



***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

# One

## Introduction

### Sally Morgan's *My Place* and the Eclipsing of Aboriginal Women's Foundational Autobiographical Narratives

Foundational autobiographical narratives by Australian Aboriginal women first achieved mainstream publication in the 1970s. Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba (Oodgeroo, then known as Kath Walker) published *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) in a children's picture book format. Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* (1977) was the first conventional autobiography as judged by Western literary criteria. *Karobran* (1978) by Monica Clare, became the first autobiographical novel by an Aboriginal woman. These women were among the first literary voices to represent Aboriginal perspectives and experiences to a general readership. Their autobiographical narratives were published without the benefit of established Aboriginal literary mentors or an Aboriginal presence in the Australian publishing industry. These women, however, were part of a multitude of indigenous writers who engaged in fragmentary forms of life writing necessitated by interactions with non-indigenous individuals and institutions. As Penny van Toorn argues, "From as far back as 1796, Aboriginal people were recounting small segments of their lives in piecemeal, fragmentary, written forms in hundreds of handwritten letters, petitions, submissions to official inquiries and court testimonies" (Van Toorn, *Indigenous* 1-2). Written records reveal, for example, that Margaret Tucker's Cumeragunja people used life story fragments in letters and petitions as a vehicle for the pursuit of land rights from as early as 1881 (Goodall 77). It was only in the 1970's however, that Aboriginal writers were able to find a public voice for their writings and an audience beyond their circle of acquaintances. Coming at a time of significant social change in Australia when Indigenous political campaigns such as the Tent Embassy were centre stage and relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians were in flux, this was an opportune moment that enabled Indigenous writers to insert their narratives into the interstices of public institutions from which they had previously been excluded (Van Toorn, *Indigenous* 3).

This thesis concentrates solely upon foundational autobiographical publications by Aboriginal women, as this is an area of Aboriginal literary history that has not received sustained critical attention. By contrast, the publishing experiences of Aboriginal male writers is an area of scholarship established some years ago by respected academics in the field, including Adam Shoemaker, Stephen Muecke and Peter Read. Although this thesis does not consider the publishing experiences of Aboriginal male writers in this thesis, it is important to note briefly that the publication histories of foundational Aboriginal women writers, particularly Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare, diverged from the experiences of foundational male writers who attained and maintained high public profiles for themselves and their publications.

It has been argued that Mudrooroo's career as a writer was initially beleaguered by the "curse of the first". Mudrooroo, then known as Colin Johnson, was identified as an Aboriginal literary pioneer following the publication of *Wild Cat Falling* in 1965. Adam Shoemaker argues that the critical appreciation of this work on its own merit was overshadowed by its position as a pioneering text. Shoemaker argues that for Mudrooroo, "the problem with being a literary pioneer is that just getting into print becomes a claim to fame" (Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 84). Indeed, Mudrooroo's high profile and influence as the first and most prolific Aboriginal novelist and critic could be argued to have contributed directly to the "still-birth" of other foundational Aboriginal texts such as *Karobran*. Much of Mudrooroo's writing sets up norms and standards of authenticity which implicitly affirm the centrality of his own writings, which themselves were overtly political and masculinist. Mudrooroo failed to recognise that the different style of Aboriginal women's writing was militant and political in its own way. Mudrooroo's strident condemnation of the collaborative construction of many Aboriginal women's texts, including *Karobran*, will be discussed in an ensuing chapter.

Other foundational Aboriginal male writers such as Kevin Gilbert and Jack Davis also gained significant critical attention and a degree of public notoriety. These male writers primarily published fiction, poetry and plays. The acceptability of these genres in the academy and with the mainstream readership of the era suggests one reason why these men were socially situated as "writers" and received some ongoing recognition. Those Aboriginal men who did publish in the autobiographical form adhered to the traditional bildungsroman model. Autobiographies published by Aboriginal men such as *Lionel Rose: Australian* (1969) by Lionel

Rose and Rod Humphreys and *A Bastard Like Me* (1975) by Charles Perkins built upon their fame established in other fields. The publishing experiences of foundational Aboriginal women writers documented in this thesis testify to the often difficult task of getting into print and gaining and sustaining critical attention. For these Aboriginal women, their position as Aboriginal literary pioneers did not necessarily equate with fame, sales success or critical attention.

The high tide of Aboriginal women's autobiographical writing is marked, instead, by the reception of Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), not by the struggles of the first generation of writers to be published. *My Place* was actively promoted by Fremantle Arts Centre Press as a "best seller" and received as such by the market place. According to Ray Coffey who edited the text for Fremantle Arts Centre Press, *My Place* has achieved the highest book sales in Australian literary history (Little, *Placing Authority* 53). The popularity of *My Place* established Sally Morgan as the definitive Aboriginal woman writer and marked the beginning of what Brewster has coined the "second-wave" of Aboriginal women's autobiography (Brewster 41). *My Place* is an accessible text that has been widely read. This achievement is acknowledged by Ruby Langford Ginibi who declared that *My Place*, "was the first to open this country up" (Langford Ginibi, *Talking* 103). The success of *My Place* ensured the marketability of Aboriginal narratives that were published in its wake; narratives that consolidated the then emergent niche for Aboriginal texts in University courses and in public bookshops both in Australia and abroad.

The authority ascribed to *My Place* by its popular success had a number of effects upon the status of Aboriginal women's autobiographical writing. *My Place* triggered a heated and ongoing debate in the academy that focused upon the "authentic" representation of Aboriginal identity and possible assimilationist outcomes of the adaptation of Western generic forms by Aboriginal writers. Arguments surrounding the representation of Aboriginality and the basis of the popular appeal of *My Place* have been vigorously debated since its publication.

Some Aboriginal scholars contest that the popular acclaim accorded to *My Place* is founded upon the text's moderate rendering of the colonial past. One argument posits that the

success of *My Place* can be attributed to a narrative strategy that allows for an assuagement of settler guilt:

[*My Place*] recasts 'Aboriginality', so long suppressed, as acceptable, bringing it out into the open. The book is a catharsis. It gives release and relief, not so much to Aboriginal people oppressed by psychotic racism, but to the whites who wittingly and unwittingly participated in it (Langton, *Well I Heard* 31).

It has also been suggested that *My Place* appeals to the nationalistic tastes of the mass market by presenting a "soft analysis" (Huggins, *Questions* 143) of colonial history. The polite version of history represented by *My Place* contrasts "the actual truth" (Huggins, *Questions* 143) about colonisation, which would offend the consciences of an ill-informed or prejudiced mass readership. These critiques of *My Place* assert that a strong correlation must be maintained between Aboriginal politics and literary production.

*My Place* has been both a commercial success and the subject of intense academic debate, a status that contrasts the position of first-wave texts published in the 1970s. *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, although pioneering Aboriginal texts, did not succeed as "intercultural brokers" (Donaldson 350), and particularly not with an academic readership. In this thesis I ask if the effective eclipsing of foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives can be explained by the relationship between Aboriginal literature and politics.

Does an absence of supportive discourses in literature or politics prior to 1988 result in limited access to a critical audience for these foundational Aboriginal texts? In response to this question I investigate the cultural and political history of the era, concentrating upon the political, social and religious groups with which the Aboriginal authors' affiliated. Each of the three foundational texts that I examine projects an overtly political enunciation, adopts an unfashionable and uncompromising ideological stance, or mobilises a strident and politicised generic style.

These findings challenge the opinion of Mudrooroo, an influential critic who has dismissed many foundational Indigenous women's texts as apolitical. Mudrooroo contests that the undue influence white editors had in the formation of the text makes their message one of

tolerance and understanding (Narogin 162 - 3). Each foundational autobiographical narrative that I examine was constructed in collaboration with a white editor drawn from the Aboriginal woman's primary community of commitment or a professional editor engaged by the publisher. In response to Mudrooroo's assertion I conducted a close examination of the cross-cultural collaborative relationships which influenced the formation of these foundational Aboriginal women's texts.

Aboriginal scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that, "self-presentation by Indigenous women is a political act" regardless of the form the text takes or the participation of a white editor (Moreton-Robinson 3). This leads me to question if the textual representation of subjectivity offers a site of political resistance for foundational Aboriginal women writers. Further, how does the collaborative construction of the text impact upon its political valence? To proceed with these questions I conducted oral history interviews (where possible) with the Aboriginal author's collaborating editor, family, friends and community members. My use of oral history interviews does not assume access to a "true" record of the past. As James Olney explains, memories are not drawn from a fixed and changeless pattern. Recall is organised and prioritised, rather, by emotional engagement and formed by the individual's, "own past history and continually in interaction with the natural and social worlds" (Olney 372).

Oral history interviews, access to primary historical records and secondary scholarship enabled me to establish a picture of the multilayered relationships that form the text. These are relationships between:

1. Author: text
2. Author: community: editor
3. Editor: text
4. Text: audience

My investigation of the collaborative relationships and the influential discourses that form the text prompt me to question the textual outcome of the editorial phase. I ask, how did the narrative change between manuscript phase and the final publication? In order to determine the influence of the collaborating editor I access the original manuscript of each

autobiographical narrative and make a close comparison with the published version. The thesis can thus be described as archeological in orientation, “exploring what had been hidden from history in order to dig up resources for imagining the present differently” (Mercer 118). What has been altered? What excised? And to what end? In my analysis I found considerable differences between the original manuscripts and the published versions. These differences included significant alterations to textual representations of Aboriginality and the editorial effacement of an Aboriginal rights platform presented from a distinctly Aboriginal perspective.

Most publications are mediated or influenced by an editor at some stage of the production process. This thesis concentrates upon three cross-cultural collaborative relationships within the Australian colonial setting and does not attempt to mount a wholesale critique of the editorial craft or to closely examine the dynamics or outcomes of editorial interventions in other contexts.

The results of this literary comparison and analysis could be said to represent the scars of cross-cultural collaboration. My analysis posits how and why it is important to examine and publicise the scars of the editorial exchange. I then question why, at this stage of the colonial project in Australia, did this style of editorial collaboration occur? Utilising the theoretical tools of Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha I examine the phenomenon of cross-cultural mimicry: black skin covered by a white mask. Application of these theoretical concepts raises questions that pertain to the authorial adoption of the “white mask” of Western generic style and undergirding epistemology. I also identify trends in the editorial effacement of the original manuscripts and its possible effects. How can we understand the editorial impositions identified in the literary analysis? Following the adaptation of Fanonian theory by Diana Fuss and Kaja Silverman, I argue that the editors engage in cross-cultural double mimesis in order to represent a version of stereotyped Aboriginality they deem as appropriate for the text. This double mimesis can be defined as the editorial engagement in a textual masquerade of (stereotyped) features, through which white editors construct an Aboriginality, posited as its “best representative”(Silverman 3-4).

This research represents an important development in Australian literary scholarship because it is one of the first substantial investigations into the collaborative construction and



publication of foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives. Path-breaking texts by Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare have been neglected by the academy. Their first-wave autobiographical narratives, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran* have been eclipsed by *My Place* and ensuing second-wave texts. The paucity of critical discussion can also be attributed to the unfashionability of generic style or distaste for the texts' ideological foundations. In identifying aspects of the texts as the "white masks" which cover and occlude the expression of Aboriginality in the narrative, this thesis can be described as being archeological in orientation. One of the outcomes of this research is the unveiling and recuperation of these Aboriginal women's representations of Aboriginality. What has been hidden from history has been exhumed, providing resources for imagining these foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives differently.

## Two

### Methodology

#### Situating Myself and this Research

I was born in Wiradjuri country, a fourth generation white working-class settler woman. My maternal and paternal forebears, English and German Protestants, have farmed Wiradjuri land near The Rock in Southwest New South Wales (NSW) for over a century. The Rock, a prominent outcrop of stone cliffs which rise a sheer 360 metres over the surrounding plains, is a significant Wiradjuri birthing and initiation site (Kabaila, *Macquarie* 78). I continue to live on Wiradjuri land, thirty kilometres from Margaret Tucker's birthplace on Warangesda Mission. Warangesda was a "camp of mercy" opened by John Gribble in the 1880s. Warangesda was closed in 1925, revoked in 1926 and sold to a white farmer in 1927 (Kabaila, *Murrumbidgee* 116). I drive past the site of the former mission every week and I am reminded that I am an inheritor of colonial dominance over Aboriginal people and beneficiary of Aboriginal dispossession.

The protocol I have followed to introduce myself as a researcher in the inter-disciplinary field of Aboriginal Studies acknowledges the traditional owners of the land upon which my research findings are delivered. This act of respect acknowledges Aboriginal dispossession and the persistence of Aboriginal sovereignty throughout contact history. Such courteous enactments also gesture to a complex debate that problematises the epistemological foundation and methodology of cross-cultural research.

#### Can a White Woman Write Aboriginal Literary History?

Aboriginal scholars such as Jackie Huggins question if it is possible for white Australians (such as myself) to write Aboriginal history. Aboriginal history, Huggins argues, "differs from white history in its concerns and perspectives and probably its methods" (Huggins, *Sister* 1). Huggins suggests that white researchers may be incognisant of entrenched white value systems that necessarily produce biased historical knowledge. Some Aboriginal scholars, for

example Wendy Brady (Director of Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, University of New South Wales) call for white researchers to foster Aboriginal scholarship with a view to leaving the field. Aboriginal researchers are believed to have an advantage over white researchers because of preexisting relationships and roles with both their Aboriginal communities and the academy, “the double advantage of relating their history in literally black and white terms” (Huggins, *Sister* 24).

Given this ongoing contest over territory, some white historians feel that their work in the field is viewed by Indigenous Australians, “with scepticism and hostility”

(Attwood, *The Struggle* xxi). Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, for example, respond to Aboriginal exclusivism by rejecting, “the idea that fields of study should be the sole preserve of particular groups or that some sort of certificate of authenticity be required before one can work in a field such as this” (Attwood, *The Struggle* xxi). The defiant stance taken by Attwood and Markus prioritises the historical imagination over the call to problematise the standpoint of the academic, “a work needs to be assessed on its merits, not on the basis of the ethnicity, race, religion or political beliefs of the author” (Attwood, *The Struggle* xxi). Such calls to prioritise one political or scholarly ideal over another lead inevitably to heated debates.

In Australian feminism the bitterly contested Bell-Huggins debate pitted white feminists’ prioritisation of universalised women’s experience against Aboriginal demands for a strategically essentialised speaking position that is not mediated by white authority. The controversy erupted after an article dealing with intra-racial rape in Aboriginal communities was published by a white feminist anthropologist, Diane Bell, in collaboration with a “traditional” Aboriginal woman Topsy Nappurula Nelson. The article, “Speaking About Rape Is Everyone’s Business” was published in *Women’s Studies International Forum* (Volume 12, No. 4, 1989). In 1990, twelve Aboriginal women including scholar Jackie Huggins were signatories to a letter of protest to the journal. They contested the authority of Diane Bell to represent Aboriginal women. In the ongoing debate Aboriginal women continued to call for white feminist academics who collaborated with Aboriginal women to acknowledge their race, class and institutional privilege. They argued that this privilege necessarily affects how knowledge is produced and how it is represented within power relations. In the aftermath of the Bell-Huggins debate the power dynamics of cross-cultural collaborations were openly

discussed and contested, with Aboriginal women such as Catrina Felton and Liz Flanagan producing “The Tidda’s Manifesto” which outlines conditions for white feminist/Aboriginal alliances (Felton). Noted white researchers in the broad field of Aboriginal studies, such as Anne Brewster, argue that responsible and accountable research practices can preserve Aboriginal agency in collaborative relationships. Brewster argues that white researchers must “do their homework” and undertake research that is consultative, dialogic and interactive. Classroom pedagogy and research methods must be reflexive and politically informed or, “run the risk of becoming altogether alienated from the Aboriginal constituency [ . . . ] thereby exploiting and appropriating Aboriginal people’s knowledge” (Brewster, *Literary* 9). Making space for Aboriginal women to speak for themselves and incorporating their critique into research practices moves towards the relinquishment of white privilege and power in the cross-cultural collaborative relationship.

### **Developing an Appropriate Methodology**

Aboriginal scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson suggests an appropriate methodological approach for non-indigenous engagement with Aboriginal Studies. She calls for non-indigenous researchers to situate themselves as raced subjects and to draw this into their epistemological standpoint. Moreton-Robinson argues that the subject position “middle-class white woman” (Moreton-Robinson 149) is a site of dominance that needs to be interrogated by white feminist academics, particularly in its manifestation as assumed and invisible power in relationship with and study of Aboriginal peoples, histories and cultures. Following Moreton-Robinson, this methodology provides a site for analysing the invisible, racialised power of whiteness in the cross-cultural collaborative relationship.

This thesis examines the production and publication of three foundational Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives; *Karobran* by Monica Clare, *If Everyone Cared* by Margaret Tucker and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* by Oodgeroo. Each foundational text is the focus of a thesis section, which consists of two chapters:

A biographical chapter sketches the political, religious and ideological beliefs of the author and her “communities of commitment” or circles of influence and support. This sketch is based upon available historical documents and oral history interviews. The historical

grounding of this biographical chapter develops and contextualises the important collaboration between editor and Aboriginal author. This conventionally invisible relationship developed out of the bonds of a community of commitment, in the case of *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared*, or was significantly affected by the absence of community in the case of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. I conducted oral history interviews with editors (where possible), friends, family and members of the religious and political communities to which the Aboriginal women belonged. These interviews provided an opportunity for collaborating parties and influential onlookers to these relationships to represent themselves, their community and relationship with the Aboriginal author and her text.

The second chapter in each section is concerned with the Aboriginal author's self-presentation. As I demonstrate in the biographical chapters, literary relations such as those between author and editor are imbued by differential access to power. Cultural capital is also available differentially to the coloniser and the colonised. To substantiate these propositions I located the original manuscripts of each foundational autobiographical text: the manuscript of *Karobran* is held in the private papers of the editor, the manuscript of *If Everyone Cared* is in the manuscript collection of the National Library and the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is in the manuscript collection of the University of Queensland's Fryer Library. After locating and copying each manuscript I made a close comparison, word by word, between the original hand written manuscript and/or the typescript and the published version of the text. The outcome of unequal relationships in the editorial phase is made manifest by the comparison of the original manuscript with the published text. This comparison reveals the degree of editorial effacement suffered by the Aboriginal woman's text and makes plain the clash between Aboriginal enunciation and the needs of white literary convention. Aileen Moreton-Robinson remarks:

Indigenous women's knowledge itself cannot be accommodated, but must be redefined to conform to the requirements of white literary practice. However, although white editing or scribing may influence the writing of the text, it does not erase the subtext, which is informed by the knowledge and experience of Indigenous women. [ . . . ] The gaze of Indigenous women on themselves is inscribed into the text through their self-presentation (Moreton-Robinson 2).

In this thesis the close comparison of the original manuscript with the published text unveils the subtextual dimensions effaced through the collaborative production of *Karobran*, *If*

*Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. This subtext preserves the textual enunciation of Aboriginal women's knowledge, experience and cultural priorities. An engagement with the subtext quantifies and describes aspects of the original manuscript that were modified or omitted to meet the requirements of the literary form, the editor's value system, the beliefs of the community of commitment or the perceived needs of the projected white readership. Material I gathered from a number of sources consolidates to form a picture of the competing influences and interests in the editorial phase. Oral history interviews that I conducted, statements made by the Aboriginal authors and the style and extent of alterations made to the manuscript all reflect a process of negotiation and accommodation between the collaborating parties. The subtext also suggests incommensurate knowledge, understanding and desires. These clashes were primarily resolved in the interest of the dominant white editor.

The methodological approach of this thesis provides a context for Aboriginal women's self-presentation to "meet and disrupt" (Moreton-Robinson xxii) the invisible but dominant and constraining influence of the white editor. The juxtaposition of the biographical chapters and the literary analysis chapters, and the structure of the literary analysis chapter itself, becomes the site of meeting between white representation of Aboriginality and Aboriginal self-presentation.

Following the three sections, which present a biographical sketch of the foundational Aboriginal woman author and a literary analysis of the foundational text, I conduct a cross-comparison in order to compare and contrast the research findings. This chapter attempts to move beyond the identification of sites of editorial effacement and the acknowledgement of the surviving subtext to theorise the collaborative processes and outcomes that are described in the preceding sections. I found Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Homi Bhabha's re-reading of Fanon and Diana Fuss's *Identification Papers* (1995) useful critical tools for thinking about the significance of the research findings. Fanon-read-through-Bhabha and Fuss as a theoretical frame to analyse Aboriginal women's collaborative relationships and autobiographical publications is fruitful, but not unproblematic.

## Invoking Frantz Fanon: Limitations and Benefits

Several areas of concern inevitably arise when white Western feminists engage with masculinist theory and minority women's experience. The discussion of these limitations will also highlight the benefits available through the application of Fanonian theory. These seemingly intractable problems must be acknowledged and are held in tension with the benefits that this engagement also delivers.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon adopts an existentialist Marxist-humanist position that disputes the Enlightenment belief in the unchanging nature of the subject. Joining thinkers such as Lukacs and Sartre (Lazarus 178), Fanon argues for a "new humanism" wherein, "The body of history does not determine a single one of my actions. I am my own foundation" (Fanon, *Black* 231). New humanism would see, "man as a product of himself and his own activity in history" (Young, *White* 121). Fanon realised that the challenge for post-colonial societies was to create a nationalism and social structure that did not reflect the colonial ideology and system (Azar 26). Fanon's aim was to abolish the dehumanising system of colonialism, calling upon his comrades to attempt a radical dissolution of inequality:

If we wish to reply to the expectations of the people of Europe, it is no good sending them back a reflection, even an ideal reflection, of their society and their thought with which from time to time they feel immeasurably sickened. For Europe, for ourselves and for humanity, comrades, we must turn over a new leaf, we must work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man (Fanon, *The Wretched* 255).

Fanon posits a revolutionary-redemptive ethic that presents difficulties to a broadly poststructuralist contemporary application of his work. One way Homi Bhabha is reconciled to the limitations of Fanonian theory is by suggesting reasons for the shortcomings, "Despite Fanon's insight into the dark side of man, such a deep hunger for humanism must be an overcompensation for the closed consciousness or "dual narcissism" to which he attributes the depersonalisation of colonial man" (Bhabha 61). While I do not ascribe to Fanon's new humanism, neither do I attempt to pardon him for adopting this ethic. The research findings clearly illustrate that Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo were constituted ambivalently in and through the discourses, political affiliations, editorial negotiations and

compromises that I detail. They, their texts and its production all give evidence of unfixed, non-unified subjectivity, produced within power relations and systems of oppression.

Another problem with an attempted application of Fanon, evident in the above discussion of new humanism, comes from the necessity to read Fanon outside the historical context of the African anti-colonialist struggle of the 1950s and 60s. After Fanon's untimely death from leukemia in 1961 his work was taken up as revolutionary theory for the Third World. *The Wretched of the Earth*, written on Fanon's deathbed, became a template for Marxist freedom fighters and dominated critical engagement with Fanon for several decades. The resurgence of Fanon studies in the 1980s and 1990s, mainly by literary critics, centered on an earlier text and is criticised as dehistoricising Fanon's intellectual and theoretical development (Gibson 101). Nigel Gibson summarises the progression of Fanon Studies:

After the African "Fanonism" of the 1960s, and the American New Left and Black Panther Fanon of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the "Critical Fanonism" of the post-Cold War 1980s marks a crucial divide. Fanonism has shifted from radical politics to a liberal cultural studies and has become now almost wholly institutionalised (Gibson 100).

Critical Fannonism of the 1980s and 1990s made almost exclusive use of an earlier text, *Black Skin, White Masks* which was written while Fanon was a medical student in France and published before he took up psychiatric practice in Algeria and joined the independence struggle. The work of scholars engaged in postmodern cultural and postcolonial studies such as Gayatri Spivak, Benita Parry, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Abdul Jan Mohamed have mobilised Fanon as a global theorist. Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues that the current resurgence of Fanon arises from the convergence of questions pursued by cultural studies and postcolonial studies:

Fanon's current fascination for us has something to do with the convergence of the problematic of colonialism with that of subject formation. As a psychoanalyst of culture and a champion of the wretched of the earth, he is almost irresistible for a criticism that sees itself as both oppositional and postmodern (Gates 458).

One problem with Critical Fanonism is that the reapplication of Fanon as a theorist of identity underplays his position as a practitioner of armed anti-colonial struggle. The editors of an important recent anthology *Fanon: A Critical Reader*, argue that this change in emphasis has



opened Fanon to unjust attack, “under a number of fashionable political designations such as misogynous, homophobic [. . .] and petit bourgeois” (Gordon 6). These attacks are misplaced, the editors argue, because they enact post hoc judgements that do not acknowledge Fanon as a historically-situated liberation theorist:

Liberation theorists, especially the 1950s and 1960s variety, are either structurally ‘modern’ and hence passe, or prescriptively ‘totalising’ and therefore terrorising. A particularly popular turn has been to earmark their modernity and totalising tendencies as exclusionary in practice and hence militating against marginalised groups - especially women (Gordon 6).

Contemporary re-readings which attempt to negotiate Fanon’s modernist humanism encounter his sexual politics as, “the Achilles heel of black liberation” (Alessandrini 9). So why invoke Fanon (out of historical and geographical context) to discuss the experience of Aboriginal women writers when his modernist heterosexism contributes to the exclusion of this already marginalised group? What does Fanon offer that is not better said by an Aboriginal woman scholar? I respond to these questions first by outlining the variety of feminist responses to Fanon and by drawing attention to approaches that acknowledge both the difficulties and significant theoretical interventions offered by contemporary application of Fanonian thought.

Negotiating Fanon’s gender and sexual politics has not proven too difficult for many eminent Critical Fanonists. The editors of *Fanon: A Critical Reader* deal with Fanon’s sexism by suggesting that flawed English translations exacerbate Fanon’s failure to use gender neutral language, resulting in contemporary misunderstanding of his intentions (Gordon 6). However, Fanonists such as Lola Young insist that the problem runs deeper than facile sexism, “This is not simply a question of tracking down the sexist use of the generic pronoun, it is a matter of the ontological status of black women” (Young, *Missing* 88). Young joins other feminists including Rey Chow and bell hooks to argue that in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon grants agency to women exclusively through their sexuality. bell hooks comments, “Not only is the female body, black or white, always a sexualised body, always not the body that ‘thinks’ but it also appears to be a body that never longs for freedom” (hooks 84).

The problem feminists find with Fanon is not that women (black women in particular) are denied agency, but that the agency granted is a determined sexual agency. This agency,

described by Fanon as the black woman's active tendency towards miscegenation and lactification, threatens the black (male) nationalist project (Chow 46). Homi Bhabha, among others, sidesteps this conundrum in his seminal essay "Remembering Fanon" by evoking and accepting at face value the line proffered by Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*, "about the woman of color. I know nothing about her" (Fanon, *Black* 179 - 80). Chow contests that critics who choose not to discuss Fanon's fraught representation of women in preference for what they perceive as, "the more important issues of racism and colonialism" (Chow 50) discursively replicate his gender politics. bell hooks, however, repudiates a feminist politics that is grounded in anti-male sentiment or prioritises the discussion of sexism that, "will destroy the possibility of progressive political solidarity between black women and men" (hooks 79). This is also a position taken by many Aboriginal scholars and activists, particularly in response to the Bell-Huggins debate. hooks acknowledges at length the difficulty of Fanon's rendering of the ontological status of women. Nevertheless, hooks chooses to prioritise what she describes as Fanon's concern with, "issues of healing [ . . . ] paradigms for the healing of the dispossessed black body politic" (hooks 82). This primal concern, hooks remarks, is often deflected by the discursive framework in which it is situated. The (feminist) reader needs to be vigilantly engaged with Fanon's liberatory insight to avoid distraction. This reading strategy allows the application of Fanonian theory to contemporary black liberatory struggles whilst acknowledging issues that may hinder an easy encounter.

Fanon's writing on the experience of colonial oppression and the path to liberation and healing is an appropriate frame for reading foundational Aboriginal women's collaborative and publishing experiences for four of key reasons:

Firstly, Fanon saw the "native writer" as a significant intermediary between the precolonial past, the colonial present and the post-colonial future. The task of the "colonised man who writes for his people" is to,

use the past with the intention of opening up the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope. But to ensure that hope and to give it form, he must take part in action and throw himself body and soul into the national struggle. You may speak about everything under the sun; but when you decide to speak about that unique thing in a man's life that is represented by the fact opening up new horizons, by bringing light to your own country and by raising

yourself and your people to their feet, then you must collaborate on the physical plane (Fanon, *The Wretched* 187).

This research into the collaborative production of foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographies reveals an oppressed political history that is intricately linked to the publication process. These Aboriginal women's political beliefs and activities were characterised by striving to increase their power through affiliation and collaboration with others. A Fanonian frame acknowledges and enunciates the important link between political praxis and literary production, a link that continues to be emphasised by contemporary Aboriginal writers and scholars.

Secondly, Fanon is valuable to a discussion of Aboriginal experience for his theorising of a split subjectivity. Fanon articulates the problem of race consciousness and subjectivity under conditions of oppression, which although effacing women's status, remains a valuable contribution to contemporary scholarship. This thesis examines the experience and contribution of both Aboriginal and white collaborators in the construction of foundational Aboriginal autobiographical narratives. It posits that both white and black participants in the collaborative relationship negotiated subjectivities that were not fixed, but were conditioned by the racial-assimilationist paradigms of the era.

Thirdly and significantly, Fanon, read via Homi Bhabha, allows for a discussion of the colonised experience that accepts ambivalence in identification with, and imitation of, the colonising power. Political agency is ascribed through black imitation or mimicry of the white colonising power, whilst simultaneously accepting that an ambivalent identification will cause confusion and emotional scarring. Bhabha's interpretation of Fanon has significant political implications, as it accepts, "a politics of subversion which lives with ambivalence, without trying to transcend or sublimate it" (Hall 27). This reading of Fanon, when applied to the experiences of foundational Aboriginal women writers acknowledges a complexity in their affiliations and identifications that is both contextual and strategic.

Finally, Fanon's views on the Negritude movement present a moderate and useful approach to the reclamation of "traditional" black culture in post-colonial societies. As stated in the quote above, Fanon urged native writers to use the resources of the past (i.e. pre-colonial cultural traditions), "with the intention of opening up the future, as an invitation to action and a basis

for hope" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 187). Some critics argue that Fanon underestimates the persistence of traditional forms of thought and cultural expression and homogenises colonial experience, particularly referring to differences in experience between the colonised elite and rural classes (Lazarus). In Aboriginal Australia there is a notable difference in experience, especially in the survival of language, between heavily settled and remote areas. Fanon's call to use the resources of the past (even if underestimated in scope) was premised on the irreparable impact of colonial experience upon black psyche and culture. Thus a Fanonian approach to foundational Aboriginal women's writing respects the scars of collaboration, manifest in this thesis as authorial compromise and editorial effacement, as much as it values aspects of Aboriginal culture that survived to be passed on in the print medium. This insight into the formation of the contemporary Aboriginal subject also guides the decision to use "Western theory" as an analytical frame in this thesis.

The methodological approach provides a site for a meeting of Aboriginal and Western knowledges and attempts to minimise the possibility of epistemic violence by prioritising Aboriginal enunciation. This priority shaped the conduct of the primary research phase. I chose to conduct the field research, including oral history interviews and the literary analyses before firmly settling upon a theoretical frame. I then took the findings from this phase of the research to various theoretical positions in order to identify the most productive dialogue or partnership. This approach enacts what Rey Chow describes as, "intellectual miscegenation" (Chow 51), or in Anne Brewster's turn of phrase, the "indigenisation of theory" (Brewster 10). The methodology thus attempts to avoid rendering the agency of Aboriginal people structurally invisible by staging an interaction between Indigenous discourse and critical theory.

**Section I**

**Re-membering *Karobran* by Monica Clare**

## Three

### **Literary Links: Monica Clare and Left Wing Politics**

#### **Questioning Collaboration**

In the field of Australian Aboriginal literary studies the discussion of cross-cultural collaboration often gives rise to debate of a very personal and emotive nature. Tensions mount and stances become oppositional particularly when discussions of the “good intentions” of white collaborators arise. The collaborators’ best intentions may stand in contrast with the outcomes experienced by the Aboriginal author. Stories of unequal access to power, lack of cultural sensitivity, personal betrayal and intellectual theft abound. The delicacy of the issue, it seems, correlates with the frequency of such encounters.

A propensity towards and proliferation of autobiographical narratives mark the history of Aboriginal women’s publishing. The “first generation” of Aboriginal women writers, publishing in the 1970s and early 1980s, produced literature primarily in autobiographical form. The continued popularity of this genre among Aboriginal women writers is based upon generic flexibility, cultural accessibility, and the capacity to straddle orally-based and literate traditions. Educational achievement or competence with written English do not necessarily pose a barrier to Aboriginal women authors, as autobiographical genres accommodate the transcribing of oral narratives into the written form. Many Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives have been recorded, transcribed and edited by a collaborating party. Others written directly onto the page were written and edited in conjunction with a professional writer or editor.

As most Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives are mediated by white people, the politics of cross-cultural collaboration becomes a significant issue. Australian publishing is, “almost entirely dominated by white bourgeois institutions” (Huggins, *Questions* 142), and even Aboriginal run and controlled publishing house, Magabala books, employs white editorial staff (Hughes 49). The only designated Aboriginal editorial position in Australian publishing, held by Sandra Phillips at University of Queensland Press (UQP), folded when the allotted

funding ceased in 1997 (Phillips). Aboriginal people engaging with the publishing industry are necessarily negotiating Western forms of mass communication. Cross-cultural collaboration thus becomes an inherent part of the publishing enterprise for Aboriginal people.

The nature of cross-cultural collaborative processes and relationships is rarely acknowledged or discussed in the published text. Many forums for collaboration, such as the “in-house” work of a sub-editor, are assumed and unquestioned interventions. Editing professionals assess the relationship with the writer as a private conversation. Michael Heyward, longstanding editor of *Scripta* and now editor-in-chief of his own company *Text Publishers*, argues that, “Editors need to feel proud of their work, but they have no business basking in the glory of the writer [ . . . ] once the book has been published, assuming he or she has done the job properly, the editor becomes irrelevant” (Heyward 10). The invisible influence of the publishing house and the market undeniably shape the text. The proliferation of autobiographical publications by Aboriginal women is linked to the publishers’ propensity to accept or commission titles in this generic style, which is in turn influenced by market popularity. As Paul Eggert reflects, authorial agency operates through people in history:

Authors are not above history or ideologies as they do their work; in fact the very reverse, for their operations are both limited and enabled by discursive, legal and commercial possibilities of the time. The literary work, written within a partly pre-defined genre, is being socialised even before it enters the public domain and is subject to the operations of publisher's editor, copy editor, page- and cover-designers and printers. It acquires a shape that can be manufactured, and then becomes a commodity that can be sold (Eggert 19).

The collaborative nature of the publishing experience is, by convention, obscured by the commodification of the book. Book promotion and publicity focuses upon the individual writer and the text, not upon the myriad influences that formed the finished product. Beatrice Davis, matriarch of Australian editing, encapsulated this desire for neatness and closure when she referred to her craft as, “invisible mending” (Kent 125). The conventional status of this wisdom means that acknowledging the hidden collaborator is the exception rather than the rule.

## Invisible Mending?

In Aboriginal publishing the professional preference for editorial invisibility has been challenged by the necessarily politicised nature of a collaborative encounter between an Aboriginal author and a non-Aboriginal editor. The perceptions of differential access to power and cultural capital have seen private exchanges publicised and criticised. The cross-cultural collaborations undertaken to produce books by Ruby Langford Ginibi and Patsy Cohen serve as examples of the varying visibility and the contested influence of white collaborators involved in the construction of Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives. The cross-cultural collaborative experiences that influenced the creation of Ruby Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (1988) are not available to the reader in the published text. By contrast Patsy Cohen and Margaret Somerville's *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* (1990) foregrounds the collaborative relationship and processes.

Given the personal nature of the autobiographical project, editorial collaboration can be intense. Add the dynamics caused by differentials in experience, gender, race, class and personality and the potential for problems expands. When Ruby Langford Ginibi was commissioned by the Australian Bicentennial Authority to write her autobiography the publishers, Penguin, commissioned Susan Hampton to help her (Thompson, *Coming* 35). *Don't Take Your Love to Town* was published in 1988 with copyright shared between author and editor. In a recent account Janine Little alleges that because of inexperience in the complexities of publishing deals, Langford Ginibi had not realised the consequences of the initial copyright arrangement, "[that] her story would end up being someone else's property" (Little Nyoongah 35). According to Mudrooroo, Langford Ginibi found herself, "enmeshed in a court case over royalties as she sought to extricate herself from the editorial process" (Nyoongah, *Couldn't ya* 377). Further editions of the now successful *Don't Take Your Love to Town* do not acknowledge the role of the collaborating editor. For personal reasons, Susan Hampton chooses not to discuss this collaborative experience on the public record. The editing process clearly had a significant impact upon Aboriginal author, white collaborator and, according to some critics, the text itself. Adam Shoemaker cites *Don't Take Your Love to Town* as having been, "comprehensively edited" (Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 91) and Mudrooroo suggests the text was, "edited to conform to the dictates of middle-class literature" (Nyoongah, *Couldn't ya* 377). Without reference to the original manuscript,



these opinions remain within the realm of insider knowledge and serve to highlight what may be interpreted as the hidden but significant influence of pre-publication processes upon the life of the text.

The presentation of Patsy Cohen and Margaret Somerville's *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* stands in contrast to the Ruby Langford Ginibi's invisible, but contested editorial experience. *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* was written in collaboration with a white woman, Margaret Somerville, who refused the conventional position of "ghost" writer. Somerville explains the decision to foreground the collaborative process and differentiate between the voices in the text, "the telling of Patsy's life was created out of the particular context of our relationship so I needed to be present in the text" (Somerville, *Life* 40). The treatment of narrative voice, particularly the visibility of the editor in *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs*, evoked a strong critical response.

Roberta Sykes' positive response to *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* was qualified by her dislike of the representation of Koori English in the dialogue. Sykes complains that the use of incorrect spelling to invoke the speech patterns of the interviewees is degrading, "I know of no one who speaks the perfect pronunciation and sentence structure of the written form, an excellent and superior form which ends up being reserved for the writer - to the detriment of the interviewees" (Sykes, *Staying* 44). Patsy Cohen herself was initially reluctant to consent to the verbatim transcription of the dialogue. Somerville notes that, "When Patsy first read her transcripts she was horrified at her use of English [ . . . ] it wasn't until some of her college lecturers responded enthusiastically to the original manuscript that she agreed with me" (Cohen, *Reflections* 48). While Somerville aimed to disrupt the dominance of the "white written form" by interjecting with the oral, Cohen was worried that the Aboriginal way of speaking would be judged as deficient. This illustrates a situation where theoretical aims of the collaborator may clash and require negotiation with the life experience and desired public persona of the Indigenous author.

Somerville scrupulously foregrounds her role in the construction of the text, but this does not constitute an easy solution to the problem of power disparities. In a spirited review, Lee Cataldi criticises Somerville for assuming the right to speak for the Aboriginal women from *Ingelba*, "Patsy Cohen is not the speaking subject of this book. She does not control it. Control

instead reverts to the commentator, who is the “I” or “we” of the text, and who introduces herself as the first person speaker in the introduction” (Cataldi 52). *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs* was clearly a project remarkable for the “unveiling” of formerly secret collaborative processes. Somerville and Cohen’s public and self reflexive discussion of their collaborative relationship was a groundbreaking and somewhat daring response to criticism of conventionally invisible collaborative relationships. Somerville’s insistence upon textual visibility aligns with her clearly stated feminist standpoint. This ethical standpoint, ironically, has perhaps intensified rather than dispelled critique of white collaborative interventions in the construction of Aboriginal texts.

Some critics argue that targeting Aboriginal texts in a discussion of editorial influence is patronising to Aboriginal writers. Mary Ann Hughes argues the same questions would not be asked of a mainstream text, “While it remains unquestioned that mainstream writers collaborate with editors [ . . . ] in the case of an Aboriginal writer, the role of the editor in constructing the work is the issue which most readily springs to the fore” (Hughes 52). Billy Marshall-Stoneking concurs, arguing that reviewers and critics who focus upon collaboration avoid the difficult task of engaging in, “responsible and honest” critique on literary merit. Marshall-Stoneking argues, “engagement [is] avoided in favour of a pat on the head [ . . . ] it is unfair to Aboriginal writers to treat their efforts as if they were the products of sheltered workshops” (Marshall-Stoneking 9). Conventionally hidden pre-production processes, including the collaborative relationship between white editor and Aboriginal author, have a far-reaching impact upon the published text. This impact is registered whether the collaborative processes are unavailable to the reader, as in *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*, or prioritised as in *Ingelba and The Five Black Matriarchs*.

Pre-production processes also profoundly affect the style of critical reception the text enjoys, again regardless of the public visibility of the editorial transactions. The inaccessibility of the pre-publication processes does not render them innocent or irrelevant. For Aboriginal writers the publication process is inherently political. As Jan Larbarlestier argues, in contemporary Australia, “living black and writing about it can be seen as a process of political confrontation” (Larbarlestier 90). While Australian publishing and readerships are dominated by the white middle-classes, this process of political confrontation will necessarily be cross-cultural. Thus, as Gillian Whitlock remarks, “The

question of what “white ghosts” do - as editors, readers, critics, teachers - with black women’s autobiographies is an important one” (Whitlock 166).

### What “White Ghosts” Do

There is a correlation between political imperative and the popular neglect of foundational autobiographical narratives by Aboriginal women. As established in the introduction, the marginalisation of foundational Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives can be substantially explained by the landmark success of Sally Morgan’s *My Place*. Prominent Aboriginal critics, including Marcia Langton and Jackie Huggins, argued that the success of *My Place* was founded upon the mainstream readership’s preference for a “white-washed” version of colonial history. By contrast, foundational autobiographical texts of a more overt political tone or ideological conviction have received meagre critical recognition or space in the public memory. The three foundational Aboriginal women’s autobiographical texts that I examine in this thesis can be characterised as communal, interpersonal and political enunciations that aim, “to win political ground” (Sommer 109). In this they can be said to exhibit features similar to those of Latin American testimonios. Oodgeroo’s *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, Margaret Tucker’s *If Everyone Cared* and Monica Clare’s *Karobran* were all published in the 1970s. These foundational Aboriginal women writers mobilised friends and associates from political and religious communities of commitment to see their autobiographical projects to fruition. The collaborative relationships these Aboriginal women forged with “white ghosts” were crucial to the achievement of their goal of publication and the style of enunciation we now see in the published text.

In this chapter I examine the literary links *Karobran* establishes between Aboriginal and left wing politics. Was there a strong correlation between the left-wing orientation of *Karobran* and the texts’ historical neglect? Do the political circumstances surrounding the publication of the novel explain Monica Clare’s obscurity today? *Karobran* strategically adopts and adapts the socialist realist form to suit the needs of an Aboriginal testimony. Written at a time when communism was in a state of worldwide flux, *Karobran* adjusts the familiar discourse in a way that responds to the changing realities of the socialist and the Aboriginal rights movements. This adaptation destabilised, but did not abandon the Party line. Even adaptability to a changing environment could not anticipate the personal and political events that affected

*Karobran*. The death of the author resulted in a time lag between the completion of the manuscript and the publication of the text. This five-year period also saw the collapse of organised communism in Australia, and the emergence of the New Left. *Karobran* was launched into a political environment that discounted the strategic adaptation of socialist realism and derided the original form. *Karobran* was identified by the socialist realist tag and received as a voice of the communist past. The shifting status and denigration of the genre have overshadowed the strategic adaptation of socialist realism to suit the political concerns of the racial group.

### **Monica Clare and Her Circle: Politics and Publishing**

Monica Clare was born Mona Matilda McGowan in September 1924. Her mother was a white woman of English heritage, and her father was an Aboriginal man (an unusual inversion of the historical trend of Aboriginal motherhood and white paternity). The impact of the depression in the late 1920s made Ron McGowan's work as a farm labourer and shearer difficult to obtain even in the pastoral niche of the upper Darling River plains of western NSW. Debt, over-grazing and pressure to subdivide for soldier settlers threatened large pastoral properties that had accommodated and employed Aboriginal workers on their own land. Transient workers such as Ron McGowan were savagely hit by unemployment. Heather Goodall suggests that Aboriginal people, "often found that they were last hired and first fired when there was any competition with whites" (Goodall 180). After Monica's mother died in childbirth, her father struggled to raise his children alone. During the depression Aboriginal people were denied the family endowment and the meagre dole available to unemployed white workers. Assistance was available from the Aboriginal Protection Board (APB) of NSW, which offered grossly inadequate rations. However, assistance from the APB was accompanied by official scrutiny of the family, which threatened the removal of the children. By 1915 the APB had legislation to support its practice of removing children from Aboriginal families without their consent. Monica and her brother Dan were taken from their father in 1931, institutionalised in Sydney, and then fostered to a white family in 1932.

As an adolescent, Monica was removed from her foster family and again institutionalised to be trained as a domestic servant. In her adulthood she took on domestic and factory work and later became a campaign organiser for a Sydney Australian Labor Party (ALP) candidate.

After the failure of her first marriage and the loss of custody of her daughter, Monica moved from Sydney to Wollongong where she became involved in the union movement. When she was 36 years old she married Les Clare, a functionary with the South Coast Trades and Labour Council (SCTLC).

Monica Clare was a tireless worker for a number of political organisations. She was a member of the CPA-aligned Union of Australian Women, secretary of the regional International Women's Day committee and served on the May Day committee. She served as secretary of the SCTLC-endorsed South Coast Aborigines Committee and was founding secretary of the Illawarra Tribal Council. Through these posts Monica Clare fought to improve Aboriginal access to land and housing. As a member of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), Monica was instrumental in securing land for Aboriginal people at Wallaga Lake near Bega on the far south coast. This traditionally significant land was under threat of revocation for holiday housing development in the early 1970s. Monica Clare's surviving correspondence suggests that she was vitally interested in education as a tool to fight racism. Writing as secretary of the Illawarra Tribal Council in 1969 (addressed, interestingly, to Jack Horner then secretary of FCAATSI) Monica Clare argues for regular exposure of Aboriginal issues and writers in the daily press, "We feel that very little Aboriginal work gets through the press and we are going to approach the editor of the local daily *Mercury* - which has the largest sales on the south coast - to see if they will allot us space at least once a week" (Clare, *Illawarra*). Friends recall the energy and commitment of Monica, who followed through with proposals such as this, even when they fell on deaf ears, "If Monica spoke, her word was her bond. She never got involved in petty scraps, it was always positive with her because she wanted to get on and get the job done" (Moore, *Interview*). Monica Clare was actively involved in and respected by the Illawarra Koori community. I interviewed a number of people who knew and worked with Monica Clare. They attested to her commitment and energy. Fred Moore, a union comrade and long standing white activist for Aboriginal rights in the Illawarra region recalls that Monica Clare, "was involved in everything that was progressive for the people" (Moore, *Interview*). These community-building activities included cooking for community events, fund raising, sewing for debutante balls and the May Day parade, "to the fore-front of that was Monica [ . . . ] she was a leader [ . . . ] So in her own way, doin' that she built up prestige and equality for the women that she become involved with" (Moore, *Interview*). Another friend, Mavis Miller,

remembers Monica Clare as the type of person that others turned to in times of need. She recalls many occasions when needy Aboriginal women called on Monica for practical and emotional support:

She was just an ordinary housewife, but the Aboriginal people, they gave her a lot of work to do, right down the coast. Maybe a young girl is pregnant and she wants an answer, then she'd come to Monica. Maybe she had a social security problem; she goes to Monica and Monica points her in the right direction. She just went about in her usual way and did what she could (Miller, *Interview*).

Monica Clare was a woman of compassion and action, possessing skills that enabled her to liaise between the Aboriginal and white communities. Monica Clare functioned as, “a mediator, adviser and helper for Aborigines on the Coast” (Miller, *Letter*). Mavis Miller links this capacity both to her upbringing in the white community, and to her ability to “pass” as a white person. According to Miller, “she wasn’t really black, she was only a light brown, and she was quite attractive, but they still used to call to her ‘how are you smoke?’ and that sort of thing” (Miller, *Interview*). Monica Clare had, “a foot in both cultures” (Miller, *Letter*), experiencing the privileges of whiteness and the discrimination bequeathed to blackness. Monica Clare managed a general provisions business with her husband in Warilla, a southern suburb of Wollongong. The couple had adopted two intellectually disabled white children whom they were raising when Monica Clare commenced writing her autobiographical novel.

Monica Clare harnessed the skills and resources of friends, political associates and institutions to further her writing project. Monica attended a writers’ group at the Workers Education Association (WEA) and sought the critical reading of friends including Jack Horner. She finished the manuscript of her novel some time in late 1972. Monica Clare also corresponded with the Society of Women Writers in 1972, a contact possibly arranged by her friend Mavis Miller. Mavis Miller had travelled and established friendship with Hilarie Lindsay, then the president of the Society of Women Writers in Sydney. This link facilitated another opportunity for critical reading and revision of the novel. Mona Brand was approached by Hilarie Lindsay to edit the manuscript and had corrected the first chapter when the future of the project became uncertain.

On National Aborigines Day, 1973, Monica Clare was alarmed to see a pair of crows fly past her home, believing that, “tragedy followed black crows flying in pairs” (Thwaites, *Monica*). Later that morning she collapsed, and was rushed to a Sydney hospital. Monica Clare died that day of a cerebral haemorrhage at the age of 49 years. News then came to her husband that Monica’s foster father had also died on the same day.

