the perpetrators, who was married, had children. He was one of the four released in February, 1839. He went to work in Goulburn and committed suicide in 1852; he's buried in some unknown grave; no-one knows where it is. I said: I'm quite happy to acknowledge what has happened and say who we are but it'll be up to the Aboriginal people to accept us or not. And so they had a meeting before we went there and said: no, that was a good idea. That's what it was all about as far as they were concerned. Reconciliation. And so that's when I became part of it.

Peggy transforms back into Letitia – cautious and fearful.

Letitia: It was six months before the memorial was due to open but we knew nothing about it. But I'd found out about Edward Foley from a book in the Inverell library. It was eerie to tell you the truth. It fell open at a large page about the Myall Creek massacre. John Foley is my great-great grandfather. John and his brother, Edward Foley, were both transported to Australia in 1832. Both were convicts. When they landed here, John Foley was assigned to Mr Harper at Wallis Plains, near Newcastle. Mr Harper was good, he was honest, John Foley never reoffended. He became a freeman, married etc. But Edward was assigned to John Fleming. And John Fleming was to lead the raid at Myall Creek. My husband and I, we decided we would follow their tracks, we'd go to Myall Creek. We went to the local map shop in Inverell.

Then I got a phone call from the Reverend. That happened through word of mouth, I spoke to someone at Myall Creek, who wasn't interested in the Memorial but she must have passed the message on. The Reverend said there was an important meeting with all the Aboriginal elders and the people involved and would I like to join them?

Sally: The families of the perpetrators had come to ask forgiveness.

Letitia: And I was really frightened, really, really frightened of going over there, because I didn't know how they'd accept me.

Sally: You know, you don't expect things to be done for Aboriginal people.

Letitia: How they would feel about me? Anyway we went along...my husband and I ...

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Pause. Sally and Letitia face each other. Sally opens her arms. They embrace.

Jayson: When Letitia met Sally not one person didn't cry.

Letitia: Sally and I, we became very emotional. It was very emotional.

Letitia and Sally let the embrace go but hold hands. They remain silent before...

Letitia: Sally told me when we were alone, she said:

Sally: I've never had a sister but I consider you now my blood sister.

Letitia: So that was special; that was really special.

They let their hands drop.

Sally: I think there was a reconciliation there.

Letitia: Somebody said it must have been very cathartic for you, but not really, no. My family broke up over it. They wouldn't accept it. They didn't want people to know they were descended from a murderer.

Raymond: Anyone who was in Australia at that time, taking it back a few generations, and on the land and thinks that they're um their people weren't involved in it, by carrying it out or covering it up, well, they're kidding themselves. And um that was the way I felt about it.

Letitia: My first response was I didn't want to know, it was shameful but I knew I couldn't let it alone. There was something in me that had to do something about it. I did feel that very, very strongly.

Jayson: So what I thought when Sally hugged Letitia was in that embrace was like reconnecting with the land. It's like through that embrace, it's like through that connection, a belonging to Australia is really established. And it can only be done through Aboriginal people. Accept the embrace, remember the history, know what it's cost.

Sally: And it all just come together.

SFX: Fade up sound of earth moving equipment.

Peggy hurriedly transforms herself from Letitia back to Peggy.

Peggy: It was just like bedlam until it opened.

Sally: We went out looking for the boulder. The rock for the end of the path.

Peggy: Transgrid offered to move whatever rock we chose but they said they could only move 20 tonnes. And I'd send a fax to Sydney. No, you can't have that, it's 50 tonnes. And ner-ner-ner. And the Reverend and I went out and we were

climbing everywhere and we both turned round and said: that's the rock. Right. I'm not going to fax Sydney. Bigger it. I've got God on my side, even though I'm an atheist, I've got God on my side. I've got the Reverend. Transgrid came out and said: Yes, you can have that rock.

Sally: And the Elders agreed to it, they had a look at it, before we went further ahead.

Jim: It was difficult to get it into that grove.

