Spurning, yearning and learning Aboriginality:
Ambivalence shaping the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians.

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University.

1999
Declaration:

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Some of the work outlined in Chapters Four and Five was shaped by earlier work completed in collaboration with Len Collard. Some of the work outlined in Chapter 7 was shaped by a piece written in collaboration with Jennifer Buchanan.

David John Palmer

August 1999.
Abstract

Much academic work concerned with social and cultural processes in Australia takes as its field of inquiry how the lives of Aboriginal Australians have been changed and impacted on by colonisation. Rarely has scholarship attempted to uncover some of the ways Aboriginality and Aboriginal people have become integral in the shaping of the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians.

This thesis takes to heart the challenge of subjecting oneself and one’s own social and cultural position to the rigours of sociological scrutiny and sets out to examine how crucial Aboriginality and Aboriginal people have been in shaping the lives, identities and economies of non-Aboriginal Australians.

Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha the thesis argues that ambivalence, which underlies much of colonial discourse, can have a tremendously disruptive and unsettling effect on the authority, identities and everyday social lives of non-Aboriginal people. The thesis explores something of the diversity of this ambivalence by focusing attention on five groups of people (One Nation Supporters, retired tourists, ‘alternative lifestylers’, governmental workers and early colonists); two historical moments (early colonial times and the late 1990s); and two regions (the south-west and Kimberley of Western Australia).
The thesis argues that one of the effects of this ambivalence is that the social worlds of non-Aboriginal Australians are often subjected to challenge and change. In early colonial times many ‘settlers’ were torn between the will to colonise and economic and cultural reliance on the efforts and knowledge of Aboriginal people. More recently, One Nation supporters attempt to distance themselves from Aboriginal people by constituting them as the barbaric and parasitical other. At the same time, Hansonites indirectly position Aboriginality as central to their own identity and political future. Another group, retired tourists, regularly perpetuate old colonial tropes and publicly express their disdain of Aboriginal people. At the same time, these people yearn for and engage in social practices otherwise associated with Aboriginal culture. Behind both groups’ public attacks on Aborigines as cannibals and the ‘Aboriginal Industry’ as spongers lies a deep political and cultural reliance on Aboriginality. Romantics and others who aspire to consume and mimic Aboriginal culture are likewise regularly ambivalent and contradictory in their treatment of Aboriginality. It is arguable that many are self-interested and seek to plunder Aboriginal cultural. However, the very romance that prompts their mimicry can and does act to unsettle the certainty of non-Aboriginal dominance. This prompts people to re-examine their identities and social practices. Ambivalence and complexity is also central to the lives of those involved in the business of Aboriginal governance. On the one hand, these people are clearly implicated in the government and regulation of Aboriginal people. On the other hand, liberal discourse on fairness and equality of opportunity force governmental workers to increase their contact and reliance on Aboriginal people. This often has the effect of provoking changes in non-Aboriginal people’s personal and working lives.
The thesis concludes that the engagement of colonial discourse with Aboriginalities inevitably leads to an ambivalence that disables the monolithic dominance of non-Aboriginal Australians. In a range of ways this ambivalence can and does produce conditions which undermine and transform the cultural lives and identities of non-Aboriginal Australians.
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Again extra-ordinary thanks to my partner, friend and “moorditj yorga” Jennie Buchanan. Without doubt the greatest privilege during this project was to collaborate with Jennie.
Many insights would not have been possible had Jennie and I not had the chance to talk and reflect at the end of a day’s fieldwork. Jennie also provided practical support such as sharing the care of our son during fieldwork, proofreading notes and drafts and taking on extra responsibilities during busy times. I am also indebted to Jennie’s confidence in my ability and work - this was something that never waned.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my son Callum. I trust that as he grows he will come to appreciate how crucial are Nyungars and other Aboriginal Australians to his life and the lives of other non-Aboriginal Australians. I also trust that, despite the impression he might get from some of our ‘leaders’, he, and his unborn sibling/s will grow up learning how important it is to seek out ways to open up possibilities for equity, fairness, respect and collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.
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Chapter one

Introductions:

Studying non-Aborigines
Yet there is something strange, I would agree,
In those dumb continents below the Line.
The roots are European, but the tree
Grows to a different patterns and design;
Where the fruit gets its flavour I’m not sure,
From native soil or overseas manure.

Introduction

Much academic work concerned with social and cultural processes in Australia takes as its field of inquiry how the lives of Aboriginal Australians have been changed and impacted on by colonisation. Rarely has scholarship attempted to uncover some of the ways Aboriginality and Aboriginal people have become integral in the shaping of the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians.

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Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha the thesis argues that ambivalence, which underlies much of colonial discourse, can have a tremendously disruptive and unsettling effect on the authority, identities and everyday social lives of non-Aboriginal people. The
thesis explores something of the diversity of this ambivalence by focusing attention on five groups of people (One Nation Supporters, retired tourists, ‘alternative lifestylers’, governmental workers and early colonists); two historical moments (early colonial times and the late 1990s); and two regions (the south-west and Kimberley of Western Australia).

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Ambivalence and complexity is also central to the lives of those involved in the business of Aboriginal governance. On the one hand, these people are clearly implicated in the government and regulation of Aboriginal people. On the other hand, liberal discourse on fairness and equality of opportunity force those involved in governmental work to increase their contact and reliance on Aboriginal people. This often has the effect of provoking changes in non-Aboriginal people’s personal and working lives.

The thesis concludes that the engagement of colonial discourse with Aboriginalities inevitably leads to an ambivalence that disables the monolithic dominance of non-Aboriginal Australians. In a range of ways this ambivalence can and does produce conditions which undermine and transform the cultural lives and identities of non-Aboriginal Australians.

In this, the introductory chapter of the thesis, I want to foreground later discussions by reflecting on some of my own history and interest in such a topic. It would be both impossible and uninteresting to the reader to offer a total and detailed explanation for my interest. (I am sure that some of what motivates me and has shaped my interest is at present unavailable to my conscious mind). However it is important to trace some of the personal and cultural conditions that have brought me to this project and reflect on how this might impact on my analysis. In this introductory chapter of the thesis I begin by establishing why I chose to study non-Aboriginal people and the ambivalent way we go about engaging with Aboriginality and Aboriginal Australians. It is important to begin
with an examination of myself and the context in which I come to this project (Behar, 1994) as I am, in many ways, a subject in my own investigation.

The chapter will include a discussion of those social processes and sets of relationships I consider as important in influencing my choice to undertake such a research topic. I will include a brief discussion of how family, Church, work in the community services industry, formal study, and long standing friendships and working relationships with Nyungars\(^1\) have all influenced my research interests and choices. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of how these social processes have shaped the analytical approach of the thesis.

The prompting of my interest

All PhD candidates are regularly asked the question: “so what is it that you’re studying?” Some seem to relish this question for it gives them a chance to take the floor and demonstrate the sophistication of their intellect. Others find it difficult to respond unless talking to people with a great deal of background in their particular technical field. Yet others would rather avoid the question as it can make them vulnerable to criticism and scorn. Being asked this question regularly has paved the way for me to gain some helpful insights and, at times valuable contacts. On more than the odd occasion my thesis topic prompted people to launch into their own thesis on cross-cultural relations, the politics of Aboriginality, and/or the governance of Aboriginal people. Often it seemed that everybody had a story to tell, an opinion to offer or the answer to some perceived
problem that related to the topic of Aboriginal people’s influence on Australian life. Occasionally people expressed obvious hostility deciding that I was another “bloody perpetual student wasting taxpayers money making good hard-working Australians feel guilty”, or that the project was “a navel gazing exercise”. These kinds of reactions proved helpful for it set me thinking about why I had chosen such a topic to be studying.

I grew up in what many would consider a safe and consistent environment in urban Australia. However like many of my contemporaries I was no stranger to contradictions and ambivalence. From a very early age Aboriginal Australians were positioned and treated in ways that often seemed quite inconsistent. I often remember being confused and baffled by what seemed to be huge discrepancies in people’s thinking about Aboriginal people. Partly I think this may have been because of who my parents are and what they were involved in.

My parents were, and still are, an enigma in many ways. They were deeply religious people and involved in an evangelical church with a rather strange and ambivalent history of work with Aboriginal people. This meant that I was regularly exposed to patronising and dogmatic ideas about the inherent superiority of those professing a Christian faith. I remember clearly the regular visits from missionaries whose attitude to the natives was at best condescending and, at worst, tyrannical. I learnt that Aboriginal people were either unsophisticated, child-like or barbaric practitioners of demonic rituals. Much of the politics of this brand of Christianity was oppressively assimilationist and bigoted in the extreme. My memory of the church’s view of Aboriginal people was
that they were “the worst kind of sinners who needed to be saved from the clutches of the devil.” In his poignant ethnography of Aboriginal responses to this kind of evangelism Trigger (1992) describes the missionary ideology of older members of my denomination as benevolent paternalism of the most reactionary and authoritarian kind. The clear view of those practising Brethrens I grew up with was and largely remains that becoming Christian necessitates rejecting Aboriginal cultural forms and distancing oneself from ‘unsaved’ Aboriginal family.

On the other hand both parents regularly instilled in my brothers and myself the belief that people are fundamentally equal before God and before each other. Both parents were sticklers for impressing upon their sons the message that “it doesn’t matter who you are, you deserve respect and should be treated fairly”. One early story stands out in my memory of how Aboriginal people were used to teach us important lessons about being good citizens. It was my first birthday party after having started school. I recall being very excited. All my friends had been invited and, save for one, had arrived wearing party attire (in those days, shorts, long socks, short back and sides hair spit licked into position) and a gift for me. Much to my disappointment an Aboriginal friend, Robbie, had neither responded in writing, nor had arrived on time. As he was a good friend and only lived down the lane, Dad agreed to go and get him. When they arrived I immediately noticed that Robbie had neither shoes on nor a present to give. Much to my parent’s horror I announced, in front of everyone, that he could not attend unless he had shoes and a present. To add to the pain and embarrassment of my parents I asked why Robbie never wore any shoes and why his parents did not have any money. I was promptly shunted into
my room, smacked, given a talk on how “some kids aren’t as lucky as I am”, and warned that unless I treated Robbie with more dignity everyone would be sent home.

This is something I remember well. It was not so important that I was being told off for being rude and ungracious (although this would have been so). Nor do I think it was Robbie’s poverty that I was being asked to respect. Even then I knew that my parents were teaching me a very important lesson about the pain that Aboriginal people like Robbie had to deal with regularly. I was lectured about how lucky I was and forced to think about how I would feel if I was in Robbie’s shoes (even though he had none). I remember this event vividly, not as an embarrassing event, but as a lesson in the treatment of Aboriginal people.

Both parents also imbued in their kids the ethic that it is important to spend time and support those who are not treated fairly by others. Indeed Dad in particular seemed to be attracted to those that many others considered less than deserving. To my parents, Aboriginal people were inherently respectable people that deserved the same human rights that we enjoyed. Until he retired, my father worked for the South Australian Government as a welfare officer/social worker, specialising in juvenile justice and child welfare. When he began with the then Department of Welfare and Aboriginal Affairs, Dad was responsible for managing the welfare of Aboriginal young men who lived at Point Pearce, on South Australia’s Yorke Peninsula. Although Dad tried to leave his work at work, upon reflection there is much about the way that he raised his own boys that would have been shaped by his work. Although Mum did little work away from
home, and consequently had less direct contact with Aboriginal people, she shared similar moral and political values with Dad.

My mother and father were also often highly critical of and had little patience for those who offered excuses for inequality. My parents were quiet and unimposing people from a strict and in many ways politically conservative church background. However, they have always been prepared to show their public support for human rights campaigns, participating in Australia’s first land rights marches, supporting Aboriginal self management organisations and advocating for changes to the welfare practice that resulted in Aboriginal children being removed from their families and communities.

In addition, more by their practice than their rhetoric, Mum and Dad instilled in their sons the importance of care and fairness. Dad was also one who believed that you only achieved good if you were prepared to be in something for ‘the long haul’. Dad, more than most, maintained consistent and continual contact with Aboriginal families. I recall a piece of advice that Dad gave me when I first considered moving away from my trade as a painter and taking up youth work with Aboriginal young people. He said something like:

*If you make a mistake as a painter it’s usually no big deal - you just put another coat of paint on. But if you’re working with people and you’re careless you can’t always undo what your done. If you have doubt you have to be cautious and considered. Lord knows there have already been too many welfare workers and*
missionaries who, although with the best of intentions, have ruined things for Aboriginal people.

Being brought up a member of the fundamentalist and evangelical Open Brethren Christian Church also brought me into contact with Aboriginal people and a range of missionaries who had direct contact with Aboriginal people. Indeed, I recall regularly sitting through slide shows at church and watching pictures of Aboriginal kids attending mission schools where members of the church had worked. I also regularly sat through sermons incorporating stories from and about Aboriginal Christians. During my teenage years I played basketball against young people from the Brethren run church mission at Port Augusta and attended church camps with Aboriginal young people.

My most powerful memories of growing up in this church and family environment were in relation to confusing and inconsistent messages about Aboriginal people. On the one hand I clearly recall Aboriginal people being described as ‘childlike and simple’ and treated in highly patronising and intrusive ways. I have since come to know much more about how much damage, pain and suffering was inflicted on Aboriginal people by missionary people I knew and loved. On the other hand, I have long-standing memories of church leaders preaching passionately about Christ as the model advocate for the poor, the widows and those considered as untouchables. One of the most powerful messages I heard from the pulpit was an ethic that demands of the practising Christian a care and practice of justice and fairness towards those who are less materially well off.
So mine is a history where non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people, who although undoubtedly involved in relationships marked by patronising and dominating patterns, were ‘brothers and sisters in the Lord’. In my experience Christian missionary work cannot be regarded as having a unitary history. While I have not always been proud of some of the things my Christian ‘family’ has been involved in, I do not think they are best or exclusively characterised as unsympathetic, cruel, inhumane and evil men and women. I grew up being clearly taught from the pulpit that Aboriginal Australians were a people of deep integrity and spirituality. I also certainly grew up seeing a level of intimacy, collaboration, love and respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people involved in mission work. So, for me, ambivalence was a constant feature of family and church life, regularly producing tensions and questions in my mind.

Another part of my story which has involved ambivalence and which has had a profound effect on my decision to research such a topic has been my professional involvement in work with Aboriginal young people and their families. When I was in my late teens I took up work in the social and community services industry. Initially this was not something I had planned to do. However after completing an apprenticeship as a painter and decorator I was given the opportunity to pursue paid work as a youth worker. Partly because of the nature of youth work and partly due to serendipity, I found myself immediately working in a youth centre which had as its major client group, Aboriginal young people. Like so many other non-Aboriginal people in a similar position I found myself working in a situation full of contradictions and being regularly confronted by things that were unsettling. On the one hand, I came to the work as one who had the will
to do good and 'help' others. I regularly saw things that offended my sense of fairness and felt an obligation to 'put things right.' However the work was enormously demanding, difficult and full of complex problems to be confronted. Many of the young people with whom I had contact regularly experienced complicated personal and social problems. Many had to daily deal with the most horrific examples of racism from those I had assumed were responsible and fair people. Initially I, like many of my fellow workers, was grossly under-skilled, with little detailed knowledge of the circumstances of the client group to whom I was responsible for offering a service. As a younger person myself, my 'authority' as someone charged with the care of young people and property, was very precarious. Consequently, I immediately became highly reliant on the expertise, good grace and generosity of Aboriginal youth workers, parents and cultural experts.

Like those youth workers I was later to study as a part of my masters research, I too was nurtured through a series of lessons by Aboriginal people I was employed to serve. Many of my otherwise unchecked ideas about cross-cultural relations and simple formula answers to complex social problems were challenged constantly. Daily exposure to the material disadvantage of others and the resistance and reaction of 'shit-stirring' Aboriginal young people served to disrupt my naive and simple ideas about the world.

I recall often having mixed feelings about all of this. I was clear about my desire to get involved in the struggle for social justice. I felt an obligation to support, in some small way, Aboriginal young people's human rights. On the other hand I had limited personal resources and would become disheartened when I became the target for Aboriginal young people's frustrations. My own ambivalence then prompted my decision to take up tertiary
study. As someone who had not completed my secondary education I had little initial interest in studying at university. However, after working with Aboriginal people for a number of years it began to occur to me that formal study of Aboriginal history and culture would be both interesting and professionally valuable. This lead to a decision to combine studies in youth work with Aboriginal and cross-cultural studies.

Like many of my contemporaries, my time studying the history of colonial relations in Australia had a huge impact on my attitudes and social world. Often the content of my studies deeply moved me, encouraging my continued involvement in political campaigns and in work with Aboriginal young people and their families. Much of the material I read reinforced many of the values I had taken on from family and the church. After reading and hearing about the violence and pain suffered by Aboriginal people I was further convinced of the need for fairness and justice. At the same time the lessons I learnt about this country’s history and my contact with Aboriginal students and community leaders profoundly challenged some of my more naive and patronising ideas. It became very evident to me that Aboriginal people were not the dupes many imagined them to be. At this time I began to read literature concerned with Aboriginal agency and the power of Aboriginal people to establish relationships and impact on others without surrendering their identity and autonomy. While carrying out research for my master’s degree I was again reminded that the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians could have been profoundly influenced by Aboriginal Australians.
Assuming that non-Aboriginal youth workers had the greater weight of institutional power and history behind them, I began an investigation of how the lives of Aboriginal young people were impacted on by youth workers and youth services. Much to my frustration, the project did not seem to gel. Although I spent plenty of time in the field, talking to people, observing and participating in the everyday goings on of youth service delivery, the conclusions I drew did not correspond with the view that Aboriginal young people were powerless victims. It was at this point in the project a number of rather insightful and reflective non-Aboriginal youth workers came to my aid. I had asked people to talk about the effects of work with Nyungars, implying that they speak about how youth worker’s interventions modify life for young Nyungars. Many responded by suggesting, albeit politely, that I was asking the wrong questions. One had this to say:

_I can tell you right now that Nyungar kids aren’t fuckin powerless. Some of them are real little operators that run rings around youth workers. I tell you what, in the last five years I’ve been shown a thing or two (Palmer, 1995a, p. 214)._ 

To illustrate the same point another youth worker recounted her story of cultural influence by young Nyungars. By this person’s own admission she was prompted to first start working with young Nyungars for a range of “the wrong reasons”. She conceded that in retrospect it may even have been inappropriate to take up the job because, like so many other Wedjela youth workers, “her reasons for wanting to work in the area were fairly patronising”. According to her recollection she had initially been rather transparent to young Nyungars who treated her with some contempt and gave her the name “kaat wara yorga”. In her ignorance she thought this was a special Nyungar name or term of
endearment. Unbeknown to her she was being called a stupid, crazy in the head or foolish white woman - a description which she later acknowledged to be fairly accurate. However, as this woman describes, the relationship underwent some important changes:

*When I first started working at **** (youth organisation) young women used to run around calling me kaat wara yorga and kind of avoiding me. For three months I didn't know that they were calling me the crazy woman. I finally found out what it meant from someone else and from then on I would respond by saying 'nah, I'm moorditj yorga'. This means good, strong woman. When they heard me say this they were really impressed and treated me really differently (Palmer, 1995a, p. 203).*

This story of moving from being a kaat wara to moorditj nyidiyang served to symbolically illustrate how power is not only exercised from above. It also showed me that in certain circumstances and under specific conditions Aboriginal Australians, in this case young Nyungars, are able to direct and influence the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. These discussions had the effect of flipping my thesis on its head. What these people were telling me was that, in very specific cultural contexts, Nyungars might possibly have power to influence the professional and cultural lives of Wedjelas.

Aboriginal colleagues have been amongst the most influential of people in my life. Of particular importance in both shaping my interest and assisting my framing of the research topic has been my friend and colleague Len Collard. If there is one person who has most shaped my own journey as a non-Aboriginal person it is this man. Len was probably the first person I met who believed it worthwhile to study the lives and social
processes of non-Aboriginal people. In addition Len has openly and graciously taught me much about relationships between Nyungars and Wadjelas.

In no small way has my journey through the literature and through our collaborative work on interpretive history projects, curriculum development, teaching and other ethnographic fieldwork been guided by Len’s passionate call for the recognition of Nyungar contributions to Australian life. The following comments from Len demonstrates how staunch he has been in his call for scholarship which recognises Nyungars as boodier - leaders both in the past and the present. Speaking to another colleague and myself about the need for primary school curriculum to include histories of triumph and leaderships he said:

_We have had real tainted glasses when we look at history. We’ve tended to go and look for violence and rape and pillage - these historical events have been important - but there have also been other important relationships between Nyungars and Wadjelas that have just not been getting a guernsey. We still have to stay focused on the injustices that occurred. Pain and suffering bloody well did happen and we’ve got to own it and start to repair the pain and the hurt that occurred as a result of it. At the same time we can’t stay there picking at the sore forever. It’s time kids get the message that Nyungars don’t just need role models, they have been role models - not just for Nyungars but for Wadjelas as well. Kids have got to start getting the message that Nyungars have not just been Jackies or people who have just labored in the background - they have also been real leaders - and they are still real leaders (Collard, 1998, personal communication)._
Conceptualising the thesis

These social processes and relationships have clearly had a profound effect on how I come to this project - shaping both my interest and the analytical tools I chose. My plans for a thesis about social and cultural interaction were in part formulated because of the particularities I have just spoken about. Technically the study has heuristic aspirations - conscious to bring to the fore my own personal experiences and insights, connecting them to the experience of others who share a similar history and cultural tradition (Quinn Patton, 1990, p. 71). At the fore of my analysis has been my own personal experiences, reflections and insights. Also important has been the observations of and dialogues with the participants in the project.

I have also taken much inspiration from people, such as my parents, missionaries, political allies and work colleagues, who are committed to ideals such as fairness, justice and human rights. I begin from a position recognising that the history of a country such as Australia is marked by racial inequality and colonial violence. Aboriginal people are poorer, die sooner, often live in substandard housing, have fewer employment opportunities and are more likely to have ill-health. This has instilled in me the analytical and political importance of taking account of and challenging social inequality.

Another important analytical influence on the thesis was that all around me were examples of how, in different ways, Aboriginality and Aboriginal people were important to me and my life. Despite the claim often made that Aboriginal people are largely
invisible to most non-Aboriginal Australians my experience tells me that, in a multitude of ways, Aboriginal people shape things for other Australians. My own journey of identity construction, learning and development as a citizen, a scholar and a professional is a journey where I have been both directly and indirectly, personally and socially impacted on by Aboriginal Australians. Like many people I spent time with as part of my research, I too have felt my life has been marked by journeys and movements thanks in part to the influence of Aboriginal Australians.

Weaving its way throughout this discussion of cultural influence will be a conceptual interest in teasing out how non-Aboriginal people are neither one single, homogenous group nor does Aboriginal culture influence non-Aboriginal people in any unidirectional way. Even within one imperial system, such as that operating within Australia in the last two hundred and eleven years, there is usually “an internal dynamic of competing ideologies and moralities” (Jacobs, 1996, p. 18). This means that non-Aboriginal Australians have never held uniform views or followed one consistent approach to inter-cultural exchange. In the words of Thomas (1994, p. 60):

*the dynamics of colonialism cannot be understood if it is assumed that some unitary representation is extended from the metropole and cast across passive spaces, unmediated by perceptions and encounters. Colonial projects are construed, misconstrued, adapted and enacted by actors whose subjectivities are fractured - half here, half there, sometimes disloyal, sometimes almost ‘on the side’ of the people they patronize and dominate, and against the interests of some metropolitan office.*
Relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are by no means simple and characterised by unitary responses. There is a case to argue that all non-Aboriginal Australians have been impacted on by Aboriginality and Aboriginal people. However not everyone has been influenced in the same way, nor does everyone respond in the same manner. Today, as in the past, some non-Aboriginal Australians might be best described as antagonists, others resentful, others sympathetic, others patronising, some collaborative, while some might be all of the above at different times during their lives. Therefore, the thesis will also examine the complex and multi-layered influence Aboriginal people and cultures have upon non-Aboriginal people.

Instead of attempting to arrive at one nation-wide generalisation about the influence of Aboriginal people on non-Aboriginal Australians the thesis will draw on instances where Australians, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, have demonstrated a capacity for agency and an ability to respond originally to specific conditions and challenges. This work will also take a conceptual interest in the active resistance, agency and intersubjectivity of people. I will discuss a variety of forms of cultural exchange ranging from direct and acknowledged appropriation, unacknowledged desire and appropriation (seemingly shaped by romance, resentment and envy), direct reliance, and reciprocal exchange. The thesis will explore the multiple and shifting identities of a broad range of non-Aboriginal Australians involved in a broad range of cross-cultural relationships. I will then be seeking out contradictions, differences and variation in the ways that non-Aboriginal people's lives have been influenced by Aboriginal Australians. I start by assuming that Aboriginal Australians are not best understood as people who have been
merely ensnared by colonial power, rather than have been able to modify it and transform
the lives of others. Nyungars and Wedjelas might then say that the thesis is partly
concerned with ‘kura, yege, boorda’, or historical and cultural continuity; ‘bulla warm’,
or cultural diversity; and ‘moorditch Nyungars’, or Aboriginal strength and agency.

My story is also one where there are many competing tensions and, on the face of it,
inconsistent influences. Like many of my age and cultural background I grew up familiar
with ambivalence and contradiction. The messages I received from my parents would
often not sit well with ideas espoused from the pulpit of their church. I grew up in a
neighbourhood with friends who had parents, like many in ‘settled Australia’, who were
less than tolerant towards Aboriginal people yet celebrated the idea that Australia had an
egalitarian history. Members of my extended family were explicitly racist and resented
Aboriginal people but often secretly harboured a respect for Aboriginal ingenuity. There
were moments in my life, particularly during my career as a youth worker, that I would
have been influenced a great deal by a romantic yearning for things Aboriginal while
saddened by the realities of Aboriginal people’s material circumstances.

Influenced by my parents’ values I wanted to begin with a study that respected the
integrity of Aboriginal Australians. At the same time I wanted to do something
acknowledging that some non-Aboriginal people, like my parents, had a good deal of
integrity too. This prompted a desire to find analytical ways to examine people’s
complex and often contradictory identities and experiences. Useful in this respect is the
theoretical work of Bohmann (cited in Bessant and Watts, 1999, p. xvii) who claims that
analysis of people’s social relationships needs to be more accepting of the indeterminacy of our social world. Throughout the project I took inspiration from Bohmann’s conceptual interest in the study of disorder, ambiguity, ambivalence and contradiction in people’s desires, discourses and practices. This necessitated my accepting, throughout the project, that our social practices are never easy to classify or understand.

This reflects where, analytically, I would like to take the reader in this thesis. My intention is to build a thesis that deals with complexity and ambivalence in the lives of groups of non-Aboriginal Australians. I will start by taking to heart the challenge of situating myself and other non-Aboriginal people as subjects in the study. The intention of such a project is not so much to engage in some kind of individualistic self-analysis, self-development, self-confessional or ‘work on myself’. Nor am I trying to enlist the use of neat binary ideas to continue established imperialist traditions which exclusively position people into relations of opposition and accentuate people’s differences at the expense of their shared experiences. On the contrary, I am interested in studying discourses, identities, social processes and cultural exchanges that are instrumental in shaping, not only my own life, but the lives of other non-Aboriginal Australians. This is not to claim that my experiences are identical to or that I will share, in any complete way, everything with other non-Aboriginal Australians. There are significant differences between myself and some of those I will talk about in the thesis. These differences reflect class, gender, cultural background, access to formal education and training, sexuality, religion, geography, parental status, political views and language. However, given the powerful force of colonising discourses and racialised relations in this country, there is
much historically, experientially, ideologically and culturally that I share with other non-Aboriginal people.

The thesis offers an alternative reading to those who insist that power is only ever exercised by the colonisers who force indigenes to take on ‘alien’ cultural forms and social practices. On the contrary, Aboriginal people and Aboriginalities are integral to the shaping of the lives of non-Aborigines. This is at least partly because of non-Aboriginal people’s own ambivalent attitude to and relationship with Aboriginality. Drawing on the work of post-colonial theorists such as Bhabha (1985) for analytical inspiration I will show just how important is this ambivalence in producing conditions which undermine and foster change in non-Aboriginal people. As Derrida (cited in Jacobs, 1996, p. 14) says, the self and the other always solicit each other and “produce decidedly disruptive effects”. These disruptions ensure that technologies of power and domination are always vulnerable - indeed can never be fully realised - while, in various ways, Aboriginal groups can and do reinvent and reinscribe their authority. According to Bhabha (1985) mastery is never complete and never entirely realised. Rather power is constantly in a state of slippage so that in some sites of power the enslaved can exploit and unleash a considerable level of political agency. As Jacobs’ (1996, p. 159) work demonstrates, nothing subverts the authority of the discourse of the master more than the ambivalence produced in response to Aboriginal people’s continued presence. Such ambivalence can and does have a profoundly unsettling effect on the cultures of the colonisers and offer possibilities for the transformation of cultural and economic life.
The political object which underpins an interest in such a project is the desire to establish what conditions produce (or encourage) cultural exchange (or movements towards cultural exchange) that are ‘fair’ and result in outcomes that serve the interests of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Australians. One could suggest that this represents an important sub-text driving the project. Behind my interest in cross-cultural exchange is a politics that seeks to maximise and open up possibilities for shared and mutually beneficial ways to move in the future. I am particularly keen to explore the kind of conditions that serve to unsettle the certainty of colonial domination. Like Curthoys (1997a, p. 122-123) I am keen to look at how to confront the past in a way that is energising rather than merely threatening. My politics also seeks to build rather than only critique. This means I am most committed to identifying some of the conditions that encourage mutually beneficial alliances rather than only identifying the barriers to shared interests. Pettman (1992, p. 126) makes the point that “recognising difference without recognising affinity or connections across category boundaries can undermine opportunities for alliances and for inclusive claims which may be necessary to effect significant change.”

Structure of the thesis

Chapter two of the thesis continues with the theme of influences on the thesis topic by reviewing some of the developments in the literature that shaped my own thinking and acted as theoretical inspiration. This chapter offers a review of work calling for
scholarship of the kind proposed in this thesis. Included in this review is work concerned with deconstructing ‘whiteness’; work by Aboriginal, black and third world writers who talk about the social agency of those otherwise constituted as the other; work within the broad field of Australian history that calls for the study of histories of negotiated collaboration between the indigenes and the colonisers; and a brief discussion of work by those scholars who contribute to theorising about colonial power and the disruptive effect of colonial ambivalence.

Chapter three deals with a number of methodologically related questions as well as describing the research process I have followed. This chapter is another about ambivalence, disruption and cultural interaction. It is about the value of embracing ambivalence in the social research process. In this chapter I suggest that there is much to be gained by the researcher who recognises that their own work and methodological processes are laden with disruptions and competing interests. In it I suggest that there is enormous analytical advantage in embracing instances of uncertainty and ambivalence in one’s ethnographic fieldwork. Indeed a research domain teeming with ambivalence is one rich in possibilities for analytical insights. As well as offering a brief description of the research process followed, this chapter discusses how useful unsettling moments can be in inspiring the researcher and transforming the research process.

Chapters four and five of the thesis will both take up similar themes. These chapters, which make up the second section of the thesis, will review evidence from ethnohistorical sources which demonstrates just how important was colonial ambivalence
in shaping early encounters between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Both chapters begin to explore how Nyungar agency and colonial ambivalence combined to produce the conditions for small but significant transformations in colonial discourse and colonial life. I argue that, despite what we might think, there was not an immediate and complete extinguishment of Nyungars and Nyungar culture at the time of early colonisation. On the contrary, early colonists came to rely heavily on Nyungars playing an active role as guides, experts, collaborators and interpreters during the early years of the Swan River colony. I argue that this was in no small part due to colonial ambivalence. This section takes inspiration from the work of Reynolds (1990) whose broader national study “With the White People” shows that during the first contacts, “collaboration was as common as confrontation” and that many Aboriginal people were “in a very real sense Australia’s black pioneers.” This discussion is important for it sets the scene for the study of people’s contemporary lives and demonstrates that Aboriginal people have long featured as central figures in the lives of other Australians.

The thesis will then turn in the third section to an analysis of more contemporary social processes and demonstrate something of the diversity of ambivalent treatment of Aboriginality by non-Aboriginal Australians. Section three is based on ethnographic work undertaken with four groups of non-Aboriginal people.

The first of these chapters takes as its theme, the influence Aboriginal people have on those non-Aboriginal Australians who are what some might describe as ‘red necks’, either openly hostile to Aborigines or resentful of any suggestion that Aboriginal
Australians might contribute productively to Australia. This chapter deals with a group of non-Aboriginal people who most definitely spurn Aboriginality. Pauline Hanson, her politics and her followers feature as the subjects of this chapter. The chapter examines Hanson’s reverie with Aboriginal cannibalism and analyses her accusations that Aboriginal people and their followers are “feeding off” the goodwill of other Australians. This is ambivalence of the most forceful and expressive kind. On the one hand, the Hansonites’ public attacks on Aboriginal people and the Aboriginal Industry demonstrate how spacious and seemingly uncompromising is their loathing and resentment. On the other hand, the passion with which they engage in such attacks demonstrates just how important Aboriginality is to them, allowing them to project their own ideas and practices onto those they attempt to construct as the barbaric and parasitic other.

Chapter seven has been shaped by fieldwork undertaken both in the north and south-west of Western Australia and includes an ethnography of a group of caravanning tourists I describe as loopies or ‘grey nomads’. This chapter applies Bhabha’s ideas about ambivalence to the lives of this group of non-Aboriginal Australians. I argue that much of the time many of these people are overtly racist and often deeply resent Aboriginal people. On the other hand they seem to desire things Aboriginal and, in their movements and social practices, often seek to reproduce what they imagine to be Aboriginal cultural forms. The effect of this ambivalence is subtle but profound and results in the lives and identities of older Australians being called into question.
Chapter eight, the third ethnographic chapter, is likewise shaped by fieldwork undertaken in the Kimberley and south-west regions. The group discussed in this chapter are those (variously described as mung beans, new agers and alternative lifestylers) who subscribe to romantic primitivist ideas about Aboriginal culture. The chapter also provides an analysis of how romantic primitivism can, and does, lead to shifts in the attitudes and practices of non-Aboriginal people. The chapter explores the desire of those non-Aboriginal Australians I described as mung beans. On the face of it many of these people seem to cherish rather than denigrate Aboriginal culture. Relying on well-established romantic primitivist discourse they are often transfixed with the idea that Aboriginal people possess special spiritual and redemptive powers. As a consequence many attempt to take on, even mimic, Aboriginal cultural forms and practices. The chapter explores how such yearning for and mimicry of Aboriginality can act to unsettle and call into question the sureness of non-Aboriginal cultural identity.

In chapter nine, the final ethnographic chapter, I examine the lives of non-Aboriginal people involved in governmental work with Aboriginal people. This chapter directs its attention to the analysis of the lives of non-Aboriginal people who, because of their involvement in governmental work, have considerable contact with Aboriginal people. The chapter argues that, like other non-Aboriginal Australians, ambivalence is also important in shaping the lives of those involved in the business of Aboriginal governance. The chapter concludes that tensions between regulatory government and more liberal ideals about fairness and justice throw up conditions which force many governmental
workers to reassess their relationships with Aboriginal people. As a consequence the work practices and everyday lives of many undergo significant change.

The thesis concludes that in a multitude of ways, in a multitude of social settings non-Aboriginal people express significant ambivalence towards Aboriginal people. On the one hand there is much spurning of Aboriginal people. Some are very public in their attacks of Aboriginal people. Others secretly harbour attitudes or involve themselves in activities that see them collaborating in the maintenance of racist discourse. However at the same time there is much yearning for Aboriginality. Some are very obvious in their quest for things Aboriginal, often going to great lengths to seek out Aboriginal culture and social intercourse with Aboriginal people. Others are more subtle in their desire for the Aboriginal Other, often keeping repressed their reliance on Aboriginal people and Aboriginality. This ambivalence is often profoundly unsettling to non-Aboriginal people, many of whom assume that their cultural identities are fixed and assured. In addition, this ambivalence results in Aboriginality becoming far more determinate and productive than many of us would like to acknowledge, often prompting changes and new and hybrid forms of social and cultural expression.

**Language used throughout the thesis**

Before moving ahead it is worth discussing the business of naming and the politics of language use. Like many others writing about contemporary social relations I come to the task of preparing the thesis during a time when there is considerable discomfort and
unease about the use of language and how to speak about each other. This is not to pretend of course that this is something new. As writers such as Fesl (1993) and Langton (1981 & 1993) have said, non-Aboriginal people in particular have a long and unsettled history when it comes to thinking about and addressing their own and Aboriginal people’s identities. This, I would suggest, is because the language we use is symbolic of the ambivalence we feel and exercise.

I come to write this thesis with no easy and established conventions for naming. Many terms have been used to describe those who are relative newcomers to Australia. Some of these include: white people, Europeans, Anglo-saxons, non-Aborigines, Wedjelas, Gadiyas, Gabbas, Goonyas, and non-Aboriginal people. Part of the reason why we (non-Aboriginal people) have such an unsettled history of naming ourselves is that there has been an unsettled and diverse history of naming the country’s original sovereign people. All of the above terms have their limitations. I could use unproblematically the terms white people, Europeans or Anglo-saxons to describe those involved as the subjects of the study. These three terms are still commonplace in both popular and academic discourse. Unfortunately all three can be misleading, inadequate and serve to imply a unified genetic, cultural and geographical heritage. I could choose to use the terms non-Aborigine or non-Aboriginal and ignore the trend in recent years by some writers who have moved away from the convention of using the term Aborigine (by association non-Aborigine), claiming that its continued use perpetuates the long and established tradition of dichotomising people’s lives and masking the complex range of experiences, and lives of culturally diverse people. I could also decide to use terms used by Aboriginal people,
such as Wedjela, Gadiya, Gubba and Goonya, to describe the subjects of the thesis. In the past I have indeed taken this approach, using descriptors when applying analysis to small geographic regions and specific cultural groups. Those involved in this study, by and large, did not self-identify either using generic or regionally specific descriptors of this kind. Although sometimes people tended to identify themselves as those from one state or another, it was very rare to hear people self-identify either using generic or regionally specific Aboriginal naming schema.

As with any choices about how to categorise and name people, the names and descriptors I choose will only go a little way towards offering an adequate description of people and social processes. The way I have attempted to deal with this dilemma in the thesis has by no means settled the problem. On the contrary I hope it serves as evidence of just how unsettled is our discourse. However, for the purposes of moving on, I have decided to go with something of a mix of identifiers. Throughout the thesis I will interchange names and identifiers, partly because that is what people seem to do and partly because I want to demonstrate the discomfort, shifting language and diversity in self-defining. This may seem rather strange and perhaps read as if things are a little fragmented. However this reflects just how deeply imbedded in language is our ambivalence. It also reflects how situational people’s self-identification tends to be and how incongruent is the cultural terrain about which I am writing. Throughout the thesis I will use a range of names to describe people’s identities because I heard people using a bundle of different names to describe themselves and others. The way that people identify speaks volumes about their cultural lives and about how they see themselves and others. For example, I found that
those people who feature in the chapter on Hanson and the One Nation Party tended to
describe themselves as “Aussie battlers”, “the silent majority” and “ordinary
Australians”. Loopies tended to either follow the lead of Hansonites or simply describe
themselves as “whites” or “white Australians”. Mung beans were more likely to use the
descriptors “white”, “Europeans”, “ango-saxon” or “anglo-celtic”. Governmental
workers were inclined to use descriptors that positioned themselves most clearly in
relation to their lack of Aboriginality, choosing terms such as “non-Aboriginal”, “non-
Indigenous” (very rarely) or accepting local Aboriginal descriptors such as Gadiya,
Wedjela or Gubba (depending on where they were living).

The reader may notice that I tend to favour the use of the term “non-Aboriginal”. This I
think reflects my own social positioning at this point and the fact that, although limited in
its application, this term has the most currency and practical use in the social circles in
which I mix. The reader may also notice that I tend to favour the use of ‘Aboriginal’ over
‘Indigenous’ as the descriptor of people with longstanding cultural heritage and
affiliations to this country. The term ‘Indigenous people’ is increasingly becoming more
popular in legal and some governmental discourse. I understand that it is used because it
is technically and legally more accurate to describe ‘First Nation People’s’ as Indigenous.
However, in my experience ‘Aboriginal people’ is a term more likely to be adopted as
common discourse by those who identify as such. There is something about the term
‘Indigenous’ that strikes me as a little impersonal and abstract. It certainly has had little
place in my own history and has only recently, and in a limited way, become a part of my
language.
In short I have a good deal of discomfort around the use of terminology used to describe cultural groups in this country. Much of the language is historically loaded, can lead to the essentialising of people’s lives, and can set up unnecessarily dualistic frameworks. However, like all social scientists, I must begin with representations available to me and recognise that dualisms, although limited in application, are real in the sense that they have an extended history and use in people’s social language. In other words, people’s identities and material conditions can only really be known through representations that are presently available.

**Conclusion**

Since the nineteen seventies scholars have been prompted to think more carefully about cultural identity and intercultural relationships in Australia. This has largely been driven by an awareness of the myth of assimilation and sensitivity to the opposition of Indigenous Australians who have struggled to maintain language, culture and some sovereignty. The popularity of the ‘loss of culture thesis’ has waned as people have begun to question the legitimacy of claims that the cultures of Aboriginal and Islander Australians are destined to dilute and dissipate, replaced by the cultural forms and practices of non-Aboriginal Australians.

However there seems to have been something of a legacy from the ‘loss of culture thesis’. This legacy has often resulted in the subtle perpetuation of the idea that
Aboriginal cultures have been passive, unconscious and isolated victims of colonial processes while the cultures and lives of non-Aboriginal Australians have remained fixed, unchanging and dominant in every way. In other words, a sub-text in still much of our thinking is that, as time goes by, Aboriginal Australians are losing their heritage to 'Australian society' while the lives of other Australians are impacted on little by the presence of Aboriginal Australians.

This introductory chapter began by introducing the thesis - that, in a multitude of ways, Aboriginality and Aboriginal Australians have and continue to be important to the cultural lives and economies of non-Aboriginal people. The chapter then moved into a brief exploration of how my own background prompted an interest in the study of cultural transmission and the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. Next the discussion moved to how the particularities of my background shaped the analytical approach I have taken. Finally the chapter briefly discussed difficulties with naming different cultural groups featured in the thesis. The thesis will now move from a review of the social influences shaping my interest in the study towards a review of the literature offering analytical inspiration.

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1 The name used to identify Aboriginal people who herald from the south west of Western Australia.

2 See Haebich (1999), for a detailed examination of the complexities and contradictions of missionary activities.

3 The name used by many Nyungars when referring to non-Aboriginal people.

4 For a short discussion of this idea see Baldassar (1992).
Chapter two

The springboard:

Inspirations from the literature
Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a tendency in literature concerned with colonial relations in Australia to rely on a ‘loss of culture thesis’. As a consequence attention is often limited to how Aboriginal people’s lives have been changed by contact with non-Aboriginal people, often at the exclusion of inquiry into cultural intersubjectivity. However, there does exist a body of scholarship interested in the impact of the colonised on the coloniser. Some of this literature emanates from other parts of the world while some has emerged from Australian scholars keen to ask how interaction with Aboriginal people has influenced non-Aboriginal people’s lives. This chapter will review how this literature has helped frame this project. I will begin with a look at the quite recent move towards deconstructing the lives of those who have not been constituted on the margins. Discussion then moves towards a review of work by a small number of historians studying the history of cross-cultural negotiations, patterns of accommodation and the crucial role Aboriginal people have played in Australian life since colonisation. Following this I will turn to a discussion of literature interested in power, particularly the agency of those otherwise constituted as the subaltern. The intention of this chapter is to examine how this literature further helps shape the analytical framework of the thesis.
Deconstructing ‘whiteness’ and the lives of non-Aboriginal people

As Rabinow (1986, p. 259) says, one of the marks of colonial inquiry is that “the group in the colonies who have received the least attention in historical and sociological studies are the colonists themselves.” While topics such as ‘race’, ‘oriental studies’, ‘Aboriginality’ and the lives of a range of Indigenous and colonised people have received enormous official and academic attention the same cannot be said about studies of whites, the Occidentals and non-Aboriginal people. Generally ‘whiteness’, the ‘West’, and the lives of non-Aboriginal people have been invisible, seen as inconsequential, not extraordinary enough to warrant social inquiry and often shielded from official scrutiny (Palmer, 1995a).