Before Monica Clare died she had delivered her manuscript to two readers for assessment. These readers were Mona Brand from the Society of Women Writers, and Jack Horner, an associate of Monica Clare’s from FCAATSI. Mona Brand and Jack Horner, though unaware of their mutual association with the manuscript, had known each other for fifteen years in the Aboriginal rights movement. Both were former members of the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship, who campaigned for the removal of discriminatory legislation and the disbanding of the APB in NSW.

This biography illustrates the energy and determination of Monica Clare; a tireless worker for the advancement of women, Aboriginal people and the working-class and one of the few Aboriginal women involved in union politics. From this picture it would seem that *Karobran* lost potentially its most strident promoter when the author herself died. Monica Clare adopted white organisations and structures, adapting them for specific goals in the Aboriginal rights movement. Monica Clare’s many initiatives, including letters to the editor and regular newspaper columns, were all aimed to expose the suffering of Aboriginal people. The publication of *Karobran* furthered this goal to publicise, politicise and educate.

## Themes

The themes developed in *Karobran* align almost directly with what is known of Monica Clare’s personal history. *Karobran* opens on a remote station in the far northwest of New South Wales during the Great Depression. The main character, seven-year-old Isabelle, and her younger brother Morris are left in the care of their Aboriginal father, Dave, after their white mother dies in childbirth. The impact of the Depression and the harsh conditions of their riverside camp take their toll. When Morris falls seriously ill, Dave is compelled to find alternative accommodation. He reluctantly leaves the children with a former shearing mate, while he seeks employment further afield. The children are cruelly mistreated at the hand of this white man, Tom Wall, who prevents their father from collecting them. Eventually Isabelle

and Morris are reunited with their father, moving to a near-by station. Seeking revenge, Tom Wall reports them to the "Welfare" and the children are forcibly removed from their father.

After some time in government institutions the children are fostered out to a farming family on the Hawkesbury River. This happy life is destroyed when Isabelle is removed to train for domestic service. Isabelle aims to save her meagre wage to enable a reunion with her father and brother. Despite the obstacles of racism and poverty, Isabelle's determination is unflinching. When she meets some friendly unionists, Isabelle's growing awareness of racial and class inequalities is radicalised. She moves among Aboriginal people on the reserves of NSW, challenging their mistreatment and seeking news of her father and brother. As *Karobran* closes, Isabelle's goal is unrealised. The memory of her father comforts Isabelle, and she believes that future generations of Aboriginal people and sympathetic white people will continue the struggle for equality.

*Karobran* addresses many issues of concern to Aboriginal people that had not previously received public recognition. The novel is among the first to expose the forced removal of Aboriginal children from their families, who have become known as "the Stolen Generations". *Karobran* discusses the meanings of Aboriginal land, the impact of white exploitation of Aboriginal people and land, racism and the treatment of Aboriginal girls and women. It also portrays a groundswell of Aboriginal activism at a time when Aboriginal politics was portrayed in the white community largely as the work of, "a handful of unrepresentative militants" (Goodall 350). *Karobran* discusses the personal impact of racism and the momentum this creates for the struggle for justice.

*Karobran* was one of the first Aboriginal publications to expose what has become known as "the Stolen Generations". In the preface Faith Bandler recalls Monica Clare's determination to expose the plight of Aboriginal children, "When Monica Clare brought her manuscript into the office of the FCAATSI in 1972 she said, 'It was like this for most of us. That's how it was, and that's how it is for Aboriginal kids'" (Clare, *Karobran* ix). In NSW the direct power to remove children from their families had been curtailed with the abolition of the APB in 1969. Although Aboriginal children's "homes" and training institutions such as those at Cootamundra and Kinchela closed soon after the abolition of the Board, Bomaderry home remained open until 1980 and covert removals continued. Involuntary or coerced adoption



and the reporting of “neglected” or “uncontrollable” children continued as methods to remove Aboriginal children from their families. Forced removals continued in western NSW despite legislative change in 1969. Research by the Western Aboriginal Legal Service revealed that, “there were children being removed from Wilcannia in the 1970s in much the same way that children were being removed in the 1960s” (Commission 50). Monica Clare was well aware of the continuing fracture of Aboriginal families when she sought to publish *Karobran* in 1972.

*Karobran* sensitively recounts the confusion felt by a child dealing with the cold cruelty of bureaucratic decisions and processes. The withholding of personal and family information, unannounced removal from foster homes and transfers between institutions saw the eventual separation of Isabelle and Morris. The emotional cost of these interventions leads Isabelle to depths of despair, suspicion and loneliness:

Isabelle went back to where she was working a very distraught girl. Although her employer asked her what was the matter, she did not tell her because she felt strongly that everything and everyone were against them. After that, she did not even bother to go anywhere during her time off [ . . . ] she started to make her spare time pass in the garden. It was not long before she had some pretty flowers growing (and one of them she privately called Morris) (Clare, *Karobran* 51).

Isabelle’s continuing need to love and care for her absent brother is now transferred to a flower she calls “Morris”. Here the character gains solace in the land when isolated from family and friends. The poignancy of this scene highlights Isabelle’s sense of embattlement and defeat.

The exploitation of Aboriginal girls and women in the workforce is a theme established in *Karobran*, which was to gain wider publicity and recognition in following decades. Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives coming in the “second-wave” of publishing, such as *Wandering girl* (Ward), *When the Pelican laughed* (Nannup) and critical/historical studies such as Jennifer Sabbioni’s “I Hate Working For White People” and Jackie Huggins “White Apron, Black Hands” (Huggins, *Sister* 78) further document the harsh conditions and low or nonforthcoming pay. *Karobran* documents the working life of Isabelle, who is forced to leave school to train as a domestic servant regardless of her academic ability and excellent results. As a domestic servant she is not free to sever her employment contract, but finds herself

bound by rules. Even happier situations are terminated against her will: she is sacked when her employer cannot afford a wage increase. Moving into factory work during the war, and then hospitality work, Isabelle repeatedly experiences racial hatred and indiscriminate dismissal. In one encounter Isabelle's Greek employer feels powerless to retain her in the face of a boycott threat by angry white people who resent Aboriginal service.

The angry customer insists, "me and my friends would not have the likes of her within miles' [ . . . ] she's Black!" (Clare, *Karobran* 67). The vehemence of these attacks scar and depress Isabelle. This bleak situation is alleviated by Isabelle's political radicalisation.

Isabelle's experience of racism and exploitation is mobilised into direct action. Moving around the Aboriginal reserves of NSW, Isabelle seeks news of her family and agitates for improved conditions. Here *Karobran* portrays the living conditions of Aboriginal communities, contemplates the meanings of Aboriginal land, and portrays Aboriginal activism as community-based. *Karobran* clearly links individual and communal health and well being with access to Aboriginal land. Isabelle learns of the many reasons why conditions in Aboriginal camps are so poor:

The people were living beside a river, and here and there some small sheds were standing little bigger than a dog's kennel made of rusty tin. [ . . . ] When Isabelle asked some of the women why they lived like this, they told her they had to stay here. They could not go any closer to town or they would be sent back again. The men could only get a little work now and then, but sometimes a few of them would go away for a long time. This meant they had to leave the very old men and women to look after the children. The old people had next to no money between them, for buying food with, and they could not hunt anymore because their hunting grounds were taken over by white people. Big machines now ripped the ground up so that the whites could take something out from underneath it" (Clare, *Karobran* 86).

Poor living conditions are linked to the effects of racial segregation and discrimination, and the loss of land. This loss is shown to affect the capacity to sustain the community both bodily and spiritually. One old person confides in Isabelle that they had been told to move on once more, "she would rather die than do that again, she felt too old now, and really wanted to be left alone" (Clare, *Karobran* 89). Isabelle appreciates the comfort that land represents; even as a small child she gained solace from the land. On her foster parents' farm Isabelle found, "a flat rock with a big hole in the middle of it, which still held water from the last rains. As she stood on top of it, she found out that she could see for miles and miles everywhere, almost

to the top of the mountain behind her. She was reluctant to leave" (Clare, *Karobran* 38). This rock and the vista that it reveals become, "so very much part of her self" (Clare, *Karobran* 38). The text emphasises spiritual links to the land and the benefit of such links for the wellbeing of Aboriginal people such as Isabelle. From this position of strength and wholeness, Isabelle gains perspective on white interventions into her social and physical world. These childhood experiences inform the thoughts and actions of the adult Isabelle, who, working from a socialist standpoint, is repelled by the effects of exploitative industry.

*Karobran* aligns Aboriginal values with those of the then fledgling conservation movement. This was well before Aboriginal claims to land were acknowledged or respected by conservationists, who were then lobbying for the declaration of wilderness parks. In the early 1970s only a few conservationists, such as Judith Wright, acknowledged the integral link between the, "wounds we have dealt both to the land and its original owners" (Brady 434). In this vein, *Karobran* educates the readership regarding Aboriginal understandings of the importance of land.

I will argue below that the public reception *Karobran*, rather than focusing upon the text as a voice for Aboriginal experience, critiqued the generic style and speculated about the extent of editorial intervention. The socialist ideals of the editors and the socialist realist method employed in the novel became the focus of critical attention.

### **Invisible Workers Leave a Mark**

The unexpected death of Monica Clare meant that the editing and publication of her manuscript fell into the hands of others. I describe the people who supported Monica Clare during the writing process, and who persevered with the project after her death, as members of her "community of commitment". The influence of these sponsors, including Jack Horner and Mona Brand, was significant for *Karobran*. Members of Monica Clare's community of commitment sought grants to fund the editing of the book, solicited a publisher, and finalised the now complicated copyright arrangements. These collaborators were socialist by political conviction, but the primary platform for their activism was in the field of Aboriginal rights. Jack Horner and Mona Brand's reputations as socialist activists and the unusual

circumstances surrounding the completion of the *Karobran* project dominated public discussion of the book.

Fixation with the label “communist” has eclipsed the contextual complexity of the publication of *Karobran*. Although both Jack Horner and Mona Brand worked from a socialist standpoint, they also brought a wealth of other experiences and perspectives to the task of editing *Karobran*. Brand and Horner nuance their socialist allegiance, particularly when held in contrast with other more extreme leftist associates. Such distinction between degrees of communist affiliation was and is not widely acknowledged by mainstream society. Critical engagement with *Karobran* reflects this homogenisation. Critics have stressed the intervention of, “the socialist ideals of its editors” (Hooton 330) without reflecting upon the contribution played by Jack Horner and Mona Brand’s experience and empathy with the Aboriginal rights movement.

Jack Horner’s commitment to the Aboriginal cause exemplifies the perseverance of many white activists of his generation. Jack Horner worked in Sydney for many years with the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF), a group of Aboriginal and white Australians who campaigned for the abolition of the APB of NSW in the 1950s, and joined FCAATSI to campaign for the “Yes” vote in the 1967 referendum. Jack Horner also served on the Aboriginal Development Committee of The Australian Council of Churches. Through these commitments Jack Horner developed his appreciation of the situation facing many Indigenous Australians.

Jack Horner attributes the development of his social awareness, including knowledge of racial inequalities, to formative experiences in his life. These include the impact of the Great Depression, the unfolding of the Spanish Civil War, and witnessing the effects of discrimination against Black friends in the theatre movement of 1950s Britain. In response to these inequalities, Jack Horner and his wife Jean became involved in a Church-based social justice movement. Jack Horner describes himself as a Christian Socialist:

As for my personal ideals and beliefs as they motivated me, I am a Christian Socialist, and consider that society should be changed by Christian (that is open and non-violent) means, towards becoming a fair society (Horner, *Answering*).

Christian Socialism was a movement initiated within the Anglican Church following the failure of the Chartist Movement in England in 1848. Seeking to foster individual and social change, the group encountered the official disinterest of the Church of England and open hostility from some clergy. The Christian Socialist movement initiated the establishment of practical relief agencies, adult education and co-operative workshops and other initiatives supporting working-class people (Cross 279). Although not long-lived in its original form, the Christian Socialist movement was the foundation for subsequent social justice movements within the Anglican Church.

Deriving his ideals from Christian socialism, Jack Horner differentiates his beliefs and plans for action from the beliefs of so called "hard line" socialists. Jack Horner now argues that, "you won't find the answers to the problems of [NSW] Aboriginal people anywhere else but in NSW, you won't find them in Moscow, that's for sure" (Horner, *Interview*). The tendency of universalising labels such as "socialism" is to homogenise and obscure difference. Critics such as Mudrooroo and Joy Hooton have assessed the work performed by Jack Horner in editing *Karobran* as deriving from the basis of what they assume to be "socialist ideals". Such assumptions do not credit the breadth of Horner's experience in Aboriginal struggles nor the relationship between his own philosophies and those identifiable in the text.

Mona Brand describes herself as a Humanitarian Socialist. For many years she has been a prolific if marginalised playwright who worked in the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) - aligned New Theatre and the Realist Writers groups. Mona Brand and her partner Len Fox were closely associated with and long-standing members of the CPA. Mona Brand is relatively unknown in Australian literary circles, despite the fact that she has over fifty publications. In response to this marginal status, Mona Brand subtitled her 1995 autobiography *Enough Blue Sky*, "The Autobiography of Mona Brand, An Unknown Well-known Playwright". Brand believes that her political commitment, expressed through association with the Realist Writers and Sydney New Theatre group, assured the marginalisation of her work during the cold war period. The alignment of these groups with the CPA meant, for example, that between 1948 and 1960 newspapers such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, would not accept paid classified advertisements for New Theatre productions (Poole 6). Mona Brand reflects upon the outcome of such public hostility to her creative work, "You can be radical at a time when it's not acceptable, and then when it is acceptable you're not successful because you were radical when it wasn't acceptable (Poole 6)". Mona Brand maintained commitments to a

number of organisations through which she found expression for her belief in “Humanitarian Socialism”. Like Jack Horner, Mona Brand was a long term member of the AAF, she taught creative writing at the WEA from 1966 - 72 and was a member of the Society of Women Writers. Mona Brand suggests that she never had a, “dogmatic attachment” (Brand, *Enough* 264) to the CPA. Despite this claim she remained in the party until her membership lapsed in 1970. Mona Brand describes this parting as a process where she, “drifted out, hoping to concentrate more on my writing, and such was the general malaise at the time that nobody asked me why, all of which might prove that I was never what many devout, hardworking Party members would call a good communist” (Brand, *Enough* 264).

Hilarie Lindsay approached Mona Brand to edit the *Karobran* manuscript because of her reputation as an activist for Aboriginal rights and her experience as a writer. Hilarie Lindsay recalls the process:

I applied through the Society of Women Writers to the Aboriginal Arts Board for a grant. We didn't ask for a lot of money. I asked Mona Brand, who was also an activist for all these causes, including Aborigines, if she would be interested in being editor. I said that, 'You'll only get \$500', and she would have done it for nothing (Lindsay, *Interview*).

Mona Brand had edited the first chapter of the *Karobran* manuscript when Monica Clare died. These changes were retained by Jack Horner, who sought Mona Brand's approval of the final draft prior to publication.

### **The Reception of *Karobran***

At a time when the invisibility of editorial work was assumed, Jack Horner and Mona Brand openly describe the editorial procedure in their preface to *Karobran*. This transparency preceded (by some ten years) similar movements in the academy towards reflexive or situated dealings with minority texts. Despite the openness of editorial approach Horner and Brand have been soundly criticised for their intervention.

What little public reception *Karobran* has received critiques the generic style and speculates upon the extent of editorial intervention. Mudrooroo remarked in *Writing from the Fringe*, “the text itself [referring to *Karobran*] has been heavily compromised by Jack Horner and

others. This may account for the socialist realist tone of the finished product" (Narogin 175). Here the political allegiances of those involved in the editing of the text have been extrapolated and imposed upon the text itself.

I had the opportunity to examine the editor's copy of the *Karobran* manuscript. My examination of the editors' marking of the original manuscript suggests on the contrary, that the socialist realist themes were present in the first typescript. The socialist realist method is significantly adapted to suit the primary concern of racial politics. Socialist politics serves as platform for this argument. My reading suggests that the editors did not emphasise or impose a CPA agenda via the socialist realist form, it was present in Monica Clare's original manuscript from the outset.

The preoccupations of the original text centre on issues of Aboriginal rights. *Karobran* foregrounds the experiences of injustice and prejudice suffered by Aboriginal people. Socialism as a political philosophy and socialist realism as a genre are both deployed to make possible a discussion of these concerns. The themes of the text are mediated by two styles, which I would designate as naturalism and socialist realism. The childhood days of the Aboriginal protagonist Isabelle are represented primarily in a naturalistic mode. A significant sentimentality is built around the description of the loving Aboriginal family. This accentuates the pathos of the children's forced removal from their father. In chapter six (of the seven chapters in this brief ninety five page volume) the formerly muted but nevertheless identifiable preoccupations of socialist realism come to the fore. This shift mirrors the development of adult understanding and political consciousness for Isabelle. Critics have identified this shift in style as abrupt and conclude that it is a result of editorial interference. Joy Hooton remarks:

Monica Clare's autobiographical novel, which was edited after her death, shows signs of editorial interference. The last section of the novel, in which Isabelle fortuitously discovers a common fellowship with the white working-class after a chance meeting with strangers in a city milk bar, rings false (Hooton 332).

Having inspected the original manuscript I would suggest that the abrupt shift in style identified in *Karobran* can be attributed to the inexperience of a first-novelist who died before the benefit of editorial-led rewrites (I will discuss the basis of my judgement at

length in my next chapter). The critics' condemnation of the overt socialist realism of chapters six and seven overlooks Monica Clare's strategic adaptation of the method as a vehicle for Aboriginal concerns. In *Karobran* socialist realism is mobilised to address the Aboriginal experience of both race and class discrimination. Socialist realism triggers a negative critical response because of its association with communism and its reputation as an outmoded, stilted and deliberately political narrative style.

### **Socialist Realism and Australian Literature**

Socialist realism promoted the idea that writing could mirror lived reality. This genre originated in the USSR and was widely promoted internationally in socialist circles. Socialist realism characteristically portrayed a radically politicised reflection of lived experience. When the Communist party of Australia officially adopted socialist realism in 1952 it was made clear to members that, "all aspects of art, including creativity itself were to be subordinated to the immediate political requirements. Art was to become a weapon, and there wasn't going to be anything haphazard about this" (Beasley, *Red* 181 - 2). Attaining the correct expression of socialist ideals within the socialist realist form was a paramount concern, and direct accountability to the Party was considered appropriate. Party official J.D.Blake is reputed to have been surprised when Katharine Susannah Prichard refused to submit her work for approval prior to publication (Beasley, *Red* 178). The work of other well known Australian writers, Dorothy Hewett, Judah Waten, and Frank Hardy was also discussed in, "passionate debates [ . . . ] over whether particular stories were sufficiently working-class, or militant or revolutionary" (McLaren 54). Although the definition of revolutionary writing shifted over time, socialist realism was generally agreed to be encapsulated by: militancy, optimism, typicality and didacticism (Beasley, *Socialism*).

The Communist Party's attempts to stress and enforce uniformity of action via the "Party line" did not necessarily equate with docile compliance by members. Although adherence to the line had been maintained by the discipline of expulsions, confession of errors through "self-criticism" and education programs, Australian communists were characterised by, "the spirit of rebellion" (Macintyre 415). Stuart Macintyre argues that the Communist Party of Australia had a history of attracting headstrong and refractory men and women, "the fact that the national executive had to keep intervening, straightening the line, replacing



cadres, attests to the persistence of powerful contrary tendencies” (Macintyre 415). In hindsight, Mona Brand asserts her independence from “the line”, suggesting she was not an earnest CPA adherent:

I was with them most of the way, I wasn't nearly as dedicated and earnest a communist as a lot of my comrades, I don't like it when people feel my plays have been influenced by the Party. They've been influenced by my attitudes to life, which happen often to coincide with the attitudes of the Party (Brand, *Interview*).

Despite criticism to the contrary, my analysis suggests that Monica Clare brought this spirit of rebellion, which holds the freedom to tailor or abandon Party dogma to purpose, to bear upon her autobiographical novel *Karobran*.

## **Refractory Girl**

Monica Clare exploited her CPA affiliation and connections as impetus for action in Aboriginal politics. Monica Clare was primarily aligned with United Front groups. Her links with groups such as the Union of Australian Women (UAW), the local May Day celebration committee and the International Women's Day movement flag the interests of a fellow traveller, as all these groups emerged from the work of communist aligned or leftist activists. Opinions about Monica Clare's Communist Party membership thus vary between her associates. The historical persecution of the CPA and affiliated individuals meant that official membership lists were never kept. Beverley Symons recalls that the only written membership records kept by the Party consisted of lists of initials and pseudonyms (Symons, *Telephone*). This strategy aimed to protect the identity of affiliates by limiting knowledge of their identity to those within the local network or the hierarchy. Irene Arrowsmith, a longstanding member of the UAW and the CPA in the Illawarra region recalls that, “people were wary of lists”. Members of the CPA, “were just ordinary people working in the community”, for whom the prospect of persecution of their communist affiliation was, “terrifying” (Arrowsmith). Friends who recall Monica Clare's sympathy for the communist movement are uncertain if she was a “card carrying member”.

It is clear that Monica Clare was affected by and responsive to changes in the CPA. According to her friend Fred Moore, communist affiliation and progressive politics went hand-in-hand:

**FM** Monica and Les, and his brother, they aligned very close to the left of the labour movement, mainly socialist and communists, and extreme left wing labour.

**JJ** Was she a communist herself?

**FM** Very close to it, Les was, and so was his brother Jack

**JJ** Les was a member?

**FM** Well, he was with it all the time, whether he was a card carrier? But he sat in on a lot of the decision-making policies of it and what you've got to understand, Jenny, that time most all big solid trade unions, and basically most things progressively was involved with the Communist Party (Moore, *Interview*).

Like Fred Moore, Jack Horner could not be certain that Monica Clare had been a member of the CPA. However, he was convinced that Monica Clare's communist sympathies were grounded in her union politics and the CPA's then radical approach to Indigenous issues. Unlike other major political parties, the CPA did not endorse a racist platform such as the White Australia policy. The CPA first enunciated a pro-Aboriginal stance in the mid 1920's, following the Comintern's support of native races as part of an anti-imperialistic policy (Macintyre 126). By 1931 the CPA sought to emancipate Aboriginal people, now recognised as "the slaves of slaves". It was determined that "no struggle of the white worker must be permitted without demands for the aborigines being championed" (Macintyre 265). Jack Horner reflects upon the appeal this stance held for Aboriginal activists who were seeking affiliation:

The Communist Party never had a white Australia policy for this reason a number of Indigenous people were attracted. The Labor Party, the Liberal Party all had a white Australia policy, so it was not an unusual thing for a person of Aboriginal decent to be a member of the Communist Party. Not many have admitted it since it changed circumstances. Whether she [Monica Clare] was a member of the Communist Party I wouldn't know, but her sympathies certainly lie in that direction because of the direction of helping Black people (Horner, *Answering*).

Mavis Miller, a friend and fellow committee worker in the UAW and the International Women's Day committee, recalls Monica Clare as an unashamed Party member.

Like Jack Horner, Mavis Miller links this commitment with the CPA platform to Indigenous affairs, and the possibility of constructive action on Aboriginal rights:

She wanted to expose the treatment of the Aborigines. That would be the major drive for her when she was in the Party, because we all felt badly about the way the Aborigines were treated. We were a good lot of people, an honest lot of people who just wanted a fair go for Aborigines (Miller, *Interview*).

As Mavis Miller and Jack Horner recall, many people interested in the struggle for Aboriginal rights were drawn to the CPA, or found themselves to be fellow travellers because of the policy platform and actions that the CPA endorsed. As a radical and counter cultural political group, Horner argues that the CPA played an influential role in the lives of many Aboriginal activists, as it, “taught [them] how to rebel” (Horner, *Interview*). Many Aboriginal activists had periods of association with the CPA. In the gamut of this thesis, all three foundational Aboriginal women writers, Oodgeroo, Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare, maintained a connection with the CPA at some stage in their lives.

Association with the CPA did not necessarily represent strict compliance to Party dogma. This was particularly the case when allegiance to the CPA was initially prompted by involvement with United Front causes, not persuasion by communist ideology. United Front organisations offered a forum from which progressive people, “could join other men and women in doing something about the evils of [the world]. It was not strange that the Communist Party, whatever its weaknesses and limitations, appealed to many of these people as a body in which they could work” (Fox 60). Many activists in the Aboriginal rights movement harnessed the organisational and discipline structures of the Communist Party and the United Front as a, “body in which they could work”. Involvement in left wing groups presented opportunities to access Aboriginal communities that would have been difficult to negotiate otherwise. For example, as a union functionary, Les Clare, travelled around regional NSW conducting union business. Monica Clare accompanied her husband, linking up with the local Aboriginal people. On these trips Monica Clare inquired about living conditions, rendered what assistance she could and continued her search for her father and brother (Moore, *Interview*). Although it seems that links with her family were never firmly re-established, by the time Monica Clare came to write her novel, she was acutely aware of the plight of many Aboriginal communities in NSW.

Monica Clare clearly exercised a deliberate choice to engage with Aboriginal politics. Monica Clare was a fair and fine-featured woman (Miller, *Interview*). Her white husband Les Clare was in fact darker in appearance than Monica, giving him a perceived advantage in mixing with Aboriginal people. As Fred Moore recalls, “Les was very dark and swarthy, some people thought Les was a Koori, so he had a walk up start, you know” (Moore, *Interview*). Monica’s brother chose not to reconstruct his Aboriginal identity. Fred Moore recalls that, “the brother was nearly white, I think he mixed in with the wider community” (Moore, *Interview*). Jack Horner attributes the choice to “pass” as a white person as a legacy of forced removal:

[Monica Clare] found her brother eventually, met him by chance at Central railway station I think. Eventually he wrote a letter to her, but he’d changed and become a conservative. He’d become a white man in effect, so they never got in touch with one another after that. Family loyalty had been broken up (Horner, *Interview*).

In naming her identity as Aboriginal, Monica Clare chose to adopt and confront the problems facing Aboriginal people rather than passing as a white person. In Australian society whiteness is a non-raced identity that functions as the human norm. As Richard Dyer notes, “other people are raced, we [whites] are just people. There is no more powerful position than being “ ‘just’ human” (Dyer 1 - 2). Passing traditionally refers to the practice of representing oneself as belonging to a group not considered as one’s own (Caughie 27). Pamela L. Caughie argues that because passing is racialised as a practice of non-whites, the term holds pejorative connotations of, “deception, dishonesty, and betrayal” (Caughie 27). Monica Clare’s choice not to pass as white signals a deliberate engagement with Aboriginal identity and politics. She adapted the tools available to her as an Aboriginal identified member of the white community, especially her association with United Front and Union institutions, to this end. As Wendy Holland argues, “living in a white body but identifying as Murri” results in an experience that is, “different to that of a Murri living in a black body” (Holland 97). Holland acknowledges the, “opportunities that [she] has been afforded as a result of [her] whiteness and being mis/taken as white in this racist society” (Holland 97). Monica Clare chose to exploit these opportunities for the benefit of the Aboriginal community.

Straddling socialist and Aboriginal politics was not without its contradictions or costs for Monica Clare. The demise of the CPA was a protracted and painful experience and it brought for many members the loss of faith and friends. Monica Clare experienced such division within the circle of her family and friends. Stan Woodbury, a relation of Monica Clare's foster family and a friend since her childhood days at Mangrove Mountain, was among the members of the CPA who quit the Party to form the Socialist Party of Australia. Monica Clare and her husband Les remained loyal to the CPA. This split, Fred Moore recalls, was marked by, "lots of shouting" (Moore, *Interview*) between the former friends. The bitterness of such divisions brought with it doubts and questions of the validity of particular political alignments. Monica Clare chose to persist with socialism, but with these experiences informing the application of her beliefs. Monica Clare's alliances were to United Front groups that accommodated liberal adaptation of socialist ideals in the climate of disillusionment and organisational collapse. Her novel *Karobran* was written in this political context.

The suspicion, even hysteria, generated by socialist affiliation is illustrated at its extreme by records of surveillance by Australian security apparatus such as ASIO. Organisations with even tenuous connections with the CPA, groups such as the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Movement Against War and Fascism, the International Women's Day movement, the Christian Socialist movement, the Writers league, the New Theatre and the Rationalist Association were noted as fronts for the CPA and scrutinised continuously from their foundation. As Fiona Capp remarks, even if some of these groups were initiated by CPA members, they were:

Not simply mouthpieces for the Party. Many attracted a range of people with diverse political views who brought their own ideas and aims to bear on the direction of the organisation. For Security, however, the impression such a list created was that Communist penetration of the community was widespread and its power base considerable (Capp 31).

Affiliation with the Communist Party was costly to many Australians, regardless of the extent to which they adhered to the Party line. The broad left CPA affiliation of Monica Clare, Mona Brand and Jack Horner tempered the reception of *Karobran* among Australian readers.

The primary editor of *Karobran*, Jack Horner, expressed his sympathy and tolerance for Communism, although he was aware of the cost of affiliation:

When I was the secretary of the AAF, I was happy the Trade Unions and Communists were with us at our conference, for they broadened our appeal to the common people of Sydney and beyond [. . .] But our policy for not leaving Communists out of our discussions led to the situation where the Liberal party could not freely affiliate to the AAF and its work for Aborigines (Horner *Answering*).

Association with the Communist party of Australia both broadened and limited the appeal and effectiveness of an organisation such as the AAF. Similarly, association with the CPA simultaneously enabled and hampered the entry of *Karobran* into the public domain. *Karobran* was hardly noticed upon its public release. When critics such as Mudrooroo and Joy Hooton discussed *Karobran* their stereotyped assumptions about socialist realism and the political affiliations of the editors led to a narrow critical reading.

*Karobran* was written in an environment of political change. The New Left emerged as a coalition of contemporary relevance and energy, with actions in and around the women's movement, the Aboriginal rights movement and the continuing protest against the war in Vietnam. Despite these burgeoning leftist actions the CPA remained locked within popular stereotypes based upon its pro-Soviet past (with only a few advocates such as Carole Ferrier who stridently argued for the contemporary relevance of communist politics in the editorials of *Hecate*). As veteran communist Bernie Taft argues, socialism is inevitably judged by its historical practice in the Soviet Union, not by local variations or reforms, "It did not matter what we said, or how much we criticised the Soviet Union and tried to disassociate ourselves from the model it represented - that was how the world would see it" (Taft 335).

Concentration upon the socialist allegiances of Monica Clare and her editors similarly overshadows other important features of the text. The isolation of socialist realism as the major philosophical frame informing *Karobran* tags the novel with the sensational label, "communist". The notoriety of this label plays down the complexity of the politics surrounding the publication of *Karobran*. It also obscures the text's engagement with the changing future of socialism and its strategic adaptation for Aboriginal politics. *Karobran* was not received as a voice representing Aboriginal women in Australian literature, but as an outmoded reworking of socialist realism.

The political climate of early 1970 - 73 when *Karobran* was written was considerably different to 1978, when this distinctly political novel was finally published. By this time, *Karobran*, with its groundbreaking Aboriginal perspective on Australian history, needed to be distanced from the notoriety of the socialist realist label. Members of Monica Clare's community of commitment, who supervised the completion of the project, were aware of these changes in the political environment. Faith Bandler is therefore careful to identify *Karobran* as a "social novel" in her preface, distancing the text from socialist realism and moving to the primary consideration of Aboriginal rights and experience:

Karobran is a Social novel in many ways. Monica Clare has put into words the thoughts of Aborigines whose experiences are similar to those of the main character, Isabelle. The uncertainty, humiliation and degradation endured by Black Australians in and out of the workforce are clearly portrayed in Isabelle's life. Furthermore, the struggle of the Blacks to keep their families united epitomises the whole sad history of Black and White relationships in Australia (Clare, *Karobran* ix).

Labelling *Karobran* as a "social novel" in Bandler's preface heralds the political basis of the novel while also distancing it from the then generally negative assessment of socialist realism. Importantly, Bandler's elaboration upon the alternative label also signifies the shift from working-class to Aboriginal concerns. The following examination of *Karobran* shows that the techniques of socialist realism are mobilised and adapted throughout the whole novel, not just in the overtly didactic closing chapters. *Karobran* both complies to and adapts the conventions of socialist realism in order to develop Aboriginal political concerns.

### **An Aboriginal Engagement with Socialist Realism**

*Karobran* adopts and adapts a socialist standpoint, developing themes familiar to the genre of socialist realism, but not limited to its aims or prescribed political outcomes. These socialist realist themes are identifiable in the whole novel, although they emerge as overt preoccupations in the final two chapters. The text engages with and redirects Party requirements for the demonstration of militancy, didacticism, optimism and typicality to serve Aboriginal political outcomes. This mobilises and adapts an available discourse to the needs of the Aboriginal community. *Karobran* clearly stands within the socialist realist

tradition, but also deviates significantly from the conventions of the genre by adopting issues of race as a primary concern.

*Karobran* does not call for socialist style militancy as a means to effect political solutions. A class template is identifiable in the text, but rather than focusing exclusively upon class struggle, it shapes the way *Karobran* engages with the struggle for Aboriginal rights. The class template suggests the shape of the problem without providing an “appropriate” socialist realist solution, which would be militant action. Instead, an emotional response to the history of genocide is promoted as the spur towards social change. *Karobran* privileges an emotional response to the hardships of Aboriginal experience, not class experience. This is evident in the published text, even after the interventions of the editors which substantially minimise the sentimentality of the original manuscript (I will consider these interventions at length in the next chapter). The “justified hatred of white people” (Clare, *Karobran* 90) is acknowledged but eschewed in preference for understanding and cooperation. Isabelle hopes that in the future, “Aborigines would take their rightful place and become a part of society, working for a better way of life for all people in this country” (Clare, *Karobran* 90). This is not a militant solution to the racist social order. *Karobran* accommodates social alteration rather than revolutionary overthrow. As such *Karobran* promotes social-revisionist attitudes based on racial problems rather than socialist outcomes based on the class conflict. To this extent *Karobran* does not faithfully replicate the socialist realist call for a “truthful” depiction of society from a socialist viewpoint. Rather, *Karobran* presents a depiction of society from an Aboriginal viewpoint.

The radicalisation of Isabelle is aligned with a socialist realist plot structure, but this initial conversion to trade unionist ideals is quickly translated into activism for the Aboriginal struggle rather than socialist revolution. Activism is premised upon political coalition with white people, encouraging cooperation with members of the wider community as a means to achieve equality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

A primary feature of socialist realist literature is didacticism. As a socialist styled hero, Isabelle lays out a textbook procedure for personal radicalisation. No reader will emerge from chapter six, when Isabelle overhears the unionists talking in the neighbouring cafe



booth, unsure of the unionist platform. Bill's discussion with Tom is a complete education for Isabelle:

'Yes, I'm in a union too, and I've been thinking about that for a while now [ . . . ] Yer know, a while ago a bloke asked me to go to a meeting [ . . . ] He told me, that if the blokes themselves weren't interested enough to attend their meetings, they couldn't blame anyone else if they didn't have good wages and conditions and them sort of things. He also said that the blokes that we vote for every couple of years to represent us - they can't do anything for us on their own. In his own words he said, 'that the union was only as strong as the men that made them' In fact we are the unions. I ain't seen him for a while now, but I've been doing a bit of reading lately, and my union paper helped me' (Clare, *Karobran* 75).

Bill's conversation conforms to the didactic tone of socialist realist writing. The text even presents a recommendation for further reading. Appropriately instructed, the socialist styled hero, "marvelled how much better she understood these matters, from the way they had explained them. It made her realise that there were many conditions that the workers ought to have that they did not have" (Clare, *Karobran* 79). While exposure to unionist ideals serves as the basis for this radicalisation, the primary educational aim of the text then moves to issues of Aboriginality.

Aboriginal people are presented as members of the universal proletariat, but with particular needs stemming from their racialised experience. Isabelle encounters oppressive work conditions, which (after her socialist enlightenment) she identifies as stemming from racial prejudice. The text instructs the reader about the litany of injustices suffered by the Aboriginal community. As the newly radicalised Isabelle works with Aboriginal people, she challenges the economic power of the bosses. In this way the text engages with a class-based political agenda that is inflected and highlighted by racialised experience. In chapter seven, the narrator reflects:

Although the outdoor life was one to her liking, she was shocked by the paltry wages the Aboriginal people were getting. She would often speak out, making no bones about how unreal she thought it was; and soon it would not be long before she would lose her job, usually because the boss would let her know in no uncertain terms that he did not want any know-all 'Abo' disturbing his workers, and Blacks should be grateful that he employed them (Clare, *Karobran* 90).

Isabelle persists in speaking out against such discrimination, managing, “to have her last say before being shown off the property” (Clare, *Karobran* 90). However, the protest and proselytising function of *Karobran* is not overtly optimistic. *Karobran* closes with Isabelle anticipating but not yet witnessing social change for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Hope for the future is invested in the spirit of the new generations of Aboriginal people, not in a revolutionary structural change. The tragedy and despair that has characterised much Aboriginal experience does not lead to the imposition of socialist style optimism. The final scene of *Karobran* suggests personal healing for Isabelle, but does not provide the romance of a rousing climax that would “remould the mentality of people in the spirit of socialism” (Zhdanov 24).

In keeping with socialist realism, *Karobran* does present “typical” worker characters engaged in “typical” circumstances in a “typical” environment. The character Isabelle herself typifies the struggle not of a member of the working-class but as an Aboriginal child forcibly removed from her family. In contradistinction to a socialist realist class-based analysis, *Karobran* does not portray worker-characters in a consistently positive light. Tom Wall, the white man who offers to care for the Aboriginal children, is developed as a typical “battler” figure. However, this naturalistic portrayal is overwhelmingly negative. Hatred, alcohol and violence consume Wall. Although the children escape from his control, there is no projected solution to the suffering of his wife. Here gender, class and racial politics intersect in complex ways. The voice of Mrs Wall clearly situates her as a working-class character. She is unnamed, her individual identity subsumed by her roles as worker and wife. Mrs Wall urges Dave to take the children without seeking police intervention:

Mrs Wall looked pleadingly at Dave, then said: ‘Dave, take the kids, Gord knows they’ve had enough misery here, but please don’t go to the sergeant. Tom’ll half kill me now when ‘e finds them gone, an’ I ain’t got nothin’ inside me to fight him anymore! Besides, Dave, do ya really think they’ll believe your word against Tom’s?’ (Clare, *Karobran* 27).

The working-class status of Tom Wall enables the portrayal of false consciousness. In this example, and throughout the novel, the experience of oppression is not simplistically diagnosed as class-based. The suffering inflicted by Tom Wall on Mrs Wall and the children has gender and racial dimensions. Mrs Wall’s dejected words, “I ain’t got nothin’ inside me to fight him anymore!” do not suggest hope and optimism. Mrs Wall, the victim of experience, is

deflated and pessimistic. Her situation illustrates the oppressed conditions that Isabelle and her fellow workers struggle against.

These examples illustrate the adoption and adaptation of the socialist realist call for militancy, didacticism, optimism and typicality. Many other instances are evident throughout the whole novel, although their presentation gains increasing strength towards the closing chapters. This adaptation of a socialist realism style was identifiable in the original typescript prior to any editorial changes.

## Conclusion

The meagre public attention that *Karobran* has received reflects critical hostility to socialist realism that persisted well beyond the decline of communism in the late 1970s. Critics such as Hooton and Mudrooroo failed to consider the benefit that the adaptation of the socialist realist method gained for the Aboriginal rights movement. *Karobran* achieved much more than this narrow critical template will allow. The malleable handling of the key indicators of socialist realism in *Karobran* situates the text within the socialist realist tradition but with a focus on Aboriginal experience. *Karobran* engages with and redirects socialist realist requirements for the demonstration of militancy, didacticism, optimism and typicality to serve Aboriginal political outcomes. The adaptation of white institutions and practices for Aboriginal ends is a significant nuance that has been overlooked. Monica Clare clearly exercised a deliberate choice to maintain her affiliation with left wing union groups and the CPA. Monica Clare adopted and adapted the tools this affiliation made available to her for Aboriginal political ends. Socialist allegiance availed a community of commitment to Monica Clare. This community supported her during the writing process and persisted with the project following her unexpected death. The editors of *Karobran*, drawn from this community of commitment, had a significant impact upon the reception and life of the text.

This chapter has documented how the socialist template of the novel coupled with the reputations of the editors to influence critical engagement with *Karobran*. Cross-cultural collaborations have had significant influence upon the construction of many Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives. The conventional invisibility of pre-publication processes does not depoliticise these transactions. In the following chapter I conduct a close

examination of the editorial treatment of *Karobran*. By comparing the original manuscript with the published text I consider how the invisible editors shaped this foundational Aboriginal autobiographical narrative.

## Four

### *Invisible Workers Leave a Mark*

#### The Role of the Editor

Editing is a craft associated with the unobtrusive but effective housework of a maid or the invisible mending of a seamstress. These analogies emphasise the supplementary, discreet and invisible nature of a feminised service role. In a review of the recent biography of Beatrice Davis, editorial matriarch of Australia, Patricia Rolfe argues that editors should function as hidden conduits or filters, “What makes an editor and what an editor does can never, even for publishing people, be as interesting as what makes a writer and what a writer does. For readers, an editor hardly exists, and that’s how it should be” (Rolfe 9). The cult of the author perpetuates the invisibility of pre-publication processes. Romantic ideals of autonomous inspiration and creation envisage the author as only drawing upon personal resources. A text, however, is shaped by more than authorial intention. The author is a socially constituted subject, who always already participates (or is inscribed) within in a network of social relations. The personal circumstances and history of an author, their negotiation of discourses of gender, race and class all influence their creative output. Individual and institutional sponsors from whom the author elicits support, the positionality of the editor, publishing house and market trends also shape a text before publication. The conventional invisibility of these influences does not render pre-publication process innocent or irrelevant.

The editor may “hardly exist” for readers of mainstream texts, but as Mary Ann Hughes argues, the same cannot be said of Aboriginal publishing, “While it remains unquestioned that mainstream writers collaborate with editors [...] in the case of an Aboriginal writer, the role of the editor in constructing the work is the issue which most readily springs to the fore” (Hughes 52). Collaboratively produced autobiographical narratives have proved to be a culturally desirable literary genre for Aboriginal women. Capable of straddling orally-based and written forms, autobiographical or “life-story” genres are enhanced by the story-telling skills of an oral tradition.

The role of the collaborating white editor was a prominent issue in the critical response to *Karobran*. The previous chapter suggested that *Karobran's* muted public reception and subsequent fall into obscurity was informed by the socialist reputations of the white editors and the text's mobilisation of the distinctly politicised generic style, socialist realism. Joy Hooton and Mudrooroo, critics who speculated upon the influence of the "socialist convictions" of Mona Brand and Jack Horner, each wrote their critique of *Karobran* in 1990. Their questions are contextualised by the emergence of the second wave of Aboriginal women's autobiographical texts and the currency of debate over power disparities in cross-cultural collaborations.

*Karobran* was published in unusual circumstances. These circumstances prompted the collaborators to discuss the editorial role in a textual address of unprecedented transparency. This transparency provoked critical interest in the pre-publication processes that preceded Hooton's and Mudrooroo's critique. I found only one review published at the time of *Karobran's* public release in 1978. This review also highlights editorial intervention as a key interest in the text. Writing in the newly established *Australian Book Review* in 1978, M.J.E. King Boyes argued that *Karobran*, "is not a great (or even good) novel, but it is an important work and, as such, deserves to be widely read" (King Boyes 13). The importance of *Karobran*, for King Boyes, lay in the record it presented of Aboriginal experience. However, the review concentrates upon the extent of editorial intervention, not upon the perceived flaws in the narrative style. The uneven quality of *Karobran* is surmised to be the result of poor or wholesale editing, "The style of writing is simple although uneven in quality. One wonders whether Monica's original manuscript, 'warts and all', might not have been preferable to some of the subsequent editing admitted in the foreword" (King Boyes 13). In mainstream Australian publishing the nature and extent of editorial work, even the name of the collaborating editor, are usually withheld from the reader. The inclusion of a lengthy explanation of the genesis of *Karobran* breaks the convention of editorial invisibility. In fact *Karobran* contains an inordinate amount of pre-textual material that includes: a publisher's note, foreword, acknowledgments, preface and introduction frame *Karobran*. It is in this space that the editorial approach is outlined. Carol Ferrier remarks that, "Questions of editing are also delicate ones and were alluded to with some sensitivity (for the time) in the foreword to *Karobran*" (Ferrier 28). The pre-textual address in *Karobran* reflects an awareness of the power disparities that inflect cross-cultural collaboration, disparities exacerbated by the

unique circumstances of this text's completion. This sensitivity reflects the political standpoint of the members of Monica Clare's community of commitment.

In a recent interview Jack Horner recalled some of the difficulties encountered in preparing the text for publication. He recalled that attracting a publisher for a politically-committed Aboriginal author proved to be a lengthy endeavour:

It was difficult to find a publisher for a book like this, and then the offer came from the APCOL people. . . they didn't have much publishing experience, and as the years have gone we realised they didn't have much business experience either! (laughter) I think they were interested amateurs not business people (Horner, *Interview*).

*Karobran* was eventually published five years after Monica Clare's death by a marginal publishing house, the Alternative Publishing Co-operative Limited (APCOL) with an initial run of 250 hard and 1000 soft covers. APCOL was established in 1976 to publish titles that mainstream publishers would not consider. Their aims were lofty, in their own words, "assuaging the hunger of a people for its own culture" (Alternative Publishing Cooperative Limited). APCOL saw a niche role as an alternative national publisher, competing against multinational domination of the publishing business. *Karobran* was published through the perseverance of Monica Clare's community of commitment in partnership with this marginal publishing house with a progressive social justice charter. The editorial process, conducted voluntarily or for minimal pay, took many years. During this time *Karobran's* implied socialist reader had all but disappeared and a formerly unimagined, politically aware protean pro-Aboriginal readership had emerged. Jack Horner suggests that the late 1970s, "was a time of growing interest among middle-class class people about Aboriginal injustices" (Horner, *Interview*). While preparing the manuscript for publication the editors became increasingly aware of the role that *Karobran*, "may have [ . . . ] in changing people's attitudes" (Horner, *Interview*) towards Australia's Aboriginal community. It took five years for the text to move from manuscript to publication. I suggest that changes in the Australian cultural landscape during that five-year period following Monica Clare's death and prior to publication may have significantly influenced the editorial preparation of *Karobran*. The addition of pre-textual material frames and legitimates the text and provides a number of familiar contexts for the novel's reception by a white readership.

This chapter examines the legacy of Jack Horner and Mona Brand's editorial intervention and challenges critical assumptions made by influential critics including Mudrooroo. It then develops new critical directions for reassessing foundational Aboriginal women's literature. Mudrooroo conjectured that the determination to explain the presentation of *Karobran* in the introductory pages might also reflect a heavy-handed editorial approach to the manuscript itself. He argues that the narrative style of *Karobran* has possibly been altered to the detriment of the text, "the style of the edited product is bland, and it would be interesting to compare it with the original manuscript" (Narogin 175). In this Mudrooroo concurs with M.J.E King Boyes, who also speculated that the manuscript, "warts and all" (King Boyes 13) might have been preferable to the edited product. In the following section I will make a close comparison of the manuscript, "warts and all", with the published text in order to ascertain the sustainability of these speculations.

### **Editorial Intervention and the Original Manuscript of *Karobran***

Literary relations such as those between an Aboriginal author and white editor are imbued with differential access to power. These unequal relations influenced the publication of *Karobran*, the outcome of which will become manifest in a comparison of the original manuscript with the published version of the text. Control of the editorial preparation of *Karobran* was complicated and further unbalanced when Monica Clare died unexpectedly, leaving her novel in draft form. It was left to members of her community of commitment to decide the manuscript's fate. *Karobran* was initially edited by playwright Mona Brand on behalf of the Society of Women Writers. Under the supervision of Hilarie Lindsay (President of the Sydney branch of the Society of Women Writers) Monica Clare had applied for a \$500 Aboriginal Arts Board grant to assist with revision of her manuscript. Mona Brand was nominated by the Society as a suitable "tutor" (Lindsay, *Notes* 174) for Monica. Following Monica Clare's death the Aboriginal Arts Board grant became void. The ethical problems posed by the posthumous editing of the novel also appeared to be insurmountable. The Society withdrew their offer to coordinate the publication of the book, arguing that they, "felt that the author's participation was necessary if the novel was to have the authentic ring of a part-Aboriginal woman torn between two cultures" (Lindsay, *Notes* 174). Other members of Monica Clare's community of commitment believed that the publication of *Karobran* should take place despite Monica Clare's inability to participate in the editorial



reworking of the manuscript. After the withdrawal of the Society of Women Writers from the project, Jack Horner successfully reapplied to the Australia Council for funding, enabling the project to continue to publication in 1978.

Jack Horner had retained his copy of the original manuscript of *Karobran* that bears the marks of his (and Mona Brand's) editorial work. He allowed me to examine the manuscript in the preparation of this thesis. No doubt Jack Horner's editorial work intended to express the intentions, voice and concerns of the author in the best possible light, while remaining true to the spirit of the original manuscript. Jack Horner exercised cultural sensitivity and political commitment in his desire to place *Karobran* in the public domain. At the same time he also made significant alterations to the original manuscript that may have muted the voice of the author.