Peggy: They had the rock on this big crane and they swung it in over the trees and nothing had to be cut down and they swung it in and they dropped it. Is that right? Ah just a little bit to the left! You know, a bit of fun. And the night before the ABC rang. How will we find you with our helicopter and I rang the police and one of the policemen when he finished his shift at midnight drove out there and got the GPS reading, so I phoned the ABC. Here's the GPS. And people were just ringing all night, trying to find where we were and all kinds of stuff.

And that day – I saw amazing things happen. My mother came out, she had a big batch of scones for people to eat and she met Aboriginal people for the first time. Amazing things.

Peggy transforms herself into Yvonne.

Jim: That first walk up the hill - You're all part of the one thing.

Sally: Our kids was the first ones to dance there since they was all massacred. It was my grandchildren that danced. We had a big celebration. They done an Aboriginal corroboree dance. They painted up, ochred up. We got the red wattle; that was the blood that was shed there. I just feel that because it was the first one where the perpetrators was punished, it was really, really - a relief. Like a peace.

Yvonne gathers herself together.

Yvonne: My son and his family had arrived the night before from down the coast and I said: oh, I have to go to this ceremony and it was a day just like this – it was awful; and when it came to the point I thought; oh, do I really want to do this? And my son said; oh, I'd like to come. I said; oh that's nice. And he said: we'll bring the kids, it'll be a good experience for them. And he said: oh, are you going to take a stone from this property to put there at the memorial? And I said: what for? Because I hadn't been following it and he had. And he said: oh, it's a sign of reconciliation. And I said: oh., well I don't really think I've got anything to say sorry for. I said: I know where all my ancestors came from and although there was the odd convict, but um, no, oh, we were all well away from this area and not involved in pastoral pursuits. We didn't do any of this. Meanwhile my son, who was quite a wise young man he must have been in his late twenties, said: Mum: where were you in the early 1970's? And I said; you know, we lived here on the property. And he said: where did the

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Aboriginal people live? And I said: oh, they lived in Tingha, they lived in humpies, none of them had houses in Tingha, they lived down by the mining holes, dirt floors, no power and he said: and what did you do about it? And that was all he said. And suddenly I thought: my goodness, I have got a reason to ask for forgiveness.

Yvonne and Sally meet downstage.

Jim changes to Patrick upstage.

Yvonne: I went and embraced Sally afterwards and said: I'm sorry, too, for my own attitudes. Not doing something at a time when I could. It's your own personals, it's what you yourself does that's relevant.

Yvonne changes into Peggy.

Patrick: Initially there was some negativity from the local community, Bingara, Myall Creek, you're targeting us, you're labelling us you know, we're...it was never said overtly...but.... I heard rumours of feelings: this will, this will be bad for the community to have all this history told. I heard some of that. Um...so after that first ceremony, we went back down to the hall, we had our meeting. I went back up to the Memorial alone. And I found three local families at the memorial. With little children. They'd brought flowers and put them on the memorial rock and one of the little boys ...I suppose he was 8...he said to me we're going to look after this forever. (*cries*).

Jayson: I feel that that monument is great. It's great. To think that it's there and to recognise the fact that those people were massacred, right? But it doesn't take away the fact that they were... Because the forces of the massacre continue. The Stolen Generations; the Northern Territory Intervention. We've gone physically backwards. Twenty years. Forty years! We've come a long way but we've got a long way to go.

Patrick: Arrogance and cultural ignorance; it's US that need to be educated. It's of great concern to me and to people like me that up at the Memorial site the introduction to the walk refers to the massacre and the perpetrators being brought to trial and it refers to William Hobbs and um George Gipps. And it doesn't mention Anderson. Now when we are reporting that massacre in a place like the Memorial, we give credit to the two white free men, Gipps and Hobbs, but not to the convict, we ignore the convict. So we've still got, you know, this huge psychological problem there where you know (*laughs*) we treat convicts one way and free men another way.

Sally: Divide and conquer.

Peggy: My concern is Edward Denny Day. Surely he played a significant role in the development of that story in history. And there seems little recognition of the role that he played. Where's his name? He's not mentioned.