Increasingly this kind of silence in social inquiry has received considerable criticism from inside and outside the academy. A range of writers have called for the self-interrogation of constructs and constituted groups such as ‘whites’, ‘Europeans’ and ‘non-Aborigines’. These writers have claimed that to fail to put these social categories through the rigours of academic scrutiny is to perpetuate the continued domination of white supremacist thinking (Dyer, 1988 and 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1992).

According to Nederveen Pieterse (1994, p. 130), this lack in the problematising of the West has been strongly shaped by nineteenth-century regimes of truth resulting in a culture of forgetting, structurally overlooking “the ways in which Europe in its development has been standing on the shoulders of other cultures”. She suggests that
much historiography reflects a European making of history “drunk with the superiority of European civilization.” She calls for a continued revision of history obsessed with the idea of European precedence and an unmasking of the extent to which those otherwise thought to hold positions of cultural centrality have been the recipients of knowledge, technology and culture. Only then, she says, will we see that the West is at least partly a creation of non-Western influences (Bergesen cited in Nederveen Pieterse, 1994, p.143).

Frankenberg (1993, p. 17) also argues that the study of cross-cultural relations has, for the most part, seen black and/or Indigenous others marked as objects while white/Westerners remain unmarked subjects with invisible racial and cultural identities. Such a fascination with the strange, distant and exotic Indigenous other, has functioned to allow for the projection and confirmation of the self (Gunew, 1994, p. 30). In the Australian situation much social scientific work has used Aboriginal others to help mark boundaries around what is considered non-Aboriginal - hence normal. This allows non-Aboriginal people to find their own personhood in the society of Aboriginal others. According to Bird Rose (1996a, p. 214-215) this makes non-Aboriginal people enormously indebted to Aboriginal Australians.

Dyer (1997) argues that until recent times, white as a social category has largely gone unexamined while the lives of black, third world and Indigenous people have received a great deal of scrutiny. He calls for scholars to look beyond the apparent unremarkability of ‘whiteness’ and engage in analysis of how ‘white’ people understand and constitute themselves. Agreeing, hooks (1992, p. 165) likewise calls for the identities and lives of
'whites' or 'westerners' to be placed under scrutiny. By investigating our own 'angloality' (Huggins and Saunders, 1993, p. 67) we can see how our cultural identities have been contingent, are historically produced and much more complex than we might otherwise have thought (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 233). Spivak (1993, p. 278) seems to share this view suggesting it is now time for scholarship to shift towards anthropologising the West. These scholars have built on the work of Edward Said (1978) whose seminal book *Orientalism* demonstrated how the West makes sense of itself as the powerful, the articulate, the civilised by constructing the 'Orient' as the defeated, the distant, the strange other.

According to Frankenberg (1993), such work on whiteness is important. She calls on scholars to not only unpack what it means to be white but also to see behind the otherwise routine and unremarkability of lives of white people and how white identities are shaped by the making of black others. Critically interrogating the lives of people otherwise constituted as the centre, the primordial, the essential self is eminently necessary for it “make(s) visible processes by which the stability of whiteness (or Europeanness, non-Aboriginalness) - as location of privilege, as culturally normative space, and as stand-point - is secured and reproduced” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 242). Rabinow (1986, p. 238) says that we need to 'anthropologise the West', show how exotic and distant its constitution of reality has been and emphasise those things most taken as universal. This is important for one of the most common tactics of an elite group is to refuse to discuss themselves and to label as vulgar or uninteresting their own lives (Rabinow, 1986, p. 235).
hooks (1992, p. 165) suggests that despite the refusal within the academy to make such things the topic of investigation, people from ‘black communities’ have been collecting and generating a wealth of information, observations and psychological readings of ‘white people’. She says:

*Although there has never been an official body of black people in the United States who have gathered as anthropologists and/or ethnographers to study whiteness, black folks have, from slavery on, shared in conversations with one another ‘special’ knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people.*

Rosaldo (1989, p. 189) likewise claims that those otherwise understood as the dominated usually understand the dominant much better than the reverse. In coping with their daily lives the colonised must understand the coloniser.

*Hegel’s analysis of the master’s imaginative leap to discover slave consciousness, for example, remains incomplete until it includes the fact that the slave, for reasons of work and survival, already knows what’s on the master’s mind.*

Rosaldo (1989, p. 62) also suggests that without necessarily being conscious of it, studying the other often produces the conditions for ethnographers to learn much about themselves. He says,
anthropologists surely have been moved, if not shaken, by the astute ethnographic observations that their subjects of research have made about North American or European culture. The most dramatic experience of this kind in my fieldwork suggest a dialogic potential, one of critical reflection and reciprocal perceptions, as yet rarely realised in the official rhetoric of anthropology.

A number of writers have applied some of these ideas to the study of non-Aboriginal Australians. Langton (1998a, np) recently talked about the need to commit at least part of our attention to the study of non-Aboriginal people. Speaking at a seminar about the management of Aboriginal services and organisation she made the observation that we know little about the corporate culture and the social culture of non-Aboriginal service providers in the Aboriginal sector.

*We need to get an idea of what service providers are thinking and doing. We know lots about the Aboriginal community ... but we do not know about service providers. What are their levels of qualifications and training? What are their levels of custom design training? Do we have an analysis of features of the corporate culture which should be changed? The answer to most of these questions is no. No, no we do not know much.*

Nicholson and Sykes (1994, p. 166) also call for the critical review of the lives of non-Aboriginal people particularly given that the continued presence of Aboriginal people has created the opportunity for the settlers to discover a great many things about themselves.

Commenting on literature concerned with colonial relations in Australia, McBryde (1996, p. 6) curiously notes that emphasis on violence, pain and suffering within
Australian history often contrasts sharply with “the more positive record that comes from Aboriginal writers recounting the same harsh events, (who) often stress the themes of initiative, courage and cultural survival” (McBryde, 1996, p. 6). To many Aboriginal people it is far from novel to suggest that non-Aboriginal Australians have been influenced, assisted and educated by Aboriginal people. Indeed one of the noticeable themes running through Aboriginal writing is that the new arrivals have always been and will continue to be, incorporated into the country, local social processes and local knowledges\(^1\). In his life story Robert Bropho (1980, p. 16) makes this very point, that colonial enterprises were literally built by Nyungars. He reminds us that Nyungars were “the structure of many buildings .... all over this continent .... the foundation stone for many churches ... many cattle stations.”

Indeed it has been a part of Aboriginal common sense knowledge and protocol to assert that it is not possible to live in a place and not be absorbed by it and its people. As Jung (cited in Tacey, 1995, p. 134), in his essay, ‘Mind and Earth’, writes,

*Certain Australian Aborigines assert that one cannot conquer foreign soil, because in it there dwell strange ancestor-spirits who reincarnate themselves in the new-born. There is a great psychological truth in this. The foreign land assimilates its conqueror.*
Hospitality, influence and intersubjectivity in Australian history

Another important analytical influence from the literature has been the interest, by a number of Australian scholars, in the history of negotiation since early colonial times. At least since the 1930s a small but important group of historians have been keenly aware of the need to explore instances of Aboriginal hospitality, agency, influence and incorporation in relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Many of these writers have undertaken to transform public perceptions about the power of Aboriginal people to exert their influence over other Australians.

Records of the effect Aboriginal people have had on colonising people and their cultures are evident from the earliest of colonial times. As later chapters will demonstrate, the journals and diaries of many of the first colonial expansionists are full of references to the work and efforts of Aboriginal men and women. By the 1930s these efforts were being recognised and written about by some key officials and historians. For example, when making his submission to the Moseley Royal Commission in the 1930s Father Raible, Catholic Bishop to the Kimberley region, acknowledged that “the whole State is founded and built upon the bones of the Blacks, who are the real owners of the country” (cited in Zucker, 1994, p. 88).

There are other examples, particularly from within the discipline of history, of scholarship taking as its theme intersubjectivity in cultural encounters. As early as 1958 Russell Ward first argued the case that at least in some encounters Aboriginal people
have been able to exercise some level of control over cultural change. He argued that some Aboriginal men were able to exert a great deal of control over non-Aboriginal men because of non-Aboriginal men’s sexual involvement with Aboriginal women. His book not only contains a discussion of violent and brutal colonial encounters but also of the ability of Aboriginal people to be openly hospitable; incorporate non-Aboriginal castaways, convicts, and settlers; resist government and Christian imposition; and engage creatively with new economies. Indeed, according to Ward (cited in Broome, 1997, p. 66), “if, as has been argued, the bushman’s esprit de corps sprang largely from his adaptation to, and mastery of, the outback environment, then the Aborigine was his master and mentor”.

In the 1960s and 70s the late Dianne Barwick criticised accounts of early Australian colonial history which she said were only interested in commemorating instances of confrontation at the expense of describing processes of accommodation (cited in Attwood, 1996c, p. 109). A little later Mulvaney (also cited in Attwood, 1996c, p.109) took up Barwick’s challenge and called for a greater commitment to historical research concerned with processes of cross-cultural accommodation, particularly where there have been instances of peaceful co-existence; positive interaction; reciprocal relations; a mingling of cultures; and signs of mutual respect. He sought out and encouraged others to seek out those instances where genuine collaborations occurred between Aboriginal people and early colonists. Mulvaney’s work regularly and conspicuously asks: What are the necessary conditions which lead to collaborative arrangements occurring between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians? According to Attwood (1996c, p. 111),
Mulvaney's work stands as a critique of histories ignoring instances of humanitarianism, reciprocity and intersubjectivity.

Thomas (1991, p. 309) shares the view that disciplines such as history and anthropology have too often used discourses of alterity that magnify “the distance between ‘others’ and ‘ourselves’ while suppressing mutual engagement and the perspectival and political fracturing of the cultures of both observers and observed.” Likewise Brewster (1995, p. 7) suggests that, while non-Aboriginal historians should neither “speak on behalf of nor ventriloquise” Aboriginal people, it is important to remain cognisant of the history of alliances, however provisional they may have been. Earlier Smith (1980, p. 51) made similar observations when he said:

_History provides many cases in which the culture of the victors has converged with the cultures of the vanquished in the search for a more civilised identity. Consider the place that Etruscan and Greek art played in the emergence of the art of Imperial Rome; or the continuing contributions which the Celtic ‘fringedwellers’ of Scotland, Wales and Ireland have made to the English cultural tradition._

It is untrue to suggest that there has been a total silence of matters related to Aborigines. However it is fair to say that most historical narrative produced by non-Aboriginal writers has largely been silent about “ourselves and the Aborigines” (Attwood, 1996b, p. xiv). Seddon (1995, p. 126) makes this point well.
There is a good and disturbing account of what we (the whites) have done to them (the blacks). The reciprocal is lacking: what they have done to us. The pervasive influence of Maori culture on Pakeha culture is a major theme in New Zealand literature. Americans know they have a black (and red) streak in their consciousness. Greg Dening has explored reciprocity in the Marquesas Islands and Beaches. But the role of the Aborigines in the Australian consciousness (seems) too obscure for analysis ....

According to Stanner (1969) this reflects a “cult of forgetfulness”, a “disremembering” which has the effect of excluding “a whole quadrant of the (historical) landscape”. Well might we suggest, as Stanner (1969, p. 56) does, that ignoring the effect Aboriginal people have had on non-Aboriginal Australians gives “the aborigines (sic) no place in our past except that of a melancholy footnote”. The historian C.D. Rowley also noted this absence of history concerned with the involvement of Aborigines in Australian life. He said:

Historical studies of the role played by the Aboriginal since contact with white settlers are sparse. In the broad scope of Australian historical studies he (sic) appears as an almost completely passive figure. Yet it is difficult to believe that long association and the most intimate personal relationships in frontier areas have failed to influence the style of Australian life (Rowley, cited in Jacobson, 1987, p. 317).

Attwood (1992) offers similar challenges to historians. He too has enunciated a commitment to rethinking colonial power and seeking out instances where knowledge and experience has been shared and negotiated. According to Attwood (1996b, p. viii) it
is time to challenge the pattern, most evident in 1970s revisionist histories of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations, of portraying Aboriginal people as anonymous and passive victims. Likewise Williams and Chrisman (1993, p. 16) criticise the tendency of historians to favour historical accounts which give rise to the idea that only the colonisers have subjectivity. These writers argue the need for more exploration of the extent to which those considered to be the subaltern have played a constitutive rather than merely reflective role.

Rather than being that other onto which the coloniser projects a previously constituted subjectivity and knowledge, native presences, locations, and political resistance need to be further theorised as having a determining or primary role in colonial discourses, and in the attendant domestic versions of these discourses.

Williams and Chrisman beseech social scientists to examine with much more vigour the active role Indigenous people have played in shaping the lives of and exerting power over colonists. In much the same way say Nicholson and Sykes (1994, p. 166), Australian studies must start to counter the “tremendous reluctance on the part of a very large component of non-Aboriginal Australia to contemplate the worthwhile nature of the Indigenous influence on the identity of Australians which Aboriginal people have already wrought and will continue to exert.” Harkins (1993, p. 32) makes similar points when talking about the specific field of linguistics, suggesting we must not be “slow to recognise Aboriginal varieties of English as part of the wealth of our national linguistic heritage.” Agreeing, Troy (1993, p. 47), says that early contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people provided Australian English with some of its core vocabulary
(Troy, 1993, p. 47). Jacobson (1987, p. 317) likewise claims that one can “trace Aboriginal influence in the very language most commonly heard on Australian lips”.

Much historiography, according to Thomas (1994, p. 15), has suffered from an overexaggeration of the ‘fatal impact’ of colonialism at the same time as diminishing: 1) the extent to which colonial histories were shaped by Indigenous resistance and accommodation and 2) the extent to which particular colonising people are altered by the Indigenous groups they encounter. This emphasis on cultural denigration has meant that much work fails to take account of the historical moments when Aboriginal people have been embraced and Aboriginal cultural forms have been cherished. Reece (1996, p. 37) makes similar comments, reproaching other historians for only writing about the extent of violence in early colonial encounters while failing to acknowledge significant accommodation between Aboriginal people and colonists. He suggests that, at least since the 1970s, historical accounts have resounded with unnecessary and at times self-effacing polemics at the expense of other valid historical interpretations of cross-cultural contact. Alongside the history of invasion, violence, dispossession, intervention and over-government have been other stories - stories involving collaborations and partnerships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Curthoys, 1997b, p. 123). As Best (1994, p. 87) puts it, historians’ overemphasis and concentration on colonial violence has resulted in an imbalance occurring so that stories about murder, blood and violence are told at the expense of stories about Aboriginal people’s strength and resilience. Likewise in her analysis of the politics of film-making by and for Aboriginal people Langton (1993) argues that, despite the growth in media which has non-Aboriginal people making
personal and rehabilitative statements about colonial history, it is generally unhelpful for film-makers to portray the colonisers as exclusively the oppressors. One of the effects of stories only ever dealing with the cruel and tyrannical mastering of Aboriginal people is that Aboriginal stories of good and collaborative times with non-Aboriginal people are silenced and left out of histories (cited in Jennings, 1993, p. 37).

Hudson and Bolton (1997, p. 3) are also critical of history making that only ever examines colonial violence and call for histories which emphasise the multiple identities of Australians. They too are particularly critical of “gloomier assessments” and simplistic readings of Australian histories and challenge historians to seek out more complex versions of the past. They call for scholarship with an interest in instances where Australians have been able to exert a level of agency and a capacity for originality in their responses to a range of historical challenges. In a similar fashion White (1997, p. 21) suggests that because Australian history is a history of violence and exploitation, as well as a history of creativity and originality, we need to be investigating the richness and fullness of a place which is teleologically dynamic.

We can no longer get away with a simple reading of Australian identity says Curthoys (1997a, p. 25), because “many individuals (are) able to relate to a number of different cultural traditions and diaspora histories within their families.” She argues that we must seek to examine a multitude of ways in which the lives of many Australians, like so many other colonial and neo-colonial people, is characterised by hybridity. We must find ways to recognise this hybridity says McGrath (1997, p. 41), for while many liaisons between
Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have been marked by violence, disease, confusion, exploitation and marginalisation, there have also been moments of intimacy which have prompted cultural insight, physical sharing, diplomacy and the biological mingling of people.

Following on from the work of Reynolds (1990), Read (1997, p. 68) expresses the view that work must continue to uncover Aboriginal economic agency. He reminds his readers that in the north, west and centre of Australia Aboriginal people have been the mainstay in the Australian economy. Yu (1994) likewise argues convincingly that other than the:

**Aboriginal economy there is little industry or prospect of any major economic development which can sustain a significant non-Aboriginal population in the (Kimberley) region, and in fact the vast majority of non-Aboriginal people living (in the region) are employed in some capacity to service the Aboriginal population (Yu, 1994, p.27).**

According to Crough and Christopherson (1993) economic analysis has rarely been directed towards the contributions of Aboriginal people. This is despite the fact that colonial expansionists often openly acknowledged how vital was Aboriginal knowledge and work. Evidence from the journals, letters, and official diaries of non-Aboriginal people operating on the frontiers is that it was and continues to be Aboriginal Australians who give the expansionists the ‘key’ to an otherwise locked country. Kept hidden have been stories about the extent to which non-Aboriginal Australians have been reliant on Aboriginal good will in this regard. This is despite the fact that:
there is increasing evidence of the indispensable role Aboriginal people played in the economic development and expansion of certain industries, particularly pastoralism, and as native police. These contributions are quite distinct from the wealth that has been generated from the land Aboriginal people had taken away from them (Crough & Christopherson, 1993, p. 18).

A “terra nullius of the mind” (Duffield, 1998) therefore exists around consideration of how Aboriginal people’s central role in social, cultural and economic life has shaped the material circumstances of non-Aboriginal people by improving their access to resources, and social benefits. In this way myth making and identity formation in relation to non-Aboriginal people’s hard work and economic significance is able to be maintained without challenge. For example, it is still claimed by many opponents of native title that Aboriginal people’s legal rights to land will jeopardise the very fabricate of non-Aboriginal contributions to the pastoral industry, something often considered to form the backbone of Western Australian (non-Aboriginal) life. The claim is that native title will nullify all the work, the blood, sweat and tears of non-Aboriginal colonial pioneers who trailblazed in exceptional conditions to build the very fabric of what exists today. Of course, this history of forgetfulness assumes, unfairly, that it was only non-Aboriginal people who set up economies such as the pastoral industry (Dodson, 1998).
Power, negotiation and ambivalence in colonial discourse.

A group of scholars informed by psychoanalytic theory have also had things to say about cross-cultural influence and the identity of non-Aborigines. Tacey (1995, p. 60), a Jungian, remarks that non-Aboriginal people living in contemporary Australia are increasingly feeling “profundely unsettled and unsure of themselves.” This is reason enough, he says, for non-Aboriginal identity to become the subject of critical investigation. As this uncertainty grows, observes Tacey, so does the level of ‘aboriginalisation’ increase within the psyche of non-Aboriginal Australians. He claims that we know precious little about this psychological and cultural process, a process where “the old assimilates its conqueror, or the conqueror becomes or takes on the likeness of those who have been conquered” (Tacey, 1995, p. 134-135). It is time, according to Tacey, to stop avoiding facing our own repressed history and experience and take up Jung’s challenge to unmask why it is that we “wrap our psychic nakedness in the wondrous trappings of an exotic culture” (cited in Tacey, 1995, p. 135).

The art critic and social commentator Bernard Smith (1980), is another who has argued the need to treat Aboriginal people’s influence on cultural life with the same attention as associated topics such as changes to Aboriginal cultural forms and frontier violence. In the introduction to his 1980 Boyer lecture series, called “The Spectre of Truganini”, Smith (1980, p. 9) challenged his audience to begin asking about the effects the continuing presence of Aboriginal people in Australia have upon the emergence of Australian culture. This question is particularly important given the insistence of denial
of Aboriginal people's place in Australian history and culture. Although using the term Australian culture in a way that seems to imply culture is homogeneous and fixed, he suggests that from early colonial days non-Aboriginal people have suffered from what Freud might describe as a guilt complex. Stories of homicide, large-scale dislocation, physical violence, rape, economic exploitation and child abduction have acted as nightmares which are thrust out of the consciousness of non-Aboriginal people. However just as Freud argued that childhood-experiences of trauma will remerge if repressed, Smith suggests that this history will always haunt non-Aboriginal Australians and their cultural way of life (Smith, 1980, p. 17).

To illustrate this point Smith takes an example from the history of the formation, by early colonialists, of ideas about the Australian bush. Aboriginal culture, he claims, came to be conflated with the bush with early settlers tending to perceive the bush as "mournful and melancholic" (Smith, 1980, p. 21). He implied that we can best understand this phenomenon, (that is of representing the bush as a place of loss) as symptomatic of the collective guilt and fear of non-Aboriginal settlers who transferred their own repressed psychic anxieties onto the landscape. He argues that even the banishment of Aboriginal people, physically and symbolically, to hidden reserves on the fringes of Australian life was important to the creation of new and distinctly Australian cultural identities. In other words, even Aboriginal people's absence has been a necessary device in the making of an Australian (non-Aboriginal) identity (Smith, 1980, p. 22). By taking on this neo-Freudian position he makes Aborigines (both as real people and imagined ideas) highly influential, in psychological terms, to the formation of non-Aboriginal people's identities. In this way
he is positing something not too dissimilar to arguments put forth by Tacey (1995) that Aboriginal people continue to be central agents in the development of non-Aboriginal psychological neurosis. Their continued presence, despite the history of frontier violence and attempted genocide, means that non-Aboriginal Australians are confronted with constant reminders of their frightful past. According to Smith, non-Aboriginal people, and by implication non-Aboriginal scholars, can confront their ‘demons’ by making themselves and their histories the subject of analysis. In a way Aboriginal Australians are not only then implicated in the formation of non-Aboriginal people’s neurosis but also in their therapy.

I have also found useful Foucault’s interest in the productive effects of power. Speaking about the need to move towards analysis of the use of power across a range of sites by a range of people, he said “we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’”. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1979). Therefore where there is power there is contest and there is struggle. Or as Foucault (1988, p. 123) said elsewhere, “as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy”.

Also offering much inspiration to the project has been the study of governmentality, or what Foucault describes as “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses
and reflections” (cited in Rose, 1996, p. 35) which involves the exercising of a variety of sets of negotiated power relationships. Of particular value has been the body of governmentality literature concerned with how subjects of ‘regimes of government’ are never simply passive victims in social processes. Rose (1996, p. 35) reminds us:

Human beings are not the unified subjects of some coherent regimen of government that produces persons in the form in which it dreams. On the contrary, they live their lives in a constant movement across different practices that subjectify them in different ways.

This might well mean that, in an range of complex ways, Aboriginal Australians emerge able to be active players in the shaping of life for other Australians. As the ex-Prime Minister Paul Keating⁴ said, Aboriginal people have again become “a defining element in the character of our nation” (cited in Dobrez, 1994, p. ii).

The thesis has also been significantly inspired by literature concerned with colonial ambivalence. Increasingly, anthropologists, sociologists and those engaging in the new field of post and anti-colonial criticism have called for work which moves away from the tendency of “totalising conceptions of power and control” (Carrington, 1994, p. 29) towards an analysis of points of contest and struggle.

As a more complex view of colonial culture is being articulated, I think we also need a more complex understanding of power in the colonies ... Power is
frequently understood as force personified: the possession of a single group - the colonialists. This conception is inadequate for a number of reasons. First the colonists themselves were highly factionalised and stratified. Second, the state (and particularly the colonial state) is something we need to know a great deal more about. Third, the view of power that understands it as a thing, or a possession, or emanating unidirectionally from the top down, or operating primarily through the application of force has been put seriously in question. (Rabinow, 1986, p. 259).

As mentioned earlier I have found value in the scholarship of Said, whose work on ‘Orientalism’ has shaped the analytical framework of the thesis in a number of ways. Often regarded as the catalyst for, or beginning of, Postcolonial literature (Gandhi, 1998, p. 64) Said’s ‘Orientalism’ moved analysis of the West and how it constitutes the other to centre stage. When Said (1978, p. 6) argued that Orientalism is more useful as a sign of the European-Atlantic than “it is a veridic discourse about the Orient” he opened the way for the study of the lives of people living in the West. Using Said’s ideas Attwood (1992, p. xi) has suggested that Aboriginalism, or discursive treatment of Aboriginal people, is likely to tell us much more about broader social processes and the lives and thinking of non-Aboriginal people than it tells us about Aboriginal people. Following this line of argument other postcolonial theorists, such as Spivak (1990, p. 96), have posited that those in the so called Third World have produced the wealth and “the possibility of the cultural self-representation of the ‘First World’”. This view is consistent with arguments put by Memmi (1968, p. 45) who acknowledged how critical is the colonised to the coloniser. According to Memmi, the colonial condition “chained the coloniser and the colonised into an implacable dependence” moulding the characters and shaping the lives
of the coloniser just as much as the colonised. This then means that those non-Indigenous people involved in colonising processes have to acknowledge, as Sartre (cited in Gandhi, 1998, p. 17) has, that “I am possessed by the Other; the Other’s look fashions my body in its nakedness, causes it to be born, sculptures it, produces it as it is, sees it as I shall never see it. The Other holds a secret - the secret of what I am.”

Since Orientalism theorists have revisited Said’s analysis and argued that stories about the colonial other are often more ambivalent, complex and available to the colonised. On the one hand the Indigenous other is despised as a barbaric alien who looms as a dangerous threat. On the other hand the Indigenous Other is the subject of much desire, serving as a source of inspiration because of its ancient wisdom and its ability to hold up the inadequacies of the West (Clarke, 1997, p. 3). As a result colonial discourse and colonial practice is often inclined to be less than straightforward and full of contradictions. So while on the one hand the coloniser might seem to be often full of disdain for the Indigenous other they are at the same time likely to elevate indigenous ideas and practices above their own. According to Clarke (1997, p. 9) this has the effect of challenging and disrupting the discourse of the colonisers, and producing possibilities for the subversion and transformation of colonial life. This means, according to Clarke (1997, p. 9), that built into Orientalist discourse is the seeds of its own subversion.

So we can say at the very least, the ‘West’s’ construction of the ‘Orient’ is not a unified or unidirectional one (Gandhi, 1998, p. 17). Nor are stories about the ‘Orient’ always and only available to the West and used against the colonised. Orientalist stereotyping,
according to Bhabha (1986, p. 169) not only involves the making of negative images which allow the coloniser to legitimise discrimination and marginalisation. Colonial stereotypes have also become available for radical and counter-colonial uses, regularly being drawn upon in affirmative ways by the colonised to define a cultural identity in opposition to the West. In other words, Orientalist discourse is available to and used by its antagonists in the colonised world. Using examples from Gandhian cultural resistance, Fox (1992, p. 151) says Indian anticolonials often “depended upon an Orientalist image of India as inherently spiritual, consensual, and corporate.” Orientalist discourse is not always negative or derogatory. In later work Said (1993, p. xii) takes this into account, arguing that:

never was it the case that the imperial encounter pitted an active Western intruder against a supine or inert non-Western native; there was always some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out.

A number of Australian writers have drawn on these ideas using them as analytical tools to understand modern Australian social and cultural relations. These writers are now arguing that the closer one looks at the history of politics in Australia the more complicated it gets. In particular non-Aboriginal treatment of Aboriginal people and Aboriginality has always been less straightforward and more ambivalent than we have accounted for. This ambivalence, according to writers like Curthoys (1997) and Chandra-Shekeran (1998), helps explain how our present social circumstances are so full of competing and rapidly changing dynamics. This ambivalence also accounts for the range
of different responses non-Aboriginal people seem to have to Aboriginality - responses which have people simultaneously taking on what seem to be contradictory significations and practices. According to Curthoys (1997b, p. 123) this is because the discursive practices of non-Aboriginal Australians have always been divided between traditions of fear, hate and disdain and desire and yearning for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture. Such double edged treatment of Aboriginality produces slippages and discursive gaps that can and are capitalised upon by Aboriginal people and those committed to a politics of liberation (Chandra-Shekeran, 1998, p. 109). Such ambivalence towards Aboriginal people can be used in enabling ways to undermine the hegemony of colonial rule.

According to Gelder and Jacobs (1998, p. xvi) this ambivalence, unsettling as it is, is a productive feature of the postcolonial Australian landscape. It incites doubt and uncertainty and gives rise to discourse and counter-discourses which remind non-Aboriginal people of their tenuous identities. Such theorising then opens the way to understand how the discourses of non-Aboriginal people contains the possibility of its own undoing. This contribution is valuable because it offers the possibility of understanding what might best produce conditions which undermine racism and the certainty of non-Aboriginal authority over Aboriginal Australians.
Conclusion

Despite what we often might assume about the death of Aboriginal culture and the supposed dependency of Aboriginal people on non-Aboriginal economies there is some evidence that Aboriginal Australians have an impact on the way non-Aboriginal people live. Langton (1994, p. 44) certainly believes the role played by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the cultural life of Australia “has heightened the ability of Australians to perceive the world differently”. Likewise Aboriginal imagery, knowledge and the economic contributions of Aboriginal people have laid the foundations for the kind of cultural forms that are being presented in the international arena as we enter the new millennium. Debates about whose interests are being served aside for a moment, one thing is clear, “we are enlisting Aboriginal culture to brand, sell and to define ourselves” (Rothwell, 1996, p. 1). As Bill Hayden said in his final Australia Day Speech as Governor General:

Aboriginal creativity has taken its place as a major influence in our national consciousness. We’re receptive to what Aboriginal artists, dancers, writers and performers have to say. In a very real sense they are helping to reshape our own concept of self and country - of the way we see and feel things as Australians - and as others see us (cited in Rothwell, 1996, p. 1).

We can see, from the work of a number of scholars, how important it is to examine Aboriginal influence on the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. This country’s history is
brimming with evidence that “the colonising culture invested more in Indigenous aspects of the place than they (the colonists) have been willing to admit” (McLean, 1998, p. vii). Well and truly by the 1950s says McLean (1998, p. 96), the significance of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture to an Australian identity and life was both well established and incontestable. Despite this, discourses of Aboriginal impotence seem to still maintain currency amongst many.

Today there is much evidence that Aboriginal people and Aboriginality are, perhaps now more than ever, central to the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. Bird Rose says that contemporary colonial relations are far more complex than she had at first anticipated. She now has the view that rather than colonial relations being distinguished by one-sided power exchanges there are a range of “zones of empowerment and synergistic accommodation” within relations of coercion and regulation (Bird Rose, 1996b, p. 36). Attwood (1996b, p. xxiii) suggests that cultural synergisation is presently occurring to an unprecedented degree with Aboriginality and Aboriginal people coming to have a heightened importance in the last two decades. He implies that given their central and defining position in contemporary Australian life, Aboriginal people’s contribution needs to receive the deepest consideration. He suggests there ought to be a number of different kinds of works, or dimensions to such work.

First, histories which would examine the moments when the ideals and values of both settler Australians and Aborigines have been upheld such that all peoples have benefited, and so genuine human progress can be said to have achieved. Second, histories such as those recommended by Tim Murray and myself, which
truly historicise the Aboriginal past and reveal not only continuities but also discontinuities, and which recognise that Aborigines and settler Australians are contemporary peoples with identities that are mutually constituted rather than exclusionary and dissociative. Third, histories which would both draw attention to those occasions when mutually beneficial relations have existed between the two peoples, and highlight the necessary conditions for this. Such histories could play a vital role in realising a new future (Attwood, 1996b, p. xxxviii).

This chapter has reviewed literature that has helped shape the analytical framework of the thesis. The chapter began by examining work by those interested in the study of ‘whiteness’ and the lives of those otherwise constituted as Westerners. In short the chapter began by taking seriously the need to make the subject of formal study the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. This interest in approaching the study of the lives of non-Aboriginal people is influenced a great deal by the challenge offered by Said (1978, p. 13) who argued Western scholarship must no longer declare the serious study of imperialism and culture off limits. This means that an overarching analytical theme running throughout the study is the necessity of unmasking some of the “ideological disguises of imperialism” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 67) by subjecting the lives of non-Aboriginal people to critical investigation. As Said (1978, p. 11) claims, to be a non-Aboriginal Australian is “by no means an inert fact”. Indeed it means being a member of a distinct and powerful social group with definite interests in and involvement with the Aboriginal other.
The chapter then moved into an exploration of literature that seeks to theorise colonial history in a way that recognises the agency and interconnections between both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. The chapter pointed to the analytical imperative to move away from theoretical models which portray Aboriginal people as merely passive victims unable to exert influence over the colonisers. In other words, it is important for the thesis to challenge silences in analysis about ‘ourselves’ and our relationships with Aboriginal people. In analysing the narratives and social worlds of non-Aboriginal people, I will attempt as thoroughly as possible to reflect upon how ‘we’ have been altered by our encounters with Aboriginal people.

Finally the chapter briefly reviewed some of the work of post-colonial writers who are keen to understand how complex and ambivalent are colonial discourses. This discussion demonstrated how important it will be in the thesis to move away from totalising conceptions of power which position non-Aboriginal people as always in opposition to and dominant over Aboriginal people. Such post-colonial literature argues that while we need to be careful to recognise the material and social consequences of racism and not underscore the concrete effects of social inequality in Australia’s colonial history we must also be concerned with the productive effects of power and the complex way in which people negotiate social relations.

The literature concerned with colonial ambivalence also points to the analytical importance of challenging the idea that colonial relations in this country have been straightforward and that non-Aboriginal people could ever have been influenced in any
significant way by Aboriginal people. Indeed non-Aboriginal people are often profoundly ambivalent in the way they come to think about and engage with Aboriginal people, at one and the same time both spurning Aboriginal people and strongly yearning for things Aboriginal.

I turn in the following chapter to a consideration of the method I used in undertaking the field work for the thesis. Taking seriously the claims by post-colonial writers like Gelder and Jacobs (1998) I set out in this chapter to explore how carrying out research can produce its own set of uncertainties and prompt ambivalence in the researcher. In this chapter I argue that my own experiences as an ethnographer offered its own set of unsettling conditions - conditions which proved to be analytically helpful and enabling.


2 Unfortunately he had little to say about the cost to Aboriginal women of these encounters nor the long term effect of many forced sexual encounters between Aboriginal women, used as exchange commodities, and non-Aboriginal men.

3 Keating made these remarks during his speech introducing the Native Title Bill in November 1993.
Chapter three

Ambivalence, disruptions and uncertainty in research
Introduction

Some years ago a Nyungar colleague and I were sitting down to one of those light discussions about the ethics of working with Aboriginal people. The discussion broadly took shape because, in my naivety, I thought it possible to get the ‘Nyungar perspective’ on how Wedjelas, or non-Aboriginal people, should go about supporting Nyungars and other Aboriginal people. I sought his view on what was the ‘right’ way to go about collaborating with Aboriginal people.

His reply went something like this:


Embarrassed and uncomfortable at not being able to follow what had been said and missing his point I responded, “yeh good one! but tell me what Wedjelas should do to prepare themselves to work with Nyungars?” Unperturbed my friend repeated himself:

I’ll translate, as best I can, what he was saying to me.

You non-Aboriginal person, where you going? You come and sit now. Be quiet. You watch and listen to me speak truthfully about Nyungars and Wedjelas. Later you non-Aboriginal person you’ll realise that you’re a good Nyungar speaker, you see, won’t you, yes.

Upon reflection the dialogue mirrors much of what goes on by many involved in Aboriginal Studies and research that involves in one way or another the study of Aboriginality. I wanted an easy answer, a blue print, a prescriptive set of guidelines to very complex tasks and questions. Above all else I wanted certainty. My friend responded by showing me how complex and demanding the process of ‘finding out’ really is. My friend responded in a way that was clearly designed to unsettle me. I now know that my friend was well used to dealing with the ambivalence of those who considered themselves well meaning. My friend’s counsel was also useful because, in talking about the importance of thinking about one’s collaborations, my friend was making some useful comments that relate to methodological practice. My friend was largely addressing his comments towards those who take as their subject matter the lives of Aboriginal people. However I believe that some of his ideas could equally be applied to this project, one that involves the study of the lives of non-Aboriginal people. I will then use his response to make a number of important points about the process of undertaking research.
As well as describing how I carried out my fieldwork, this chapter is also about how doing research can be unsettling to the researcher. What follows in this chapter is a discussion of some of the key methodological principles that shaped how I undertook this research project. I talk first about how crucial it became for me to regularly reflect on, perhaps one might say interrogate, my own desire as a researcher. I then go on to discuss the value of seeing research as a dialogical process which sometimes involves the bracketing of one’s own discursive ideas and necessitates treating people’s time and ideas with respect and integrity. This leads to a discussion of the recognition of the research process as a series of collaborative moments, often resulting in transformations and inspirations for the thesis. I suggest that in a thesis interested in collaborations it is most important to acknowledge, value and utilise collaborations between the researcher and those involved as subjects, participants and consultants. I then move on to make comments about the value of social disruptions in the research talking briefly about how useful it can be to exploit unsettling moments to help further my understanding of social processes. I argue that research interested in the ambivalence of its subjects must acknowledge that the researcher is similarly situated in a position of indeterminacy. Finally the chapter offers a brief description of the research process I followed.

The importance of interrogating your own desire

The first theme that I think my friend was getting at had to do with the importance of interrogating one’s desire and motivation. He said: “Noonook wedjela, windja noonook
koorling?” This was his way reminding me of who I was and asking me where I was going.

I recently re-read Muecke’s (1992, p. 197-206) account of a dialogue between himself and a post-graduate student. The conversation developed after Muecke had been approached by a student seeking counsel on what contribution a non-Aboriginal researcher could make to ‘Aboriginal Affairs’. When asked whether he felt it important to study Aboriginal culture, Muecke’s reply was to talk about the need to interrogate ‘non-Aboriginal desire’. He had this to say.

*I would start to question one thing: your desire....*

*Your desire for the other, what form does it take? To begin with there is the lure of the exotic, the other culture as exotic. In this model a centre-periphery ratio is set up, an anthropological model which takes the European as central, but really only makes it visible through the contrast with the exotic. The two cultures tend to be treated as separate systems, with the researcher as a shuttle.*

*If you reject this one, then you might have to start looking at aspects of the other culture as being the same as yours, as being quite ordinary....*

*Or you take your desire as historically loaded, guilt ridden. Do you want to study Aboriginal culture to extirpate this guilt, or display it? Would this be a question of reversing the Hegelian master-slave dialectic? Are you punishing yourself, or going to find people who will do it to you? Do you want to be a ‘valet of the oppressed’ as Lyotard put it?*
Let's keep in mind that you are going to embark on a thesis, a piece of writing in a university. We'll try to work out just what these things are good for in the end. Your desire is located there too, to gain a qualification, eventually a job, to write and to know. Desire in relation to the Other is perfectly okay. You just have to ask yourself how that desire might work for or against your thesis work, or for or against the work of the Other.

Muecke had been asked a similar question to the one I was asked by my friend. His counsel was also similar to my friend’s. He suggested that we need to ask ourselves, openly and honestly why we want to forge collaborations with those we choose to study. During the research this was less difficult than I had initially imagined. Because people’s life stories and experiences so often seemed similar to my own, situating my own desire and reflecting on what prompted my interest in this study was something that routinely seemed to occur. I was often forced to revisit my own desire because people I met asked me to explain why I had chosen non-Aboriginal people as subjects for investigation. To many it seemed rather extraordinary that someone should be interested in their lives as non-Aboriginal people - something hardly surprising given the taken for grantedness of ‘whiteness’ and non-Aboriginality. Most of the time it was not possible to avoid or deflect these kinds of questions - not that I was keen to do this anyway. My own style embraces the chance to include in conversation talk about myself and my work. I also saw it as rude not to answer people’s questions when they were asked of me. As Oakley (1981) claims, it is the epitome of ingratitude for researchers, who often ask much of their subjects, to walk away from their encounters having given nothing to those researched.
Learning and respecting language

The second theme that I want to touch on in my friend’s advice to me was his emphasis on listening and learning of ‘language’. He said: “Noonookurt yoowalkoorl nyininy yeye. Borl worl. Noonookurt kidji nyin geenung kidji ngang wangkin kidji karnarn ngalang Nyungar Wedjela”. I now understand this to mean: “You come and sit now. Be quiet. You watch and listen to me speak truthfully about Nyungars and Wedjelas”.

It might appear that my friend was merely making a simple point about how it is mandatory for non-Aboriginal people to take seriously the understanding of Aboriginal language if they are earnestly seeking to work in collaboration with Aboriginal people. In my judgement he was certainly saying this. After all, two way and reciprocal ‘conversation’ and collaboration can only occur when both parties are cognisant of what the other is saying. However I also now know that my friend was alluding to the importance of karnan (speaking and listening with integrity and respect) in collaborations. It might be one thing to speak with people, it might be one thing to follow what they have said, but it is another to listen with the intent of respecting the other’s integrity.

It was then also important to look for ways to suspend or, as Garfinkel (1967) suggests, ‘bracket’ some of my own preconceived judgements about people’s social lives and experiences. As Smith (1987, p. 105) might say, it was important to “preserve the
presence of subjects as knowers and as actors." One set of ideas helpful in this regard
came from the work of hermeneuticists such as Gadamer (1976) who talk in some detail
about research that values exchanges between two active participants. In this model ideas
are generated through conversations between two parties, both of whom are recognised
as having two distinct and committed positions but are open to some level of shared
understanding. This allows for people to maintain a distinct set of identities, knowledges
and values while at the same time being prepared to add to and modify their views.

This is not to say that I could always guarantee others’ commitment to shared dialogue.
However during the research process I attempted to maximise opportunities to develop
conversational type interactions based on a dedication to be open to what was being said
by those around me. I also endeavoured to fight with any of my own tendency towards
dogmatism and be accommodating, and wherever possible, attentive and respectful. Most
of the time I would like to think I followed good conversational protocol, apologising for
offence if I caused it, being conciliatory as much as possible, reciprocating talk for talk,
question for question and interest for interest, and assimilating the ideas of others into my
own conversation (Litchfield, 1994, p. 10).

When designing and making choices about the research process I was motivated by the
desire to steer away from polemics where possible. The cultural terrain that involves
talking about relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is already well
populated by those who see political point scoring as the only way to further their cause.
Foucault (cited in Rabinow, 1984, p. 382), counsels against the overreliance on polemics and says:

As in judiciary practice, polemics allows for no possibility of an equal discussion: it examines a case; it isn’t dealing with an interlocutor, it is processing a suspect; it collects the proofs of his guilt, designates the infraction he has committed, and pronounces the verdict and sentences him.

Those who fall victim to polemics then are incited, not to advance, not to take more and more risks in what they say, but to fall back continually on the rights they claim, on their legitimacy, which they must defend, and on the affirmation of their innocence (Foucault cited in Rabinow, 1984, p. 383).

However, it would be a mistake to believe that one can or ought to entirely bracket one’s theoretical and political positions. It would also be a mistake to see this as implying that people ought to be indulged, particularly where they have no interest in shared and conversational interaction. As Frankenberg (1993, p. 30) says, there is “no disinterested position to be adopted in scholarship.” In my view respect does not equate with a disregard of one’s own politics and some kind of values-free acceptance of behaviour that disregards the dignity and human rights of others. So at times during the project this principle proved to be a most difficult one to apply in practice. There were a number of uncomfortable moments when listening and respecting the ideas of others became an arduous task. This was particularly the case when I found people expressing resentment, anger and hostility towards Aboriginal people and were less than generous in their attitudes towards those who did not share their own views. Indeed there were moments
The value of collaborations and dialogue

Another point that I think my friend was getting at had to do with the importance of appreciating the extent to which people engage in mutually beneficial collaborations. In other words, he talked about recognising that collaborations have an extended history and that we have much to learn from this history. If you remember he said: “Boorda noonakoort Wedjela quarppa Nyungar wangka, noonakoort geenung, wa, kia.” Translated this means: “Later you non-Aboriginal person you’ll realise that you’re a good Nyungar speaker, you’ll see, won’t you, yes”.

