



***Aboriginal Women's Autobiographical Narratives and
the Politics of Collaboration***

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Abbreviations

AAF	Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship
ABSCHOL	National Union of Australian Students Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme
ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMP	Australian Mutual Provident
APB	Aborigines Protection Board
APCOL	Alternative Publishing Co-operative
A&R	Angus and Robertson
ASIO	Australian Securities Intelligence Office
BAITC	Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Tribal Council
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
MRA	Moral Re-Armament
NSW	New South Wales
NTC	National Tribal Council
QUAAL	Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League
QCAATSI	Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
VAAL	Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
WEA	Workers Education Association
WPSQ	Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

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Abstract

Since their groundbreaking publication in the 1970s, foundational autobiographical texts by Aboriginal women writers have been the subject of little critical discussion and have failed to gain space in the public memory. Oodgeroo published *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) in a children's picture book format. Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* (1977) was the first conventional autobiography. *Karobran* (1978) by Monica Clare, became the first autobiographical novel by an Aboriginal woman. These three Aboriginal women authors were outspoken, active and successful advocates of Aboriginal rights. The loss of status suffered by their foundational autobiographical narratives can be linked to each text's overt political enunciation, uncompromising ideological stance or mobilisation of an unfashionable generic style. Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo were women of conviction, working within their Aboriginal communities, pan-Aboriginal lobby groups, religious and political organisations. These organisations included non-Aboriginal people who were sympathetic to the Aboriginal struggle. This thesis investigates the role of these 'communities of commitment' in the publication of their foundational autobiographical narratives. It considers how and why the Aboriginal woman elicited outside support and how the ideology of the group informed the epistemology of the text. My research highlights the role of collaborating white editors, drawn from a community of commitment or a professional editor, as crucial in influencing the style and content of the published piece. I quantify and describe the changes implemented by the editor by comparing the original manuscript of each text with the published edition. This comparison lays bare the hidden ideological work of the editor and the surviving Aboriginal subtext. Following Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, I characterise the adoption of a white ideological artifice by the Aboriginal woman author as the white mask of colonial mimicry. I demonstrate how compromise in the editorial phase also becomes a site of potential political subversion. Significantly, my work discusses the outcomes of cross-cultural impersonation performed by the white editor. The editorial collaboration is the site of editorial double mimesis, the imposition of stereotyped representations of Aboriginality. This thesis accepts the scars of editorial effacement as evidence of struggle and celebrates the substantially unheralded achievements of these women.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of the thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Jennifer Jones, October 2001