Sally: Divide and conquer. The British were kind of masters at this. It allowed them to play up the clan hatreds, to the point where under white command, Aboriginal police from a different tribe would come in and carry out massacres of other Aboriginal clans. These vendettas go right through the family, right through the schools on for generations, and that's not our way. It's not our way. We've got to get rid of the family and make it the community.

Jayson: It's our people, we have to be reconciled with each other, before we can reconcile with anyone else. We're the ones who were separated and we're still separated today. Disharmony and distrust doesn't only pervade Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationships, it pervades all relationships. It turns us against each other. Divide and conquer. Aboriginal people have to let go of – rebrainwashing, unbrainwashing....we've no-one yet to unite us. Go ahead and see for ourselves, go ahead and experience for ourselves. See with our own eyes, hear with our own ears. Make decisions based on that, not on what other people say. We have to work on the younger generation. Education. I used to blame teachers but I've changed my thinking. Parents should be involved in every phase of school life. The only way we can achieve is through education. Because tomorrow belongs only to those who prepare for it today. We've got to move from a culture of blame to a culture of responsibility.

Peggy: I mean one thing that strikes me about the Myall Creek story is what happened in 1838 was not a full-stop, it was like a semi-colon in the story. The story actually goes on.

Patrick: So we decided that we want to erect a large building, an educational and cultural centre ... a reconciliation centre. There's such a huge number of people in the population that remains ignorant about this stuff. It's staggering.

Sally: That's why we have the schools' program. Kids submitting art or poetry or stories on a theme. To make them think. It's judged before the Memorial Day then put up in the hall. This year it's: What is Sorry?

Jayson: We've consciously reconciled, I think- as a committee. We're on the same team, battling for the same things. So now we're really focusing on what we can do together.

SFX: Birds calls.

Peggy: Other places have copied it. Almost like a McMyall Creek McMemorial. The Reverend was asked to come and put a Memorial up at Slaughterhouse Creek. He said: "I can't do it." You've got to have your heart in it. I was driven by my heart. It was like I didn't have any choice in it, it was what I had to do. And you've got to have more than just money. You've got to have all different things. And we all came with different motivations. You know, Sally had lost her ancestors.

Today We're Alive – generating performance in a cross-cultural context

Patrick: What is often not understood is the incredible resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in just surviving. By 1888, one hundred years of on-going colonization and 95% of the Aboriginal population had “disappeared”!

Jayson: Myall Creek. A shaft of light in history. Our history.

Sally: Sometimes I think about, I sit down and think ... I know there's a peace there now. You feel a peace there now, when you walk there, because I believe that no-one really cared to do enough. Um and that's why I decided to do what I'd done, I just feel good. That we've done it.

All: Ngiyani winangay ganunga. We Remember Them.

SFX: Fade up sound of wind, blues/country music, fade to silence.

-----The End-----

Appendix iv.) Interview with David Williams & Dr Paul Dwyer, 11th November, 2011.

LW: Is there a trade-off been research and script?

David Williams: Performance has an interest in structure that is different to the structural interests of research. Research in itself can be open-ended, it can keep going on forever, you can become more and more expert in a particular field. What performance can be is one of the manifestations of the research process; in the same way that a journal article is the outcome of a research process. It has some time limitation: this can be the scope of the argument that hangs around this particular set of research threads in a formal structure.

And I think performance kind of works like that, whereas I think research project can keep on developing and changing forever.

[*The Bougainville Photoplay Project*] was trying to find out how different story threads might speak to each other in an interesting way. .. at a particular point when there is a desire to produce a performance. It implies that will have an outcome and you know what that outcome will be. That means you need to make choices as to what's in and what's out, if only for time, but more importantly for coherence. There's a lot of research materials that can never be easily gathered into performance. But that sense arrives afterwards. A performance needs to make sense; it needs to provide some kind of rich experience for an audience, that encourages them to reflect in some way.

Paul Dwyer: I agree with David that a performance can be one of the outcomes of a research project and scholarly articles can be a different outcome. When in doubt I go back to the definition of a performance by Richard Bauerman: performance involves the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. But it's not as if movement towards a conventional theatre setting leads to ossification. It's not as if the choices made to fit in that environment aren't interesting choices.