I think that the final comment my colleague was trying to make was that whether we recognise it or not collaborations have been a part of our history and are built into the very substance of our relationships. My friend was suggesting that we do not have to orchestrate and contrive new approaches and invent technical ways to encourage collaboration or research the lives of people we live with. You will notice he says I would realise I am (already) good at speaking - later I would learn there has been a strong tradition of interaction and dialogue. His suggestion implies that I would be a fool not to recognise and exploit the kinds of collaborations that already exist in my own everyday world.

The main way I chose to take account of this principle - that research involves collaboration - was, as best I could, to allow the research to take direction from what others had to say. To an extent this meant that I regularly surrendered the helm of my.
ethnographic search to my hosts and let them and their understandings of me steer the research process somewhat (Abramson, 1993, p. 66). As Rosaldo (1989, p. 182) says, this means a study such as this, with an interest in the dynamic interplay of people cultures and everyday worlds, begins with the premise that there needs to be a central place for the analysis of those most involved in the social processes under study (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 182). In Gadamer’s (1976) view this necessitates seeing dialogue as central to any practice of knowing. Other writers (such as Frankenberg, 1993; Lather, 1986; Abbott and Wallace, 1990; Webster, 1982; Clifford, 1986) also emphasise the need for what they describe as dialogical and reflexive research. These writers have argued that people’s social and cultural lives must begin to be presented in ways that reflect, “the dialectic process of self-other communication and the multi-sided and open ended process that the construction of knowledge is about” (Sen, 1991, p. 6). Sen further adds that useful ethnographic research has to examine the presence of the researcher and the dialogical relationship that exists between themselves and subjects. Conclusions offered in the thesis then reflect a two-way process in which the intersubjectivity of researcher and subjects are made explicit. In practice this meant I also took many of my leads from the expertise of those with whom I talked and spent time.

Disruptions, uncertainty and ambivalence in research

My friend’s story was profoundly disruptive for me. I asked him what I thought was a clear and simple question. His answer could not have been more unclear to me. I felt lost, embarrassed and almost completely confused. This was mostly because his response was
offered in a language I had almost no understanding of. I suspect that my friend knew precisely how confrontational and disruptive his response would be to me.

Initially I saw this lack of clarity as a problem. I thought I should leave the encounter with a clearer idea of what I was doing and not leave more confused. However, as I was later to appreciate, uncertainty does not have to be unproductive. Sure, sometimes critical mistakes can ruin projects just as an over-reliance on intuition and blind faith can be dangerous. However, as ethnomethodologists like Garfinkel (1967) argue, disruption, accidents, serendipity and unplanned ‘screw-ups’ can be seized upon by sociologists and historians and used in productive ways to learn lessons about social processes. Uncertainties and disruptions can offer opportunities for us to take stock and adopt a reflexive and dialogical demeanour, giving us glimpses into new insights and possibilities.

I began to think about the value of uncertainty when I first started reviewing a series of archival sources in preparation for a review of Aboriginal contributions in the south west. During this time I was involved in an interpretive history project with a group of Nyungars keen on revisiting the ‘Pinjarra Massacre’¹. During this research I read over one hundred different accounts of essentially the same event. I read that the incident was a “turning point in the development of the western state” and has since come to be mythologised in a range of ways in local and even national historical accounts (Goldsmith, 1950). As I read more I realised that most non-Aboriginal accounts were motivated by a desire to ‘set the colonial record straight’ through the use of pseudo-
positivist historical fact finding. For most, getting to the “essential facts” are most necessary given that “incidents surrounding the ‘battle’ have beenclothed in some uncertainty” (Goldsmith, 1950, p. 1).

Initially this was confusing and annoying for me. At the time I was being asked to review ‘the facts’ to help Nyungars recreate what had happened. I, like other historians charged with ‘getting to the facts’ found the idea that an historical event might be clothed in uncertainty reflected poorly on historical scholarship. The whole point of the exercise for me was to find out precisely, and beyond doubt, what actually happened. Uncertainty then represented chaos and something that got in the way of ‘putting things right’ and ‘setting the record straight’. I had fallen into the trap that many modern historians do, in wanting to replace uncertainty with certainty. I saw uncertainty as something that needed to be ordered or corrected.

But of course getting at the ‘truth’ is a slippery task for a number of reasons. If we are honest we would have to acknowledge that one of the characteristics of the world we are seeking to study is that it is full of disruptions and uncertainties, problems and a level of chaos. The subject of our analysis, either as historians and/or social scientists is not particularly ordered - on the contrary the world is brimming with conflict and irregularity, disorganisation and, as I will show later, much ambivalence. In the same way, research is not always orderly - indeed it is often regularly disorderly. The researcher is likely to have a number of competing and contradictory objectives in mind. Indeed it is likely that many researchers are much more ambivalent about their subject
matter than they would care to acknowledge. Planning schedules, time discipline and a preoccupation with being orderly are therefore often at odds with productive research (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 120). After all, social processes and cultures will not stand still for their portraits to be taken. In addition complexity and ambivalence is not easily understand by applying simple formulas and straightforward procedures. Attempts to make the social and cultural worlds of people stand still “always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship” (Clifford, 1986, p. 10). This means that I, like any other honest researcher, had to begin by acknowledging my own ambivalence, the incompleteness of my sources and how provisional my conclusions were.

Like those I set out to study I too found myself with competing interests and ambivalent feelings towards the research subject matter. I too harboured ideas and aspirations that have been shaped by long and well-established discursive traditions that are profoundly contradictory. For example, there were moments during the research process when I felt totally appalled by the attitudes of people who spoke harshly and angrily about Aboriginal people. Sometimes I felt great contempt for those who attacked supporters of Aboriginal rights and interests. I also found myself losing patience with those whose romance for the exotic other saw them repeatedly essentialising Aboriginal culture and fixing Aboriginal people in some pre-modern antiquity. At other times I was close to tears as I listened to stories of pain, struggle and emotional turmoil suffered by those same people I had angrily reacted to. There were amongst those hostile towards
Aboriginal people many who reminded me of members of my own family. These were people with whom I felt a great deal of affinity. I also found myself sharing some things with those romantics who yearned to be healed by the wisdom of Aboriginal sacredness. Part of me often felt drawn to those who spoke frequently about their own state of incompleteness. Constantly throughout my fieldwork I moved from cynicism, anger, indignation, through to sadness, pity and compassion. I regularly found myself at one and the same time repelled and attracted to those who featured as subjects of the study.

Developing a thorough and detailed analysis was also difficult because of the incompleteness of ethnographic detail available to me. The following story from Burke (cited in Rosaldo, 1989, p. 108) helped me to better recognise that researchers, be they historians or social scientists, are ‘present’ in any cultural domain but for a moment. One enters the ‘field’ not at the beginning or end of a cultural conversation but as an active participant in an ongoing cultural process.

_Imagine that you enter a parlour. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone on before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers, you answer him (sic); another comes to your defence; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending on the quality of your ally’s assistance._
However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the conversation still in progress.

Getting to ‘the truth’ is also difficult because the very process of history making and writing involves the doing of fiction. Fiction not in the sense that it involves falsehood, something opposed to the truth and the telling of lies but in the sense that it involves making choices and interpreting people’s lives in a creative way. It involves making decisions to systematically exclude a range of details and favour others (Clifford, 1986, p. 6). Ethnographic writing then is writing “made or fashioned” (Clifford, 1986, p. 6). Clifford goes on to describe ethnographers as tricksters, who are often expected not to lie, but who can never really undertake to tell the whole truth. Ethnographic accounts, then, reflect social life in that they are always inherently partial and incomplete (Clifford, 1986, p. 8).

In much the same way, the historian attempting to seek out even the slightest certainty is suffering from a colossal fantasy. To say, for example that “the actual incidents surrounding the ‘Battle of Pinjarra’ have been clothed in some uncertainty” is the greatest of understatements. What we probably should say is that one of the things that most characterises this kind of history is the extent to which it is almost completely clothed in uncertainty.

After recovering from my initial disappointment at being unable to know exactly what went on during the Pinjarra Massacre I realised that the stories themselves, the language
used, the omissions and exclusions, the ambivalence and the variety and inconsistencies, were very illuminating. Fortunately, histories are not dependent on certainty to be of use. As Attwood (1996a, p. 100) says, we can make use of history when we understand it as ‘a narrative discourse which constructs a past in the present’. History can offer very useful insights when we understand it not as a passive and straightforward process of collecting, storing and retrieving objective past events but rather as rich in discourses that can disrupt our ideas in the present. For as Le Goff (cited in Attwood et al, 1994, p. 203) says, “we reach the past by starting out from the present”. We also reach the present through our reading of the past because our interests and concerns in the present are inevitably shaped by our understandings, interpretations and engagements with the past.

It then follows that, as an active ‘player’ or participant in a disorderly world, I work in a terrain marked by a level of chaos, uncertainty, ambivalence and disruption. However, this is not something that ought to be debilitating or seen as necessarily unproductive to those seeking to understand social processes. Uncertainty does not have to cripple research for uncertainty can open the way for insight. Rather than uncertainty, ambivalence and disruption being a problem for historians and ethnographers it represents a tremendous analytical advantage. Uncertainty and ambivalence offers the critical historian the kinds of opportunities which sociological disruption offers the ethnomethodologist. Historical events like the ‘Pinjarra Massacre’ offer us insight not so much into what actually happened on the 28th of October 1834 but into how historians and others come to think about early colonial relations. In other words, the ambivalence
in history often tells us more about the historian than the historical event itself (Duruz, 1994, p. 178).

I soon discovered that good ethnography and historiography requires the researcher to pursue the detours, to wander ‘off the track’ on occasions as well as continue down well defined paths. This experience taught me that it is sometimes crucial for the ethnographer to become ‘lost’, in the sense that they suspend a commitment to pure rationality and order, so as to be able to learn more about the cultural terrain that they wish to study (Fetterman, 1989, p. 138). Indeed I discovered that, as much as anything, my ethnographic work “involved serendipity, creativity, being in the right place at the right or wrong time, a lot of hard work, and old fashioned hard luck” (Fetterman, 1989, p. 12).

In my view optionality, variability and unpredictability produce positive dualities of social being rather than negative zones of analytically empty randomness. Far from being devoid of any positive content (presumably because of not being rule governed) indeterminancy allows the emergence of a culturally valued quality of human relations where one can follow impulses, change directions and co-ordinate with other people. In other words, social unpredictability has its distinctive tempo, and it permits people to develop timing, co-ordination and a knack for responding to contingencies. These qualities constitute social grace, which in turn enables an attentive person to be effective in the interpersonal politics of everyday life (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 112).

For Garfinkel (1967) many everyday, common sense and otherwise taken for granted social systems are best uncovered when the familiar is disrupted in some way. In his view
when disorganised interaction occurs, a great deal can be learnt about “how the structures of everyday activities are ordinarily and routinely produced and maintained” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 38). In other words, when ‘trouble’ is made, when the taken-for-granted is contested and when the certain becomes uncertain, what otherwise goes unnoticed becomes more obvious. It is when certainty is violated in some way that we see what it is that people do to give their worlds an appearance of order. Garfinkel argued that social disruption can serve as a powerful tool, useful in revealing much about the everyday and taken for granted business of identity formation in contemporary social relations.

Garfinkel’s method of utilising already existing disruptions serves to unveil many seen but often unnoticed discourses and patterns in people’s racialised worlds. Where we find historical disruption, controversy, ambivalence and uncertainty there we also find the possibility of raising new questions about how events were popularly understood at the time they were constructed. The real power of productive human engagements comes out of our ability to see what is questionable and use this to open up possibilities for understanding (Gadamer, 1976, p. 13).

Rosaldo (1989, p. 112) also offers valuable insights into the opportunities chaos and disruption offer to ethnographers. In his view, optionality, variability and unpredictability can produce positive possibilities for ethnographers rather than merely being “negative zones of analytically empty randomness”. Instead of seeing it as devoid of any positive content, indeterminacy can be embraced by the ethnographer who can flexibly and sensitively respond to the discontinuities in the cultural terrain by following impulses, changing directions and being lead by the everyday improvisations and contingencies of
people. Everyday people are confronted with choices. Everyday people argue and struggle with each other. Everyday people’s aspirations are ambivalent. People’s everyday decisions are shaped by emotion as well as rational planning. In short, ethnographers are regularly confronted with the unexplainable, the illogical and the disorganised - because this is often how our lives are lived. If ethnography is to capture the richness and complexity of everyday life then ethnographers must begin to celebrate their own fallibility and find ways to be open to people’s many unpredictable and indeterminate movements.

In practice this meant that I needed to be tentative with conclusions and reluctant with my closure. When talking about the limitations of preparation for ethnographic fieldwork Rosaldo (1989, p. 8) counsels the field worker against finality and closure. He asks, at what point can we say we have finished our learning or completely understood?

Although the doctrine of preparation, knowledge and sensibility contains much to admire, one should work to undermine the false comfort that it can convey. ... The problem with taking this mode of preparing the ethnographer too much to heart is that it can lend a false air of security, an authoritative claim to servitude and finality that our analyses cannot have.

After all, he says, all our interpretations, all our conclusions, are always provisional, they are made by active social agents, positioned subjects who have come ‘prepared’ knowing certain things and not knowing others. This ethnographic process then involved for me the regular repositioning of myself as the researcher. It became critical that I adopted a
reflexive process beginning with a set of questions that were then regularly revised throughout the course of the field work. In practice this meant that at times I emerged from discussions with a different set of questions than I had started with - thus completing the hermeneutic circle but not completing knowledge (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 7). In practice I often embraced, perhaps even celebrated, disruptions and the opportunity to be involved in research that was sometimes fragmented (Marcus, 1986, p. 191).

Let me use the ‘Pinjarra Massacre’ as an example to help elaborate. Anyone who has spent more than an afternoon looking at accounts of the ‘Massacre’ knows there is considerable controversy over many of the important details which surround what happened at Pinjarra on the morning of October the 28th, 1834. The estimated number of Nyungars killed in the exchange varies from fifteen to over three hundred. Not surprisingly accounts vary over whether or not the attack by Governor Sir James Stirling and his party was premeditated. The character of many of the key actors, both Nyungar and Wedjela, are most certainly highly debated in the narratives. The choice of whether to call the event the “Battle of Pinjarra” or the “Pinjarra Massacre” continues to fuel enormous controversy, particularly at the local level. What characterises the event is the extent to which there is controversy. It is precisely because of this controversy that the event becomes useful to the critical historian. If there was little or no disagreement about, say, the number killed or the context for the attacks, then the events, or more importantly how the events are constituted, would be more likely to go unnoticed.
Historical contradictions, much the same as sociological disruptions, allow us to explore ambivalent attitudes, shifts in discursive ideas and changing circumstances. If we suspend, for a moment, our fascination with what literally happened we can see possibilities for unpacking the range of symbolic meanings that might provide vital clues to such things as the unspoken intentions of colonial leaders, lives and struggles of early colonialists, the range of responses to frontier violence, and, quite possibly, such things as present social attitudes to Nyungars and the place of Nyungars in the identity formation of Western Australians. Or to put it another way, we can explore much about social processes by examining the ‘misremembering’, the exclusions, the contradictions and the internal inconsistencies within historic accounts (Taksa, 1994, p. 77). So, far from being a hindrance or a fundamental problem to be avoided, I saw uncertainties, controversies and disruptions as valuable in uncovering hidden layers of thought and otherwise invisible social processes.

Other comments about the research process

Methodologically the study drew inspiration from a range of ideas emanating from the literature on critical ethnography, historiography, and sociology; ideas which emphasise reflexivity, the subjectivity of researcher and ‘subject’, negotiated relations in the field, the value of disruption and contradiction, the need for frankness in research, and the researcher’s active place in domains rich with political tensions.
The project utilised what might best be described as critical ethnographic and ethnohistorical techniques. Specifically this involved conducting field-work in a number of 'cultural and geographic locations', most of which were in Western Australia. During the fieldwork I used the following ethnographic and ethnohistoric techniques:

- keeping detailed records of participant observation of public 'cultural' events which involved contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people;
- carrying out a small number of formal interviews with key informants using snowballing interviews which involved purposive or judgemental sampling techniques;
- collecting a number of life histories of non-Aboriginal Australians who had varying attitudes to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture;
- collecting artefacts of 'non-Aboriginality' (for example postcards, tourist souvenirs, novels, newspaper articles, media representations, official policy documents, posters, public statements by well known cultural actors);
- carrying out a review of early colonial accounts of relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups;
- analysing 'local non-Aboriginal folklore' in relation to 'Aboriginality' (for example examining local newspapers, tourism information, and popular published accounts of colonial life);
- documenting the language and semantic patterns of non-Aboriginal people (particularly in relation to the language used to self-identify); and
• undertaking a review of early colonial documents featuring accounts of the
  contribution of Aboriginal Australians.

During the course of the project I undertook many field trips throughout the south and
north west of Western Australia. This I was able to do because of my involvement in a
number of projects and work related activities. I visited a range of towns and made
contact with a diverse group of people throughout the south-west region which takes in
Perth, Fremantle and a range of small to medium sized regional centres. The Kimberley
region, taking in the regional centres Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek,
Wyndham and Kununurra and a range of communities and tourist destinations, makes up
the second region in which I spent considerable time. Throughout the project I was able
to visit the Kimberley four times with length of stays ranging from three weeks to four
months. Over the course of the project I was able to stay in the Kimberley region for
close to seven months. This involved travelling to Broome during the peak of the tourist
season, being based in Broome while engaging in participant observation in cultural and
tourist events, collecting history and other artefacts and undertaking formal interviews
with a small select group of locals. I was able to visit other centres and sites in the
Kimberley region and take part in a range of organised tours arranged by Aboriginal and
non-Aboriginal controlled tourist enterprises.

Field work in the Kimberley region became important for a number of reasons. The first
is that in regions like the Kimberley Aboriginal Australians make up a large proportion of
the local population (over 40%). This means that non-Aboriginal ‘locals’ are likely to
have considerable contact with Aboriginal people. By comparison, urban dwelling non-
Aboriginal Australians often have little or no physical contact with Aboriginal
Australians. One of the important consequences of such cultural contact is that there are
many ready-to-hand examples of extended cultural incorporation of Aboriginal cultural
forms by non-Aboriginal locals.

The Kimberley region is often imagined, especially in much tourism propaganda, as a
place of multicultural diversity, outback exotica and one of the last bastions of authentic
and traditional Australian (Aboriginal) culture and identity. Increasingly tourism
enterprises in the region are appropriating ‘Aboriginal cultural’ images, ideas, languages
and practices and selling them as commodities for domestic and international
consumption. In the region, the ‘Aboriginal other’ is being cleverly packaged to invent,
reinvent and sell Australia and images of Australians. During the ‘dry’ season the region
is becoming inundated with thousands of tourists intent on ‘tasting’ what one brochure
describes as “the heart and soul of 40,000 years of rich and exciting cultural heritage”.
The influence and incorporation of Aboriginal cultural forms in the region then is well
established in history, in social relations and increasingly is being exploited within
industries such as tourism.

As Crane and Angrosino (1992, p. 13) claim, definitive and prescriptive rules for making
contact with subjects in ethnographic projects cannot be laid down in the same way as it
is laid down in other social research. The subjects of this ethnography did not only
include those who agreed to undertake formal, prearranged and recorded interviews. The
general public involved in the ‘going’s on’ of everyday life or groups attending cultural events were, at times, just as important as those who volunteered information in structured and prearranged settings. Likewise the publicly available work of artists, writers, public servants, community planners and cultural leaders was drawn on indirectly without my ever having established actual face to face contact. Much the same as other actively participating members in a community or cultural setting, a good deal of the research process involved every day and regular engagements with people.

In this project much of the work was largely unobtrusive and presented no risks or dangers to individuals. However some of the work also involved eliciting information from individuals and groups through preplanned interviews and discussions. Those people who graciously agreed to become involved in formal interviews and life history recordings were recruited essentially using two techniques. I relied heavily on professional and personal networks I had developed over the years through my involvement in ‘Aboriginal Affairs’, the youth industry, community work, and the education and training industries. As mentioned earlier this was a conscious strategy and reflected my desire to make myself and my social world the subject of investigation. Using these networks also allowed me to act both as an investigator and participant observer in a range of cultural activities. One of the values of utilising existing networks was that it broadened my contact with people and tended to have a snowballing effect so that I managed to meet and talk with friends of friends and colleagues of colleagues. Thus snowballing became the second technique used to make formal contact with people.
As already mentioned, in the early planning stages of the project it was difficult to know with any absolute precision who would be involved in the ethnographic fieldwork. However I did know that I wanted to target a cross section of non-Aboriginal people who brought with them varying experiences of contact with Aboriginal people. I therefore found myself seeking people from a wide range of ages (excluding minors without parental permission), both genders, from different geographic locations, ‘cultural identities’ and class backgrounds.

Initially some people were chosen because they had the necessary background to describe travels, work and other cultural experiences that involve engagements with ‘Aboriginality’. I sought out the experiential expertise of a number of people who could describe the details of a tourist enterprise or cultural event. Others were chosen because of their involvement in a particular cultural event or activity. For example, I attended a number of ‘Aboriginal’ productions and used the performance to prompt discussions with others in the audience about cultural identity and intercultural relations. Still others were invited to talk to me because they were considered to have some expertise in a particular area of social life. A limited number of people were selected because they had outspoken views on a topic. Others were chosen because they had worked with Aboriginal communities for an extended time. Some were chosen because others suggested that I do so. As the project grew it became more apparent that I would likely be seeking to write about particular groups of people. In one sense then the choice to speak to some was prompted by the organic growth of the project (Read, 1996, p. ix).
Within six months of beginning the field-work, the idea of concentrating my attention on four or five distinct groups of non-Aboriginal people began to emerge. My choice to concentrate my attention on Hansonites, loopies, mung beans and governmental workers partly reflects serendipity and partly my own cultural identity and background. Throughout the time of the field-work Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party became a growing and well publicised political and cultural phenomenon. It was not unusual to see Hanson feature in the media every day during this period. This prompted much public debate and proved to be one of the dominant topics in people’s everyday discussions. As disturbing as it is for me to acknowledge, there were times when I found myself sharing some empathy and affinity with Hansonites. While I shared few of the political values of these people I found many came from a similar class background, often having worked and lived in similar social conditions as members of my own family and social network.

The choice to include both loopies and mung beans in my analysis was prompted by more mundane and practical considerations. It so happened that many of my travels paralleled the travels of these two groups of people. The times that I was able to travel were also the times when both groups were inclined to travel. This meant that I stayed, in terms of destinations and accommodation, in similar places to loopies and mung beans. This, I suspect, was not something that happened purely by chance. As Frankenberg (1993, p. 69) argues the places one goes and the people one meets is very much shaped by how space and place is racialised. I also chose to spend time with these two groups because I share much with them culturally. Like loopies, the caravan park is social terrain
that is familiar to me. When I was growing up, annual holidays usually involved staying in caravan parks, travelling vast distances on the road, with parents who were keen to ‘explore the bush’. Likewise people I grew up with very rarely travelled overseas or could afford to stay in places more expensive than caravan parks. Like mung beans, at least part of me yearns for the romantic primitive. Part of my history of engaging with Aboriginal people reflects a romantic desire to consume the primitive other. In other words, if I am honest I may well be an aspiring looie and a ‘closet’ mung bean.

The choice to include governmental workers in the project was grounded much more in my desire to be self-reflexive of my own working history. People who were the participants in this group were chosen much more consciously. I sought out people using my own social and professional networks as someone with considerable involvement in Aboriginal governmental work. Not surprisingly I noticed that many of these people seemed to share similar views and experiences with me.

Rarely did I seek out the involvement of children, or those considered to be legal minors. This is not because I believe children do not have the cultural wisdom or experiential tools to offer valuable insights. On the contrary, cross-cultural interaction and influence between children may have been easier in some ways as children can be more open and honest about how they feel and what they think and are often very perceptive about those aspects of social life to which adults are often closed. However, this is a topic I had already undertaken some work on in the past (for example my masters thesis was
concerned with cross-cultural influence in youth centres). In addition, I did not want to impose myself yet again on young people.

The project did not primarily target Aboriginal Australians as subjects. As mentioned in previous chapters it was important to me that I undertook work which would subject the lives of non-Aboriginal people to the critical gaze of social science and avoid subjecting Aboriginal people to unnecessary social scientific interrogation. This did not mean I could entirely avoid problems around being active in researching ‘things Aboriginal’. Due to the influence that a considerable number of Aboriginal Australians (most of whom work in academic institutions) have on my every day working life it would be remiss of me to claim that Aboriginal people were not involved in this project. However, every attempt was made to limit unnecessary inquiry and make myself a burden on Aboriginal Australians who were not otherwise involved in my life.

Conclusion

As I explained in the introduction, part of the reason for carrying out this kind of research project was to examine something of my own cultural identity and some of the ways that my life is impacted on by the lives of Aboriginal people. Like many others living in this country at this point in time I am confronted with conflicting messages about how best to carry out collaborations with Aboriginal people. Some suggest that we ought to forget the past. Some say there is much to be sorry about. Others imply we should feel guilt. Still others argue that we should note and understand the past and use that knowledge to help
make better decisions about the future. Often this makes our communities difficult places to be in. Often this makes decisions about how we carry out our lives confusing. It certainly means that there is no shortage of ambivalence. These same broad political and social dynamics not only shaped my research topic but also served as a backdrop for decisions I had to make about how to carry out this research.

In this chapter I have provided a discussion of some of the key themes and issues that shaped how I devised and carried out a research project keen to examine collaborations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. It was most important to develop research tools that could ‘open up’ knowledge rather than promote fear, defensiveness and paralysis among those I approached. The chapter has offered a discussion of the kind of principles that allowed me to think about how practically these kind of objectives could be accomplished. I began by talking about how important it became to regularly review my own desire as the person driving the project. Next I discussed my commitment to the necessary place of respectful dialogue with people. Discussion then turned to the topic of research as collaboration, followed by a series of comments about the value of disruptions, ambivalence and uncertainty in research. Finally the chapter offered a brief description of some of the steps taken during the research process.

The task of the next section of the thesis will be to turn to the accounts of ambivalence in early colonial life. This section of the thesis will concentrate its attention on how colonists in the south-west of Western Australia came to negotiate with Nyungars. Chapters four and five will show that Nyungars have been able to exploit the unsettling
effect of colonial ambivalence and have consequently exerted considerable influence upon the lives of non-Aboriginal south-westerners.

1 More popularly known by many non-Aboriginal people as the 'Battle of Pinjarra.'

2 Attwood is by no means the original author of these kinds of ideas. For other detailed discussions about history as narrative see chapters in Darien-Smith and Hamilton (1994).
History Section - Introduction
A section dealing with the history of engagements between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is important to this thesis for a range of reasons. At the very least, history influences the way people think of themselves as ‘Australians’ (Attwood, 1996a, p. 101). The business of ‘narrative accrual’, in which history often has a central role, shapes the way people self identify, and in this case, come to see themselves as non-Aboriginal Western Australians. There is then a textual interdependence between the lives of contemporary Australians and the lives of those who lived in early colonial times. As Attwood (1996a, p. 101) puts it, the category of non-Aboriginal or European was and is profoundly dependent upon the maintenance of a particular relationship with colonial history. For Gadamer (1976) historical interrogation is especially illuminating for it opens up possibilities not only to understand the past but also to understand the self in the present.

An examination of early colonial encounters is also useful as it yields much evidence supporting the conclusion that Aboriginal people have always contributed much to the lives and identities of non-Aboriginal people. Since delving into archival facilities I have been astounded at the extent to which early colonists recognised how reliant they were on Aboriginal people. Conventional documentary sources, such as official government correspondence, diaries, journals, newspaper articles, mission records and government reports are full of accounts of Nyungars offering cultural and economic leadership. Like Clark (1994, p. 20) I discovered that the real barriers that have for so long kept the contributions of “Indigenous Australians out of our history books were not based on a lack of material, but rather on perception and choice.”
In addition, undertaking a review of early colonial times uncovers much about the ambivalence of the colonisers. The archival record is rich in contradictions and speaks volumes about just how unsettled have been non-Aboriginal people’s attitudes and treatment of Aboriginality. Since arriving non-Aboriginal people have long been confused about how to deal with Aboriginal people. Many early ‘settlers’ were torn between 1) involvement in activities which implicated them in dispossession, violence and intolerance towards Aboriginal people and 2) the desire to commune with the original inhabitants. Like Curthoys (1997b, p. 126) I discovered that the “closer one looks at this political history, the more complicated it gets.”

Finally, a section concerned with the history of earlier colonial times helps set the scene for an ethnography of contemporary relationships by demonstrating continuity, shifts and differences at the level of ideas and practice. As Ashcroft et al. (1998, p. 174) say, our cultural world is much like a palimpsest - a parchment on which several inscriptions have been made on top of what has otherwise thought to have been erased. Despite what we might like to think there are always traces of previous inscriptions underneath the ‘overwritten’ symbols of our present. Inscriptions from early colonial life in the south-west of Australia remain as a continuing feature giving present cultural life in south-west Australia particular density and character (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 174). Any exploration of contemporary social relations then must examine the traces of previous engagements in the cultural palimpsest. Approaching analysis in this way will confirm the dynamic, intersubjective, dialogic and complex nature of cultural life for non-Aboriginal people in
contemporary times. Our lives today, the places we go, the way we use country and the
way we speak, act as a reminder that Aboriginal Australians have been and continue to be
critical to the lives of non-Aboriginal Australians. In the same way, lessons we learn
about the ambivalence of early colonists can teach us much about social processes going
on today.

The following section takes inspiration from Henry Reynolds (1990) who, in his book
With The White People, used evidence from archival facilities throughout the country to
track, across regions, the contribution of Aboriginal people. In many ways both chapters
reiterate many of Reynolds’ claims about cultural influence while concentrating on one
particular region, the south west of Western Australia. There are three reasons for this
choice. The first is that this is the region that I consider my home and where, over the
past eleven years, I have spent most of my time. This is the area where I have some of my
deepest cultural and spatial affiliations and spent the majority of time during the course
of this research project. The second reason for making this choice is that over the past
three years I have been invited by Nyungar colleagues to participate in a number of
interpretive histories variously located throughout this broad region. The third reason for
the choice is that, as the first region colonised on the west coast of Australia, it is rich in
documented sources of close contact and collaboration between Nyungar and Wedjela. In
these areas Nyungars seem to have been particularly generous so that there seems to have
been a rich history of cultural exchange in early colonial encounters in this part of the
world.
Both chapters examine the contributions Nyungars made to early colonial life. Both chapters demonstrate that Nyungars, Nyungar work and Nyungar ideas have been more influential in shaping the lives of people in the south-west than many of us might have imagined. In fact history is teeming with examples which show that intersubjective negotiations have foundations in early colonial time. There are essentially two connected sets of processes behind this influence - colonial ambivalence and Nyungar agency. The chapters begin to explore how both of these processes produce the conditions whereby colonial dominance and colonial power are able to be challenged and subverted. This section sets the scene for later discussions which concentrate attention on more contemporary instances of cultural influence.
Chapter four

‘Nyungars as boodie’: Colonial ambivalence and early Nyungar contributions to Western Australian life - Part 1
Introduction

For some time now many Australian historians have pursued scholarship focusing on race relations during the early years of colonial expansion. Most of this work has concentrated on the devastating effects of colonial expansion on Aboriginal life and land and the varied ways Aboriginal people have been violated. It is absolutely imperative that accounts not deny or soften the history of violence, intrusion and the regularity with which Aboriginal Australians have had their human rights attacked. However, I share the observation made by Ysola Best (1994, 151-156) that the tendency within Australian history of concentrating almost exclusively on frontier violence has made it easy to neglect other forms of social interaction between “Aborigines and Europeans”. She maintains that social engagements involving initiative, courage, survival, alliance, accommodation and cultural exchange are all worthy of more attention.

Often a consequence of the making and unmaking of cultural identity in colonial discourses is a refusal to take an interest in the active and powerful ways Aboriginal cultural forms and Aboriginal people are brought to bear on the identities and lives of colonisers. Often the history of colonial endeavours are made to look as if the colonisers achieved their ends with little trouble, completing the task of implanting their economic and social objectives in a relatively straightforward way. However colonial enterprises are no where near as simple and as unproblematic an experience as we might imagine. On the contrary, colonial life has often been full of contradictions and problems for the colonisers. There are at least two general reasons for this. The first is that rarely have
Indigenous groups simply accepted the sovereignty of the colonisers. Instead Aboriginal groups have physically resisted and/or chosen a combination of strategies that involve accommodation and negotiation. The second reason why colonial life has not been straightforward is that ambivalence is a regular feature of the desire and objects of the coloniser.

In this chapter I will continue with some of the themes introduced earlier and take issue with those who seem to imply that colonists have always been able to impose their will and cultural baggage on Nyungars and other Aboriginal groups. I particularly want to challenge work which argues that today Nyungars and other Aboriginal Australians are suffering from what some describe as “a slow disintegration of culture” (Beresford, 1993, p. 30) or “a slow poisoning of the spirit” (Eckersley, 1995, p. 17). Behind this line of thinking is the view that cultural identity is only formed as a result of the “homogeneous domination over others by an individual or group” (McHoul and Grace, 1993, p. 89).

I will draw on empirical work generated from a range of historical sources. The evidence demonstrates that colonial encounters often involve indigenes in negotiated arrangements whereby their wills invoked an influence on the coloniser. The chapter will particularly draw on historiography questioning the usefulness of carelessly applying the old master-slave dialect when thinking about the history of Nyungar involvement in Australian cultural and economic life. I argue that it is inadequate to say that Nyungars have simply suffered cultural annihilation and are all constantly in a state of desperate crisis. There have been significant historical ‘moments’ when Nyungars have exerted their agency and
contributed to the working and personal lives of Wedjelas. If we subject historical records to close empirical examination, we will see that distinctly Aboriginal cultural systems and forms have been active in shaping cultural experience, identity and knowledge formation for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. As Collard (1996, p. 4) has said:

Rather than ‘Aboriginal culture’ being wiped out or ‘Aboriginal culture’ and ‘non-Aboriginal culture’ being always distinctly separable, aspects of Nyungar knowledge have been and are being accessed and utilised by both Nyungars and Wedjelas. Without necessarily being acknowledged or understood, south westerners, be they Nyungar or Wedjela, have often utilised Nyungar symbols, ideas and ways of speaking in their everyday language.

As mentioned previously, this and the following chapter are both interested in similar themes - theorising how the combined effects of Nyungar agency and colonial ambivalence have opened up possibilities for colonial experience and colonial discourse to be influenced, perhaps even subverted. This chapter begins to theorise how Nyungar agency and colonial ambivalence combined to produce the conditions for small but significant transformations in colonial discourse and colonial life. The chapter starts with a short examination of the long and established history of Nyungar patterns of social incorporation. Most of the rest of the chapter is concerned with exploring in more detail how Nyungar agency and colonial ambivalence produced conditions which saw colonists rely heavily on Nyungar guidance and Nyungar labour. Nyungars played an active role as guides, experts, collaborators and interpreters during the early years of the Swan River
colony, providing skills and knowledge that Wedjelas came to rely on. One might conclude that this merely reflects how exploitative Wedjelas were during the early years of contact. While there can be no denying that Wedjelas often appropriated Nyungar knowledge without reciprocating, this exchange had profound effects on Wedjela life and colonial discourse. The following chapter will continue this exploration focusing more on other examples of colonial ambivalence.

**Accommodation prior to colonisation - the incorporation of *Djanga* (outsiders)**

When I first began to look at historical documents concerned with early colonial relations I was immediately struck by the extent to which Nyungars seemed open and hospitable to outsiders. Indeed Nyungars seem to have an extended history of welcoming and offering hospitality to outsiders. Immediately I was confronted with the question of why this might have been so. Part of the explanation seems to lie in the fact that Nyungars were well accustomed to regular visits from 'outsiders'. There is much evidence that Aboriginal groups regularly visited country that was controlled by others, sometimes travelling hundreds of miles. Collard (1996, p. 46) says, “amongst Nyungars it has always been customary to incorporate outsiders into the social relationships of the group”. According to Hallam (1983, p. 134), before colonisation, meetings between different Nyungar groups were highly structured events, “with elements of ceremonial preparedness for conflict, formal peacemaking, reciprocal exchange of gifts, and sometimes actual conflict and resolution of conflict”. Outsiders were given a place within Nyungar kin structures facilitating
participation in such things as education and knowledge attainment, marriage and sexual relationships, involvement in important meetings, the gathering and distribution of food, economic and social reciprocity, attendance at funerals, intergroup conflict and indeed contact and avoidance of others. Collard (1996, p. 46) says that when outsiders demonstrated their ignorance of protocols Nyungars would often take it upon themselves to provide an education on such matters.

A particular practice for incorporating outsiders involved Nyungars concluding that Wedjelas had been known as Nyungar moort, or relations, in previous times. Under these arrangements Nyungars accepted ‘foreigners’ as djanga or returned spirits of the dead. Nyungars, like many other Aboriginal people\(^1\), recognised non-Aboriginal ‘outsiders’ as reincarnated clans-people, those who had passed away and come back to visit again (Clark, 1994, p. 3). This system of explaining the arrival of strangers is regularly cited in the early colonial documents. According to Armstrong (1836 & 1844) and Grey (1841, p. 302), Nyungars initially believed Wedjelas to be returned relatives from the spirit island of Kurannup to the Ngar-dee bula or west (Green, 1981, p. 33-34)\(^2\). Roth (cited in Collard, 1996, p. 37) offers an account of an incident involving a man called Greensell from Robert Austin’s exploring party that landed at Koombannup (the place smelling like urine) near the present site of Bunbury. “Upon landing they (the landing party) were met by some natives, whom immediately recognised Greensell as one of their recently deceased kin.” According to the account Nyungars thought Greensell, who they named Wor-kap (presumably after the deceased Nyungar), to be kin returned to his land as a white man. In a similar story from 1836 Francis Armstrong observed that Nyungars saw
Wedjela settlers as reincarnated family and “confidently recognise several hundred of the colonists by their countenances, voices and scars of former wounds” (cited in Green, 1981, p. 53). George Grey provides still further evidence of this in his account of a meeting between his party and local Nyungars during a journey north of Perth. He described the meeting in this way:

.... A sort of procession came up, headed by two women, down whose cheeks tears were streaming. The eldest of these came up to me, and looking for a moment at me, said - “Gwa, gwa, bundo bal,” - “Yes, yes, in truth it is him;” and then throwing her arms around me, cried bitterly, her head resting on my breast ... the other younger one knelt at my feet, also crying. At last the old lady emboldened by my submission, deliberately kissed me on each cheek...! She then cried a little more, and at length releasing me, assured me that I was the ghost of her son, who had some time before been killed by a spear wound in his breast (Grey, 1841: 1, p. 299-303).

According to Clark (1994, p. 4) Nyungars dealt with Wedjelas in this way in an attempt to spark memories and encourage newcomers to recognise their reciprocal obligations to long lost family. It was perhaps the earliest attempts by Nyungars to ‘Aboriginalise’ the colonisers by incorporating them into established kinship structures. Both Collard (1996, p. 48) and Green (1981, p. 53) surmise that this might go some way to explaining why, at times, there was often little anger and resistance to the arrival and settlement of Wedjela strangers. Collard (1996, p. 48) concludes that “contrary to many popular ideas about Nyungars being aggressive, they appear to have been amongst the most obliging group of Aborigines in the history of Wedjela occupation of Australia.” As Grey (1841, p. 302-
303) explains, Nyungars would have thought that the mere existence of strangers in a land pointed to their previous affiliation to the country. It would have been difficult for Nyungars, who had such profound connections to their country and an enormous reticence to give up or leave their karleep or home camp for long periods, to understand how Wedjelas could leave their country voluntarily.

_Themselves never having an idea of quitting their own land, cannot imagine others doing it; - and thus when they see white people suddenly appearing in their country, and setting themselves down in particular spots, they imagine that they must have formed an attachment for this land in some other state of existence; and hence conclude the settlers were at one period black men, and their own relations (Grey, 1841, p. 302-303)._ 

I do not want to imply by all of this that Nyungar hospitality, in and of itself, allowed non-Aboriginal people to simply enter into the country and immediately take up residence as Nyungars. Neither am I implying that somehow hospitality was the only response by Nyungars during the early years of colonial life. However it is worth considering that it is not only colonial representations of the other which drive colonial relations. According to Desmond (cited in Creighton, 1996, p. 136) colonial politics always involves a two way exchange with both the colonisers and the indigenes constructing the other. Both sets of discourses, the stories of the indigenes and the colonisers, help shape the encounter. As Berstein (cited in Carrier, 1996, p. 102) says, it is important to consider that the initial processes of meeting in early colonial settings can and do predispose people to think and act in certain ways towards each other. In the
south-west the way Nyungars dealt with the incorporating of outsiders would have been one of the variables that acted as a backdrop for later social relations.

**Looking for the residents of *Terra Nullius***

It is true that much of early colonial expansion was violent, intrusive and often vehemently resisted by Nyungars and other Aboriginal groups. However this did not mean Nyungars were forced to completely abandon their lives as Nyungars or that the colonising project was able to be fully completed. On the contrary, in many cases Nyungars were able to maintain very close and continuous cultural affiliations with their country by forging significant alliances with colonists. This was because during the early and struggling years of Wedjela occupation, there were contradictions at the heart of the colonial enterprise. On the one hand the colonists were keen to appropriate what they could and economically exploit the country and the people. However in physical and symbolic ways, Nyungars were needed as *boodiers*, leaders, pathfinders and cultural experts. Indeed in some cases, Nyungar agency and colonial ambivalence began to produce fractures and subvert the colonial project even before physical contact had occurred between Nyungars and the early ‘explorers’. This occurred because at the heart of the colonial object of exploration was an important contradiction. On the one hand the explorers adopted the fiction of *terra nullius*. It was clearly often taken for granted that the ‘new’ country was not inhabited by any civilised and sovereign people. However, as their diaries and logs demonstrate, explorations were often reliant on signs of the country’s inhabitants. Wedjela diaries, journals, reports and other historical documents
are full of instances where Wedjelas sought out signs of Nyungars in order that valuable information could be obtained on the availability of water, native fauna, the best farming country, roads and short cuts (Reynolds, 1990, p. 12).

This is not particularly unique or isolated to the south west of Western Australia. If one examines the history of almost all colonial exploration and expansion we can see that it was a standard practice for colonisers to look for signs of Aboriginal occupation. Regularly on the pages of ship’s journals or the diaries of overland parties which document the movement of explorers into ‘unmarked terrain’ mention is made of signs (or conversely lack of signs) of the presence of Aboriginal groups (Reynolds, 1990).

As soon as Wedjelas started exploring Nyungar country it became apparent that Nyungars (particularly the young and fit) possessed very sophisticated knowledge immensely valuable to Wedjelas. Nyungar occupation of an area became a sign to Wedjelas that food, water, other valuable resources and knowledgable men and women were close to hand (Markey, 1976, p. 9). Contrary to the rhetoric of *terra nullius*, many early Wedjelas knew full well that Nyungars worked the land with extreme precision and expertise. Many knew that when they saw Nyungar campfires rising in the distance there would be a readily available pool of useful knowledge and resources. It did not take Wedjela explorers long to realise that Nyungars were most numerous at the precise locations they would find most useful to their own needs. The most popular areas included King George Sound, the Swan and Murray estuaries, the Avon Valley, Leschenault Inlet, the Vasse district, and the rich country around Pinjarra (Markey, 1976, p. 8).
Signs of Nyungar occupation often acted as clues for Wedjelas that they may be able to learn about the new country. Hammond (1933, p. 18) records that Wedjela travellers, shepherds, merchants and explorers looked for well-marked Nyungar tracks ‘like cattle-pads and just as plain’. Indeed there is evidence that a good deal of these tracks formed the basis many of today’s main roads (Clarke, 1996, p. 76). Wedjela explorers and settlers soon learned to use Nyungar paths and quickly realised that these often connected the best patches of country. Soon Wedjelas, such as John Drummond from York, came to realise that “good land to the aborigines (sic) was good land for them” (Wollaston cited in Hallam, 1991, p. 10).