Examination of the original manuscript shows that *Karobran* was substantially altered during editorial preparation (see Appendix I: an extract from the original manuscript with editorial corrections). Close comparison of the original manuscript with the published text unveils what might be called the subtext of *Karobran*, a site where Monica Clare's textual enunciation of some form of Aboriginal women's knowledge, experience and cultural priorities are preserved and available for critical examination and recuperation. I undertook a close examination of the editors' markings on the manuscript, counting and categorising all the changes. Alteration was evident in over 6075 instances in this 95 page text. Of the three manuscripts I study in this thesis the *Karobran* manuscript was the most heavily marked by the editor's pencil. A majority of these changes are what might be seen as minor changes to improve the quality of the prose. Other changes impact upon the original intention of a passage. Together they make a text that is quite different to the original manuscript. I analyse that difference and speculate on its possible meaning and effects. Responding to the vast number of changes, I chose to divide some of the categories into sub-categories in order to simplify quantification and accurately reflect the scale of editorial intervention. For example, the deletion of words is quantified in four sub-categories:

1) Deleting words, 2) deleting more than two words, 3) deleting a sentence, 4) deleting a paragraph. Thus the following table represents instances of editorial interventions, not the number of pencil markings on the text. See Table One below:

**Table 1****Instances of Editorial Intervention to *Karobran* Manuscript**

1.	Deleting a paragraph	4
2.	Deleting description of characters bodily interaction	8
3.	Adding or deleting words to increase the political import of a passage	14
4.	Inserting alternative colloquialisms	32
5.	Minimising a characters emotional expression	38
6.	Altering a characters physical action	41
7.	Deleting a sentence	75
8.	Deleting more than two words	117
9.	Spelling Corrections	176
10.	Changing sentence order	216
11.	New paragraph (esp for dialogue)	226
12.	Replacing more than two words (up to a sentence)	297
13.	Retaining chosen colloquialisms	373
14.	Adding words or sentences	456
15.	Standardising colloquialisms	615
16.	Replacing Monica Clare's chosen word(<2)	808
17.	Deleting words	868
18.	Correcting or inserting punctuation	1709
	<b>Total Instances of change</b>	<b>6075</b>

As indicated above, the *Karobran* manuscript was heavily edited, with over 6075 changes. The vast majority of these alterations involved the correction of accidentals, particularly punctuation. Appropriate speech marks, paragraph breaks and other conventions of punctuation were almost entirely absent from the original manuscript. This absence perhaps reflects Monica Clare's lack of experience as a writer and her disrupted education. As Fred Moore recalls, Monica Clare only, "had a bit of education from somewhere" (Moore, *Interview*). She did not allow these issues to hamper her autobiographical project however and was, "always ambitious" for the text. It cannot be known how Monica Clare would have

responded to the editor's version of her heavily-marked manuscript. Given unequal power relations and Jack Horner's status as a friend, one might speculate that Monica Clare may have been grateful for his assistance. As we will see in the next chapter, Margaret Tucker was appreciative of the same style of collaborative editing in the same decade.

In Table 2 below I list the editorial alterations that I consider to have had the most significant impact upon the tone and intentions of the manuscript.

**Table 2**

Significant alterations to *Karobran* manuscript

1.	Changes that increase the political import of a passage	14
2.	Inserting alternative colloquialisms	32
3.	Minimising a character's emotional expression	38
4.	Standardising colloquialisms	615
<b>Total</b>		<b>699</b>

I would judge that 699 instances of intervention had the potential to alter the original intentions of the manuscript. Each individual instance of change may appear of minor consequence in isolation, but the cumulative impact is significant. Editorial decisions that minimise the expression of emotion, add or delete words to increase the political import of a phrase, and delete or alter colloquialisms have the most obvious impact. Editorial alterations in these categories are not discrete or isolated interventions, they have ongoing and expanding ramifications for the narrative style and structure. The following section elaborates and explains some important alterations in each category.

### **Minimising a Character's Emotional Expression**

The socialist realist "class template" identifiable in *Karobran* shapes the way the text engages with the struggle for Aboriginal rights. This template provides some of the parameters for understanding the hardships of Aboriginal experience but does not direct the reader's response to the text. In contrast to a conventional socialist realist call for militant action,

*Karobran* privileges an emotional response to contact history. The sentimental description of Aboriginal family fracture in particular is privileged as the spur towards social change.

The *Karobran* narrative utilises the distinct styles of naturalism and socialist realism, both tuned to the Aboriginal cause. Five of the chapters are presented in a mainly naturalistic prose style. Isabelle's childhood days feature sentimental prose that accentuates the pathos of the children's forced removal from their father. Chapter six of the seven chapters marks a shift to socialist realism. This shift mirrors the plot structure and the development of Isabelle's adult understanding and radical consciousness. Jack Horner substantially changes the prose style in the naturalistic section. The intent seems to be to minimise overt sentimentality. The emphasis upon the emotional effects of forced removal in the original manuscript is substantially reduced. Jack Horner explains in his correspondence with me why he chose to remove some of these sentimental passages:

Monica wanted to openly show family affection of the father and his two children after they lost their mother, by describing the affection in action [ . . . ]. You did not need *every* action of affection close up, to feel their emotions as you were reading (Horner, *Letter to Jennifer Jones*).

However, the removal of some affectionate moments significantly alters the flow and impact of the text.

One of the outcomes of the minimisation of sentimentality is the reduction of a significant symbolic dimension of the novel. Minimising actions of affection in the scene where Isabelle and Morris are separated from their father has ongoing consequences for the novel's development of symbolism and a sense of Aboriginal spirituality. Changes to the original separation scene impact upon the rendering of the significance of child separation throughout the text. For example, an initial editorial deletion in chapter three requires further deletions in chapters four and seven. An editorial decision aimed at reducing melodramatic descriptive prose early in the text requires further deletions that minimise the description of the lifelong impact of Aboriginal child separation and the strength of ties to land and kin.

The separation scene takes place in chapter three. The children are about to be removed from their father by the "Welfare" authorities. Dave has said goodbye, and has asked Isabelle to look after her young brother. The original manuscript reads, "Isabelle looked back into her

Dad's face and saw him blink his eyes to stop a tear from falling down his black cheek, and she knew that she would always remember him as he was at this moment" (Clare, *Manuscript*). This image of the father's tear stained face is repeated at two other pivotal moments in the manuscript. However, the editor chose to remove the reference to his tears at this point. This decision cuts a powerful motif that the original manuscript returns to throughout the novel. Following editorial intervention, the published text reads, "Isabelle looked into her Dad's face. She knew that she would always remember him as he was at this moment" (Clare, *Karobran* 33). The edited text does not allow the reader to access the emotional expression of the father's face. Following this editorial decision to cut the image of Dave's tear stained black face, the repeated image in chapters four and seven is also deleted. These references to Isabelle's memory of her father assert the ongoing effects of her removal from his care. They also suggest, at important points in the development of the plot, that Dave's presence in "spirit" continues to aid and guide Isabelle.

In chapter four Isabelle has settled happily with her foster family. The chapter documents the children's sense of belonging to the Manbury family and the land which they farm. In the context of the happiness of family picnics and community gatherings after church, Isabelle re-envisages her father's grief. In bed at night, she wonders why Dave has not visited them. The original manuscript reads:

She was bubbling over with things to tell him. Then her thoughts went back to the day she had last seen him at the sargents [sic] place, and as she closed her eyes she could still see that tear that he stopped under his eyelid of his black face (Clare, *Manuscript*).

Following editorial intervention, the published text reads:

She was bubbling over with things to tell him. Her thoughts went back to the day when she had last seen him at the police station, and as she closed her eyes she could still see his serious sad black eyes (Clare, *Karobran* 40).

There is a considerable difference in the impact of these two versions. In the original text, the memory of Dave's tears qualifies or contextualises the pleasures of Isabelle's farm life. While this is substantially retained in the published version, the original impact of masculine tears is mellowed to the recollection of "serious sad black eyes". The original emphasis upon the blackness of her father's skin is also deflected to a sentimentalised emphasis on his black eyes.

In the original manuscript of *Karobran*, the image of Dave's tear stained Black face takes on iconic meanings in the final chapter. This is one of the chapters that bears the marks of socialist realism. Isabelle becomes the "typical" and spokesperson for racial oppression. As Isabelle moves among Aboriginal people, attempting to alleviate their suffering and to gain news of her relations, she considers her childhood experiences from the perspective of a politically aware adult.

Faced with the pain and despair that removal and segregation policies wage on Aboriginal people, Isabelle struggles to reconcile these devastating effects with the individual white people, "who had meant well"(Clare, *Karobran* 88). As the novel closes, Isabelle is torn by the conflicting desires to condemn and defend white people. In the original manuscript, this point of personal anguish is transformed by a vision of her father. The original manuscript reads:

Isabelle put both hands to her eyes to wipe away the tears, and as she closed them for a second, she saw again the tear stained face of her Dad as she had last seen him so many years before, and she realised that the years were passing by so quickly. . . He and his people would live on in young Aborigines like the young man who had spoken today, and Isabelle needed no reassurance from her Mum's people like Aunt, Uncle and Bill, whom she knew would teach their young that black was not a dirty word, and that together with white it would mean strength for equality and human rights (Clare, *Manuscript*).

Following editorial intervention, the published text reads:

Would she ever see her Dad again? Isabelle stared ahead in despair, catching her breath. Her Dad and his people would live on in Aborigines like the young man who had spoken that day. Isabelle needed no reassurance from her Mum's people like Aunt, Uncle and Bill, whom she knew would teach their young that black was not a dirty word, and that together with white it would mean strength for equality and human rights (Clare, *Karobran* 94).

Isabelle's vision of, "the tear stained face of her Dad" is revelatory; it moves her from despair to hope. In the original manuscript this repetition of the tear stained face icon leads directly to the novel's denouement, "For the first time ever, she sensed the comforting closeness of her Dad and her Mum together as it flowed deeply inside her body and eased the ache she had carried in her own heart for so many years" (Clare, *Karobran* 95). *Karobran* closes with certainty that reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous communities is possible. This certainty is symbolised by Isabelle's sense of, "the comforting closeness of her Dad and her Mum together". The unity between Black father and white mother presages reconciliation

between all Australians. In the original manuscript the vision of the tear stained face served as the catalyst to Isabelle's newfound peace and hope. The replacement of this vision with the phrase, "Would she ever see her Dad again? Isabelle stared ahead in despair, catching her breath", leaves the section impoverished and disjointed. In the published version of *Karobran* the movement from despair to hope relies upon a caught breath rather than a revelatory vision. The text's movement towards closure is significantly hampered by the removal of the vision scene. The recurrence of the father's tear stained face at key moments in the flow of the manuscript evokes the ongoing impact of removal policies through out the life course of the stolen child and their community. The vision scenes are also linked to the discussion of other important issues such as ties to the land and kin.

The emended text of *Karobran* harnesses reason rather than emotion to carry the force of the novels' politics. The minimisation of emotion in the original text aligns with this editorial strategy. However, the removal of some sentimental moments redirects the intentions of the original text. *Karobran* documents a sequence of separations and loss that appear both bleak and relentless. In the original text the separations suffered by Isabelle are frequent, fraught and anguished events. Editorial alterations present these events in a more circumspect fashion. When Isabelle has settled into her foster family and is beginning to find hope and happiness the "Welfare" uproot her again. Arriving again at the government institution, Isabelle is informed that she is also to be separated from her young brother. The original manuscript documents Isabelle's response to this news, "Tears immediately appeared into Isabelle's eyes and she clung on tighter to Aunts' hand, but at the same time she obediently put out her other hand and drew Morris close to her and kissed him hard on the cheek" (Clare, *Manuscript*). The original manuscript relies on the portrayal of Isabelle's body language to project her response to the news. The edited version curtails the physicality of her reaction and summarises the event, "Isabelle was naturally disappointed, but at the same time she obediently put out a hand to Morris and kissed him hard on the cheek" (Clare, *Karobran* 44). The force of Isabelle's parting kiss is the only remnant of her emotional response. This change projects a reasonable and dutiful response to a character that demonstrates mounting frustration and alienation in the following chapters. Alterations such as this are out of synchronicity with the text's overall character development and result in the sublimation of grief experienced by characters in the novel.

## The Editorial Approach to Colloquialisms

In the publishing trade the role of an editor has been likened to invisible mending: quiet, efficient and seamless. Stitching up *Karobran's* original manuscript involved replacing a total of 1105 words and phrases with alternatives preferred by the editor. Many of the replacements aid the flow of the narrative or remove a phrase deemed clumsy or offensively colloquial. Even small changes to the original manuscript have a cumulative effect, so a replacement here and there soon impacts upon the tone of the work. *Karobran* appears to have been edited to be more palatable to middle-class readers. This approach was particularly focused upon the manuscript's depiction of raw Australian colloquial expression. Alterations to the original manuscript included the description of the hungry children who, "scoffed into the food" (Clare, *Manuscript*). In the published text they, "tucked into the food" (Clare, *Karobran* 28). While "tucking in" to a good meal still resonates as an Australian expression, it does not hold the rough or unrefined connotations available in the phrase, "scoffed into". Similarly, where Isabelle's young brother Morris is originally described as, "that little fulla" (Clare, *Manuscript*), the published version describes him as, "that little chap" (Clare, *Karobran* 3). The edited version also avoids the risk of possible misunderstanding of the colloquial language. Thus when, in the original manuscript, Isabelle and Morris, "almost choked him [their father] with joy" (Clare, *Manuscript*) the expression is replaced. In the published text the sentence reads, "Isabelle and her Brother hugged him with joy" (Clare, *Karobran* 4). Choking someone, even with joy, holds a violence of emotion that the editor eschews. This concern for possible misinterpretation of the protagonist's actions is also demonstrated by changes to the authoritarian but affectionate actions of the drover's cook.

When Isabelle and Morris have smeared bread and golden syrup over their too-eager faces, Ma Casey comments:

"Ain't nothin Dave" said Mrs Casey trying not to smile. "Things is bad a nough fer em now, they only kids once", But then as she marched them towards the river by the ear she turned her head over her shoulder and said to Dave "But they'll eat damper and drippin again ter-morra" (Clare, *Manuscript*).

The editors delete the description of Ma Casey marching the children to the river "by the ear". The published text reads, "'Ain't nothin', Dave', said Mrs Casey, trying not to smile. 'Things are bad enough fer them now, they are only kids once'. While she marched them off



to the river to clean them up, she called to Dave, 'But tomorrow, they'll eat damper and dripping again'" (Clare, *Karobran* 12). This alteration removes any hint of rough discipline that could be misconstrued, but it also affects the performative impact of the exchange. The original text placed more emphasis upon the conflict between Ma's obvious amusement and her role as stern caregiver and disciplinarian than is available in the published text. These changes are minor alterations in isolation, but the combined affect upon the tone of the narrative is significant.

Many other changes to the manuscript of *Karobran* considerably strengthen the prose. The correction of accidentals, which number 2327 of the total, makes the text much easier to read. A major intervention that also aids readability is the standardisation of colloquial expression, in 647 instances. Of these 615 colloquialisms are translated into standard Australian English and 32 alternative colloquialisms are given. Some 373 original colloquialisms are retained. It appears that the primary function of these alterations was to make the dialogue much easier for a white audience to read. The original manuscript presents the dialogue as it sounds, reflecting the primacy of oral rather than text-based cultural traditions. The original text sounds right when read aloud, but it does not look "correct" on the page. The flow of the original vernacular would have appeared stilted and unfamiliar to the reader's eye/ear.

The changes made to the colloquial speech represented in the manuscript annul a regional working-class accent of western New South Wales. Monica Clare achieved a rendering of a region and class specific accent in the original manuscript of *Karobran*. This is particularly evident in the replacement of a sounds with o sounds. For example, in chapter two, Morris hears a bird call (which is actually his father attempting covertly to gain his interest). He says to Isabelle, " 'Its been a long time since I 'eard one a em. Its down in the paddeck'[sic], said Morris pointing his finger. 'Lets go an fine im' " (Clare, *Manuscript*). Following editorial intervention, the "ocker" accent disappears, becoming more rounded, " 'its been a long time since I 'eard one o' them.' said Morris, pointing. 'Lets go an find him' " (Clare, *Karobran* 26). This is a very different rendering of English from the vernacular of the manuscript.

A linguist I consulted regarding these alterations suggested that a reader expecting to negotiate standard, written English would not "know how to read" the unpunctuated a sound

in the extract, “I 'eard one a em”. She suggested that a “standard editorial approach” could either:

- 1) Punctuate the *a* , becoming “I 'eard one a' them”, or
- 2) Remove the problematic *a*, replacing it with something that the reader would easily identify. The editor of *Karobran* chose the second option, replacing the unpunctuated *a* with a punctuated *a*.

*Karobran* does not represent a specifically Aboriginal accent. The accent that can be detected in Monica Clare's original manuscript seems to be a blend of class, region and culturally-based influences. The speech of working-class white people in *Karobran* is presented as the same as the speech of the Aboriginal characters. In contrast, the dialogue and textual inflection of the doctor in the hospital, the welfare officer, police officer and Isabelle's employers are different from the working-class characters. The novel positions these people as members of the middle and upper classes and they are represented as using grammatically correct, standardised English in dialogue.

Thinning down the regional, class-based accent in the dialogue of *Karobran*, was achieved by replacing some colloquialisms and retaining others. These alterations create unevenness or inconsistency in the text. For example, the word “fulla” was changed to either “fella” or “feller”. The colloquialism “youse” becomes “yers”; “Gonna” becomes either “going ta” or “goner”. Many lively colloquial expressions that capture the earthy orality of the characters are substituted. For example, colloquialisms such as “mucked up” were altered to “played up”, “awful lonely” to “very lonely”, and “every bit as” to “quite as”. These alterations accumulate to change and some might say, gentrify the narrative.

I asked Jack Horner why the dialogue in the manuscript was so heavily edited. He recalls continually referring back to Monica Clare's original phrasing to safeguard fidelity:

The purpose was to find the way that Monica made sense to the reader. She wanted to write dialogue that imitated the natural speaking patterns of rural Australian speech. We admired her for the idea, but it was too much; we had to lighten it a bit, for it made the talk just harder to read (Horner, *Answering*).

The dialogue in the published text is much easier to read. By standardising nearly twice as many colloquialisms as were retained, the editor does achieve thinner rendering of the working-class accent. However, this paring down for readability is at the cost of the orality of regional colloquial expression.

The regional and class-based accent may have been adapted to suit the needs of readers. As Daniel Kunene suggests, the mediator of a “foreign” text (editor or translator) confronts a task further complicated by the necessity to act as a bi-cultural go-between. Making the product of one culture accessible to another cultural group is particularly difficult when the editor, “is encumbered by the extra duty to instruct [an] audience that is to varying degrees hostile and reluctant” (Kunene 86). Here pre-publication interventions demand the ethical or political task of, “trying to restore a human dignity seriously outraged on both the personal and the national levels” (Kunene 86). Honing the rough edges of the dialogue in *Karobran* may have reflected the desire to check reader hostility, protecting the book from the criticism that the written English was “incorrect”. The response of the audience was necessarily a consideration in handling the raw colloquial dialogue. At this time Australian audiences had not encountered many other Aboriginal publications. Diluting the dialogue suggests an effort to protect the book from a, “hostile or reluctant” audience. As Adam Shoemaker reflects, the “failure” to comply with expected literary norms can expose an Aboriginal writer to undue or harsh criticism (Shoemaker, *Black* 185). The legitimacy of such tailoring of an Aboriginal woman’s text to suit the capacity of the projected readership, is now a contested issue.

The accessibility to the general reader of the Aboriginal speaking voice, be it based upon culture, region, class, or a mixture of all factors, remains as relevant a concern today as it did when *Karobran* was edited in the 1970s. Sue Thomas argues that most Australians display more competence in the language and culture of African-Americans, “than in the culture and language of Aborigines and Islanders” (Thomas 43). When Australian readers are first exposed to Aboriginal and Islander literature they genuinely, “cannot ‘hear’ the speaking voice in what they read” (Thomas 43). The inability to “hear” a speaking voice rendered into print reflects lack of exposure to that voice. If Aboriginal writing continues to be tailored to cater for the ignorant reader, the problem is perpetuated. Exposing readers to Aboriginal styles of language is a priority of Aboriginal publishing. Sandra Phillips argues that, “publishers should

give readers the opportunity to experience difference and take those risks, step out with writers who are doing different things with language, and write it as a strength rather than as a deficit" (Phillips). The editor of *Karobran* acted as a bi-cultural go between in dealing with the raw colloquial dialogue of the original manuscript. The desire to preserve the orality of the dialogue was balanced with the speculated response of an ill-informed and historically hostile readership. The resulting text is a compromise between these demands.

### Accentuating the Political

Some alterations to the original manuscript of *Karobran* heighten the political impact of the novel. Strategic passages are strengthened by substitutions that act as intensifiers. These changes resonate throughout the text, allowing the reader to better visualise particular scenes and comprehend the import of an event. For example, the simple substitution of the word "yelled" with "bawled" conveys the intensity of an interaction between Tom Wall and the "Welfare" officer, as he insists Isabelle and Morris be removed from their Aboriginal father. The original manuscript reads, " 'Yer want me ter take em. I found em didn't I' yelled Tom" (Clare, *Manuscript*). The editors' alterations to this passage aid readability and add an element of performance to the words of Tom Wall. The edited text reads, "'You want me to take 'em. I found 'em didn't I?' bawled Tom" (Clare, *Karobran* 28). Changes such as this assist the reader's engagement with the text by strengthening the exchange between characters. Editorial interventions that strengthen the prose are the assumed task of a good editor, who filters the manuscript before publication.

In another example, Tom Wall, who is positioned as an archetypal racist, expresses his hatred towards Aboriginal people. Tom admits to his wife that he has been threatening Dave with his whip and dogs to prevent him from collecting the children. Editorial alterations to this section heighten the impact of the racist rhetoric, sharpening the contrast between the evil white man and the innocent, suffering father and his children. The original manuscript reads, "Thems aint any different from that un I caught down in me paddeck, what said 'e was lookin fer grub, I bet 'e was thievin', grub me eye, es bloods still on ere". Tom said as he ran his fingers along his whip" (Clare, *Manuscript*). Following editorial intervention, the published text reads, "'They ain't any different from that buck I caught down in me paddock, what said he was lookin' fer grub. I bet he was thievin', grub me eye! His blood's still on 'ere', and Tom ran

his fingers along the whip" (Clare, *Karobran* 25). Although the original manuscript clearly establishes Tom Wall as a cruel man feeding upon irrational hatred, the editor chooses to heighten the effect of the passage. The inclusion of the word "buck", an American-inflected, powerful and sexually threatening racist term for Southern Black men intensifies Tom's boast. As in the United States, the dehumanising effect of animal references has been an ideological tool used to distance Australian settler communities from the subordinated Other (unlike the USA, in Australia this reference does not hold overt sexual connotations).

Many changes to the original manuscript heighten the political impact of a passage to an extent that goes beyond the scope of the original phrase. In chapter seven, Isabelle visits her foster parents, "Aunt and Uncle", in their new home on the North Coast of N.S.W. She meets people from the local Aboriginal community who describe the assistance Aunt and Uncle have given them. The original manuscript reads, "Isabelle heard how some of the white people victimised those who were kind to the Aboriginals. People like Aunt and Uncle who invited them into their homes" (Clare, *Manuscript*). Changes to this passage reorient the motives of these white associates from providers of charity to political activists. The published text reinterprets the original passage as, "Isabelle heard how some of the white people had victimised those who treated Aboriginal people as equals. People like Aunt and Uncle, who had invited the blacks into their homes"(Clare, *Karobran* 82). The motives of a person who is "kind" to Aboriginal people is considerably different from those who "treated Aboriginal people as equals". The editor also adds the word "blacks" to heighten the impact of the actions of these white people who defy the social conventions such as race segregation. The possibility of cross-cultural "togetherness" is a dominant theme in the novel *Karobran*. This alteration clearly supports, but perhaps overstates, the political aims of the text.

Alterations to the manuscript of *Karobran* have a mixed effect upon the novel. The adaptation and deletion of some passages in the novel may seem detrimental at first glance. My examination of some of the 6075 changes to the manuscript of *Karobran* reveals that many editorial interventions are double-edged. Minimising the sentimentality of the novel unfortunately results in the removal of a significant symbolic motif. Thinning out the colloquial dialogue undoubtedly diminishes the orality of the novel. However, only an extremely dedicated reader would labour through the speech as presented in the original manuscript. The political impact of the text is strengthened by strategic substitutions, but at

the risk of making an overstatement and being dismissed as didacticism. This examination of the editorial interventions has also stressed the political context of *Karobran's* launch into the public domain. The aim is not to apologise for the editorial alterations, but to present a balanced account.

### **Contextualising Editorial Scandal**

Editorial decisions such as those documented above provide compelling evidence to substantiate the claims of *Karobran's* early critics. However, the nature of some of the editorial changes correlates with the level of understanding and sympathy in the general community at the time of publication. *Karobran* was possibly tailored to minimise a shocked and defensive response. Policies that resulted in the removal of Indigenous children from their families, now known as “the Stolen Generations”, were not widely known or acknowledged by the Australian public until the “Bringing Them Home Report” was tabled in 1997. Generations of white Australians were content to be ignorant of Aboriginal affairs.

Hilarie Lindsay, an early actor in the publication of *Karobran*, explained her own journey to understanding race relations and the position of Aboriginal people in Australia. Lindsay suggests that the whirl of the Great Depression, war and post war life explain why many Australians left Aboriginal welfare to government agencies. People like Hilarie Lindsay were absorbed by their own concerns:

So it wasn't that we didn't want to know about Aborigines, we were too busy surviving . . . immediately the depression ended, the war started . . . [after the war] we were told to go back and have kids. A lot of women were having nervous breakdowns. I was bored witless, I thought, “if this is all there is to life!”. . . so you can understand there was no motivation, no energy. . . Even then I wasn't even aware that there was anything happening. I mean, we accepted that what had gone on, that assimilation, was the best thing. That was what we believed and what we were told (Lindsay, *Interview*).

Lindsay's involvement in women's issues in the 1970s fostered her growing interest in the lives of Other women, such as the migrant women employed by her family's manufacturing business, and the lives of the hitherto invisible Aboriginal women. The editor of *Karobran* sought to engage and educate such a readership, invoking thought and action, not the paralysis of guilt. Minimising or eliminating emotionality softens the blow of these revelations

to an ill-informed readership. As Oodgeroo noted, the conventions of polite conversation in white Australia prohibit the discussion of unpleasant topics, “as though even atrocities were never mentioned by nice people” (Collins, *Oodgeroo of 13*). From experience, Oodgeroo felt that, “Australian people are frightened by those who care deeply about something. They get embarrassed in public if people bring up uncomfortable subjects. They ridicule the earnest and those with strong convictions” (Collins, *Oodgeroo of 13*). The impact of family rupture was represented quite plainly in the original manuscript of *Karobran*. The highly emotive description of such raw emotion could have been counterproductive to the political aims of a novel such as *Karobran* in 1978. An emotional outpouring risked alienating the ill-informed Australian public, whose guilt and fear had historically been translated into prejudice and hate.

The *Karobran* manuscript was an unpolished draft when Monica Clare died. It was the first work of an inexperienced writer with little formal education but considerable personal and political drive. As Mona Brand recalls in a recent discussion with me, “I don’t think she had good health, and it was probably a struggle for her to write” (Brand, *Interview*). Monica’s ambitions for the book aligned with her work as an Aboriginal activist. In the recent interviews I conducted, none of Monica Clare’s contemporaries felt that she aspired to a literary career, but hoped that the publication of her novel might, “make a difference” politically (Lindsay, *Interview*). A colleague of Monica Clare’s from the Union of Australian Women, Mavis Miller, insists that Monica’s aim was to expose the child removal policies and the living conditions of her people, “To let off steam about how her life had been, and to let people know how the Aborigines were treated. Her main object was to expose the thing, more than anything, more than the selfish point of view; it was to expose that situation” (Miller, *Interview*). Her friends agree that Monica Clare’s primary aim as a writer was to establish and publicise a political agenda through literature.

Monica Clare’s surviving correspondence supports this assertion. In her effort to make a difference for Aboriginal people, Monica Clare wrote many letters. She wrote to members of parliament, councils and to newspapers. According to friends Monica Clare wrote thousands of letters, as a private citizen and in her role as secretary to the Illawarra Tribal Council. Monica Clare wrote to anyone with the power or influence to help her, “get on and get the job done” (Moore, *Interview*). She was particularly active in agitating for the rights of Aboriginal

people living on the reserve at Wallaga Lake on the far South Coast of N.S.W. One “letter to the Editor” written by Monica Clare was published in two local Illawarra papers, *The Express* and *The Illawarra Daily Mercury*. In a letter to fellow activist and friend Faith Bandler, Monica Clare comments upon the editorial treatment of her publication. Here she expresses pleasure that the letters gained publication, accepting editorial decisions as the necessary price of public exposure for Aboriginal concerns. Monica Clare enclosed the clipping from one of these papers in her letter to Faith Bandler and discusses the editorial treatment they received. She writes:

As promised I am enclosing a letter to the editor that I wrote to *The Express* (enclosed) our weekly free paper and this one is printed word for word. The other one was printed about a week ago in the *Illawarra Daily Mercury* and the only alteration they made was that where I used the words black and white they used Aboriginal and Australian - plus they left out the bit re them now having a cow etc “I forwarded the other cutting to Wallaga Lake” (Clare, *Letter to Faith*) (sic).

This letter, housed in the FCAATSI archives reveals how Monica Clare accommodated short-term compromise in the interest of long-term political gain. Monica Clare draws attention to the achievement of publication “word for word” in one paper, and to the substitution of her more potent descriptors “black and white” with the exclusionist pairing “Aboriginal and Australian” in the other paper. Although Monica Clare draws Faith Bandler’s attention to the impact of editorial licence, her primary focus is upon local community responses to these publications.

Through her correspondence, Monica Clare wanted to stimulate community awareness and discussion of Aboriginal rights. She writes, “Since the one in the *Mercury* a couple of teachers from our local school have asked permission (through Coralie) [her daughter] to call and talk with me regards the land question and the letter” (Clare, *Letter to Faith*). Discussion of Monica Clare’s local work as an educator among the white community, particularly within the school system, gains far more emphasis in her letter to friends than does disputing editorial changes. Monica Clare also discusses the opportunity to speak with teacher/librarians regarding Daisy Bates, countering popular lore with Aboriginal oral knowledge. Monica Clare’s letter to Faith Bandler has an urgent tone; it is concerned with action and results.

Extrapolating from this example, it can be surmised that Monica Clare herself would have been pleased to have her novel reach the public domain, regardless of the nature of the editorial



interventions. She had expressed her personal trust in Jack Horner by enlisting him as a reader of early drafts of the manuscript. As Mona Brand said in a recent interview, "I'm sure she would have been very happy that it [*Karobran*] was published" (Brand, *Interview*).

Gaining publication for *Karobran* was a considerable achievement for Monica Clare and the members of her community of commitment who finalised the project following her death. Jack Horner was an amateur editor who edited the manuscript with the assistance of only \$350 from the then fledgling Aboriginal Arts Board. He negotiated the problems of copyright and an inexperienced small-scale publisher to get the text to press. Jack Horner's editing decisions might be judged as a mixed blessing. Changes to the dialogue aid readability at the expense of lively colloquial expression or an aural quality. Minimising emotional expression depletes the development of symbolic motifs in the text. These strategic alterations, however, emphasise the political message. Whatever judgements might be made now, in hindsight, it remains that the editorial interventions succeeded on their own terms. *Karobran* reached the public domain, and is still accessible for further interpretation.

### **Publish and Perish**

The publication of *Karobran* (1978) by Monica Clare represented almost a decade of dedicated perseverance, initially by the Aboriginal author, and then by Jack Horner who took up the publishing project following her death. Despite the efforts of the team who prepared the text for publication, *Karobran* fell into almost immediate obscurity. Lack of critical attention, and negative appraisal by a few influential critics, contributed to *Karobran's* loss of status. As Barbara Holloway notes, "Negative reviews have their contrasting impact, not least on what writing is set (or passed over) in the growing number of Aboriginal Studies courses" (Holloway 20). In the first ten years since its publication (1978 - 1988) *Karobran* was listed as a set text in only two university courses. Kay Schaffer taught one of these courses, "Autobiography and Creative writing", in Women's Studies at the then South Australian College of Advanced Education. Carole Ferrier taught the other course for a University of Queensland Honours program on Australian women writers. These feminist academics both forged their careers teaching against the grain. Sales figures suggest that *Karobran* has not been placed on university course lists since *Hecate's* 1988 survey "Teaching Courses in Black Women's Fiction". Original sales figures for *Karobran* were not transferred to Hale and

Iremonger, who took over the APCOL list when the publishing cooperative folded in 1990. Hale and Iremonger remaindered 500 copies from the 1987 reprint of *Karobran*, which was suggested by Jack Horner to have numbered 1500 copies. In the ten or so years that Hale and Iremonger have controlled the APCOL list, only 50 copies of *Karobran* have been sold (Morrison). These figures suggest that the *Karobran's* readership has declined significantly from 1990 - 2001, when Aboriginal studies, in general, and Aboriginal literature, in particular, experienced a boom in the academy.

In the first chapter of this thesis I proposed that the explicitly political function of *Karobran* contributed to its loss of public recognition. I identified Monica Clare's strategic adaptation of the socialist realist genre for the Aboriginal struggle as an important feature of the text that has been previously overlooked. Monica Clare's use of socialist realism illustrates how Aboriginal women writers bring differing priorities and agendas to bear upon their texts from non-Aboriginal writers. These distinct Aboriginal perspectives, "disrupt European assumptions about ways of saying" (Holloway 20). The rigid responses of the few critics who have dealt with *Karobran* stand in contrast to the Aboriginal author's flexible use of European generic conventions. Influential critics like Mudrooroo have produced ideologically narrow readings of *Karobran*, readings that assume that the socialist realist agenda in *Karobran* can be linked to the socialist convictions of the editors.

Early critics asserted that the editors of *Karobran* imposed their socialist convictions upon the text via a heavy editorial rewriting. Close textual comparison of the original manuscript and the published version of *Karobran* in this chapter refutes these critical assertions. These findings suggest that the editors did not impose the socialist realist style identifiable in the published text. It is true that *Karobran* was heavily edited, with over 6075 changes. The 699 alterations that I argue were significant changes to the tone and intention of the manuscript however did not include the editorial imposition of a socialist realist form. Instead, the editor attempted to engage the interests of the new emerging readership, which had no time for the politics, or the solutions of the old left.

The editorial response to cultural changes between 1973 and 1978 included imposing the image of the "radical Aboriginal" upon the text. This approach reflects an attempt to strengthen market appeal by bolstering the Aboriginal rights platform. For example, strategic

editorial substitutions heighten the political impact of the manuscript. The speech and actions of both pro-Aboriginal and racist white characters, in particular, are intensified. As the editorial process was conducted without the possibility of consultation with the Aboriginal author, the editor's agenda necessarily prevailed. Thus the editorial procedure also included muting issues that took a place of prominence in the manuscript. Aboriginal perspectives on the importance of land, the portrayal of Aboriginal spirituality as a part of contemporary urban life, the emotive portrayal of child removal and the consequences of Aboriginal family fracture were all effaced by the editorial interventions. Close examination of the manuscript of *Karobran* suggests that the text had the potential to offer a groundbreaking representation of Aboriginal experience and perspectives. It did not have this impact at the time. However, records suggest that Monica Clare was a strategic and pragmatic activist. It is likely that she would have welcomed at least some of the editorial changes made to her manuscript. Gaining publication, albeit heavily edited, was a major achievement for an Aboriginal woman in the 1970s. Editorial collaboration placed *Karobran* on the public record and makes the text available for future recuperation.

## **Section II**

**Re-membering *If Everyone Cared* by Margaret Tucker**

## Five

### *The Contested Memory of Margaret Tucker*

#### Foundational Publications and the Community of Commitment

In the first section of this thesis I examined the community of commitment that Monica Clare mobilised to achieve her goal of publication. *Karobran* was published in 1978 as a result of sustained community support for the project (following the author's sudden death in 1973). This journey to publication and subsequent critique, including judgements about the impact of generic conventions and editorial intervention upon the manuscript, illustrates the mediated and ongoing nature of the autobiographical project.

In this chapter I will consider the role of another committed community in aiding Margaret Tucker as a foundational Aboriginal woman writer. *If Everyone Cared* gathered the comparatively privileged community of Moral Re-Armament (MRA) workers into the autobiographical project. *If Everyone Cared* by Margaret Tucker preceded the launch of *Karobran* by only a few months (Horner, *Answering*). Jack Horner, the editor of *Karobran*, contrasted the profiles of these two Aboriginal women authors. He argued that Margaret Tucker's public prominence and Monica Clare's relative obscurity position their books very differently:

The significance of *Karobran* was not really diminished by this book [*If Everyone Cared*]. Mrs Tucker was a famous Aboriginal leader in Melbourne all her adult life, and her memoirs belong to Melbourne's Koori community. She was a famous daughter of a famous mother Mrs Therese Clements and her sister Geraldine Briggs and their cousin John Patten were talented speakers. [...] The fact of Monica's comparative obscurity piles on the personal and family anguish at being parted from loved ones and her quest for her own identity (Horner, *Answering*).

Jack Horner contrasts the meagre public profile of Monica Clare, a stolen child and local community activist, with that of Margaret Tucker a prominent Aboriginal elder, matriarch and well-known public figure. According to Horner, Margaret Tucker wrote from a position

of comparative strength, emerging as she did from an articulate and politically active family and Aboriginal community at Cumeragunja on the Murray River near Echuca.

### **They Being Dead Yet Speaketh**

The Cumeragunja community have honoured their dead with a simple, but eloquent monument. Among the headstones of influential Aboriginal activists including William Cooper, Sir Douglas Nichols, Hyllus Maris, Margaret Tucker and her daughter Molly Dyer stands a monument that invokes the Cumeragunja spirit of endurance, protest and pride. The text reads, "They being dead yet speaketh".

This monument represents the past as being in dynamic relationship with the present. Indigenous understandings of historical experience often contrast with modern Western understandings which break chronological time into distinct periods and divide, "a present from a past" (de Certeau 2). Margaret Tucker died in 1996 and is buried in the Cumeragunja cemetery, but her life is resonant and active in the memories of her communities. Margaret Tucker was a revered elder in the Aboriginal community of Melbourne and a respected figure throughout Australia. A strong, charming and vibrant woman, Margaret Tucker was also well known for her singing voice, her television appearances in *Women of the Sun* and *Lousy Little Sixpence*, her numerous speaking engagements and school visits. Today Margaret Tucker is still mourned and treasured by her communities. Stories written by Margaret Tucker and those told about her life by community members are collective by nature. They represent a relationality where the self is experienced as, "part of others and others are part of the self; this is learnt through reciprocity, obligation, shared experiences, coexistence, cooperation and social memory" (Moreton-Robinson 16). *If Everyone Cared* and the many other texts of Margaret Tucker's life, had their genesis and continue to exert influence from the particularities of the communities from within which they were produced.

### **Autobiographical Narratives as Communal Texts**

Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives can be distinguished from the traditional bildungsroman model of autobiography by their relationality. The distinct community orientation of Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives and alternative modes of production (such as taped and transcribed oral narratives, ghost written and polyvocal texts)

stand in contrast to the subjectivity promoted by conventional Western autobiography, which is characterised by the unfolding of an awareness of individuality and personal achievement. Some critics suggest that Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives are more appropriately read and understood within the subgenre of Testimonios, which construct a collective subject enmeshed in a social struggle (Mohanram 125). This subgenre is a rich frame for reading Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives which aim to gather the readership into political solidarity and to speak for the Aboriginal community. An important qualification is necessary here. The aim here is not to try and "fit" Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives into a foreign frame. Testimonio emerged as a genre within the specific circumstances of 1950 - 1970s South America and is closely related to movements of national or cultural liberation. Testimonio is acknowledged as a literature of personal witness or consciousness-raising often parallel to (leftist) armed political struggle (Beverley 93). The specific social conditions from which Testimonio emerged as a preferred or possible genre in South America make a direct reading of Aboriginal literature through the genre inappropriate. South American political struggles do not wholly parallel the Indigenous Australian experience, although totalitarian suppression does resonate in contact history. Aboriginal autobiographical literature should not be squeezed into the generic confines of Testimonio, a process that would eschew difference. Rather, this thesis demonstrates how an understanding of the communal genesis of autobiographical texts, which Testimonio has stimulated, also helps to acknowledge the political genesis and purposes of Aboriginal women's writing.

The collective subject constructed by Testimonio, which are often collaborative texts, positions the reader differently than does the autonomous "I" of conventional autobiography. While the "I" of the autobiography emphasises the author's individual difference, the "we" of the Testimonio invites the reader to identify with an ethnically defined and unified political community.

Doris Sommer describes the action of Testimonio as, "produc[ing] complicity. . . Once the subject of the testimonial is understood as the community made up of a variety of roles, the reader is called in to fill one of them" (Sommer 118). Testimonio invites the first world or privileged reader to engage with the marginalised speaking subject. The community

orientation of Testimonio not only gathers the privileged reader into the world of the other; it also has an important double function. Communal narratives within the Testimonio subgenre also speak for the many voiceless actors within a particular community. John Beverley describes Testimonio as having representative value, “each individual Testimonio evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences” (Beverley 96).

Aboriginal author Ruby Langford Ginibi suggests that her autobiography fulfils a communal function for Aboriginal women, “[My] book is not only my story, it is the story of every Aboriginal mother that has children to raise in this society, in this country” (McGrath 80). In an interview with Caitlin McGrath and Phillipa Sawyer, Langford Ginibi argued that this representative role is hampered by *Don't Take Your Love to Town's* generic positioning as “autobiography”:

Ginibi: [ . . . ] *Don't Take Your Love to Town* has not been acknowledged as relevant Australian history. It is not on the main texts, it is just on the English list.

Sawyer: So, do you think it should be studied as a history text as well?

Ginibi: Yes [ . . . ](McGrath 80).

*Don't Take Your Love to Town's* position on the “English list” of the New south Wales Higher School Certificate is viewed by Langford Ginibi as a denial of its historical veracity. Langford Ginibi views the autobiographical genre as a form of “truth writing”, identifying apparently direct reference to and representation of events involving the writing subject. Paul De Man writes, “We assume that life *produces* the autobiography as an act produces consequences” (De Man 920). This apparently simple or direct referentiality, however, is actually mediated by the demands of the autobiographical project itself. De Man writes, “whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture” (De Man 920). The autobiography is a textual construct; it is mediated by language and narrative techniques. The demarcation between textualising and truth in autobiography continues to be blurred by the simultaneous, “necessity to escape the tropology of the subject and the equally inevitable reinscription” (De Man 923). Aboriginal women’s autobiography, like South American Testimonio, insists upon the political imperative of speaking out the “truth” on behalf of the group. This insistence maintains tension between textuality and truth in Aboriginal women’s autobiographical writing.



## Representing the Silent Majority

Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives give voice to Aboriginal experience beyond the bounds of individual identity. Monica Clare described her manuscript, *Karobran*, as representative of Aboriginal experience. She said, "It was like this for most of us. That's how it was, and that's how it is, for Aboriginal kids" (Clare, *Karobran* ix). Margaret Tucker's public retelling of her experiences as an Aboriginal woman reflected her commitment to her Aboriginal people and to educating the ignorant white majority of Australians. Members of her community recall, "Aunty Marge believed in educating people by telling them her story" (Blow). Margaret Tucker's commitment to storytelling made her spokesperson for women of her generation who did not or could not speak publicly for themselves.

Margaret Tucker's public testimonies are important enunciations for women such as Evonne Goolagong Cawley, whose mother Linda Goolagong, received a meagre education and was functionally illiterate. Evonne Goolagong Cawley writes, "Margaret Tucker's story [ . . . ] so closely parallels the experiences of my mother's life and her mother's life that I can barely read a page of her work without feeling she is telling my story too"(Goolagong Cawley 374). Public testimony such as Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* plays a significant role for the generations of Aboriginal people that have been silent or silenced. Silence may be a deliberate choice, a strategy of resistance and survival or a mode for the protection of children.

Goolagong Cawley writes:

I knew that Aboriginal children of my generation rarely had the opportunity to come to terms with their own history, much of it was kept from them by well-meaning parents who did not wish to burden them with the 'shame' of their heritage (Goolagong Cawley 366).

Knowledge that is lost to generations of Aboriginal people through strategies of silence or as a consequence of forced child removal, is largely beyond recuperation. For these individuals and communities there are few solutions for the theft of time, language, traditional knowledges or even the awareness that these things have been lost (Frow 366). For Aboriginal people such as Goolagong Cawley, however, Margaret Tucker's textual voice recovers pre-colonial life and memory. *If Everyone Cared* collects the, "remaining fragments of their [the Old Peoples'] presence" (Goolagong Cawley 368) and makes valuable oral knowledge available to the next

generation. Margaret Tucker's stories access knowledge handed down from her great grandmother, which, "reach back to dim recollections of the first arrival of white settlers along the Murray in the 1830s" (Kabaila, *The Murrumbidgee* 102). Autobiographical narratives such as Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* serve as an archival resource and contribute to the maintenance of contemporary Aboriginal culture.

### **For and From the Community**

Margaret Tucker gained a public voice and spoke on behalf of the silent majority of her generation of Aboriginal people. Her autobiographical text *If Everyone Cared* also evinces links to other significant communities of commitment that influenced her life course and aided the publication of her narrative. Margaret Tucker had relationship with and political commitment to three significant communities at different stages of her life. These communities include her Aboriginal community, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and later the more conservative religious community of MRA. Margaret Tucker's links with the CPA were forged in the early 1930s. The extent of her involvement is unknown, although it appears that Tucker maintained significant supportive relationships with left-aligned activists such as Anna Vroland until at least 1950 (Vroland). By 1956 Margaret Tucker's allegiance had shifted to MRA.

Margaret Tucker published *If Everyone Cared* in 1977. Like Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker had been a member of, or was a fellow traveller with, the Communist Party of Australia. In the following section I examine the social memory of Margaret Tucker, particularly her reputed CPA affiliation and the representation of this affiliation in her autobiography *If Everyone Cared*.

The desire to articulate coherent memories influences how our recollections are reconstructed. The challenge to make meaning of memories takes an added dimension when a once viable version of the past has been excluded from public norms. Accounting for events excluded from the dominant discourses of the past involves composing memories in a way that is understandable in the circumstances of the present. Experiences of the past are therefore reshaped in memory to conform to our ideas of the moment (Halbwachs 183). Stories of Margaret Tucker's Communist Party affiliation illustrate how memories are read from a

present day perspective. The values of Margaret Tucker's longest standing community of commitment, MRA, become a filter for the recall of her experiences as "the Black Communist". This filtering function is identifiable in Margaret Tucker's autobiography *If Everyone Cared*, and in stories told about her CPA affiliation by friends and family today.

Margaret Tucker's autobiography was written and edited in collaboration with a white woman, Jean Hughes, who was drawn from the MRA community in Melbourne. The style of editorial intervention that transformed the manuscript of *If Everyone Cared* illustrates the ideological influence of the editor in cross-cultural collaborations. I argue, with reference to Margaret Tucker's original hand-written manuscript, that signs of Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation were stripped of meaning during the editorial process. The editorial mediation of *If Everyone Cared* calls into question the assumed autonomy of the authorial figure and reveals the influence of a conventionally invisible editorial process. This analysis reveals how the removal of key indicators of Margaret Tucker's communist involvement reflects the anti-communist stance of MRA and changing social perceptions of the struggle for Aboriginal rights.

### ***If Everyone Cared***

Margaret Tucker's autobiography, *If Everyone Cared*, is primarily a documentation of forced removal and indentured servitude, understood now as the experiences of "the Stolen Generations". Twelve of the sixteen chapters concentrate on Margaret Tucker's happy childhood with her family in the Murray-Murrumbidgee River basin of south-western New South Wales.

Margaret Tucker was born at Warrangesda Mission on the Murrumbidgee River in 1904 and was raised with relationship to several communities gathered at mission stations in south-western New South Wales. These included Old Maloga Mission on the Murray River, Moonahculla Mission on the Edward River, Brungle Station near Tumut and later Cumeragunja on the Murray. Margaret Tucker was forcibly removed from her family when she was thirteen and sent to the Cootamundra Training Home for Aboriginal Girls. *If Everyone Cared* documents her experiences of abuse and exploitation at the hands of her employers. The

remaining four chapters of the text deal with the personal outcomes of these experiences in Margaret Tucker's adult life.

Margaret Tucker moved to Melbourne in 1925 when she was released from her service contract with the N.S.W Aborigines Protection Board. The onset of the Depression in the 1930s brought great hardship to Aboriginal communities and saw the politicisation of many Aboriginal people who, like Margaret Tucker, struggled against poverty and racism. Margaret Tucker was known as an associate of the CPA when she attended the "Day of Mourning" in Sydney in 1938 an event which is recognised as a, "turning point in capturing white public attention" (Goodall 230) for the Aboriginal protest movement. By the time of the Cumeragunja walkout in 1939 Margaret Tucker had public status as an Aboriginal activist, raising money for the Aboriginal strikers through concert parties and other direct action. Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock, producers of *Lousy Little Sixpence*, suggest Margaret Tucker earned a reputation as a communist because of her activism for Aboriginal rights, "[Margaret Tucker] began an active life campaigning for citizen rights for her people. In 1939 she organised concert parties to raise funds for the Cumeroogunga [sic] strikers. Because of her activism she was named 'the black Communist'" (Morgan, *Lousy*).

*If Everyone Cared* gives only passing attention (only five pages in total) to Margaret Tucker's early experiences as an Aboriginal activist. Yet her ties to the CPA were of sufficient significance to earn her the tag "the black Communist", a tag that is recalled by the producers of *Lousy Little Sixpence* some 44 years later. The brief references to CPA ties in *If Everyone Cared* serve primarily to introduce Margaret Tucker's relationship with Bill Onus, a fellow Aboriginal activist who facilitated her initial contact with MRA. There is no direct reference to Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation in *If Everyone Cared*. Her life as a young activist is developed only as a prelude to a lasting affiliation with MRA. Margaret Tucker's years of activism in the 1930s signpost the harsh and bitter experiences that the MRA ideology enabled her to reconcile with and ultimately overcome. They do not point to a politicised identity or to the role that CPA affiliation played in the development of this identity. The final chapters of her autobiography go on to document this process of personal change and advocate an MRA standpoint.