I'm interested in the slippage between research presentation and performance presentation....Verbatim theatre shows its research more nakedly than other forms of theatre.

David Williams: Often Version 1.0 theatre works are quite complex. Political scandals etc and there is usually a moment of trying to understand the events where we have to work out why this matters, why this was important...we stop the show and try work out for ourselves what's going on, eg show about the wheat board (*Deeply Offensive and Utterly Untrue*) – it wasn't staged for the audience, although it was very funny.

Paul Dwyer: It was a workshop exercise. You've read about the Wheat Board scandal, now explain it to me. Wear a silly hat, if you need to. There was no intention of putting this on stage. There was simply a moment of frustration in the research process. That was an example in the research phase, where the performers are seeking provisional expertise. With any performance-maker, you've got to coordinate the story and the plot – how you release the information in that story. Do you have flashbacks? Flash-forwards? In an inquiry show there's always three layers to it: here's the story as we know it, the story of the events as best we know; here is the telling of that story within the frame of the Inquiry; and here is the story of a group of people trying to come to grips with those stories.

LW: Has your practice changed over the years, particularly in reference to your choice of material.

David Williams: The aesthetic range of choice of materials has broadened. I don't agree that theatre is fiction, I agree that it's a set of representational acts. But it is also real people in front of other real people talking about real events. As we've made more shows, we've thought about what we can express, so there's a big difference between Inquiry shows like *The Table of Knowledge* to a show like *This Kind of Ruckus*. *This Kind of Ruckus* has a lot of research background. The original intention was to make a show using therapy transcripts from domestic violence offenders. There was a particular therapeutic model of narrative therapy that has obvious theatrical points of interest; if you get people to change the way they narrate their experiences, they potentially had the ability to change their behaviour. Or recognise their past behaviours in a different way, which might change their future behaviours. We did dig into that material but didn't find much that was useful in staging a show. So what is this show if it's not primarily around that?

There was a group of ten artists involved in that stage so that question went out in all sorts of directions. We decided to persist, even though the first month wasn't productive. We had another two weeks the following years and three weeks later we into rehearsal and production. The second time round we tried to be very systematic around organising the ideas. Another loop that went nowhere. Then we did an exercise that was aimed at generating material. We found ways of unlocking the material in more creative ways. Then there was a whole series of sexual assaults involving Rugby League players. Oh, so the show has always been about gender power and control. Suddenly the segments of the show aligned in quite an interesting way. It's a very visual, physical show. But there isn't a central set of transcripts. Unlike other shows, which have been very concerned with accountability: identifying who is speaking, and then using juxtaposition to counterbalance that statement, identifying individuals who speak in a public capacity, whose actions or inactions need to be highlighted. But in *This Kind of Ruckus* we don't identify anyone but ourselves. We wanted it to be very difficult for audience members to separate themselves, be able to say: other men do bad things and those people are not like me. So we did want it to remain in the room.

Paul Dwyer: I agree with David that the aesthetic palate has become broader.

LW: Is that related to confidence and experience or is it related to the landscape you feel this form can examine?

Paul Dwyer: Both.

David Williams: Certainly there's emerging maturity of the form. It's not a strange idea for theatre to be based on real world materials anymore. When people talk about verbatim theatre there is usually an expectation of what verbatim theatre looks like. That expectation is what we try to frustrate or subvert or expand. But certainly there is a maturity of the forms and a maturity of the artists. Version 1.0 has made a lot of work in its 13 years that has been very successful.

Paul Dwyer: You can't separate the show from its history – *Bougainville Photoplay Project*, for example. "*Beautiful One Day*" does involve a relationship with Aboriginal Community members on Palm Island that's different to relationships that we've had before. [We're saying] these people are ours: they're not a long way away.

Appendix v.) Interview with Rosalyn Oades, 20th October, 2011.

LW: Let's talk about how you stumbled into this form of creation.

Rosalyn Oades: I've always been very interested in voice and I've got a lot of history working in a community context. I grew up in Bankstown. I got involved in the arts in my own area – a very diverse area, lots of changes, a very exciting place to be doing work at that time. And my other bread & butter job is voicing cartoons and re-voicing very beautiful models and you have to make the very squeaky teenager sound sophisticated and controlled. And when you change that voice, that girl becomes a hybrid of me and her and I found that quite fascinating.