When Ensign Dale first travelled east from the Swan River through the rolling hills and into the Avon Valley he commented on the potential for utilising country already worked by Nyungars (Garden, 1979). Likewise when John Bussell travelled north from Talanup, or the present area around Augusta, he soon saw the potential for exploiting pasture which had been carefully tended by Nyungar firestick hunting (Bussell, 1833a).

Armstrong (1978) argues that non-Aboriginal agricultural enterprises were very much reliant on the work of Nyungar ‘firestick farmers’ who had been able to create a “mosaic of plant communities” highly conducive to European systems of agriculture. He claims that the complex environmental systems which non-Aboriginal farmers ‘found’ was due to “variations in the manner and frequency of firing as much as to differences of soil, topography and water relations” (Armstrong, 1978, p. 31). Bussell noted how country,
which had been cleared by Nyungars to attract kangaroos, was ideal for sheep and cattle farming. On his early explorations in the Augusta area in 1839 he looked for country that:

*bore numerous impressions of the feet of natives and kangaroos and where the ground ... was vivid green ... sullied with burnt sticks and blackened grass trees ... grass was plentiful ... a thicket of trees and the soil was a white earth* (Bussell, 1833a, p. 191).

Almost immediately Wedjelas realised that Nyungar knowledge and modification of the environment would be of great benefit to them. In 1836-37 H.W. Bunbury had this to say:

*By these fires ... the country is kept comparatively free from underwood and other obstruction, having the character of an open forest through most parts of which one can ride freely; otherwise in all probability, it would soon become impenetrably thick, and ... the labour cost of clearing would be so greatly increased as to take away all the profit, and it would change the very nature of the country, depriving it of the grazing and pastoral advantages it now possesses ... It is true that we might ourselves burn the bush, but we could never do it with the same judgement and good effect of the Natives, who keep the fire within due bounds, only burning those parts they wish when the scrub becomes too thick or when they have any other object to gain by it* (Markey, 1976, p. 11).

These examples make it clear that even before they had considered settling in sections of the south-west Wedjelas knew Nyungars were “of considerable value to the initial European settlers.” (Markey, 1976, p. 11). This is hardly surprising nor terribly unique to exploration in the south-west of Australia. We see similar patterns in the attempts of
early British colonial ‘explorers’ and administrators. Indeed Captain Arthur Phillip, the first Governor-Designate to the colony of New South Wales, was instructed by his authorities to seek out signs of Aboriginal people so that their knowledge could be turned to the advantage of the newcomers (Rolls, 1998, p. 64). Long has the West recognised the value that the East has to itself (Voltaire, cited in Clarke, 1997, p. 3). Needham (cited in Clarke, 1997, p. 3) shares this view and further claims that imperialists have for at least 3000 years appreciated the value of seeking out dialogue with the other. Clarke (1997, p. 6) likewise implies that, at least subconsciously, at the heart of the colonial imperative is a pilgrimage which seeks out and values the attainment of Indigenous knowledge.

**Colonising territories and the need for Nyungar knowledge and guidance**

Using the presence of Nyungars as signs of various resources was merely one example of colonial inconsistency and ambivalence at work. Another was the ambivalence early settlers had towards Nyungar knowledge and guidance. On the one hand, the colonists were committed to explore, map and conquer the new territory. On the other hand, the newcomers, who knew little about the terrain, the topography, the weather and the potential for agriculture and farming, were tremendously reliant on the locals for guidance and direction. Once contact was established much of the history of Wedjela exploration and expansion of the south-west of Australia became the history of Nyungars being recruited as ‘boodiers’, supervisors and guides.
There is ample evidence that during the establishment years of the Swan River Colony many Nyungars acted as educators and instructors inculcating Wedjelas with local practical and cultural knowledge. Although within many colonial accounts there is a tendency to see ‘tracking’ as a simple and menial task, the complex range of jobs undertaken by ‘trackers’, such as navigation, language interpretation, cross-cultural negotiation, cooking, counselling, equipment maintenance, hunting and military advising, was always vital to colonial development. Wedjelas were shown Nyungar roads and paths³, karleep mia or camping places, the best hunting grounds and gnamma or waterholes. This information was to become as important to Wedjelas as it had been for Nyungars. In many instances, particularly during the first 40 years of colonisation, Wedjelas were almost totally reliant on the wisdom and knowledge of Nyungars to move from area to area. For example MacKay (1963) makes mention of the use of Nyungars by Ensign Dale and Brockman who, in August 1830 crossed the Darling Range in search of farming land. After he found good farming land Dale enlisted the help of a Nyungar named King Dick to lead a party of twenty non-Aboriginal settlers to the area now known as York. The road later became known as King Dick Road until it was later changed to Old York Road. MacKay notes that none of the settlers had any idea of where they were going, making them totally reliant on King Dick and his knowledge of Nyungar tracks (MacKay, 1963).

Wedjelas quickly learned the value of this kind of knowledge and made it a priority to seek it out. In fact in his study of the history of the development of Australian horse and bushcraft McLaren (1996) attributes part of the success of Wedjela explorations in the
south west to their eagerness to learn from Nyungars. This reflected a pattern that had already been developed in eastern Australia. Clark (1994, p. 20) makes the observation that:

_The first expeditions inland from the infant European settlement at Sydney Cove were accompanied by Indigenous guides who provided a range of services - they conducted the Europeans along the most convenient routes, often along traditional pathways, crossed rivers at well-known fords; found water; prepared temporary bark huts; and, of greater importance, they acted as interpreters and diplomats and negotiated passage through the country of resident clans met on the line of march._

There are many examples of Nyungars acting to assist early colonial exploration parties. In 1829, only three years after the initial garrison had been established in King George Sound, Mokare, an Albany Nyungar, guided a party under his leadership to inspect country sixty miles north of the small settlement (Hallam, 1983, p. 138). During an 1829 expedition up the Canning River the explorer Wilson commented that a group of Nyungars they had met ’...shewed (sic) us various roots which they used for food, and also the manner of digging for them...’ (Perth Gazette, 23rd March 1833, p. 6). In 1833 John Bussell wrote of the help he received from local Nyungars while trying to locate the most useful areas for establishing roads used for pastoral development. In his diaries of early years in the Swan River Colony George Fletcher Moore (1884, p. 385) speaks of the extensive use of Nyungar information to assist with exploration. Yagan, while in custody on Carnac Island, gave Robert Lyon the names of Nyungar groups within contact of the Swan River settlement and made sketches which later helped to guide Fletcher Moore
through to the Avon district. Fletcher Moore (1884, p. 385) also refers to the work of Nyungars Weenat and Tomghin, who acted as guides through the eastern hills during the early 1930s. In 1835 Fletcher Moore took on the services of Weeip, a Nyungar whose country included the Upper Swan area, to head up a reconnaissance party some seventy kilometres north of the main settlement area on the Swan River (cited in Hallam, 1983, p. 137).

One task early colonists frequently called upon Nyungars for assistance with was in the search for missing livestock. One Swan River Nyungar, Miago, is recorded as having a crucial part to play in a number of these kind of searches. For example in 1833 a valuable bull owned by a man called Leroux wandered off and became lost. Miago and another Nyungar named Dommerra were immediately called upon and were able to successfully locate the animal in a short time (Tilbrook, 1983, p. 20). In January 1835 Nyungars Miago and Molly Dobbin, as they returned to Fremantle from a reconnoitre of the Pinjarra massacre site, came across a group of non-Aboriginal settlers searching in vain for a lost boy of five who had been missing for a day or so. Both Nyungars then immediately set out to track the young boy. For ten hours they followed the child’s tracks. At times the scrub was too dense for those on horse to follow. They tracked across limestone outcrops often on a trail invisible to the non-Aboriginal participants in the search. They went along sections of beach, sometimes choosing to go on where the tracks had been lost due to the action of the wind and the tide. They finally found the semi-conscious child lying in the wash of the incoming tide (Green, 1984, p. 130). Norcott was glowing in his praise of Miago and Molly Dobbin. He said, “their steady perseverance
was beyond anything he could have anticipated from them” (Perth Gazette, 1835, 3rd of January).

Miago continues to feature in the historical journals as a result of his involvement in an exploration party which travelled to the West Kimberley region in 1838. The party was under the command of Lieutenants Grey and Lushinton. At Beagle Bay, on the Dampier Peninsula north of Broome, the party was confronted by a group of Aboriginal people from the region. Miago became the centre of attention during this encounter, managing to keep the locals from becoming hostile. Upon returning, crew from the expedition publicly congratulated Miago on his navigation skills and who, “even on the darkest night without the assistance of stars, could unerringly indicate the direction of the Swan River” (Green, 1984, p. 132).

This assistance continued on throughout the first ten years of colonial life. In May 1836 James Drummond and three of his contemporaries set out from Guildford to explore the road to their grants on the Avon near the present town of York, to the east of Perth. Not familiar with this country they enlisted the guidance of a local Nyungar called Bobbing to ‘see water’ for them. As he travelled Bobbing blazed trees to mark the route while Wedjelas noted Nyungar names of waterholes so that other Nyungars could be asked to direct future parties (Erickson, 1969, p. 31).

Many reports exist of the preparedness of Nyungars to lead Wedjela explorers to their water supplies. In February, 1837, while travelling through the York region on an
exploratory trip from King George Sound to Perth, Surveyor Hillman and his party were directed by eight unnamed Nyungars to a spring when they were in quite desperate need of water (Bignell, cited in Markey, 1976 p. 8). In 1839, after a series of accidents resulted in the loss of three whaleboats to be used to sail on their return journey to Perth, the ‘explorer’ George Grey and his party were forced to rely on the expertise of Kaiber, a Nyungar from the Murray region. Grey’s journal emphasises just how reliant the party was upon this Nyungar for food and water. Kaiber was able to push on, with a handful of the party who survived only after he taught them how to lick the grass at dawn so as to suck on the autumn dew.

Procuring game in forest country of the south-west of Western Australia also appears to have been a considerably easier task than it was for eastern colonists, chiefly because Wedjelas were offered young Nyungars as guides. According to Captain Barker⁴, from the beginnings of Wedjela developments in the Albany hinterland, Nyungars offered their assistance to Wedjela parties in search of local food and resources. (Cited in McLaren, 1996, p. 86). John Wollaston, wrote in 1853, of the usefulness of Nyungar knowledge of food resources. Wollaston speaks of how the Warrang, a variety of yam, had been shown to him by Nyungars as both a food of much nutritional value as well as a marker of desirable country. He said of the Warrang, “when roasted it is represented as superior to the potato, sweet, pleasant and nourishing. This root flourishes where the best stock feed is found” (Markey, 1976, p. 8).
In 1855 an unnamed Nyungar acted as a guide for Alfred and Ellen Bussell who set off south from Busselton in search of new and fertile areas. Despite losing the Wadjela servant, who turned back almost immediately, the Nyungar guided the Bussells to Mokidup. The area, situated next to a freshwater spring, had many natural resources to make life good for the Bussells. The spring offered fresh water all year around, the soil was good and local dunes offered protection from the strong sea winds just yards to the west. This laid the foundation for Nyungars to become central operators in both the establishment and continued operation of both Mokidup or Ellensbrook Homestead and other Wadjela enterprises in the area.

In the 1870s an event was to occur at Calgarup, near Margaret River, that acts as a reminder of the kind of lengths Nyungars would often go to support Wedjelas. On the 1st of December 1876 Sam Isaacs and a young Grace Bussell were involved in rescuing shipwrecked crew and passengers from the vessel “Georgette”. The “Georgette” had run aground off Cape Naturaliste, an infamous coastal stretch in the south-west of Western Australia, and was in the process of sinking. Some passengers had managed to get to shore before a storm set in, making it impossible to land the remaining passengers and crew. Sam Isaacs saw the ship in trouble and organised a rescue. With the help of their horses, Sam and Grace struggled with stormy waters and dangerous reefs to rescue fifty of those who survived the wreck of the Georgette. Without Isaacs involvement it is likely that more if not all of the ship’s people would have perished. Although much of the historical record credits Grace Bussell as the ‘hero’ it was the older and stronger Isaacs who acted as the chief ‘surf rescuer’ (Collard, 1996, p. 99).
There is also evidence that one of the reasons so many colonists were able to survive and stay healthy was because they drew on Nyungar medicinal knowledge. For example, the knowledge that sap from the Marri has medicinal qualities was gained very early from Nyungars. According to Bindon and Walley (1992, p. 34) Marri sap can be used by those who have a sore throat by mixing the crushed powder of the sap with water and then gargling it. The sap apparently acts as a disinfectant. It can also be used for assisting with tooth ache if applied in the same way. Likewise stomach aches can be cured. Apparently it works much like the modern antiseptics. Early explorers and squatters who suffered from dysentery because of poor water quality saw Nyungars using Marri sap powder in this way. They copied Nyungars and found it worked (CALM, 1998).

It is also recorded that Nyungars tanned kangaroo skins to make water bags for excursions into dry areas. They used the gum from the Marri, putting it on the kangaroo skins, making it both pliable and waterproof. Wedjelas took these ideas up and used Marri gum and kangaroo skins to make water bags. Wedjelas learned about other uses of plants by Nyungars and copied them. Nyungars use the balga or the grasstree for different purposes. They used the resin to make what we would call varnish. The resin was also used to help treat stomach problems. The dried leaves of the balga were also used for lighting fires. Early colonists copied all of these things (CALM, 1998).
Colonial isolation and reliance on Nyungar friendship and intercourse

A particularly crucial reason why Nyungars and Nyungar knowledge was important to the lives of Wedjelas was because early colonists were often physically and socially isolated from contact with others. During the early years this isolation was so evident that it drove many to fear Nyungars. Indeed during the first five years of settlement the main colonial newspaper, the Perth Gazette, regularly featured stories about the possibility of Nyungar groups forming large alliances in order to rid themselves of the invading group (see Green, 1984). Precisely how many Nyungars were present around the main settlement areas was one of the most talked about things in the 1830s (Bussell, 1833b, p. 192-193). The colonists were particularly aware of their vulnerability and feared that Nyungars would exploit their strategic strengths and numerical superiority.

As a consequence Wedjela leaders were especially cautious in their dealings with Nyungars, often going to great lengths to encourage people not to cause offence, instead adopting conciliation as a tool. This is not to suggest that colonists were always keen on establishing amicable relationships. On the contrary, even a cursory reading of the journals of leaders such as Stirling, Irwin, Armstrong and Fletcher Moore (see Collard and Palmer, 1996) shows that once colonial garrisons and other military facilities were better established, many Wedjelas were less concerned with accommodating Nyungars and their interests and fostering friendships than with mounting physical attacks. However physical isolation did prompt some to establish ‘productive’, friendly and hospitable relationships with Nyungars. Many Wedjelas, often alone in an unknown and
hostile environment, relied on Nyungars for friendship, comfort and sexual gratification. Very quickly a number of important alliances, friendships and kin-based relationships developed between Nyungars and Wedjelas. More often than not one of the consequences of this was that Nyungar knowledges were passed along to Wedjela families.

One particularly important example of the value of friendships to Wedjelas involved the Drummonds of York Nyungars. James Drummond was an early Government Naturalist in the Swan River Colony. His son John was later to become Inspector of Native Police in York. Amongst Wedjela settlers the Drummonds were regarded as “friends of the aborigines (sic)” (Erickson, 1969, p. 38). Drummond senior so respected and valued his friendships with Nyungars that he was prepared to confront other ‘settlers’ over their treatment of Nyungar men. As a young man John Drummond frequently went on hunting expeditions and spent considerable time with Nyungar friends. He maintained these friendships despite being warned by other Wedjelas that this was an inappropriate thing to do. At various times young Drummond faced considerable pressure to limit his contact with Nyungars - at one point having the Resident Magistrate mounting a special investigation into “the circumstances attending John Drummond’s taking away a native woman, wife of Marabunda” (cited in Erickson, 1969, p. 40). John Drummond’s familiarity with Nyungars, Nyungar language and culture soon turned to good account for him. In June 1840 the still young John Drummond was appointed Inspector to patrol the Beverley, Toodyay and York districts. In this role Drummond often acted as a negotiator and mediator clearing up a range of potentially dangerous problems and conflicts.
between Wedjelas and Nyungars. Drummond was regularly called upon throughout his later life to act in this capacity. In November 1849, whilst travelling with A.C. Gregory, the Burges brothers and a party of miners from Perth to Champion Bay, he was able to quell potential violence. Drummond, who became famous for dealing with “warring natives”, would have been able to use his knowledge of language to mediate between group of Nyungars and non-Aboriginal parties (Bain, 1975).

Another early young colonist, George Layman Junior, whose father George Layman Senior established himself in the Wonnerup area, grew up with and learnt much from Nyungars. Layman learnt how to speak Nyungar, much about local Nyungar stories and much about Nyungar economic and ceremonial life. Written as well as oral accounts claim that the young Layman was especially keen to be taught local Nyungar ‘customs’ and practices. According to Webster (1974, p. 3), Nyungars often saw him as one of their own. Today the Layman family has accumulated an impressive collection of Nyungar and other Aboriginal artefacts because of the close relationships forged between Layman and his Nyungar contemporaries.

It was not always the case that Nyungar and Wedjela contact resulted in violence and clashing of values. Indeed despite the fact that there were numerous cultural differences Nyungars and Wedjelas often seemed to maintain cordial relationships. The following incident tends to imply that the quality and depth of social intercourse and mutual respect must have been substantive. Had this not been so, this ‘misunderstanding’ would probably have resulted in a serious clash. During 1910 the son of a Coolup settler brought
home two stones from an island off Poverty Point in the southern estuary. To local Nyungars this island is a very important place. Large numbers of well worn stones were laid out in a circle in a clearing. These stones, it is believed, were brought from very far away perhaps thousands of years ago. Some time in the past the stones had been painted white to symbolise their spiritual significance. Mr Dick Tuckey, an old Wedjela settler recounted how the Nyungars responded.

A couple of days afterwards a couple of them (Nyungars) dressed in all their war paint and spears and what have you arrived at the door, and they said, 'You take em stone back otherwise big trouble!'. So they got the buggy out and they took the stones back and put them where they'd got 'em - where they belonged - and that was that (cited in Richards, 1993, p. 305).

One consequence of this sharing of social and cultural intercourse was that some Wedjelas grew up with considerable respect for Nyungars. The following account outlined in Richards (1993, p. 305) demonstrates something of the level of respect some Wedjelas had for Nyungars.

We accepted them - as kids we accepted them. We used to get along all right with them ... and they'd protect your children and they'd protect their children...they'd do anything for them ... they loved kids ... we got on well with them, we got on well with the families. I found them, both down in Pinjarra and in the North taken all through, terribly honest and terribly, terribly reliable.
There are many other stories involving the children of settler Wedjelas and the children of Nyungars growing up together and sharing much in the way of friendship, knowledge and work relationships. For example, around Ellensbrook Nandinnong and Bungitch’s son, Indeal, became a friend and ‘tutor’ to Alfred John Bussell, the son of Ellen and Alfred Bussell. His close relationship with Indeal resulted in Alfred John growing up learning a great deal about Nyungar approaches to hunting, the usefulness of local plants and animals, how to speak Nyungar language and other important stories and sets of cultural knowledges (Bussell, 1930).

Stanley Grey was described by many as “a great friend of the Isaacs family” (Elizabeth Hansen cited in Collard, 1996, p. 102). One Wedjela recalled his relationship with Stanley Grey as one that was based on friendship, shared learning and, on occasions, protection. Ted Ashton said,

> It was a native - Stanley Grey ... he was the same age as me and, of course, being that and a boy, we got around together quite a bit, and I know that he took me off once on an expedition through a lot of swordgrass swamp, and we went off to feed Penny who was a runaway ... when we got back to the sandhills we were walking along and all of a sudden Stanley gave me a push sideways, and then beat his stick on a snake that was almost between my feet when he pushed me. I hadn’t seen the snake at all (laughs). I was apparently stepping over it, or I would have stepped on to it perhaps, but Stanley gave me a shovel and beat the snake to death (Ashton cited in Collard, 1996, p. 104).
Throughout the past century many older Wedjela families grew up with and fostered many productive friendships with many Nyungar families. At times this friendship and respect was reciprocated. One story cited in Richards (1993, p. 302) recounts how when an ageing Billy Downer was ill Mrs Nellie Patterson cared for him. Likewise in 1903 when ‘George Winjan’ was a ‘sick old native’ living by himself in a camp near the Pinjarra Recreation Ground he was looked after by a Mrs Watts of Pinjarra. According to two older Wedjelas interviewed in the 1970s, the Sutton, Hall and Cooper families (all old settler families) had a deep respect, understanding and genuine affection for Nyungars living in the Pinjarra and Mandurah districts (Richards, 1993, p. 305). One consequence of this during the early years of colonial life was that some Nyungars managed to retain a level of freedom, remain well respected and offered Wedjelas much.

Despite attempts to hush the regularity of sexual affiliations between Nyungars and Wedjelas the contributions of Nyungar mothers, wives, companions and sexual partners is also well documented. It is certainly true that Nyungar women became the victims of rape and sexual exploitation. If the women became pregnant it was easy for Wedjela fathers to shirk their responsibilities and deny their involvement. However not all sex acts between Nyungars and Wedjelas were based on rape. Some Nyungars entered into sexual relationships that were characterised by negotiation and mutual affection and resulted in rich and stable families. Wedjelas not only had sexual liaisons with Nyungars, they also entered into formal and informal married arrangements creating “dynasties and new cultural communities” (McGrath, 1997, p. 45). There was regular occurrence of cohabitation between non-Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women. Indeed in 1909 Alfred
Searcy (cited in Jacobson, 1987, p. 14) spoke about the occurrence of considerable
‘comboism’. Elaborating he said:

_Nearly all the drovers, cattlemen, and station hands had their black boys -gins
(sic) .... These women are invaluable to the white cattlemen, for, besides the
companionship, they become splendid horsewomen, and good with cattle. They
are useful to find water, settle the camp, boil the billy, and track and bring in the
horses in the mornings. In fact, it is impossible to enumerate the advantages of
having a good gin 'outback'.

Clearly sexuality and culture are intricately tied together. When Nyungars and Wedjelas,
with their different sexual styles and practices, shared sexual liaisons, this led to an
otherwise unexplored language, experience and expression of frontier sexuality
(McGrath, 1997, p. 44). Indeed the first sexual experiences for many Wedjelas living on
the colonial frontier would have been with Nyungar women. Although largely unexplored
in the psychoanalytic literature these sexual encounters would likely have had a profound
impact on the lives of those non-Aboriginal men involved10.

It may well be argued that all of these examples of cultural interaction only serve to
prove that many Wedjela colonists were hell bent on sucking and exploiting Nyungars
and their cultural knowledge. Of course there is some truth in this argument. However
this is only part of the story. As anti-colonial writers such as Said (1978), Bhabha (1985),
and Thomas (1994) remind us there are limits to any analysis that merely explains these
kinds of histories as histories of blind appropriation or total oppression. Accordingly we
must find ways to make sense of the complexity of social relations and the many and
varied social processes which ran concurrently. As well as taking what they could,
Wedjelas were also forced, often with some reluctance, to engage in social intercourse
with Nyungars. They were also forced to take direction from those, who because of their
familiarity with country, were in some ways more powerful. This enforced engagement
had a profound on effect on many Wedjelas. For example, clearly Nyungar guides had a
subtle effect on the social attitudes, language, cultural practices and thought processes of
early Wedjelas such as John and Grace Bussell, John Drummond, Georgina Malloy,
Henry Hall and others. A number of these people clearly came to realise that what they
were purporting to 'discover' was otherwise known by Nyungars. As Clarke (1997, p. 8)
says considerable numbers of these people became strangely affirmative of Aboriginal
knowledge and Aboriginal people. In the south-west this resulted in the integration of
Nyungar ideas and Nyungar knowledge into the everyday intellectual concerns and
cultural practices of colonists. One only need look at the use of Nyungar place names to
see that Nyungar knowledge took firm hold on the cultural terrain of the colonisers.
According to Clarke (1996, p. 74) amicable social relationships often resulted in
transformations in language and cultural life for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
people. One of the effects of these relationships was cultural and linguistic hybridity. As
Clarke argues, we ought not underestimate the significance of such relationships on
contemporary social and cultural life, as they make it possible for “essentially
transformed cultural relics” to become a part of our everyday discourse (1996, p. 74). By
drawing on Nyungar knowledge in the way they did colonists became more creative,
more open-textured and more reciprocal than we often recognise in our analysis (Clarke,
The net effect of these kinds of relationships was that Nyungar knowledge and ideas were sometimes elevated above those of the colonisers, allowing Nyungars and Nyungar knowledge to “challenge and disrupt the master narratives of the colonising powers.”

Conclusion

_A few of the boys assimilate themselves, in some degree, with the servants and the Settlers, and the little Blacks are often the playfellows of the white children; but even, under these circumstances, the Blacks are growing up in much the same state of barbarism as their ancestors; and it is a question, whether the white children do not learn more of barbarism from the Blacks, than the Blacks acquire of civilisation from the Whites_ (Backhouse, 1843, p. 539-540)\(^{11}\).

Since Said (1978) first offered his analysis of various forms of Orientalism, theorists have increasingly criticised the preferencing of theoretical models which use power in complete and totalising ways. When applied to the study of race relations in the south west of Western Australia this has often resulted in Nyungars being seen in powerless, desperate, negative, victim centred and static terms (see Attwood, 1989; Bulbeck, 1992; Cowlishaw, 1993). While this view is subtly racist, it is also an exercise in ‘presentism’ (Reece, 1996, p. 33). It is also an exercise of remembering history in a way that extends current political preoccupations with ideas about Aborigines as inert cultural and economic consumers with a history of only ever taking passively what colonists have dished out and as parasites who are a burden on others. It is also an exercise in selective
remembering, a denial of just how inconsistent and ambivalent is the social practice of colonisers.

The history of early colonial life in the south-west of Australia is not merely the history of an assemblage of negative social practices with the colonists only ever being repressive. The history of early colonial life in the south-west is far richer, complex and, in the Foucaultian sense, more productive than this. Sure there is much about early colonial encounters that involved exclusion, repression, censorship, violence and concealment. However the attitudes and practices of colonists were cloaked in ambivalence towards and reliance on Nyungars.

If early colonial historians were to have embraced contemporary terminology they may well have described some Nyungars as expert consultants, cultural attachés, or diplomatic peacekeepers. Likewise they may well have described themselves as cultural cannibals, culturally dependent, or perhaps culturally discerning. Particularly during very early colonial life in the south-west most non-Aboriginal people, most parties of ‘explorers’, and most government officials would have been assisted in some way by Nyungar guides and cultural experts. Indeed, as Clark (1994, p. 21) reminds us, those exploration parties which eschewed advice and help from Aboriginal people, such as the ill-fated Bourke and Wills expedition¹², failed.

Non-Aboriginal people throughout the south-west owe much to Nyungars. Nyungar knowledge and bushcraft (being able to navigate through ‘foreign’ country, keep safe,
find water, trade and exchange with others) have always been enormously valuable to non-Aboriginal Australians. The great ‘Aussie legend’ of the talented bushman stands as testament to the fact that non-Aboriginal people have learnt much, either first or second hand, from Nyungars and other Aboriginal people. It is now well and truly time for more of us to recognise the development of colonial Australia as a collaborative endeavour, at least partly driven by Aboriginal Australians, and not simply a history of non-Aboriginal leadership and heroism (Clark, 1994, p. 22).

Aboriginal heroes, of course, in the main remain nameless ... Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth ... are depicted as being intrepid explorers who found their way across the Blue Mountains in the greater expanse of Australia. Of course this isn’t true. Aboriginal people showed them the way. Without these Aboriginal people they wouldn’t have been able to get across those mountains. Those Aboriginal people remain nameless, yet the ‘intrepid explorers’ are forever glorified by statues and throughout the history books of Australia. There do exist, throughout those historical accounts of what occurred throughout Australian history, many examples of Aboriginal involvement in the blazing of trails, in the establishment of settlements, and in every area of Australian advancement. (McGuinness and Walker, cited in Clark, 1994, p. 20).

Nyungars acting as guides set up the pattern for many later engagements which saw distinctly Nyungar knowledge and expertise become important for folk living in the south-west of Australia (Richards, 1993, p. 56). The following chapter will continue pursuing similar themes in the history of colonial south-west Australia. It will maintain an acknowledgement that under colonial governance relationships between Nyungars and Wedjelas remained exploitative with any hybridity, any shared mixing and fusing of
interests, largely remaining mute and opaque (at least to Wadjela colonists). However it will further explore how unintentional, unconscious hybridization is evident in the historical life of all colonial encounters and how culturally productive moments were a feature of early colonial encounters. It will, to use the words of Bakhtin (1981, p. 360), offer further reminders that whenever a dialogue occurs between two culturally different ‘speakers’ (with their different discursive forms and political interests) both parties are “pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world.”

1 According to Clark (1994, p. 3) in western Victoria, non-Aboriginal people were identified as reincarnated family and known as nagmadjid.

2 Some Nyungars still refer to non-Aboriginal people using the word Nyidiyang, a variation on the term djanga.

3 These tracks, called boodler or pathways transverse the whole south-west (Moore, 1884, p. 8).

4 A Wadjela military man who was involved in explorations in the Albany region during early colonial years.

5 Mokidup has been a significant Nyungar summer karlepp or camping spot for many thousands of years. It has since become known as Ellensbrook Homestead (See Collard (1994)).

6 A Nyungar trained and working at Ellensbrook at the time.

7 One of the daughters of the Wadjela settlers involved in the establishment of the Ellensbrook Homestead.

8 Nyungars often gained much knowledge from Wadjelas through these exchanges.

9 Not surprisingly this often made him unpopular and much maligned amongst his Wadjela contemporaries (see Erickson, 1969).

10 Just as sexual encounters would have had a profound impact on the lives of Aboriginal people.

11 Backhouse’s choice to use the term barbarism reflects how hostile the language of colonialism can be. It is neither a term I accept nor one that I would ordinarily choose. However the quote is an important one in that it demonstrates something of the power of Nyungars to teach and accommodate non-Aboriginal folk - even those who use demeaning language.

12 Indeed the only member of Bourke and Wills’ party to live, a young man by the name of King, only survived because he was offered, and accepted, the help of local Aboriginal people (Clark, 1994).
Chapter five

‘... We cleared and built all that run’:

Colonial ambivalence and early Nyungar contributions to

Western Australian life - Part 2
Introduction

This chapter follows similar themes to the last. Like chapter four it will draw on a series of accounts of early colonial life to explore how ambivalent colonists were in their treatment of Nyungars. The chapter is concerned with an examination of the ambiguous position of Nyungars in early colonial life. On the one hand, colonial ideology was premised on imperial expansion, resource exploitation and the eventual annihilation of indigenous cultures and economies. This meant that colonists were, or at least aspired to the practice, the theory and the attitude of implanting European economies and ideas on others, constituting the colonial territory as economically and culturally inferior. However, and here is where we see another example of inconsistency and ambivalence, colonists were often extremely reliant on Nyungars for labour and other assistance. This was particularly so during the formative years of the Swan River colony when the ‘settlers’ were highly dependent on Nyungar assistance (Clark, 1994, p. 21). While being committed to the domination and eventual annihilation of Nyungar knowledge and culture, early colonists were also dependent on its maintenance.

This is where their ambivalence becomes a problem for Wedjelas. It is almost as if the colonists were forced to be in two minds about how they would engage with Nyungars. Regularly colonists were torn between contradicting aspirations, pushing Nyungars away at the same time as being forced towards them. One of the effects of this ambivalence was to draw many Wedjelas into close social intercourse with Nyungars and, in many cases, forced them to take on Nyungar cultural forms, languages, ideas and social
influences. At times this would have been profoundly unsettling and must have regularly contradicted prevailing colonial discourse and the aspirations of the colonists themselves. This demonstrates just how critical are contradictions in colonial discourse and how colonial ambivalence embodies the seeds of its own destruction (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 140). It also demonstrates how colonial ambivalence presented limitations to the authority of colonial dominance.

The chapter begins with an examination of the critical part Nyungars played in the economy. They worked in the pastoral, communications, prospecting, fisheries, shearing, clearing, firefighting and shipping industries, building the foundations of today’s economy. Next the chapter looks at how critical Nyungars were in helping maintain good government. It examines how Nyungars acted as police assistants, detectives and ‘trackers’, making law and order possible during the formative years of colonisation. Finally the chapter turns to a discussion of how regularly Nyungars played a part in the moral and religious life of the ‘settlers’. They took on leadership in work such as education, childrearing and missionary work.

The chapter shows that without Nyungars many Wedjela endeavours would not have been able to succeed. This chapter again demonstrates that colonists were more ambivalent about Nyungars than we often acknowledge. Like the last, this chapter shows that non-Aboriginal people have long been in two minds about Nyungars. Indeed it was this ambivalence that forced colonists to rely on Nyungars for assistance and inspiration.
Colonial enterprises and the necessity of Nyungar labour

Another area in which fractures occurred in the colonial project in south-west Australia was in relation to the transplanting of a colonial economy. On the one hand the principal purpose of colonisation is to replace an indigenous economy with a colonial one, exploiting new territories and resources. However in many colonies, particularly those distant from the imperial centre, the newcomers became highly dependant on indigenous labour.

In some regions, particularly during the ‘early years’, Wedjelas encouraged cordial relations with Nyungars precisely because of this dependence, because they desperately needed Nyungar co-operation and labour. For example during the early 1840s Wedjelas settling in and around York were especially keen to get on well with Nyungars because they needed to employ them. During this time the local district was experiencing rapid agricultural development with the sheep population increasing by 60 percent in 1841, cattle by 50 percent and crop acreage by 50 percent. At the same time there was almost no increase in the availability of Wedjela labour. The need for Nyungar labour became so important that Governor Hutt developed a scheme to encourage Wedjelas to take on Nyungar workers. In June 1841 he announced a land bounty for those farmers prepared to persevere with the training of young Nyungars in agricultural work. The scheme offered a remission on the price of land to Wedjelas who could prove they had employed and trained a Nyungar for two years in farming skills. If the training resulted in Nyungars
receiving a trade's certificate the Wedjela farmer could receive double this concession (Green, 1984, p. 144).

At the same time many Nyungars, prompted by enormous changes to their physical environment and their economies, sought out ways to survive. Although regular and permanent work was often not available Nyungars were able to develop adaptations of earlier economic practices to sustain themselves and their families. Often they were able to maximise their capacity to subsist by including Wedjelas in their sharing and trading practices. According to McGann et. al. (1994, p. 17) in return for goods such as tea, sugar and flour and permission to camp on non-Aboriginal acquired land Nyungars often provided game and labour to non-Aboriginal families.

So from the earliest of contact Nyungars offered their practical expertise and mastery to non-Aboriginal people trying to establish economic enterprises in the infant Swan River colony. Particularly in places where there was a shortage of free or convict labour, such as was the case in the Swan River before the 1850s, Aboriginal labour became vitally important. Almost immediately many Nyungars took up this challenge and became expert horsemen and women, skilled shepherds, and adept at using European agricultural technology and firearms. As well as acting as guides Nyungars took on work chopping wood, fetching water, clearing land, discovering and mining mineral deposits, undertaking domestic chores such as scrubbing floors, preparing food and looking after children (Clark, 1994, p. 23).
As early as the 1820s and 1830s colonial expansionists, such as George Fletcher Moore and Georgiana Molloy regularly make reference to the use of Nyungars as servants in their journals and letters (Hasluck 1955). In 1833 the Mandurah ‘settler’ Hall records that he employed Nyungars in his fishing industry. When whaling was established in Albany in 1836 Nyungars were amongst those working on the boats. This pattern continued well into the 1840s with Nyungars employed in whaling activities both on the beach, in the boats as crew and in the houses of whaling captains (Green, 1984, p. 143).

In 1839 the Resident Magistrate at Toodyay, Captain Whitfield, described the practice of taking young Nyungars away from their families and placing them in non-Aboriginal households to be trained as lackeys or servants. Whitfield boasted that as workers Nyungars were often far better than non-Aboriginal hired labourers, easily surpassing the value of those who often had little bushcraft skills and knowledge of the area (Erickson, 1969, p. 32).

One particularly successful, if relatively unknown, example of Nyungar involvement in the delivery of essential services during early colonial times involved the establishment of a Nyungar fire brigade in the York area. Wedjela settlers in the Avon Valley, located east of Perth, quickly learnt about Nyungar use of fire stick farming techniques and by 1838 were “bribing Aborigines with gifts of wheat, rice, sugar and blankets in order to persuade them to burn-off after the harvest had been gathered.” (Markey, 1976 p. 10). In July 1840, in a desperate attempt to deal with increased bush fires which threatened ailing farms, one local Wedjela suggested that the best way to prevent fires was to
employ Nyungar prisoners as fire constables to patrol the district, and “discourage their brethren from lighting fires and to fight any that broke out…..” (cited in Garden, 1979, p. 42-43). This suggestion was adopted and at the end of January 1851 orders were issued by Cowan (the York Protector of Aborigines) for Harris (the Wedjela who initially made the recommendation) to employ four Nyungs as fire controllers. Nyungs were promised a small wage, a kilogram of flour per day and several sheep to cook at the end of the season (Green, 1984, p. 146).

Many written accounts of the history of colonial exchange tend to imply that little, if any, economic exchange took place after the very early years of colonial contact. Like much official colonial history a sub-text within much writing of history is that Nyungar work essentially ceased once colonial settlements were well established. However Nyungs continued to offer their services and labour well beyond the early years of colonial contact. Regular mentions are made of Nyungar involvement in the labour force throughout the historical records.

Bessie Flower offers us one example of a Nyungar actively involved in work as an educator. She was born in 1851 and spent the early years of her life at Mrs Camfield’s Annesfield Institution for Aboriginal children in Albany. Bessie was taught at Annesfield and did very well, passing, with credit, a public examination held at a government school (Tilbrook, 1983, p. 44). In 1867, when she was only 16 years old, she was taken from Albany’s Annesfield Native Institution, to ‘give instruction to her own people’ at Victoria’s Ramahyuck Mission. Originally she moved to Ramahyuck as Mission school
teacher with an obligation to serve two years (Green, 1989) but after marrying a local
Aboriginal man they both took charge of the mission’s home for Aboriginal orphans and
contributed much to the mission (Green, 1984, p. 156). She continued teaching at the
school, with the Australian News reporting in 1869 “the very accomplished native
teacher, Elizabeth Flower will soon take charge of the new boarding school. The children
receive five hours instruction daily, and made good progress in their lessons as well as in
needle and household work” (cited in Green, 1989, p. 118). When, in 1874, Ramahyuck
was examined by school inspectors it received the highest results and commendations.

Another industry in which Nyungars contributed much was in the delivery of various
communications services. During the period before convicts were introduced into
Western Australia the economy relied heavily on Nyungars maintaining mail services
between the major settlements. Indeed for several years the southern mail routes from
Perth to Bunbury and Vasse relied entirely on Nyungar postal carriers (Pope, 1993, p.
57). Nyungars acting as runners between places such as Perth and Bunbury received a
small wage plus food, clothing and tobacco (Green, 1984, p. 146). Among those who
worked in this industry included Durangod, Joolonga, Wayrang and Jim, who in 1838
carried mail from the Leschenault area; Yugan and Wawayran, who carried mail from
Leschenault to Pinjarra in 1839; Dindu, Ninda and Jack, who carried mail from Pinjarra
to Perth; Dick and Gattabonnayon from Leschenault; and William, Kenny, Biranga,
Bushell, Hohindon and Paddy, who carried mail from the Vasse to Leschenault
(Tilbrook, 1983, p. 20). In one noted example of Nyungar involvement in mail carrying a
colonist named Nancy McDermott records that on the 27th of July 1833, “two soldiers
and some natives arrived from the Vasse. The latter brought papa a letter from Captain Molloy”. While this was not unusual it is interesting to note that the letters were entrusted to Nyungars ahead of non-Aboriginal soldiers (Pope, 1993, p. 59).

It is likely that Nyungars were recruited for this kind of work because they were able to adapt already developed skills in message stick carrying. As Hammond (1933, p. 61) explains message stick technology had much in common with Wadjela communication networking.

_The stick had to go along certain paths ... It would be carried in various stages by various natives. For instance, if a message had to go from Perth to Albany, one native might carry it to Pinjarra, another on to Harvey, another to Bunbury, and so on until it had gone right through the territory. Each native, after handing over the stick, would return to the place where he had received it, and this acted as a sort of check to know that the stick was being sent around all right. Anyone who was capable of carrying a message had to do it when called on. He could not refuse_ (Hammond, 1933, p. 61).

One particularly celebrated example of Nyungar involved in the communications industry was by a woman called Mary Helen Cooper. Cooper was born around the Dardanup area near Bunbury and was sent to the New Norcia Mission after her mother died. In the early 1870s a telegraph line was established, linking Perth to Geraldton. The telegraph station and post office at New Norcia was a critical link in this communications network. Mary Helen was selected to be the telephonist and was trained by Bishop Salvado to send and receive messages in Morse Code (Haebich, 1988a). After she was
forced to retire for health reasons, her role was taken over by another Nyungar woman named Mary Sarah Ninak (Bourke, 1978).

Nyungars involved in early postal work worked well and efficiently under very difficult circumstances with few resources. They were able to complete their work proficiently and made a very important contribution at a time when the new colony was economically vulnerable. Without the contributions of these workers many regional settlements, such as Bunbury and the Vasse, would have been completely isolated and unable to operate (Pope, 1993, p. 77).

In the years after the 1890s the involvement of Nyungars in the world of work took a different turn with the establishment of various state and church funded institutions and ‘homes’ designed to prepare Aboriginal children to be even more ‘productive’ in the Wedjela world of work. Young Nyungars trained and employed at these institutions acted in important ways to ‘open up’ economies in other areas throughout the country. Ellensbrook Homestead produced its share of young Nyungars who went on to contribute much as workers and citizens. There is little doubt that the work of the Nyungars in the establishment of Ellensbrook as domestics or as farm workers contributed to the survival and success of Ellensbrook as a farm, an Aboriginal home and, in more contemporary times, a tourism venture. In 1874 a young Nyungar man named Nannup, who had been trained at Ellensbrook, was taken by the expansionist Brockman and a number of Wedjela stockmen with two hundred head of cattle all the way from Margaret River, in the south-west, to Nickol Bay, in the north-west of Western Australia (Tilbrook, 1983, p.
Later Nannup was to prove a very important contributor to many early pastoral enterprises in the Pilbara and Kimberley.

Despite much resistance on the part of fishing authorities many Nyungars maintained an active involvement in the local fishing industry. Late into the last century in the Mandurah and Barragup districts the stockpiles of fish created by Nyungars using *mungah* or fish traps became a useful product for early Wedjela families. After each *mungah* season ³ huge piles of fish were used by Wedjelas as manure for their gardens. These stock piles were left because of the decrease in Nyungar travel, increase in sickness and death and the fact that Nyungar knowledge demanded that no fish be allowed to swim out to sea lest they informed their relations of the traps.

By the end of the 1800s Nyungars were key contributors in the formal labour market. Indeed Nyungars were amongst the most active participants in many of the jobs that made it possible to establish farming and other industry in Western Australia. Nyungars took on anything and everything from work shepherding, stock-keeping, bottling and corking of wine, ringbarking and fishing (Richards, 1993, p. 47).

Clarke’s (n.d.) personal records of life growing up around the York area in the late 1800s very graphically describes her family’s attitude to Nyungars and the value they attached to the work of Nyungars. Talking about Nyungar involvement on farm her sister ran 30 miles from York she said:
they (Nyungars) were very useful to the farmers, they looked after their cattle and sheep and helped with the harvest ... they also brought manna gum in paper bark or any old bags they could find, which the farmers sold by the ton for a good price. When they sent a load of sandalwood to Perth, which took them a fortnight, they put the bags of gum on the top. The farmers kept dogs too, and two or three natives with nothing to do but hunt kangaroos which with pork was their chief meat. They caught so many they helped to feed the natives and dogs, besides the farmer’s family ... it was marvellous how quickly they (Nyungar women) learnt to become useful about the house, especially scrubbing and washing.