*If Everyone Cared* represents Margaret Tucker's alignment with MRA as her most significant political affiliation. Other sources, however, dwell at greater length upon formative experiences with the CPA and her protest actions of the 1930s. Andrew Markus notes in *Blood from a Stone* that Margaret Tucker, as a founding member and Vice-President of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League (VAAL) had, "been active since 1935 in advocating the cause of Aborigines in left-wing circles" (Markus 11). Heather Goodall also refers to links between the AAL and the CPA; *Invasion to Embassy* notes, "close personal connections between members of the AAL and individual members of the Melbourne Branch of the Communist Party" (Goodall 186). Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus' documentary history *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights* textualises this link between Margaret Tucker's political affiliation with the CPA and her work as an Aboriginal activist.

In 1939 Margaret Tucker testified as a, "constant reader of the *Workers Voice*" and appealed to the readership to, "help us in our fight for liberty and freedom. Help us to protect ourselves from the clutches of the Aborigines Protection Board" (Attwood, *The Struggle*160). The *Workers Voice* published 1933 - 1939 was the weekly paper of the Communist Party of Australia, number four District Committee, Melbourne. The weight given by these historians to Margaret Tucker's involvement in the Day of Mourning and the Cumeragunja walkout, both key Aboriginal protest events, clearly contrasts with her own treatment of this era in *If Everyone Cared*.

Other texts by Margaret Tucker represent a more radical political identity than is developed in *If Everyone Cared*. The documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence*, in which Margaret Tucker has eight speaking appearances, allows a much more vibrant image of these years of political protest. *Lousy Little Sixpence* concentrates upon the forced "apprenticeship" of Aboriginal girls and boys as domestics and farm labourers, but it also links these themes to public protest against unjust conditions. In *Lousy Little Sixpence* Margaret Tucker acknowledges the CPA as being a catalyst for her gaining a political voice:

The lady that I stayed with and her husband - he was George Franks. He was the head of Trades Hall and this and that and everything. A well-known communist too - and they used to take me to all the meetings. They were very interested in the downtrodden people. Well, I felt that my people were very downtrodden and I wasn't backward in coming forward and saying what I

felt - you know. They seemed to speak a lot of what I was feeling and thinking. It built up my thinking (Morgan, *Lousy*).

Margaret Tucker had separated from her white husband, Phil Tucker, by 1933, returning to Melbourne to the support of her Communist friends. In *Lousy Little Sixpence* this period is recalled as politically formative and exciting. *Lousy Little Sixpence* also shows excerpts from a short news reel film titled *A Princess of an Ancient Tribe* (Tucker, *Interest*) which was shown on cinema screens in 1935. Here Margaret Tucker makes a public appeal for equality for her people, calling for, "equal rights so that my people can have the same opportunities as our white brothers and sisters" (Tucker, *Interest*).

Margaret Tucker openly acknowledges the CPA as being a catalyst to the production of this news reel, and her development of a political voice, "they seemed to speak a lot of what I was feeling. . . it built up my thinking - it came out in words" (Morgan, *Lousy*). Margaret Tucker discusses political experiences in the 1983 production *Lousy Little Sixpence*, that are elided in her autobiography, which was written approximately a decade earlier. Why is it that the construction of Margaret Tucker's public persona requires the suppression of certain historical memories in the 1970s, memories that are vividly recalled in the context of the 1980s?

After interviewing a friend of Margaret Tucker's in Melbourne in 1999 I had the opportunity to look through her collection of letters, journals and newspaper clippings that had belonged to or spoke of Margaret Tucker. Included in this collection was a hand-written narrative by Margaret Tucker titled, "My initiation into what?: The unknown". This narrative mirrors the beginning of chapter 14, pages 162 - 4 of *If Everyone Cared*. However, it discusses her period of communist affiliation and activism in much greater detail than the published text. It is my opinion that , "My initiation into what?: The unknown" manuscript is the unedited draft of the corresponding chapter in *If Everyone Cared*.

The "My Initiation" manuscript is held in the papers of Margaret Tucker's friend, Lorna White. Lorna White, who lives in Melbourne, met Margaret Tucker at a MRA conference in the USA in 1958. They became close friends. Lorna White holds a large collection of newspaper clippings and papers pertaining to Margaret Tucker including journals and other

autobiographical writing. After Margaret Tucker's death in 1996, Lorna White, also a former worker for Grosvenor Books, attempted to collate the disordered manuscript of *If Everyone Cared*. She then donated it to the National Library. The hand-written manuscript has several sections missing and little remains of the typescript. Close inspection suggests that the "My Initiation" manuscript held by Lorna White is actually a section prepared for the *If Everyone Cared* manuscript. This section may have been overlooked by Lorna White (due perhaps to its disordered state) when she attempted to organise the manuscript before donating it to the National Library.

By comparing the "My Initiation" draft with the published version in *If Everyone Cared* I will demonstrate how Margaret Tucker's contact with the CPA is elided by the invisible hand (and ideological beliefs) of the editor. The hand-written manuscript "My Initiation", bears editorial corrections most probably made by Margaret Tucker's white friend Jean Hughes, whose editorial role I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

### **The Impact of Editorial Choices**

Editorial changes to an original manuscript of an autobiographical text undoubtedly shape the public persona of the autobiographical subject. The following textual analysis of the "My Initiation" manuscript illustrates how small but strategic editorial changes minimise the representation of Margaret Tucker's CPA involvement and shape the enduring perception of her political identity.

When I compared the original hand-written manuscript of "My Initiation", which included editorial changes made by Jean Hughes, with the version which was published in *If Everyone Cared*, the first and most obvious omission made by the editor was the title. The original manuscript bears the title, "My Initiation into what?: The unknown", which suggests a season of political education and testing that introduced Margaret Tucker into the unfamiliar world of activism. The editorial removal of the reference to "initiation" strips emphasis from Margaret Tucker's formative involvement with the CPA. This leaves Margaret Tucker's encounter with MRA as the prioritised description of her political education and transformation.

The next omission from “My Initiation” to *If Everyone Cared* is the loss of the contextualising date and the reference to Margaret Tucker’s reunion with her Aboriginal community. The original “My Initiation” text reads:

About 1933, I do remember one instance when I was staying with my Communist friends who took me in when I did not have any where to stay or go - long before I met my Aboriginal friends in Fitzroy: I was very ignorant about anything in politics or any isms (Tucker, *My Initiation*).

The edited text in *If Everyone Cared* reorients the passage to distance Margaret Tucker and even her friends from the CPA which is presented in the past tense. The edited text reads, “Meanwhile I had nowhere to go, but some friends who were involved with the Communist cause took me in. I was ignorant about how Australia was run, about politics or any ‘isms’ of those times” (Tucker, *If Everyone*). The “My Initiation” text names the hospitable friends as communist, “my Communist friends”. The edited version distances these friends of Margaret Tucker’s from communism (and, by default, distances Tucker herself) by naming them firstly as friends, then as , “involved in the Communist cause”. Communism is reduced to a cause rather than as an identifying label. Margaret Tucker notes in the original manuscript that these Communist friends welcomed her, “long before I met my Aboriginal friends in Fitzroy”, which signals the functioning of the communist associates as a community of support. This reference is also removed.

Another distancing strategy is the institutionalisation of the reference to politics. The “My Initiation” text does not elaborate upon the realm of politics beyond the reference to “isms”. The published version in *If Everyone Cared* contextualises this political realm as, “how Australia was run”, connoting mainstream and institutionalised party politics rather than personal affiliation to a minor political party such as the CPA. Margaret Tucker’s claim to political innocence is maintained, corroborating the perception that Aboriginal CPA affiliates were dupes who were vulnerable to persuasive rhetoric. Note that the political is also pegged in the past tense, “I was ignorant about [ . . . ] any ‘isms’ of those times”. Communism is presented as an “ism” belonging to the past.

Possibly the most significant decontextualisation of Margaret Tucker’s affiliation with the CPA in this brief extract is the removal of the reference to Helen Bailie. Most historians who have dealt with the political mobilisation of the Cumeragunja community in the 1930s



mention the role of Helen Bailie as an important and active supporter of the Aboriginal cause. For example, historian Fiona Paisley documents the important practical support Helen Bailie gave to the Aboriginal community of Melbourne (Paisley). Yet in the transformation of the "My Initiation" manuscript into Chapter Fourteen of *If Everyone Cared*, Helen Bailie is reduced to an anonymous, "white woman" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 164). Helen Bailie was an important support for many Aboriginal activists such as Margaret Tucker, William Cooper and Doug Nicholls whom she drove to Sydney in 1938 for the 'Day of Mourning' protests. The hand-written "My Initiation" manuscript begins to acknowledge this work of Helen Bailie:

I was just an Aboriginal maid and getting to love parties and all it stood for - so-called good time. And then a white Society lady Miss Helen Baillie [sic] found me and asked me to sing in a concert (a church) in aid of our Aborigines in Fitzroy and that was the beginning of understanding and working for my people and others in the only way we knew (Tucker, *My Initiation*).

In contrast, the published version reads:

I was just an Aboriginal maid and getting to love parties and all that that kind of life stood for. Then a white woman asked me to sing in a concert in a church to help the Aborigines living in Fitzroy. That was the beginning of understanding and working for my people and others (Tucker, *If Everyone* 164).

Although the changes may appear to be slight, or trivial, they in fact accomplish a number of shifts in emphasis. First, the published version removes the classing reference, "a white Society lady". Second, the name of the white woman, "Miss Helen Bailie" is removed. Third, ownership and identification with the Aboriginal community, "our Aborigines in Fitzroy" is altered.

The editing of this section of Margaret Tucker's original text distances Margaret Tucker from the communist and Aboriginal communities, represented by her hospitable friends and Helen Bailie, and "our Aborigines in Fitzroy". The original hand-written manuscript titled "My Initiation" established links to these communities, both ideological and chronological, that are not sustained in the edited version of *If Everyone Cared*. The removal of Helen Bailie's name from *If Everyone Cared* depersonalises and dehistoricises Margaret Tucker's contact with communism and Helen Bailie's contributions. The edited version of the "My Initiation" material clearly downplays the period between 1925 to at least 1938, severing an important

association in the development of Margaret Tucker's activism: the connection between communism and Aboriginal activism.

### **A "Greater Ideology"**

The CPA first enunciated a pro-Aboriginal stance in the mid 1920s, when the plight of Aboriginal people was viewed by the CPA as an illustration of the cruel yoke of capitalism and imperialism. Like the CPA, the MRA organisation's interest in Aboriginal affairs had an ideological foundation.

MRA promotes the practice of absolute moral standards, active forgiveness and reparation. Affiliates believe that world peace can be achieved through the lived example of individuals. MRA ideology suggests that such profound change requires harnessing a, "moral and spiritual force that is powerful enough to remake the world" (Lean 263). The practice of absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love generates this force (Ramsey). Unlike the CPA, which drew from the working class and educated radicals, MRA adherents were primarily middle- and upper-class liberals. After the Second World War MRA founder Frank Buchman embarked upon a major tour of Australia. This tour coincided with the establishment of a national MRA centre, housed in a Toorak mansion donated by a grateful convert. During his 1956 Australian tour, Buchman encouraged those who had been influenced by MRA to speak publicly, within their social circle, about the change in their personal lives. Common themes of his tour were the encouragement of open acknowledgment of past sin and faults, and bearing witness to the powerful transformation available through apology and reparation. In Australia these practices have been exercised to promote reconciliation and foster leadership within the Indigenous Australian community. MRA saw the behaviour of the white settlers towards Aboriginal people as an example of greed, selfish living and cruelty that shamed the nation.

Many MRA workers have devoted their working lives to the struggle for Aboriginal rights. John Bond, for example, is a full time MRA worker and a member of the National Sorry Day Committee and the Journey of Healing Committee. Mike and Jean Brown, full time MRA workers in Adelaide, have been instrumental in the success of the Blackwood Reconciliation group. They also made a significant contribution to the establishment of the "Fountain of Tears" memorial to the Stolen Generation at the former Colebrook Home site in Eden Hills,

Adelaide. MRA represents itself as a non-party political group. Adherents are directed by their conscience and the morality of their personal faith. MRA advocates I interviewed identified as both left and right-wing in their political allegiance. Prominent MRA advocates have included Kim Beasley senior who was a minister in the Whitlam Labor government, and Michael Thwaites, former head of counter-espionage in ASIO.

Margaret Tucker's political affiliations shifted from the CPA some time in the 1950s, and she maintained an affiliation with MRA from 1956 until her death in 1996. Bill Onus and Harold Blair, both prominent Aboriginal figures and MRA affiliates, introduced Margaret Tucker to MRA at a social gathering in 1956 (the same year that MRA founder Frank Buchman made his Australian tour). Bill Onus had been inviting celebrities and friends to his studio to see Aboriginal art and listen to the Aboriginal women's choir led by Margaret Tucker. It was at an event such as this that an upper-class white woman, Jean Roberts, made an unexpected public apology for suffering inflicted upon Aboriginal people. After a time of singing and chatting Jean Roberts stood up and declared, "From the bottom of my heart how sorry I am for my superiority as a white Australian, and for our treatment, as whites, of the Australian Aboriginal race. Would you please forgive? (Tucker, *If Everyone* 172). Margaret Tucker records this event as, "the first time I had heard such words said to us Aborigines. It touched my heart" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 173). This startling address had a great impact upon Margaret Tucker, who acknowledged harbouring a deep suspicion of white people up until this time (Tucker, *If Everyone* 181). Years of service in upper class homes and her experience entertaining at "Society" concerts and parties made her keenly aware of class distinctions and the assumption of racial superiority. Friends recall the impact of this public apology upon Margaret Tucker:

Marg was very very perceptive, and I think she knew that Jean came of the class that Marg had most cause to hate. So the apology wasn't just that it was a white person, but that it was a white person of privilege and background, part of The Establishment (Coulter).

Jean Roberts represented the sector of society to whom many Aboriginal domestic workers were indentured and in whose hands many suffered exploitation and abuse.

History gives access not so much to events as they happened in the past, but to the meaning of these events to the narrating subject in the present. To this extent, re-narration of a past

event reflects, “not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (Attwood, *A Life* 204). One consequence of Margaret Tucker’s lasting alignment with MRA is the loss of cultural value or legitimacy for the story of her involvement with the Communist Party. *If Everyone Cared* is informed by a grand narrative of the Christian project, represented in the text by the mobilisation of MRA, a Christian community of commitment. The distancing of Margaret Tucker from her communist past is not surprising, considering the framing function of MRA ideology at the time of writing in the 1970s. MRA has historically pitched its message as a world transforming ideology; a “greater ideology” (Howard 23) than communism.

The story of Margaret Tucker’s alliance with the CPA in the 1930s was amended before the publication of *If Everyone Cared* in accordance with the MRA stance on communism in the 1970s. MRA was a firmly anti-communist organisation during the 1950s when political commitment was hotly contested and communism was viewed as socially dangerous. The social credibility of MRA was rising in the 1950s alongside an intense anti-communist movement. The crisis of communism is illustrated by a number of national events whose effects were to resonate in the Australian cultural memory, including the campaign waged by Prime Minister Menzies to ban the CPA via the Communist Party Dissolution Bill and the subsequent referendum of 1951. In the wake of this campaign was the 1954 defection of Soviet agents Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov and the Royal Commission on Espionage based on intelligence gained from the “Petrov Affair”. The Petrov’s joint autobiography was published in 1956, telling of their lives as Soviet spies, their disaffection and decision to defect to, “the West” (Thwaites, *Truth*). *The Empire of Fear* was ghost written by Michael Thwaites, the head of ASIO’s counter-espionage office and an MRA member. Michael Thwaites was a firm friend of Margaret Tucker and her mother Yarmuk, to whom he dedicated a poem *For Yarmuk* upon her death in 1959 (Thwaites, *The Honeyman* 79). In the 1950s, MRA promised change to the world order (like communism), but from a position of social credibility. MRA networks and ideology were undoubtedly influential upon Margaret Tucker’s tailoring of her memories of CPA involvement. It is understandable then, that the written record, reconstructed many years later with the editorial assistance of her friend Jean Hughes, does not dwell upon Margaret Tucker’s involvement with the Communist Party.

The desire to disassociate Margaret Tucker from the CPA was an experience shared by other prominent Aboriginal people who forged their reputations in the same post-war period. Harold Blair, renowned as “the Aboriginal Tenor” was perceived publicly as a symbol of “acceptable” Aboriginality. Marcia Langton argues that white Australians relate to prominent Aboriginal people not as real individuals, but as, “figures of the imagination generated by Australian image producers [ . . . ] safe, distant distortions of an actual world of people who will not bring down the neighbourhood real estate values” (Langton 33). Harold Blair’s representative role as a prominent Aboriginal figure required the public renouncement of past links to the CPA, particularly the assumption that, “the Communist Party gave Harold Blair his first start in life” (Harrison 54). Harold Blair’s singing career was aided significantly by his sponsor Harry Green, who was a trade unionist and fellow traveller of the CPA. Writing in 1975, Harold Blair’s biographer was anxious to distance Blair from the stain of communism (not personal affiliation, but the affiliation of a close sponsor). Harrison achieves this by emphasising the anti-communist stance of his allegiance to MRA:

For some inexplicable reason, the most sinister of Communistic overtones has attached itself to Harold’s connection with MRA [ . . . ] In actual fact, The Moral Re-Armament movement is strongly anti-Communist and is based on four main principles: ABSOLUTE HONESTY, ABSOLUTE LOVE, ABSOLUTE PURITY, ABSOLUTE UNSELFISHNESS.

The members seek guidance from God in all their problems and anything further removed from Communism would be hard to imagine  
(Harrison 190 - 1).

Harrison contrasts the MRA practice of “guidance”, which promotes individual action, with the CPA preference for collective action. This contrast achieves the distancing effect the biographer deems to be required. This construction of a biographical narrative clearly results in a mediated account. As Kay Schaffer comments in relation to another biographical subject, the reconstruction of the past in narrative form is embedded within a complex matrix of social and political influences and derivations:

We can only posit the meaning of her life through discourses and texts which themselves reconstruct her life history, create ideological and historical contexts for her life, and position readers to regard her story in specific but significant ways (Schaffer 14).

Margaret Tucker’s limited account of her communist affiliation in *If Everyone Cared* may evade revealing the impact of her communist affiliation as a young Aboriginal activist in the

1930s. But her autobiographical account, particularly the choice to evade her communist ties, speaks by default to historically-situated understandings of colonialism, democracy, capitalism, internationalist communism and human progress. Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid remind us that, “when any cultural phenomenon, practice or product is made to mean something, this signifying process both separates it from and joins it with a variety of references” (MacLachlan 15). In the autobiographical text Margaret Tucker’s identification as the one-time “Black Communist” functions as a demarcating phenomena. It provisionally distinguishes her from communists while also allowing a relationship to them. Margaret Tucker is identified within her own narratives as a former communist in order to establish her position as both MRA advocate and Aboriginal activist.

This stripping is unfortunate, as there is a dearth of information on the public record regarding Aboriginal communists or the role of the CPA in Aboriginal affairs. Histories such as *Invasion to Embassy* and *The Reds* refer to liaisons between Aboriginal activists and the CPA, but their focus is necessarily limited by the parameters of the particular study. Memoirs such as Mona Brand’s *Enough Blue Sky* and Faith Bandler’s personal history *Turning the Tide*, or social histories such as *More Than a Hat and Glove Brigade* and *The Time Was Ripe* gesture to an engagement between Aboriginal activists and communists that is still largely unwritten.

### **Gaining Her Voice**

Although Margaret Tucker is now deceased, the stories told by her communities do not have the sense of being retrieved as dusty archival memories from the isolated past. Margaret Tucker was a respected elder and custodian of traditional knowledge, and in accordance with this status her stories are valued and maintained by her communities. They are narrated from the perspective of today, making meaning of the past as it relates to present understandings and experiences. They are present-centred although spoken in the past tense. As I illustrated in the previous section, the story of Margaret Tucker’s involvement with the Communist Party has lost cultural value or legitimacy. This story, as narrated by herself in *If Everyone Cared* and *Lousy Little Sixpence* and by her friends and relatives today, has changed, and is even denied, in accordance with the decline of communist ideology. The story does, however retain cultural value when aligned with the present day discourse of Aboriginal

reconciliation. The status of these stories is affected both by Margaret Tucker's own political journey and the changing political affiliations within the nation. The following section will illustrate how the dynamic life of communities such as MRA or Cumeragunja accommodate change and adapt community stories to make meaning for the contemporary narrator and listener.

Narratives that I collected from representatives of Margaret Tucker's communities do not draw upon personal memory of her CPA affiliation. All date their relationship from after the time of Margaret Tucker's Communist Party involvement. Some narratives play down, or even deny CPA involvement. Other narratives develop an apologetic theme, suggesting that the CPA provided training and structure, but not an ideological foundation, for the organised Aboriginal protest movement that emerged in the 1930s. In these interview narratives communism is pictured as a model for activism, not as a cause worth following in its own right. The focus of these narratives moves quickly away from communism to the struggle for Aboriginal rights. Communism's loss of social currency is also strongly evidenced by the absence of a communist community claiming association with Margaret Tucker today.

In recent interviews I posed a number of questions regarding Margaret Tucker's political commitment and her communist experience. MRA members responded to these questions by playing down communism as a then expedient political vehicle or denying Margaret Tucker's involvement. Representatives from the Cumeragunja community applauded the strategic adaptation of communist methods for the Aboriginal cause. Margaret Tucker's grand daughter told a story of her vehement denial, then accommodation, of her grandmother's CPA affiliation. These responses, examined in turn, show the loss of currency for stories of CPA involvement as they undergo adaptation to present-day circumstances and meanings. In contrast, the stories of Margaret Tucker's involvement with MRA and the Aboriginal rights movement are enhanced by present-centred interpretation, demonstrating the recycling and renewal that memories undergo to maintain contemporary relevance for a community which invests value in them.

Walda Blow identifies as a Cumeragunja woman. Her uncle was married to Margaret Tucker's sister. Walda Blow manages the Margaret Tucker Hostel for Aboriginal girls. This hostel, in the northeastern suburbs of Melbourne, was established by a committee of Aboriginal women

who saw the need for crisis accommodation for Aboriginal girls who were homeless or “at risk”. Walda Blow recalls Margaret Tucker’s commitment to the Aboriginal cause, “I grew up at Cumeragunja, so Auntie Marge has always been in our lives. [ . . . ] Growing up as a young Aboriginal woman, I’ve always looked up to Auntie Marge and admired Auntie Marge for her strongness and her fight for equality for her own people” (Blow).

Walda Blow recounts Margaret Tucker’s involvement with the Communist Party by recalling the necessity to be politically-minded and active in the struggle for Aboriginal rights:

We would never be able to talk and fight for the rights of our people if we weren’t politically involved, and these are the things that these women [Margaret Tucker’s generation] have taught us, we must be political. She spoke on platforms, going back years ago, in Melbourne in the city here when we wouldn’t have had a voice at all. I can go as far as saying ‘black was a dirty word’, you know, and you had to be really very careful. But Auntie Marge spoke on platforms, she joined the Communists, because they were the only ones that listened to Aboriginal people in those days, you know. So Auntie Marge jumped on the wagon there too, as long as she got her voice (Blow).

For Walda Blow, joining the CPA encapsulates Margaret Tucker’s commitment to gaining “her voice” and an audience with the capacity to assist the struggle. Blow interprets CPA involvement through the lens of contemporary Aboriginal political activism. Workers for Aboriginal rights such as Walda Blow retain value in stories of CPA affiliation as a measure of commitment to the Aboriginal cause. Advances in the struggle for Aboriginal rights are credited to the consistent campaigns of, “women like Auntie Marge, telling us to stand up for our rights” (Blow). Standing up for Aboriginal rights historically entailed harnessing the resources and methods of the CPA.

Long standing MRA workers remember the journey of change and growing confidence that transformed many Aboriginal MRA members into confident and articulate public speakers. MRA practices such as public confession of past wrongs and testimony to the changing power of God through the MRA method tested the resolve of the MRA convert to live the moral life of the group. The practices also tested the confidence and capacity of the speaker to gain and communicate with an audience.



Maxine Barr suggests that her grandmother (Margaret Tucker) cultivated public presence under the influence and coaching of MRA:

She just oozed that charisma. She was very gentle, she spoke very softly, yeah - it was just a thing that Nan had. Again, if Nan was alive, she'd say, she owes that to MRA, because they taught her to talk with a plum in her mouth, to talk like a lady. She'd always give that thanks (Barr).

Rita and Jim Coulter, whom I interviewed in Melbourne in 1999, also recall that under MRA tutelage Margaret Tucker emerged as a person who, "spoke beautifully, very cultured, and yet she had so little education" (Coulter). Their memories of Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation, however, are not as affirming as Maxine Barr's.

Rita and Jim Coulter recall:

*Rita* I don't think she was in the Communist Party, she never was.

*Jim* I'd say, I don't think there is an Aboriginal activist that hasn't been helped by the Communist Party. When it has fitted in with the communist thing they have been full-bore for the Aboriginals, but it hasn't been consistent enough for many of the Aboriginals. So I think Marge, in earlier years, I have no doubt had touched them, but I'd be very surprised if Marge was [a CPA member] (Coulter).

According to Rita and Jim Coulter, whose association with Margaret Tucker began after her conversion to the MRA philosophy in 1956, Margaret Tucker was not "in" the Communist Party, she was "helped" by them. This "touch" with the Communist Party is projected to be a fleeting association, again, read through her work as an Aboriginal activist.

Lorna White, another retired MRA worker, also met Margaret Tucker through her association with Jean Roberts. Lorna White accompanied Margaret Tucker to the MRA conference in the USA in 1957. Their developing friendship is noted at length in *If Everyone Cared* and from this foundation they became life-long companions. Lorna White's memories reflect a personal knowledge of Margaret Tucker and her account reveals an interpretation of CPA affiliation (in her memory) that incorporates a shared belief in the MRA ideology. Lorna White recalls:

In the early days, when she first was struggling in Melbourne, and there was very little understanding of Aboriginal people, she was befriended by the Communist Party. They used to encourage her and help her find food and work. [ . . . ] She gradually realised that having grown up with an innate sense of spirituality, both from her own old tribal elders, and from the Missionaries, who she really loved. [ . . . ] She seemed to have an innate spiritual sense, and

she realised that the Communist Party didn't. They used to scoff at God and she felt that that wasn't what she wanted. So she didn't stick with the Communist Party (White).

Lorna White, like Jim Coulter, assigns agency for the establishment of the relationship between Margaret Tucker and the CPA to her communist friends. According to Lorna White, however, the agency for severing the ties is Margaret Tucker's. White links the decline of CPA influence in Margaret Tucker's life to her growing appreciation of her spiritual heritage.

Margaret Tucker raised her grand daughter, Maxine Barr, who counts herself as having been, "the closest" to her grandmother among her siblings. Maxine Barr's narrative demonstrates pride and protective sensitivity to the public memory of her grandmother:

I'll never forget one woman come to me one day and said to me, "your grandmother was a communist", I went *sick* (emph) and I said, "my grandmother wasn't a communist rah rah rah". And then they told me what the communists stood for, you know they, what they did was for their people, and good for their people. And the way she describes them, well, "if that's what they are, well, that was Nan". But, you know the first thing with communism is, "hey, Hitler", and I thought, "no, no" I just went sick. Because my grandmother was far from that sort of resentful and hurtful person. And then, when you watch, I don't know if you've seen the film, *Lousy Little Sixpence*, when I see that, I thought, "well if that's what a Communist done, well that was my grandmother". Yeah, so again, I can't feel anything but proud, and very proud to be her grand daughter (Barr).

This narrative demonstrates the clash between the historical role and the public memory of the CPA through its confusion with fascism. In the eyes of Margaret Tucker's grand daughter, invoking the communist label amounted to an insult to the memory of her grandmother. Maxine Barr's immediate association was with the "resentful, hurtful" policies of Hitler's National Socialist regime. This slip in association between the international socialist movement and the Third Reich reflects both the low status and misunderstanding of communism and fascism in the public memory. However, for Maxine Barr, communism is redeemable when evaluated according to the life practices and philosophy of her grandmother. This is, among other things, a matter of precedence in the association; "your grandmother was a communist" is offensive, but "communists are like your grandmother" allows Maxine Barr to assign value to communism. Margaret Tucker's discussion of her CPA association in the documentary *Lousy little Sixpence* confirms that new value can be attributed to the label

'communist'. Maxine Barr then affirms her earlier statement, "I thought, 'well if that's what a communist done, well that was my grandmother'" (Barr). The emotional legacy of memory clearly affects Maxine Barr's assessment of communism. New information presented to Maxine Barr enables her to reframe past experience and future expectations of the alignment of Margaret Tucker with the CPA (MacLachlan 76).

Margaret Tucker's friends and relatives replace and reassign value to communism according to contemporary meanings. These meanings are necessarily informed by the cultural framing of communism first as a subversive and conspiratorial network, then as an overripe, corrupted and finally defunct ideology. Overall, these narratives demonstrate how memory of an event or historical period changes according to the present-day circumstances. Meanings events or experiences may once have held are overlaid or replaced by new meanings. Maurice Halbwachs argued that we preserve memories from each epoch of our lives through repetition, "because these memories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in different systems of notions, at different periods of our lives, they have lost the form and appearance they once had" (Halbwachs 47). Memories that don't fit within the present-day framework are reconstructed differently or eventually lost. Stories of Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation have lost value in the circles that continue to treasure and renarrate her life. This loss of value is seen in the sparse narration of this era in *If Everyone Cared* and the devaluing effect of the editorial interventions that I have examined. Personal narratives by Margaret Tucker's friends and relatives demonstrate the present-centredness of memory. Communist affiliation is denied or re-read through the lens of Aboriginal activism, as it is understood today.

### **Unfashionable Commitment**

This chapter has illustrated how MRA members down play Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation. More recent critics perform the same critical gesture in relation to Margaret Tucker's affiliation with MRA. From the perspective of today, when a discourse of Aboriginal rights and reconciliation is almost pervasive, it is tempting to see the framing of Margaret Tucker's story by MRA ideology as an unfortunate, even embarrassing veiling of an Aboriginal text. Rosamund Dalziel argues that lack of attention to a text such as *If Everyone Cared* hints at a prescriptive shaming mechanism. This mechanism, "is uncomfortable with [ . . . ]

unfashionable commitment to religious values introduced by European missionaries, to Moral Re-Armament, or even to political values" (Dalziel 173). Dalziel contests that divergent Aboriginal narratives are silenced by this shaming mechanism. Aboriginal voices which are clad in the trappings of a distinct ideological frame such as Mission Christianity, communism or Moral Re-Armament can be distasteful to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal readers, often from ensuing generations, who do not place credence in these world-views.

The argument put forward by Catrina Felton and Liz Flannagan in the "Tidda's Manifesto" (1993) illustrates this difference in generational perspective. The Tidda's Manifesto suggests that, "many of our old people are too trusting of whites" (Felton 56). Many Aboriginal "Old People" who "went through the missions talk of the missionaries with great fondness" (Felton 56). This older generation are perceived as dupes who suffer from a form of false consciousness or the inability to, "recognise the racism inherent in their [the missionaries] treatment of us" (Felton 58). Felton and Flannagan contest that the life-long experience of paternalism borne of colonial domination ensures this predilection. Jackie Huggins also discusses generational shame in dialogue with her mother in *Aunty Rita*.

Responding to her mother Rita's feelings of guilt and shame over childhood misdemeanours on the Cherbourg Mission, Jackie Huggins insists, "No, mum, none of youse deserved it. They brainwashed you into believing you were responsible and it was your fault. It was white paternalistic control and surveillance" (Huggins, *Auntie* 29). Representatives of the younger generations of Aboriginal people such as Jackie Huggins, Catrina Felton and Liz Flannagan struggle to appreciate the respect (expressed as fear, guilt or admiration) that their elders hold for white authority figures such as missionaries and mission administrators.

With due acknowledgment to the painful experience of racist paternalism, it can be argued that Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives that display "unfashionable commitment" to ideologies such as Mission Christianity or Moral Re-Armament, must be approached with attention to the role they played at that time in history. Margaret Tucker wrote from within her time and cultural contexts, contexts that are now barely recognisable. Nevertheless a narrative such as *If Everyone Cared* should be recognised as the writing of a survivor whose life was nourished by her adoption of Christianity as an explanatory and motivational framework. Margaret Tucker's grand daughter does not align with MRA as her

grandmother did. However, Maxine Barr recognises that MRA formed Margaret Tucker as a public speaker and aided her to work on her autobiography with hospitality and practical assistance. With the support of MRA people such as Ann Ross, at whose home Margaret Tucker often wrote, the autobiography became an achievable goal. Maxine Barr recalls, "With all the fundraising and all the organisations, groups and stuff that she was in, the committees she was on, she was inundated with people all the time. So she would never have been able to write her book if she was in her flat, never" (Barr). The nature of this practical assistance will be the focus of the next chapter.

This chapter has demonstrated how autobiographical narratives such as Margaret Tucker's function as communal texts. Margaret Tucker speaks as a representative of her community regarding her experience as an Aboriginal woman. The editorial collaboration that formed *If Everyone Cared* also places the text within other communal ideological frames. *If Everyone Cared* was written from the standpoint of a community of commitment. The MRA community enabled the publication of the text and functions as a filter for the stories that the autobiography relates. Today Margaret Tucker's communities still maintain her stories, ensuring they retain contemporary relevance. I illustrated this maintenance function by examining stories of Margaret Tucker's ideological commitment. Stories of Margaret Tucker's Communist Party affiliation are read from the present day perspectives of her communities. Stories of Margaret Tucker's CPA affiliation had not maintained contemporary relevance among her communities; instead they were qualified, denied or resituated in an Aboriginal rights discourse. The values of a community such as MRA, the Aboriginal community or Margaret Tucker's family shape the enduring public image of Margaret Tucker. Margaret Tucker's status as "the Black Communist", in particular, has been reinterpreted to represent the political ends of the present-day spokesperson.

The enduring public image of an Aboriginal figure such as Margaret Tucker and the representation of her political affiliations on the public record, illustrates the ideological underpinning of memory and narrative construction. The editorial handling of the communist material in *If Everyone Cared* supports the assertion that public memory is constructed by interested groups who hold influence over the dissemination of public knowledges. Margaret Tucker's status as "the Black Communist" has been reinterpreted to represent the political ends of the custodians of her memory. Interpreting CPA affiliation as an inevitable

consequence of involvement in Aboriginal rights movements distances Margaret Tucker (and others) from any ideological basis for such an alignment and allows the interested group to claim public memory for themselves. Was Margaret Tucker once “the Black Communist” by conviction? The tailoring of memory and narrative ensures that this question remains unanswered.

## Six

### *Editing Under the Guidance of God*

#### **The Cost of Publication**

The structure of Margaret Tucker's autobiography *If Everyone Cared* reflects a generically "traditional" Western focus upon the life-span of the protagonist. The narrative opens with details of Margaret Tucker's family background and formative experiences, culminating in the noteworthy personal achievements of her adult years. This narrative structure appears to be at odds with what I described in the previous chapter as the relationality or community orientation of her life stories. Margaret Tucker's voice was not that of the triumphant individual achiever. This disjuncture between the individuated text and Margaret Tucker's community-orientated life is substantially explained by a close examination of the collaborative construction of this Aboriginal woman's foundational autobiography.

In this chapter I focus upon the community support structures that Margaret Tucker mobilised during the writing process. These support structures enabled the autobiographical project to flourish and reach fruition, but not without cost. The examination of the original hand-written manuscript reveals that the cost of publication for Margaret Tucker was the expression of cultural difference in her text.

Margaret Tucker had attempted to publish an autobiographical narrative at an earlier stage in her life, but without success. The previous chapter notes that Margaret Tucker's involvement as a foundation member of the AAL in Victoria brought her into contact with a number of non-Indigenous people who were agitating on behalf of Aboriginal people. Cross-cultural coalitions often presented difficulty for Aboriginal people. Differences in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal priorities and approach complicated cooperative activism and led to misunderstandings. Many non-Indigenous supporters of the Aboriginal cause, "suffered from the same ill-informed arrogance which characterised government's approach to the 'Aboriginal problem'" (Kerin 29). In early 1950 Margaret Tucker severed long-standing ties with a white woman, Cora Gilsenen, who had been active in the fight to repeal the Victorian Aborigines Act. Tucker left

Melbourne, "with a feeling that I did not have any white friends" (Tucker, *Letter*). Soon after, she received an encouraging letter from another white woman, Anna Vroland. Margaret Tucker replied to this letter saying:

Coming on top of losing Cora's [Gilsenen] friendship it was just more than I could bear, its friends like you that help the likes of us to keep on keeping on . . . thanks for everything you have done for me and my folks (Tucker, *Letter*).

In the 1950s Anna Vroland was a unique figure in Aboriginal activism because she did not presume to know, "what was best for the Aborigines" but devoted her energies, "to creating an environment in which Aboriginal voices could be heard" (Kerin 29). Anna Vroland, a white middle-class school teacher with left-wing political associations, met and befriended a number of prominent Aboriginal spokespeople including Margaret Tucker in the mid-1930s (Kerin xii). Over the following two decades Anna Vroland's continued to cultivate links with the Aboriginal people of Victoria. By 1950 Anna Vroland's involvement included taking a vital organisational role in the construction and attempted publication of an early autobiographical narrative by Margaret Tucker. This narrative, now lost, was called "I Plead for Understanding". It appears that Margaret Tucker wrote the narrative whilst staying with Anna Vroland. In March 1950 Margaret Tucker wrote to Anna Vroland declaring, "[I] would like to stay with you for a couple of days if it is really convenient for you to have me. Dear Mrs Vroland it is out of the question to do any writing up here. I have my place full of young people and the chatting and the noise" (Tucker, *Letter*). By June 1950 Anna Vroland possessed a copy of Margaret Tucker's manuscript "I plead for Understanding" and was attempting to persuade a publisher to accept it:

I have a MS of Mrs Tucker's story 'I Plead for Understanding', in which she tells what happened to an aboriginal girl (herself) who was taken away from her mother by the police at twelve years of age, and some of the things that happened before she was reunited with her family some eight years later. The story is dramatic and sincere, but up to date I have been unable to interest a publisher. I think the story is important because Government will do nothing progressive until electors demand it. Electors are not touched by the problem until it is presented to them in a way they can understand it. I believe Mrs Tucker does this, and I hope some day, before it is too late, that her story will be published (Vroland).



Anna Vroland makes an astute observation about the need for sufficient “political will” to prompt “progressive” government action on Indigenous issues. Autobiographical narratives such as Margaret Tucker’s manuscript “I plead for Understanding”, required supportive public discourses to ensure their successful circulation. The conditions required to interest a publisher did not exist in 1950, despite Anna Vroland’s persistent advocacy. At this time no Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives had achieved mainstream publication.

Margaret Tucker found a determined and insightful collaborator in Anna Vroland, however, as a political actor Vroland was often isolated and misunderstood. Rani Kerin suggests that Vroland is a singular and distinctive political figure of the 1950s. According to Kerin, “ in her insistence on the importance of Aboriginal voices, her commitment to the legitimacy of Aboriginal self-identification and her challenging of the assimilation program, Vroland was quite alone” (Kerin). As a lone actor, Anna Vroland was ultimately unable to assist Margaret Tucker in the pursuit of her goals. Margaret Tucker’s next attempt to publish her autobiographical narrative saw her enlist the assistance of a cohesive and influential community of commitment, the MRA group in Melbourne.

Margaret Tucker felt that she needed to secure the promise of assistance before she made a second attempt at the autobiographical project. Her white friends from the MRA movement gave this assistance freely and willingly. By this time Margaret Tucker was an elderly woman with meagre formal education (in Western terms), living with her large extended family. Again she sought from her white friends a basic necessity required by every woman writer:

### **A Room of Her Own . . .**

Margaret Tucker was a prominent member of the Melbourne Koori community. She sat on the Aborigines Welfare Board from 1964 - 1972 and was a vital member of numerous Aboriginal community and advancement groups. Margaret Tucker was sixty-eight years of age when fellow members of the Aborigines Welfare Board of Victoria suggested to her that she write her autobiography. Members of the Aborigines Welfare Board felt that an autobiography from such a renowned figure would aid in the “uplift” of the Aboriginal community. It was arranged that Margaret Tucker apply for a grant from the newly established Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council.

One of Margaret Tucker's white friends, Anne Ross, recalls the decision to embark upon the autobiographical project:

It was put to her by these people who saw her worth, and who wanted to help forward the Aborigines. They thought she could do something for her people. So they felt that if she wrote her story, it would help them. So she was offered a grant [c. 1972], she thought about it (Ross).

The obstacles to the proposed project seemed to be great. Margaret Tucker had a meagre education that was curtailed by forced removal and indentured servitude. Lacking in confidence in her written expression, Margaret Tucker believed that she was, "not brainy" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 192) enough to undertake authorship alone. It seemed obvious to her friends that if she were to undertake the autobiographical project she would need ongoing encouragement and practical assistance. Although members of the Aborigines Welfare Board initiated the project and facilitated its funding, it was the MRA community who stood behind Margaret Tucker during the long years of manuscript preparation. When I interviewed Anne Ross, a long-time companion of Jean Hughes who prepared the typescript with Margaret Tucker, she recalled the dedication required of author and collaborator:

To write a story is quite an undertaking for someone who left school when they were 13 and hadn't been back. She would need help. Some of her friends felt that. Jean Hughes, who had become a long-standing friend, she felt too that she would need help. She was equipped to help her. She offered, she said, "well look Marge if you'd like to accept this offer, I will stand by and help you" (Ross).

Producing the hand-written manuscript proved to be a logistical challenge, but Jean Hughes stood by, and helped Margaret Tucker for the five-year period that was required. Anne Ross remembers Margaret Tucker's Broadmeadows home as brimming with life and activity:

It was a fairly interesting experience, going out to this place. Getting to know her family, getting to know her next door neighbours, who were extended family, getting to know all the people who called in and out - and the dog! He was a very important part of the family. He had to have a chair of his own, and no one must take his chair. A lot of that kind of thing went on. The people who called - it threw a lot of light on her life. Marge got into our hearts - everybody who came; no one was ever refused anything. People would come and ask for help. She would listen to them and find out the whole story (Ross).

The constant demands of family and community life precluded the possibility of space and time to write. Margaret Tucker's grand daughter, Maxine Barr recalls a house full of people:

My brothers and sister'll tell ya, there is nothing for a day to go past when you didn't have fourteen-fifteen people stayin' at our three-bedroom commission place in Broadmeadows! I remember always, we'd be asleep, and we'd be kicked out - on the floor on a mattress, on the couch - just to give the beds. So that's been my life, that's all I remember of it, the house was always full of people (Barr).

In order to write, Margaret Tucker retreated to the home of Jean Hughes and Anne Ross, first in Traralgon and later in Camberwell, where she was given a room and the luxury of quiet that was conducive to the production of the hand-written manuscript. A routine emerged that reflects the nature of the collaboration between Margaret Tucker and Jean Hughes and the ideological formation of this autobiographical project.

Margaret Tucker wrote at a gracious art deco flat on Bourke Road in Camberwell. Other friends, Rita and Jim Coulter, whom I interviewed in 1999, now occupy this flat. They showed me the room where Margaret Tucker wrote and described her routine. Their description recalls not only the physical routine of quiet mornings and shared meals. It also alludes to the shared philosophical beliefs that informed the collaborative process and the editing strategy from which the typescript emerged.

### **Seeking Guidance**

Margaret Tucker had been an advocate of MRA for sixteen years when she began her autobiography in 1972. For the MRA affiliate, the practice of daily guidance or listening to God was the foundation of daily life and long-term planning. Frank Buchmann, MRA founder, argued that for any willing listener, "adequate, accurate information can come from the mind of God to the mind of man. That is normal prayer" (Lean 171)(sic). The practice of a "quiet time" is a common discipline; adherents sit quietly in a meditative attitude and write down thoughts that come from God.

Margaret Tucker made "guidance" a regular practice in her life:

Nan used to do what she called guidance, and she reckoned that God used to talk to her. She'd do an hour a day. She had to have her silence. She'd be sittin' there quiet; she'd just start writin'. She'd let me read it, and I'd think, "ooh, where does this come from, Nan?", and she'd say, "God's told me to write this, I'm writin' what he's tellin' me" (Barr).

Some of the notebooks that Margaret Tucker used in her quiet times are in the personal papers held by her friend Lorna White. Below is a typical extract from her daily guidance:

11 Jan 1972 Broadmeadows

Control of ones' nature.

Terrific loyalties, affection giving the right way.

It is not courage when one is doing things for kicks.

It is courageous to fight against wrong things

and to stick to what is right.

don't put my head in the sand so I won't see things.

I must not bottle things up until it explodes - do not think things of people unless you are really sure but most of all you cannot do these things unless you are really guided by God (Tucker, *Guidance*).

The guidance for 11th January 1972 concerned general directives and encouragement for righteous living. Other guidance written in the same small notebook details Margaret Tucker's response to a Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs meeting of the previous day and her feeling that Aboriginal people are, "like flotsam on a current in the river, we do not know which way to go" (Tucker, *Guidance*). Margaret Tucker's God gave her certainty and courage when she felt threatened by her own natural inclinations and the disappointments of the Aboriginal struggle.

Daily guidance encouraged Margaret Tucker that God had a direction for her life and her people. Daily guidance also formed the foundation for the collaborative relationship and editorial strategy that shaped the manuscript of *If Everyone Cared*. Margaret Tucker stayed

with her friends in Camberwell for two or three weeks at a time. She would rise early to write, a habit borne of the MRA practice of guidance.

Anne Ross recalls her routine:

I remember, we were able to give her a room to herself . . . I would often go into her room first thing with a breakfast tray. She would be sitting up in bed with pencil and notebook writing away. I would say to her, "Marge, you're at it early". She would say, "I like writing early in the morning. My mind is clear then. I've been writing for the past hour". That is when she would best remember things from the past (Ross).

The habit of rising early to write down what she believed to be God's guidance for the day prepared Margaret Tucker for the task of writing her autobiography. The practice of guidance also shaped the editorial process. Together with Jean Hughes, she would revise the morning's writing, discerning if the rough draft matched God's desire for the finished piece. Anne Ross describes this interaction:

She would join Jean and together they would go over what Marge had been writing. The thing that struck me about that was that Jean was determined that it should be what Marge *really* wanted to say in her own words - that was the important thing. She would often say when something would come up, some issue, "now Marge, is that really what you want to say?" and Marg being an honest person, would say, "well no, no" and they would work at it to see what it was that she had here [gestures] in her heart. Then they would try again until they got it right and that would be what went into the book (Ross).

This recollection raises many issues regarding the collaborative relationship and the influence of the editor, who asks, "is this really what you want to say?". I will address these issues at length in an ensuing section. First it is important to develop a picture of the friendship that enabled the completion of the book. As the manuscript progressed Margaret Tucker and Jean Hughes saw the need for a writing retreat, to get away from visitors and other interruptions. Together they went to Gough's Bay at Eildon Weir in the central Victorian Alps. Anne Ross recalls her role as chief cook and tour guide:

I was chauffer when they had to be taken places. So we took Marg up there, and together they worked on it - just the two of them. As well as that, Marge has got a great love of the country. We were able to go for drives - Mt Buller. She loved that, it fed her spirits, because they were both engaged in a difficult job . . . (Ross).

These trips included journeys back to Margaret Tucker's own country. Margaret Tucker took several trips back to the Murray/Riverina country of her childhood during the production of *If Everyone Cared*. She revisited Aboriginal cemeteries, the Barmah forest and the Aboriginal settlements that were home to her, "She wanted to go back, she had to for her book's sake. That was where her heart was" (Ross). These visits aided recall and confirmed the importance of the project. Anne Ross and Jean Hughes accompanied her on these trips. On the final journey, intended to direct the photographer Denis Mayor to significant sites, the three women had a car accident leaving Anne Ross with a broken wrist and Margaret Tucker hospitalised for her injuries. When they had recovered from their injuries the project continued as before. The collaborative relationship described by Anne Ross and other close friends of Margaret Tucker's from MRA appears to have been founded upon a dedicated and selfless friendship. Jean Hughes and Anne Ross gave up much time and energy for a project that would not bring them any financial reward or recognition. Theirs was an enabling friendship that provided Margaret Tucker with the resources required to complete the project upon which she had embarked. The completion of the manuscript in 1976 marked twenty years of friendship between the three women.

Margaret Tucker's social status as a member of the Aborigines Welfare Board, later the Victorian Department of Aboriginal Affairs, gave her access and encouragement to embark upon her autobiography. However, it was her friendships within the MRA religious organisation that enabled her to complete the task. Jean Hughes and Anne Ross provided practical assistance in the form of transport and physical space. They also nurtured Margaret Tucker in times of emotional need, particularly as she revisited many difficult periods in her life. For example, in chapter nine of *If Everyone Cared* Margaret Tucker recalls the abuse she suffered at the hands of her first mistress in the leafy suburbs of Sydney. To convey her suffering to her mother she had to outsmart her mistress, who censored the letters she sent home. Margaret Tucker resorted to drawing stick figures on the back of the envelope as she walked to the post office. Margaret Tucker's mother interpreted these messages as calls for help and found her daughter in Sydney. Her mother, Theresa Clements defied the authorities who refused to intervene or to reveal where Margaret was lodged.