I toyed with making traditional verbatim shows in Australia, and at the time I'd just come off two years on *Home & Away* as an actor, a good time to go to the UK. I came across Mark Wing-Davey, he's a director and actor and director of the London Actors Centre at the time, in 2001. He'd been working with Anna Deavere-Smith, a one woman verbatim practitioner, very political. She used head phones, was a consummate performer, she would acknowledge all the details, play all these different characters. Mark, who had been directing her, thought: I find it really interesting when she has the headphones on, because she's not acting, she's not interpreting, she's listening and repeating. And there's something that happens when she takes them off, it becomes more of performance, more of an interpretation. And when he became director of the London Actors Studio he ran a workshop in this idea, Theatre Without Paper, was the name of the workshop. And myself and one other actor in particular, Alecky Blyth, have gone on to form a company using this technique called recorded delivery.

I joined a company with Mark, called Non-fiction Theatre and for about year we workshopped material and put together a show and then I had to come back to Australia. Then I started my own explorations with the technique in Australia, because I like the fidelity of the vocal print being preserved. You know, it's still recorded and edited like any other verbatim form, but it's never transcribed. I give the actors CDs and now ipods. They learn the script like a piece of music, it's like a score. So they're never learning the lines, they're just learning the score. I particularly like recording group conversation and mapping that, because I think there's so much information in the way people speak. And as an artist I believe there is as much information in the way people tell a story as there is in what they're saying. You know it's a mother and daughter by the way they're speaking together. And I really love the process of preserving the vocal print. Something that's bugged me about verbatim plays is that tendency towards parody. Almost making fun of the characters or just getting the characters wrong. The responsibility to people's stories – there's a fidelity to this form that gives you some freedom so I like – I feel like this technique actually prevents parody and also enables me to play with the casting a

bit. So in *Stories of Love and Hate*, which was made in response to the Cronulla riots, I spent two years in Bankstown and in the Sutherland Shire, talking to people, who were directly involved in that day and my cast was made up of two actors of Middle eastern appearance and two actors of Anglo appearance. And out of pure necessity, when you have four cast members playing 25 characters, they have to swap around a lot. But you also have that thing of women playing men and people of Lebanese appearance playing characters of Australian background and vice versa but that was done with such fidelity that you stopped trusting your eyes and you just trusted your ears. You got to see those stories re-framed in quite a gentle but interesting way that I found quite exciting as an artist.

Now that the scripts have started to enter the mainstream a little bit more in that the last show happened at the Sydney Theatre Company and this one is happening at Belvoir, I need to transcribe it for technicians. But I don't transcribe it for the actors. But I do for particular reasons – like if people have wanted bits for publication, I've had to work out ways of transcribing it – I mean the ideal way to publish these plays is have the text and the CD. So that students wanting to perform the play would have the same experience as the actors on the show. I don't feel so comfortable about it being a traditional text that the actors would learn and perform.

LW: How do you choose your stories? And what stories benefit the most and the least from this technique? Benefit from the fidelity of this process.

Rosalyn Oades: I think that's something I'm still working out. I think when you have something like an event, when all stories are tied to it – that gives you quite a neat structure and you have the lead-up to that event and how people deal with it. That gives you a nice three act structure but I'm kind of interested in challenging that, because I'm kind of interested in challenging myself. Because in *I'm Your Man*, which I'm just finishing off, I set myself the challenge of creating a physical work, which is all in the present tense. Because in other verbatim stuff that I've seen people are reflecting on what's already happened. So I wanted to put myself in an event. Because I'm attracted to energy, which is why I think I'm attracted to group conversations rather than individual interviews – I don't want to have one-on-one interviews in a formal setting, I want to have permission to go to people's houses, to have permission to record and to provoke a conversation, so I can record those candid moments and what happens when a group knows each other well. But in *I'm Your Man*, I guess I've been interested in themes of courage for a long time. I see *I'm Your Man* as being the third in a trilogy on courage. Even in *Stories of Love and Hate* there's people standing up for what they believe. [I like] Finding a way of considering both sides. At the start of that project thinking: Who are these Lebanese thugs and racist rednecks I keep hearing about? That was the initial drive, have a line of investigation, find out who these people are; how they got up the next day, after their names had been spread around the world in such a negative way.