I must not forget to mention three brothers in 1867 ... the three wonderful brothers ... their names were John Bailey, Paddy and Toby ... soon made short work of the harvesting with their reaping hooks ... they were never out of work, except when travelling round when the season finished to look for it. There was nothing that they could not do on a farm (Clarke, n.d., p. 4).

This involvement in the labour market increased into the new century. Haebich (1988b, p. 35-41), in her work on Nyungars and Wedjela administration in the early years of this century, documents just how active Nyungars have been in the rural economy. From the early 1900s Nyungars joined the workforce taking up jobs in land clearing, seasonal farm work, shearing and stump pulling. In fact until very recent times, (the late 1960s), Nyungar workers represented the largest section of the casual labour market throughout rural south west Australia. In his review of the history of the administration of Aboriginal people in Western Australia Biskup (1973, p. 223) says,

Outside the pastoral regions, the immediate postwar years were marked by continued demand for aboriginal (sic) labour. In the south west, aborigines (sic)
dominated the casual labour market, doing most of the clearing, burning off, fencing, and crutching, and providing the bulk of hands in the shearing sheds. In the metropolitan area many continued to work in factories as unskilled labourers.

As Haebich (1988b) demonstrates, many Nyungars were instrumental in providing the necessary labour for ‘opening up the south-west’ to European style farming and stock work. This occurred despite the fact that Nyungars were rarely offered permanent work and often paid very little or not at all. Hodson’s (1993a & b) study of Nyungar involvement in the rural labour market in this century shows that up until the 1970s Nyungars provided an important reserve army of labour to farmers in the Great Southern region. When particular seasonal and economic conditions required, non-Aboriginal wheat and sheep farmers would call upon the services of Nyungars to take on work such as clearing land, shearing and domestic labour.

There is plenty of evidence that both during this and last century Nyungars drove the shearing industry in the south-west. Some of the earliest records of Nyungar shearers are from documents kept by members of the New Norcia monastic community. The New Norcia Mission employed Nyungars and paid them at a rate of twenty to forty shillings per month as well as food and clothing. They were then contracted out at just over twenty shillings per hundred sheep. In 1867 the top shearers, Benedict Cuper, sheared 1421 sheep while William Monap, Richard Canchiel and Tom Yawell sheared 990, 838 and 756 sheep respectively (Green & Tilbrook, 1989, p. 162d). Nyungars continued this active involvement in shearing through to the early 1970s. According to informants cited in Hodson (1993b, p. 90-91), during this time, many of the shearing teams were
Nyungars. As one of her informants remarks, “Wedjelas (whites) had a job to get a job shearing, they were battling especially (in) the big sheds ... Nyungars had the shearing game wrapped up right throughout the southern part of the State and in the wheatbelt as well.” As the following comment from another of Hodson’s (1993b, p. 91) informants shows, Nyungars certainly believe they played a pioneering role, one that has been largely ignored by non-Aboriginal people, in work and the development of land for agriculture in the south-west regional economy.

I don’t think the old farmers would have told the younger people who did clear the land. The younger blokes have got in their minds these days that Nyungars are bludgers, loafers, they didn’t care that the Nyungars were the ones that cleared their land and that they were underpaid to do it. That’s the reason why these days they think nothing of Nyungars, they never respected Nyungars. If they saw what we had to do in those times, they would think a lot different now.

One Nyungar elder I talked to about this chapter expressed similar sentiments when he recalled:

our mob we cleared and built all that run from Brookton, York, Beverley right through as far as Kondinin. For years we sheared the majority of the sheep in that area. You talk to the older Nyungar yorgas (women) .... when they was younger they brought up and looked after all them kids from the big farming families.... we built the fences, milked the cows, repaired the roads, we did everything .... Wedjelas wouldn’t be where they are now without Nyungars ... we cleared and built all that run ... not them ... we did it.
Colonial rule and the need for Nyungar governance

There is significant scholarship examining how the colonisers, who had at their disposal tremendous military and regulatory resources, impose their sovereignty upon indigenous people through the use of physical force. However, it is an illusion that colonial authority is ever exercised in a complete and straightforward way. On the contrary, the history of instituting colonial rule is full of contradictions and ambivalence. In addition the history of instituting colonial rule is incomplete without the story of the involvement of indigenous people in colonial governance. It is therefore important, in this discussion of the history of early colonial encounters in the south-west of Australia, to make mention of colonial ambivalence and the need for Nyungar involvement in governance.

As Hunter (1994, p. 28) says, the objective of governing populations has always required those attempting to apply sovereignty to develop expert knowledges about those who are to be governed. This is at least partly because governmental processes rely on the help and active involvement of the governed to effect by “their own means ... a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). This is at least partly because those aspiring to rule never have at their disposal the practical means by which to effect total governance (Hunt and Wickham, 1994).

One of the consequences in colonial relations is that it is not only the coloniser that is implicated in governmental processes. Indeed in places such as south-west Australia we
can see that colonial rule was highly dependent on the involvement of Nyungars in governmental work. The business of maintaining law and order was another area of colonial life in which Wedjelas came to rely on Nyungars.

The colonial record regularly makes mention of the involvement of Nyungars in colonial governance. From the very earliest of colonial times fit and knowledgeable young Nyungar men were recruited in an attempt to quell resistance and maintain law and order amongst other ‘troublesome’ Nyungars (Biskup, 1973, p. 223). In return for their services these ‘constables’ were given a daily ration of a pound of flour and told the ration would cease if there was trouble in the area (King, 1980). We see this happening as early as August 1830 when Ensign Dale commented that:

*Exploring parties minimised the risk of danger by including friendly natives among their members. These often acted as guides and on more than one occasion changed possible foes into eager acquaintances (Andrews, 1939, p. 61).*

In the 1840s, Captain Bunbury’s forces were only able to attack York Nyungars because a young Nyungar acted as their guide (Fletcher Moore, 1884, p. 326). The wholesale attack on Nyungars at Pinjarra would not have been possible without ‘intelligence’ supplied by neighbouring Nyungars. Bentley (1993, p. 33) claims that the early ‘settlers’ found Nyungars to be excellent guides and protectors due to their knowledge of the country, skill in riding horses and ability to ward off hostile Nyungars. It became routine to include at least two Nyungars in any major police operation. By the 1860s there were “39 native assistants who made up a quarter of the police force in the colony at the time”
(Coles, n.d.). During this time 146 police had to cover an area of 60,000 square miles. Nyungar assistants therefore played an important part in tracking down absconders and guiding Wedjela officers throughout the country (Coles, n.d.). During this time most police stations had either full or part-time Nyungar police constables.

Clearly those charged with the responsibility of maintaining ‘law and order’ recognised the value of Nyungar involvement in governance. The following remark by Keeffe (cited in Palmer, 1997) serves as an example of how non-Aboriginal Police Constables felt about the skill of Nyungar Police Assistants:

one cannot but admire the courage and resourcefulness of the Police Constables concerned, who with their drive and tenacity and the skill of the native trackers, brought in the culprits (of crimes) from a vast area of virgin bush.

It is with this topic, assistance to police, that we first hear about the contributions of the now famous Tommy Windich, who along with Jimmy Mungaro, Billy Noongale Kickett and Tommy Pierre, provided assistance to John and Alexander Forrest in their expeditions across the interior of Australia (Forrest, 1875). Windich was born in the Mt Stirling area not far from York in 1840 and was brought up and taught bush skills by his relations. By the time he was twenty five, Windich was using these skills for the Western Australian police force (Coles, nd. p. 2).

Within a few years Windich was to become involved in guiding a number of Wedjela explorations. Examples of these included the successful search for kerosene in the areas
east of York (Coles. nd. p. 3). In 1866 he was chosen as one of three Nyungars to join Hunt and Forrest’s expedition of the Hampton Plains areas. He was then appointed to Forrest’s party to search for Leichhardt who was believed to have perished after he tried to come overland from Victoria. In 1870 Windich and Billy Noongale Kickett set out from Perth to ‘head’ a party seeking to explore isolated country between Israelite Bay and Eucla. The men guided the party overland to Esperance Bay, along the coast until they arrived at Israelite Bay. On the journey Kickett and Windich shot game for fresh meat for the other men and rode ahead of the main party with John Forrest to find water, fresh provisions and set up camp. As a direct result of this expedition, maps of the coastline were corrected, redrawn and a range of areas were identified as being suitable for non-Aboriginal settlement (Haebich, 1978, p. 19). After these expeditions Forrest described Billy Noongale as an “intelligent young fellow” and wrote that Windich was;

very useful in collecting the horses, as well as a first class huntsmen and really invaluable as a water finder. Accompanying me on many trying occasions, suffering often from want of water, he showed energy and determination deserving of the highest praise (Coles. nd. p. 5-6).

Clearly Windich and Kickett were both very important members of Forrest’s various parties. Forrest’s journals show how dependent he was on Windich and Kickett’s ability to find water and blaze the way for later explorations and enterprises. On his second journey with Forrest, Windich acted as guide from Esperance to Adelaide forging a route which formed the basis of the telegraph line linking Perth and Adelaide. Windich then accompanied Forrest on an exploration from Geraldton, east across the middle of the
state, to the Adelaide-Darwin telegraph line. Still relatively young, Windich returned to Esperance, presumably to take up work as a police ‘native assistant’. It was here that he became desperately ill and died before arrangements could be made to send him to Perth for treatment. The Forrest brothers erected over his grave a tablet with the following inscription:

_Erected by John and Alexander Forrest in memory of Tommy Windich; born near Mt Stirling, 1840, died at Esperance Bay 1876. He was an aboriginal native of W.A. of great intelligence and fidelity who accompanied them on 4 exploring expeditions into the interior of Australia, two of which were from Perth to Adelaide. (Coles. nd. p. 10)._  

Reading Forrest’s many journal entries shows just how much respect he had and how dependent he was on Windich. He was, according to Forrest’s own account, “the most experienced and best bushman in the colony” (cited in Wood Wilson, 1981, p. 11). Indeed reading Forrest’s accounts gives one the impression that he considered Windich the leader who literally headed up his many government sponsored expeditions.

_Tommy was a tall, healthy native with a well combed beard. He usually rode with me at the head of the party and all through the trying journey he was always helpful and my closest companion (Forrest cited in O’Brien, nd. p. 1)._  

Forrest makes it known on more than one occasion in his journals and records that without the help and companionship of Windich, he and his party would have perished many times through lack of water (O’Brien, nd. p. 2). Cole (nd) argues that Windich’s
contribution is typical of the many Aboriginal people, “whose knowledge of this vast country, made possible the successful completion of many of the explorations begun by those of Australia’s white race” (Coles. nd. p. 10). O’Brien (nd. p. 2) argues that Windich was a central player in the government business.

Nyungars incarcerated in prisons also became a valuable source of labour for the colonial government. For example, roads throughout the York district were completed by Nyungars ‘waiting’ to be transported to Fremantle. Many of the building structures still existing on Wedjumup or Rottnest Island were designed and initially built by Nyungars and other Aboriginal prisoners transported for petty transgressions of Wedjela law (Green, 1997, p. 18). Before the arrival of convict labour in Western Australia, Nyungars, who were regularly incarcerated in prison doing ‘hard labour’, built many of the early government buildings and structures all over the state. When convict labour was introduced, the Colonial Office in London decreed that they were not to work north of the 26th parallel. This combined with the intense heat and living conditions in the north-west and uncertainty around conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, made it difficult for the early land developers to attract non-Aboriginal labour. An option often made available to those keen on ‘developing’ country to the north was to recruit Nyungar labour from places such as Rottnest Prison (Bosworth, 1991). For example in 1863 Mr Padbury, a Swan River pioneer, approached the Government for financial assistance with his venture at Nichol Bay in the north-west. His request was refused by the authorities who instead offered him the services of Nyungar prisoners from Rottnest
Island. These prisoners were later to prove essential in assisting with the development of early Roebourne (Withnell Taylor, 1980 p. 26-27).

Nyungar and other Aboriginal convict labour then became useful sources of government labour, particularly in work such as road making. Withnell Taylor (1980, p. 101) says:

*Roads were constructed by prisoners, mostly Aborigines, of limestone. It was common knowledge that when some people with special skills were required for the job, it took little time for the police to arrest them on some pretence and out them to work on Government buildings or roads. The roads in both Roebourne and later Cossack were some of the best in the state.*

**Colonial respectability and the patronising urge of missionaries**

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, as well as homogenising the cultures and lives of indigenous people, much colonial discourse assumes that the colonisers share one unified history. As Thomas (1994, p. 97) argues, colonising involved an array of "religious, commercial, administrative and exploratory projects". Often this produced tensions and contradictions. Nowhere were these tensions and contradictions more evident than amongst those who, on the one hand were keen advocates for colonial expansion, but on the other hand, committed humanitarians and/or missionaries.

The life of Bishop Salvado (and many of his Benedictine missionary community) offers us one such example of ambivalence in missionary work. Salvado's relationship with
Juat Nyungars is full of contradictions of the kind that reflect a profound inconsistency at the heart of missionary reasoning. It is well documented that Salvado was amongst the most fearless colonisers of Nyungar country. He was like many other early missionaries in Australia who cooperated with various colonial administrations to ‘open up’ and exploit Nyungar land. Indeed it could be argued that he collaborated in the dispossession of Nyungar land and culture. However, there is good reason to believe that he was a man who cared much for Nyungars. Much has been written about his attempts to ‘soften the blow of colonisation’ and of his deep love and respect for Nyungars. As a consequence he was one who learnt much from Nyungars and was transformed by his long association with them.

Nowhere were Nyungars more important than in the establishment and development of the New Norcia Mission and monastic community. According to Bishop Salvado himself (cited in Stormon, 1977 and Russo, 1980), the early mission would not have survived were it not for the work and efforts of many Nyungars. Like other colonists, Salvado and his group relied heavily on the work of Nyungar guides. Salvado’s journals are full of entries indicating just how dependent he was on the efforts of Nyungars:

_We piled our baggage on to one dray, and accompanied by two of the Captain’s (Scully) employees and two natives, resumed our journey through the bush (Stormon, 1977, p. 35)._
(in great thirst and after many attempts at finding water) I followed the native, and after a mile, to our immense joy, we found a large pool of water (Stormon, 1877, p. 36).

But this time the bullocks wandered so far that it took three days to recapture them, and then only with the aid of two natives (Stormon, 1977, p. 45).

We proceeded to explore the area with some friendly natives whose help we sought in the hope of finding a suitable site. The natives directed us to a place where the Moore River widened into a pool that they called Mourin (Russo, 1980, p. 54).

The work of William Bilyagoro, who was described as “Salvado’s first and greatest savage friend” had much to do with Salvado’s ‘good fortune’ in establishing New Norcia. Salvado records that in February 1846 Bilyagoro took the dangerously thirsty Salvado to Badgi-Badji Pool. This area was later to become one of the sites for the early mission (Hutchison, 1995, p. 40). He then went about assisting Salvado in the initial stages of setting up his mission. Henry Indich, was another person who was close to and lent a hand to the Benedictine monks. According to his great great grandson Trevor Walley (1995, p. 37), Indich regularly accompanied Salvado into the local country, introducing him to Nyungars, in the hope that they might be recruited as members of the community. Indich took on a number of work roles, most of which demanded considerable responsibility. By 1877, when he was only nineteen years old, he was managing the New Norcia Telegraph Office (Russo, 1980, p. 203).
From the very beginning Nyungars were quick to join with the monks in work to build the new mission. Nyungars tilled the soil, planted crops, helped with the construction of buildings, made roads and bridges, assisted in the spiritual work, and guided and cared for the early Benedictine community. This reflected something of Nyungar’s kind and hospitable attitude to Salvado and his small band of monks. Salvado records that in March of 1846, when the mission was in its most infant stage, Nyungars helped with the building of the first hut.

they fell in quite willingly, and in fact we would have lost a lot of time in the last stages if they had not told us what the best material was for covering the hut and where to get it ... between that day and the next, with their help, the hut was completely covered with rushes and other plants (Stormon, 1977, p. 38).

During the early years of the mission supplies were very low. There can be no doubt it was the labour of Nyungars, who set out hunting and gathering provisions, that saved the monks from starvation. Underground bulbs, lizards, grubs and other bush resources were regularly collected by Nyungars to supplement the monk’s dwindling supplies of flour and rice (Stormon, 1977, p. 39).

On 28 April I set out for the city with a native at my side. We fed on grubs and lizards that we caught as we went along, and I must say, out of a regard for the truth, that the good native always gave me the larger share. As for possums and kangaroo-rats, we kept them for our evening meal ... Often enough when I was sound asleep the native, having come back from the hunt with something to his own taste, would wake me up saying, ‘Guaba guaba munda nalgo’ (Good, good,
Nyungar produced materials were also regularly offered to the monks so they could survive in some comfort. In October of their first year in the bush Salvado recalls that, noticing that things were obviously bad for the monks, Nyungars offered materials to help sustain poorly maintained clothing and shoes. Trousers were patched with Nyungar kangaroo skin. Clothing was kept on by tying dried kangaroo gut around waists. New boots were made out of kangaroo skin (Stormon, 1977, p. 53).

It is difficult to speculate why Nyungars would have been so generous. Perhaps Juat Nyungars cultivated Salvado’s patronage in order to develop exchanges so they could obtain certain goods and services: food, clothing and transport, and some relief from harassment. However there is good evidence that they wished not to surrender their identity and cultural autonomy.

On more than the odd occasion Salvado speaks of the early interventions and efforts of Nyungars in almost angelic terms. Indeed he implies that they offered spiritual inspiration. He suggests that in many times of crisis, when the monks prayed to their Lord for help, Nyungars provided the assistance they had asked for.

*Finally the water began to fail in the pool (near his hut), and we tried digging a well, but without success. Thereupon we made a triduum to St Benedict, asking his intervention in these sore straits ... I went off with two natives to find water*
elsewhere ... (over twenty miles from the hut) ... and further on found a mineral spring (that) according to the many natives in the vicinity, was quite suitable for drinking ... one (Nyungar) gave me a present of tubers and another part of their catch (Stormon, 1977, p. 40).

In April of 1846, after one of the monks named Don Leander had become lost, Salvado and his men sat down to pray:

At 11 A.M., after we had sung a High Mass, we saw four natives, whom we had not seen for four days, coming towards us. They were like four angels sent by Divine Providence to our aid ... we were still reciting the Rosary when the fourth native came up, touched me on the shoulder, and said: 'On Lean, n-agna ciena, iei, coli', which literally translated, means: 'I have seen Don Leander; he is on his way now.' Our happiness can well be imagined (Stormon, 1977, p. 41).

When the mission became more established Nyungars maintained their support, offering to increase their labour. Salvado records that in early 1847 clearing of the land began with Nyungars assisting with the “uprooting of gum trees and wattles and thickly strewn scrub.” Thanks to the work of Nyungars, within a few days thirty-four acres of land were ready for ploughing (Stormon, 1977, p. 56). Nyungars contributed much to the growth of the mission helping to build cottages, storehouses, the main church, the blacksmith shop and the flour mill (Russo, 1980, p. 86). In 1847 Salvado recruited a workforce of seventy-four Nyungars to help with the construction of the new mission (Russo, 1980, p. 128). They took on the majority of work in lambing and shearing, specialising in detecting water and sinking a network of wells throughout the Victoria Plains district (Russo, 1980,
Nyungars soon learnt the art of breaking and mustering horses, breeding animals that were sold to the British Army for work in India (Russo, 1980, p. 165).

It was not merely Nyungar men who were relied on. Salvado used the talents and labours of Nyungar women who, ‘just by watching a lady intent on her work knitting socks’ learnt needlework, woolwashing and other domestic work. Indeed during these formative years of the mission, Nyungars made all the clothes and shoes (Russo, 1980, p. 166). All of this effort was most important in allowing New Norcia to become “the most powerful economic force in the young colony” (Russo, 1980, p. 109). Evidence of the extent to which Nyungars helped run the mission can be seen from the following mission diary entry for the 3rd of March 1874. Speaking about Nyungar involvement in work Salvado says:

_A well sunk at Marah. A native boy is taking a horse to Mr Thompson. Benedict Cuper sold a horse for two pound to a stockman. Brother Joseph and two natives went to measure ground. I intend to buy land in three places around Marah. They bring timber for the house we are building for the house next door to the Telegraph Office. It already has its walls up. They are baking the fourth batch of bricks. Continuing with grape crushing for wine-making. The brothers are constructing window frames to take to Marah. A table is made for the dining-room in the guest-house. A choir is rehearsing to sing Lamentations for holy week. They are preparing the troughs for the coming season. They are constructing the flour-mills to begin milling as soon as they complete the building. They are making two tip-carts. I am designing a wooden back to be built on the seats of the choir in the public church (Russo, 1980, p. 204)._
Salvado was later to become known as both a successful landowner and one of the colonies finest surveyors. His success has mostly been connected to his grasp of the pastoral and agricultural industry and his personal ingenuity and superior education (Russo, 1980, p. 58). However by his own account, much of his success and ability can be attributed to the work of Nyungars and the valuable lessons he learnt from Nyungars.

According to Russo (1980, p. 59) Salvado and his Benedictine companions were explicit in acknowledging their debt to Nyungars. They appreciated that Nyungars knew the land and were prepared to offer their assistance to the newcomers. Until he was very old Salvado used many of the Nyungar tracks to travel through the country.

_He lived with the Aborigines and shared their lives; camped in the open air and examined their country with them on foot, taking and explaining bearings, drawing maps and measuring the land. He recorded details carefully in his notebook and sent reports to the Land and Survey Office in Perth, often enough with an application for land. He gained knowledge from the Aborigines of trees and shrubs, the soil on which they grew, the rocks and the water-holes. In this way native names for places became a large part of his vocabulary. ‘Every time I took up land’, he wrote, ‘I always took care to give the native name of the start-point, well, spring, or even of a marked tree.’ _ (Russo, 1980, p. 60).

Again one might suggest that all of this merely demonstrates that Nyungars were simply the victims of exploitation, that colonisers merely benefited and that there was little effect on colonial authority and discourse. However this fails to take into account the transformative possibilities that become available when the coloniser is encouraged to
collaborate with, even mimic the colonised. Reading the diaries and self-accounts of
Salvado it becomes apparent that he was confronted with much that forced him to
question the certainty of colonial dominance. He seems to have come to see Nyungars as
much more than simply heathens to be Christianised.

**Conclusion**

Some might argue that colonisation has essentially erased Nyungar culture and Nyungar
knowledge and that history has few examples of intersubjectivity between Nyungars and
Wedjelas. However to accept this thesis is to risk falling into the trap laid by old colonial
discursive ideas and erase Nyungars from the historical landscape. The history of early
colonial contact is not an empty space for those interested in productive cultural zones.
On the contrary, reading history with a view to looking for instances of Nyungar
influence would tend to suggest that colonial contact did not simply involve the
annihilation of Nyungar culture and contributions. If we look carefully at the colonial
record it becomes clear that Nyungars and Nyungar economic and cultural contributions
did not completely die out after frontier contact with Wedjelas. Rather, Nyungars
continued to maintain ongoing contact and involvement with their country, local
Wedjelas and the world of work. Both during and long after the introduction of European
illnesses, frontier conflict, massacres and institutionalisation, which most definitely
affected Nyungar numbers, economies, language and social organisation, Nyungars
continued to work in Wedjela enterprises as well as continued to live as Nyungars.
During the formative years of colonisation, Nyungars contributed in crucial ways to the formal and informal labour market. In a range of ways they came to influence, and in many cases transform, the lives of Wedjelas. They became language teachers regularly providing knowledge of the availability of economic sustenance to supplement Wedjela supplies. They offered protection from the elements and hostile groups of Nyungars, acted as domestic workers, ‘farmers’, agricultural and environmental consultants, mappers, child carers and teachers. Lyon, an early Wedjela linguist, points out that although their land had been invaded, “the aborigines (sic) helped us when we were in their power if lost in the bush, sharing their food with us and showed us our way again” (Lyon cited in Seddon, 1995, p. 115). The work of historians like Haebich (1988b) and Reynolds (1990) demonstrates that throughout contact history Nyungars were instrumental in providing labour necessary for ‘opening up the south-west’ to European style farming and stock work. Careful reading of the colonial record makes it clear that Nyungars have not been the dupes they have often since been made out to be. Despite having their access to land severely regulated, their human rights enormously eroded and many members of their families taken from them, Nyungars have remained key players in the colonial economy and the cultural life of the early colony.

One of the key reasons for this was the existence of considerable ambivalence, many contradictions and a range of tensions operating amongst early colonists. Colonising projects were frequently split and divided by people’s divergent strategic interests and visions and the multitude of people’s specific needs and desires. Often early colonists were torn between impulses to exploit, moral ideas about the ‘brotherhood of man’,
curiosity of the primitive other and sexual desire. Nyungars added to the dynamic by often resisting the objectives of the colonists, exerting their own agency and negotiating with the new arrivals. As Thomas (1994, p. 3) says, the coherence of colonial life was prejudiced both on internal contradictions and the intransigence and resistance of the colonised. This meant that early colonial life did not always involve coherent imposition and denigration. Instead it often involved practically mediated relationships. Often this forced Wedjelas to re-evaluate their attitudes to and treatment of Nyungars and compelled them to rely on the culture and labour of Nyungars.

There is no doubt that early colonial relationships were often exploitative. However, Wedjelas were often ambivalent towards Nyungars. Sure many maintained a distance and were keen to ignore Nyungars. However, many were highly reliant on Nyungars for knowledge on sustenance. Many early Wedjelas were frightened and repulsed by those they considered strange and dangerous. On the other hand this strangeness and fear often manifested itself in Wedjelas being drawn to Nyungars, curious and inquisitive of Nyungar knowledge and cultural practices. There is certainly no shortage of journals, diaries, newspaper reports and officially sanctioned studies of the “manners and habits of the Aborigines of Western Australia” (Armstrong, 1836)\(^5\). It was this ambivalence, added with the agency of Nyungars, that created some conditions for transformations to occur for early colonists.

This had a tremendous effect on the lives of Wedjelas. For some this meant growing up with, working with and learning skills from Nyungars. Others came to learn Nyungar
language and take on Nyungar conceptual ideas. Some were even raised by Nyungars, either ‘reared’ and taught by Nyungar women or adopted into Nyungar families. Many were forced to see things in the way that Nyungars saw things and adopt social practices shaped by Nyungar cultural forms. Indeed it is likely that in a multitude of subtle ways Wedjela social history reflects Nyungar cultural influence. Indeed as Clark (1994, p. 15) says, it would be interesting to speculate what would have been the outcome had not Nyungars and other Aboriginal people contributed to the extent they had. There is certainly a case to suggest that ‘settlements’, such as the one at Swan River, may well have been abandoned or established in a reduced form had it not been for the work and efforts of Nyungars. The way we use social space and name places would certainly be different today had it not been for the history of Nyungar assistance and knowledge sharing.

The contributions of Nyungars are one of the most significant elements on the palimpsest of Western Australia. It is most certainly the case that the lives and economies of many of Western Australia’s old and established colonial families were built on the backs of Nyungars. Many members of some of the south-west’s most prominent and successful farming families were literally and symbolically suckled by Nyungars who provided their early sustenance. Other newer arrivals, who were attracted to Western Australia’s fast booming economy also have Nyungars to thank. Early colonial history has created the conditions for Aboriginality to shape the lives of contemporary non-Aboriginal Western Australians. The following section of the thesis will turn to a study of the lives of these people.
1 Also known in the literature as Betsy Flower.

2 Such as Ellensbrook Home for Destitute Children near Margaret River, Moore River Native Settlement near Moora, and Carrolup Native Settlement near Katanning.

3 Hammond (1933) reports that after the first rains, usually in early April, many Nyungar families from surrounding areas gathered around carefully designed mungah or fish traps to share the harvest and attend local meetings. The Nyungar constructed and maintained fish harvesting traps were designed in such a way.

4 Often Nyungar prisoners would be held in places like York which were in need of road works and only sent to Perth when the job was complete.

5 See for example Nind (1831); Collie (1834); Fletcher Moore (1884); Lyon (1833); Armstrong (1936).

6 The term used by Ashcroft et al (1998, p. 174) to describe a parchment on which several inscriptions are made over the top of earlier ones in an attempt to erase them.
Ethnographic Section - Introduction
Fifty kilometres south of where I live is the city of Mandurah. I spend considerable time in this area as it is a place where family members live and a place I enjoy. I have recently heard about a matter of some ‘public concern’ circulating in local papers and public commentary. In this story there were three main players, ‘Aborigines’, ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’. The discursive chattering behind this ‘public concern’ was based on fairly well known and established ideas about Aboriginal people as a public nuisance. It seems there was some concern at the use, by groups of Aboriginal people, of the foreshore area in Mandurah’s main shopping and tourist zone. These Aboriginal people became the subject of considerable public discussion because their presence was thought to threaten the livelihood of locals by limiting the tourist potential of the area. Almost all who engaged in the public chatter seemed to see the problem’s resolution coming through the removal of the Aboriginal people concerned. The sub text of course was that the interests of ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’ are incompatible with ‘Aborigines’ - the presence of ‘Aborigines’ seen as an unnecessary nuisance and burden. Nowhere in this public discussion was it considered that the Aboriginal people seen to be using public space were either locals or tourists themselves. Nor was it acknowledged that the place in question† had long been associated with outsiders, such as tourists, using the place as a summer visiting and resting place.

Over the last few years a similar topic of public interest has emerged in the local media in Fremantle, the place where I live. Like Mandurah, Fremantle has a rather large retail and business precinct which attracts many shoppers and tourists. Like Mandurah, Fremantle has a number of public parks and facilities that Aboriginal people, amongst
others, seem to enjoy using. Like Mandurah, the fact that some Aboriginal people have been visible in their use of public parks in Fremantle has received some attention in the local media. However, instead of constituting Aboriginal people as a public nuisance the overwhelming concern from Fremantle people (at least those prepared to voice an opinion) seemed to be to make sure those using parks were safe and able to enjoy access to space without intervention from the criminal justice system.

I have been a resident of Fremantle now for over ten years and have either seen or been involved in almost all of the annual city festivals, held in November of each year. It has now become a tradition, almost a ritual, that each Fremantle Festival be officially opened by a Nyungar elder and closed with a family concert organised by and featuring Aboriginal performers. It is also now well established that one of the floats in the Festival Parade focus on the theme of Aboriginal reconciliation and coexistence between the old and newcomers. As is now the established tradition, the opening concert of the 1998 Fremantle Festival began with a formal recognition of Nyungar prior ownership of the region, a Nyungar welcome and a musical performance beginning with a large community choir singing a song about Walyulup, the Nyungar name for Fremantle. This year, more so than previous years, I noticed the reconciliation float attracted a rather large number of non-Aboriginal people who were prepared to march with it. I also noticed there were few onlookers not offering those marching thunderous applause. I have since learnt that the Fremantle City Council has prepared a Reconciliation Policy Statement and agreed to not challenge native title claims lodged by Nyungar custodians.
The point of citing these pieces of ethnographic detail from modern metropolitan Perth is not to pass judgement on the people of Mandurah and present the impression that Fremantle is the centre of progressive intercultural exchange. I am sure I could cite other examples of how Nyungars are marginalised in Fremantle and how Nyungars have been embraced by some who live in Mandurah. Rather the examples serve as a reminder that while Aboriginal people and Aboriginality does seem to feature regularly in the minds and thoughts of non-Aboriginal people, this happens in a variety of ways. In both of the places Aboriginal people feature in public discussions; are in different ways alive as subjects for public comment; and, by their presence, force non-Aboriginal people to readjust their own worlds. However the form and consequences of the way Aboriginal people are constituted and dealt with are often very different.

As argued in the previous section, Aboriginal people have had a very central place in the development of knowledge, culture and economic life of non-Aboriginal people historically. The following section of the thesis continues with similar themes pursued in the section dealing with the history of early colonial encounters and applies them to the study of the lives of groups of contemporary non-Aboriginal people. As mentioned in the introduction, I have chosen to feature four different groups of non-Aboriginal people in this section of the thesis. I am hopeful that this will allow me to present a picture of something of the diversity in non-Aboriginal approaches to talking and dealing with Aboriginal people. This in turn will make it possible to examine the diverse ways Aboriginal people and Aboriginality shape the lives of non-Aboriginal people. Contrasting the lives of a number of different groups of non-Aboriginal Australians is
one way to move away from the tendency to over-generalise and lose sight of non-Aboriginal people’s dynamism, creativity, originality, agency and diversity.

This section seeks to continue the work of those wanting to provide a complex reading of late colonialism in Australia. It is inspired by field work undertaken in the south-west and north-west of Western Australia during the mid to late 1990s. I chose to undertake field work in these two regions for a few reasons. The first is because both regions are places where I spend considerable time. I have lived in the south west for nearly twelve years and have regularly visited the Kimberley visiting friends, working and touring the region. The second reason for choosing to base the field work in these two regions is that both places are very different in many ways, at the same time as sharing strong culture and economic ties.

Undertaking fieldwork in the Kimberley was particularly useful because, culturally, socially and linguistically, it is a region offering many ready-made disruptions to the identities of many who visit and work there. Indeed for many non-Aboriginal tourists, part of the attraction of the Kimberley as a destination is that it is so very different to what they experience in their everyday worlds. This is at least partly due to the presence and activities of so many Aboriginal people in the region. Many of those who live or have grown up in the south of the country have had little direct contact with Aboriginal people. Suddenly and often for the first time, they are confronted by Aboriginality and the visibility of Aboriginal people. This often has the effect of calling into question and highlighting non-Aboriginal people’s own cultural identities and everyday worlds. Places
like the Kimberley then offer up a rich source of ethnographic material about non-Aboriginal life and social processes often unavailable in other regions.

Although material generated from this field work reflects specific regional and historical conditions, observations I make reflect broader social and political patterns occurring in other regions. For example, the analysis of the lives of people involved in Aboriginal governmental work will strike a chord with folk living and working in other parts of the country. Likewise my analysis of the treatment of Aboriginal people by romantic primitivists has something to say about patterns of desire amongst ‘Westerners’, ‘whites’ and ‘recent settlers’ in other parts of the world.

The first chapter in this section, Chapter 6: “The Dracula in non-Aboriginal Australia: Pauline Hanson, One Nation and consuming Aborigines’, takes as its subject the ideas, attitudes and practices of those who express clear alliances with Pauline Hanson and her politics. The second chapter in the section, Chapter 7, is called: “White, nomadic and loopy: Ambivalence and the repressed image of self as the Aborigine”. This chapter includes an ethnography of non-Aboriginal Australians touring the country in caravans, buses and other camping vehicles. The third chapter in this section, Chapter 8, is called: “ Trying to create our own little Garden of Eden: mung beans and the yearning for (a)Aboriginality”. This chapter features as subjects non-Aboriginal people who draw on romantic primitivist ideas about Aboriginal Australians. The final chapter in the section, Chapter 9 is called “The person you were is not the one you become: ambivalence, governmental work and change.” This chapter examines how the lives of non-Aboriginal
governmental workers have been transformed by their involvement with Aboriginal people.

The chapters have been written in a way that focuses attention on each group separately. This is important for it helps demonstrate how variable and complex are the lives of different groups of non-Aboriginal people. It is also important to examine the specificities of people’s lives for it allows us to undo colonialism as a coherent object - something that has effected people in consistent and fixed ways (Thomas, 1994, p. 17). Just as it was in earlier times, the activities of non-Aboriginal people involve an array of interests and projects that are sometimes harmonious but often in tension or outright contradiction (Thomas, 1994, p. 97) What connects each chapter, and this section with the previous one concerned with history, is its exploration of the ambivalence of non-Aboriginal people toward Aboriginality and Aboriginal people. Each chapter cites examples of how non-Aboriginal people seem to shift in their engagements with Aboriginality; often fluctuating between repulsion and attraction, between rejecting Aboriginal people but wanting Aboriginality. The ethnographies show how this ambivalence has the potential to act as a disturbance to what is often considered to be the clear-cut authority of colonial domination. Like the preceding section concerned with the history of earlier colonial life, this section offers evidence that ambivalence has the effect of disrupting and transforming the attitudes, identities and social lives of many non-Aboriginal Australians.

1 According to George Fletcher Moore, an early colonist, the word Mandurah is derived from the Nyungar word Manjar and pays testament to the long standing history of trading, summer festivities and the place as a site where outsiders (tourists) were regular and welcomed. Nyungars, according to Fletcher Moore (1884),
referred to Manjar as a sort of fair which takes place where inhabitants of districts meet to share and barter with each other the products of their respective countries.
Chapter six

The Dracula in non-Aboriginal Australia: Pauline Hanson, One Nation and consuming Aborigines.
Introduction

Much has been written about the politics of Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party over the past three or four years. Some have suggested that Hanson represents the voice of an angry, but none the less extremely racist, Australian “battler” class, long silenced by the forces of political correctness. Others have claimed that Hanson’s ideas represent the public face of the ‘darker’ and unconscious desires of Australian politics, repressed for many years by a more popular and powerful liberal set of political ideas until it became strategically useful to exploit “for political purposes a fear and loathing about Aboriginal people” (Mick Dodson cited in Gray and Winter, 1997, p. 2). Hanson and her One Nation Party have certainly sparked much debate, quickly becoming the subject of numerous newspaper editorials, articles, autobiographical studies, academic journals and a couple of books. Hanson has also excited the interest of commercial television featuring as the target of satire by the Seven Network’s comedy team “Full Frontal” and appearing as a celebrity gardener on the high rating Channel Nine show “Burke’s Backyard” (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 1).

Hanson and her supporters have had much to say about a range of political topics from immigration to Native Title, foreign ownership in Australia, tariff protection, tax reform, education, unemployment, crime and political correctness. There already exists a multitude of well-written, mature and detailed critiques and commentaries on the breadth
of Hanson’s political views. It is certainly not my intention to launch into yet another detailed examination of the ideological persuasions of Hanson or her followers.

However much of what Hanson and her followers have had to say is very relevant to a study concerned with cultural intersubjectivity and the ambivalence of non-Aboriginal Australians. I therefore became very interested in One Nation discourse on such things as Native Title, the question of Aboriginal access to basic human rights, reconciliation, and recent policy responses to Aboriginal health, housing, social security, social justice and education. I also became keenly interested in the Hanson phenomenon because, during the course of the field-work¹, I met and had much contact with those who were clearly supporters of hers. Almost daily, particularly during my time in the Kimberley, I found myself in the middle of a discussion on the merits of Hanson and One Nation. Hanson, as a symbolic figure, became the voice of many people I met. What she said clearly resonated with many groups of non-Aboriginal people with whom I chose to study. I regularly heard people not only repeat and support her ideas but celebrate her role as one who would speak out on matters which they believed had otherwise gone unspoken. After my contact with many of these people it occurred to me that the Hanson and One Nation phenomenon might offer us insights into contemporary social relations and what is presently in the minds of many non-Aboriginal Australians. Whatever the future for One Nation, it is likely the case, as Hugh Mackay suggests, that figures like Hanson feature as something of a loudspeaker for disgruntled whispers in the Australian Body politic (cited in Shoemaker, 1997, p. 20).
Pauline Hanson then is a central figure in this chapter. Discussion of the people with whom I actually met and spoke with might seem to take a backseat at times, their accounts and comments peppered throughout the chapter. This is partly because Hanson is such an outspoken person whose statements and political claims seemed to feature so prominently in the stories and attitudes of those I met. This means that it becomes necessary, if we want to understand the attitudes and lives of her supporters, to spend considerable time talking and thinking about Hanson’s public statements and public persona.

It is also worth focusing considerable attention on Hanson because she offers us a window into the fears, resentment, anger and ambivalence of many people I met. In keeping with the work of Said (1978) I want to suggest that public narratives on the Other, whether they be delivered by historians, social commentators, academics, politicians, journalists or other citizens, are likely to tell us more about the thinking and the lives of the speaker than about the Other. In other words, statements made by Pauline Hanson and her followers about Aboriginal people may well offer us profound insights into the lives of a significant proportion of non-Aboriginal Australians. Furthermore it is worth spending time on analysis of the activities and public statements of Hanson and her One Nation followers because of the hidden ambivalence they seem to have towards Aboriginal people. On the one hand Hansonites are deeply resentful of, at times repulsed by, Aboriginal people. Yet, as I will argue in this chapter, Hanson and One Nation are highly dependent on the political consumption of Aboriginality and utilising ideas about Aboriginal people in public debate.
In this chapter it is not so much the content of what Hanson and her followers have said about Aborigines (although this will need to be examined), as what this content tells us about Hanson, her followers and other non-Aboriginal Australians. I will concentrate, for the most part, on people’s preoccupation with Aboriginal cannibalism and those who ‘feed’ off the so called ‘Aboriginal industry’. I will argue that those who yell the loudest about economic and cultural cannibalism possibly expose much about their own soul and political identity. In other words, stories about Aboriginal cannibalism might well tell us more about non-Aboriginal people’s own cultural cannibalism and reliance on what Hanson describes as the ‘Aboriginal industry’. Furthermore, I will argue that Aboriginal people and stories about Aboriginal people are critical for people like Hanson and her followers. Indeed Aboriginality features regularly as a staple in the symbolic diet of these people. Arguably, were it not for Aboriginal people, Hanson, and people aligned with her views, would have little political platform to rely on. Hanson and her followers then offer us one example of non-Aboriginal people’s ambivalence towards Aboriginal Australians. In other words the chapter shows that, at one and the same time, Hansonites have a love-hate relationship with Aboriginality and Aboriginal people. While they are publicly scathing in their attacks on Aboriginal people they are, unconscious as it may be to many, deeply indebted to Aboriginal people.

The chapter begins by broadly reviewing Hanson’s attacks on Aborigines and the ‘Aboriginal industry’, particularly her claims about Aboriginal cannibalism and the history of Aboriginal people ‘feeding off others’. This serves as a backdrop to later
analysis concerned with her ambivalence towards Aboriginal people. I note with interest that Hanson chooses to use the work of the late anthropologist Daisy Bates as a crucial source to help sustain claims about Aboriginal cannibalism. In so doing, Hanson draws on a legacy of a non-Aboriginal involvement in cultural and symbolic cannibalism. I then move on to suggest that, like Hanson, Daisy Bates’ preoccupation with Aboriginal cannibalism is an outward manifestation of a form of cross-cultural neurosis of the psyche whereby members of the coloniser class project their own unresolved histories, anxieties and desires onto Aboriginal others.

Later in the chapter I will return to the politics of Hanson and argue that by yelling so loudly about the perceived relative deprivation of what she describes as “Aussie battlers” Hanson reveals that her’s is a politics of resentment, a politics of living off the misfortunes of others. In other words, Hanson’s regular and stinging attacks on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture serve to show the extent to which Hanson is reliant on Aborigines for her own political identity and survival. Hanson, as a symbolic figure, then offers us something of a window into often otherwise repressed non-Aboriginal Australian unconscious desires, feelings and thoughts. She has become, to paraphrase Hugh Mackay (1996, p. 2), the confessional loudspeaker which magnifies the inaudible, otherwise repressed whispers of the (non-Aboriginal) Australian soul so that they can be heard.
Hanson and Aborigines

For most of us, Pauline Hanson first came to our attention in the lead-up to the 1996 Australian Federal election. She had recently been disendorsed as Liberal Party candidate for the federal seat of Oxley in south-east Queensland. Her views became the subject of national attention when she claimed that Aboriginal Australians had become a privileged group in Australia, receiving special benefits at the expense of other Australians. Aboriginal Australians, claimed Hanson, had been “overprovided for by government” (cited in the Weekend Australian, Nov 9-10, 1996, p. 6). She was subsequently elected into the Federal House of Representatives as an independent member following a twenty four percent swing against the Labor incumbent. Shortly after her election she turned her back on democratic political conventions by issuing a statement that she would be fighting for “the white community, the immigrants, Italians, Greeks, whoever, it doesn’t really matter - anyone apart from the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders” (Sydney Morning Herald, March 30, 1996, p. 32). Her first parliamentary speech has been described as “a classic expression of resentment against Aboriginal and Asian Australians” (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 7). In it she invoked the myth that Aboriginal people enjoy privileges over other Australians (Hanson, 1996a). This myth, featuring the white Australian as the Aussie Battler, claims that white, mainstream, anglo-Australians are the new marginalised, the persecuted, the exploited and the silenced (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 8).
I heard many similar sentiments from those who are proud One Nation members and supporters. Comments such as the following were made by those with whom I talked while undertaking fieldwork for this thesis. Clearly those expressing such sentiments subscribed to similar myths about Aboriginal privilege,

*My trouble is that I have the wrong coloured skin and wrong shaped nose. If I were a coon I could walk right into Toyota and demand a four-wheel drive. It wouldn’t matter if I had the money or not, I could just book it up. That’s bullshit heh? (Male informant).*

*I lived in Alice Springs for years and I saw it all the time. Blackfellas would get houses from the government one week and the next they would be chopping it up for firewood. All this happens while white families get nothing (Male informant).*

Clearly Hanson’s attitude to the governance of Aboriginal people resonated with many non-Aboriginal people. Her comments about Aboriginal privilege seeming to strike a cord with many who also believed that they had been let down by ‘liberals and do-gooders’.