Sixty years later Margaret Tucker recalled the incident with the immediacy and clarity of the moment:

I stared at the person at the gate and my dullness cleared as I realised it was my mother. Oh the joy, I can feel it as I write. I experienced it. I kept thinking how? How did she find me? How did she manage it? All this in the space of a second. As I think of it now I cry, I cannot help it. I think of my wonderful Aboriginal mother finding her way from the bush. She had read my drawings - a figure chasing a smaller figure, hitting the small one on the head with a saucepan (Tucker, *If Everyone* 121 - 22).

This is a very moving scene. The mistress attempted to prevent Theresa Clements from seeing her daughter, but the mistress was, "no match for a distraught mother who had had her children taken from her" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 121 - 22). Margaret Tucker wept sixty years later as she recalled her mother's feat and wrote of her experience. In the handwritten manuscript, titled "The Day Mother Came", Margaret Tucker's typically open and flowing script becomes unusually tight and scrawling as she recalls and writes of her pain. Writing her autobiography was an enormous undertaking, at both an emotional and intellectual level. Ann Ross confirms that the process took its toll on the collaborators as well, "It was a lengthy business, but Jean gave that. There is a lot in the writing of a book. They had to work hard at it in various places. It takes it out of you when you are working like that. They both needed a bit of a rest . . ." (Ross). Writing *If Everyone Cared* took the best part of four years, five until publication. The relationship of support, trust and shared philosophical understandings between Margaret Tucker and her friends, particularly Jean Hughes, sustained and finally realised the production of the text.

As I turn now to the possible impact of the editorial strategies I want to hold this collaborative relationship in mind to contextualise and contrast the alterations. The scale and scope of alterations to Aboriginal women's texts can appear to be alarming at first glance. *Karobran* sustained 6075 changes to the manuscript. One can begin to understand the nature and effect of such changes with reference to the influential collaborative process, the generic structure of the text and the choice and availability of editors and their agendas.

The collaborative relationship between Margaret Tucker and Jean Hughes was framed by the long friendship between the women and the social context within which this friendship was

established. Margaret Tucker was the first Aboriginal person that Jean Hughes and Anne Ross had ever met. She became and remained the primary link between these middle/upper class women and the Melbourne Aboriginal community. Jean Hughes died in 1984. When I interviewed her friends in 1999 they recalled Jean Hughes' years of service for MRA in India as forming her approach to race and class relations.

Jean Hughes was a single woman working successfully as a department head for Australian Mutual Provident (AMP) in the early 1950s when she resigned to take up full time voluntary work with MRA. Advocates such as Jean Hughes viewed the tenets of the MRA movement to be, "above party, class and creed" (Good); the practice of absolute moral standards was viewed as an equaliser of social distinctions. Jean Hughes saw these MRA ideals put to the test as she worked within the rigid social divisions of India over a number of years in the early 1950s. She completed her period of service in India by accompanying an Indian Member of Parliament to the MRA conference at Macinack Island in the USA. At this conference Jean Hughes met Margaret Tucker.

Margaret Tucker and Jean Hughes both ascribed to the saying of MRA founder, Frank Buchman, that "it is not colour, but character that counts" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 200). Margaret Tucker believed this saying whole-heartedly. Maxine Barr ascribes this growth in self-confidence and pride to her grandmother's association with MRA:

When she was a little girl, after she was taken and put in to the domestic and all that, she said, she scrubbed her arm until it bled - to try and get the Black off her. She told me those stories. When she met MRA, they showed her: "You can be Black and still be a beautiful person" (Barr).

Margaret Tucker willingly took on the refined upper-middle class characteristics of her MRA associates. Friends recall her poise, her dignity, her dress sense and the quality of her speech. According to one appraisal, "She had stature - a big person. You had the charm and this inner dignity and quality which made its mark on people" (Coulter).



Margaret Tucker's class identification is noted by one reviewer of *If Everyone Cared*, who questions whether Margaret Tucker's identification with European Australia was the best choice for Aboriginal cultural survival:

Mrs Tucker has clearly aligned herself with those Aboriginals such as Harold Blair, Neville Bonner and Sir Douglas Nicholls, who have sought and accepted the approval of European Australia. She is an MBE. While her sincerity and right to pursue this course cannot be questioned, many will wonder at a time when Aboriginal infant mortality, blindness and unemployment vastly exceed the national average, whether it is the right one for cultural survival and social equality (Corris).

In his criticism of the autobiography, Peter Corris identifies Margaret Tucker with the likes of Harold Blair, Neville Bonner and Sir Douglas Nicholls (her cousin) as a Europeanised Aboriginal and expresses the belief that this identification was at the expense of Aboriginal cultural survival.

This response to *If Everyone Cared* highlights the impact of the discursive environment into which the text was released. This critical appraisal, like most of the critical reviews written about *If Everyone Cared*, speaks primarily to the then prevailing or authoritative discourses on Aboriginality. It appears that Margaret Tucker's class identification has been directly linked to her lasting MRA affiliation.

### **Critical Responses**

The circumstances surrounding the publication, reception and ongoing life of *If Everyone Cared* illustrate the significant influence of the MRA community upon Margaret Tucker's life and work. MRA supported Margaret Tucker in the writing process and ultimately published and promoted the title. *If Everyone Cared* received wide publicity in the newspaper reviews following initial publication by Ure Smith in 1977, but gained very limited attention upon the release of a second edition by MRA's publishing wing, Grosvenor Books in 1983. The differing profile of Ure Smith and Grosvenor Books partly explains this disjuncture.

Margaret Tucker's friends recall that Ure Smith were reluctant to release the first edition in paper back and flatly refused to consider a second edition. It appears that library sales

ensured Ure Smith would recoup their costs from the release of a hardback edition, however, the publisher had no confidence that this landmark Aboriginal publication would achieve mainstream sales in a paperback edition. Lorna White recalls her disappointment with Ure Smith's handling of the title, "When Ure Smith had it they didn't publicise it a great deal, and they were just going to remainder it, we felt that it should go on" (White). In response to Ure Smith's lack of faith Margaret Tucker and her friends approached Grosvenor Books, the publishing arm of Moral Re-Armament. They suggested Grosvenor Books cost a second edition using the same typeset and printer. Grosvenor Books decided that a second imprint was viable and proceeded with the project. John Bond, who worked for Grosvenor Books at this time, recalls the process, "We felt that the book was still very relevant, that Australia had to face its history with regard to what has become known as the Stolen Generations. So we put up the money and published it ourselves" (Bond). Grosvenor Books launched hard and soft cover editions in 1983. Grosvenor Books were unable to gain review space for *If Everyone Cared* in major broadsheets, however the persistent lobbying capitalised on interest in Margaret Tucker's film appearances and secured the text on Higher School Certificate reading lists in New South Wales and Victoria. The wide exposure gained by *Lousy Little Sixpence* provided a niche marketing opportunity for Grosvenor Books. John Bond elaborates upon this opportunity, "When the documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence* was made, and was taken up by schools, *If Everyone Cared* was put on various schools' reading lists. So I took the opportunity to market the book to those schools, and sold several thousand copies" (Bond). The second edition of *If Everyone Cared* sold over 18,000 copies in six editions primarily on a break-even basis. Today the text is still Grosvenor Books' most successful title.

The following survey discusses the critical reception of *If Everyone Cared* in seven review articles published in broadsheets, weeklies, regional papers, and religious magazines following the release of the first and second editions. The key features I identify reflect changes in the critical environment into which the two editions of *If Everyone Cared* were published, particularly changing discourses around Aboriginal history.

Newspaper reviews of the Ure Smith first edition primarily focus upon the novelty of *If Everyone Cared* as a foundational Aboriginal publication. Margaret Tucker's position as a racialised author, her conciliatory position on racial conflict and her experience of forced removal are key features. The sensational titles of these reviews reflect their preoccupation

with Margaret Tucker's status as an Aboriginal writer: "A Tribal Princess Remembers" , "A Princess Story - Unlike Any You've Ever Read" and "Survival of an Australian Slave". One of these reviews, published in the women's section of *The Sun*, patronisingly suggests that reading *If Everyone Cared* will "ginger up your genteel book group [and] take your mind off your own snug little load of troubles" (Ross, *A Princess*). The chief preoccupation of two reviews centres upon Margaret Tucker's claim to the title "princess". For example, Catherine Ross values *If Everyone Cared* as the work of "a tribal princess [who] was taught race legends" (Ross, *A Princess*). These reviews do not reflect upon any of the major issues taken up by Margaret Tucker in the autobiography itself.

The third review to adopt a sensational title, "Survival of an Australian Slave" published by Peter Corris in *The Australian* , does so for political affect. The review emphasises the shameful government policies and practices that reduced Margaret Tucker and her community to "poverty and servitude". This review suggests that *If Everyone Cared* is a valuable record of Aboriginal experience, but critiques the conservative philosophy that enabled Margaret Tucker to survive when "many of her contemporaries became outright victims of the system, suicides and derelicts" (Corris). Corris mounts a strong critique of Margaret Tucker's appeal for tolerance and conciliation, in contrast to another group of reviews which applaud her stance.

Reviews which focus upon Margaret Tucker's conciliatory politics open with titles that include, "A Woman who Refuses to Hate", "Proof of Sainthood", "A Fighter Forgives" and "Aboriginal Authoress: Give and Take to reach Harmony". These reviews acknowledge *If Everyone Cared* as a record of forced removal, but move quickly from Margaret Tucker's historical experience to her ideological management of the past. Margaret Tucker is hailed as a pacifist whose Christian values gave her a transcendent ideological platform, "'something higher' which was above bitterness and questions of race" (Warden).

The second edition of *If Everyone Cared* received a noticeably different public reception. Reviews of the second edition were limited to two regional daily papers and a religious sector publication. The approach of these reviews also diverges from those published six years earlier.

Reviews of the second edition concentrate upon the forced removal and harsh treatment experienced by Margaret Tucker without qualification. These reviews rely upon the discursive environment created by the successful screenplay *Women of the Sun* (1983) and the documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence* (1984). A review from *The Portland Observer* illustrates this style of publicity-by-association. Although titled *Lousy Little Sixpence*, the review opens with an extract from *If Everyone Cared* which is then followed by an overt promotion of the autobiography, "Margaret, whose Aboriginal name is Lillardia, writes about that traumatic parting - as well as the horrors of her training and the cruelty of her first employer - in her autobiography, *IF EVERYONE CARED*. You are urged to read it" (*Lousy* 5).

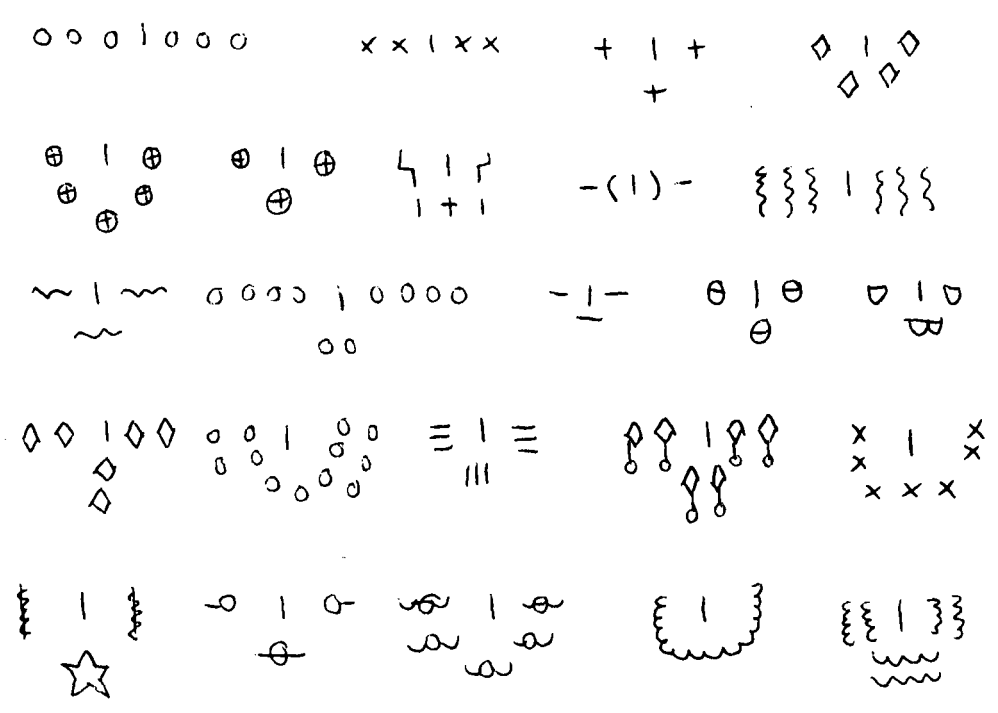
In another review Margaret Tucker's television appearances makes the local setting of her story a point of interest to the regional readership. "From Barmah with Love", published in *The Numurkah Leader* also validates the autobiography by reference to the series *Women of the Sun*:

The three girls, including Margaret's sister May were taken forcibly from their parents and were not to see them except for a few brief visits for nine years. These experiences were recently recounted in the series shown on ABC TV "Women of the Sun" which took out many awards. This pleased Margaret for she also acted her own grandmother in the series and a niece Hillis Morris [sic] was a script writer (Reilly 10).

The second edition of *If Everyone Cared* was able to tap the emerging public discourse which increasingly accommodated Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal history. Access to this discourse is marked by the contrasting treatment of Margaret Tucker's experiences as a member of the Stolen Generation in first edition and second edition reviews.

**MS 8704**

The manuscript of *If Everyone Cared* is housed in the manuscript section of the National Library of Australia. Margaret Tucker's friend, Lorna White, attempted to order the pages that constitute the manuscript prior to the donation. Only 31 pages of edited typescript have been preserved, whilst the hand-written manuscript has been retained almost in its entirety. The hand-written manuscript is a collection of Margaret Tucker's thematic writing in quarto exercise books, A4 writing paper, and small spiral bound note pads. Margaret Tucker wrote thematically as she reminisced and titled each booklet to indicate the subject. These themes invoke significant people, sacred places, Aboriginal knowledge and important events. The editors substantially disregarded the narrative flow of these booklets and rearranged the material to obtain a "flow of life" chronology conventional to the bildungsroman model of autobiography. I was able to trace and reconstruct the process because Margaret Tucker used an idiosyncratic numbering system in which the number sequence in each booklet was surrounded by patterns or symbols which identify the original sequence of the manuscript. The diagrams below replicate the patterns used by Margaret Tucker in the original manuscript. A single and consistent pattern opened the top of each page in the booklet. It appears that each theme was accompanied by a different numbering pattern.



**Diagram 1** Margaret Tucker's Symbolic Numbering System

Source: National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection, by courtesy of Maxine Barr

The original sequence of the manuscript could be replicated by matching the different paper types, which have been separated from the original booklet or notebook binding. The hand-written manuscript in the National Library is now a jumbled bundle of old multicoloured pages. This bundle gives evidence to support the claim that the editorial process led to an important erasure of difference. The original compilation in thematic booklets may have been misunderstood and subsumed by the Western imperative for progressive, chronologically ordered narratives.

The idiosyncratic organisation of the original manuscript is not reflected in the chronological ordering of the published text. No trace of the numbering symbols or the original titles remains in the published product. The symbols that Margaret Tucker arranged to sequence the hand-written manuscript may be indicative of the importance to her of visual symbols. Margaret Tucker's original thematic ordering does not suggest the individualistic focus of the "success story" that the chronological presentation achieves. The chronological ordering of the material in the published text presents Margaret Tucker as the central actor, around whom events unfold as the reader walks through chapters 1 - 16 of her life course. The original thematic ordering of the manuscript material achieves an entirely different effect. The ordering of the original manuscript positions Margaret Tucker as the storyteller who is relating memories of people and events, not as they impact upon her individual development, but upon the community of Aboriginal lives and lands. Table 3 below shows the titles that Margaret Tucker used to structure her thinking about her life during the preparation of her autobiography.

**Table 3**

**Section Titles from Margaret Tucker's Manuscript Booklets**

Monnachulla

Tales Handed down from Grand parents Through the Ages

Grannie Aggie

Missionaries

In Barmah - on the Murray River

Episode: Granny Maggie and Gramps her Hubbie

Remembering Incidents of Funny Happenings and Sad Happenings of Long Ago

Beccers - a myth (Ulupna)

Our River and Barmah Forest and What it Means to Me

May

Old Maloga Homestead

Cootamundra Domestic Training Home for Aboriginal Girls

in My Days 69 Years Ago

The Day Mother Came

Borrumbil Station Walgett - Sheep Station

Barham

My Marriage and What it Meant

The City of Melbourne

Harold Blair

The Mid Thirties

Mackinac Island

Blacks Mountain – Canberra

Source: National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection, by courtesy of Maxine Barr

This list of thematic titles speaks of Margaret Tucker's relationships with people, land and lore. It is a circular list organised by kin and place, beginning with Moonachulla where Margaret Tucker spent her early childhood, and finishing with Blacks Mountain, where her mother Theresa travelled as a young bride (pregnant with her first child, Margaret) to meet her husband's Wiradjuri people. In Wiradjuri culture, totems are given at the site where the



pregnant woman first feels her child kick, marking the birth of the child's spirit. Blacks Mountain thus becomes a significant site for Margaret Tucker, as it marks the place of her spiritual birth. In this ordering Margaret Tucker's story does not finish with her public achievements (as does the autobiography): an MBE, Aboriginal Welfare Board positions and lunches with Queens and Prime Ministers. It ends at the beginning: with her land and people. The stories that these titles herald in the original manuscript are all present in the published text, but they are diffused throughout the life span trajectory and robbed of the emphasis that the original organisation and headings provide.

The reordering of the text is the first noticeable change to what I am calling the hand-written original manuscript. The disruption of the circular narrative to obtain linearity was a structural decision that significantly changed Margaret Tucker's original emphasis upon kin and place. Many more significant changes were made within the confines of this restructured narrative. These changes include the correction of accidentals such as grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as changes which diminish, delete or qualify issues of importance to Aboriginal people. In the following section I will examine a few of these editorial decisions. The numerical count of changes to Margaret Tucker's manuscript seems at first, to be quite modest. The original hand-written manuscript was altered 830 times. This averages out to four alterations per page, compared with 53 alterations per page to the *Karobran* manuscript (See Appendix II for an extract from the original manuscript).

The hand-written manuscript was edited by Margaret Tucker's friend, Jean Hughes, while alterations to the typescript were made by the professional editor at the Ure Smith publishing house. Because the typescript is substantially missing it is difficult to conclude categorically by whom the alterations were made. I attempted to establish this by comparing the parallel sections that do remain of the hand-written manuscript to the typescript and then to the published text.

The section of typescript that survives parallels with sections of chapter 13 - 15 of the published text; 31 pages of the 205-page book. Judging from this sample, in which 53 changes were made, the average number of alterations falls in the movement from typescript to printed text, with the typescript sustaining an average of 1.7 changes per page. Although I cannot establish that this movement is consistent throughout the now missing typescript, I

will suggest that the bulk of changes (4 changes per page in the hand-written manuscript compared with 1.7 in the typescript) were made to the hand-written manuscript by Jean Hughes. It is the substance of these changes that I now turn to.

### **Editing under the Guidance of God**

When I categorised the alterations made to the *Karobran* manuscript a large majority of the alterations fell away as the correction of accidentals such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. This was not the case with the editing of the hand-written manuscript of *If Everyone Cared*. The following table represents instances of editorial intervention.

**Table 4**

#### **Instances of Editorial Intervention to *If Everyone Cared* Manuscript**

1.	New paragraph	5
2.	Standardising Colloquialisms	8
3.	Correcting or inserting punctuation	12
4.	Replacing Margaret Tucker's sentence	13
5.	Spelling Corrections	18
6.	Deleting Paragraph(s)	35
7.	Adding words or sentences	82
8.	Deleting a sentence	101
9.	Changing sentence order	136
10.	Deleting words	185
11.	Replacing Margaret Tucker's chosen word(s)	235
	<b>Total instances of change</b>	<b>830</b>

Hidden within this chart, particularly within the categories I have labelled "replacing and deleting words, sentences and paragraphs", lies the diminishing or deletion of interests highlighted by Margaret Tucker as of importance to her Aboriginal community. Among a total 830 changes, 117 diminish, delete, or qualify issues discussed by Margaret Tucker or render

them passive and/or respectable. The following table lists the areas of concern or issues the editor's alterations affected.

**Table 5**

**Significant Alterations to *If Everyone Cared* Manuscript:  
Concerns Diminished, Deleted, Qualified or Rendered Respectable**

1.	Aboriginal achievements - sport and music	2
2.	Desecration of Aboriginal burial sites	4
3.	Aboriginal spirituality	9
4.	MRA platform - moral standards, human nature	16
5.	Loss of traditional land, game and culture	25
6.	Family - kinship networks and genealogy	30
7.	Respectability of text - increased or passivity achieved through word choice	31
<b>Total</b>		<b>117</b>

In the section below I will examine ten examples from these seven categories, notably the discussion of land, kin and the editorial strategy to increase the respectability of the text.

**Loss of Traditional Land**

Margaret Tucker took a politically conservative public stance on many issues, including her disapproval of radical activists who set up a Tent Embassy at Parliament House in Canberra in 1972. Margaret Tucker's politically conservative actions did not necessarily correspond with a consistently conservative belief system. In the case of the Tent Embassy Margaret Tucker disagreed with violent public protest, not with the call for Aboriginal land rights in New South Wales and other heavily settled states. The original manuscript of *If Everyone Cared* holds in tension the desire for radical outcomes and conservative methods in the land rights debate.

Chapter one of *If Everyone Cared* closes with a discussion of Aboriginal inheritance. In the published text, this discussion is limited to the effects of miscegenation. Here Margaret

Tucker argues, counter to popular discourse, that light-skinned Aboriginal people still access and enjoy the great depths of Aboriginal spiritual inheritance. The published text reads, "The descendants of those Aborigines no matter how light-skinned they are now, are of Aboriginal blood and have made the earth richer in this land of Australia which God has given us all. There is plenty of room for everyone. Thank God for the spiritual heritage we have. That keeps me keeping on" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 32). However, the hand-written manuscript reveals that Margaret Tucker's concerns were much broader than the edited version allows. In the original manuscript the discussion of miscegenation is preceded by a description of some of the old people who were important identities in Margaret Tucker's childhood, "full-blood identities in the area" (Tucker, *Manuscript*). The extract I have quoted above, which is now only five lines in length, was originally an entire page of text. The same passage in the original manuscript deals with a number of issues at length. Margaret Tucker's chief concern is that important Aboriginal burial sites will be forgotten or desecrated. From this thought she moves to the importance of land and then to a much more politicised reflection upon Aboriginal inheritance. In the excerpt below I have italicised the phrases retained in the published piece and placed in bold some of the significant sections that were deleted:

Before it is forgotten that their is the remains of well known tribes are buried their and years to come the bones may be dug up as souvenirs - or some such thing. I often wonder if it is sentimental to worry or think of our loved one's this way. Because deep in my heart I can still see the places I lived when small, first went to school - dearly loved play mates - the little old churches - we had Sunday school; bough shed and camps and a school (temporary). All gone. Changes - more fences dividing not only land but memories of at least one old woman (Moonachulla). Another home not the same now - memories almost all buried too at Cumeragunja. people or governments call it improvement, progress. But our beloved Murray River will always be there and the lakes we love which is fast becoming a tourist attraction - fishing, camping, picnics. Barmah Forest, the Edwards River running from the Murray River past Deniliquin; twenty five miles further on past Moonaculla, **which will always be ours: the Aborigines in our hearts. Please don't blame us.** *I feel till the last descendants no matter how light skinned is identified as of Aboriginal blood and has made the earth richer in his last sleep in this earth that God has given us, Australia - plenty of room for everyone, but so little room for Aborigines now.* *I thank God for spiritual beliefs and blessings that is inherited that keeps us keeping on.* **And there is an answer to all human beings if we have the courage to live and give it: love to all humans** (Tucker, *Manuscript*)(emphasis mine).

The editorial hand deleted references to a number of important issues including the significance of land, burial sites, the division of the land by fencing and the loss of important sites. In the original manuscript Margaret Tucker insists that all Aboriginal people share a spiritual inheritance and are traditional owners of Aboriginal land regardless of external physical features such as skin pigmentation. This reconciliation of a radical land rights agenda with a conservative political approach is not sustained in the published text. The editorial excision of these views represents a loss of important particularities in *If Everyone Cared*. The published text perpetuates the view that political positions within the Aboriginal rights movement are neatly divided between the right and the left-wing consistent with Western political dichotomies.

### **Kinship**

In the manuscript version of *If Everyone Cared* Margaret Tucker repeatedly discusses Aboriginal heritage in terms of genealogy. The published text retains some of these references, but the majority are summarised and simplified before inclusion. For example, in Chapter Three Margaret Tucker discusses the nature of Aboriginal kinship. The practices of two elders, Grannie Maggie and Gramps, are described in order to explain the significance and extent of kin ties. I quote here from the published text:

They would often go walkabout to visit their many relations. (Any Aborigines, even from far away places, who had the same totems although speaking a different dialect, were considered relations. They were from the same Spirit world, not necessarily from the same flesh and blood. I think this explains why Aborigines are so clannish, and especially in those days we did our best to carry on our traditions (Tucker, *If Everyone* 46).

When writing her book Margaret Tucker did her best to carry on the tradition of personal identification via kinship networks. As I noted earlier, as many as thirty references to family and kin networks are deleted or curtailed in the published text. Aboriginal editor Sandra Phillips has discussed the peopling in Aboriginal texts, particularly representations of the volume of people moving through Aboriginal lives. When Alexis Wright's novel *Plains of Promise* was released in 1997 it was criticised as having too many characters. In an interview with Ramona Koval, Sandra Phillips responds to the criticism of Aboriginal texts.

Phillips remarks:

Even though a work may be reviewed as being too peopled, perhaps in the editorial development of the work some of the people have already been removed! (laughter) So what are they to know that there weren't twice as many or three times as many characters to start with (Phillips).

Phillips responds here to the suggestion that non-Indigenous editors, reviewers and readers find it difficult to manage the numbers and movement of characters in Aboriginal lives and literature. This is clearly the case with *If Everyone Cared*. In the original manuscript Margaret Tucker carefully lists the genealogy of many families at Moonaculla, Cumeragunja and beyond. She notes details of marriage, children, areas of settlement and career successes. Margaret Tucker discusses the descendants and relations of Jack Patten, and her other cousins. Although this extract from the manuscript is lengthy, the discussion of kinship networks deserves reproduction. I have placed in bold the sections that deal with kinship details for easy identification:

Many descendants of the **Patten** family is here, there and everywhere but only one member direct from the senior **Patten** family is living. **Uncle Jack Patten** whom I believe was born in Healsville, Victoria and married to **George Middleton's**, our grandfather's youngest daughter **Christina**, all English names given by white people those days! Aborigine names were hard to remember by white managers and school teachers. Such a pity, my Aborigine name, Lillardia - means a flowering plant. Pretty but is considered a weed in gardens. Rather attractive I think! It is the name given to me by **Old Uncle William Cooper** father of **Lynch Cooper, Sally Russel**, the late **Amy Charles**, late **Jessie Mann**, and **Gillian Cooper** and late brother **Dan Cooper** who was killed in the first world war. However, **Aunt Minnie** as all our people know her, is very gifted in education and can go far if helped the right way. She is the only **first cousin** I have on my **mother's side**. I have a few on my **father's side** His **brother Ernie Clements**, somewhere living in the Dubbo district and **my father's youngest sister May's** family whom I have longed to see but have never met. **My father's sister Ada** who married **Pat Freeman** a very fine couple. **Uncle Pat's people** lived in Yass N S Wales. His and **Aunt Ada's**, **my father's sister's granddaughter** is married to a fine young upright Aborigine who was born a **fifth generation of Granny Truggannini** (I don't know the spelling) **late of Tasmanian race. Jim and Margaret has three fine children** who are helping their parents, their father and mother being members and heads of Aborigine legal aid and doing fine work. **Jim's mother's mother Granny Mary Clark is a great great grandmother and third generation from Granny Truggannini** whose stories and happenings will never die out. Like other stories of our race, will live on many years as our age old peoples stories can only be truthfully handed down, but let happenings of

past brutalities - in any race be a lesson in how to build a better relationship with all races, no matter what colour, starting in our own country. We are called civilised or deep down are we still savages or ratbags, greed and selfish ambition is a killer of all characters. So is untruth, selfishness, hate creating wider and wider divisions. When I think about it I feel it is possible to live and bring the world together starting with our self, homes and communities. I'll always remember: God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

This comprehensive listing of kin closes with the reflection that the stories of all these old people, such as Truganini, will act to guide the ensuing generations of listeners on issues regarding race relations. The excerpt illustrates further that Margaret Tucker was consistent in her attempt to marry her Christian faith with the traditional values and spirituality of her Aboriginal inheritance, an insistence that informs the production of the manuscript and the published text. Margaret Tucker also elaborates upon her ideal of "civilised" behaviour, which aligns with the MRA stance on absolute morality and the biblical principle of salvation. Tucker closes this section of the hand-written manuscript by quoting John 3:16.

In the initial editorial phase Jean Hughes retained, but paraphrased, the kin relationships described by Margaret Tucker. The typescript groups, for example, the cousins Margaret Tucker has not met in a continuous list rather than in separate listings. The typescript does, however, edit out the final section that deals with the purpose of the kinship stories and their application to race relations, MRA standards and Christian salvation. The typescript concludes as follows, "Jim's mother's mother is Granny Mary Clarke, a third generation from Granny Truggannini whose story has been handed down to them and many other relatives" (Tucker, *Typescript*). Although paraphrased, the significant names and relationships are retained in the typescript. However, the professional editor at Ure Smith publishing house then refined the edited typescript, and none of these kinship details were retained.

Margaret Tucker related all these names, relationships and life situations as an educative resource for future generations. These stories of people and relationships are part of an oral tradition that is highly valued as a unifying cultural heritage. Margaret Tucker believed that storytelling held the potential to heal rifts and divisions within the Aboriginal community and beyond. She wrote, "it is possible to live and bring the world together starting in our own self, homes and communities" (Tucker, *Manuscript*). The original manuscript also lists the

kinship ties of other significant Aboriginal figures, including Pastor Doug Nicholas and Lionel Rose. Margaret Tucker's knowledge of kinship networks in Victoria was an extensive resource that was effectively denied to the ensuing generations of Aboriginal people by the editorial exclusion of kinship details. The professional editor treated Margaret Tucker's lists of kin relationships as extraneous or tedious details. This does not reflect their status in an Aboriginal world-view.

Margaret Tucker's knowledge of kinship networks was acknowledged at her funeral by Aboriginal singer Archie Roach who sang *Took the Children Away* in her honour:

He first related how he once sat down in a pub, a little worse for wear, near an elderly Aboriginal woman. 'Like they all do, she asked me what was my mother's name, and my father's name. Then she told me who was my grandfather and my great-grandfather, and so on'. It was that 'knowledge and wisdom that brought me back' (Lanchaster).

Margaret Tucker's knowledge and wisdom was shared generously in the manuscript version of *If Everyone Cared*. It was, unfortunately, also substantially removed from the published text. This removal powerfully illustrates the differing priorities of the writer, the collaborating amateur editor Jean Hughes, and the professional Publishing House editor.

Margaret Tucker devoted many manuscript pages to the listing of genealogical details. Her friend and collaborator Jean Hughes summarised and ordered these lists. The professional editor then removed them completely from the text. The summarisation and eventual removal of Margaret Tucker's kinship stories from *If Everyone Cared* reflects the differing commitments and priorities of editors who might be seen as ideological "fellow travellers" with the author and the power and ultimate control of editors who work for commercial publishing houses.

Remember that Margaret Tucker and her collaborative editor Jean Hughes pondered the morning's writing prayerfully before executing changes. According to Anne Ross, Margaret Tucker apparently agreed with these changes. Some pages of the remaining typescript have alterations written in by Margaret Tucker's own hand. The paraphrased kinship details I have discussed above serve as an example of this consensus style of collaboration. The typescript drops the continuing theme of moral teaching developed in the hand-written manuscript and



concludes, "Granny Truggannini whose story has been handed down to them". Margaret Tucker then amended the typescript by hand. The phrase, "Granny Truggannini whose story has been handed down to them" was then amended by hand with the words, "and many other relatives".

I want to argue a very fine line here. I acknowledge Margaret Tucker's agency within the editorial process and respect her belief that God was directing the writing process. Margaret Tucker exercised a considered and inevitably political choice in the decision to collaborate with Jean Hughes, to "tell" (Brewster 37) her story in a style that was aligned with MRA ideology. That choice might be understood as a politically strategic identity position rather than the expression of an "authentic" identity. As Anne Brewster argues, "the discursive inscription of identity in Aboriginal women's narratives is [. . .] politically strategic" (Brewster 37).

The relationship between the Aboriginal author and her patron, although established by choice, is also necessarily embedded within and influenced by a number of discursive formations that shape the resulting text (van Toorn, *Discourse* 110). These issues have relevance in relation to the editing and publication of Margaret Tucker's text. She participated in a discursive formation within a middle class, "Anglo" Christian value system advocated by her white friend/editor. Her manuscript, in the hands of the press, underwent additional change designed to meet the commercial objectives of the publisher. Both editor and publisher tailored the manuscript with different projected audiences in mind, who in turn responded to the narrative through their own culturally negotiated readings. The collaborating amateur editor, Jean Hughes, may have made a judgement that the general readership would not be able to tolerate lists of long and convoluted kinship relations or repeated invocations of the MRA ideals, and so she edited them out. Commercial, rather than ideological interests would have guided the Ure Smith professional editor, whose aim was to maximise sales. The professional editor consolidated this judgement by removing the remaining Aboriginal kinship details. What is clear however, is that, regardless of the contingent decisions that drew Tucker into the editing process, her intentions to convey the significance of kin networks is completely deleted from her own autobiography.

## Respectability

The original manuscript shows evidence of editorial sanitisation. I identified 31 instances where references that may have offended the white readership have been removed or rendered passive and respectable. As I have suggested previously, even apparently minor alterations accumulate to affect a significant shift in the tone of the text.

In the original manuscript Margaret Tucker outlines the devastating effects of tuberculosis on Aboriginal communities and criticises government administrations for treating Aboriginal people, “like guinea pigs” (Tucker, *Manuscript*). During the editorial process the intended application of her critique is removed. In the manuscript Margaret Tucker moves from the effect of government policies on the real lives of Aboriginal people and the responsibility of the wider community to develop understanding. Tucker writes:

We were happy in spite of starvation and hardships - we didn't know any other life on those Aborigine camps and settlements. [ . . . ] but one thing I know, our race should never have dwindled [ . . . ] So I feel that this story of mine may help - not only our dark youth of today, also whites to see the Real Us: human feelings of Aborigines. Even now mostly we are not understood, not even by some of our wonderful white friends! (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

In the published version the reference to starvation and hardship is removed and the section is paraphrased, “But I believe this story of mine may help both our dark youths of today and white people too, to see the real causes of the so-called Aboriginal problem. It may help both sides to understand each other better” (Tucker, *If Everyone* 30). In this section Margaret Tucker's attempt to place the burden of understanding upon the white community is deflected back to Aboriginal people. Her attempt to portray Aboriginal people as real humans with feelings is interpreted as the “so-called Aboriginal problem”, and the spirit of the section is edited out. The editorial handling of this section illustrates how Jean Hughes, one of Margaret Tucker's “wonderful white friends”, fails to understand the message that Margaret Tucker hopes will help, “not only our dark youth of today, also whites to see the Real Us” (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

The editorial sanitisation of the manuscript removes references to whiteness that may offend the readership. Early in the manuscript Margaret Tucker discusses her childhood fear of

unknown or "wild blackfellows" who tried to steal young women from the camp. In a note that is removed she ponders her relief that her 'old aunt' did not live to witness the "wild white fellows" of today. Margaret Tucker writes, "We were afraid of the wild black fellows too, but my old Aunt and Uncle would say there are no wild blackfellows now. They are all pretty tamed. Dear old Auntie I am glad - she does not see them these days: wild white fellows too" (Tucker, *Manuscript*). This reference to wild whitefellows is removed from the published text. Similarly, the description of "white people" who laughed as a beloved old uncle's funeral procession passed by is also deracialised. The procession included a pack of loyal rabbiting dogs. The white town's-people found the inclusion of rabbiting dogs among ranks of the mourners amusing. This negative reference to white people is erased, with the universalised descriptor "people" used as a replacement.

*If Everyone Cared* does develop white characters, including Margaret Tucker's first employer, that are shown to use and abuse Aboriginal people. However the editorial strategy insists on removing reference to the lasting effects of this abuse. Two short examples illustrate this strategy:

When Margaret Tucker's mother, Theresa Clements, finds her suffering abuse at her first situation in Sydney ( as I described earlier in this chapter, the physical violence was relayed on the back of her letters) and attempts intervene, the young Margaret relates the extent of the maltreatment. This exchange is left intact in the published text, but is contextualised as an event in the isolated past. Evidence presented in the manuscript that suggests Margaret Tucker will continue to carry the effects of the abuse for her whole life is removed. In the manuscript Margaret Tucker writes, "I told her everything, showed her scars on my body" (Tucker, *Manuscript*). In the published text Margaret Tucker tells but does not show the scars that she will carry on her body throughout her life.

In this fashion the lasting impact of childhood experiences is minimised by editorial intervention. One legacy of this childhood ill-treatment is Margaret Tucker's feelings of reserve and suspicion towards white people as an adult. In the original manuscript Margaret Tucker relates the ongoing effects of these feelings, particularly during her 1957 stay at the MRA conference at Mackinac Island in the USA. The original manuscript relates that she was initially shy of all the dignitaries, particularly the white people present, "I roomed with

Lorna White an Australian Nursing Sister who travelled over with me. Being troubled with my old suspicions of white people I kept in those happy group of Maoris" (Tucker, *Manuscript*). The published text removes this negative reference to white people, "I roomed with Lorna White an Australian Nursing Sister who travelled over with me, but I spent most of my time with the happy group of Maoris" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 181). In the editing of the text Margaret Tucker is not allowed the scars of her racial experience, be it physical welts or psychological reserve. These may appear to be minor instances of change, but they do have a cumulative effect upon the text. The editorial sanitising of *If Everyone Cared* reduces the likelihood of offending the white reader, who can read even the most horrific description of abuse without feeling personally implicated. The editorial strategy has attributed these terrible events to the faceless government authority or to the isolated responsible individual. Most reference to whiteness or white people have been removed, so the reader can safely condemn these often nameless perpetrators without reflecting upon their own position as benefactors of Aboriginal dispossession.

The editorial treatment of Margaret Tucker's manuscript takes an unexpected twist when confronted with Margaret Tucker's failed marriage and her repeated concentration upon declining moral values and the answer she identifies in Moral Re-Armament.

The editor's handling of the marriage failure material suggests that it has been acceptable for Margaret Tucker to pass as a middle/upper class woman of refined taste and manners, but not to claim this status for herself. Margaret Tucker married Phil Tucker, the son of "well-known pioneers, highly respected" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 157). Maxine Barr describes her Grandfather as, "from a very well-to-do family", with interests in orchards, fruit export and race horses (Barr). The Tuckers were a proud family with social status that ensured that, "Every street in Stocksdale is named after Tuckers or Hazlewoods, and that's all her husband's" (Barr). In *If Everyone Cared* Margaret Tucker relates her grief when she realises what social stigma her marriage has bought upon her husband's family, "I had not realised the heartache and shame an Aboriginal girl could bring to a white family in those days by marrying their son" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 157). The family eventually accepted their Aboriginal daughter-in-law and in the published text the theme closes with gestures of the family's affection for Margaret. These gestures include the youngest son's feelings of loyalty and affront when Margaret is ill-treated on a public bus and words of affection from

her mother-in-law upon her deathbed. It is the editorial treatment of this second gesture that suggests the limitation of Margaret Tucker's class affiliation. The published text relates the incident as follows, "As I wept, her last words were, 'we love you for yourself'. I have treasured these words from a very proud white lady because it made me feel it was worth trying to live without bitterness and hate on one's heart" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 158). The manuscript makes a much more serious claim of recognition and class affiliation than the published text allows:

Before the old lady died (my mother-in-law) she told me as I cried, her last words were, "you are more of a lady than my son is a gentleman and we all love you for yourself". I have treasured those words from a very proud white lady because it made me feel it was worth trying to live without bitterness and hate on one's heart (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

The mother-in-law's statement that Margaret Tucker was, "more of a lady than my son is a gentleman" could be interpreted as the condemnation of the son as ungentlemanly. Alternatively, as Margaret Tucker chose to interpret it, the phrase represents recognition of her worth as a lady. Jean Hughes edited this status claim out of the surviving section of typescript. Another status claim edited out of the text reveals the basis of Margaret Tucker's claim to the title "Princess Lillardia of the Ulupna". Whilst attending the MRA conference at Mackinac Island Margaret Tucker is introduced to other dignitaries, "by my tribal name, Lillardia, given to me by that old Aboriginal warrior, Uncle Bill Cooper" (Tucker, *If Everyone* 180). The original manuscript elaborates upon this tribal name:

I was introduced by my tribal name Lillardia that was given by a dearly loved old Aboriginal warrior, Uncle Bill Cooper, and my mother being the last of a line of chiefs in her Ulupna tribe, I was given the honorary title being the oldest [ . . . ] the title Princess Lillardia. Which in truth, every tribe has the right to hand down if wished (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

Margaret Tucker's right to claim the title "Princess", which has been handed down to her, is edited out of the text. The deletion of claims to status is in accord with the MRA belief that the practice of absolute moral standards acts as a social equaliser that dispenses with the need for class distinctions. However, Margaret Tucker, who emulated the accent and manners of her middle/upper class MRA friends, still felt the need to assert her pride in and claim to this status within the Aboriginal community and on Aboriginal terms.

## Moral Standards

The original manuscript of *If Everyone Cared* reveals Margaret Tucker's preoccupations and interests; what she considered worthy of inclusion in her autobiography. As I have argued, these preoccupations have been diluted or deleted from the published manuscript in the interests of the autobiographical form, the presumed reader, or to conform to the philosophical convictions of the MRA movement. The desires of the author, reader, autobiographical form and the MRA position are often in conflict. Until this point I have illustrated this conflict as the editing-out of Aboriginal cultural difference and the sanitisation of the text. However, compromise is required to simultaneously satisfy the conflicting desires of the parties involved in the production of the text. The handling of Margaret Tucker's overt and continual references to moral decline and the virtues of a "holy" lifestyle illustrate this compromise. Sixteen references to moral standards are removed from the text, but many more remain. Often they are included in the typescript then deleted by the professional editor. The example below illustrates the flow of change. In chapter fourteen Margaret Tucker describes her first encounter with MRA. In the handwritten manuscript she writes:

I have never ceased to be thankful for meeting such people [ . . . ] who not only spoke of change in their lives but showed that it could be lived from the heart and given all over the world, not only by whites but by all races especially Aboriginals. It is a challenge, its hard, but it has given me a clearer vision of what we are doing to our world today - pornography, hate, greed, selfish ambition, destroying each other. have we the courage to fight against such evils? There is a right way and a wrong way - a self righteous way is phoney (Tucker, *Manuscript*).

The typescript prepared by Jean Hughes paraphrases Margaret Tucker's original text slightly:

I have never ceased to be thankful for meeting such people [ . . . ] They not only spoke about change in their lives, but showed that it could be lived in any home and elsewhere by all races all over the world, especially Aboriginals! It is a challenge, it is hard, but trying to live straight has given me a clearer vision of what we are doing to our world today, greed, hate, ambition destroying one another. Have we the courage to fight such evils? There is a right way and the wrong, self righteous phoney way (Tucker, *Typescript*).

The typescript hones Margaret Tucker's description of the MRA movement, coining the phrase "to live straight", in order to sum up the MRA lifestyle. This phrase was not used in the hand-written manuscript. The only other distinct difference between the two texts is the removal of pornography as a specific evil. In other instances Margaret Tucker discusses the abuse of alcohol, drugs, illicit sex and the social acceptability of nakedness as examples of the moral laxity of the present generations. These references are also substantially depleted or removed altogether from the typescript. The major change to this section of text takes place in the transition from typescript to printed text; that is in the hands of the professional editor at Ure Smith. The published version of this section reads:

I have never ceased to be thankful for meeting such people [ . . . ]. They not only spoke about change in their own lives, but showed that it could be lived in any home anywhere by all races across the world, including Aborigines! Their lives were a challenge - a hard one - but they showed me how to live straight, not in the self-righteous phoney way I had been living (Tucker, *If Everyone* 173).

Margaret Tucker's words are transformed, as the hand-written manuscript becomes typescript, which then becomes printed text. The life style change that MRA advocates is now phrased as "including Aborigines!" rather than being "especially" applicable. Margaret Tucker's vision of the world's evils are removed altogether from the published text, with only the key phrase "to live straight" retained. Remember that the editor Jean Hughes included this phrase at the typescript phase. Finally, Margaret Tucker's distinction between the right way to live and the wrong, "self-righteous phoney way", is removed. This phrase, which had been mobilised by Margaret Tucker to describe the evils of the world today, is now applied to her own past life. The changes between the hand-written text, the typescript, and the published text illustrate how Margaret Tucker's particular preoccupations and interests are diluted, deleted or transformed in the production of the final draft.

The significant differences described above result from a comparison between the hand-written manuscript, the typescript and the published text. This analysis is based upon the 31 pages that remain of the typescript. Were I able to make a comparison across the whole 205-page text it is possible that the overall effect of the alterations between editorial stages is even more profound.

## The Colour of Whiteness

Margaret Tucker reiterates her view that “it is not colour but character that counts” throughout her text *If Everyone Cared*. However, it seems that colour did count in the editing process. The colour that counted in the editorial phase was the colour of whiteness. The editing strategy employed by Jean Hughes and later the editor at Ure Smith reduces cultural difference to sameness. This reduction is evidenced in the removal or reduction of significant Aboriginal cultural markers such as references to traditional land and lore, or to the extrapolation of kinship networks. The sanitisation of the text to minimise the chance of offending the white reader also reveals the cultural bias of the editors or the deliberate tailoring to suit an assumed white readership.

Margaret Tucker's hand-written manuscript showed many signs of cultural difference, including the original presentation in thematic and circular form. These differences were broadly reduced to sameness, resulting in a linear text oriented to project individual life achievement rather than the view of one from within the group. Margaret Tucker's grand daughter, Maxine Barr confirms this view of her Nan. She recalls Margaret Tucker as saying, “all I am as a person is done for my people”. Maxine Barr continues, “Some people go through life boasting about: ‘how I got this, how I got that, and I'm noted’, Nan was never that person” (Barr). In this view Margaret Tucker's life was actually antithetical to the bildungsroman model of autobiography: an individualistic model of autobiography that the editors crafted out of Margaret Tucker's own words.

The remodelling of Margaret Tucker's original manuscript to resemble a Western style autobiography illustrates the cost of publication for this foundational Aboriginal woman writer. Her manuscript held potential to represent Aboriginal understandings of land, kinship and approaches to political activism that the editors were ill-equipped to recognise or accommodate. The changes that I have described in this chapter are the scars of this encounter between white editor and Aboriginal author. Nevertheless, the collaborative relationship between Jean Hughes, Anne Ross and Margaret Tucker was substantially enabling. The shared MRA philosophy served as a foundation for the friendship between the women. As I have illustrated above and the previous chapter and in this section, shared philosophy does not preclude differential access to power nor differing interpretations of



ideology. The manuscript study shows that Margaret Tucker attempted to marry her Aboriginal traditions with the MRA philosophy, a combination that was not accommodated during editorial preparation of *If Everyone Cared*. Margaret Tucker's lasting affiliation with MRA illustrates how a community of commitment enabled the preparation and publication of a foundational Aboriginal woman's autobiography. MRA affiliates continue to maintain the public memory of Margaret Tucker, memory which is inflected by the present ideals of the community.

## **Section III**

**Re-membering *Stradbroke Dreamtime* by Oodgeroo of  
the Tribe Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba**

## Seven

### ***Political Activism and the Writing Life: From Poetry and Pan-Aboriginal Politics to Children's Prose and Cultural Education***

#### **Publishing and Politics**

Previous sections of this thesis considered the political alliances of foundational Aboriginal women writers Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker and how these alliances influenced the production and reception of their autobiographical texts. Both these women were involved with communities of commitment which left distinct marks upon their autobiographical texts, *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared*. Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker forged long-term coalitions with white political groups and their ideological structures: CPA aligned “united front” groups and Moral Re-Armament. From these communities of commitment they drew support that aided and shaped the autobiographical narratives they produced in the early 1970s. Clare and Tucker’s writing manifests tensions between their chosen politics, everyday realities and Aboriginal cultural beliefs. Clare and Tucker reconciled these tensions through mutual compromise with their supporters. My research documents the nature and extent of these compromises and their impact upon the autobiographical text. Collaborative compromise, however, allowed both the writer and the group that supported the Aboriginal woman to realise some important goals through the publication.

In this chapter I document the political history of Oodgeroo of the Tribe of Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba, noting how she struggled to overcome legacies of colonialism in her writing life and the life of her communities. Oodgeroo published her autobiographical narrative *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in 1972, five years before the publication of *If Everyone Cared*. This title was the first prose work to be published by an Aboriginal woman, however, the text fell outside the conventions of the autobiographical genre because it was viewed as children’s literature. Oodgeroo’s position as a high profile Aboriginal activist and poet prompted me to examine this neglected foundational text. My research documents the circumstances that contributed to the side-lining of this foundational autobiographical text and recuperates what I demonstrate to be a significant publication in Aboriginal literary history.