The first play I did with Urban Theatre Projects was called *Fast Cousin Tractor Engines* and that was a collection of fighting stories – like people sharing the fight of their lives or survival stories, such a mix of interesting stories from that area. And that became a thematic arc, which was kind of inspired by an oral history publication, so I was already aware of these great characters and I could almost plan who I wanted to interview and what I wanted that journey to be... Before I even met the people.

And the second one (*Stories of Love & Hate*) was structured around an event and I think that worked well. And this one is sort of around an event, *I'm Your Man*, like I'm sort of following a young fighter from Bankstown, whose dream it is to have a world title fight. And so I've followed him in the present tense, like I've been with him in the dressing room just before he went on, I've been with him straight after the fights, I've been with him, while he was training. So often I've got these moments that are quite inarticulate but it's kind of a shard of what's happening back stage. So there's a loose narrative thread but I guess it's also a thematic work about success and failure. Because I've also been – it's set in a boxing gym, it's a place of dreaming, it's like this installation of a space. I want to give the audience an immersive experience, so they can be part of the adrenalin – it's more of a poetic structure, than a traditional narrative form and I guess I'll find out how that works once it's happened.

LW: What have you found out about courage?

Rosalyn Oades: I've definitely found out you can find it in unexpected places. There're so many different types of courage – there's the courage of staying in a relationship that's really destructive. Someone can look at that as cowardice but it can also be seen as courage. I guess it's something I've always struggled with, so it's something I'm really drawn to. So that's why it's kind of exciting in this third work, to explore it in a really literal form. I think it's so courageous to be a boxer and to step into the ring and it's such a macho world. Reputation is so important and to publicly step into the ring and win or lose, and learn your limits and I don't have to learn my limits as an artist, but it's absolutely obvious in a boxing ring, which you've reached your age limit or your weight limit, and you're knocked down on the ground, then it's really clear. I think I'm still learning about courage – it's doing something you're really scared of. It's confronting your fears; it's great drama to watch someone do that and it's quite uplifting.

LW: The editorial process. Do you cherry-pick an interview? Do you know when you're getting what you want?

Rosalyn Oades: Yeah. I know when an interview is hot, because I feel totally engrossed. Or I feel a bit bored – I work from instincts a lot. I always try and get personal stories over opinion. I find opinion boring. What's ideal for me is to find a personal story that has opinion or point of view embedded in it. I don't find opinion

dramatic. I'm not a journalist. I like to find personal stories that create a dramatic arc. I think that's where the uniqueness of a person lies. In *Stories of Love and Hate* I wanted to find love stories in this very hateful incident and my line of inquiry in that work was: at the heart every war is a love story. And the dramatic shape then was to draw people into empathy. Because I think anyone who is in love is beautiful and I am drawn to them instantly. Even if they've done something really hateful, if I know what they love, I'm drawn to them because love is such a beautiful place. So on that project I was looking for passionate people, so if someone was really ho-hum about their life, I'd be striking them off saying: so who else do you know that's a surfer? Who's the best surfer in Cronulla, I want to meet the best surfer. Who's your hero in Cronulla? And eventually you'd get to the most passionate person. So you'd get an invitation to their flat and suddenly you'd be hanging out with their friends. So I've got the five best surfers in Cronulla sitting on the couch with some pot and Bob Marley on the record player. And I already know this is going to be hot. Because it's their space, they feel comfortable, the context is: they're the experts, I'm just interested in surfing. So I think if you can make your interviewees the experts, and it's in their space, you know you're on the money.

LW: Do you segue into race relations around that or does the conversation stay on surfing?