In her ghost-written book, ‘The Truth’, Hanson launched into accusations of Aboriginal cannibalism, intending to undermine compensatory claims by Aboriginal people and short circuit the work of those she described as the new class elite - those who propagated an ideology founded on guilt. In one section of the book she drew on the rather dubious claims of Daisy Bates to argue there is considerable evidence Aboriginal people ate their own young as well as consumed the carcasses of enemies. To support
these claims Hanson cited a number of historical and anthropological sources, including supposed eye-witness accounts of Aboriginal cannibalism.

She argued that history is full of examples of horrible and brutal acts committed by "blacks against blacks" (Hanson cited in Franklin and Priest, 1996). In one of her many public statements on the subject (Hanson, 1997, p. 132) she said that if "white Australians are to feel guilty about settling Australia, then Aborigines should apologise to the relatives and descendants of the Chinese that they (Aborigines) cannibalised in Northern Queensland in the late 19th century". Hanson later extended these claims of Aboriginal cannibalism in the past, insinuating that in today’s Australia, Aboriginal people are allowed to "exploit the system" and live off the hard work and good grace of non-Aborigines. She accepted uncritically old and well established discourses about Aboriginal people’s natural disposition towards exploiting their own, citing the fact that ATSIC representatives receive $290 a day sitting fees as evidence (One Nation Party, 1998). According to this line of reasoning, if Aboriginal people kill and exploit their own then they are no different from any colonising agent, have not grounds to argue for compensation or special treatment, and ought to expect to experience social deprivation and marginalisation unless they change their behaviour. During the fieldwork I met countless numbers of people who maintained similar views. One person who was handing out One Nation information during the recent federal election said:

*I don’t know why do-gooders go on about how much Aborigines have to suffer. It’s the blacks themselves that get stuck into their own the worst. They’re the ones
who bash each other, they would just as soon leave their kids in cars while they
go in to the casino or pub, they steal from each other. In the old days they used to
volunteer to go out on raids to kill other blacks - they were the worst ones.

The political goals of Hanson and her One Nation Party⁵ reflect similar sentiments about
Aboriginal advantage. In the party launch Hanson called for the abolition of what she
describes as “divisive and discriminatory policies, such as those attached to aboriginal
(sic) and multicultural affairs”, the cessation of ATSIC, the repealing of the Native Title
Act, and the reversal of the Wik decision (One Nation Party, 1998).

**Hanson, Daisy Bates and the projection of cannibalism**

There are some powerful ironies tied up with Hanson’s choice of Daisy Bates as a
principal source to substantiate her claims of Aboriginal cannibalism. Bates believed and
propagated stories, which she said had been told to her by Aboriginal people, of
Aborigines eating members of their own family. In her book, *The Passing of the
Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia*, Bates wrote that,

*Baby cannibalism is rife among the central-western peoples, as it is west of the
border in Central Australia. In one group, east of the Murchison and Gascoyne
Rivers, every woman who had had a baby had killed it and eaten it, dividing it
with her sisters, who, in turn, killed their children at birth and returned the gift of
food, so that the group had not preserved a single living child for some years.
When the frightful hunger for baby meat overcame the mother before or at th*
The claim that new-born Aboriginal babies were killed and occasionally eaten by their mothers is a very familiar story embraced by many purporting to be experts in the study of Aboriginal cultural life. However, careful examination of the evidence seems to indicate that there is little evidence to sustain such a claim. Bates’ own notes suggest that her sources were non-Aboriginal people rather than the women she was making claims about.

Whether Aboriginal groups practised infanticide and/or cannibalism is difficult to ascertain. The work of Pickering (1985), Arens (1979) and the critical scholarship of Buchhorn (1992 and 1994) concludes there is no single credible eyewitness account of cannibalism amongst Aboriginal people. Buchhorn (1992, p. 8) goes so far as to claim there is no real evidence that cannibalism, or the eating of human flesh as a food source, has ever been an accepted cultural practice in any society. On the other hand, colonial histories the world over are filled with fabricated and exaggerated tales of indigenous brutality and barbarism. Colonists often arrived on the frontier with fertile imaginations and minds already filled with ideas about the local cannibals. The colonial imperative, which Langton (1993) talks about, makes it necessary for people on the other side of the frontier to be accused of cannibalism. Arens (1979) makes the observation that almost every colonised group in history, whether they be Scots, Irish, Jews, Catholics or Chinese, has been accused of cannibalism. As Buchhorn (1992, p. 2) says, this led to
much exaggeration, distortion and the invention of stories. Today similar traditions continue when urban myths and tales are claimed to be first hand accounts of events.

The question of whether Aboriginal people were or are cannibals is essentially an irrelevant red herring when considering people’s human and legal rights anyway. What we can say is that historically, allegations of Aboriginal cannibalism occur within a context designed to justify their subordination by colonisers (Horton, 1994). We can also say that stories about Aboriginal cannibalism tell us much more about the minds and hearts of the coloniser than the Aborigines. As Cowlishaw (1997, p. 4) says, reports of infanticide and cannibalism in the literature “provide more evidence of the social domain of the writers than the actual events”.

The fact that Hanson used Bates’ work as the cornerstone upon which to position her arguments about Aboriginal cannibalism and the fact that Bates seemed to be so preoccupied with death, cannibalism and the destruction of Aborigines is good reason to warrant a brief exploration of the work of Bates. Making some observations in relation to Bates’ work may illuminate what accusations of Aboriginal cannibalism tell us about non-Aboriginal people.

There is much that is unclear about Bates’ own life. She seems to have been somewhat reluctant to disclose details about herself. At least some of what she did tell the world about her early years seems to have been distorted. Some have even argued that Bates was a well practised liar whose accounts are unreliable (Blackburn, 1994, p. 21).
However, there are many things about her life that we can be fairly confident about. Bates was certainly involved in an industry/profession highly reliant on the consuming of Aboriginal knowledge. Bates’ professional life and status relied on the collection of cultural knowledge from Aboriginal people who were thought to be on the verge of extinction. As well as “smoothing the dying pillow”\(^5\), Bates was keenly committed to collecting the last remnants of knowledge from a “passing” and “savage people”. In keeping with the dominant view within anthropology at the time, Bates saw Aboriginal people and their culture as a window into the past. In the words of Spencer (cited in Attwood, 1996c, p. 101) Aborigines were “regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded.” Australia’s Aboriginal people were thought to be savages surviving in the modern world, a type of primitive people who were on their last legs. They were thought to be the most primitive, hence best examples of earlier versions of European selves (Griffiths, 1996b, p. 43).

Along with many of her contemporaries in the field of anthropology, Bates saw the environment in which Aboriginal Australians lived as “a fundamental research laboratory of human cultural evolution, a storehouse of customs and beliefs that held the key to charting the progress of man from the earliest ages down to the present” (Mulvaney cited in Attwood, 1996c, p. 101). Bates wrote,

\begin{quote}
to live among them, to see them amidst their own bush surroundings and to note their everyday comings and goings is to experience an ever delightful feeling that you are watching the doings and listening to the conversation of early mankind (cited in Salter, 1971, p. 93)
\end{quote}
At this time Bates was, like many of her contemporaries, keenly concerned that as much knowledge as possible be collected from the bodies and intellects of Aboriginal people before they quickly slipped into extinction. Regularly throughout her journals and notes, Bates speaks of the absolute urgency of collecting and recording Aboriginal knowledge before it faded away. In June 1907, after the death of one of her key Nyungar informants, Fanny Balbuk, Bates wrote that, “with her death ended all hope of obtaining any further reliable records of the Swan River Bibbulman (Nyungars)” (Bridge, 1992, p. 86). Indeed she was bitterly disappointed and lamented over the fact that she was not able to get to the body and take the remains adding, “the Chief Protector, the dearest old lady in the world, was horrified. If I could only body snatch it, it would be invaluable” (Salter, 1971, p. 132).

Bates clearly relied heavily on Aborigines and Aboriginal cultural knowledge as raw material to be consumed and exchanged in the scientific market place. This was not an uncommon attitude amongst anthropologists at the time. It might be said that Bates derived legitimacy and identity from the Aboriginal people with whom she lived and observed. Although her utterings about the imminent death of Aboriginal culture were highly ethnocentric and erroneous, Bates saw her life’s work as the seeking out and collection of a passing culture. We could then say that for much of her adult life Bates lived off what she thought was the dying cultural remnants of Aboriginal people. Her’s, then, was a life marked by its reliance on what might be described as cultural
cannibalism. It is then rather ironic that Hanson chooses to rely on the word of someone who could be described as a vulture of Aboriginal culture.

Some Nyungars (Collard, 1995, personal communication) claim Bates was involved in the grave-robbing networks operating at the turn of the century. I have heard it suggested Bates helped finance her field work by supporting the body-snatcher trade and selling the human remains of Nyungars to museums and the scientific trade. It is difficult to say whether Bates was directly involved in the selling and exchange of Aboriginal remains. Given her contact with and access to Aboriginal groups it would not have been difficult for her to involve herself in this rather macabre activity. If she were involved in body-snatching, by no stretch of the imagination would she have been acting in isolation. Recent research confirms that late last century and for the first fifty years of this century (when Bates was actively involved in fieldwork with Aboriginal people) the trafficking of Aboriginal body parts was at its most prodigious. Monaghan (1991, p. 33) claims that between 5000 to 10,000 Aboriginal people had their graves desecrated, their bodies disinterred and parts dismembered in the name of science. According to Monaghan (1991), there is strong evidence that some Aboriginal people were murdered so that dealers’ supply demands could be met.

According to Monaghan (1991), at that time it was not unusual for people like Bates to be used as agents for the collection of human remains. Bates certainly had regular contact with and knowledge of the needs of academics and museum officials. According to her own accounts she regularly sent specimens of animals to places like the Natural History
Museum in return for money and other support. She once recorded having sent samples of Aboriginal hair to the pathologist Professor Cleland in an attempt to further scientific knowledge about the origins of racial types. Although stopping short of admitting to the practice of grave robbing, she had no problem in describing her interest in securing Aboriginal remains for the purpose of scientific study. For example, she records that while in the north-west,

*I asked the kindly telegraph master if he could let me know when the man (a tall Aboriginal man from the region) died .... so that his skeleton might be secured for anthropological purposes. I fear I gave the gentle master a shock but the skeleton is really worth obtaining* (Salter, 1971, p. 104).

On another occasion Bates admitted sending what she thought were the remains of a skull of an Aboriginal baby to Professor Cleland to help prove her own theories about Aboriginal cannibalism (Blackburn, 1994, p. 133). Although the size and content of her personal collection is unknown, it does seem that at some point Bates kept human skulls quite close to hand during field work. There exists one notable photograph of her sitting with a white cloth spread out on her lap, on it what she claimed to be an Aboriginal skull without the lower jaw (Salter, 1971, n.p.). We could conclude from this that even if Bates was not involved in body-snatching of Aboriginal remains, she was certainly keenly involved in the collection of remains.

Like many of us, Bates’ life and identity was complex, dynamic and marked by considerable ambivalence towards Aboriginal people. Speculation about her desire and
claims of Aboriginal cannibalism aside, by her own admission Bates was deeply ambivalent about her contact with Aboriginal people. Particularly during her earlier life Bates often expressed her repulsion for many Aboriginal people. Her attitude to those she described as ‘half-castes’ was harsh. She was intolerant and considered them vulgar, unsophisticated, lazy and backward (Horton, 1994, p.109). However, as she grew older she seems to have developed a deep respect for many Aboriginal people she met. Indeed she regularly wrote more about her love, friendships and reliance on Aboriginal people. Salter (1971, p. 159) speculates that, as she grew older, Bates shifted from thinking that Aborigines needed her, to becoming conscious of her own need for them. Bates certainly learnt much from the people with whom she lived. It seems Aboriginal people allowed her into their lives and cultures to join them on many of their sojourns. From these trips Bates learnt how to catch fish without the need for a rod, kill kangaroo by silently stalking them, the science of tracking and the mysteries of the stars, much about social organisation and Aboriginal knowledge and, according to Salter (1971, p. 163) much about herself.

Salter (1971, p. 164) characterises the early period of Bates’ life spent in camps with Aboriginal people by calling it a transitionary period of great magnitude. “Her outlook, her circumstances, even her body, were undergoing changes that were too radical not to leave their mark”. So then, in a number of ways Daisy Bates was another important figure in the history of cross-cultural relations who ‘lived off’ and was highly influenced by Aboriginal people. To use her as an authoritative figure to substantiate claims about Aboriginal cannibalism and human exploitation is then fraught with ironies.
Hanson, politics and consuming Aborigines

To help sustain her attack on what she describes as the romantic views of the new class ideology, Hanson and her minders have drawn on many similar ideas about Aborigines as cannibals, painting a picture of them (and their supporters) as aggressive and exploitative. According to the Hansonian view, long before European influence, Aborigines were adept at gratuitously manipulating the world in which they lived. Ignoring the breadth of the archaeological record, Hanson, paints a picture of Aborigines as a people involved in the systematic and wholesale destruction of the Australian environment.

These pre-European occupants of Australia extinguished most of the large fauna 35,000 years ago. Consequently 94 per cent of Australia's large mammals became extinct as the result of pre-European occupation. The vegetation was completely changed due to firestick farming which destroyed all fire-sensitive vegetation. (Aborigines) changed the ecology of the continent far more than European settlement has done (Hanson, 1997, p. 137-138).

Drawing on speculation about early human migration to Australian Hanson implies that not only have Aboriginal people no legitimate claim to native title or "special treatment" but they have no reason to complain about the treatment they have received over the last two hundred and ten years. She uses old racial discourse and posits that Aborigines were responsible for the wholesale genocide of earlier racial groups inhabiting the continent.
One of her many claims is that the “mainland Aborigines exterminated most of the original inhabitant of Australia, forcing the remaining Papuan-type people to Tasmania” (Hanson, 1997, p. 139). According to this logic, if the original Australians were not Aboriginal people, it follows that Aboriginal people must have been involved in a brutal process of annihilation of earlier groups.

Hanson extends these ideas about Aborigines as aggressive exploiters to contemporary times. In her maiden speech Hanson attacks “those who feed off the Aboriginal industry” and members of the Council for Reconciliation who “receive $290 a day sitting allowance” (Hansard, 1996a, Ms Pauline Hanson’s Maiden Speech, Tuesday, 10th September, 1996). Subsequently she accuses the “taxpayer funded, do-gooder supporters” of Aborigines (Hanson, 1996b) of gratuitously exploiting a system for their own ends. In her June 1998 speech attacking the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people she made the claim that:

*The indigenous population is experiencing boom growth in Australia. .... Identifying as an Aboriginal has definite financial advantages, as Aboriginality allows them to claim a share of the booty of the native title scam as well as various other publicly funded perks not available to other Australians (Hanson, 1998).*

Again the language she uses to construct the “Aboriginal industry” brings to mind images of a world made up of bloodsucking scavengers who exploit and feed off the carcasses of vulnerable Australians. According to Mickler (1997a, p. 2), Hanson uses these
accusations of human cannibalism as a way of justifying the nullification of Aboriginal human rights to freedom and autonomy. Just at the moment when Aborigines look like they have justifiable rights to native title Hanson uses the old politically abhorrent idea of human cannibalism. It is here again that Hanson and her followers engage in political projection with the allegation of economic cannibalism telling us more about what is in the mind of Hanson rather than about Aboriginal people and their allies. It is here that we begin to see the ambivalence of Hanson and her supporters.

In the Australian political system, independent candidates, such as Hanson, with no formal major party backing have little chance of election without a strong and/or controversial single issue to win over a significant proportion of the electorate. There is little doubt that without her early attacks on Aboriginal people and the ‘Aboriginal industry’ Hanson had little political future. By her own admission Hanson campaigned and won the seat of Oxley in Queensland largely on the issue of the provision of benefits to Aboriginal people (Hanson, 1996a).

Since her early days as a candidate for the Federal Parliament Hanson has used Aboriginal people, along with other groups such as Asian immigrants, recipients of unemployment benefits and gays, as objects against which she uses a flogging stick to promote herself. To Hanson, Aboriginal people and their allies function as the political and cultural Other against which ‘real’ Australians can measure and know themselves. In doing this Hanson follows a well established political strategy of making Aboriginal Australians function “as one of the most important outlets for debate (or therapy) about
who and what Australians are” (Phillips, 1997, p. 157). In this sense Hanson is just as much (if not more) guilty of using Aboriginal people to serve her own (and her supporters’) interests.

Another example of Hanson exploiting issues around Aboriginality is in relation to how she and the pastoralist lobby approached the debate over the Wik Native Title decision. Hanson’s demand to have native title extinguished is, without question, tantamount to arguing for special and extra privileges for a small minority of Australians, namely pastoralists. Not only did Hanson and pastoralists argue for extinguishment of native title but they also used the opportunity to demand that pastoral leases be upgraded to perpetual leases, a form of exclusive tenure, akin to freehold or freehold title itself. (Mickler, 1997b, p. 6). Without using Aboriginal people and the success of their recent claims for native title the pastoralist lobby, (supported in this case by Hanson) would stand little chance of being able to argue for the upgrading of pastoral leases to exclusive tenure.

We can then begin to see that without the ‘Aboriginal industry’, and her subsequent attacks on it, Hanson might have found herself in political limbo. Arguably she would not have been able to enjoy her meteoric climb to fame and notoriety without using Aboriginal Australians in the way she has. It is certainly the case that Hanson was elected to Parliament on the strength of her views in relation to the ‘race issue’ (Hill, 1998, p. 92). While she has since used a number of other marginalised groups as political fodder to ‘feed’ off, it is debatable whether her populist tactics would have gained the necessary
momentum without her early use of Aboriginal people as targets to attack. She would, as it turns out, be forced to operate a business specialising in the cutting up and cooking of fish and chips (items accepted by most meat eaters as legitimate food for human consumption), rather than in a business specialising in the cutting up and consuming of Aborigines and Aboriginal rights.

Of Hanson it might be said that, at least in symbolic terms, she is herself politically and economically reliant on the ‘Aboriginal industry’. One might say that she and her followers have become the political cannibals preying on and devouring Aboriginal people and their supporters to satisfy an insatiable political hunger. As Wells (1997) argues in his analysis of the politics of populism, populism is reliant on emotive sentiments and, more importantly, social groups who are made to act as punching bags against which its subscribers can vent their frustrations. As an independent candidate, with little formal political backing, Hanson had (indeed continues to have) little political platform beyond a populist politics of resentment and attack. As Markus (1997, p. 80) puts its, “she is the quintessential one issue politician who has nowhere to move, for there is little beyond the message of anger and resentment.”

**One Nation supporters as parasites**

Not surprisingly those Hanson and One Nation supporters with whom I spoke were likewise convinced that Aboriginal people are inclined to continue this tradition of cannibalism, albeit by exploiting each other and ‘the system’ rather than literally eating
each other. One Hanson supporter clearly considered that Aboriginal people were their own worst enemies. She said:

> You see it all the time up here. They are just parasites who bludge off the system. I really feel for those ones [Aboriginal people] who try and do something for themselves. Their own people feed off their hard work ... they get ripped off by their own (female informant, Broome).

In the minds of these people Aboriginality is a marker of economic advantage, or as one person put it a “free ticket to exploit the system”. During the field work I overheard Hansonites engage in a litany of stories of special treatment towards Aboriginal people. These stories were often grounded in extreme resentment, expressing bitterness and animosity towards those who were seen to be the ”lowest forms of human life.”

> Everyone has seen it up this way (in the northwest of Western Australia). Abos (sic) get money to buy land and set up their mustering camps and outstations with new houses, all the latest equipment and four wheel drives and you go there and no-one is bloody living there ... they’re in the towns getting pissed and running amuck. (male informant, Broome).

However, very rarely during my time in the north of Western Australia did I hear these people acknowledge the extent to which they draw heavily on the Aboriginal economy. During one of my many extended visits to Broome I met with friends of the person I was staying with for a few drinks at a bar called the Satay Hut. The Satay Hut is a favourite Friday afternoon and early evening ‘watering hole’ for many working people of Broome.
As a result of the introduction offered by my host the conversation quickly turned to a discussion of politics, One Nation and Aboriginal people. Of the six men with whom I found myself drinking, two had recently joined One Nation and three were clearly vocalising considerable support for Hanson and her ideas about Aboriginal people. They all talked about Hanson and One Nation as “a breath of fresh air”, “right on the money”, “spot on - especially what she’s got to say about the Aboriginals”. Hanson, who at that time had only recently established the One Nation Party, was the talk of the table with one man saying:

*She is just what the doctor ordered in politics. She has got a lot of good things to say about getting this country back on track again. She is not afraid to say what your everyday Aussie has known for years. And what everyone up here likes about her is that she wants to stop grovelling up the arses of the Aboriginals. Everyone knows we’ve got to stop all this corruption and get rid of all the special funding programmes for this, that and the other.*

Being introduced as “another anthropology Uni student studying blackfellas” seemed to spark a barrage of opinionated responses on how “to deal with the fucking mess up here” - the “fucking mess” clearly being a euphemism for Aboriginal people. The general thrust of what was suggested is encapsulated in the remark that “ATSIC and every other Aboriginal gravy train funding scam should be just got rid of, simple as that.” The consensus of those present was that “the best thing for the country - the best thing for all of us - is to make Pauline Hanson Prime Minister and get rid of ATSIC.” For some time I listened and allowed people to go on uninterrupted. Eager to push the topic towards less
Historically this has generated a good deal of unresolved guilt, anger, grief and significant need for denial. One way of dealing with this has been for non-Aboriginal people to project their own ideas and feelings onto Aboriginal people. According to Naidoo (1998, p. 140) this is how folks like Hanson and her supporters come to see themselves as the victim. Reality is, of course, very different with people like Hanson and her supporters able to victimise while continuing their own cultural and economic cannibalism.

As well as drawing heavily on Aboriginal people’s economic activities, Hansonites and others using populist ideas often rely on Aborigines to help them mark out their own identities. As Edward Said (1978) argued in his now classic book Orientalism, the Oriental Other exists primarily (at times even exclusively) as a projection and confirmation of the West. Crucial to the making of the self is a set of stories with the Other at the centre of attention. In Australia it has long been the case that racialised discourses, such as the story that Aborigines are cannibals, have played a central part, along with anthropological, legal and governmental discourses, in constructing the categories of Australian, white, European and non-Aboriginal (Attwood, 1996b, p. vii-vii). Attwood et. al. (1994, p. 202) claims that the recent popularity in attacking Aborigines reflects the need of so many to make sense of their own, now contested, identities as Australians. He goes on to claim that stories about Aborigines as barbarian, deviant and irresponsible provide “a cognitive structure that contains generic knowledge about the self” (Attwood, et al. 1994, p. 202).
Without often recognising it, most Hansonites I met were co-opting Aboriginal people and Aboriginality to assist them in the business of their own identity formation or imagining of self and community (Anderson, 1983). If we use the language of Bakhtin (cited in Danow, 1991, p. 59) we might say that in this way Hansonites were becoming conscious of themselves, through another (Aborigines), and with the help of another (Aborigines). If this is so then those using Aboriginal people in this way cannot manage without the Aboriginal Other. The Aboriginal Other, positioned on the margins as wasteful, manipulative and exploiting, becomes important in conveying spatial, political and social distance which serve to frame the Hansonite self in the centre. In very important ways the Aboriginal Other is formative of the self in that Hansonites become unable to know themselves without the interacting presence of the Aboriginal Other (Danow, 1991, p. 59-60). To use Bakhtin’s metaphor, Hansonites cannot see their own face without some form of mediation from an Aboriginal Other. They need an Aboriginal Other to hold up or take the form of a mirror, a photograph, a painting or some other reflective mechanism before they can see themselves. Hansonites then invest in the Aboriginal Other in order to know the boundaries of their own selves, identities and truths about the world (McLean, 1998, p. 47). As Attwood (1992, p. 3) puts it,

*the category of the ‘self’ or the group is fashioned through the construction of an Other, which is outside and opposite, and that the making of an identity rests on negating , repressing or excluding things antithetical to it. By creating such binary opposition(s), the heterogeneity and difference within the former category is displaced and so the unitary self or group is manufactured. In this process there is clearly an interdependence of the two categories, that is, they only make*
sense in the context of each other. One should note that this interdependence is usually hierarchical, with one category prior, visible and superordinate, the other secondary, often invisible and subordinate. Hence Europeans have forged a collective identity through a discourse that sets them apart from non-Europeans, especially 'the Aborigines'.

If we again relate this to ideas that Hanson and One Nation supporters seem to have about Aboriginal cannibalism, we could say that this stock of ideas about Aboriginal people are used to build a collective sense of the non-Aboriginal self, or in Hanson’s language “ordinary Australians”. Aboriginal people, or at least fictions about them as the crude and savage cannibal, offer up to Hansonites ‘tools for knowing’ themselves. As Lacan (cited in Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 170) might say, Aboriginal people become the grande-autre, the great and barbaric Other, in whose gaze non-Aboriginal Australians gain their identity as the civilised and respectable.

**Hanson showing her (our) true colours**

Dyer (1997), in his analysis of whiteness, reminds us that death and whiteness (with a touch of red) are often seen operating together in much of our symbolic imagery. The colour white, historically associated with non-Aboriginal Australia, is a colour that is often associated with a blank, an absence, a nothingness, a lack of life. When we think of a dead human body we think of a body which has lost its colour and become more white. Psychoanalytic readings of the horror film genre have made much of the idea of those who are extra white, (zombies and vampires) as themselves dead, as the harbourers of
death and the devourers of life. The ultimate in white terror, the vampire, is one who brings death upon others in order that it may perpetuate its existence. Vampires bring themselves to life by sucking the blood (the colour) out of the living. At this point the vampire becomes flush with red, the symbol for life, while their victim grows pale as life leaves them. As Dyer (1997, p. 208) says, “whites often seem to have a special relation with death, to yearn for it but also to bring it to others.” Cowlishaw (1993) reiterates this point when she says that many non-Aboriginal Australians have a hunger for histories of colonial blood and horror. She argues that many of us like to replay accounts of the devastating impact of early colonial contact while, at the same time, ignoring the strength, courage, resilience and success of Aboriginal people.

In a number of ways Hanson has continued to show her true colours. After regularly demonstrating her support for the gun lobby and calling for the return of national service (thereby encouraging the training and licensing of technology designed for human killers), in late 1997 it was revealed on national television that she had video recorded a special media release, that in the event of her assassination would be shown to the nation. In the introduction to this recorded monologue she began by telling the audience that if they were watching the video recording then she had been assassinated.

If one were not already convinced that Hanson was preoccupied with death then this incident should have been the final ‘nail in the coffin’. Hanson, who had been out of the national spotlight for some time, had yet again orchestrated an event that guaranteed media coverage. Perhaps she was motivated by her own fear of death, a fear of her
There is also evidence that one of the reasons so many colonists were able to survive and stay healthy was because they drew on Nyungar medicinal knowledge. For example, the knowledge that sap from the Marri has medicinal qualities was gained very early from Nyungars. According to Bindon and Walley (1992, p. 34) Marri sap can be used by those who have a sore throat by mixing the crushed powder of the sap with water and then gargling it. The sap apparently acts as a disinfectant. It can also be used for assisting with tooth ache if applied in the same way. Likewise stomach aches can be cured. Apparently it works much like the modern antiseptics. Early explorers and squatters who suffered from dysentery because of poor water quality saw Nyungars using Marri sap powder in this way. They copied Nyungars and found it worked (CALM, 1998).

It is also recorded that Nyungars tanned kangaroo skins to make water bags for excursions into dry areas. They used the gum from the Marri, putting it on the kangaroo skins, making it both pliable and waterproof. Wedjelas took these ideas up and used Marri gum and kangaroo skins to make water bags. Wedjelas learned about other uses of plants by Nyungars and copied them. Nyungars use the balga or the grasstree for different purposes. They used the resin to make what we would call varnish. The resin was also used to help treat stomach problems. The dried leaves of the balga were also used for lighting fires. Early colonists copied all of these things (CALM, 1998).
Colonial isolation and reliance on Nyungar friendship and intercourse

A particularly crucial reason why Nyungars and Nyungar knowledge was important to the lives of Wedjelas was because early colonists were often physically and socially isolated from contact with others. During the early years this isolation was so evident that it drove many to fear Nyungars. Indeed during the first five years of settlement the main colonial newspaper, the Perth Gazette, regularly featured stories about the possibility of Nyungar groups forming large alliances in order to rid themselves of the invading group (see Green, 1984). Precisely how many Nyungars were present around the main settlement areas was one of the most talked about things in the 1830s (Bussell, 1833b, p. 192-193). The colonists were particularly aware of their vulnerability and feared that Nyungars would exploit their strategic strengths and numerical superiority.

As a consequence Wedjela leaders were especially cautious in their dealings with Nyungars, often going to great lengths to encourage people not to cause offence, instead adopting conciliation as a tool. This is not to suggest that colonists were always keen on establishing amicable relationships. On the contrary, even a cursory reading of the journals of leaders such as Stirling, Irwin, Armstrong and Fletcher Moore (see Collard and Palmer, 1996) shows that once colonial garrisons and other military facilities were better established, many Wedjelas were less concerned with accommodating Nyungars and their interests and fostering friendships than with mounting physical attacks. However physical isolation did prompt some to establish ‘productive’, friendly and hospitable relationships with Nyungars. Many Wedjelas, often alone in an unknown and
hostile environment, relied on Nyungars for friendship, comfort and sexual gratification. Very quickly a number of important alliances, friendships and kin-based relationships developed between Nyungars and Wedjelas. More often than not one of the consequences of this was that Nyungar knowledges were passed along to Wedjela families.8

One particularly important example of the value of friendships to Wedjelas involved the Drummonds of York Nyungars. James Drummond was an early Government Naturalist in the Swan River Colony. His son John was later to become Inspector of Native Police in York. Amongst Wedjela settlers the Drummonds were regarded as “friends of the aborigines (sic)” (Erickson, 1969, p. 38). Drummond senior so respected and valued his friendships with Nyungars that he was prepared to confront other ‘settlers’ over their treatment of Nyungar men.9 As a young man John Drummond frequently went on hunting expeditions and spent considerable time with Nyungar friends. He maintained these friendships despite being warned by other Wedjelas that this was an inappropriate thing to do. At various times young Drummond faced considerable pressure to limit his contact with Nyungars - at one point having the Resident Magistrate mounting a special investigation into “the circumstances attending John Drummond’s taking away a native woman, wife of Marabunda” (cited in Erickson, 1969, p. 40). John Drummond’s familiarity with Nyungars, Nyungar language and culture soon turned to good account for him. In June 1840 the still young John Drummond was appointed Inspector to patrol the Beverley, Toodyay and York districts. In this role Drummond often acted as a negotiator and mediator clearing up a range of potentially dangerous problems and conflicts.

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between Wedjelas and Nyungars. Drummond was regularly called upon throughout his later life to act in this capacity. In November 1849, whilst travelling with A.C. Gregory, the Burges brothers and a party of miners from Perth to Champion Bay, he was able to quell potential violence. Drummond, who became famous for dealing with “warring natives”, would have been able to use his knowledge of language to mediate between group of Nyungars and non-Aboriginal parties (Bain, 1975).

Another early young colonist, George Layman Junior, whose father George Layman Senior established himself in the Wonnerup area, grew up with and learnt much from Nyungars. Layman learnt how to speak Nyungar, much about local Nyungar stories and much about Nyungar economic and ceremonial life. Written as well as oral accounts claim that the young Layman was especially keen to be taught local Nyungar ‘customs’ and practices. According to Webster (1974, p. 3), Nyungars often saw him as one of their own. Today the Layman family has accumulated an impressive collection of Nyungar and other Aboriginal artefacts because of the close relationships forged between Layman and his Nyungar contemporaries.

It was not always the case that Nyungar and Wedjela contact resulted in violence and clashing of values. Indeed despite the fact that there were numerous cultural differences Nyungars and Wedjelas often seemed to maintain cordial relationships. The following incident tends to imply that the quality and depth of social intercourse and mutual respect must have been substantive. Had this not been so, this ‘misunderstanding’ would probably have resulted in a serious clash. During 1910 the son of a Coolup settler brought
home two stones from an island off Poverty Point in the southern estuary. To local Nyungars this island is a very important place. Large numbers of well worn stones were laid out in a circle in a clearing. These stones, it is believed, were brought from very far away perhaps thousands of years ago. Some time in the past the stones had been painted white to symbolise their spiritual significance. Mr Dick Tuckey, an old Wedjela settler recounted how the Nyungars responded.

A couple of days afterwards a couple of them (Nyungars) dressed in all their war paint and spears and what have you arrived at the door, and they said, 'You take em stone back otherwise big trouble'. So they got the buggy out and they took the stones back and put them where they'd got em - where they belonged - and that was that (cited in Richards, 1993, p. 305).

One consequence of this sharing of social and cultural intercourse was that some Wedjelas grew up with considerable respect for Nyungars. The following account outlined in Richards (1993, p. 305) demonstrates something of the level of respect some Wedjelas had for Nyungars.

We accepted them - as kids we accepted them. We used to get along all right with them ... and they'd protect your children and they'd protect their children...they'd do anything for them ... they loved kids ... we got on well with them, we got on well with the families. I found them , both down in Pinjarra and in the North taken all through, terribly honest and terribly, terribly reliable.
There are many other stories involving the children of settler Wedjelas and the children of Nyungars growing up together and sharing much in the way of friendship, knowledge and work relationships. For example, around Ellensbrook Nandinnong and Bungitch’s son, Indeal, became a friend and ‘tutor’ to Alfred John Bussell, the son of Ellen and Alfred Bussell. His close relationship with Indeal resulted in Alfred John growing up learning a great deal about Nyungar approaches to hunting, the usefulness of local plants and animals, how to speak Nyungar language and other important stories and sets of cultural knowledges (Bussell, 1930).

Stanley Grey was described by many as “a great friend of the Isaacs family” (Elizabeth Hansen cited in Collard, 1996, p. 102). One Wedjela recalled his relationship with Stanley Grey as one that was based on friendship, shared learning and, on occasions, protection. Ted Ashton said,

*It was a native - Stanley Grey ... he was the same age as me and, of course, being that and a boy, we got around together quite a bit, and I know that he took me off once on an expedition through a lot of swordgrass swamp, and we went off to feed Penny who was a runaway ... when we got back to the sandhills we were walking along and all of a sudden Stanley gave me a push sideways, and then beat his stick on a snake that was almost between my feet when he pushed me. I hadn’t seen the snake at all (laughs). I was apparently stepping over it, or I would have stepped on to it perhaps, but Stanley gave me a shovel and beat the snake to death (Ashton cited in Collard, 1996, p. 104).*
Throughout the past century many older Wedjela families grew up with and fostered many productive friendships with many Nyungar families. At times this friendship and respect was reciprocated. One story cited in Richards (1993, p. 302) recounts how when an ageing Billy Downer was ill Mrs Nellie Patterson cared for him. Likewise in 1903 when ‘George Winjan’ was a ‘sick old native’ living by himself in a camp near the Pinjarra Recreation Ground he was looked after by a Mrs Watts of Pinjarra. According to two older Wedjelas interviewed in the 1970s, the Sutton, Hall and Cooper families (all old settler families) had a deep respect, understanding and genuine affection for Nyungars living in the Pinjarra and Mandurah districts (Richards, 1993, p. 305). One consequence of this during the early years of colonial life was that some Nyungars managed to retain a level of freedom, remain well respected and offered Wedjelas much.

Despite attempts to hush the regularity of sexual affiliations between Nyungars and Wedjelas the contributions of Nyungar mothers, wives, companions and sexual partners is also well documented. It is certainly true that Nyungar women became the victims of rape and sexual exploitation. If the women became pregnant it was easy for Wedjela fathers to shirk their responsibilities and deny their involvement. However not all sex acts between Nyungars and Wedjelas were based on rape. Some Nyungars entered into sexual relationships that were characterised by negotiation and mutual affection and resulted in rich and stable families. Wedjelas not only had sexual liaisons with Nyungars, they also entered into formal and informal married arrangements creating “dynasties and new cultural communities” (McGrath, 1997, p. 45). There was regular occurrence of cohabitation between non-Aboriginal men and Aboriginal women. Indeed in 1909 Alfred
Searcy (cited in Jacobson, 1987, p. 14) spoke about the occurrence of considerable ‘comboism’. Elaborating he said:

*Nearly all the drovers, cattlemen, and station hands had their black boys -gins (sic) .... These women are invaluable to the white cattlemen, for, besides the companionship, they become splendid horsewomen, and good with cattle. They are useful to find water, settle the camp, boil the billy, and track and bring in the horses in the mornings. In fact, it is impossible to enumerate the advantages of having a good gin ‘outback’.*

Clearly sexuality and culture are intricately tied together. When Nyungars and Wedjelas, with their different sexual styles and practices, shared sexual liaisons, this led to an otherwise unexplored language, experience and expression of frontier sexuality (McGrath, 1997, p. 44). Indeed the first sexual experiences for many Wedjelas living on the colonial frontier would have been with Nyungar women. Although largely unexplored in the psychoanalytic literature these sexual encounters would likely have had a profound impact on the lives of those non-Aboriginal men involved\(^\text{10}\).

It may well be argued that all of these examples of cultural interaction only serve to prove that many Wedjela colonists were hell bent on sucking and exploiting Nyungars and their cultural knowledge. Of course there is some truth in this argument. However this is only part of the story. As anti-colonial writers such as Said (1978), Bhabha (1985), and Thomas (1994) remind us there are limits to any analysis that merely explains these kinds of histories as histories of blind appropriation or total oppression. Accordingly we
must find ways to make sense of the complexity of social relations and the many and varied social processes which ran concurrently. As well as taking what they could, Wedjelas were also forced, often with some reluctance, to engage in social intercourse with Nyungars. They were also forced to take direction from those, who because of their familiarity with country, were in some ways more powerful. This enforced engagement had a profound effect on many Wedjelas. For example, clearly Nyungar guides had a subtle effect on the social attitudes, language, cultural practices and thought processes of early Wedjelas such as John and Grace Bussell, John Drummond, Georgina Malloy, Henry Hall and others. A number of these people clearly came to realise that what they were purporting to ‘discover’ was otherwise known by Nyungars. As Clarke (1997, p. 8) says considerable numbers of these people became strangely affirmative of Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal people. In the south-west this resulted in the integration of Nyungar ideas and Nyungar knowledge into the everyday intellectual concerns and cultural practices of colonists. One only need look at the use of Nyungar place names to see that Nyungar knowledge took firm hold on the cultural terrain of the colonisers. According to Clarke (1996, p. 74) amicable social relationships often resulted in transformations in language and cultural life for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. One of the effects of these relationships was cultural and linguistic hybridity. As Clarke argues, we ought not underestimate the significance of such relationships on contemporary social and cultural life, as they make it possible for “essentially transformed cultural relics” to become a part of our everyday discourse (1996, p. 74). By drawing on Nyungar knowledge in the way they did colonists became more creative, more open-textured and more reciprocal than we often recognise in our analysis (Clarke,
The net effect of these kinds of relationships was that Nyungar knowledge and ideas were sometimes elevated above those of the colonisers, allowing Nyungars and Nyungar knowledge to “challenge and disrupt the master narratives of the colonising powers.”

Conclusion

*A few of the boys assimilate themselves, in some degree, with the servants and the Settlers, and the little Blacks are often the playfellows of the white children; but even, under these circumstances, the Blacks are growing up in much the same state of barbarism as their ancestors; and it is a question, whether the white children do not learn more of barbarism from the Blacks, than the Blacks acquire of civilisation from the Whites (Backhouse, 1843, p. 539-540).*

Since Said (1978) first offered his analysis of various forms of Orientalism, theorists have increasingly criticised the preferencing of theoretical models which use power in complete and totalising ways. When applied to the study of race relations in the south west of Western Australia this has often resulted in Nyungars being seen in powerless, desperate, negative, victim centred and static terms (see Attwood, 1989; Bulbeck, 1992; Cowlishaw, 1993). While this view is subtly racist, it is also an exercise in ‘presentism’ (Reece, 1996, p. 33). It is also an exercise of remembering history in a way that extends current political preoccupations with ideas about Aborigines as inert cultural and economic consumers with a history of only ever taking passively what colonists have dished out and as parasites who are a burden on others. It is also an exercise in selective
remembering, a denial of just how inconsistent and ambivalent is the social practice of colonisers.

The history of early colonial life in the south-west of Australia is not merely the history of an assemblage of negative social practices with the colonists only ever being repressive. The history of early colonial life in the south-west is far richer, complex and, in the Foucaultian sense, more productive than this. Sure there is much about early colonial encounters that involved exclusion, repression, censorship, violence and concealment. However the attitudes and practices of colonists were cloaked in ambivalence towards and reliance on Nyungars.

If early colonial historians were to have embraced contemporary terminology they may well have described some Nyungars as expert consultants, cultural attachés, or diplomatic peacekeepers. Likewise they may well have described themselves as cultural cannibals, culturally dependent, or perhaps culturally discerning. Particularly during very early colonial life in the south-west most non-Aboriginal people, most parties of ‘explorers’, and most government officials would have been assisted in some way by Nyungar guides and cultural experts. Indeed, as Clark (1994, p. 21) reminds us, those exploration parties which eschewed advice and help from Aboriginal people, such as the ill-fated Bourke and Wills expedition$^{12}$, failed.

Non-Aboriginal people throughout the south-west owe much to Nyungars. Nyungar knowledge and bushcraft (being able to navigate through ‘foreign’ country, keep safe,
find water, trade and exchange with others) have always been enormously valuable to non-Aboriginal Australians. The great ‘Aussie legend’ of the talented bushman stands as testament to the fact that non-Aboriginal people have learnt much, either first or second hand, from Nyungars and other Aboriginal people. It is now well and truly time for more of us to recognise the development of colonial Australia as a collaborative endeavour, at least partly driven by Aboriginal Australians, and not simply a history of non-Aboriginal leadership and heroism (Clark, 1994, p. 22).

Aboriginal heroes, of course, in the main remain nameless ... Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth ... are depicted as being intrepid explorers who found their way across the Blue Mountains in the greater expanse of Australia. Of course this isn’t true. Aboriginal people showed them the way. Without these Aboriginal people they wouldn’t have been able to get across those mountains. Those Aboriginal people remain nameless, yet the ‘intrepid explorers’ are forever glorified by statues and throughout the history books of Australia. There do exist, throughout those historical accounts of what occurred throughout Australian history, many examples of Aboriginal involvement in the blazing of trails, in the establishment of settlements, and in every area of Australian advancement. (McGuinness and Walker, cited in Clark, 1994, p. 20).