Oodgeroo's importance as a historical actor and availability of material that has not previously been incorporated into biographical accounts of her life requires that a substantial section of this thesis is devoted to Oodgeroo and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. It is clear that both Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker were also actively involved in Aboriginal politics at the local and national level. During my research into the FCAATSI split it became evident that all three women were present and able to cast a vote at the decisive Easter 1970 conference. The complexities of Monica Clare's and Margaret Tucker's political concerns, difficulties and intrigues were not registered with the detail available pertaining to Oodgeroo. For this reason I take the opportunity to detail the political environment into which all three autobiographical narratives were received in the 1970's, via the political journey of Oodgeroo.

Oodgeroo's political affiliation and support structures differed from other foundational Aboriginal women writers who were published later in the 1970s. Aboriginal activists such as Tucker and Clare found life-long ideological homes within white-dominated communities of commitment. Many Aboriginal people struggled with the limitation of ideological and organisational self-interest. Activists such as Charles Perkins found some white supporters to be, "friends of convenience who helped 'so long as it reflected on them well or served a purpose for them'" (Read, *Charles* 69). Branded "communist" by the conservatives and a "right-winger" by the left, activists such as Perkins demonstrated that passion for Aboriginal rights was not necessarily reliant upon a traditional ideological and institutionalised political base.

Oodgeroo was among the ranks of the emerging Aboriginal intelligentsia who had tried and abandoned a variety of white political organisations. Like Perkins, Oodgeroo in her primary allegiance to Aboriginality, maintained a freedom to choose and move between ideologies. By the time Oodgeroo came to write her autobiographical stories in the period 1969 -1972, she had moved through both the CPA in the 1950s, the ALP in the 1960s, and had resigned from FCAATSI by 1969, then the peak organisation in Aboriginal politics.

In 1972 Oodgeroo abandoned poetry and institutionalised politics, choosing to entwine educational endeavours with creative prose into a new and unique politics. Oodgeroo harnessed this entwined politics of education and writing to foster cultural and environmental conservation and to teach anti-racism. I contextualise this move by examining Oodgeroo's experiences in

institutionalised politics, or what she described as involvement at, “a practical level with the struggle for our rights” (Sykes, *Murawina* 152). Oodgeroo’s poetry was part of the practical struggle for Aboriginal rights:

In my early days it was a real struggle for me to reconcile politics and what I saw happening around me, with the reality of Aboriginal cultural beliefs, and often my poetry has been written in an effort to come to grips with this (Sykes, *Murawina* 152).

For Oodgeroo, pan-Aboriginal activism complemented her role as a public poet. In the 1960s, she established and consolidated her reputation as an outspoken poet, describing her poetry as, “sloganistic, civil writerish, plain and simple” (Walker, *Aboriginal*). Oodgeroo’s poetry lamented the lack of civil rights, impoverished living conditions, the loss and destruction of traditional cultures and lands. Her poetry was received by many Aboriginal people as a representative voice that addressed the concerns of an emergent pan-Aboriginal politics, while also addressing everyday realities at the local level and attempting to value and preserve traditional Aboriginal cultural beliefs. Strident political poems such as “Aboriginal Charter of Rights” and “Oration” were first delivered at political gatherings and became catch-cries for the political struggle of organisations such as FCAATSI to which Oodgeroo belonged. This link between art and politics sealed Oodgeroo’s public reputation as “Kath Walker, Aboriginal poet and political activist”. Yet Oodgeroo went on to publish just as many children’s prose titles as she did poetry, and these were also best sellers. The public memory of Oodgeroo retains the image of poet/activist and does not move past a series of personal and institutional crises which engulfed Oodgeroo between 1969 and 1972. Oodgeroo’s significant shift to prose writer and educationalist is substantially lost from the public memory. The second chapter of this section shows that the editorial and generic shaping of Oodgeroo’s first prose work, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972), significantly depoliticised her prose voice to meet the market expectations of her chosen tool.

In 1972 Angus and Robertson released Oodgeroo’s *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, the first mainstream publication of an autobiographical narrative by an Aboriginal woman. The period 1969 -1972 when *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was written, edited and published represents a period of crisis and change in Oodgeroo’s political activism and creative output. I consider this period as a key intersection between Oodgeroo’s politics and writing. During this period she moved from writing

poetry and maintaining political involvement in pan-Aboriginal, peak level, political organisations to producing children's prose and working as an individual in strategic, localised educational interventions. Nuancing the available tributary biographical record reveals that setbacks, vacillation and betrayal often punctuated Oodgeroo's path. Oodgeroo repeatedly strived for, but was disappointed with, attempts at political solidarity and community in activism. Oodgeroo did not find a permanent political home or community of commitment as did Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker. Oodgeroo, instead, forged strategic political alliances with white supporters and structures; alliances that were mobile, ambivalent and provisional upon their usefulness for her goals. Oodgeroo drew a dedicated but disparate band of supporters to her cause, and a community of prominent individuals gathered around her. Her determination to achieve her goals and perseverance in the face of disappointment and the loss of community support proved that, "one person can make a difference".

### **A Woman Who Proved One Person Can Make a Difference**

On North Stradbroke Island, in a shady clearing, stands a grave marked by a large stone. The grave is covered with shells, decorations and ferns. This is the resting-place of Oodgeroo of the Tribe of Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba. The plaque above her grave reads:

A woman who proved that one person can make a difference  
Resting in the arms of her beloved earth mother

Oodgeroo was born Kathleen Mary Jean Ruska on November 3, 1920. Both her parents were of Aboriginal descent. Oodgeroo's mother, Lucy, was from mainland Queensland. She was a stolen child raised in Catholic institutions. Oodgeroo's father, Ted, was a Noonuccal man with strong ties to his traditional land and waters. Oodgeroo was educated on North Stradbroke Island before she went into service on the mainland at age thirteen. In 1941 Oodgeroo joined the Women's Army to escape the drudgery of housework. In 1942 she married her childhood playmate, Bruce Walker, with whom she had become re-aquainted upon moving to Brisbane. Oodgeroo's public life began in Queensland in 1944 when, with her husband Bruce, she became involved with the Communist Party. Together they contested and publicised colour-bar practices in Queensland towns such as Bundaberg. Her experiences in the CPA-aligned Brisbane Realist Writers group and the connections she forged there were to have an important and lasting influence on her creative path.

Oodgeroo's political party memberships, however, did not last. In the course of her political career she joined and became disaffected with the CPA (mid 1940s), the ALP (1969) and the Democrats (1983). Oodgeroo's eldest son Denis was born in 1946. Around this time she became supporting sole-parent and, in 1953, her second son Vivian was born. In 1958 Oodgeroo became involved with the newly formed Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (QCAATSI) and its parent body of FCAATSI. Oodgeroo was soon among the public faces campaigning for the removal of discriminatory clauses from the Australian constitution and the abolition of state-based Aboriginal Welfare Boards. She toured Australia campaigning, meeting politicians and speaking at public meetings. Meanwhile, high profile members of the Realist Writers group promoted Oodgeroo's poetry within their circles of influence, gaining the attention of Judith Wright. Jacaranda Press published *We Are Going* in 1964, *The Dawn is at Hand* in 1966 and *My People* in 1970. Oodgeroo was both hailed as a "people's poet" and derided as a "propagandist". She became a household name and the best selling poet in Australian publishing history.

In the early 1970s a crisis in Oodgeroo's personal and political life prompted her to "retire" to her home on North Stradbroke Island. In 1971 Oodgeroo resigned from organised politics and withdrew from public life. "Retiring" to Moongalba on Minjerriba (North Stradbroke Island), Oodgeroo created a cultural education centre that would influence the lives of hundreds of thousands of children in the next twenty years. From Moongalba Oodgeroo embarked on the prose phase of her literary production, writing several children's books, theatre and television scripts. Oodgeroo founded Moongalba, hosting educational camps for children that fostered responsible race relations and environmental citizenship. Her prose writing for children began in 1972 with the publication of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. This text was addressed primarily to an audience of children and extended to her politics of race relations and conservation.

Her retirement to Moongalba did not stem the relentless flow of invitations. In the 1970s and 1980s Oodgeroo gave lecture tours in New Zealand, Fiji and the United States of America. She represented her people and Australia at international writers conferences and cultural festivals in Papua New Guinea, Malaysia and Ghana. Her role in a cultural delegation to China in 1984 resulted in her final collection of poetry *Kath Walker in China* (1988). In 1986 she travelled to Moscow at the invitation of Gorbachev to attend The International Forum for a Nuclear Free

World. In 1987 Oodgeroo's disgust at the preparations for the bicentenary of white settlement led her to mobilise her considerable international reputation in symbolic protest. She returned her MBE (awarded in 1970) and abandoned her English-derived name, Kath Walker, adopting the Noonuccal word for the paperbark tree (Oodgeroo) as her name. Oodgeroo was perceived by some to be walking away from her label of fame. One disgruntled Aboriginal person commented, "But Kath, you're famous as Kath Walker", to which the newly self-named Oodgeroo replied: 'Well, I'll just have to start all over again and get famous as Oodgeroo'"(Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 129).

Oodgeroo soon gained public recognition under her Aboriginal title. She continued to consolidate her work as anti-racist educator, inculcating respect and recognition for Aboriginal culture. Oodgeroo's 1988 collaboration with her son Vivian (newly re-named Kabul) resulted in the exciting "Expo '88" dramatic production, *The Rainbow Serpent*. This production related Aboriginal creation stories and called for human cooperation and conservation. It played over 10,000 performances. *The Rainbow Serpent* cooperated with Moongalba to forge new links between Aboriginal culture and environmental activism, promoting the conservation and valuing of Mother Earth. Oodgeroo was awarded honorary doctorates by Macquarie and Griffith Universities in 1988 and 1989. Oodgeroo's final project, the initiation of an Aboriginal Studies component in tertiary teacher education, secured an institutionalised base for this anti-racist, cultural education initiative in primary and secondary schooling. Her final wish was for the success of this community-based national initiative, for which she acted as a principal consultant. This initiative echoes Oodgeroo's determination in 1973 to "do good for the next generation" (Wright, *Folder 470*).



## For the Next Generation

Judith Wright was a trusted friend and dedicated supporter of Oodgeroo, a person with whom she shared an important, lasting personal correspondence. Their letters touched upon creative projects, politics, family and personal news. On May 18th 1973 Oodgeroo wrote to thank Judith for sending a copy of Wright's 1972 poetry collection, *Alive*. She wrote:

The poems are different somehow. They made me feel sad but then that is probably because I too know what it is like when one reaches fifty years of age. I feel that time is running out too and for all my efforts I see little accomplished and so much left unaccomplished for the human race. One of the reasons I turned away from poetry I think. Am beginning another children's book. Perhaps this is where I can do good for the next generation  
(Wright, *Folder 470*).

This letter to Judith Wright voices feelings of frustration that "time is running out too and for all my efforts I see little accomplished and so much left unaccomplished for the human race". The period preceding Oodgeroo's fiftieth birthday and the writing of this letter in 1973 marked a transition point in her politics and writing. Until 1969 Oodgeroo's considerable efforts contributed to the political agenda of multi-racial civil rights groups. Oodgeroo worked in FCAATSI for twenty years until the first in a series of political and personal crises in her life between 1969 and 1972. The FCAATSI organisation splintered in 1969 over the issue of Aboriginal control of the organisation. After the split Oodgeroo persevered with pan-Aboriginal political work on the national level, moving to the National Tribal Council, an organisation that prioritised indigenous leadership and decision making styles, as well as attempting to articulate a distinctly Aboriginal symbolism.

## Oodgeroo and FCAATSI

Oodgeroo became involved in institutionalised Aboriginal politics in 1958, when she responded to a call for Aboriginal representation on the Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (QCAATSI). Although vigorously committed to the Aboriginal cause, none of the people involved in this fledgling organisation were indigenous. Bob and Kathie Cochrane were among the ranks that formed QCAATSI; they became life long friends and supporters of Oodgeroo. Seeking indigenous representation, Kathie Cochrane attempted, "to go out and talk to Aboriginal people in their homes" (Cochrane, *Interview*). She found that

Aboriginal people were reluctant to become personally involved with QCAATSI. Kathie Cochrane explained the reluctance of Aboriginal people to engage with organised protest and advancement groups:

Aboriginal people were not very willing to be involved at that time because everything they'd had to do with white people who were trying to do good things for them always ended in nothing particular, and sometimes in an unfavourable sort of way. They simply didn't trust white people and experience had taught them that (Cochrane, *Interview*).

Aboriginal people repeatedly suggested that the appropriate person to contact would be Oodgeroo:

I did find when I was going round and trying to get people interested that everybody said, 'you should talk to Kath Walker' and evidently the Aboriginal people did regard her as a sort of spokesperson, and didn't mind 'dobbing her in', so to speak (Cochrane, *Interview*).

Oodgeroo served as state secretary of QCAATSI from 1961 - 1970. This position required her involvement with the national umbrella group, FCAATSI.

The high point of FCAATSI's political agitation was its successful campaign in the 1967 referendum to have the federal government assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and to have Aboriginal people counted in the census. The positive result of the "Yes" vote, however, did not prompt the Commonwealth government to action. The circumstances of Aboriginal people were substantially unchanged despite the overwhelming majority victory. Faith Bandler writes:

Change following the referendum was disappointingly slow. Our early euphoria died down. The government, despite putting the referendum to the people of Australia, had themselves been lukewarm about it. This was evident not only in their pre-referendum posture but also from the absence of any real plan of action on which they should embark following the referendum. Meanwhile, the lives of Aborigines virtually stayed the same (Bandler, *Turning* 116).

Oodgeroo, who had been fully immersed in Aboriginal rights organisations, FCAATSI and the Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League (QUAAL) for almost a decade, was also unhappy with the practical outcomes of the 1967 referendum.

Oodgeroo's response to the Federal Government's tardy reform program was to take action as an individual. She gained ALP preselection for her home electorate of Greenslopes, contesting the May 1969 Queensland state election. Oodgeroo believed that Aboriginal people should be in positions of power from which to remove structural disadvantage and initiate policies affecting Aboriginal communities. This platform was not successful in Greenslopes. Although the first Aboriginal woman to gain preselection for political office, Oodgeroo was no more than a throwaway candidate for the ALP. The seat Oodgeroo contested in 1969, Greenslopes, was a blue-ribbon liberal seat (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 77). Oodgeroo's position was made more difficult by what she perceived as sexist and racist attitudes within the Labor movement, "I lost a lot of the socialist votes for two reasons. One I was a woman and two I was Aboriginal" (Mitchell 197). With the election loss behind her Oodgeroo resigned from the ALP.

Oodgeroo's politics took another tack, away from the machinery of institutionalised representation, just one month after the disappointment of her election loss. From this time her political work emphasised the need for meaningful dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, with measurable outcomes in the identification and support of Aboriginal leaders.

In June 1969 Oodgeroo embarked for London where she was an Australian delegate to the World Council of Churches conference: "Consultation on Racism". Here she formed a lasting friendship with one of her support partners, Don Dunstan. Oodgeroo also returned with an appreciation for the significance of international debate and influence over indigenous issues. International opinion both legitimated local experience and gave leaders access to a large range of activist stances and political strategies. International bodies such as the World Council of Churches granted essential funds for the establishment of autonomous Aboriginal lobby groups such as the National Tribal Council. Upon her return from London, Oodgeroo produced a number of, "blazing speeches and articles" (Read, *Cheeky* 76) that decried the lack of real political power available to Aboriginal people.

In Oodgeroo's terms, the Australian situation was no less than an, "institutionalised evasion process":

Black Australians are expected to believe that the Aboriginal victim is prevented from formulating his own policy for his own good. [ . . . ] Aborigines have been given the vote in order to vote for white politicians. Yet, in attempting to break into politics the black Australian has shown very clearly that white Australians are not prepared to allow a black Australian to speak on their behalf in Parliament. Rather than vote for an Aborigine there were those who deliberately threw their vote, or gave it to the white candidate least expected to be elected. If Aborigines move towards independence these white Australians feel betrayed by the very declaration of independence of black Australians (Walker, *Racism* 2).

Oodgeroo's experience at the Consultation on Racism conference in London had alerted her to the fact that, "Australian blacks seemed so far behind many other indigenous peoples" (Read, *Cheeky* 76). The publication of Oodgeroo's article 'Racism: Double thinking, complex state of mind', in the new Aboriginal weekly *Origin* (and not in a national broadsheet) exemplified Oodgeroo's frustration with lack of access to political power. Oodgeroo's frustration was expressed in two forms: the desire to withdraw and the desire to challenge. Although these impulses may appear contradictory, Oodgeroo did both.

A few weeks after Oodgeroo had lambasted the available readership and audience with these blazing speeches and articles, she wrote to Judith Wright, expressing her exhaustion and anguish. Her mind, Oodgeroo wrote, was, "in turmoil and I feel I must get away from the rat race for two reasons 1) I am tired 2) I feel I need to write my thoughts about the racial situation" (Wright, *Folder* 470). In this letter Oodgeroo also responded with grateful acceptance to Judith Wright's standing invitation to retreat and recuperate at her home at Tamborine Mountain, south of Brisbane. Oodgeroo's aim was to use the retreat as time and space to start another book. On 31 August 1969, Oodgeroo wrote to Judith Wright explaining her decision:

I am withdrawing from the mad rat race of society for a while to write another book. [ . . . ] I am cancelling much of my work and by the middle of October I should be free to do some writing. Vivian is not with me at present. He has gone off to make his fortune in the south. He is at the headstrong age of almost seventeen years and like his elder bro. has to learn about life the hard way. I hope he doesn't come unstuck. Anyway, if he does I shall just have to glue him together again (Wright, *Folder* 470).

Oodgeroo's concerns above were not limited to lofty questions of race relations; she lived what she described with annoyance as, "her double identity" (Collins, *A Mate* 19). Oodgeroo attempted to negotiate between her responsibilities toward her family (her sons were then aged 23 and 17 years and her eldest grandchild then 4 years old), her friends and community with the demands of public life and a relentless itinerary.

Since 1960 Oodgeroo had been conducting an ongoing series of adult education tours. Her lectures touched upon her own poetry, the Aboriginal rights movement and Aboriginal culture. At one point these lecture series saw her touring three states in as many months. She was involved with Aboriginal advancement groups at the state and federal level and had published three collections of poetry which are reputed to have sold more copies than those of any other Australian poet except C.J.Dennis (Van Toorn 30). The public popularity of these titles also demanded public appearances and lectures of Oodgeroo. The demands on Oodgeroo's time and energy were described by friends as absurd (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 79).

Oodgeroo planned to withdraw from "the rat race" to write what she thought would be a book on race relations. Her concern was with the need for Black political autonomy and the difficulty of achieving this within the white-dominated Australian civil rights movement. She asked Judith Wright if she would be prepared to join her in publishing a bi-racial dialogue on, "the reconstruction of the human race":

What I had in mind is to think black and for someone to think white. There is a need for a healthy balance of criticising world affairs. Is it possible for you to be the white thinker and assist me to write the book [ . . . ] I am afraid if I write it alone it will be lopsided and biased (Wright, *Folder 470*)

Oodgeroo did retreat to Wright's home, Calanthe on Tamborine Mountain, for what Judith Wright described in a letter to me as, "a working holiday away from her problems" (Wright McKinney). Oodgeroo may have retreated from the immediacy of her problems, but she still carried with her and explored a range of solutions to the problems of her people. Whilst on retreat Judith Wright and Oodgeroo spent the mornings writing and in the afternoon they travelled around South East Queensland (Wright McKinney). They were looking for a suitable site to establish an Aboriginal cultural centre, Boornong Mumba, a project of the newly established Brisbane Tribal Council. Denis Walker had written to Judith Wright on behalf of members of the Brisbane Tribal Council, engaging her as a consultant for the project (Wright,

Folder 470). The importance of developing and maintaining connections with land as a path to reinvigorating Aboriginal culture and community was increasingly apparent for Oodgeroo. On these trips Oodgeroo and Judith Wright were looking for, "A bora ring or some such indication that the place would be what she wanted - obviously connected with Aboriginal occupation" (Wright McKinney).

However, the three-week visit found only desecrated and occupied sites and did not result in a dialogue on racism. Instead, Oodgeroo spent her time at Calanthe writing eight of the stories that would constitute her 1972 book *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (Wright McKinney). This writing retreat was an indication of a developing shift in Oodgeroo's politics, a shift that also found expression in her future literary output. At a time of exhaustion and disappointment a return to the nurturing place of land and Aboriginal cultural beliefs became increasingly important.

### **The FCAATSI Split**

The problem of Aboriginal agency and control of Aboriginal advancement groups emerged as a key issue in 1969 and 1970. The path pursued by civil rights groups such as FCAATSI, with emphasis upon achieving sameness through assimilation, did not adequately recognise the demands of difference or autonomy. Aboriginal people wanted the opportunity to engage in, "formulating [their] own policy for [their] own good" (Walker, *Coalition*). Aboriginal activist Charles Perkins and community leader Pastor Doug Nicholls had earlier expressed their dissatisfaction with the white-dominated organisational culture of FCAATSI in 1967 by setting up an alternative all-Aboriginal structure, the National Aboriginal Affairs Association (NAAA). The splintering away from FCAATSI by Aboriginal delegates such as Perkins and Nicholls indicated the growing influence of identity politics and a shift away from the assimilatory underpinning of FCAATSI's call for non-discrimination (Rowse 73). The influence of the Black Power movement in the United States was significant, as Black Power did not call for equal treatment without distinction, but rather sought to recognise and affirm the pride and power available in difference. Black Power activists also took a more radical, tactical approach.

In 1969 Aboriginal rights lobby groups, which at that time had been dominated by white executives tabled motions that only Aboriginal people, "take the leading places in actions and organisations which seek to promote the advancement of Aborigines"

(Silverwood 8). This direct critique of white leadership and the assimilatory underpinning of existing Aboriginal rights groups led to the development of the first national network of autonomous Aboriginal controlled advancement organisations. The Aboriginal-controlled Tribal Council was formed in Brisbane and a major change to the constitution of the Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League (VAAL) saw the exclusion of non-Indigenous people from the committee. In Queensland Oodgeroo's friend Kathie Cochrane tabled a motion that would disband QCAATSI in order to support the newly formed Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Tribal Council. Kathie Cochrane recalls the rationale behind her motion:

I thought, when the Tribal Council was formed, it was time for us to say, 'well, we've done our job, we've got these people active, they are fighting for their rights, this is what we wanted'. It was a revelation to me, I have to say, to find so many of these white people not wanting to let go. I even think there was a bit of racism involved in that, that they were quite unaware of themselves, feeling that the Aboriginals wouldn't manage it - that they wouldn't know what to do. Of course, Kathy [Oodgeroo] always said, 'we've got to make our own mistakes, we've got to do it ourselves, we've got to learn' (Cochrane, *Interview*).

Some well-intentioned white activists were affronted by the demand that they relinquish control of the Aboriginal civil rights bodies by taking non-voting supportive roles. One union representative on the QCAATSI board objected to Aboriginal political autonomy through a personal attack on Oodgeroo, "'We've made Kath Walker what she is', he said. Everyone was startled. Kath's response was immediate. She rose from her secretarial chair, thanked [him] very much and walked out" (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 80). Kathie Cochrane's motion to support the Aboriginal-controlled Tribal Council was defeated. This marked the effective demise of QCAATSI as the branch was divided by the withdrawal of key Aboriginal members including Oodgeroo and her non-Aboriginal supporters including Bob and Kathie Cochrane. The Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Tribal Council (the forerunner to the National Tribal Council) subsequently informed FCAATSI that they would not affiliate with the national body, "unless voting rights be vested in the Aboriginal and Islander people, and them only" (Pittock, *Easter* 4). With precedents now in Victoria and Queensland, FCAATSI was advised to anticipate similar motions at the Easter 1970 conference.

FCAATSI had facilitated the emergence of a pan-Aboriginal identity among its formerly disparate Aboriginal members, precipitating a demand for black representation and voice that challenged FCAATSI's traditional emphasis upon white-assisted rights and advancement. In 1998 Pat O'Shane recalled FCAATSI as having been the only, "truly national Aboriginal political

organisation [which united] disparate groups of Aboriginal people around common causes” (O’Shane). The working presumptions of many white and a significant number of Aboriginal members was that Aboriginal rights and advancement relied upon white assistance and good will.

The pan-Aboriginal identity that the FCAATSI structure had so successfully fostered was pitted against a rights and advancement platform that presupposed white assistance. The failure to separate pan-Aboriginality from the issue of white assistance was evident in argument circulated by Aboriginal people opposed to the amendment for Aboriginal and Islander control of the FCAATSI executive. In a document titled “Why we believe that Aborigines and Islanders should have allies in their fight for rights and advancement”, Dulcie Flower, Faith Bandler, Ken Brindle and Pastor Frank Roberts (all prominent, seasoned Aboriginal and Islander activists) argued against the demand for FCAATSI to facilitate black representation and voice. They argued that FCAATSI was a forum and common front of black and white people who opposed the destruction of Aboriginal rights and it did not aim to, “help, represent and speak for Aborigines and Islanders” (qtd. in Attwood, *The Struggle* 245). These activists separated representation and voice from rights and advancement, arguing that Aboriginal advancement required on-going support and administration from white members and affiliated organisations, “It is only through the unity between Aborigines and Islanders and supporting white organisations that the rights and advancement of Aborigines has *any hope at all*” (qtd. in Attwood, *The Struggle* 245).

The existence or effectiveness of white support for Aboriginal rights was not the issue being contested by Aboriginal activists such as Oodgeroo and Pastor Doug Nicholls, both of whom were opposed to white control at the decision making level. Oodgeroo’s experience at the World Council of Churches “Consultation on Racism” prompted her to lead by example, advocating that Aboriginal people, “tak[e] the lead in advancing their own cause” (Pittock, *Easter* 2). Oodgeroo’s previous movement in and out of white political structures such as the Communist Party in the 1940s and the ALP in 1969 testified to her political autonomy and willingness to move against the current in pursuit of her political goals. Oodgeroo was an executive member of FCAATSI during the Easter 1970 crisis.

By 1970 Oodgeroo was convinced that Aboriginal people must gain control of their own advancement apparatus. In a circular distributed to FCAATSI delegates prior to the Easter 1970



conference, Oodgeroo argued for Aboriginal control of the national body. She identified the need for respectful and appropriate support from white allies:

If black Australians are to become masters of their own destiny white Australians must recognise them as being capable of formulating their own policy of advancement. [ . . . ] Black Australians must strengthen themselves into a solid, determined fighting unit and dictate their own terms for their own advancement [ . . . ] then they can determine where white Australians can be of assistance. Unless they take this line black Australians will always be cast in a beggar's role, with a second-class status (Walker, *Coalition*).

Here Oodgeroo articulates a platform for Aboriginal self-determination. In Aboriginal politics this platform was to be formulated with increasing vigour and applied through radical tactics such as the erection of the Tent Embassy on Australia Day in 1972.

In response to Oodgeroo's paper "Coalition of Black and White Australians", A. Barrie Pittock, a white FCAATSI delegate who favoured Aboriginal control, moved that the constitution be amended. Reflecting upon his decision, Pittock wrote, "It is no use writing a lot of fine theories [about Aboriginal self-determination] unless one is sufficiently committed to do something about them. I for one had to act" (Pittock, *Easter 2*). Pittock tabled amendments to the FCAATSI charter, seeking that, "only individuals of Australian Aboriginal or Island descent may exercise the vote" and that whites could only function on the executive, "as non-voting consultants" (Pittock, *Beyond 23*). The tabling of this motion at the Easter 1970 FCAATSI conference met strong opposition. In particular, opposition came from:

Most of the Executive, including several Aborigines and Islanders, and by nearly all the affiliated white trade union delegates and Labor Party members. [ . . . ] The conference was deeply divided, and, after a long and bitter debate, the amendment was lost on a tied vote (it needed a two-thirds majority) (Pittock, *Beyond 23*).

Two prominent Aboriginal leaders, Oodgeroo and Pastor Doug Nicholls, read opposition to and the eventual defeat of the motion as, "paternalistic and assimilationist". They moved to establish the National Tribal Council (NTC), an Aboriginal controlled coalition of Regional Tribal Councils such as the Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Tribal Council. Oodgeroo was founding chair of the National Tribal Council.

Aboriginal and Islander communities were invited to form their own Councils and to join the National body. Monica Clare, for example, became founding secretary of the Illawarra Tribal Council. Politically minded Aboriginal and Islander people such as Monica Clare were invited to:

form their own "Regional Tribal Council" either like a white man's council or like a traditional Aboriginal and Islander Council of elders or chiefs. If you want NTC to help you to organise we will help. If you already have a Tribal Council or Village Council let us know and you can become part of the NTC.

The NTC has white friends who advise it and give help and support, but who do not decide what it will do. Only people of Aboriginal and Islander decent decide what it will do (Council).

The National Tribal Council was formed with financial support from the World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism (Pittock, *Beyond*), a gift of \$13,500 to be spent over three years (*National 3*). The NTC also appealed for donations from interested individuals. The NTC policy platform made explicit its difference from FCAATSI or any other advancement group that allowed non-Aboriginal people to take executive positions, "We stand for self-reliance. We hope for aid both morally and financially, but cannot be dependent on it. We depend on our own efforts, on the united stance of our own people" (Council). Paternalistic attitudes, Oodgeroo argued, perpetuate paternalistic relationships:

Coalitions cannot work effectively nor can they be sustained on moral, friendly or sentimental conscience of white behaviour patterns. [ . . . ] The shock of black Australians deciding their own policies demoralises white Australians who have brain-washed themselves into believing their own superiority (Walker, *Coalition*).

Oodgeroo resigned from coalitions that did not support Aboriginal leadership. As founding president of the NTC, and an executive member of the Brisbane Tribal Council, Oodgeroo's hectic schedule redoubled.

### **The National Tribal Council**

The National Tribal Council believed that political change for Aboriginal people must be premised upon the revitalisation of Aboriginal and Islander traditions and communities. The pan-Aboriginal philosophy and structure of the Tribal Council gave licence to and opportunity for individual Aboriginals and communities, who had been denied their traditional language and culture, to reinvigorate their culture. Cultural renewal was available through preservation of

known traditions and optional adoption of a generic pan-Aboriginal identity. Published in *Origin* in September 1970 under the heading "Cultural Pluralism", the NTC policy manifesto states:

Australian governmental policies of lip service to the worth and value of Aboriginal and Islander traditions and culture should be made a reality by encouraging, not discouraging, programmes, seminars, and courses which aim at the re-acculturation of Aborigines and Islanders.

There is a growing desire by many people of Aboriginal and Islander descent for study programmes which will teach them what they need to know in order to find their true identities as Aboriginal and Islander Australians.

Governments must abandon the failed policy of assimilation which amounts to cultural genocide, and encourage the growing desire for bi-culturalism in a genuine and voluntary plural society. If Aborigines and Islanders decide that the maintenance and development of voluntary and distinctive Aboriginal and Islander cultures and communities is in their own best interests, this decision should be accepted, respected and encouraged by white Australians. Freedom and equality cannot otherwise be realities in Australia (Council 13).

The NTC policy manifesto powerfully enunciates a call for bi-culturalism that respects distinctive, contemporary Aboriginal and Islander identity. The "maintenance and development" of Aboriginal and Islander cultural identity and traditions was not only enshrined within the policy manifesto of the NTC. These priorities were symbolically manifested in the adoption of ceremonial dress and investiture rites. The invention of pan-Aboriginal symbols, iconography and rituals signalled the reconstruction of a contemporary Aboriginal and Islander spiritual culture. The invention and performance of NTC rituals marked the organisation as, "quite foreign to the European-style FCAATSI structure" (Pittock, *Beyond* 24).

At the first annual conference in September 1970, the ceremonial investiture of NTC patron, Pastor Doug Nicholls (titled *Bapu Mamus*), was described as a solemn and unforgettable occasion:

Aborigines paid homage to Pastor Nicholls with a special corroboree and ceremonious presentation of spear, woomera and killing stick while Pastor Don Brady played the didgeridoo. Islanders performed the dance only for their chief and presented a symbolic polished shell worn on the breast, a feathered headdress and a chief's wooden hammer. On behalf of all the people, Mrs Walker presented Mrs Nicholls with a decorated food gathering bag (*National* 3).

The symbolism of these rites signalled efforts to foster a distinctly Aboriginal organisational culture, with procedure that was in keeping with traditional values.

When the National Tribal Council was established in 1970, the Brisbane Tribal Council had already been actively pursuing cultural revitalisation projects for twelve months. These Brisbane-based projects included language and culture workshops for urban-dwelling Aboriginal people who wanted to strengthen their knowledge base, the foundation of a pre-school that drew upon Aboriginal learning and parenting models, and the pursuit of funding for a much larger cultural education project: the foundation of Boornong Mumba (Doobov).

### **Boornong Mumba**

Oodgeroo's involvement with the proposed Boornong Mumba project was to have a lasting influence upon her politics and life course. Although this particular project did not eventuate, Oodgeroo's experience with Boornong Mumba shaped her future application for land and funding in 1971, for a cultural education project at Moongalba on North Stradbroke Island. The search for a site and funding for Boornong Mumba coincided with a change of focus in Oodgeroo's politics, from Aboriginal rights to cultural politics. Fellow activists from the Brisbane Tribal Council recall that Oodgeroo was on the cusp of this change in 1969, "She was moving to a phase where what she was interested in was culture, Aboriginal culture and not the day to day fights for Aboriginal rights. She had done that, but she'd passed that phase and now she was interested in the culture" (Doobov).

The Brisbane Tribal Council attempted to establish 'Boornong Mumba' as a contemporary Aboriginal arts and cultural centre. The centre was envisaged as a live-in community of Aboriginal teacher/artists and students with facilities including a museum, art gallery, theatre, classrooms, living areas and amenities. This arrangement, modelled traditional community organisation and teaching methods that would foster respect for and reinvigorate cultural identity and traditions (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*). Oodgeroo acted as spokesperson for the project, offering her name as the signatory for Arts Council applications (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*).

While Oodgeroo retreated at Calanthe in 1969 to write, she had also taken the opportunity to search for a suitable location for the Boornong Mumba project. Judith Wright recalled, "We both spent the mornings writing, and the afternoons often in renewed searches for places" (Wright McKinney).

Oodgeroo was hunting for a specific site:

We travelled a good deal in far Southeast Queensland as I drove her round various areas where we hoped to find a bora ring or some such indication that the place would be what she wanted - obviously connected with Aboriginal occupation. Those we did find were desecrated and occupied (Wright McKinney).

By 1970 the Brisbane Tribal Council had settled upon a site at the base of Tamborine Mountain, "near a bora ring"(Noonuccal, *Paper Box 28*), for Boornong Mumba and applied for an Aboriginal Arts Board grant. This application was to mark the beginning of an era of frustrated ambition for Oodgeroo, whose visionary plans and pathmaking projects were curtailed and stalled by the failure of others to catch a glimpse of the possibilities of her vision.

### **When the Personal is Political**

Oodgeroo's fame as an Aboriginal pioneer was both a spur to action and a "fearsome burden". She was extremely busy with the demands of the NTC and frequently suffered from ill health. Her letters note a relationship between fatigue generated by her workload and frequent illness. She suffered "kidney trouble, which comes upon me when I do too much. I have only myself to blame for it. So it serves me right" (Wright, *Folder 470*). Oodgeroo blamed herself for "doing too much", but she also frequently noted there was a constant demand for her representation, "I feel as if they all want a part of me" (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo 79*). The burden of representation carried by Oodgeroo alarmed her close supporters.

In April 1970, at the height of activity around the Boornong Mumba project and just following the FCAATSI split over the Easter period, Michael Leo wrote to Judith Wright, concerned for Oodgeroo's health:

Kath is working so hard at present I didn't want to burden her with more, so I am writing directly. You probably don't know but she was supposed to go into Greenslopes Repatriation Hospital this month. At last report she has trips around Australia planned until the end of May. You - being an older friend of hers than myself, will have to order her to refuse all appointments in June. Can we collect a coalition to gang up on her, as I am afraid for her future health. I can't do it myself. I forced Kath to eat a second sandwich for lunch the other day and even then she left the crust (Wright, *Folder 470*).

Friends like Michael Leo were concerned that Oodgeroo was running on empty. Her life was a tumultuous one. Three months after this letter was penned the office for the Queensland Minister for Education and Cultural activities quashed the Boornong Mumba project. Oodgeroo sent a copy of the letter she received from the Minister to Judith Wright, with a note attached, "I am determined to get that land and from the State Government. The damn Country Party is at fault here. They are a [?] of ignorant racists" (Wright, *Folder 470*). The failure of the Boornong Mumba project, and Oodgeroo's resolution to appropriate land from the Queensland Government added further stress to a difficult time in her life. When Oodgeroo wrote to Judith Wright in August 1969 declaring her intentions to leave "the rat race", she revealed that she had no idea of her son Vivian's whereabouts. Vivian had left home at the age of seventeen without leaving word of his travel intentions. He finally renewed contact with his mother two years after his disappearance, in December 1970. He had won a scholarship to NIDA and intended to carve out a career in the Arts. Oodgeroo wrote to Judith Wright on 5 December 1970 with the good news, wryly noting, "Oh me! The young ones, how some of them tear our guts out" (Wright, *Folder 470*).

The private and the public in Oodgeroo's life continued to overlap and blur. Just nine months after her involvement in the formation of the National Tribal Council at the FCAATSI Easter conference, Oodgeroo tendered her resignation to the national executive of the NTC. When Oodgeroo submitted her resignation to the national conference she publicly cited her failing health as the basis of her decision.

The biographical record treats this major development in Oodgeroo's political life very lightly. Judith Wright and Kathie Cochrane allude to generational and gender differences between key figures within the Brisbane Tribal Council, the effective power base of the National Tribal Council. Other sources suggest that conflict between Oodgeroo and her son Denis forced the resignation. The national Aboriginal paper, *Origin*, reported that Oodgeroo's decision to resign from the NTC was taken on Doctor's orders:

Mrs Walker resigned following medical advice that she should rest for some months. "Kath Walker is a great lady, and we owe her a great deal for the tremendous work she has done in this field" said Pastor Nicholls. [ . . . ] Mrs Briggs, speaking for the National Aboriginal Women's Council, said [ . . . ] "We deeply regret she has to leave the work so dear to her heart" (*Tribute*).

However, her biographer Kathie Cochrane attributes more than bad health to the decision. Kathie Cochrane suggests that Oodgeroo was forced off the Council by the agitation of a group of young Aboriginal men:

Early in 1971 a young white man, a representative of ABSCHOL [ . . . ] came to Kath and told her that she was considered too old to be of further use to the Tribal Council. [ . . . ] she knew he was a messenger from the young Aboriginal men of the Queensland Tribal Council. The hurt bit into her deeply (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 84).

Judith Wright recalled that Oodgeroo retreated to Calanthe after her resignation from the NTC in early 1971. She describes Oodgeroo as seeking time-out:

She had been, I think, rebuffed by the males in her circle and wanted a break away from politics where she could work. [ . . . ] Neither Kath or I discussed them [the circumstances of her resignation]. However, she was certainly under stress at the time she came to Calanthe, and both of us avoided talking too much about politics, whether government or Aboriginal  
(Wright McKinney).

Both Judith Wright and Kathie Cochrane were evasive in discussing the substance of Oodgeroo's exchange with "the males of her circle". What is known publicly is based upon Kathie Cochrane's biography of Oodgeroo, but here she evades the substance of the event. Kathie Cochrane admitted in a 1994 interview with John Collins (Oodgeroo's publisher at Jacaranda press), that her treatment of this episode in the biography could be read as a sanitised version of these tumultuous times. She argues that some topics were too sensitive for her to develop respectfully in the biography:

Did I deliberately leave things out? No, I did not do that. I did, however, try to be tactful. I tried not to say a lot about things that were painful to her. I did skate over a few things and I did omit the worst of Denis' behaviour out of a feeling of friendship. Remember, she was alive when I was writing. [ . . . ] There were one or two things where she said, "do you have to put this in?" "Yes", I said. "I have to. You asked me to write it and I have to say these things" Honestly, I do have to admit that I did not put in a lot of things that would have been very hurtful, but I didn't leave out anything that would distort the picture (Collins, *Oodgeroo: John Collins in* 221).

Records such as this interview clearly indicate that very painful events such as Denis Walker's possible involvement in his mother's ousting from the National Tribal Council required

omission from the biography. When dealing with issues such as these the distinction between Kathie Cochrane's roles as friend and author were difficult to negotiate. Oodgeroo's query, "do you have to put this in?" saw Kathie Cochrane "skate" over many painful details. However, in her interview with John Collins, Kathie Cochrane discusses the Tribal Council resignation incident more candidly and reveals, "When the Tribal Council was being established - when she [Oodgeroo] had the bad experience of being told that she was no longer wanted. She was pretty sure this had started with Denis and she was very upset about it"(Collins, *Oodgeroo: John Collins in 221*). Here Kathie Cochrane suggests that Oodgeroo's resignation was prompted by "being told that she was no longer wanted" by members of the Tribal Council at the behest of her son Denis. Denis Walker was much more open in his discussion of Oodgeroo's resignation from political work. In an interview published in 1973 by Ward McNally, Denis Walker commented on the public silence of his formerly vocal mother:

I asked Walker why his mother, once regarded as one of her race's finest advocates, and a fluent speaker on Aboriginal affairs, was no longer heard. 'By Aboriginal standards Kath is old now. She no longer wants to fight or be subjected to the immense pressure the system would impose upon her if she continued protesting. She has gained some small measure of physical comfort [ . . . ] and has a little money coming in'. He spoke of his mother as though she were someone quite divorced from him, not his mother. 'Kath is entitled to her peace and quiet now. Her poems and talks made many white people uncomfortably aware of the poverty and malnutrition so rife among our people. Her poems are still published. In her modest way she still pricks the conscience of society. [ . . . ] I think Kath disagrees with my methods - with the outspoken stated aims of the Black Panther movement. She dislikes talk of violence (McNally 11).

Denis Walker's involvement in the Australian version of the radical American "Black Panther" movement was modelled upon the Black Power philosophy then prevalent in the African American civil rights movement. Oodgeroo may have been quite radical in her 1969 enunciation of the Aboriginal community's need for self-determination and respect within a bi-cultural society, but she was not radical enough for her younger cohorts, including Denis Walker. Aboriginal political actors who emerged in the early 1970s were influenced by African American urban defence organisations. Direct action was taken to establish the Aboriginal Legal Service and Medical Service in Redfern in 1970 and 1971. The black berets, gloves and sunglasses of the Black Panthers made their protest publicly conspicuous at the 1971 tour of South African sporting teams (Goodall 335). The enduring public memory of Aboriginal symbolic protest was the establishment of the Tent embassy on Australia Day 1972. Although echoing the 1969 "Resurrection City" protest against African American poverty in Washington,



the tent embassy announced a distinctly Aboriginal cry for land rights. This era of protest is marked by the international inflection of Aboriginal politics in Australia.

Denis Walker was an active player in many of the actions of the early 1970s. However, as he noted in his interview with Ward McNally, his methods differed distinctly from those of his mother. Kathie Cochrane records the outcome of these differences: "He adopted aggressive postures, and became involved in confrontations that ended in brawls. Eventually he was arrested and gaoled for violent behaviour, and Kath grieved deeply" (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 56). The Brisbane Tribal Council relied heavily upon Denis Walker's personal skills. Fellow members remember him as being, "pretty well endowed" (Doobov) with leadership and organisational capabilities. Denis Walker's defection to the Black Panthers was a great blow to the Brisbane Tribal Council. A. Barrie Pittock recalls that, "divisions, defections and impatience within the key Brisbane group" saw the NTC become "more or less moribund by 1972" (Pittock, *Beyond* 24). Jack Davis commented that Aboriginal lobby groups such as the NTC were fragmented by, "pseudo leaders who are not capable of leadership" (Turcotte 27). Oodgeroo concurred with this opinion, she remarked that:

When the dingo pup wants to become cock of the walk he's usually about sixteen when he tries it. [ . . . ] after a while the 'pseudo leaders' drop out into oblivion. It's the dedicated leaders who stand the test of time (Turcotte 27).

Oodgeroo's encounter with a "dingo pup" in the NTC resulted in a personal crisis that re-oriented the direction of her politics and writing.

Other statements corroborate Judith Wright's suggestion that Oodgeroo's resignation from the National Tribal Council resulted from a generational conflict based upon political strategy. Ruth and Alan Doobov, (white/Jewish) ABSCHOL members who were heavily involved with the Brisbane Tribal Council recall a possible frustration between Oodgeroo and her son Denis:

There might have been a little bit of "Denis didn't want his mum breathing down his neck all the time", but there was also a sense of perhaps just giving some other people space too: because she [Oodgeroo] was the one who was well known, to let the others do stuff rather than her (Doobov).

These conflicting accounts, both official and unofficial, do not reflect the power of the event as experienced by Oodgeroo, which led her to resign from a group she so recently helped to

establish. The National Tribal Council held much promise as an avenue for the expression of Oodgeroo's political and cultural priorities, yet Oodgeroo abandoned the group without warning and by all accounts was devastated by the necessity of the decision. In an attempt to clarify these conflicting accounts I approached Kathie Cochrane concerning the paucity of detail surrounding the drama of this episode in Oodgeroo's life. I interviewed Kathie Cochrane in March 2000; she maintained her protective stance, "Yes well, I felt that I had to go rather easily on that" (Cochrane, *Interview*). This issue was still raw for Kathie Cochrane who expressed her desire to leave the issue alone. What becomes evident, from the stance of Oodgeroo's close friends Judith Wright and Kathie Cochrane, is that the circumstances surrounding Oodgeroo's resignation from the National Tribal Council ran deeper than the usual cut and thrust of political contest. Her resignation from the NTC precipitated a personal crisis, which became a turning point in her life and work.

### **Life after the National Tribal Council**

Retirement from national level politics turned Oodgeroo's mind to the possibility of local action on her home ground, North Stradbroke Island. The failure of the 'Boornong Mumba' project and the loss of the National Tribal Council as a political avenue for her commitment to rejuvenating Aboriginal culture did not spell the end to Oodgeroo's activism. As Kathie Cochrane notes, "it was not in her nature to retire from the struggle for Aboriginal rights and Aboriginal dignity" (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 85). The rationale for Oodgeroo's sudden resignation from the NTC, publicised in January 1971, was "doctor's orders" to rest and recover her health. However, in practice, Oodgeroo attempted to maintain her punishing schedule of speaking engagements that included adult education lectures, a university address, book promotions and committee meetings. Oodgeroo crumbled under the strain of ill health and profound personal disappointment. She withdrew from her commitments in April - July 1971 and made her "retirement" known to the general public on June 8 1971. *The Australian* reported:

Aboriginal poet Kath Walker has withdrawn from public life to her birthplace, Stradbroke Island, off Morton Bay, in Queensland. The 50-year-old Brisbane housewife, a seasoned fighter in sensitive verse [ . . . ] said she would turn her future to creative writing and to regaining her lost health (*Kath* 7).

This newspaper report, which identifies Oodgeroo primarily as a “housewife”, reflects the levels of misunderstanding and ignorance that Oodgeroo had confronted for over a decade in institutionalised Aboriginal politics.

Oodgeroo sold her house and moved home to North Stradbroke Island, suffering from a neglected chest infection, exhaustion and depression. Oodgeroo’s son Vivian, who had resurfaced after a two-year absence from her life, supported her as she moved back home. In an interview with Susan Mitchell in 1987, Oodgeroo recalled how this move opened a new avenue for the rejuvenation of individuals in relationship with land and culture:

After the FCAATSI movement folded up I got very sick, I hadn’t had a holiday for seven years [ . . . ] Anyway, this time I was so weak Vivian had been to see my doctor who told him I was absolutely worn out. So he said, ‘Mum, sell the house and get back to the island’. So I did. I took a year off. But eventually it got boring and I remembered all the time I was in the Civil Rights Movement I had wished I could go somewhere to recharge my batteries. I thought, ‘Why can’t I build such a place here on Stradbroke’. So I applied for the old mission called Moongalba, which was all bush then, saying I wanted to approach the Federal Government for enough money to build a museum and art gallery (Mitchell 205).

Oodgeroo’s recovery can be attributed to the healing work of her relationship with the land on North Stradbroke Island, which suggested new possibilities for her work in cultural education. The failed Boornong Mumba project had spurred Oodgeroo’s determination to “get that land from the State Government” and in October 1971, Oodgeroo placed a submission before the Queensland Lands Department and the Redlands Shire Council for two hectares of land at Moongalba, the former Myora Mission site on Stradbroke Island (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 90). Oodgeroo applied for permanent ownership to the Redlands Shire Council in 1971. Her application for ownership was rejected, but she was granted a conditional twenty-five year lease at “peppercorn-rent”, which was later extended to her lifetime (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 91). Oodgeroo established Moongalba as the Noonuccal-Nughie Education and Cultural Centre in 1972. Here she hosted and taught thousands of campers over the next twenty years. Oodgeroo’s resignation from the NTC and retirement from public life was prompted by a potent mix of personal and political influences that alarmed her close friends.

Kathie Cochrane revealed in her interview with me that her decision to move home to Stradbroke Island was her salvation:

**KC** Yes, it was Denis, Denis, Denis was jealous of his mother and he wanted to get her out of the movement and she was terribly, she was really, really upset. If she hadn't gone back to Moongalba and started those camps and things I don't know what would have become of her really.

**JJ** That was a real change of focus in her life?

**KC** Yes, it was forced on her really.

**JJ** But she took it wholeheartedly?

**KC** Well, she took it, it was a very difficult time for her.

**JJ** I mean the focus on children. . .

**KC** Oh, that, she took to that like a duck to water. She was wonderful with children; magical - it didn't matter what colour they were she ran those camps mainly for underprivileged children. They came from Sydney slums; they came from all over Australia. They had a great time with her (Cochrane, *Interview*).

Oodgeroo's move back to Moongalba on Stradbroke Island was significant for both her politics and writing. The rejuvenation of Oodgeroo's links with her land soon fed into her work at Moongalba Education and Cultural centre and into her next publication, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*.