Rosalyn Oades: It starts with surfing, it always starts with love and then it moves round to: what was happening to your beach before the riots? The love leads into the hate. And then the opposite of that was finding the guys that had the hottest cars in Bankstown, the guys that were always driving over to Cronulla and meeting one of them and saying; can I see your car? And then you end up in a car with a group of boys and when you're in their car, you're in their kingdom. And then they interview themselves – when things are hot and everyone is excited, they interview each other, you don't have to do anything. That energy I find really exciting. And I wanted two male tribes in that project. And there was drama just in that.

This project (*I'm Your Man*) has been a lot more challenging, because fighting is such a solo process and I spent a bit of time trying to find my subjects. I interviewed trainers, card girls, audience. No, it's just the professional fights, people that have this huge need, desire or will to fight. That's what they live their whole lives for; they've got the passion and there's this exclusive elite underground cult. And I had to work with monologue a lot, which is so much more challenging. Because there's a natural drama or presence in conversation. But dramaturgically, because you're talking about a one-on-one fight, where you stand up and find out how much of a man you really are, it demands that intensity. Although making it physical has been more exciting, there's a drama in that, seeing the human body working to extremes. The actors are all in training now; they're going to have work out for an hour each show – like they're physically working out while the story unfolds. There's a drama in seeing the body spend itself as well.

LW: Do actors respond to your technique differently?

Rosalyn Oades: Yes, definitely. It demands an actor that can let go the desire to interpret. Trust that all the information is embedded in the story – the way people tell traumatic stories is different to the way we think they do. But in this process you just use your ears and your body. Not your heart and your mind, which what you're taught to do as an actor. Actors have an amazing ability to make us empathise, to cry and laugh of their own volition. But in this process you have to be able to leave that aside. Two of the actors I've been working with the longest both come from a physical theatre background. I think any good actor can get there...actors are really great tools, aren't they, if they work at it. Often people laugh at the way characters talk and I think there's always the temptation if you're a comic actor to embellish that a little bit. And if the audience is laughing, you want to go with it. But in this technique, you're not really with the audience. You're in another world; it's more like being in a film but having a live audience that you're talking to. Because it's still got the direct address. But I actually think it's a really great exercise and it should be something they do in drama school. And I know Mark Wing-Davey, who lectures now in New York, uses it on the floor with actors, just getting them out of their head and having a go at breathing. Because it's literally breathing someone else's breath. I'm so pedantic about breathing, come on, you missed a breath. We'll go back over that. You're breathing the same breath as someone else, like walking in the same shoes. So much information is embedded in that. You can tell how people feel about their age, their gender, their relationships, so much information just from the voice. It's almost as unique as a fingerprint.

Ref: [IM/RW]

11 May 2011

Associate Professor Michael Anderson
Drama Education
Faculty of Education and Social Work
Education Building – A35
The University of Sydney
Email: michael.anderson@sydney.edu.au

Dear A/Prof Anderson

Thank you for your correspondence dated 18 April 2011 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). I am pleased to inform you that at its meeting held on 3 May 2011 the Committee approved your protocol entitled “**Today We're Alive - creating performance through two-way sharing: a critical reflection**”.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Protocol No.: 13558

Approval Period: May 2011 to May 2012

Authorised Personnel: Associate Professor Michael Anderson
Dr Paul Dwyer
Ms Linden Wilkinson
Ms Genevieve Mooy
Mr Frederick Copperwaite
Ms Anna Volska

Documents Approved: Participant Information Statements:
• Memorial Story-tellers (version 2, April 2011)
• Researcher/Actor (version 1, February 2011)
Participant Consent Form (version 1, February 2011)
Phase 1 – Semi-Structured Interview and Focus Group Questions
Phase 2 – Focus Group and Semi-Structured Interview Questions
Phase 3 – Focus Group Questions

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. A report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Your report is due by **31 May 2012**.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours for clinical trials/interventional research.



2. All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
3. Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.
4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement: *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Manager, Human Ethics, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); + 61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).*
5. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms and provide these to the HREC on request.
6. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.
7. The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.
8. A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

**Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee**

cc: Linden Wilkinson
lwil6627@mail.usyd.edu.au / lindenw@bigpond.net.au

Dr Paul Dwyer, Associate Supervisor
paul.dwyer@sydney.edu.au