Nyungars acting as guides set up the pattern for many later engagements which saw distinctly Nyungar knowledge and expertise become important for folk living in the south-west of Australia (Richards, 1993, p. 56). The following chapter will continue pursuing similar themes in the history of colonial south-west Australia. It will maintain an acknowledgement that under colonial governance relationships between Nyungars and Wedjelas remained exploitative with any hybridity, any shared mixing and fusing of
interests, largely remaining mute and opaque (at least to Wedjela colonists). However it will further explore how unintentional, unconscious hybridization is evident in the historical life of all colonial encounters and how culturally productive moments were a feature of early colonial encounters. It will, to use the words of Bakhtin (1981, p. 360), offer further reminders that whenever a dialogue occurs between two culturally different ‘speakers’ (with their different discursive forms and political interests) both parties are “pregnant with potential for new world views, with new ‘internal forms’ for perceiving the world.”

1 According to Clark (1994, p. 3) in western Victoria, non-Aboriginal people were identified as reincarnated family and known as nadjadjid.

2 Some Nyungars still refer to non-Aboriginal people using the word Nyidiyang, a variation on the term djanga.

3 These tracks, called boodier or pathways transverse the whole south-west (Moore, 1884, p. 8).

4 A Wedjela military man who was involved in explorations in the Albany region during early colonial years.

5 Mokidup has been a significant Nyungar summer karleep or camping spot for many thousands of years. It has since become known as Ellensbrook Homestead (See Collard (1994)).

6 A Nyungar trained and working at Ellensbrook at the time.

7 One of the daughters of the Wedjela settlers involved in the establishment of the Ellensbrook Homestead.

8 Nyungars often gained much knowledge from Wedjelas through these exchanges.

9 Not surprisingly this often made him unpopular and much maligned amongst his Wedjela contemporaries (see Erickson, 1969).

10 Just as sexual encounters would have had a profound impact on the lives of Aboriginal people.

11 Backhouse’s choice to use the term barbarism reflects how hostile the language of colonialism can be. It is neither a term I accept nor one that I would ordinarily choose. However the quote is an important one in that it demonstrates something of the power of Nyungars to teach and accommodate non-Aboriginal folk - even those who use demeaning language.

12 Indeed the only member of Bourke and Wills’ party to live, a young man by the name of King, only survived because he was offered, and accepted, the help of local Aboriginal people (Clark, 1994).
Chapter five

‘... We cleared and built all that run’:

Colonial ambivalence and early Nyungar contributions to Western Australian life - Part 2
Introduction

This chapter follows similar themes to the last. Like chapter four it will draw on a series of accounts of early colonial life to explore how ambivalent colonists were in their treatment of Nyungars. The chapter is concerned with an examination of the ambiguous position of Nyungars in early colonial life. On the one hand, colonial ideology was premised on imperial expansion, resource exploitation and the eventual annihilation of indigenous cultures and economies. This meant that colonists were, or at least aspired to the practice, the theory and the attitude of implanting European economies and ideas on others, constituting the colonial territory as economically and culturally inferior.

However, and here is where we see another example of inconsistency and ambivalence, colonists were often extremely reliant on Nyungars for labour and other assistance. This was particularly so during the formative years of the Swan River colony when the ‘settlers’ were highly dependent on Nyungar assistance (Clark, 1994, p. 21). While being committed to the domination and eventual annihilation of Nyungar knowledge and culture, early colonists were also dependent on its maintenance.

This is where their ambivalence becomes a problem for Wedjelas. It is almost as if the colonists were forced to be in two minds about how they would engage with Nyungars. Regularly colonists were torn between contradicting aspirations, pushing Nyungars away at the same time as being forced towards them. One of the effects of this ambivalence was to draw many Wedjelas into close social intercourse with Nyungars and, in many cases, forced them to take on Nyungar cultural forms, languages, ideas and social
influences. At times this would have been profoundly unsettling and must have regularly contradicted prevailing colonial discourse and the aspirations of the colonists themselves. This demonstrates just how critical are contradictions in colonial discourse and how colonial ambivalence embodies the seeds of its own destruction (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 140). It also demonstrates how colonial ambivalence presented limitations to the authority of colonial dominance.

The chapter begins with an examination of the critical part Nyungars played in the economy. They worked in the pastoral, communications, prospecting, fisheries, shearing, clearing, firefighting and shipping industries, building the foundations of today’s economy. Next the chapter looks at how critical Nyungars were in helping maintain good government. It examines how Nyungars acted as police assistants, detectives and ‘trackers’, making law and order possible during the formative years of colonisation. Finally the chapter turns to a discussion of how regularly Nyungars played a part in the moral and religious life of the ‘settlers’. They took on leadership in work such as education, childrearing and missionary work.

The chapter shows that without Nyungars many Wedjela endeavours would not have been able to succeed. This chapter again demonstrates that colonists were more ambivalent about Nyungars than we often acknowledge. Like the last, this chapter shows that non-Aboriginal people have long been in two minds about Nyungars. Indeed it was this ambivalence that forced colonists to rely on Nyungars for assistance and inspiration.
Colonial enterprises and the necessity of Nyungar labour

Another area in which fractures occurred in the colonial project in south-west Australia was in relation to the transplanting of a colonial economy. On the one hand the principal purpose of colonisation is to replace an indigenous economy with a colonial one, exploiting new territories and resources. However in many colonies, particularly those distant from the imperial centre, the newcomers became highly dependant on indigenous labour.

In some regions, particularly during the ‘early years’, Wedjelas encouraged cordial relations with Nyungars precisely because of this dependence, because they desperately needed Nyungar co-operation and labour. For example during the early 1840s Wedjelas settling in and around York were especially keen to get on well with Nyungars because they needed to employ them. During this time the local district was experiencing rapid agricultural development with the sheep population increasing by 60 percent in 1841, cattle by 50 percent and crop acreage by 50 percent. At the same time there was almost no increase in the availability of Wedjela labour. The need for Nyungar labour became so important that Governor Hutt developed a scheme to encourage Wedjelas to take on Nyungar workers. In June 1841 he announced a land bounty for those farmers prepared to persevere with the training of young Nyungars in agricultural work. The scheme offered a remission on the price of land to Wedjelas who could prove they had employed and trained a Nyungar for two years in farming skills. If the training resulted in Nyungars
receiving a trade's certificate the Wedjela farmer could receive double this concession
(Green, 1984, p. 144).

At the same time many Nyungars, prompted by enormous changes to their physical
environment and their economies, sought out ways to survive. Although regular and
permanent work was often not available Nyungars were able to develop adaptations of earlier
economic practices to sustain themselves and their families. Often they were able to
maximise their capacity to subsist by including Wedjelas in their sharing and trading
practices. According to McGann et. al. (1994, p. 17) in return for goods such as tea, sugar
and flour and permission to camp on non-Aboriginal acquired land Nyungars often provided
game and labour to non-Aboriginal families.

So from the earliest of contact Nyungars offered their practical expertise and mastery to
non-Aboriginal people trying to establish economic enterprises in the infant Swan River
colony. Particularly in places where there was a shortage of free or convict labour, such
as was the case in the Swan River before the 1850s, Aboriginal labour became vitally
important. Almost immediately many Nyungars took up this challenge and became
expert horsemen and women, skilled shepherds, and adept at using European agricultural
technology and firearms. As well as acting as guides Nyungars took on work chopping
wood, fetching water, clearing land, discovering and mining mineral deposits,
undertaking domestic chores such as scrubbing floors, preparing food and looking after
children (Clark, 1994, p. 23).
As early as the 1820s and 1830s colonial expansionists, such as George Fletcher Moore and Georgiana Molloy regularly make reference to the use of Nyungars as servants in their journals and letters (Hasluck (1955). In 1833 the Mandurah ‘settler’ Hall records that he employed Nyungars in his fishing industry. When whaling was established in Albany in 1836 Nyungars were amongst those working on the boats. This pattern continued well into the 1840s with Nyungars employed in whaling activities both on the beach, in the boats as crew and in the houses of whaling captains (Green, 1984, p. 143).

In 1839 the Resident Magistrate at Toodyay, Captain Whitfield, described the practice of taking young Nyungars away from their families and placing them in non-Aboriginal households to be trained as lackeys or servants. Whitfield boasted that as workers Nyungars were often far better than non-Aboriginal hired labourers, easily surpassing the value of those who often had little bushcraft skills and knowledge of the area (Erickson, 1969, p. 32).

One particularly successful, if relatively unknown, example of Nyungar involvement in the delivery of essential services during early colonial times involved the establishment of a Nyungar fire brigade in the York area. Wedjela settlers in the Avon Valley, located east of Perth, quickly learnt about Nyungar use of fire stick farming techniques and by 1838 were “bribing Aborigines with gifts of wheat, rice, sugar and blankets in order to persuade them to burn-off after the harvest had been gathered.” (Markey, 1976 p. 10). In July 1840, in a desperate attempt to deal with increased bush fires which threatened ailing farms, one local Wedjela suggested that the best way to prevent fires was to
employ Nyungar prisoners as fire constables to patrol the district, and “discourage their brethren from lighting fires and to fight any that broke out.....” (cited in Garden, 1979, p. 42-43). This suggestion was adopted and at the end of January 1851 orders were issued by Cowan (the York Protector of Aborigines) for Harris (the Wedjela who initially made the recommendation) to employ four Nyungs as fire controllers. Nyungs were promised a small wage, a kilogram of flour per day and several sheep to cook at the end of the season (Green, 1984, p. 146).

Many written accounts of the history of colonial exchange tend to imply that little, if any, economic exchange took place after the very early years of colonial contact. Like much official colonial history a sub-text within much writing of history is that Nyungar work essentially ceased once colonial settlements were well established. However Nyungs continued to offer their services and labour well beyond the early years of colonial contact. Regular mentions are made of Nyungar involvement in the labour force throughout the historical records.

Bessie¹ Flower offers us one example of a Nyungar actively involved in work as an educator. She was born in 1851 and spent the early years of her life at Mrs Camfield’s Annesfield Institution for Aboriginal children in Albany. Bessie was taught at Annesfield and did very well, passing, with credit, a public examination held at a government school (Tilbrook, 1983, p. 44). In 1867, when she was only 16 years old, she was taken from Albany’s Annesfield Native Institution, to ‘give instruction to her own people’ at Victoria’s Ramahyuck Mission. Originally she moved to Ramahyuck as Mission school
teacher with an obligation to serve two years (Green, 1989) but after marrying a local Aboriginal man they both took charge of the mission's home for Aboriginal orphans and contributed much to the mission (Green, 1984, p. 156). She continued teaching at the school, with the Australian News reporting in 1869 “the very accomplished native teacher, Elizabeth Flower will soon take charge of the new boarding school. The children receive five hours instruction daily, and made good progress in their lessons as well as in needle and household work” (cited in Green, 1989, p. 118). When, in 1874, Ramahyuck was examined by school inspectors it received the highest results and commendations.

Another industry in which Nyungars contributed much was in the delivery of various communications services. During the period before convicts were introduced into Western Australia the economy relied heavily on Nyungars maintaining mail services between the major settlements. Indeed for several years the southern mail routes from Perth to Bunbury and Vasse relied entirely on Nyungar postal carriers (Pope, 1993, p. 57). Nyungars acting as runners between places such as Perth and Bunbury received a small wage plus food, clothing and tobacco (Green, 1984, p. 146). Among those who worked in this industry included Durangod, Joolonga, Wayrang and Jim, who in 1838 carried mail from the Leschenault area; Yugen and Wawayran, who carried mail from Leschenault to Pinjarra in 1839; Dindu, Ninda and Jack, who carried mail from Pinjarra to Perth; Dick and Gattabonnayon from Leschenault; and William, Kenny, Biranga, Bushell, Hohindon and Paddy, who carried mail from the Vasse to Leschenault (Tilbrook, 1983, p. 20). In one noted example of Nyungar involvement in mail carrying a colonist named Nancy McDermott records that on the 27th of July 1833, “two soldiers
and some natives arrived from the Vasse. The latter brought papa a letter from Captain Molloy”. While this was not unusual it is interesting to note that the letters were entrusted to Nyungars ahead of non-Aboriginal soldiers (Pope, 1993, p. 59).

It is likely that Nyungars were recruited for this kind of work because they were able to adapt already developed skills in message stick carrying. As Hammond (1933, p. 61) explains message stick technology had much in common with Wadjela communication networking.

_The stick had to go along certain paths ... It would be carried in various stages by various natives. For instance, if a message had to go from Perth to Albany, one native might carry it to Pinjarra, another on to Harvey, another to Bunbury, and so on until it had gone right through the territory. Each native, after handing over the stick, would return to the place where he had received it, and this acted as a sort of check to know that the stick was being sent around all right. Anyone who was capable of carrying a message had to do it when called on. He could not refuse (Hammond, 1933, p. 61)._

One particularly celebrated example of Nyungar involved in the communications industry was by a woman called Mary Helen Cooper. Cooper was born around the Dardanup area near Bunbury and was sent to the New Norcia Mission after her mother died. In the early 1870s a telegraph line was established, linking Perth to Geraldton. The telegraph station and post office at New Norcia was a critical link in this communications network. Mary Helen was selected to be the telephonist and was trained by Bishop Salvado to send and receive messages in Morse Code (Haebich, 1988a). After she was
forced to retire for health reasons, her role was taken over by another Nyungar woman named Mary Sarah Ninak (Bourke, 1978).

Nyungars involved in early postal work worked well and efficiently under very difficult circumstances with few resources. They were able to complete their work proficiently and made a very important contribution at a time when the new colony was economically vulnerable. Without the contributions of these workers many regional settlements, such as Bunbury and the Vasse, would have been completely isolated and unable to operate (Pope, 1993, p. 77).

In the years after the 1890s the involvement of Nyungars in the world of work took a different turn with the establishment of various state and church funded institutions and ‘homes’ designed to prepare Aboriginal children to be even more ‘productive’ in the Wedjela world of work. Young Nyungars trained and employed at these institutions acted in important ways to ’open up’ economies in other areas throughout the country. Ellensbrook Homestead produced its share of young Nyungars who went on to contribute much as workers and citizens. There is little doubt that the work of the Nyungars in the establishment of Ellensbrook as domestics or as farm workers contributed to the survival and success of Ellensbrook as a farm, an Aboriginal home and, in more contemporary times, a tourism venture. In 1874 a young Nyungar man named Nannup, who had been trained at Ellensbrook, was taken by the expansionist Brockman and a number of Wedjela stockmen with two hundred head of cattle all the way from Margaret River, in the south-west, to Nickol Bay, in the north-west of Western Australia (Tilbrook, 1983, p.
Later Nannup was to prove a very important contributor to many early pastoral enterprises in the Pilbara and Kimberley.

Despite much resistance on the part of fishing authorities many Nyungars maintained an active involvement in the local fishing industry. Late into the last century in the Mandurah and Barragup districts the stockpiles of fish created by Nyungars using mungah or fish traps became a useful product for early Wedjela families. After each mungah season a huge piles of fish were used by Wedjelas as manure for their gardens. These stock piles were left because of the decrease in Nyungar travel, increase in sickness and death and the fact that Nyungar knowledge demanded that no fish be allowed to swim out to sea lest they informed their relations of the traps.

By the end of the 1800s Nyungars were key contributors in the formal labour market. Indeed Nyungars were amongst the most active participants in many of the jobs that made it possible to establish farming and other industry in Western Australia. Nyungars took on anything and everything from work shepherding, stock-keeping, bottling and corking of wine, ringbarking and fishing (Richards, 1993, p. 47).

Clarke’s (n.d.) personal records of life growing up around the York area in the late 1800s very graphically describes her family’s attitude to Nyungars and the value they attached to the work of Nyungars. Talking about Nyungar involvement on farm her sister ran 30 miles from York she said:
they (Nyungars) were very useful to the farmers, they looked after their cattle and sheep and helped with the harvest ... they also brought manna gum in paper bark or any old bags they could find, which the farmers sold by the ton for a good price. When they sent a load of sandalwood to Perth, which took them a fortnight, they put the bags of gum on the top. The farmers kept dogs too, and two or three natives with nothing to do but hunt kangaroos which with pork was their chief meat. They caught so many they helped to feed the natives and dogs, besides the farmer’s family ... it was marvellous how quickly they (Nyungar women) learnt to become useful about the house, especially scrubbing and washing.

I must not forget to mention three brothers in 1867 ... the three wonderful brothers ... their names were John Bailey, Paddy and Toby ... soon made short work of the harvesting with their reaping hooks ... they were never out of work, except when travelling round when the season finished to look for it. There was nothing that they could not do on a farm (Clarke, n.d., p. 4).

This involvement in the labour market increased into the new century. Haebich (1988b, p. 35-41), in her work on Nyungars and Wedjela administration in the early years of this century, documents just how active Nyungars have been in the rural economy. From the early 1900s Nyungars joined the workforce taking up jobs in land clearing, seasonal farm work, shearing and stump pulling. In fact until very recent times, (the late 1960s), Nyungar workers represented the largest section of the casual labour market throughout rural south west Australia. In his review of the history of the administration of Aboriginal people in Western Australia Biskup (1973, p. 223) says,

*Outside the pastoral regions, the immediate postwar years were marked by continued demand for aboriginal (sic) labour. In the south west, aborigines (sic)*
dominated the casual labour market, doing most of the clearing, burning off, fencing, and crutching, and providing the bulk of hands in the shearing sheds. In the metropolitan area many continued to work in factories as unskilled labourers.

As Haebich (1988b) demonstrates, many Nyungars were instrumental in providing the necessary labour for ‘opening up the south-west’ to European style farming and stock work. This occurred despite the fact that Nyungars were rarely offered permanent work and often paid very little or not at all. Hodson’s (1993a & b) study of Nyungar involvement in the rural labour market in this century shows that up until the 1970s Nyungars provided an important reserve army of labour to farmers in the Great Southern region. When particular seasonal and economic conditions required, non-Aboriginal wheat and sheep farmers would call upon the services of Nyungars to take on work such as clearing land, shearing and domestic labour.

There is plenty of evidence that both during this and last century Nyungars drove the shearing industry in the south-west. Some of the earliest records of Nyungar shearers are from documents kept by members of the New Norcia monastic community. The New Norcia Mission employed Nyungars and paid them at a rate of twenty to forty shillings per month as well as food and clothing. They were then contracted out at just over twenty shillings per hundred sheep. In 1867 the top shearers, Benedict Cuper, sheared 1421 sheep while William Monap, Richard Canchiel and Tom Yawell sheared 990, 838 and 756 sheep respectively (Green & Tilbrook, 1989, p. 162d). Nyungars continued this active involvement in shearing through to the early 1970s. According to informants cited in Hodson (1993b, p. 90-91), during this time, many of the shearing teams were
Nyungars. As one of her informants remarks, “Wedjelas (whites) had a job to get a job shearing, they were battling especially (in) the big sheds ... Nyungars had the shearing game wrapped up right throughout the southern part of the State and in the wheatbelt as well.” As the following comment from another of Hodson’s (1993b, p. 91) informants shows, Nyungars certainly believe they played a pioneering role, one that has been largely ignored by non-Aboriginal people, in work and the development of land for agriculture in the south-west regional economy.

_I don’t think the old farmers would have told the younger people who did clear the land. The younger blokes have got in their minds these days that Nyungars are bludgers, loafers, they didn’t care that the Nyungars were the ones that cleared their land and that they were underpaid to do it. That’s the reason why these days they think nothing of Nyungars, they never respected Nyungars. If they saw what we had to do in those times, they would think a lot different now._

One Nyungar elder I talked to about this chapter expressed similar sentiments when he recalled:

_our mob we cleared and built all that run from Brookton, York, Beverley right through as far as Kondinin. For years we sheared the majority of the sheep in that area. You talk to the older Nyungar yorgas (women) .... when they was younger they brought up and looked after all them kids from the big farming families.... we built the fences, milked the cows, repaired the roads, we did everything .... Wedjelas wouldn’t be where they are now without Nyungars ... we cleared and built all that run ... not them ... we did it._
Colonial rule and the need for Nyungar governance

There is significant scholarship examining how the colonisers, who had at their disposal tremendous military and regulatory resources, impose their sovereignty upon indigenous people through the use of physical force. However, it is an illusion that colonial authority is ever exercised in a complete and straightforward way. On the contrary, the history of instituting colonial rule is full of contradictions and ambivalence. In addition the history of instituting colonial rule is incomplete without the story of the involvement of indigenous people in colonial governance. It is therefore important, in this discussion of the history of early colonial encounters in the south-west of Australia, to make mention of colonial ambivalence and the need for Nyungar involvement in governance.

As Hunter (1994, p. 28) says, the objective of governing populations has always required those attempting to apply sovereignty to develop expert knowledges about those who are to be governed. This is at least partly because governmental processes rely on the help and active involvement of the governed to effect by “their own means ... a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). This is at least partly because those aspiring to rule never have at their disposal the practical means by which to effect total governance (Hunt and Wickham, 1994).

One of the consequences in colonial relations is that it is not only the coloniser that is implicated in governmental processes. Indeed in places such as south-west Australia we
can see that colonial rule was highly dependent on the involvement of Nyungars in governmental work. The business of maintaining law and order was another area of colonial life in which Wedjelas came to rely on Nyungars.

The colonial record regularly makes mention of the involvement of Nyungars in colonial governance. From the very earliest of colonial times fit and knowledgeable young Nyungar men were recruited in an attempt to quell resistance and maintain law and order amongst other ‘troublesome’ Nyungars (Biskup, 1973, p. 223). In return for their services these ‘constables’ were given a daily ration of a pound of flour and told the ration would cease if there was trouble in the area (King, 1980). We see this happening as early as August 1830 when Ensign Dale commented that:

*Exploring parties minimised the risk of danger by including friendly natives among their members. These often acted as guides and on more than one occasion changed possible foes into eager acquaintances (Andrews, 1939, p. 61).*

In the 1840s, Captain Bunbury’s forces were only able to attack York Nyungars because a young Nyungar acted as their guide (Fletcher Moore, 1884, p. 326). The wholesale attack on Nyungars at Pinjarra would not have been possible without ‘intelligence’ supplied by neighbouring Nyungars. Bentley (1993, p. 33) claims that the early ‘settlers’ found Nyungars to be excellent guides and protectors due to their knowledge of the country, skill in riding horses and ability to ward off hostile Nyungars. It became routine to include at least two Nyungars in any major police operation. By the 1860s there were “39 native assistants who made up a quarter of the police force in the colony at the time”
(Coles, n.d.). During this time 146 police had to cover an area of 60,000 square miles. Nyungar assistants therefore played an important part in tracking down absconders and guiding Wedjela officers throughout the country (Coles, n.d.). During this time most police stations had either full or part-time Nyungar police constables.

Clearly those charged with the responsibility of maintaining ‘law and order’ recognised the value of Nyungar involvement in governance. The following remark by Keeffe (cited in Palmer, 1997) serves as an example of how non-Aboriginal Police Constables felt about the skill of Nyungar Police Assistants:

*one cannot but admire the courage and resourcefulness of the Police Constables concerned, who with their drive and tenacity and the skill of the native trackers, brought in the culprits (of crimes) from a vast area of virgin bush.*

It is with this topic, assistance to police, that we first hear about the contributions of the now famous Tommy Windich, who along with Jimmy Mungaro, Billy Noongale Kickett and Tommy Pierre, provided assistance to John and Alexander Forrest in their expeditions across the interior of Australia (Forrest, 1875). Windich was born in the Mt Stirling area not far from York in 1840 and was brought up and taught bush skills by his relations. By the time he was twenty five, Windich was using these skills for the Western Australian police force (Coles. nd. p. 2).

Within a few years Windich was to become involved in guiding a number of Wedjela explorations. Examples of these included the successful search for kerosene in the areas
east of York (Coles. nd. p. 3). In 1866 he was chosen as one of three Nyungars to join
Hunt and Forrest’s expedition of the Hampton Plains areas. He was then appointed to
Forrest’s party to search for Leichhardt who was believed to have perished after he tried
to come overland from Victoria. In 1870 Windich and Billy Noongale Kickett set out
from Perth to ‘head’ a party seeking to explore isolated country between Israelite Bay
and Eucla. The men guided the party overland to Esperance Bay, along the coast until
they arrived at Israelite Bay. On the journey Kickett and Windich shot game for fresh
meat for the other men and rode ahead of the main party with John Forrest to find water,
fresh provisions and set up camp. As a direct result of this expedition, maps of the
coastline were corrected, redrawn and a range of areas were identified as being suitable
for non-Aboriginal settlement (Haebich, 1978, p. 19). After these expeditions Forrest
described Billy Noongale as an “intelligent young fellow” and wrote that Windich was;

very useful in collecting the horses, as well as a first class huntsmen and really
invaluable as a water finder. Accompanying me on many trying occasions,
suffering often from want of water, he showed energy and determination
deserving of the highest praise (Coles. nd. p. 5-6).

Clearly Windich and Kickett were both very important members of Forrest’s various
parties. Forrest’s journals show how dependent he was on Windich and Kickett’s ability
to find water and blaze the way for later explorations and enterprises. On his second
journey with Forrest, Windich acted as guide from Esperance to Adelaide forging a route
which formed the basis of the telegraph line linking Perth and Adelaide. Windich then
accompanied Forrest on an exploration from Geraldton, east across the middle of the
state, to the Adelaide-Darwin telegraph line. Still relatively young, Windich returned to Esperance, presumably to take up work as a police ‘native assistant’. It was here that he became desperately ill and died before arrangements could be made to send him to Perth for treatment. The Forrest brothers erected over his grave a tablet with the following inscription:

_Erected by John and Alexander Forrest in memory of Tommy Windich; born near Mt Stirling, 1840, died at Esperance Bay 1876. He was an aboriginal native of W.A. of great intelligence and fidelity who accompanied them on 4 exploring expeditions into the interior of Australia, two of which were from Perth to Adelaide._ (Coles. nd. p. 10).

Reading Forrest’s many journal entries shows just how much respect he had and how dependent he was on Windich. He was, according to Forrest’s own account, “the most experienced and best bushman in the colony” (cited in Wood Wilson, 1981, p. 11). Indeed reading Forrest’s accounts gives one the impression that he considered Windich the leader who literally headed up his many government sponsored expeditions.

_Tommy was a tall, healthy native with a well combed beard. He usually rode with me at the head of the party and all through the trying journey he was always helpful and my closest companion (Forrest cited in O’Brien, nd. p. 1)._ 

Forrest makes it known on more than one occasion in his journals and records that without the help and companionship of Windich, he and his party would have perished many times through lack of water (O’Brien, nd. p. 2). Cole (nd) argues that Windich’s
contribution is typical of the many Aboriginal people, "whose knowledge of this vast country, made possible the successful completion of many of the explorations begun by those of Australia's white race" (Coles. nd. p. 10). O'Brien (nd. p. 2) argues that Windich was a central player in the government business.

Nyungars incarcerated in prisons also became a valuable source of labour for the colonial government. For example, roads throughout the York district were completed by Nyungars 'waiting' to be transported to Fremantle. Many of the building structures still existing on Wedjemup or Rottnest Island were designed and initially built by Nyungars and other Aboriginal prisoners transported for petty transgressions of Wedjela law (Green, 1997, p. 18). Before the arrival of convict labour in Western Australia, Nyungars, who were regularly incarcerated in prison doing 'hard labour', built many of the early government buildings and structures all over the state. When convict labour was introduced, the Colonial Office in London decreed that they were not to work north of the 26th parallel. This combined with the intense heat and living conditions in the north-west and uncertainty around conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, made it difficult for the early land developers to attract non-Aboriginal labour. An option often made available to those keen on 'developing' country to the north was to recruit Nyungar labour from places such as Rottnest Prison (Bosworth, 1991). For example in 1863 Mr Padbury, a Swan River pioneer, approached the Government for financial assistance with his venture at Nichol Bay in the north-west. His request was refused by the authorities who instead offered him the services of Nyungar prisoners from Rottnest
Island. These prisoners were later to prove essential in assisting with the development of early Roebourne (Withnell Taylor, 1980 p. 26-27).

Nyungar and other Aboriginal convict labour then became useful sources of government labour, particularly in work such as road making. Withnell Taylor (1980, p. 101) says:

Roads were constructed by prisoners, mostly Aborigines, of limestone. It was common knowledge that when some people with special skills were required for the job, it took little time for the police to arrest them on some pretence and out them to work on Government buildings or roads. The roads in both Roebourne and later Cossack were some of the best in the state.

Colonial respectability and the patronising urge of missionaries

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, as well as homogenising the cultures and lives of indigenous people, much colonial discourse assumes that the colonisers share one unified history. As Thomas (1994, p. 97) argues, colonising involved an array of “religious, commercial, administrative and exploratory projects”. Often this produced tensions and contradictions. Nowhere were these tensions and contradictions more evident than amongst those who, on the one hand were keen advocates for colonial expansion, but on the other hand, committed humanitarians and/or missionaries.

The life of Bishop Salvado (and many of his Benedictine missionary community) offers us one such example of ambivalence in missionary work. Salvado’s relationship with
Juat Nyungars is full of contradictions of the kind that reflect a profound inconsistency at the heart of missionary reasoning. It is well documented that Salvado was amongst the most fearless colonisers of Nyungar country. He was like many other early missionaries in Australia who cooperated with various colonial administrations to ‘open up’ and exploit Nyungar land. Indeed it could be argued that he collaborated in the dispossession of Nyungar land and culture. However, there is good reason to believe that he was a man who cared much for Nyungars. Much has been written about his attempts to ‘soften the blow of colonisation’ and of his deep love and respect for Nyungars. As a consequence he was one who learnt much from Nyungars and was transformed by his long association with them.

Nowhere were Nyungars more important than in the establishment and development of the New Norcia Mission and monastic community. According to Bishop Salvado himself (cited in Stormon, 1977 and Russo, 1980), the early mission would not have survived were it not for the work and efforts of many Nyungars. Like other colonists, Salvado and his group relied heavily on the work of Nyungar guides. Salvado’s journals are full of entries indicating just how dependent he was on the efforts of Nyungars:

> we piled our baggage on to one dray, and accompanied by two of the Captain’s (Scully) employees and two natives, resumed our journey through the bush (Stormon, 1977, p. 35).
(in great thirst and after many attempts at finding water) I followed the native, and after a mile, to our immense joy, we found a large pool of water (Stormon, 1877, p. 36).

But this time the bullocks wandered so far that it took three days to recapture them, and then only with the aid of two natives (Stormon, 1977, p. 45).

We proceeded to explore the area with some friendly natives whose help we sought in the hope of finding a suitable site. The natives directed us to a place where the Moore River widened into a pool that they called Mourin (Russo, 1980, p. 54).

The work of William Bilyagoro, who was described as "Salvado’s first and greatest savage friend" had much to do with Salvado’s ‘good fortune’ in establishing New Norcia. Salvado records that in February 1846 Bilyagoro took the dangerously thirsty Salvado to Badgi-Badji Pool. This area was later to become one of the sites for the early mission (Hutchison, 1995, p. 40). He then went about assisting Salvado in the initial stages of setting up his mission. Henry Indich, was another person who was close to and lent a hand to the Benedictine monks. According to his great great grandson Trevor Walley (1995, p. 37), Indich regularly accompanied Salvado into the local country, introducing him to Nyungars, in the hope that they might be recruited as members of the community. Indich took on a number of work roles, most of which demanded considerable responsibility. By 1877, when he was only nineteen years old, he was managing the New Norcia Telegraph Office (Russo, 1980, p. 203).
From the very beginning Nyungars were quick to join with the monks in work to build the new mission. Nyungars tilled the soil, planted crops, helped with the construction of buildings, made roads and bridges, assisted in the spiritual work, and guided and cared for the early Benedictine community. This reflected something of Nyungar’s kind and hospitable attitude to Salvado and his small band of monks. Salvado records that in March of 1846, when the mission was in its most infant stage, Nyungars helped with the building of the first hut.

they fell in quite willingly, and in fact we would have lost a lot of time in the last stages if they had not told us what the best material was for covering the hut and where to get it ... between that day and the next, with their help, the hut was completely covered with rushes and other plants (Stormon, 1977, p. 38).

During the early years of the mission supplies were very low. There can be no doubt it was the labour of Nyungars, who set out hunting and gathering provisions, that saved the monks from starvation. Underground bulbs, lizards, grubs and other bush resources were regularly collected by Nyungars to supplement the monk’s dwindling supplies of flour and rice (Stormon, 1977, p. 39).

On 28 April I set out for the city with a native at my side. We fed on grubs and lizards that we caught as we went along, and I must say, out of a regard for the truth, that the good native always gave me the larger share. As for opossums and kangaroo-rats, we kept them for our evening meal ... Often enough when I was sound asleep the native, having come back from the hunt with something to his own taste, would wake me up saying, ‘Guaba guaba munda nalgo’ (Good, good,
he would then extract a half-chewed piece from his mouth, and offer it to me with his compliments.

Nyungar produced materials were also regularly offered to the monks so they could survive in some comfort. In October of their first year in the bush Salvado recalls that, noticing that things were obviously bad for the monks, Nyungars offered materials to help sustain poorly maintained clothing and shoes. Trousers were patched with Nyungar kangaroo skin. Clothing was kept on by tying dried kangaroo gut around waists. New boots were made out of kangaroo skin (Storrorn, 1977, p. 53).

It is difficult to speculate why Nyungars would have been so generous. Perhaps Juat Nyungars cultivated Salvado’s patronage in order to develop exchanges so they could obtain certain goods and services: food, clothing and transport, and some relief from harassment. However there is good evidence that they wished not to surrender their identity and cultural autonomy.

On more than the odd occasion Salvado speaks of the early interventions and efforts of Nyungars in almost angelic terms. Indeed he implies that they offered spiritual inspiration. He suggests that in many times of crisis, when the monks prayed to their Lord for help, Nyungars provided the assistance they had asked for.

Finally the water began to fail in the pool (near his hut), and we tried digging a well, but without success. Thereupon we made a triduum to St Benedict, asking his intervention in these sore straits ... I went off with two natives to find water
elsewhere ... (over twenty miles from the hut) ... and further on found a mineral spring (that) according to the many natives in the vicinity, was quite suitable for drinking ... one (Nyungar) gave me a present of tubers and another part of their catch (Stormon, 1977, p. 40).

In April of 1846, after one of the monks named Don Leander had become lost, Salvado and his men sat down to pray:

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\textit{At 11 A.M., after we had sung a High Mass, we saw four natives, whom we had not seen for four days, coming towards us. They were like four angels sent by Divine Providence to our aid ... we were still reciting the Rosary when the fourth native came up, touched me on the shoulder, and said: 'On Lean, n-agna ciena, iei, colı', which literally translated, means: 'I have seen Don Leander; he is on his way now.' Our happiness can well be imagined (Stormon, 1977, p. 41).}
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When the mission became more established Nyungars maintained their support, offering to increase their labour. Salvado records that in early 1847 clearing of the land began with Nyungars assisting with the "uprooting of gum trees and wattles and thickly strewn scrub." Thanks to the work of Nyungars, within a few days thirty-four acres of land were ready for ploughing (Stormon, 1977, p. 56). Nyungars contributed much to the growth of the mission helping to build cottages, storehouses, the main church, the blacksmith shop and the flour mill (Russo, 1980, p. 86). In 1847 Salvado recruited a workforce of seventy-four Nyungars to help with the construction of the new mission (Russo, 1980, p. 128). They took on the majority of work in lambing and shearing, specialising in detecting water and sinking a network of wells throughout the Victoria Plains district (Russo, 1980,
Nyungars soon learnt the art of breaking and mustering horses, breeding animals that were sold to the British Army for work in India (Russo, 1980, p. 165).

It was not merely Nyungar men who were relied on. Salvado used the talents and labours of Nyungar women who, ‘just by watching a lady intent on her work knitting socks’ learnt needlework, woolwashing and other domestic work. Indeed during these formative years of the mission, Nyungars made all the clothes and shoes (Russo, 1980, p. 166). All of this effort was most important in allowing New Norcia to become “the most powerful economic force in the young colony” (Russo, 1980, p. 109). Evidence of the extent to which Nyungars helped run the mission can be seen from the following mission diary entry for the 3rd of March 1874. Speaking about Nyungar involvement in work Salvado says:

A well sunk at Marah. A native boy is taking a horse to Mr Thompson. Benedict Cuper sold a horse for two pound to a stockman. Brother Joseph and two natives went to measure ground. I intend to buy land in three places around Marah. They bring timber for the house we are building for the house next door to the Telegraph Office. It already has its walls up. They are baking the fourth batch of bricks. Continuing with grape crushing for wine-making. The brothers are constructing window frames to take to Marah. A table is made for the dining-room in the guest-house. A choir is rehearsing to sing Lamentations for holy week. They are preparing the troughs for the coming season. They are constructing the flour-mills to begin milling as soon as they complete the building. They are making two tip-carts. I am designing a wooden back to be built on the seats of the choir in the public church (Russo, 1980, p. 204).
Salvado was later to become known as both a successful landowner and one of the colonies finest surveyors. His success has mostly been connected to his grasp of the pastoral and agricultural industry and his personal ingenuity and superior education (Russo, 1980, p. 58). However by his own account, much of his success and ability can be attributed to the work of Nyungars and the valuable lessons he learnt from Nyungars.

According to Russo (1980, p. 59) Salvado and his Benedictine companions were explicit in acknowledging their debt to Nyungars. They appreciated that Nyungars knew the land and were prepared to offer their assistance to the newcomers. Until he was very old Salvado used many of the Nyungar tracks to travel through the country.

_He lived with the Aborigines and shared their lives; camped in the open air and examined their country with them on foot, taking and explaining bearings, drawing maps and measuring the land. He recorded details carefully in his notebook and sent reports to the Land and Survey Office in Perth, often enough with an application for land. He gained knowledge from the Aborigines of trees and shrubs, the soil on which they grew, the rocks and the water-holes. In this way native names for places became a large part of his vocabulary. 'Every time I took up land', he wrote, 'I always took care to give the native name of the start-point, well, spring, or even of a marked tree.' _ (Russo, 1980, p. 60).

Again one might suggest that all of this merely demonstrates that Nyungars were simply the victims of exploitation, that colonisers merely benefited and that there was little effect on colonial authority and discourse. However this fails to take into account the transformative possibilities that become available when the coloniser is encouraged to
collaborate with, even mimic the colonised. Reading the diaries and self-accounts of Salvador it becomes apparent that he was confronted with much that forced him to question the certainty of colonial dominance. He seems to have come to see Nyungars as much more than simply heathens to be Christianised.

**Conclusion**

Some might argue that colonisation has essentially erased Nyungar culture and Nyungar knowledge and that history has few examples of intersubjectivity between Nyungars and Wedjelas. However to accept this thesis is to risk falling into the trap laid by old colonial discursive ideas and erase Nyungars from the historical landscape. The history of early colonial contact is not an empty space for those interested in productive cultural zones. On the contrary, reading history with a view to looking for instances of Nyungar influence would tend to suggest that colonial contact did not simply involve the annihilation of Nyungar culture and contributions. If we look carefully at the colonial record it becomes clear that Nyungars and Nyungar economic and cultural contributions did not completely die out after frontier contact with Wedjelas. Rather, Nyungars continued to maintain ongoing contact and involvement with their country, local Wedjelas and the world of work. Both during and long after the introduction of European illnesses, frontier conflict, massacres and institutionalisation, which most definitely affected Nyungar numbers, economies, language and social organisation, Nyungars continued to work in Wedjela enterprises as well as continued to live as Nyungars.
During the formative years of colonisation, Nyungars contributed in crucial ways to the formal and informal labour market. In a range of ways they came to influence, and in many cases transform, the lives of Wedjelas. They became language teachers regularly providing knowledge of the availability of economic sustenance to supplement Wedjela supplies. They offered protection from the elements and hostile groups of Nyungars, acted as domestic workers, ‘farmers’, agricultural and environmental consultants, mappers, child carers and teachers. Lyon, an early Wedjela linguist, points out that although their land had been invaded, “the aborigines (sic) helped us when we were in their power if lost in the bush, sharing their food with us and showed us our way again” (Lyon cited in Seddon, 1995, p. 115). The work of historians like Haebich (1988b) and Reynolds (1990) demonstrates that throughout contact history Nyungars were instrumental in providing labour necessary for ‘opening up the south-west’ to European style farming and stock work. Careful reading of the colonial record makes it clear that Nyungars have not been the dupes they have often since been made out to be. Despite having their access to land severely regulated, their human rights enormously eroded and many members of their families taken from them, Nyungars have remained key players in the colonial economy and the cultural life of the early colony.

One of the key reasons for this was the existence of considerable ambivalence, many contradictions and a range of tensions operating amongst early colonists. Colonising projects were frequently split and divided by people’s divergent strategic interests and visions and the multitude of people’s specific needs and desires. Often early colonists were torn between impulses to exploit, moral ideas about the ‘brotherhood of man’,
curiosity of the primitive other and sexual desire. Nyungars added to the dynamic by often resisting the objectives of the colonists, exerting their own agency and negotiating with the new arrivals. As Thomas (1994, p. 3) says, the coherence of colonial life was prejudiced both on internal contradictions and the intransigence and resistance of the colonised. This meant that early colonial life did not always involve coherent imposition and denigration. Instead it often involved practically mediated relationships. Often this forced Wedjelas to re-evaluate their attitudes to and treatment of Nyungars and compelled them to rely on the culture and labour of Nyungars.

There is no doubt that early colonial relationships were often exploitative. However, Wedjelas were often ambivalent towards Nyungars. Sure many maintained a distance and were keen to ignore Nyungars. However, many were highly reliant on Nyungars for knowledge on sustenance. Many early Wedjelas were frightened and repulsed by those they considered strange and dangerous. On the other hand this strangeness and fear often manifested itself in Wedjelas being drawn to Nyungars, curious and inquisitive of Nyungar knowledge and cultural practices. There is certainly no shortage of journals, diaries, newspaper reports and officially sanctioned studies of the “manners and habits of the Aborigines of Western Australia” (Armstrong, 1836)⁵. It was this ambivalence, added with the agency of Nyungars, that created some conditions for transformations to occur for early colonists.

This had a tremendous effect on the lives of Wedjelas. For some this meant growing up with, working with and learning skills from Nyungars. Others came to learn Nyungar
language and take on Nyungar conceptual ideas. Some were even raised by Nyungars, either ‘reared’ and taught by Nyungar women or adopted into Nyungar families. Many were forced to see things in the way that Nyungars saw things and adopt social practices shaped by Nyungar cultural forms. Indeed it is likely that in a multitude of subtle ways Wadjela social history reflects Nyungar cultural influence. Indeed as Clark (1994, p. 15) says, it would be interesting to speculate what would have been the outcome had not Nyungars and other Aboriginal people contributed to the extent they had. There is certainly a case to suggest that ‘settlements’, such as the one at Swan River, may well have been abandoned or established in a reduced form had it not been for the work and efforts of Nyungars. The way we use social space and name places would certainly be different today had it not been for the history of Nyungar assistance and knowledge sharing.

The contributions of Nyungars are one of the most significant elements on the palimpsest of Western Australia. It is most certainly the case that the lives and economies of many of Western Australia’s old and established colonial families were built on the backs of Nyungars. Many members of some of the south-west’s most prominent and successful farming families were literally and symbolically suckled by Nyungars who provided their early sustenance. Other newer arrivals, who were attracted to Western Australia’s fast booming economy also have Nyungars to thank. Early colonial history has created the conditions for Aboriginality to shape the lives of contemporary non-Aboriginal Western Australians. The following section of the thesis will turn to a study of the lives of these people.
1 Also known in the literature as Betsy Flower.

2 Such as Ellensbrook Home for Destitute Children near Margaret River, Moore River Native Settlement near Moora, and Carrolup Native Settlement near Katanning.

3 Hammond (1933) reports that after the first rains, usually in early April, many Nyungar families from surrounding areas gathered around carefully designed mungah or fish traps to share the harvest and attend local meetings. The Nyungar constructed and maintained fish harvesting traps were designed in such a way.

4 Often Nyungar prisoners would be held in places like York which were in need of road works and only sent to Perth when the job was complete.