### **This is My Land**

Oodgeroo's return to her land was a significant move. Her bonds with the land had been strong and influential all her life:

This is my land: I have always said that, even as a child. The white people used to say to Dad, 'That girl walks this land as though she thinks it's hers', Dad wouldn't say anything. He'd just walk home and tell me, 'Mrs So-and-so said you walk the land as though it's yours'. 'It's mine, isn't it?' I would say and he'd say, 'Yes, girl. Don't ever forget it' (Lane 33).

Oodgeroo's childhood on Stradbroke Island stands apart from the experiences of many Aboriginal children, particularly in Queensland.

Eve Fesl suggests that Oodgeroo and her family were seen as "outsiders" by the majority of (mainland) Murri community, who were interned on mission settlements under the Act and were known as "mission blacks", "Because of mixing more freely with the white community, not being a slave, having been treated comparatively well and encouraged by her school teacher, Oodgeroo developed a faith in the white community which was not shared by the 'mission

blacks” (Fesl 143). Eve Fesl describes Oodgeroo as having functioned as, “a bridge between the two worlds, communicating in a language foreign to this country, the ancient beliefs of and lifeways of our people” (Fesl 143). How did she become this bridge?

The colonial experience of the Noonuccal people had not been as harsh and exploitative as it had been for many other Aboriginal groups in Queensland. Early contact was first recorded in 1799. Periodic occupation of Minjerriba included a pilot station built in 1825 (Museum 40) and a Passionist mission that closed in 1847 after a four year outreach proved that, “the task of conversion as hopeless” (Ford 27). Dunwich housed a quarantine station from 1850, which was converted to a Benevolent Asylum in 1864. The Benevolent Asylum removed a population of “undeserving” white citizens from the mainstream Queensland settler society: the old, infirm, disabled, inebriates and for a short time, lepers. The asylum held large numbers of inmates and the local Aboriginal people provided the cheap, permanent labour pool that the frugal administration required. Workers on the “Aboriginal gang” at the Dunwich benevolent institution, such as Ted Ruska (Oodgeroo’s father) did not work under “the Act”. Pay was meagre, but residential arrangements were not tightly controlled and most Aboriginal people “lived a ‘normal’ family life” (Walker, *Useful* 137). Aboriginal children including Oodgeroo attended the local Dunwich school with the children of white workers.

Even the residents of the second Aboriginal “mission”, established in 1893 by the Queensland Aboriginal Protection Association, attained a degree of self-determination. The Quandamooka peoples’ history of comparatively egalitarian association with white people had shaped their attitude to authority. Any attempt to bring “Myora into line with other reserves” (Museum 13) through the imposition of “the Act” proved “a matter of supreme difficulty” (Walker, *Useful* 144).

Oodgeroo was born to a cultural heritage of relative independence. Her people had maintained a degree of self-reliance and a sense of community integrity despite the European colonial presence upon their land. This combination of traditional cultural ties to land and confident interaction with white people undoubtedly informed the political path Oodgeroo was to take.

Upon returning to her land, Oodgeroo transformed a time of personal crisis into a new avenue for Aboriginal cultural revitalisation and community education. Land was to become increasingly

important in Oodgeroo's political activism and writing. Oodgeroo's childhood experiences on North Stradbroke Island and the Noonuccal people's stories of the land are the focus of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Kathie Cochrane reflects on the influence of Stradbroke Island on Oodgeroo's prose writing:

Being back at Stradbroke Island made her think of her childhood, of what it was like and the sort of influences it might have had on her - She was very, very attached to Stradbroke Island. Whenever she went anywhere she always said how glad she would be to get back to the Island. It was really somewhere where she felt that she belonged. She felt that quite deeply (Cochrane, *Interview*).

Judith Wright comments on the effect of this combination of white and black influence upon Oodgeroo's life, noting that the Noonuccal community:

Managed to exist quite close to a capital city, retaining at least some of its true character and supplementing its white-donated rations by living to some extent from fishing, hunting and food gathering. This background, says Kath Walker, gave her enough understanding of both the black and white background, and enough (just enough) education for her writing (Wright, *Because* 153).

When Oodgeroo returned to live at Moongalba it was her "black background" to which she turned. Forced removal had severed her mother Lucy's ties to her people and land in Central Queensland, but Oodgeroo had been raised in the firm knowledge of her father's Noonuccal traditions and ties to North Stradbroke Island. From her sitting-down place emerged a politics and writing that was inspired by and affirmed the traditional meanings and values of the land and the Quandamooka culture of her father's people.

In "retirement" at Moongalba Oodgeroo's new politics included a trail-blazing role in the emerging field of Indigenous education. She conducted educational camps for children and had key input into the design of Indigenous Studies programs that would be implemented at all levels of school education. Oodgeroo also moved away from poetry. Oodgeroo completed her draft of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, the first of her prose publications. *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, as I will demonstrate in my next chapter, combines Oodgeroo's concern for the conservation of land and Aboriginal culture within an educational text. Her love of country is revealed through stories that tell of a childhood immersion in that land and the re-telling of the legends of her people. From 1972 Oodgeroo developed a different kind of politics and used unique venues for its

dissemination. On her own land she began educational camps and beyond the shores of Stradbroke Island, in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, she turned to education through story.

### **Sitting Down at Moongalba**

When Oodgeroo resigned suddenly from her heavy load of high-profile commitments on peak level bodies in Aboriginal politics in 1971 her focus had turned away from protest and rights to Aboriginal culture and education. In 1972 there was pressure on Oodgeroo to re-engage with national politics and contribute to the urgent political situation developing at the tent embassy in Canberra. Oodgeroo enunciated her changed priorities when she gained possession of her traditional land, Moongalba, on North Stradbroke Island. Oodgeroo applied for permanent ownership to the Redlands Shire Council in 1971. While she waited upon the approval of her application for the land at Moongalba, Oodgeroo started clearing sections of the land. Her vision for a cultural education centre was within reach, and she was not going to be distracted by national political events. Oodgeroo explained her stance in a letter to Judith Wright dated July 5th 1972:

I am busy clearing the land at Moongalba. I am not going to Canberra so ignore any news items you see on said subject. The Aborigines at the Aboriginal Embassy do want me to go but I feel that the Moongalba Project is equally important and I can do better re race relations by concentrating on conservation instead of politics (Wright, *Folder 470*).

Oodgeroo made connections between conservation and indigenous culture that few environmentalists understood or acknowledged at this time.

Oodgeroo made plain her intention to shape the minds of the younger generations both at Moongalba and in the books she published subsequent to her "retirement". This strategy mimics the approach taken by, "[m]issionaries, teachers, government officials [who] believed that the best way to make black people behave like white was to get hold of the children who had not yet learned Aboriginal lifeways" (Read, *A Rape* 49). Oodgeroo hoped that significant Aboriginal contact with young non-Indigenous children would mould their lifeways towards tolerance and understanding, before the ingrained racist attitudes of their parents were passed down. Oodgeroo commented, "I'm sick and tired of talking to mentally constipated adults; they don't listen. It's the children who are going to change this world for the better, not the adults" (Lane 33).

Oodgeroo had hosted around 30,000 children and adults at Moongalba from 1972 to 1993 (the year she died). Oodgeroo also expanded the scope of her vision beyond the shores of North Stradbroke Island. She attempted to reach out to the children who could not travel to the Moongalba education camps, initially achieving this through her writing. Oodgeroo's poetry had been a political tool primarily addressing an adult audience. After 1971 Oodgeroo abandoned her quest for an adult audience, arguing, "The adults are mentally constipated, children are wide open" (Thompson, *Aboriginal* 156). The publication of Oodgeroo's first book for children, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972), coincided with the establishment of Moongalba and communicated the project's values and practices to a wide audience of children. Oodgeroo wrote *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as an act of reclamation of Aboriginal land and culture. Yet at the same time, as I will argue in my next chapter, *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* sales success was built upon Oodgeroo's accommodation of the needs of the publishing house and the projected white readership.

Oodgeroo was not unfamiliar with the need to accept compromise. Whilst completing the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in 1971/72, Oodgeroo was also overseeing the construction of temporary buildings for her cultural education centre on Moongalba. The Noonuccal-Nughie Education Cultural Centre at Moongalba was stalled and stunted by negotiations with various bureaucracies, whose responses ranged from interference and over-scrutiny to indifference and neglect. The federal Government would not fund her plans for a museum, art gallery, theatre, kitchen and amenities without security of land tenure. The Bjelke-Petersen State government and the Redlands Shire Council would not relinquish the land, allowing only a lease. As Judith Wright notes, "she was never sure of holding the land she paid a 'peppercorn rental' for to the Redlands Council" (Wright McKinney). This became an issue of extreme frustration for Oodgeroo. In February 1974 she railed, "Re [sic] Moongalba, well I shall hold on for a while say until September and if they continue to ignore me or give me the usual run around I shall just walk off the place and to hell with it all!" (Wright, *Folder 470*).

Oodgeroo's applications for continued funding had been deemed, "too vague to justify a grant" (Wright, *Folder 470*), despite her public backing by high profile supporters such as Manfred Cross, Judith Wright, Nancy Cato, Rodney Hall and later, Nugget Coombs (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo*). However, with the encouragement of friends, Oodgeroo held on. High profile friends, particularly Judith Wright, lobbied Government on behalf of Oodgeroo, illustrating her



continuing reliance upon cross-cultural political alliances. Oodgeroo campaigned for Aboriginal leadership and the need for Aboriginal voices to be heard in the public arena. Yet the pragmatic reality for Oodgeroo, five years later, was that she still required the public support of prominent white friends to advance her cause. Judith Wright attempted to enlist the influence of the Whitlam Labor Government (which was ideologically supportive of Oodgeroo's aims) over the recalcitrant National Party Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, of the Queensland State Government. No tangible result came from this action.

By February 1976, the Whitlam Government had been ousted and Oodgeroo had resigned herself to continued state Government resistance to the permanent establishment of Moongalba as a cultural education centre:

Australia is really in a mess now since the coup. Guess we've reached the bottom of the barrel [ . . . ]. I am no longer worried about whether Moongalba gets government aid or not. It is already playing an important role in the fields of education, theatre and holiday camps. Both black and white take advantage of Moongalba. Next week the teachers' training college students are descending upon us for a weekend (Wright, *Folder 470*).

Oodgeroo ran her programmes on a shoestring, with self-funding campers and school communities providing resources. The "teacher training college students" Oodgeroo spoke of here were to become increasingly important in her vision. Meanwhile, Moongalba did not receive any substantial government funding, despite continued efforts and high profile support. In 1978/9 Oodgeroo, aided by Julianne Schwenke, Al Grasby and Franca Arena, made another application for funding (Wright, *Folder 470*). Oodgeroo was supported by letters from the Society of Authors (Wright, *Folder 470*) and offers of free labour from University of Queensland architect, James Mac Cormack, among others (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo 102*). Oodgeroo appreciated the quality of the proposal, "if it fails it will be because of there being no money available from those bastards in Canberra" (Wright, *Folder 470*). Finally, the Federal Aboriginal Development Commission offered \$250,000 for building works. The money was never paid over because of the legal insufficiency of the leasehold on the property (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo 102*). Oodgeroo fought to secure funding for the Moongalba project for many years, endured hardship and setbacks, but never accepted defeat.

## Alliances and Outcomes

Oodgeroo drew support from a circle of prominent and committed individuals, who formed a loose coalition with each other through their mutual association with her. These people proved to be a great asset for Oodgeroo. Moongalba, in particular, benefited from hour upon hour of unsolicited, donated labour. However, this loose network of support did not offer the hedging protection availed by a structured community of commitment. My chapters on Margaret Tucker illustrated the benefits enjoyed, and the limitations encountered, through belonging to a community of commitment such as MRA. Oodgeroo, by contrast, was open to both the benefits and limitations inherent in fame or notoriety. Organised communities create a buffer around the prominent Aboriginal person and screen individuals who seek association. Oodgeroo was without the benefit of these protective processes. Kathie Cochrane recalls how her relationship with Oodgeroo changed in the absence of the structures of the Civil Rights movement:

We were very close when we were in the Civil Rights movement and when the Tribal Council was being established [ . . . ] After she retired to Moongalba that closeness disappeared. We kept in touch by phone. She had a way of ringing when she was troubled. She would ring when it seemed she had some important decisions to make. I used to get quite annoyed at this. She would ring and say, 'I've got an invitation to go to America... do you think I should go?' I would say, " it depends on you. Do you want to go? I can't tell you whether you should or shouldn't" (Collins, *Oodgeroo: John Collins in 221*).

Oodgeroo drew upon friends such as Kathie Cochrane for the solidarity and affirmation that had been an inherent characteristic (however paternalistic) of the FCAATSI organisational structure. After she left organised politics in 1971, Oodgeroo continued to receive many invitations that sought her representation and recognised her achievements. Oodgeroo had been guest lecturer to the University of South Pacific in 1972 and Australian envoy to an International Writers conference in Malaysia in 1974. She acted as senior adviser to the Australian delegation to the first World Black Festival of Arts also in 1974, after which she had the unfortunate experience of being a passenger on a plane that was hijacked in Dubai. Oodgeroo was guest of the Government of Papua New Guinea for their Festival of Arts in 1975. These invitations gave Oodgeroo access to an international audience that had proved (since her inclusion in the Australian delegation to the World Council of Churches conference on racism in London, 1969) to be an important influence upon Aboriginal politics. Returning from the London conference on racism had prompted Oodgeroo to take action, seeking Aboriginal voice and

representation within the FCAATSI structure. Since 1969 Oodgeroo's political journey had illustrated that the pragmatic need for white support and intervention was at the risk of white dominance, even within her own personal networks. Oodgeroo's reliance upon non-Aboriginal support was exacerbated during this period by her forced resignation from the Aboriginal political community which had dominated her life for twenty years.

In 1977 an American academic, Margaret Read Lauer, visited Oodgeroo at Moongalba to interview her for *World Literature Written in English*. In 1978 Lauer facilitated Oodgeroo's application for a Fulbright Scholarship and a Myer Travel Grant. These funds enabled Oodgeroo to travel to the USA to take a position as poet-in-residence at Bloomsberg State College, where Lauer worked as an Associate Professor of English.

The benefits derived from Oodgeroo's liaison with individuals such as Lauer were not always only in Oodgeroo's interest. Upon Oodgeroo's arrival in the US it became clear that Lauer had her own agenda for inviting an Australian Aboriginal activist and writer. Oodgeroo wrote to Judith Wright from America in October 1978:

Jessie says Margaret Lauer is a crazy do-gooder. Since I have been here and since Margaret blandly told me the reason why she got me here is in the hope that she will get her professorship - I am beginning to agree with Jessie. She treats me like a very fragile black golliwog, and I hate it [ . . . ] I don't give a damn whether she gets it [the promotion] or not but I sure hate to be used this way (Wright, *Folder 470*).

Incidents surrounding her tour of the USA in 1978/9 illustrate Oodgeroo's vulnerability to exploitation by apparently well-meaning members of her network. With the absence of Government assistance for Moongalba, Oodgeroo relied upon royalty payments and generous donations from faithful supporters such as Judith Wright (whose letters document the regular donation of money over the years). Tours organised by the likes of Lauer boosted the sale of Oodgeroo's titles and stimulated interest in her project. In 1980 Oodgeroo expressed frustration with ongoing financial hardship. She had received an Aboriginal Arts Board grant for \$2000 to set up an Aboriginal fabric design enterprise. Her letter to Judith Wright notes that the grant was, "Without strings ???!!! (amazing eh) for setting up. [ . . . ] Keep your fingers crossed for us. I'm sick of having to beg or pray for my daily bread" (Wright, *Folder 470*). Oodgeroo's path of achievement was not one smooth stride followed by another. Procuring her daily bread proved

to be a continual struggle. Oodgeroo's letters to Judith Wright illustrate how she was subject to financial and social pressures familiar to colonised and dispossessed people.

In July 1979 Julianne Schwenke wrote to Judith Wright on Oodgeroo's behalf to, "let [her] know what is happening up here" (Wright *Box 470*). Oodgeroo "was very ill for a couple of months with a head injury" (Wright, *Folder 470*) that resulted from an incident of family violence over the Easter break in 1979. Oodgeroo's letters speak of mountainous piles of correspondence, periods busy with family life, care for her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and bouts of illness, particularly chronic bronchitis and conjunctivitis (Wright, *Folder 470*). Later in her life Oodgeroo suffered a broken wrist, a result of family conflict over the burden of childcare placed upon her (Wright, *Folder 471*). Oodgeroo clearly had personal experience of patterns of harm in Aboriginal communities. Oodgeroo argued that these patterns were the result of, "physical and psychological genocide":

The ongoing problems within the spheres of Aboriginal existence such as high rate of imprisonment, high infant mortality rates, deaths in custody, breakdown of extended family units, substance abuse, domestic violence, etc are all components making up the situation that constitutes an iron cycle which we have yet to break. The 'piecemeal' approaches of the past have not worked. In the main these 'piecemeal' attempts have been received as impositions that have been rejected (Walker and Noonuccal, *Terra Nullius* 92).

The issues that Oodgeroo and Denis Walker address in this joint paper were problems that had caused pain and created divisions within their own family. Oodgeroo's personal experience of inter-generational contest and betrayal convinced her that a land-based Aboriginal cultural identity was the key to fostering a revitalised Aboriginality. The firm foundation of Aboriginal identity then became the ground for Oodgeroo's anti-racist educational strategy. Oodgeroo first pursued her political goals via cultural education with the establishment of Moongalba and the publication of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in 1972.

### **Instigated and Inspired by Oodgeroo**

The success of Moongalba as a localised educational intervention highlighted the need for Aboriginal Studies at all levels of the education system to be responsive to local Aboriginal communities. By 1990 Oodgeroo was advocating for a national framework for Aboriginal Studies. This plan extrapolated the benefits of educational programmes such as the Moongalba camps

within a national context. Like the camps, she hoped that Aboriginal Studies would support and nurture indigenous children by strengthening their cultural awareness and indigenous identity. Simultaneously, Aboriginal studies programmes would intervene in the formation of non-Indigenous Australian children by providing Indigenous perspectives about indigeneity and contact history. Accommodating the needs and acknowledging the expertise of local Indigenous communities would be a key factor in the implementation of Oodgeroo's vision. As she noted to Judith Wright in September 1991, "What I hope I can convince Tickner is to set up Aborigines to do the teaching" (Wright, *Folder 471*). As she did in 1969, Oodgeroo was again advocating that the public hear Aboriginal people representing their own perspectives. It was about time white Australians started to listen to Aboriginal voices:

They are still making decisions for us. Why the hell can't they understand that it is time to start listening to us instead of fouling our lives with their English minds and fucked up colonialist attitudes (Wright, *Folder 470*)(sic).

Some people were listening. Oodgeroo continued:

I am trying to cut down my workload. However, the older I get the more work I receive. I have been asked to go back next year to the University of New South Wales to follow up seeds I have sowed there. Very complimentary but more bloody hard work (Wright, *Folder 470*).

The seed that Oodgeroo planted at the University of New South Wales grew into the "Teaching the Teacher: Indigenous Australian Studies' Project of National Significance". Rhonda Craven, project-coordinator, acknowledges Oodgeroo as both instigator and inspiration. The premise of the project was that culturally appropriate education was essential for improving education outcomes for Indigenous students. These outcomes could only be achieved when teachers are properly equipped by teacher training institutions to teach Indigenous students and Australian Indigenous studies. Equipping new generations of teachers to teach Indigenous Studies through a community consultative approach will also enable teachers to present a more accurate history of Australia to all students, contributing significantly to reconciliation and social justice (Craven, *Teaching*).

Regarding Oodgeroo's role in the project, Craven wrote:

It is a tribute to Oodgeroo that over the period 1991 - 1994 there are now seven universities in Australia trialing a core Aboriginal Studies subject when previously there was only one. It also proves that indeed one person can make a difference. [ . . . ] It was her last wish that this project succeed. She saw this project as emphasising reconciliation through education. When Oodgeroo was very ill she assured me that the project would succeed in that she had laid the pathway for its success. In a life full of monumental contributions to Australian society her last project may prove to be her most significant for generations of Australians to come  
(Craven, *Oodgeroo* 128).

Oodgeroo's contribution to Aboriginal education has, does and will make a difference to Australian education.

## Conclusion

This chapter attempted to sketch the relationship between Oodgeroo's political activism and her writing life: from poetry and pan-Aboriginal political organisations to children's prose and strategic, localised cultural education interventions. Oodgeroo's abandonment of institutionalised politics in 1972 proved that one person could make a difference, but at a cost. Her political investment in pan-Aboriginal organisations in 1970/71 allowed the pursuit of political goals unhindered by the immediate constraints of a white agenda. However, this coalition was short lived. Oodgeroo's role as a pathmaker cannot be extricated from her personal experience of patterns of harm in Aboriginal communities. The impact of political and family conflict led Oodgeroo to retreat to her homeland on Stradbroke Island. Here Oodgeroo pursued her goals of cultural conservation through relationship with the land. Oodgeroo's actions, taken on an individual basis, were vulnerable to institutionalised dominance of white perspectives and the splintering of alliances between Aboriginal people. Oodgeroo struggled to support herself financially and to combat the "run-around" of the bureaucracy. After years of applications, she failed to gain title for her land. Oodgeroo's years of survival under rudimentary conditions, scratching together funds to conduct educational camps at Moongalba, became the inspiration for her final project. Capitalising upon her years of experience as a localised Aboriginal educator, Oodgeroo combined the local and national perspective. The "Teach the Teacher" project instigated by Oodgeroo is a community-based national initiative which aims to subvert the racist status quo by educating the next generation of teachers and ultimately students themselves.

Oodgeroo's focus on "the next generation" was borne out in her educational approach to political activism and writing. Her autobiographical text *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was an early expression of this approach. In my next chapter I will conduct a close examination of the production of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and illustrate how the desire to avoid white domination, which promoted Oodgeroo's resignation from FCAATSI, also impinges significantly upon the creation and publication of this landmark text.

## **Eight**

### ***The Resurrection of the Mythologised Indigene***

"The resurrection of the mythologised indigene requires that the living survivors be muzzled" (Rose, *The year* 26).

#### **Selective Hearing**

Oodgeroo was a path maker in the fields of Aboriginal writing, politics, cross-cultural education and cultural conservation. Her poetry collection *We Are Going* (1964) was the first mainstream literary publication by an Aboriginal person. It was published when Aboriginal activism was gaining political recognition and large media audiences. Penny Van Toorn argues that this achievement should not be understood as breaking an Aboriginal silence, rather as, "ending a period of white deafness, by bringing a powerful Aboriginal voice into earshot of large, mainstream audiences both in Australia and overseas" (Van Toorn 29). Oodgeroo's poetry, though disparaged by many critics, was received enthusiastically by a general readership. The emergence of Aboriginal literature was part of the rising profile of Aboriginal politics on the national political stage of the 1960s. The audience that Oodgeroo found for her poetry accepted this work as part of the push for socially sanctioned Aboriginal rights. In 1967 the vast majority of Australians had voted in favour of the FCAATSI rights-based platform: to have the federal government assume responsibility for Aboriginal affairs and to have Aboriginal people counted in the census.

The white ear that heard Oodgeroo's poetry as a cry for Aboriginal rights was not so willing to hear Oodgeroo's other, more avant garde approaches to Indigenous issues. Oodgeroo's plans and actions were often ahead of the thinking of many of her fellow political activists and the government bureaucracies with whom she interacted. Oodgeroo's divergence from the status quo often led to a clash of expectations and approach with her political collaborators. Opposition did not deter Oodgeroo, nor she was afraid to forge her own path. Political divergence did lead to misunderstanding, frustration and curtailment of some of Oodgeroo's



most forward-thinking or unpopular plans. Oodgeroo's resignation from FCAATSI is an example of one such clash of expectations and approach. Oodgeroo moved away from a "rights"-based ideal to a political platform that accommodated pan-Aboriginal identity politics. Major shifts in Oodgeroo's politics were informed by developments in her personal life and expressed in a changing approach to her writing. Oodgeroo's founding role in the National Tribal Council, her sudden resignation from the fledgling organisation and subsequent retirement to North Stradbroke Island all contextualise shifts in her creative expression. In this period of personal crisis Oodgeroo retreated to her traditional land, finding nurture that spurred a land-based politics of cultural education and conservation. Oodgeroo had been exploring these avenues within the NTC structure, particularly in the failed Boornong Mumba cultural education and arts project. She had also been writing early drafts of autobiographical childhood stories and recording traditional Dreaming stories. Oodgeroo's move away from a rights-based politics to a land-based politics of identity was accompanied by this shift from poetry to prose and from an audience of adults to children.

Oodgeroo's poetry may have ended a period of white deafness, but this new public ear to the Aboriginal voice was selective in its hearing. Still drawing upon modernist presumptions about Aboriginality, the white Australian ear was not ready to hear the more avant garde call that Oodgeroo proposed to make in her first prose work, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972). Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* attempted to communicate a proud black identity that was linked to a vibrant, contemporary Aboriginal spirituality of the land. The discussion of land-rights and the invocation of a contemporary Aboriginality among people of Aboriginal descent was far more radical than the acceptable call for intangible "rights". Modernist thinking still attempted to resurrect a mythologised "traditional" Indigene when engaging with Aboriginal issues. As Deborah Bird Rose astutely argues, "The resurrection of the mythologised indigene requires that the living survivors be muzzled" (Rose, *The year* 26). Oodgeroo wrote from the position of an urban-based Indigenous woman who was attempting to re-engage with her Aboriginal heritage and spirituality. In manuscript form, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* crossed genre boundaries and pushed the limits of acceptable Aboriginal expression as deemed by white cultural criteria. The edited version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, as I will illustrate in this chapter, achieved very different aims. *Stradbroke Dreamtime* became a popular children's title that sold out four editions. This popular success

was secured by the style of editorial emendation to the manuscript, particularly through the imposition of traditional genre expectations for autobiography and folklore.

*Stradbroke Dreamtime* was published in 1972. The first edition was released as a children's title, aimed at an audience nine years and over. It was first published as a 22x17 cm hard cover text with a cover illustration of an outback desert scene by an anonymous Aboriginal girl. The first half of the book, titled "Stories from Stradbroke", contains autobiographical stories from Oodgeroo's childhood. The second half, titled "Stories From the Old and New Dreamtime" contains traditional legends and new Dreaming stories told in traditional form. Each story is accompanied by a black-and-white illustration drawn in an "Aboriginalist" style. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is housed in the Oodgeroo Noonuccal collection at the University of Queensland's Fryer Library. The manuscript exists in three forms; hand-written drafts in "school exercise" note books that also contain notes as to whether the draft had been typed, final drafts typed by the author that note if the piece has been submitted to "A&R" (Angus and Robertson), and the edited proofs of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, which are accompanied by a letter from Angus and Robertson dated 8 February 1979, regretting that it had taken the Press seven years to return the manuscript to the author after publication.

The ordering of the handwritten and typed drafts in the manuscript collection makes no generic distinction between autobiographical and Dreaming stories. The published text separates the stories into distinct and discrete sections: autobiographical and dreaming stories. The ordering of the manuscript is alphabetical: an ordering that avoids genre distinctions. In this chapter I will outline the nature and impact of the editorial alterations such as the division of stories along generic lines. Other key alterations to the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* relate to the trimming down of contemporary Aboriginal viewpoints on Aboriginality and the refashioning of the text to represent an Aboriginality more akin to the image of the mythologised Indigene of the white modernist imagination. Editorial alterations, such as the packaging of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as timeless folklore for children's entertainment divorced from the everyday political experiences of Aboriginal people, disarmed Oodgeroo's avant garde conception of children's literature as a cultural education and anti-racist tool. Before moving to the substance of these editorial alterations I will outline the nature of the editorial relationship and other forces in the publishing world

that influenced the shape of the text, including the publishing house's perception of changing audience demands.

### **The Collaborative Relationship**

When Oodgeroo wrote and published *Stradbroke Dreamtime* she was an established poet and had a reputation for her forthright, fiery nature. In public statements and in her actions she made known her intolerance of outside interference with Aboriginal endeavour. As I established in my previous chapter, Oodgeroo had a political history marked by unpopular, independent stances. Her position on white leadership in Aboriginal rights lobby groups, land rights and conservation groups serve as a few examples. Oodgeroo also had spoken openly and uncompromisingly against white censorship, citing her early encounters with the Communist Party, " I didn't stay in the Communist Party long because they wanted to write my speeches. They wanted me to say what they wanted me to say. I said, 'No, can't do that. I'm no parrot'" (Mitchell 197).

Oodgeroo was also involved with organisations such as the Realist Writer's group, whose practices involved collaborative criticism of manuscripts. The author disapproved of the anonymous submission of drafts to the open forum when it resulted in the alteration of her poetry. Cochrane relates how on one occasion, "one well-meaning member of the group took one of her poems, rewrote it in his own style, and sent it to the *Bulletin*. It was published as Kath Walker's poem, and Kath felt angry and humiliated" (Cochrane, *Oodgeroo* 35). These public statements, combined with her fiery reputation, led me to expect to find that the original manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* would not have been altered significantly. When I travelled to Brisbane in March 2000 to conduct interviews and to examine the manuscript at the Fryer Library however, I found a very different story.

*Stradbroke Dreamtime* was produced under different circumstances to those experienced by both Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker, who were first-time authors and whose titles were primarily edited by friends without professional editorial experience or qualifications. The editor of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, Barbara Ker Wilson, was an experienced professional and Oodgeroo was an established author with a reputation for wilfulness. Oodgeroo and Barbara Ker Wilson did not have a pre-existing relationship when they embarked upon the editorial

preparation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, nor did their relationship continue after the text's publication.

In 2000 I interviewed Barbara Ker Wilson, who remembers a sense of trepidation as she met Oodgeroo for the first time. The women met to discuss the proposed project and to establish a working rapport. Barbara Ker Wilson recalls the initial meeting between author and editor as taking place after a poetry reading at The Adelaide Festival. It is likely that this occurred in 1966 when Oodgeroo participated as the first Aboriginal writer to read at The Adelaide Festival's "Writers Week". Ker Wilson clearly recalls the tenor of that first meeting:

I remember she was very outspoken about what she called "trashy poetry" and I remember her walking out of one poetry reading in high dudgeon, walking out saying, "this is trash" or something and I rather admired her. She was a very feisty lady at that time, and in a sense you felt you were working with a slightly volcanic temperament and that she might easily object to something you'd done to her manuscript (Ker Wilson).

Oodgeroo's volcanic temperament may have put Barbara Ker Wilson in awe of her, but Ker Wilson also makes an imposing first impression. Born and trained in the United Kingdom, Barbara Ker Wilson carries herself with a dignified demeanour and has a polished Oxbridge accent. Ker Wilson began working with Oxford University Press in 1949, gaining what she describes as a "hands-on, all-round education" (Ker Wilson) in every aspect of publishing before she was accepted as a junior editor. She also attended the London School of Printing to learn typography and design aspects of the book trade. After immigrating to Australia she managed the Angus and Robertson children's list. At the time of her first meeting with Oodgeroo, Ker Wilson was editing and retelling Aboriginal legends collected by Daisy Bates. Her editorial work on *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was her first professional collaboration with an Aboriginal writer. She has since become an editor for the University of Queensland Press Black Writers series and is respected for her professionalism and her long and significant contribution to Aboriginal publishing.

Back in the 1960s, Ker Wilson's inexperience with cross-cultural collaboration, combined with Oodgeroo's status, led her to approach the new editorial relationship with caution, "It was not a time when there were many Aboriginal writers, as you know, and so she too was diffident, we were both diffident" (Ker Wilson). There is no contradiction in describing

Oodgeroo as both fiery and diffident. My previous chapter illustrated the complexity of Oodgeroo's personal and political life at the time *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was nearing completion. Personal fatigue as well as a desire to be heard and pass her stories down to a younger generation, may well have inhibited her challenge of editorial decisions. It was Ker Wilson's professional practice to work only in pencil, inviting the author to engage in a discussion of the editor's proposals for the work. It seems that even a bold personality such as Oodgeroo found taking the initiative to object and counter the professional opinion of an experienced editor a difficult prospect:

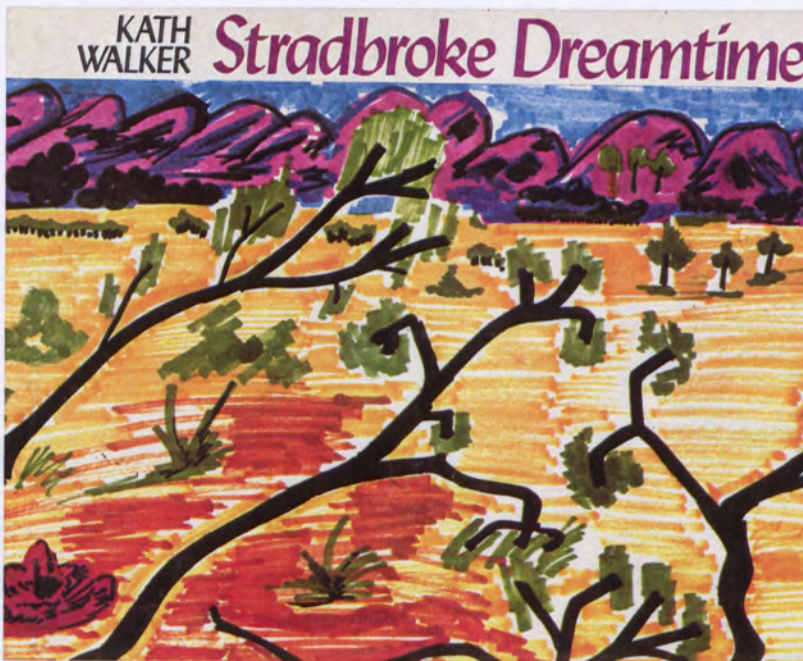
Kath was inclined too perhaps to take too much of what I suggested; though in a way I was very diffident about it. I think afterwards I believe she made some remarks about how her manuscripts had been changed, which is always sad for an editor because she did have the opportunity [to object] at the time (Ker Wilson).

As a groundbreaking writer, engaged in producing the first autobiographical work by an Aboriginal woman, Oodgeroo's relationship with Ker Wilson was necessarily unequal in terms of cultural capital, power and professional experience. My examination of the changing packaging of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* over four editions from 1972 to 1993 suggests that it was many years before the text was refashioned to resemble the traces of a text identifiable in the original manuscript.

### **The Book is a Social Thing**

Within a Western book culture a readership is a community formed around and drawn by the characteristics of a text. The packaging of a text can affect the type and size of its eventual readership. The book, as Alison Ravenscroft notes, "carries social relations" (Ravenscroft 261). The powers of a text are both enabled and constrained by the culture in which it circulates. Each of *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* four editions have distinct markers, which proclaim its genre and seek a particular reader. In each edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the illustrations and presentation has been changed, but the narrative has remained unaltered. The first edition, as I have noted, was packaged as a picture book for older children. The second edition is a folio-sized picture book with large illustrations of wide-eyed, cute Aboriginal children. The illustrations dwarf the accompanying narrative, suggesting appeal for a younger child audience. The third edition is markedly different, seeking an adolescent to

adult audience. This edition is novella sized, with no illustrations accompanying the text. The fourth and most current edition seeks to appeal to all ages. A prominent Aboriginal artist worked the new illustrations. The changing packaging of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* illustrates how the presentation of a book correlates with the publisher's conception of an audience. This perception, as I will detail below, changed significantly from 1972, when *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was first released, to 1993 when the most current (but now out of print) edition was republished. The packaging of the first three editions of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* suggests a philosophical foundation that varies significantly from that of the manuscript. Only in the fourth edition does the presentation draw close to the possibilities identifiable in the manuscript.



**Figure 1** *Stradbroke Dreamtime* First Edition (1972)

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## The First Edition

The first edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was designed for a children's market; a 22x17-cm text with black and white illustrations accompanying each story. Seven years after initial publication Oodgeroo publicly criticised the publishing house Angus and Robertson, citing her disappointment with the style of illustrations, the editorial treatment and the demeanour of the House. *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was Oodgeroo's only title with Angus and Robertson. Her poetry was published by Jacaranda Press, to whom she returned in 1981, when publishing *Father Sky and Mother Earth*, her second prose book for children.

A white man, Denis Schapel was selected by the publishing house to illustrate the first edition. Barbara Ker Wilson recalls his idea for the illustrations was to draw "in Aboriginal style" (Ker Wilson). The choice of "Aboriginalist" styled illustrations by a white artist reflects the primacy of a modernist paradigm, which I will discuss in detail in an ensuing section. For the cover illustration, the Press chose a painting done by an Aboriginal child for whom no attribution is given (see illustration 1). This painting was originally intended for a calendar project, illustrated by a number of Aboriginal students, that Barbara Ker Wilson was coordinating in cooperation with an inner-city Adelaide school. When this project failed, Barbara Ker Wilson saw the opportunity to use one of the paintings nevertheless, "I thought at least it would be nice to use one of them as a book cover. I thought that Kath's book seemed a very suitable one. So we did have the publication of one Aboriginal artist"(Ker Wilson). This Aboriginal artist was an anonymous school child.

Oodgeroo was not impressed with the packaging and was infuriated by the inability of the Publishing house to identify and acknowledge the cover illustrator. Just days after Angus and Robertson finally returned the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in February 1978, Oodgeroo reflected upon the contrast between the Australian edition and its impending Polish translation. In a letter to Judith Wright dated 20 February 1978, Oodgeroo wrote, "the illustrations are superb and far better than the Australian version" (Wright, *Folder 470*). Further, in 1979 Oodgeroo made public her resolve to deal only with overseas publishers following her experience with their Australian counterparts.

*The Australian* reported Oodgeroo as being disgusted by, “the niggardliness of Australian Publishers”:

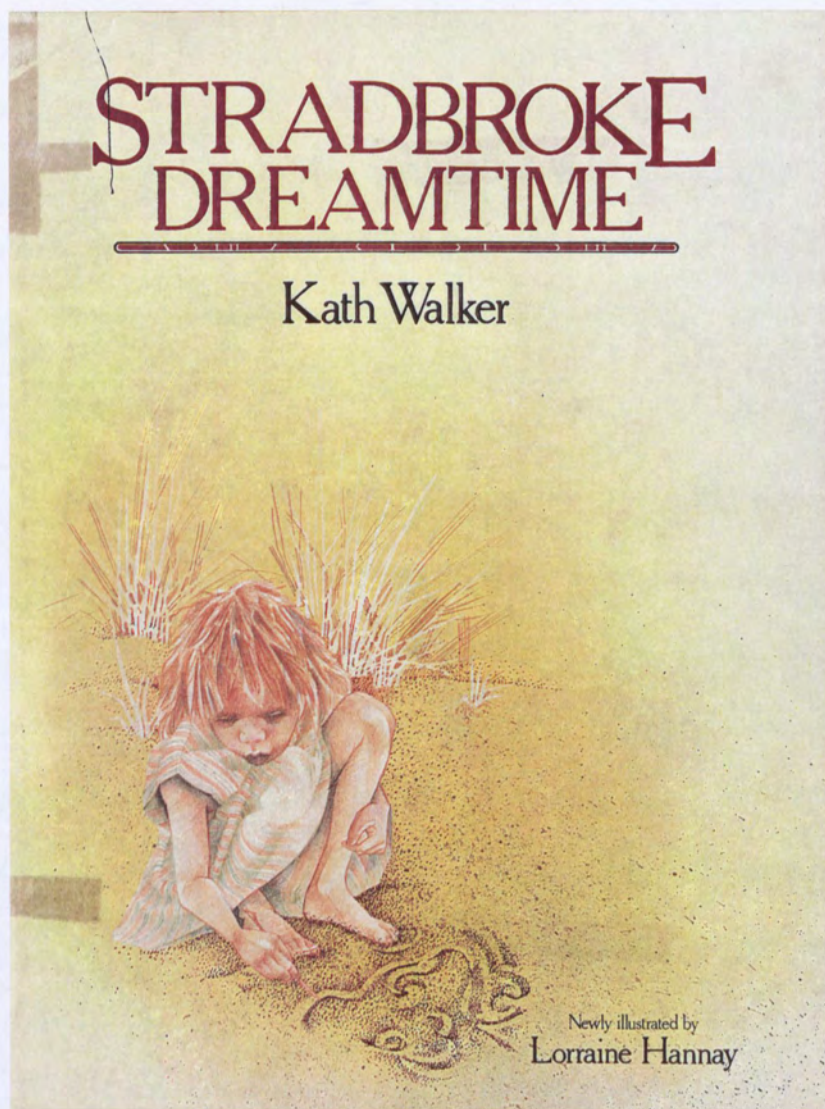
The cover of my last book (*Stradbroke Dreamtime*) was a painting by a 10-year-old Aboriginal girl and the publishers could not even tell me her name. [ . . . ] That book is compulsory reading in Japan for children learning English. It is recommended reading in Australian schools and 20,000 have been distributed in Poland. Yet that little girl has not got a cent out of it. That is sick and Australians are sick in the way they treat their Aborigines and their artists (*Walker Local Publishers 2*).

The packaging of the first edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* suggests both a lack of consultation with Oodgeroo and a failure to recognise the value of art as a means of culturally appropriate empowerment for Aboriginal people. Packaged as timeless folklore and children’s entertainment, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*’s publishers denied appropriate recognition and effaced these wider social issues.

### **The Second Edition**

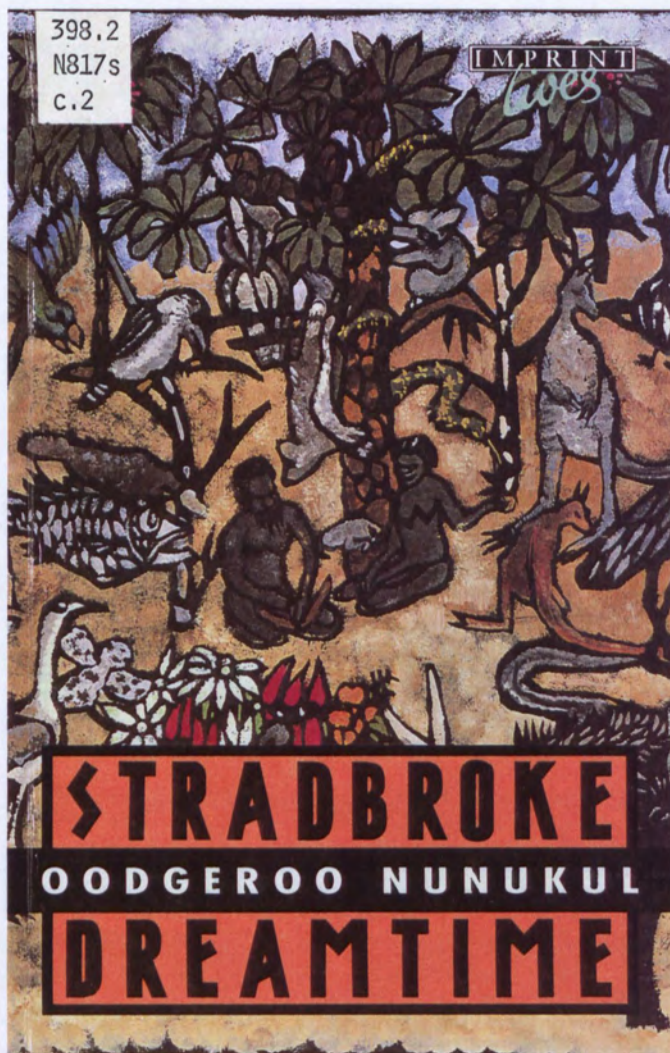
The second edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was released in 1982. This edition has a much larger layout - 22 x 29-cm, folio size black-and-white and colour illustrations by a white New Zealand-born woman, Lorraine Hannay (see illustration 2). The illustrations are described on the cover blurb as “youthful and vigorous” and situate the text within the genre of a large format children’s picture book. Hannay draws in the Western, Romantic tradition which portrays Aboriginal children as wide-eyed, elfin creatures, the stuff of fairy tales. Such depictions of Aboriginal children have been historically utilised to invoke the “universal innocence” of childhood and draw settler-readers to empathise with Aboriginal people on white assimilatory terms. The 1982 re-illustrated edition consolidated the market position of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* within white, Western conceptions of the children’s book genre.





**Figure 2** *Stradbroke Dreamtime* Second Edition (1982)

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**Figure 3** *Stradbroke Dreamtime* Third Edition (1992)

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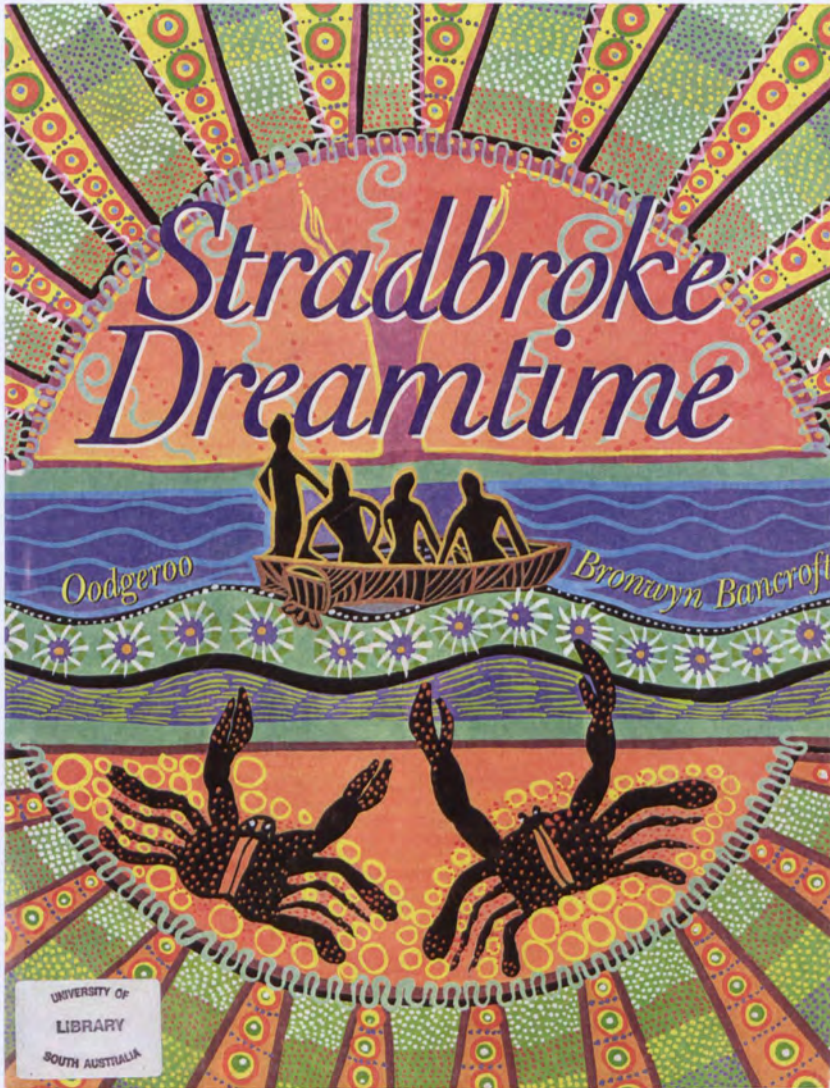
### **The Third Edition**

Ten years later, in 1992, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was released in a novella format. This third edition is formatted as a standard 13 x 20-cm paperback text without illustrations. The cover illustration is again by a white artist (see illustration 3 above), but this time a “serious” artist of some repute; not an anonymous Aboriginal child or a children’s book illustrator. The artist, Margaret Preston, was among the first modernist Australian artists to take up the Aboriginalist style. In the 1940s artists such as Preston saw Aboriginalism as a path towards the expression of a distinctive Australian identity and ultimately a new national mythos: white indigeniety (McLean 89). Traditional Indigenous owners (then and now) contest the rendering of traditional motifs by white people as a form of theft (Nicholls). Nonetheless, choice of Preston’s art for the cover would add prestige to the text and visual interest as a lure for potential readers. The third edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* carries Preston’s “Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden” (circa 1950) as a cover illustration. This painting uses Aboriginal figures to represent the mythologised innocence of the Garden of Eden. Published under the Harper Collins’ Imprint/Lives series of autobiography and fiction, the 1992 edition moves away from the children’s literature/folk lore classification. For the first time the styling of the text acknowledges the political import of the prose, even if this acknowledgment is still within Western ideological terms. The back cover carries a media tribute to the author, “Always vigorous, and deeply committed” quoted from the *Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*.

This edition seeks to take Oodgeroo’s work seriously as adult literature, acknowledging her position as a prominent elder and literary figure. The packaging of the text in novella form, and within the Imprint/Lives series, suggests the rehabilitation of work that had been formerly categorised as children’s literature and neglected within the academy. The re-categorisation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as autobiography coincides with the movement in literary criticism that acknowledges the worth of life writing, a formerly marginalised genre. The repackaging also reflects the biography boom in popular book sales that occurred in the 1990’s. The 1992 reframing of the text is still firmly within parameters determined by the publisher and the market. It was only in 1993, the year of Oodgeroo’s death, that *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was packaged in a form that was aligned more directly with Oodgeroo’s long-stated value code.

## The Fourth Edition

The fourth edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was re-illustrated and released in 1993, just prior to Oodgeroo's death. This edition is a 22 x 29-cm large format illustrated text with bold colour and black and white illustrations by Aboriginal artist Bronwyn Bancroft (see illustration 4).



**Figure 4** *Stradbroke Dreamtime* Fourth Edition (1993)

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away from a rights-based politics to a politics of cultural education and conservation became the grounds for a clash of public expectations. For example, in 1978 Moongalba was the focus of a *Woman's Day* feature article titled "My Day by Kath Walker". In this article Oodgeroo is introduced as a lapsed poet:

Kath Walker, 57, is an internationally acclaimed Aboriginal poet. She lives in a caravan on Stradbroke Island, her ancestral home off Brisbane. She returned there eight years ago to write books, instead she spends much of her time and energies tutoring children (Walker, *My Day* 65).