5 See for example Nind (1831); Collie (1834); Fletcher Moore (1884); Lyon (1833); Armstrong (1936).

6 The term used by Ashcroft et al (1998, p. 174) to describe a parchment on which several inscriptions are made over the top of earlier ones in an attempt to erase them.
Ethnographic Section - Introduction
Fifty kilometres south of where I live is the city of Mandurah. I spend considerable time in this area as it is a place where family members live and a place I enjoy. I have recently heard about a matter of some ‘public concern’ circulating in local papers and public commentary. In this story there were three main players, ‘Aborigines’, ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’. The discursive chattering behind this ‘public concern’ was based on fairly well known and established ideas about Aboriginal people as a public nuisance. It seems there was some concern at the use, by groups of Aboriginal people, of the foreshore area in Mandurah’s main shopping and tourist zone. These Aboriginal people became the subject of considerable public discussion because their presence was thought to threaten the livelihood of locals by limiting the tourist potential of the area. Almost all who engaged in the public chatter seemed to see the problem’s resolution coming through the removal of the Aboriginal people concerned. The sub text of course was that the interests of ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’ are incompatible with ‘Aborigines’ - the presence of ‘Aborigines’ seen as an unnecessary nuisance and burden. Nowhere in this public discussion was it considered that the Aboriginal people seen to be using public space were either locals or tourists themselves. Nor was it acknowledged that the place in question had long been associated with outsiders, such as tourists, using the place as a summer visiting and resting place.

Over the last few years a similar topic of public interest has emerged in the local media in Fremantle, the place where I live. Like Mandurah, Fremantle has a rather large retail and business precinct which attracts many shoppers and tourists. Like Mandurah, Fremantle has a number of public parks and facilities that Aboriginal people, amongst
others, seem to enjoy using. Like Mandurah, the fact that some Aboriginal people have been visible in their use of public parks in Fremantle has received some attention in the local media. However, instead of constituting Aboriginal people as a public nuisance the overwhelming concern from Fremantle people (at least those prepared to voice an opinion) seemed to be to make sure those using parks were safe and able to enjoy access to space without intervention from the criminal justice system.

I have been a resident of Fremantle now for over ten years and have either seen or been involved in almost all of the annual city festivals, held in November of each year. It has now become a tradition, almost a ritual, that each Fremantle Festival be officially opened by a Nyungar elder and closed with a family concert organised by and featuring Aboriginal performers. It is also now well established that one of the floats in the Festival Parade focus on the theme of Aboriginal reconciliation and coexistence between the old and newcomers. As is now the established tradition, the opening concert of the 1998 Fremantle Festival began with a formal recognition of Nyungar prior ownership of the region, a Nyungar welcome and a musical performance beginning with a large community choir singing a song about Walyulup, the Nyungar name for Fremantle. This year, more so than previous years, I noticed the reconciliation float attracted a rather large number of non-Aboriginal people who were prepared to march with it. I also noticed there were few onlookers not offering those marching thunderous applause. I have since learnt that the Fremantle City Council has prepared a Reconciliation Policy Statement and agreed to not challenge native title claims lodged by Nyungar custodians.
The point of citing these pieces of ethnographic detail from modern metropolitan Perth is not to pass judgement on the people of Mandurah and present the impression that Fremantle is the centre of progressive intercultural exchange. I am sure I could cite other examples of how Nyungars are marginalised in Fremantle and how Nyungars have been embraced by some who live in Mandurah. Rather the examples serve as a reminder that while Aboriginal people and Aboriginality does seem to feature regularly in the minds and thoughts of non-Aboriginal people, this happens in a variety of ways. In both of the places Aboriginal people feature in public discussions; are in different ways alive as subjects for public comment; and, by their presence, force non-Aboriginal people to readjust their own worlds. However the form and consequences of the way Aboriginal people are constituted and dealt with are often very different.

As argued in the previous section, Aboriginal people have had a very central place in the development of knowledge, culture and economic life of non-Aboriginal people historically. The following section of the thesis continues with similar themes pursued in the section dealing with the history of early colonial encounters and applies them to the study of the lives of groups of contemporary non-Aboriginal people. As mentioned in the introduction, I have chosen to feature four different groups of non-Aboriginal people in this section of the thesis. I am hopeful that this will allow me to present a picture of something of the diversity in non-Aboriginal approaches to talking and dealing with Aboriginal people. This in turn will make it possible to examine the diverse ways Aboriginal people and Aboriginality shape the lives of non-Aboriginal people. Contrasting the lives of a number of different groups of non-Aboriginal Australians is
one way to move away from the tendency to over-generalise and lose sight of non-Aboriginal people’s dynamism, creativity, originality, agency and diversity.

This section seeks to continue the work of those wanting to provide a complex reading of late colonialism in Australia. It is inspired by field work undertaken in the south-west and north-west of Western Australia during the mid to late 1990s. I chose to undertake field work in these two regions for a few reasons. The first is because both regions are places where I spend considerable time. I have lived in the south west for nearly twelve years and have regularly visited the Kimberley visiting friends, working and touring the region. The second reason for choosing to base the field work in these two regions is that both places are very different in many ways, at the same time as sharing strong culture and economic ties.

Undertaking fieldwork in the Kimberley was particularly useful because, culturally, socially and linguistically, it is a region offering many ready-made disruptions to the identities of many who visit and work there. Indeed for many non-Aboriginal tourists, part of the attraction of the Kimberley as a destination is that it is so very different to what they experience in their everyday worlds. This is at least partly due to the presence and activities of so many Aboriginal people in the region. Many of those who live or have grown up in the south of the country have had little direct contact with Aboriginal people. Suddenly and often for the first time, they are confronted by Aboriginality and the visibility of Aboriginal people. This often has the effect of calling into question and highlighting non-Aboriginal people’s own cultural identities and everyday worlds. Places
like the Kimberley then offer up a rich source of ethnographic material about non-Aboriginal life and social processes often unavailable in other regions.

Although material generated from this field work reflects specific regional and historical conditions, observations I make reflect broader social and political patterns occurring in other regions. For example, the analysis of the lives of people involved in Aboriginal governmental work will strike a chord with folk living and working in other parts of the country. Likewise my analysis of the treatment of Aboriginal people by romantic primitivists has something to say about patterns of desire amongst ‘Westerners’, ‘whites’ and ‘recent settlers’ in other parts of the world.

The first chapter in this section, Chapter 6: “The Dracula in non-Aboriginal Australia: Pauline Hanson, One Nation and consuming Aborigines”, takes as its subject the ideas, attitudes and practices of those who express clear alliances with Pauline Hanson and her politics. The second chapter in the section, Chapter 7, is called: “White, nomadic and loopy: Ambivalence and the repressed image of self as the Aborigine”. This chapter includes an ethnography of non-Aboriginal Australians touring the country in caravans, buses and other camping vehicles. The third chapter in this section, Chapter 8, is called: “Trying to create our own little Garden of Eden: mung beans and the yearning for (a)Aboriginality”. This chapter features as subjects non-Aboriginal people who draw on romantic primitivist ideas about Aboriginal Australians. The final chapter in the section, Chapter 9 is called “The person you were is not the one you become: ambivalence, governmental work and change.” This chapter examines how the lives of non-Aboriginal
governmental workers have been transformed by their involvement with Aboriginal people.

The chapters have been written in a way that focuses attention on each group separately. This is important for it helps demonstrate how variable and complex are the lives of different groups of non-Aboriginal people. It is also important to examine the specificities of people's lives for it allows us to undo colonialism as a coherent object - something that has effected people in consistent and fixed ways (Thomas, 1994, p. 17). Just as it was in earlier times, the activities of non-Aboriginal people involve an array of interests and projects that are sometimes harmonious but often in tension or outright contradiction (Thomas, 1994, p. 97) What connects each chapter, and this section with the previous one concerned with history, is its exploration of the ambivalence of non-Aboriginal people toward Aboriginality and Aboriginal people. Each chapter cites examples of how non-Aboriginal people seem to shift in their engagements with Aboriginality; often fluctuating between repulsion and attraction, between rejecting Aboriginal people but wanting Aboriginality. The ethnographies show how this ambivalence has the potential to act as a disturbance to what is often considered to be the clear-cut authority of colonial domination. Like the preceding section concerned with the history of earlier colonial life, this section offers evidence that ambivalence has the effect of disrupting and transforming the attitudes, identities and social lives of many non-Aboriginal Australians.

1 According to George Fletcher Moore, an early colonist, the word Mandurah is derived from the Nyungar word Manjar and pays testament to the long standing history of trading, summer festivities and the place as a site where outsiders (tourists) were regular and welcomed. Nyungars, according to Fletcher Moore (1884),
referred to Manjar as a sort of fair which takes place where inhabitants of districts meet to share and barter with each other the products of their respective countries.
Chapter six

The Dracula in non-Aboriginal Australia: Pauline Hanson, One Nation and consuming Aborigines.
Introduction

Much has been written about the politics of Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party over the past three or four years. Some have suggested that Hanson represents the voice of an angry, but none the less extremely racist, Australian “battler” class, long silenced by the forces of political correctness. Others have claimed that Hanson’s ideas represent the public face of the ‘darker’ and unconscious desires of Australian politics, repressed for many years by a more popular and powerful liberal set of political ideas until it became strategically useful to exploit “for political purposes a fear and loathing about Aboriginal people” (Mick Dodson cited in Gray and Winter, 1997, p. 2). Hanson and her One Nation Party have certainly sparked much debate, quickly becoming the subject of numerous newspaper editorials, articles, autobiographical studies, academic journals and a couple of books. Hanson has also excited the interest of commercial television featuring as the target of satire by the Seven Network’s comedy team “Full Frontal” and appearing as a celebrity gardener on the high rating Channel Nine show “Burke’s Backyard” (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 1).

Hanson and her supporters have had much to say about a range of political topics from immigration to Native Title, foreign ownership in Australia, tariff protection, tax reform, education, unemployment, crime and political correctness. There already exists a multitude of well-written, mature and detailed critiques and commentaries on the breadth
of Hanson's political views. It is certainly not my intention to launch into yet another
detailed examination of the ideological persuasions of Hanson or her followers.

However much of what Hanson and her followers have had to say is very relevant to a
study concerned with cultural intersubjectivity and the ambivalence of non-Aboriginal
Australians. I therefore became very interested in One Nation discourse on such things as
Native Title, the question of Aboriginal access to basic human rights, reconciliation, and
recent policy responses to Aboriginal health, housing, social security, social justice and
education. I also became keenly interested in the Hanson phenomenon because, during
the course of the field-work, I met and had much contact with those who were clearly
supporters of hers. Almost daily, particularly during my time in the Kimberley, I found
myself in the middle of a discussion on the merits of Hanson and One Nation. Hanson, as
a symbolic figure, became the voice of many people I met. What she said clearly
resonated with many groups of non-Aboriginal people with whom I chose to study. I
regularly heard people not only repeat and support her ideas but celebrate her role as one
who would speak out on matters which they believed had otherwise gone unspoken.
After my contact with many of these people it occurred to me that the Hanson and One
Nation phenomenon might offer us insights into contemporary social relations and what
is presently in the minds of many non-Aboriginal Australians. Whatever the future for
One Nation, it is likely the case, as Hugh Mackay suggests, that figures like Hanson
feature as something of a loudspeaker for disgruntled whispers in the Australian Body
Pauline Hanson then is a central figure in this chapter. Discussion of the people with whom I actually met and spoke with might seem to take a backseat at times, their accounts and comments peppered throughout the chapter. This is partly because Hanson is such an outspoken person whose statements and political claims seemed to feature so prominently in the stories and attitudes of those I met. This means that it becomes necessary, if we want to understand the attitudes and lives of her supporters, to spend considerable time talking and thinking about Hanson’s public statements and public persona.

It is also worth focusing considerable attention on Hanson because she offers us a window into the fears, resentment, anger and ambivalence of many people I met. In keeping with the work of Said (1978) I want to suggest that public narratives on the Other, whether they be delivered by historians, social commentators, academics, politicians, journalists or other citizens, are likely to tell us more about the thinking and the lives of the speaker than about the Other. In other words, statements made by Pauline Hanson and her followers about Aboriginal people may well offer us profound insights into the lives of a significant proportion of non-Aboriginal Australians. Furthermore it is worth spending time on analysis of the activities and public statements of Hanson and her One Nation followers because of the hidden ambivalence they seem to have towards Aboriginal people. On the one hand Hansonites are deeply resentful of, at times repulsed by, Aboriginal people. Yet, as I will argue in this chapter, Hanson and One Nation are highly dependent on the political consumption of Aboriginality and utilising ideas about Aboriginal people in public debate.
In this chapter it is not so much the content of what Hanson and her followers have said about Aborigines (although this will need to be examined), as what this content tells us about Hanson, her followers and other non-Aboriginal Australians. I will concentrate, for the most part, on people’s preoccupation with Aboriginal cannibalism and those who ‘feed’ off the so called ‘Aboriginal industry’. I will argue that those who yell the loudest about economic and cultural cannibalism possibly expose much about their own soul and political identity. In other words, stories about Aboriginal cannibalism might well tell us more about non-Aboriginal people’s own cultural cannibalism and reliance on what Hanson describes as the ‘Aboriginal industry’. Furthermore, I will argue that Aboriginal people and stories about Aboriginal people are critical for people like Hanson and her followers. Indeed Aboriginality features regularly as a staple in the symbolic diet of these people. Arguably, were it not for Aboriginal people, Hanson, and people aligned with her views, would have little political platform to rely on. Hanson and her followers then offer us one example of non-Aboriginal people’s ambivalence towards Aboriginal Australians. In other words the chapter shows that, at one and the same time, Hansonites have a love-hate relationship with Aboriginality and Aboriginal people. While they are publicly scathing in their attacks on Aboriginal people they are, unconscious as it may be to many, deeply indebted to Aboriginal people.

The chapter begins by broadly reviewing Hanson’s attacks on Aborigines and the ‘Aboriginal industry’, particularly her claims about Aboriginal cannibalism and the history of Aboriginal people ‘feeding off others’. This serves as a backdrop to later
analysis concerned with her ambivalence towards Aboriginal people. I note with interest that Hanson chooses to use the work of the late anthropologist Daisy Bates as a crucial source to help sustain claims about Aboriginal cannibalism. In so doing, Hanson draws on a legacy of a non-Aboriginal involvement in cultural and symbolic cannibalism. I then move on to suggest that, like Hanson, Daisy Bates’ preoccupation with Aboriginal cannibalism is an outward manifestation of a form of cross-cultural neurosis of the psyche whereby members of the coloniser class project their own unresolved histories, anxieties and desires onto Aboriginal others.

Later in the chapter I will return to the politics of Hanson and argue that by yelling so loudly about the perceived relative deprivation of what she describes as “Aussie battlers” Hanson reveals that her’s is a politics of resentment, a politics of living off the misfortunes of others. In other words, Hanson’s regular and stinging attacks on Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture serve to show the extent to which Hanson is reliant on Aborigines for her own political identity and survival. Hanson, as a symbolic figure, then offers us something of a window into often otherwise repressed non-Aboriginal Australian unconscious desires, feelings and thoughts. She has become, to paraphrase Hugh Mackay (1996, p. 2), the confessional loudspeaker which magnifies the inaudible, otherwise repressed whispers of the (non-Aboriginal) Australian soul so that they can be heard.
Hanson and Aborigines

For most of us, Pauline Hanson first came to our attention in the lead-up to the 1996 Australian Federal election. She had recently been disendorsed as Liberal Party candidate for the federal seat of Oxley in south-east Queensland. Her views became the subject of national attention when she claimed that Aboriginal Australians had become a privileged group in Australia, receiving special benefits at the expense of other Australians. Aboriginal Australians, claimed Hanson, had been “overprovided for by government” (cited in the Weekend Australian, Nov 9-10, 1996, p. 6). She was subsequently elected into the Federal House of Representatives as an independent member following a twenty-four percent swing against the Labor incumbent. Shortly after her election she turned her back on democratic political conventions by issuing a statement that she would be fighting for “the white community, the immigrants, Italians, Greeks, whoever, it doesn’t really matter - anyone apart from the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders” (Sydney Morning Herald, March 30, 1996, p. 32). Her first parliamentary speech has been described as “a classic expression of resentment against Aboriginal and Asian Australians” (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 7). In it she invoked the myth that Aboriginal people enjoy privileges over other Australians (Hanson, 1996a). This myth, featuring the white Australian as the Aussie Battler, claims that white, mainstream, anglo-Australians are the new marginalised, the persecuted, the exploited and the silenced (Perera and Pugliese, 1997, p. 8).
I heard many similar sentiments from those who are proud One Nation members and supporters. Comments such as the following were made by those with whom I talked while undertaking fieldwork for this thesis. Clearly those expressing such sentiments subscribed to similar myths about Aboriginal privilege,

*My trouble is that I have the wrong coloured skin and wrong shaped nose. If I were a coon I could walk right into Toyota and demand a four-wheel drive. It wouldn’t matter if I had the money or not, I could just book it up. That’s bullshit heh? (Male informant).*

*I lived in Alice Springs for years and I saw it all the time. Blackfellas would get houses from the government one week and the next they would be chopping it up for firewood. All this happens while white families get nothing (Male informant).*

Clearly Hanson’s attitude to the governance of Aboriginal people resonated with many non-Aboriginal people. Her comments about Aboriginal privilege seeming to strike a cord with many who also believed that they had been let down by ‘liberals and do-gooders’.

In her ghost-written book, “The Truth”, Hanson launched into accusations of Aboriginal cannibalism, intending to undermine compensatory claims by Aboriginal people and short circuit the work of those she described as the new class elite - those who propagated an ideology founded on guilt. In one section of the book she drew on the rather dubious claims of Daisy Bates to argue there is considerable evidence Aboriginal people ate their own young as well as consumed the carcasses of enemies. To support
these claims Hanson cited a number of historical and anthropological sources, including supposed eye-witness accounts of Aboriginal cannibalism.

She argued that history is full of examples of horrible and brutal acts committed by "blacks against blacks" (Hanson cited in Franklin and Priest, 1996). In one of her many public statements on the subject (Hanson, 1997, p. 132) she said that if "white Australians are to feel guilty about settling Australia, then Aborigines should apologise to the relatives and descendants of the Chinese that they (Aborigines) cannibalised in Northern Queensland in the late 19th century". Hanson later extended these claims of Aboriginal cannibalism in the past, insinuating that in today’s Australia, Aboriginal people are allowed to "exploit the system" and live off the hard work and good grace of non-Aborigines. She accepted uncritically old and well established discourses about Aboriginal people’s natural disposition towards exploiting their own, citing the fact that ATSIC representatives receive $290 a day sitting fees as evidence (One Nation Party, 1998). According to this line of reasoning, if Aboriginal people kill and exploit their own then they are no different from any colonising agent, have not grounds to argue for compensation or special treatment, and ought to expect to experience social deprivation and marginalisation unless they change their behaviour. During the fieldwork I met countless numbers of people who maintained similar views. One person who was handing out One Nation information during the recent federal election said:

_I don't know why do-gooders go on about how much Aborigines have to suffer. It's the blacks themselves that get stuck into their own the worst. They're the ones_
who bash each other, they would just as soon leave their kids in cars while they
go in to the casino or pub, they steal from each other. In the old days they used to
volunteer to go out on raids to kill other blacks - they were the worst ones.

The political goals of Hanson and her One Nation Party\(^3\) reflect similar sentiments about
Aboriginal advantage. In the party launch Hanson called for the abolition of what she
describes as “divisive and discriminatory policies, such as those attached to aboriginal
(sic) and multicultural affairs”, the cessation of ATSIC, the repealing of the Native Title
Act, and the reversal of the Wik decision (One Nation Party, 1998).

**Hanson, Daisy Bates and the projection of cannibalism**

There are some powerful ironies tied up with Hanson’s choice of Daisy Bates as a
principal source to substantiate her claims of Aboriginal cannibalism. Bates believed and
propagated stories, which she said had been told to her by Aboriginal people, of
Aborigines eating members of their own family. In her book, *The Passing of the
Aborigines: A Lifetime Spent Among the Natives of Australia*, Bates wrote that,

> Baby cannibalism is rife among the central-western peoples, as it is west of the
> border in Central Australia. In one group, east of the Murchison and Gascoyne
> Rivers, every woman who had had a baby had killed it and eaten it, dividing it
> with her sisters, who, in turn, killed their children at birth and returned the gift of
> food, so that the group had not preserved a single living child for some years.
> When the frightful hunger for baby meat overcame the mother before or at the
birth of the baby, it was killed and cooked regardless of sex (Bates, 1938, p. 107-108).

The claim that new-born Aboriginal babies were killed and occasionally eaten by their mothers is a very familiar story embraced by many purporting to be experts in the study of Aboriginal cultural life. However, careful examination of the evidence seems to indicate that there is little evidence to sustain such a claim. Bates' own notes suggest that her sources were non-Aboriginal people rather than the women she was making claims about.

Whether Aboriginal groups practised infanticide and/or cannibalism is difficult to ascertain. The work of Pickering (1985), Arens (1979) and the critical scholarship of Buchhorn (1992 and 1994) concludes there is no single credible eyewitness account of cannibalism amongst Aboriginal people. Buchhorn (1992, p. 8) goes so far as to claim there is no real evidence that cannibalism, or the eating of human flesh as a food source, has ever been an accepted cultural practice in any society. On the other hand, colonial histories the world over are filled with fabricated and exaggerated tales of indigenous brutality and barbarism. Colonists often arrived on the frontier with fertile imaginations and minds already filled with ideas about the local cannibals. The colonial imperative, which Langton (1993) talks about, makes it necessary for people on the other side of the frontier to be accused of cannibalism. Arens (1979) makes the observation that almost every colonised group in history, whether they be Scots, Irish, Jews, Catholics or Chinese, has been accused of cannibalism. As Buchhorn (1992, p. 2) says, this led to
much exaggeration, distortion and the invention of stories. Today similar traditions continue when urban myths and tales are claimed to be first hand accounts of events.

The question of whether Aboriginal people were or are cannibals is essentially an irrelevant red herring when considering people's human and legal rights anyway. What we can say is that historically, allegations of Aboriginal cannibalism occur within a context designed to justify their subordination by colonisers (Horton, 1994). We can also say that stories about Aboriginal cannibalism tell us much more about the minds and hearts of the coloniser than the Aborigines. As Cowlishaw (1997, p. 4) says, reports of infanticide and cannibalism in the literature "provide more evidence of the social domain of the writers than the actual events".

The fact that Hanson used Bates' work as the cornerstone upon which to position her arguments about Aboriginal cannibalism and the fact that Bates seemed to be so preoccupied with death, cannibalism and the destruction of Aborigines is good reason to warrant a brief exploration of the work of Bates. Making some observations in relation to Bates' work may illuminate what accusations of Aboriginal cannibalism tell us about non-Aboriginal people.

There is much that is unclear about Bates' own life. She seems to have been somewhat reluctant to disclose details about herself. At least some of what she did tell the world about her early years seems to have been distorted. Some have even argued that Bates was a well practised liar whose accounts are unreliable (Blackburn, 1994, p. 21).
However, there are many things about her life that we can be fairly confident about. Bates was certainly involved in an industry/profession highly reliant on the consuming of Aboriginal knowledge. Bates’ professional life and status relied on the collection of cultural knowledge from Aboriginal people who were thought to be on the verge of extinction. As well as “smoothing the dying pillow”\(^5\), Bates was keenly committed to collecting the last remnants of knowledge from a “passing” and “savage people”. In keeping with the dominant view within anthropology at the time, Bates saw Aboriginal people and their culture as a window into the past. In the words of Spencer (cited in Attwood, 1996c, p. 101) Aborigines were “regarded as a relic of the early childhood of mankind left stranded.” Australia’s Aboriginal people were thought to be savages surviving in the modern world, a type of primitive people who were on their last legs. They were thought to be the most primitive, hence best examples of earlier versions of European selves (Griffiths, 1996b, p. 43).

Along with many of her contemporaries in the field of anthropology, Bates saw the environment in which Aboriginal Australians lived as “a fundamental research laboratory of human cultural evolution, a storehouse of customs and beliefs that held the key to charting the progress of man from the earliest ages down to the present” (Mulvaney cited in Attwood, 1996c, p. 101). Bates wrote,

*to live among them, to see them amidst their own bush surroundings and to note their everyday comings and goings is to experience an ever delightful feeling that you are watching the doings and listening to the conversation of early mankind (cited in Salter, 1971, p. 93)*
At this time Bates was, like many of her contemporaries, keenly concerned that as much knowledge as possible be collected from the bodies and intellects of Aboriginal people before they quickly slipped into extinction. Regularly throughout her journals and notes, Bates speaks of the absolute urgency of collecting and recording Aboriginal knowledge before it faded away. In June 1907, after the death of one of her key Nyungar informants, Fanny Balbuk, Bates wrote that, “with her death ended all hope of obtaining any further reliable records of the Swan River Bibbulman (Nyungars)” (Bridge, 1992, p. 86). Indeed she was bitterly disappointed and lamented over the fact that she was not able to get to the body and take the remains adding, “the Chief Protector, the dearest old lady in the world, was horrified. If I could only body snatch it, it would be invaluable” (Salter, 1971, p. 132).

Bates clearly relied heavily on Aborigines and Aboriginal cultural knowledge as raw material to be consumed and exchanged in the scientific market place. This was not an uncommon attitude amongst anthropologists at the time. It might be said that Bates derived legitimacy and identity from the Aboriginal people with whom she lived and observed. Although her utterings about the imminent death of Aboriginal culture were highly ethnocentric and erroneous, Bates saw her life’s work as the seeking out and collection of a passing culture. We could then say that for much of her adult life Bates lived off what she thought was the dying cultural remnants of Aboriginal people. Her’s, then, was a life marked by its reliance on what might be described as cultural
cannibalism. It is then rather ironic that Hanson chooses to rely on the word of someone who could be described as a vulture of Aboriginal culture.

Some Nyungars (Collard, 1995, personal communication) claim Bates was involved in the grave-robbing networks operating at the turn of the century. I have heard it suggested Bates helped finance her fieldwork by supporting the body-snatcher trade and selling the human remains of Nyungars to museums and the scientific trade. It is difficult to say whether Bates was directly involved in the selling and exchange of Aboriginal remains. Given her contact with and access to Aboriginal groups it would not have been difficult for her to involve herself in this rather macabre activity. If she were involved in body-snatching, by no stretch of the imagination would she have been acting in isolation. Recent research confirms that late last century and for the first fifty years of this century (when Bates was actively involved in fieldwork with Aboriginal people) the trafficking of Aboriginal body parts was at its most prodigious. Monaghan (1991, p. 33) claims that between 5000 to 10,000 Aboriginal people had their graves desecrated, their bodies disinterred and parts dismembered in the name of science. According to Monaghan (1991), there is strong evidence that some Aboriginal people were murdered so that dealers’ supply demands could be met.

According to Monaghan (1991), at that time it was not unusual for people like Bates to be used as agents for the collection of human remains. Bates certainly had regular contact with and knowledge of the needs of academics and museum officials. According to her own accounts she regularly sent specimens of animals to places like the Natural History
Museum in return for money and other support. She once recorded having sent samples of Aboriginal hair to the pathologist Professor Cleland in an attempt to further scientific knowledge about the origins of racial types. Although stopping short of admitting to the practice of grave robbing, she had no problem in describing her interest in securing Aboriginal remains for the purpose of scientific study. For example, she records that while in the north-west,

*I asked the kindly telegraph master if he could let me know when the man (a tall Aboriginal man from the region) died ... so that his skeleton might be secured for anthropological purposes. I fear I gave the gentle master a shock but the skeleton is really worth obtaining* (Salter, 1971, p. 104).

On another occasion Bates admitted sending what she thought were the remains of a skull of an Aboriginal baby to Professor Cleland to help prove her own theories about Aboriginal cannibalism (Blackburn, 1994, p. 133). Although the size and content of her personal collection is unknown, it does seem that at some point Bates kept human skulls quite close to hand during field work. There exists one notable photograph of her sitting with a white cloth spread out on her lap, on it what she claimed to be an Aboriginal skull without the lower jaw (Salter, 1971, n.p.). We could conclude from this that even if Bates was not involved in body-snatching of Aboriginal remains, she was certainly keenly involved in the collection of remains.

Like many of us, Bates’ life and identity was complex, dynamic and marked by considerable ambivalence towards Aboriginal people. Speculation about her desire and
claims of Aboriginal cannibalism aside, by her own admission Bates was deeply ambivalent about her contact with Aboriginal people. Particularly during her earlier life Bates often expressed her repulsion for many Aboriginal people. Her attitude to those she described as ‘half-castes’ was harsh. She was intolerant and considered them vulgar, unsophisticated, lazy and backward (Horton, 1994, p.109). However, as she grew older she seems to have developed a deep respect for many Aboriginal people she met. Indeed she regularly wrote more about her love, friendships and reliance on Aboriginal people. Salter (1971, p. 159) speculates that, as she grew older, Bates shifted from thinking that Aborigines needed her, to becoming conscious of her own need for them. Bates certainly learnt much from the people with whom she lived. It seems Aboriginal people allowed her into their lives and cultures to join them on many of their sojourns. From these trips Bates learnt how to catch fish without the need for a rod, kill kangaroo by silently stalking them, the science of tracking and the mysteries of the stars, much about social organisation and Aboriginal knowledge and, according to Salter (1971, p. 163) much about herself.

Salter (1971, p. 164) characterises the early period of Bates’ life spent in camps with Aboriginal people by calling it a transitionary period of great magnitude. “Her outlook, her circumstances, even her body, were undergoing changes that were too radical not to leave their mark”. So then, in a number of ways Daisy Bates was another important figure in the history of cross-cultural relations who “lived off” and was highly influenced by Aboriginal people. To use her as an authoritative figure to substantiate claims about Aboriginal cannibalism and human exploitation is then fraught with ironies.
Hanson, politics and consuming Aborigines

To help sustain her attack on what she describes as the romantic views of the new class ideology, Hanson and her minders have drawn on many similar ideas about Aborigines as cannibals, painting a picture of them (and their supporters) as aggressive and exploitative. According to the Hansonian view, long before European influence, Aborigines were adept at gratuitously manipulating the world in which they lived. Ignoring the breadth of the archaeological record, Hanson, paints a picture of Aborigines as a people involved in the systematic and wholesale destruction of the Australian environment.

*These pre-European occupants of Australia extinguished most of the large fauna 35,000 years ago. Consequently 94 per cent of Australia's large mammals became extinct as the result of pre-European occupation. The vegetation was completely changed due to firestick farming which destroyed all fire-sensitive vegetation. (Aborigines) changed the ecology of the continent far more than European settlement has done (Hanson, 1997, p. 137-138).*

Drawing on speculation about early human migration to Australian Hanson implies that not only have Aboriginal people no legitimate claim to native title or "special treatment" but they have no reason to complain about the treatment they have received over the last two hundred and ten years. She uses old racial discourse and posits that Aborigines were responsible for the wholesale genocide of earlier racial groups inhabiting the continent.
One of her many claims is that the “mainland Aborigines exterminated most of the original inhabitant of Australia, forcing the remaining Papuan-type people to Tasmania” (Hanson, 1997, p. 139). According to this logic, if the original Australians were not Aboriginal people, it follows that Aboriginal people must have been involved in a brutal process of annihilation of earlier groups.

Hanson extends these ideas about Aborigines as aggressive exploiters to contemporary times. In her maiden speech Hanson attacks “those who feed off the Aboriginal industry” and members of the Council for Reconciliation who “receive $290 a day sitting allowance” (Hansard, 1996a, Ms Pauline Hanson’s Maiden Speech, Tuesday, 10th September, 1996). Subsequently she accuses the “taxpayer funded, do-gooder supporters” of Aborigines (Hanson, 1996b) of gratuitously exploiting a system for their own ends. In her June 1998 speech attacking the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people she made the claim that:

*The indigenous population is experiencing boom growth in Australia. .... Identifying as an Aboriginal has definite financial advantages, as Aboriginality allows them to claim a share of the booty of the native title scam as well as various other publicly funded perks not available to other Australians (Hanson, 1998).*

Again the language she uses to construct the “Aboriginal industry” brings to mind images of a world made up of bloodsucking scavengers who exploit and feed off the carcasses of vulnerable Australians. According to Mickler (1997a, p. 2), Hanson uses these
accusations of human cannibalism as a way of justifying the nullification of Aboriginal human rights to freedom and autonomy. Just at the moment when Aborigines look like they have justifiable rights to native title Hanson uses the old politically abhorrent idea of human cannibalism. It is here again that Hanson and her followers engage in political projection with the allegation of economic cannibalism telling us more about what is in the mind of Hanson rather than about Aboriginal people and their allies. It is here that we begin to see the ambivalence of Hanson and her supporters.

In the Australian political system, independent candidates, such as Hanson, with no formal major party backing have little chance of election without a strong and/or controversial single issue to win over a significant proportion of the electorate. There is little doubt that without her early attacks on Aboriginal people and the ‘Aboriginal industry’ Hanson had little political future. By her own admission Hanson campaigned and won the seat of Oxley in Queensland largely on the issue of the provision of benefits to Aboriginal people (Hanson, 1996a).

Since her early days as a candidate for the Federal Parliament Hanson has used Aboriginal people, along with other groups such as Asian immigrants, recipients of unemployment benefits and gays, as objects against which she uses a flogging stick to promote herself. To Hanson, Aboriginal people and their allies function as the political and cultural Other against which ‘real’ Australians can measure and know themselves. In doing this Hanson follows a well established political strategy of making Aboriginal Australians function “as one of the most important outlets for debate (or therapy) about
who and what Australians are” (Phillips, 1997, p. 157). In this sense Hanson is just as much (if not more) guilty of using Aboriginal people to serve her own (and her supporters’) interests.

Another example of Hanson exploiting issues around Aboriginality is in relation to how she and the pastoralist lobby approached the debate over the Wik Native Title decision. Hanson’s demand to have native title extinguished is, without question, tantamount to arguing for special and extra privileges for a small minority of Australians, namely pastoralists. Not only did Hanson and pastoralists argue for extinguishment of native title but they also used the opportunity to demand that pastoral leases be upgraded to perpetual leases, a form of exclusive tenure, akin to freehold or freehold title itself (Mickler, 1997b, p. 6). Without using Aboriginal people and the success of their recent claims for native title the pastoralist lobby, (supported in this case by Hanson) would stand little chance of being able to argue for the upgrading of pastoral leases to exclusive tenure.

We can then begin to see that without the ‘Aboriginal industry’, and her subsequent attacks on it, Hanson might have found herself in political limbo. Arguably she would not have been able to enjoy her meteoric climb to fame and notoriety without using Aboriginal Australians in the way she has. It is certainly the case that Hanson was elected to Parliament on the strength of her views in relation to the ‘race issue’ (Hill, 1998, p. 92). While she has since used a number of other marginalised groups as political fodder to ‘feed’ off, it is debatable whether her populist tactics would have gained the necessary
momentum without her early use of Aboriginal people as targets to attack. She would, as it turns out, be forced to operate a business specialising in the cutting up and cooking of fish and chips (items accepted by most meat eaters as legitimate food for human consumption), rather than in a business specialising in the cutting up and consuming of Aborigines and Aboriginal rights.

Of Hanson it might be said that, at least in symbolic terms, she is herself politically and economically reliant on the ‘Aboriginal industry’. One might say that she and her followers have become the political cannibals preying on and devouring Aboriginal people and their supporters to satisfy an insatiable political hunger. As Wells (1997) argues in his analysis of the politics of populism, populism is reliant on emotive sentiments and, more importantly, social groups who are made to act as punching bags against which its subscribers can vent their frustrations. As an independent candidate, with little formal political backing, Hanson had (indeed continues to have) little political platform beyond a populist politics of resentment and attack. As Markus (1997, p. 80) puts it, “she is the quintessential one issue politician who has nowhere to move, for there is little beyond the message of anger and resentment.”

**One Nation supporters as parasites**

Not surprisingly those Hanson and One Nation supporters with whom I spoke were likewise convinced that Aboriginal people are inclined to continue this tradition of cannibalism, albeit by exploiting each other and ‘the system’ rather than literally eating
each other. One Hanson supporter clearly considered that Aboriginal people were their own worst enemies. She said:

>You see it all the time up here. They are just parasites who bludge off the system. I really feel for those ones [Aboriginal people] who try and do something for themselves. Their own people feed off their hard work ... they get ripped off by their own (female informant, Broome).

In the minds of these people Aboriginality is a marker of economic advantage, or as one person put it a “free ticket to exploit the system”. During the field work I overheard Hansonites engage in a litany of stories of special treatment towards Aboriginal people. These stories were often grounded in extreme resentment, expressing bitterness and animosity towards those who were seen to be the “lowest forms of human life.”

>Everyone has seen it up this way (in the northwest of Western Australia). Abos (sic) get money to buy land and set up their mustering camps and outstations with new houses, all the latest equipment and four wheel drives and you go there and no-one is bloody living there ... they’re in the towns getting pissed and running amuck. (male informant, Broome).

However, very rarely during my time in the north of Western Australia did I hear these people acknowledge the extent to which they draw heavily on the Aboriginal economy. During one of my many extended visits to Broome I met with friends of the person I was staying with for a few drinks at a bar called the Satay Hut. The Satay Hut is a favourite Friday afternoon and early evening ‘watering hole’ for many working people of Broome.
As a result of the introduction offered by my host the conversation quickly turned to a
discussion of politics, One Nation and Aboriginal people. Of the six men with whom I
found myself drinking, two had recently joined One Nation and three were clearly
vocalising considerable support for Hanson and her ideas about Aboriginal people. They
all talked about Hanson and One Nation as “a breath of fresh air”, “right on the money”,
“spot on - especially what she’s got to say about the Aboriginals”. Hanson, who at that
time had only recently established the One Nation Party, was the talk of the table with
one man saying:

She is just what the doctor ordered in politics. She has got a lot of good things to
say about getting this country back on track again. She is not afraid to say what
your everyday Aussie has known for years. And what everyone up here likes
about her is that she wants to stop grovelling up the arses of the Aboriginals.
Everyone knows we’ve got to stop all this corruption and get rid of all the special
funding programmes for this, that and the other.

Being introduced as “another anthropology Uni student studying blackfellas” seemed to
spark a barrage of opinionated responses on how “to deal with the fucking mess up here”
- the “fucking mess” clearly being a euphemism for Aboriginal people. The general thrust
of what was suggested is encapsulated in the remark that “ATSIC and every other
Aboriginal gravy train funding scam should be just got rid of, simple as that.” The
consensus of those present was that “the best thing for the country - the best thing for all
of us - is to make Pauline Hanson Prime Minister and get rid of ATSIC.” For some time I
listened and allowed people to go on uninterrupted. Eager to push the topic towards less
Historically this has generated a good deal of unresolved guilt, anger, grief and significant need for denial. One way of dealing with this has been for non-Aboriginal people to project their own ideas and feelings onto Aboriginal people. According to Naidoo (1998, p. 140) this is how folks like Hanson and her supporters come to see themselves as the victim. Reality is, of course, very different with people like Hanson and her supporters able to victimise while continuing their own cultural and economic cannibalism.

As well as drawing heavily on Aboriginal people’s economic activities, Hansonites and others using populist ideas often rely on Aborigines to help them mark out their own identities. As Edward Said (1978) argued in his now classic book Orientalism, the Oriental Other exists primarily (at times even exclusively) as a projection and confirmation of the West. Crucial to the making of the self is a set of stories with the Other at the centre of attention. In Australia it has long been the case that racialised discourses, such as the story that Aborigines are cannibals, have played a central part, along with anthropological, legal and governmental discourses, in constructing the categories of Australian, white, European and non-Aboriginal (Attwood, 1996b, p. vii-vii). Attwood et. al. (1994, p. 202) claims that the recent popularity in attacking Aborigines reflects the need of so many to make sense of their own, now contested, identities as Australians. He goes on to claim that stories about Aborigines as barbarian, deviant and irresponsible provide “a cognitive structure that contains generic knowledge about the self” (Attwood, et al. 1994, p. 202).
Without often recognising it, most Hansonites I met were co-opting Aboriginal people and Aboriginality to assist them in the business of their own identity formation or imagining of self and community (Anderson, 1983). If we use the language of Bakhtin (cited in Danow, 1991, p. 59) we might say that in this way Hansonites were becoming conscious of themselves, through another (Aborigines), and with the help of another (Aborigines). If this is so then those using Aboriginal people in this way cannot manage without the Aboriginal Other. The Aboriginal Other, positioned on the margins as wasteful, manipulative and exploiting, becomes important in conveying spatial, political and social distance which serve to frame the Hansonite self in the centre. In very important ways the Aboriginal Other is formative of the self in that Hansonites become unable to know themselves without the interacting presence of the Aboriginal Other (Danow, 1991, p. 59-60). To use Bakhtin’s metaphor, Hansonites cannot see their own face without some form of mediation from an Aboriginal Other. They need an Aboriginal Other to hold up or take the form of a mirror, a photograph, a painting or some other reflective mechanism before they can see themselves. Hansonites then invest in the Aboriginal Other in order to know the boundaries of their own selves, identities and truths about the world (McLean, 1998, p. 47). As Attwood (1992, p. 3) puts it,

*the category of the 'self' or the group is fashioned through the construction of an Other, which is outside and opposite, and that the making of an identity rests on negating , repressing or excluding things antithetical to it. By creating such binary opposition(s), the heterogeneity and difference within the former category is displaced and so the unitary self or group is manufactured. In this process there is clearly an interdependence of the two categories, that is, they only make*
sense in the context of each other. One should note that this interdependence is usually hierarchical, with one category prior, visible and superordinate, the other secondary, often invisible and subordinate. Hence Europeans have forged a collective identity through a discourse that sets them apart from non-Europeans, especially 'the Aborigines'.

If we again relate this to ideas that Hanson and One Nation supporters seem to have about Aboriginal cannibalism, we could say that this stock of ideas about Aboriginal people are used to build a collective sense of the non-Aboriginal self, or in Hanson’s language “ordinary Australians”. Aboriginal people, or at least fictions about them as the crude and savage cannibal, offer up to Hansonites ‘tools for knowing’ themselves. As Lacan (cited in Ashcroft et al., 1998, p. 170) might say, Aboriginal people become the grande-autre, the great and barbaric Other, in whose gaze non-Aboriginal Australians gain their identity as the civilised and respectable.

**Hanson showing her (our) true colours**

Dyer (1997), in his analysis of whiteness, reminds us that death and whiteness (with a touch of red) are often seen operating together in much of our symbolic imagery. The colour white, historically associated with non-Aboriginal Australia, is a colour that is often associated with a blank, an absence, a nothingness, a lack of life. When we think of a dead human body we think of a body which has lost its colour and become more white. Psychoanalytic readings of the horror film genre have made much of the idea of those who are extra white, (zombies and vampires) as themselves dead, as the harbourers of
death and the devourers of life. The ultimate in white terror, the vampire, is one who
brings death upon others in order that it may perpetuate its existence. Vampires bring
themselves to life by sucking the blood (the colour) out of the living. At this point the
vampire becomes flush with red, the symbol for life, while their victim grows pale as life
leaves them. As Dyer (1997, p. 208) says, “whites often seem to have a special relation
with death, to yearn for it but also to bring it to others.” Cowlishaw (1993) reiterates this
point when she says that many non-Aboriginal Australians have a hunger for histories of
colonial blood and horror. She argues that many of us like to replay accounts of the
devastating impact of early colonial contact while, at the same time, ignoring the
strength, courage, resilience and success of Aboriginal people.

In a number of ways Hanson has continued to show her true colours. After regularly
demonstrating her support for the gun lobby and calling for the return of national service
(thereby encouraging the training and licensing of technology designed for human
killers), in late 1997 it was revealed on national television that she had video recorded a
special media release, that in the event of her assassination would be shown to the nation.
In the introduction to this recorded monologue she began by telling the audience that if
they were watching the video recording then she had been assassinated.

If one were not already convinced that Hanson was preoccupied with death then this
incident should have been the final ‘nail in the coffin’. Hanson, who had been out of the
national spotlight for some time, had yet again orchestrated an event that guaranteed
media coverage. Perhaps she was motivated by her own fear of death, a fear of her