Oodgeroo challenged the prioritising of the role "poet" over "teacher" in the interview transcript:

If I had the choice between writing another book and teaching children I would teach. I tell them how to hunt for food [ . . . ]. I tell them about the spirit world [ . . . ]. I also teach them about the cultures of different countries I have visited [ . . . ]. So far 8000 children have visited me. They seem to be my whole life now. Of course, the future is in them. When I do get time for writing it is rarely lengthy stuff. Mostly I've been doing short stories for children (Walker, *My Day* 65).

Oodgeroo saw "the future" in the education of children, either through direct contact or through the publication of children's literature. Oodgeroo's educational initiatives, at Moongalba and via her children's literature titles, were open to children of all backgrounds. Nurturing and educating Aboriginal children, however, took particular priority. In a speech delivered at Monash University on June 7th 1977 Oodgeroo argued that white readers of Aboriginal literature must realise that they are a secondary audience:

What must be understood regarding Aboriginal literature is that the authors are writing for their own race first. Their efforts so far have been strictly for Blacks. Their criteria is not Shakespeare, Milton or Keats. Frankly they couldn't care less.[ . . . ] It is perfectly normal therefore for Aboriginal authors to toss the white man's criteria out in their Black writings, in their attempt to capture the Black man's song and rhythms of his own language. What all authors are aiming for is for their Aboriginal identification and their lost identity (Noonuccal, *Papers Box* 30).

For Oodgeroo, the purpose of Black writing is to capture the orality of Aboriginal language and song and to strengthen Aboriginal identity and community. Here she calls into being an Aboriginal readership and endows Aboriginal written expression with power. The "white

man's criteria" are of secondary importance to the task of fostering Aboriginal art and writing.

How easy is it for an Aboriginal author, even one as influential as Oodgeroo, to "toss out" these criteria? Aboriginal authors encounter the restrictions inherent in publishing Black words on a "white page", even if "they couldn't care less" about negative comparisons to representatives of the canon such as "Shakespeare, Milton or Keats". Here Oodgeroo gestures to a clash of expectations regarding the function and assessment of literature. In the case of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the publishing house and editor held very different understandings of the function of children's literature and its value. Their preparation and presentation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* through the trope of primitivism resulted in a published text that is considerably different from the possibilities suggested by the manuscript version.

### **"Their Criteria is not Shakespeare, Milton or Keats": The Hierarchy of Genres and Aboriginal Primitivism**

Literary modernism posited that an aesthetic hierarchy was available to judge and classify forms and genres against the standards of "true culture". The modernist hierarchy of generic forms supported a binary opposition between high and low art. In the United Kingdom, advocates of high culture, such as FR and QD Leavis, argued that products of mass culture (such as children's literature, detective fiction, romance and melodrama) offered cheap and easy pleasures that degraded the mass-readership. Literary modernism adopted criteria for taste and readership that demeaned the mass audience while also valorising a mythic conception of primitivism in art and literature.

Primitivist movements esteemed "primitive" cultures from which artists and writers drew inspiration, but rarely on the terms of the Indigenous cultures being appropriated. The valorisation of the "primitive" functioned rather to support the discourses of the modernist aesthetic:

The term "primitive" [ . . . ] refers to those ideological constructions formulated through Western intellectual traditions by which other cultures are admired as a distant and exotic entity whilst at the same time the superiority of 'the West' remains unchallenged (Kleinert 9).

The elevation of “the primitive” relates exclusively to “traditional” arts and legends, not to Indigenous adaptation of Western genres. The contrasting critical reception of Oodgeroo’s poetry, which adapted Western forms, and her collections of legends in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, which were modelled on traditional narrative styles, clearly illustrates this division. Oodgeroo’s poetry was received with hostility and derision while the “primitive” legends were accepted and praised. *We Are Going* was criticised: as having “nothing to do with poetry” and as “propaganda” (Shoemaker, *Mudrooroo* 85). *Stradbroke Dreamtime* received much more generous acceptance as the retelling of “primitive” folklore.

The following survey discusses seven articles which critiqued *Stradbroke Dreamtime* after publication in 1972. These reviews were sourced from broadsheets, weeklies, regional papers, and magazines. Two of the newspapers sought well-known anthropologists to review the text, suggesting again the determination to read *Stradbroke Dreamtime* through discourses of primitivism and cultural “authenticity”. Three key features reflect the epistemological foundation of the reviews and gesture to the critical environment into which *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was published. A determination to link folklore with primitivism, and the low status of children’s literature clearly shapes these critical responses.

One critical approach is identifiable in each of the seven reviews. All of the reviews achieve a temporal distancing between the autobiographical stories in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and contemporary Aboriginal culture. This denial of coevalness also supports a Western prejudice of cultural superiority. Although the reviews are overwhelmingly positive, the text’s acceptability is premised upon the assumption that the vibrant culture it describes is now extinct.

The nostalgic white reader required the representation of a poor but worthy Aboriginal remnant enjoying a happy and simple life. For example, the reviewer for the *Grafton Examiner* reflects that Oodgeroo:

Brings these happy far-off days vividly back [ . . . ] days when Aboriginal families might well have been poor, as her family was, but when those days were full and busy with the legends and traditions of their people and meaningful and important in their daily activities (*Children’s*).

This review describes days “full and busy with the legends and traditions”, with an implied contrast to culturally barren contemporary Aboriginal communities. Other reviews adopt a similar position. *The Courier Mail* suggests that *Stradbroke Dreamtime* recalls a period when “some of the tribal traditions still remained” (Cox 2) and expresses the belief that Oodgeroo, “regrets not having known the old tribal life” (Cox 2). *The Advertiser’s* Noel Rait says Oodgeroo “has dipped her pen in magic to tell of her island childhood” (Rait), describing a time when “pleasures were simple”, now “shattered” and hence unavailable to contemporary Aboriginal communities.

The second critical approach reads Oodgeroo’s collection of tribal legends through the folklore genre. Six of the seven reviews situate the Dreaming stories as artefacts of lost cultural traditions. Stella Lees, writing for *The Review*, argues that the legends are “more powerful” than the autobiographical stories, “Stripped to the bone, they retain the timeless quality of life and death and natural phenomena when seen through the dark glass of magic. Man is part of this world, living on equal terms with animals, plants, rocks and the stars” (Lees 1025).

Primitive culture is appreciated as timeless and close to nature, invoking a binary relationship with the sophisticated and technologically-advanced white Western cultures. Similarly, Dennis Dugan from *The Age* identifies “a one-ness with the environment that few white people achieve” (Dugan 12). This acknowledgment of Aboriginal ties to country is reserved for “tribal” people of the past. David Cox of the *Courier Mail* also expresses this sentiment in when he writes, “In all, there is a feeling for the brittle and beautiful landscape of our country. The tribal aborigines knew it so much better than we” (Cox 2). These reviews acknowledge ties between the Dreaming and country, but they do not acknowledge present and continuing ownership by Aboriginal people.

Roland Robinson, writing for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, corrects mistakes in Oodgeroo’s rendering of the legends. These “mistakes” are interpreted as evidence of disconnection from “pure” or authentic culture. Robinson is disappointed by *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as he, “expected to find narratives, in some depth, of Stradbroke Island”.



Instead the reviewer encounters corrupted “camp stories”:

Either Kath Walker is not as well informed on Aboriginal mythology as she would wish to appear, or she has read avidly from previously “Europeanised” collections of mythology. Totemic ancestors were not “punished” for their misdeeds by being turned into stone [ . . . ]. This reviewer has never encountered the Bunyip as an “evil spirit” as in Kath Walker’s narrative [ . . . ] Kath Walker’s “water spirits” are not young women of the tribes who disobeyed the elders and became slaves of the Bunyip. They are “siren women”, the ideals of Aboriginal beauty (Robinson).

This chastising review suggest that Aboriginal legends are only adequately retold when taken directly from a “traditional” tribal culture, not reinterpreted or created for contemporary purposes.

Oodgeroo’s reputation as political poet and her choice to release *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as a book for children presents a challenge to four of the seven reviews. These reviews link Oodgeroo’s characteristic political fervour with the “anger and bitterness” of her poetry. The generic shift to children’s literature is then mobilised to distance *Stradbroke Dreamtime* from Oodgeroo’s political reputation. David Moore writes for *The Bulletin*:

Kath Walker is mainly known as a poet (she is the first Aboriginal poet to achieve popular success). And more recently as an ardent conservationist. Her poems have been filled with the frustrations, longings and bitterness of her people, but this delightful book is something quite different (Moore 52).

In another review, David Cox suggests that Oodgeroo, “well known for her bitter, biting poetry and her work for aboriginal rights and conservation” presents in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* a “gentle crusade” (Cox 2) that draws upon nostalgia and the legends of her lost culture. This gentle crusade is seen as an appropriate tone of address, as in this book “Kath Walker speaks to children” (Cox). Here the generic requirements of “children’s literature” dictate the political tone of the text.

The three key features I have identified in the reviews of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* clearly assess the text through the lens of the framing generic forms. As autobiography, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* recalls lost days of simple island life. Reviewers such as Roland Robinson are careful to note that this was a “detrivalised childhood on Stradbroke Island” enjoyed by

“semi-wild children” hunting for the pot. As folklore, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* retells legends that are a relic of the ancient past. As children’s literature, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is allowed only a “gentle crusade” against racial discrimination. These reviews, working within the contemporary parameters of the framing genres, do not allow a vital, contemporary Aboriginality. Rather, the reviews of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* treasure “Dreams remembered” (Moore). This is a past centred Aboriginality, not a palpable, present and future oriented culture.

The acceptability of “primitive” cultural expression through traditional legends reflects the demand of a modernist aesthetic for a pristine and bygone Aboriginality, which would not threaten white hierarchies of aesthetic critique. Marianna Torgovnick suggests that in a modernist paradigm the primitive is a voiceless Other who mirrors the concerns and obsessions of the Western self:

The needs of the present determine the value and the nature of the primitive. The primitive does what we ask it to do. Voiceless, it lets us speak for it. It is our ventriloquist’s dummy [ . . . ] The primitive can be - has been, will be (?) whatever Euro-Americans want it to be. It tells us what we want it to tell us (Torgovnick 9).

Primitive societies function as ventriloquists’ dummies for the Western self. Nostalgia for the lost simplicity of the past motivates a desire for admiration of the primitive within a modernist aesthetic. Connections with land, ancestors and Indigenous spirituality are denied political efficacy and instead reduced to a white mythology of the Other. Thus the editing of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* to address Western expectations and generic standards provides one example of lost potential for the expression of alternative conceptions of knowledge and social reality.

The editor of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* differentiated between the stories along generic lines. This differentiation refused the Aboriginal writer’s attempt to maintain continuity between the cultural past and a contemporary present and obscures the alternative view of the world that the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* offered.

Differentiating between the autobiographical stories of childhood and the legendary stories, however, is not a disavowal of their suitability as partners within the one title. The editorial

approach to *Stradbroke Dreamtime* did not acknowledge Oodgeroo's culturally specific interpretation of autobiography and folklore; it drew instead from another understanding of their suitability as generic partners. Autobiographical stories of childhood team well with tribal legends when understood from a perspective that accepts the infantilisation of "primitive" societies. The figure of the childlike native, as Johannes Fabian argues, has served as a powerful rhetorical device and motive behind barely disguised attitudes of power and practices of repression and abuse, "informing colonial practice in every aspect from religious indoctrination to labour laws and the granting of basic political rights" (Fabian 63). In *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the image of the infantilised primitive is maintained through the generic combination of autobiographical stories of childhood and tribal legends. Read together these genres present an idealised picture of simplicity and innocence. The editorial removal of references to Oodgeroo's adult life and the removal of political polemic further assists this infantilisation. Although the combination of autobiography and folklore may seem odd to a contemporary reader, newspaper reviewers of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* overwhelmingly endorsed the generic combination. Their comments echo the modernist assumption of the simple, childlike native. At the time of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*'s publication most reviewers received the combination of autobiography and tribal legends as an archive of ancient but primarily lost Aboriginal culture, whose simple and declining remnants practice a bowdlerised version of the original.

The following section considers at length the ramifications of the clash of expectations between writer, Oodgeroo, and editor, Barbara Ker Wilson. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* offers many alternative viewpoints that are filtered out by the trope of primitivism, a trope that invents a bygone Aboriginality, not an active contemporary, political identity. The radical potential of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was restrained by prevailing understandings of the genres towards which it was edited.

### **When What You Wrote is not What was Published**

The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is housed in the Oodgeroo Noonuccal Collection, no.84 in the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland. As was my practice with manuscript examination in the preceding sections, I carefully compared the manuscript with the published text, noting types and numbers of changes and how these changes affected the

manuscript. As I have argued above, the major influence I identified as shaping the manuscript in the editorial process was the trope of primitivism within the genre of folklore.

The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* exists as a collection of hand-written drafts written in school exercise notebooks and typescripts completed by the author. Two of the stories are missing in typescript form. No ordering has been maintained in the archive, however, lists collated by Oodgeroo in her notebooks suggest that the typed draft was ordered alphabetically, making no distinction between the stories according to genre. This ordering does not represent an arbitrary collation, rather, the deliberate mixing of autobiographical and Dreaming stories. The Fryer Library also holds a complete copy of the editor's proofs, which is ordered in the same manner as the published text and manifests only superficial alterations. Comparison between the handwritten draft, the typescript and the editor's proofs suggest that the bulk of the editorial changes were made at the typescript phase. It is also evident that the autobiographical stories were more heavily edited than the legends. This reflects the relative degree of difficulty in shaping the different genres to fit the primitivist conception of Aboriginality. The legends required less editorial intervention because folklore already aligns with primitivist conceptions of Aboriginal culture.

Autobiographical stories of childhood hold the potential for the nostalgic, primitivist gaze, but only with the deletion of political comment or references to bi-cultural life experiences. As was the case with the two other manuscripts examined in this thesis, the bulk of the editorial changes to the manuscript are "accidentals": spelling, grammar, punctuation and typographic presentation. As I found in *If Everyone Cared*, alteration to the typographic presentation had major ramifications for the presentation of Aboriginal visual cues. Other significant alterations include: reduction of the primacy of Aboriginal perspective, the deletion of references to Aboriginal knowledge, spirituality or practices, Aboriginal culture described in the past tense and references to an Indigenous relationship with nature deleted (see Appendix III for examples of manuscript pages).

The three tables below list the number and type of changes made between the typescript stage and the proofs stage. I have itemised separate tallies for the "Stories from Stradbroke" (autobiographical section) and the "Stories from the old and new Dreamtime" (Aboriginal

legends section). I then provide a combined tally of both sections, and tally of outcomes or issues evident.

**Table Six**

**Tally: “Stories from Stradbroke”**

	<b>Typescript/hand copy</b>	<b>Proofs</b>
1. Inserting a paragraph break	-	2
2. Spelling corrections	1	16
3. Deleting colloquialisms	2	1
4. Correcting grammar	3	7
5. Changing paragraph order	8	-
6. Adding sentence	12	1
7. Delete paragraph	15	1
8. Correcting punctuation	17	140
9. Replace sentence	37	-
10. Delete sentence	46	-
11. Change sentence order	50	6
12. Delete words	94	7
13. Add words	116	12
14. Replace words	21	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>238</b>

The differential between the proofs and the typescript tallies suggest that most of the editing took place between drafts. Editorial changes to the proofs consist primarily of the correction to “accidentals”: spelling, punctuation, and improvement of expression or style.

**Table Seven****Tally: "Stories From the Old and New Dreamtime"**

	<b>Typescript/hand copy</b>	<b>Proofs</b>
1. Insert a paragraph break	-	-
2. Delete colloquialisms	-	-
3. Correct grammar	-	2
4. Correct spelling	-	18
5. Delete paragraph	1	-
6. Change paragraph order	1	-
7. Correct punctuation	5	51
8. Replace sentence	6	-
9. Delete sentence	11	-
10. Add sentence	13	-
11. Change sentence order	23	1
12. Delete words	38	2
13. Add words	59	2
14. Replace words	114	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>91</b>

This section appears to be much less heavily edited than the autobiographical stories above, even after accounting for differences in length. The "Stories From the Old and New Dreamtime" section, with fourteen stories taking forty-two pages of the text, including illustrations, are shorter on average than the "Stories from Stradbroke" which consist of thirteen stories taking fifty eight pages, including illustrations. Even so, the tally of changes to the "Stories from Stradbroke" section reveals over twice the number of changes as found in the "Stories From the Old and New Dreamtime" section.

**Table Eight****Tally: Both Sections Combined**

	<b>Typescript/hand copy</b>	<b>Proofs</b>
1. Insert paragraph break	-	2
2. Correct spelling	1	34
3. Delete colloquialisms	2	1
4. Correct grammar	3	9
5. Change paragraph order	9	-
6. Delete paragraph	16	-
7. Correct punctuation	23	191
8. Add sentence	25	1
9. Replace sentence	43	-
10. Delete sentence	57	-
11. Change sentence order	73	7
12. Delete words	132	9
13. Add words	175	14
14. Replace words	332	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>1219</b>

This grand total of 1219 changes to both the typescript and the proofs combined reveals that an average of 12 changes were made per page on the proofs while an average of 33 changes were made per page to the typescript. Of these 1219 changes I judged only 61 to have had negative outcomes for the text, in twelve identifiable categories. Negative outcomes for the text include: the prohibition of possible critiques of the dominant culture, the removal of references to contemporary Aboriginal life, and other characteristics that do not align with a primitivist view of Aboriginality.

**Table Nine****Outcomes of Editorial Changes to *Stradbroke Dreamtime***

1.	Delete reference to adult life of child character	2
2.	Delete Aboriginal English	2
3.	Non gendered address changed to masculine	2 of 14 stories
4.	Raise the “respectability” of the character	3
5.	Change of title	3
6.	Stories told in 3rd person altered to autobiographical ‘I’	3 stories
7.	Delete or reduce relationship and communication with nature	4
8.	Aboriginal culture described in past tense or reference to present experience deleted	4
9.	Delete typographic design in Dreamtime section	6 of 14 stories
10.	Delete or reduce details that reflect badly upon or disturb white majority (race relations/hardship)	10
11.	Delete references to Aboriginal knowledge/spirituality/practises	11
12.	Delete or reduce the primacy of Aboriginal perspective (impose view of white majority especially regarding Aboriginal rights)	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>61</b>

**61 significant alterations out of 1219 editorial changes in total**

The breakdown of the significant alterations into the two sections of the published text supports my contention that the autobiographical section was more heavily edited than the legends section. Only fifteen of the sixty-one significant alterations were made to the “Old and New Dreamtime” section, and these were found in seven of the fourteen legends. Primitivism, as Torgovnick contests, requires that Indigenous cultures function as a mouthpiece for Western concerns. The differing scale of editorial intervention evident in the two generic sections of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* suggests that the autobiographical genre posed more of a



threat to the maintenance of the primitivist trope than the genre of folklore. The table above lists significant alterations that I identified from among the 1219 total changes to the manuscript. The table is weighted according to numerical occurrence and impact upon the text. The most significant changes occur more frequently and relate to the reduction or deletion of contemporary Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginality and cross-cultural relations. These alterations are particularly significant because they held the potential to challenge the primitivist representation of Aboriginality. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* promised to provide the targeted children's audience with alternative, progressive representations of Aboriginal cultural life. Before moving to specific analysis of the table of outcomes I will illustrate the radical potential promised by the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* by examining the impact of alteration upon the story "Oodgeroo" which appears in the "Stories from the Old and New Dreamtime" section of the published text.

### "Oodgeroo"

The story "Oodgeroo" was originally titled "In the New Time". It explains how the Noonuccal totem, the Paperbark tree, claimed a new form of communication that holds the potential to offer continuity between Aboriginal cultures of the past, present and future. "In the New Time" was written by Oodgeroo in 1970, eighteen years before she adopted her totem as her Aboriginal name. Kath Walker adopted Oodgeroo as her name in 1988, relinquishing European titles in protest at the failure of the federal government to enact land rights legislation and in response to the white bicentennial celebrations (Collins, *Oodgeroo of*). In an interview with Gerry Turcotte, Oodgeroo described how Pastor Don Brady first conferred the name upon her during the 1970 protests at the official commemoration and celebration of Captain James Cook's landing on Australian soil:

He said, Kathy, if we had our own way of life, if we could decide our own destiny, the tribal elders would have called you Oodgeroo, because you couldn't do it without your sister, the paperbark tree [ . . . ] So when I went home I wrote the story of Oodgeroo who had lost her tribes and was trying to get back to them, and it's only lately that the people who've read the story have realised I was writing about myself (Turcotte).

Pastor Don Brady gestures to Aboriginal sovereignty with the words, “if we had our own way of life, if we could decide our own destiny the tribal elders would have called you Oodgeroo”. “Oodgeroo: Paperbark Tree” becomes the signature story of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and is a key illustration of the assimilatory role of the editorial process. “In the New Time”, like many in the collection, is edited to conform to the dominant cultural viewpoint on Aboriginality and Aboriginal sovereignty. The opening lines of “In the New Time” engage with and challenge the time and space coordinates of colonial frontier experience, “In the new time there lived a woman and she longed for the stories of her lost tribe but time had stolen the stories and hid them” (Walker, *Manuscript*). The character, “Oodgeroo”, a mythical or ancestral being, is surviving the loss of her tribe (author’s own term) and their stories, “time had stolen the stories and hid them”. Time here represents the concerns and practices of the invading culture. “Time” has stolen the stories of the Aboriginal people and hidden them. Deborah Bird Rose describes the mission of civilisation as being constructed within the matrix of modernity, a matrix that pits Indigenous tradition against the violence of progress:

The hand of destruction and the hand of civilisation mutually shape a set of space-time coordinates that disperse hope, meaning and purpose. This is done through practices such as genocide, theft, dispossession [ . . . ] as well as through schema which define the indigenous as precursor to the invader (Rose, *The year*19 - 20).

Oodgeroo establishes this scenario of contact experience in the manuscript of “In the New Time”. The arrival of the new time is witnessed in colonial practices and the consequences of settlement upon the Indigenous population of Minjerriba. In another publication, *Australia’s Unwritten History*, Oodgeroo elaborates upon the historical experience that resulted in the loss of the tribe, “a strange sickness (smallpox) which killed many of the Noonuccal tribe [ . . . ] Panderook saw the once great tribe of the Noonuccals lying scattered around their campfires” (Noonuccal, *Australia’s* 11 - 14). In *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the character “Oodgeroo” occupies the familiar position in frontier mythology as the “last of her tribe”. The manuscript and the published text deal very differently with the experience and agency of Oodgeroo as representative of the Aboriginal remnant. The edited version reorients the story from a tale of contact experience to that of the non-threatening mythical Indigene. The published text opens, “In the new Dreamtime there lived a woman, an Aborigine, who longed for the stories that had belonged to her people; for she could remember only the happenings of

her own Dreamtime. But the old Dreamtime had stolen the stories and hidden them” (Walker, *Stradbroke* 100). These editorial alterations introduce a number of contradictory factors into the story. The division of the Dreaming into old and new segments reflects the imposition of a Western understanding of chronology. As W.E.H Stanner commented in an early essay on the Dreaming, “neither time nor history as we understand them is involved in this meaning [ . . . ] A concept so impalpable and subtle naturally suffers badly by translation into our dry and abstract language” (Stanner 23). The Dreaming is not divisible into time periods; it is “everywhen” (Stanner 24). Silas Roberts, first chair of the Northern Land Council, describes the Dreaming as, “The belief that long ago, these creatures started human society. These creatures, these great creatures are just as much alive today as they were in the beginning. They are always part of the land and nature as we are” (Rose, *Nourishing* 26).

The initial replacement of the “Time” character with “Old and New Dreamtime” does gesture to the pre- and post-contact experience developed in the manuscript. However, the responsibility for the theft of the people’s stories is shifted from Time, clearly a metaphorical character of colonisation, back to the Dreamtime itself, “But the old Dreamtime had stolen the stories and hidden them”. This distancing shifts the blame for the loss of the stories from Western civilisation, making Aboriginal cosmology responsible for its own destruction and decline. It also suggests a division into historical epochs that is unfamiliar to the Aboriginal world-view; that is more akin to the Christian concept of linear time that posits an ontologically distant beginning and awaits an ultimate end (Rose, *The year* 27). Johannes Fabian argues that temporal distancing (such as those enacted in the editorial alterations, cited above) denies contemporaneity between Western and Other cultures. Fabian (addressing the discipline of Anthropology in particular) suggests that Western superiority is predicated upon the refusal to acknowledge a shared time or coevalness. Thus Western societies document their histories in terms of progress and modernity, while Other societies are viewed as being without history, timeless and unchanging. Labels that connote temporal distancing such as “savage”, “primitive” or “stone age” are employed to, “remove other people from *our* time” (Fabian 33). The distance between “the West and the Rest” naturalises, for example, colonial enterprise, “Denial of coevalness is a political act, not just a discursive fact. The absence of the Other from our Time has been his mode of presence in our discourse - as an object and victim (Fabian 155).

Editorial changes to Oodgeroo's story "In the New Time" deny coevalness between Aboriginal and settler societies by resituating the story in the Western conception of a removed mythical "Dreamtime" not the everywhen of Alcheringa (Oodgeroo's preferred term) (Noonuccal, *Australia's* 5) or the Dreaming, which accommodates contemporary realities. Stanner cautioned against the imposition of Western categories of understanding in discussion of the Dreaming, "We should be very wrong to try to read into it [the Dreaming] the idea of a golden age, or a Garden of Eden" (Stanner 24). Yet this is exactly what the editorial alteration to this story, "In the New Time" achieves.

Several significant editorial changes to the story "In the New Time" relate to its recontextualisation as a Dreaming story rather than a story about the consequences of contact history. In response to the theft of the tribe's stories (I use Oodgeroo's preferred term), the manuscript version has Oodgeroo using the tools of the new time to reclaim her heritage:

The woman decided she must look for them. So she picked up her bags and sticks which were no longer of the old ways. Time had stolen her yam stick and she no longer dug for yams. He removed her mind of the past and she could only remember happenings of her own time (Walker, *Manuscript*).

This narrative flow is maintained in the edited version of the story. However there are small but significant alterations. The edited version of the above extract reads, "The woman knew that she must search for the old stories - and through them she might find her tribe again. Before she set off, she looked for her yam-stick and dilly bag, but Time had stolen these, too" (Walker, *Stradbroke* 100). The manuscript version describes her bags and sticks, her tools of survival, as "no longer of the old way", maintaining the distinction between pre- and post-contact experience. The post-contact context is also corroborated by the detail that Time had, "removed her mind of the past and she could only remember happenings of her own time", suggesting the loss of oral culture that was a consequence of white invasion. These details are removed from the edited version. Interestingly, at this point of the edited text the character Time is introduced. The character Time is now understood within a Dreaming context, not as a critique of colonial experience. This recontextualisation of Time strips the critical edge of Oodgeroo's original story further.

In both versions the (new) tools carried by the character "Oodgeroo" include a sugar bag in which she collects the ashes from the dead fires of her people. Biambi, the good spirit,

instructs her to draw from this collection “short, thin black sticks of coal” with which she marked the paperbark and brought to life the lost stories. The character Time observes her activity with the sugar bag and scoffs at her attempt to regain her stories. In the original manuscript the character Time doubts Oodgeroo’s capacity to work with the new tools, “Time laughed at her efforts because he did not think she could do much with her new dilly bag” (Walker, *Manuscript*). Time, linked in the manuscript to Western colonial structures, does not think an Aboriginal woman “can do much” with her new tools for reclaiming culture - the pen and paper. This metaphor alludes to the derision of Aboriginal writers and literature as a second-rate product. This reference is removed from the edited text.

Instead, the character “Time”, “Laughed at her efforts; he thought her new dilly bag was useless” (Walker, *Stradbroke*100). In the edited text Time thinks the dilly bag itself is useless, not Oodgeroo’s capacity to work with the tools. Remember that in the edited version the tools Oodgeroo carries remain within the discrete ancient Dreamtime context; they are not “bags and sticks which were no longer of the old ways”, as the manuscript describes them.

The edited version of the story reproduces the bulk of the description of Oodgeroo’s journeys to collect coals from the dead fires of her people, and her use of the coals to rediscover and write her people’s stories. The endings, however, differ slightly but significantly. The manuscript version notes that Oodgeroo’s reclamation of her stories serves as a lesson to Time (and all that Time represents), “That is how the woman taught time a lesson. She is happy now because she can talk to her long lost tribe through the sticks of coal and the paper bark. Time has lost his power over her because Biامي made it so” (Walker, *Manuscript*). The edited version relegates the story to a mythical Dreamtime context by removing the original reference to the character Oodgeroo’s ongoing conversations with her people. The published version of the manuscript extract above reads, “And this is the story of how Oodgeroo found her way back into the old Dreamtime. Now she is happy because she can always talk to the tribes whenever she wants to. Time has lost his power over her because Biامي has made it so” (Walker, *Stradbroke* 102 - 3). In the edited version Oodgeroo finds her way back to the old Dreamtime. The emphasis is thus removed from “the sticks of coal and the paper bark” as a new and powerful communicative tool in the present-continuous Dreaming.

The original story entitled “In the new time” represents what Stanner called the “everywhen” of Aboriginal cosmology. The character Oodgeroo functions in the here-and-now

as well as in the ancestral past. The editing of the story to become “Oodgeroo: paperbark tree” relinquishes the past-centredness of the present and vice versa, allowing the non-Indigenous popular reading of Dreaming stories as creation myths or folklore that are divorced from present day realities. As Fabian notes, “Western disbelief in the presence of ancestors and the efficacy of magic rests on the rejection of temporal coexistence implied in these ideas” (Fabian 34). Editorial alterations made to “In the New Time” and, I will argue, the entire collection of stories in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, result in the presentation of the text within a dehistoricised and politically disabling trope of primitivist folklore.

The “Oodgeroo” story is representative of the style of editorial intervention enacted upon the text and has a metaphoric relationship to the author herself. Kath Walker’s adoption of the name Oodgeroo gives the editorial treatment of the story “Oodgeroo” in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the symbolic significance afforded by hindsight. Now to return to the table of editorial outcomes, I will illustrate how editorial changes prohibit possible critiques of the dominant culture, remove references to contemporary Aboriginal life and refashion the manuscript to align with a primitivist view of Aboriginality.

### **Changes that Delete or Reduce the Primacy of Aboriginal Perspective**

*Stradbroke Dreamtime* was edited to achieve a text that conformed to then current conceptions of timeless folklore and children’s entertainment. This packaging necessitated the disarming of Oodgeroo’s radical conception of children’s literature as a cultural education and anti-racist tool. The deletion or reduction of Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal experience assisted the refashioning of the manuscript from a politically charged text into harmless children’s folklore.

The greatest number of significant alterations to the manuscript relate to the toning down of the text, particularly with regard to Aboriginal perspectives on contact history and conservation issues. Although individual alterations may appear to be insignificant when seen in isolation, the cumulative effect of the changes achieves a significant alteration to the tone of the text. The autobiographical story, “The Tank” illustrates the toning down of Aboriginal perspectives on post-contact history. This story is a humorous rendition of how Oodgeroo’s father attempted to repair an old water tank with the help of his children. With a large family

to support on an Aboriginal worker's meagre wage, Oodgeroo's father was not ashamed to scavenge from the tip or steal from his employer to provide for his family. The manuscript is plain and unapologetic about theft as a valid form of income supplementation. The practice is rationalised by comparison to the family's dietary self-sufficiency:

If Dad came by a thing honest he would always answer Mother's questions in front of us, if he sort of took a lend of things which were really the property of the Government he just didn't answer Mother's questions. Dad's philosophy was if you can't afford to buy it and you really need it then take it. He never classed that as stealing, it wasn't his fault he never had much money. I knew for a fact that if Dad had the money to buy a tank he would rather have bought it. He never took food stuffs and things like that because we could always get food off the land. We always hunted our own food and there was always plenty for all (Walker, *Manuscript*).

The editorial treatment of "The Tank" demonstrates how white onlookers cope with such challenging Aboriginal realities. Interestingly, it is not the fact of theft that is edited out of the published text. The primitivist paradigm allows for contemporary Aboriginality to manifest degraded anti-social practices. Instead the edited text removes the reference to dietary self-sufficiency. The passage, "we could always get food off the land", demonstrates the continuous practice of traditional hunting and gathering skills. The edited version allows contemporary Aboriginal families to supplement their low incomes with petty theft, but not through the ongoing practice of hunting skills which provided, "plenty for all" (Walker, *Manuscript*). The published text reads:

If Dad had had come by something which he'd found or someone had given him, then he would answer Mother's questions. If, on the other hand, he had "borrowed" something that was really the property of the Government, then he simply didn't answer her questions. Dad's philosophy was simple: if you really needed something and can't afford to buy it, then you should take it. He never thought of this as wrong. It wasn't his fault that he never had much money. The fault lay with the Government, which doled out such low wages to Aborigines. We really needed a water tank, and I know that if Dad had had the money to buy one, he would rather have done so (Walker, *Stradbroke* 26).

The edited text deals with the question of theft by substituting the direct references found in the manuscript with euphemisms. The substitution of the phrase "He never classed that as stealing" with "He never thought of this as wrong" enacts a significant ideological shift. The substitution moves the question away from the definition of stealing/not stealing to a question

right/wrong. The editorial treatment of the story imposes a tone of moral judgement that was absent from the manuscript. Placing emphasis upon the government's failure to pay adequate wages to Aboriginal staff is an extension of this moral stance. The editorial insertion, "The fault lay with the Government, which doled out such low wages to Aborigines" appears to support an Aboriginal rights stance. On the contrary, this insertion does not challenge the practice or suggest reasons why the practice is unjust. The choice of the phrase "doled out such low wages" suggests a charitable handout, not remuneration for labour. Thus the insertion can be aligned with a racist view that Aboriginal workers are lazy, thieving and deserving of differential pay to their white counterparts.

### **Changes that Delete References to Aboriginal Knowledge, Spirituality or Practices**

Changes in this category limit the transmission of an Aboriginal world-view. In particular the complex moral code of Aboriginal communities is simplified or translated into terms acceptable to a white audience.

The foundation of the story "Kill to Eat" is an elaboration of Aboriginal food gathering practices. The story speaks of the necessity for children to respect their environment which provides sustenance to the family. In the manuscript the moral code is developed as pan-Aboriginal. For example, in the manuscript one of Oodgeroo's brothers boasts about his hunting skills. This behaviour is discouraged along cultural lines. The manuscript reads:

My elder brother was by far the best shot of us all. He was always boasting about it too. But he never would boast about himself in front of mum and dad because he would have been punished for his vanity. Aborigines don't believe in encouraging that kind of emotion. He only boasted in front of us because he also knew we would not complain to our parents (Walker, *Manuscript*).

The edited version of this extract isolates the moral stance against vanity to Oodgeroo's parents as individuals, rather than reflecting community values. The edited version reads:

My elder brother was by far the best shot of us all. He was always boasting about it, too. But never in front of mother and father, because he would have been punished for his vanity. He only boasted in front of us, knowing we wouldn't complain about him to our parents (Walker, *Stradbroke* 16).



Later in this story, when the children break the “kill to eat” code by killing a kookaburra their punishment is explained by reference to other pan-Aboriginal child rearing practices. The manuscript reads, “I wished our father would beat us but we all knew it would not be a quick punishment. Besides, Aboriginal fathers never beat their children. No, we knew the punishment would be carefully weighed up to fit the crime” (Walker *Manuscript*). Editorial alterations to this extract isolate the stance on corporal punishment to Oodgeroo’s father alone, “I wished our father would beat us, but we all knew it would not be a quick punishment. Besides, Dad never beat us. No, we knew the punishment would be carefully weighed to fit the crime” (Walker, *Stradbroke* 19). Changes such as this remove references to pan-Aboriginal cultural practices and individualise a discipline code. These editorial choices also resonate in other passages where Aboriginal culture is described in the past tense or reference to present experience, customs and practices are deleted.

### **Aboriginal Culture Described in Past Tense or Reference to Present Experience Deleted**

One of the ways Western society maintains its self-perceived superiority over Indigenous peoples is through the refusal of coevalness. In the case of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* editorial changes that place Aboriginal culture in the past tense and delete reference to contemporary experience achieve this temporal distance. The treatment of the legend “Mirrabooka” illustrates the effects of temporal distancing. In the manuscript version of this story the continuity of relationship between Mirrabooka (the Southern Cross) and Aboriginal people is clearly expressed. The manuscript asserts:

They called Mirrabooka by the name of Southern Cross. And the eyes of Mirrabooka they called The Pointers. But it is really Mirrabooka stretched out across the sky. He is still there and will be there forever and every Aborigine knows this for Biami had made it so (Walker, *Manuscript*).

The published version of the text removes the important qualifier: that “every Aborigine knows this”. Therefore the text loses another reference to contemporary Aboriginal people as retaining their traditional knowledge.

The edited version of the story reads:

They called Mirrabooka by the name of the Southern Cross. And the eyes of Mirrabooka they called the Pointers. But it is really Mirrabooka stretched out across the sky; he will be there forever, for Biامي has made it so (Walker, *Stradbroke* 84).

The eternal presence of Biامي and Mirrabooka is maintained in the edited version, but reference to the continuity of Aboriginal traditional knowledge is removed. This rhetorical shift denies a living and continuing contemporary Aboriginal culture. Tony Birch argues that the distancing of contemporary Aboriginal people from their cultural heritage, particularly in the settled areas of Australia, is a strategy of domination, "The cultures of indigenous people are relegated to 'prehistory' and the 'ancient', allowing only for metahistorical myths, located outside the boundaries of 'historical facts', which support imperial domination" (Birch 18). The Dreaming stories of Aboriginal culture are presented in the edited version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as tales from a pre-historical past. This strategy aligns with the critical framing of the text within a folklore genre. It is also supported by the deletion of references to the present expression of Aboriginal culture and the adult life of the Aboriginal child characters.

### **Deletion of References to the Adult Life of the Child Character**

I have argued that the presentation of autobiographical stories of childhood alongside tribal legends works to perpetuate the infantilisation of Indigenous culture within the primitivist paradigm. The editorial removal from the manuscript of references to the growth and future prospects of the central child character (Oodgeroo) also aids the perpetuation of the image of the childlike native. Two of the autobiographical stories, (as well as the tribal legend "Oodgeroo: Paperbark Tree") prefigure the status and reputation of the adult Oodgeroo through reference to emerging character traits in the child character. In these stories the actions of the child Oodgeroo point to her public roles and experiences as an adult. The manuscript describes the behaviour of the child Oodgeroo with emphasis upon traits that mark Oodgeroo as an important Aboriginal public figure: an outspoken and undaunted Aboriginal activist, conservationist and writer. In the manuscript version of the story "Where's Mother?" the child Oodgeroo is in strife for her wilful and independent behaviour. She has led her little sister across the island at night to find Mother, who has escaped from

her home duties for a social evening without the children. After the drama of the search for the lost children has ended, their Mother worries about what the future will hold for a child like Oodgeroo, who follows her own convictions and leads others behind her. In the manuscript version the mother chastises her husband for not “keeping an eye on his kids”:

‘For the first time in my life I get a chance to have a break away from the children and look what happened. You’ll have to do something about that girl. It’s not the baby’s fault. She would never have thought of doing such a thing if her sister hadn’t put her up to it’, her mother’s voice was growing louder as the one sided argument continued [ . . . ] ‘Leave it be woman’, he finally said, ‘The girls just different that’s all. There’s nothing wrong with her. She’s just different from the other kids of her age that’s all’. ‘What’s she going to be like when she grows up?’ replied her mother, ‘Let me remind you that, that stubborn, pig headed daughter of yours just turned seven years of age last month’ (Walker, *Manuscript*).

These details give the reader access to the stubborn, politically committed adult Oodgeroo. The published text, however, removes these intertextual references, “‘For the first time in my life I get the chance to have a break form the children, and look what happens’. It sounded like a one-sided argument to me [ . . . ] ‘Leave it be, woman’, he said finally. “Leave it be”. Silence filled the house [ . . . ]” (Walker, *Stradbroke* 35). The edited version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* removes this textual prefiguration of Oodgeroo as public persona: a leader who will venture alone or accompanied, a “pig headed” personality who is unique among her peers. The removal of details such as these conforms with other editorial practices previously described to represent Aboriginal culture as belonging to the realm of the past.

### **Delete or Reduce Details that Reflect Badly upon or Disturb White Majority**

In *Stradbroke Dreamtime* editorial crafting achieves an idealised childhood for the Oodgeroo character, a childhood that is compatible with the urban majority’s notions of growing up wild and free in a tropical island paradise. The dual functioning of the text as both autobiography and folklore within the primitivist paradigm relies upon the projection of isolated, carefree and long-lost Aboriginal community life. One of the most noticeable changes to the manuscript was the removal of references to hardship caused by racial discrimination or material deprivation. Removal of incidents of cross-cultural conflict also relates closely to other instances where the “respectability” of the character is raised through strategic

alterations. For example in the manuscript version of the story "Where's mother?" one sister is described by another as "that loud mouthed pimp". In another story the swear word "damn" offends the editorial eye. This coarse insult is also removed, replaced with the intensifier, "flaming". These changes are neither major nor wholesale, but they do raise the language from a (class-coded) colloquial level to suit the rhetorical proprieties of a middle-class white (child) readership.

References to deprivation or ambiguous relations with white people are edited out of the published version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Oodgeroo's Aboriginal family is still positioned as unable to subsist on the low wages, "doled out [ . . . ] to Aborigines" (Walker, *Stradbroke* 27), but this subsistence is explained by the figure of the "noble poor". Family activities such as hunting for food or "making do" are subsequently placed within a white "battler" context, and not as the outcome of discriminatory policy and practices towards Aboriginal people. In the story, "Kill to Eat", the punishment for needlessly killing a kookaburra is a hunting ban that restricts the children's diet to bland rations. The relationship between white society, rations and Aboriginal community is developed in the manuscript, which reads, "For three months we would eat only the hated white man's rations" (Walker, *Manuscript*). The published version removes the ambiguity present here in the positioning of the word "hated". The edited text reads, "For three months we would eat only the white man's hated rations" (Walker, *Stradbroke* 19). The edited version does not accommodate the two interpretations possible in the manuscript: Hatred of both the "rations" and the "white man".

This editorial strategy that deflects any suggestion of racial conflict is more overt in the story "The Left Hand". Originally titled "School Days", written in the third person, and featuring a character called Josie, this story (in manuscript form) considers not only the experience of discrimination suffered by a child who is a left-hander but allows for the discussion to be extended to matters of race. In the manuscript the child is positioned as a trouble-maker, whose talent is only appreciated by the sewing teacher (the head teacher's wife):

Perhaps it was her race they could not understand. She was Aboriginal, and they therefore classed her as different from the other Australians. Whenever the sewing teacher reported about the child to her husband he always seemed surprised (Walker, *Manuscript*).

In the published version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* these contextualising comments on the racial positioning of the child in the school structure are removed completely. Further, references to the whiteness of the teachers are edited out. A key motif in the story is that of the hand; the left hand that refuses to comply and the white hands of the teachers who impose the oppressive regime. The pivotal movement in the story is Josie's smashing of the watch on the teacher's wrist. The manuscript develops links between these motifs; the watch (colonial governance), the teacher's white hand (which enforces these structures), and the stain of the black child's blood on the white hand when she smashes the watch in protest. The manuscript reads, "She did not raise her head at once but her eyes riveted upon the small watch on the wrist of the white hand (Walker, *Manuscript*). The published version removes the reference to the whiteness of the teacher's hand, "I fixed my gaze on the small watch on the teacher's wrist" (Walker, *Stradbroke* 42). The symbolism of this scenario is further stripped in the published version by the removal of a connection between the hand, race and blood. In the manuscript, when Josie smashes the watch a key concern for the teacher is contact with the blood of the black child:

[She] raised her left fist and brought it smashing down on the face of the watch. She felt the wetness of blood on her hand and saw too the blood on the teacher's hand. In that short second she wondered if it were all her blood and whether the teacher would be embarrassed at having Josie's spilt blood on her hand. The teacher gave a cry of pain and quickly withdrew her hands [ . . . ] (Walker, *Manuscript*).

The manuscript here alludes to the racist preoccupation with Aboriginal "blood" and the narrator's perception of defilement through bodily contact. The published version of this extract does not ponder the symbolic meanings of a white authority figure having Aboriginal blood on their hands. Nor does it allow for an Aboriginal narrator who positions a character within white frameworks of defilement:

Suddenly I raised my left fist and smashed it down on the shiny face of the teacher's watch. I felt the wetness of blood. There was blood on the teacher's hand. Was it all my blood, I wondered? The teacher gave a cry of pain and quickly withdrew her hands (Walker, *Stradbroke* 44).

Although the published version retains the allusion to the mingling of blood, it does not maintain the phrase "the teacher would be embarrassed at having Josie's spilt blood on her hand", which conveys an important racial dimension of this story in the manuscript version.

Further, the image of the Aboriginal child smashing the watch on the white wrist of the teacher held a potential as a sharper critique of Western colonial governance: the theft of Aboriginal Dreaming by Western concepts of time.

### **Delete or Reduce Relationship with Nature**

In keeping with an Aboriginal world-view, the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* personalises human interaction with nature, ascribing the environment with human emotions and actions. In the manuscript of “Going Crabbing” the sea is feminised. Oodgeroo’s father complains about the child’s tendency to seasickness, “My father would shake his head and say to Mother, “Three generations of sailor’s blood in her veins, and just look at her contaminating the sea by spewing all over her” (Walker, *Manuscript*). The published version alters “spewing all over her” to “spewing all over it” (Walker, *Stradbroke* 37).

Other stories also feminise and attribute emotional responses to natural features. The manuscript of the story “Where’s Mother?” has the sky at sunset, “changing her dress of blue and bedecking herself in sunset colours” (Walker, *Manuscript*). The published version reads, “The sky was changing from blue to dusky pink”. The manuscript of the story “Stradbroke” presents a mother-ocean image that presents an intimate unity between natural and human worlds, “Sometimes the sea in an angry mood would smash her waves against the rocks [ . . . ] When her anger left her, she would send her waves in to roll lazily upon the sands and caress every rock and crevice before calling them back to her bosom” (Walker, *Manuscript*). In the published version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* this description is removed altogether.

The feminisation of nature and the representation of Aboriginal connection with land in the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* aligns with Oodgeroo’s commitment to conservation and actions that promulgate respect for the environment within the wider community. The cutting edge of Oodgeroo’s critique of development is retained in the story “Stradbroke”. However personifications of the land as mother in other stories are removed, depleting the overall power of this message. The removal of these personifications cooperates with the severing of contemporary Aboriginal experience from traditional beliefs and practices.

## Delete Typographic Design in “Stories From the Old and New Dreamtime” Section

The original ordering of the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* made no generic distinction between autobiographical stories and tribal legends. This melding of autobiography and totemic legends, particularly in the story “Oodgeroo: Paperbark tree” offers a culturally appropriate adaptation of life-writing, one that adapts the Western notion of self-portraiture to accommodate Indigenous cultural identity. The fusion of genres presents the opportunity for an Aboriginal writer such as Oodgeroo to articulate and maintain a relationship between her cultural heritage and contemporary cross-cultural realities. Although these possibilities are identifiable in the manuscript, they were not realised in the published version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* because they contradicted the primitivist understanding of Aboriginal culture as ancient, stagnated and dying, not contemporary, vibrant and adaptable.

The original manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* does not make distinction between autobiographical stories and tribal legends, but it does make a distinction between traditional tribal legends and the “new” stories written in traditional form. Explanatory labels or titles did not make this distinction, as Oodgeroo chose not to privilege alphabetic signs over visual cues (see following discussion). The distinction between the traditional tribal legends and the contemporary Dreaming stories was made via the typographic embodiment of the traditional legends. The eight contemporary Dreaming stories in the manuscript version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* are formatted in conventional paragraph form. In contrast, the text of the six traditional tribal legends is patterned to create the outline of the subject of the story. For example, “The Beginning of Life” illustration 5 (below) describes the awakening of the Rainbow Serpent and the formation of the earth. The typographic placement of the text creates the outline shape of the Rainbow Serpent. The Rainbow Serpent form becomes visible as the eye of the reader tracks the unfolding story.

Jubilee  
A + R
Accepted
  
 BEGINNING OF LIFE.

In the dreamtime, all the earth lay sleeping. Nothing grew. Nothing moved. All was quiet and still. The animals, birds and reptiles lay sleeping under the crust of the earth.

Then one day the Rainbow Serpent awoke from her slumber and dug her way through the earth's crust, pushing before her the stones that lay in her way.

When she emerged, she looked about her and then travelled over the land, going in all directions.

She travelled far and wide and when she grew tired, she curled herself into a heap and slept.

Upon the earth, she left her winding tracks and the imprint of her sleeping body.

When she had travelled all the earth, she returned from where she came and called to the frogs.

"Come out".

The frogs were very slow to come out, for their bellies were very heavy with the water they had stored in their sleep.

She tickled their stomachs and when they laughed the water ran all over the earth and filled the tracks of the Rainbow Serpent's wanderings.

That is how the lakes and rivers were formed.

The grass began to grow and trees were everywhere and so life began on earth.

All the animals, birds and reptiles awoke and followed the Mother Of Life (The Rainbow Serpent) across and over the land.

Now they were happy upon the earth and lived and hunted for food with their own tribes.

The Kangaroo, Wallaby and Emu tribes on the plains. The reptiles among the rocks and stones and the birds flew through the air and lived in the trees.

The Mother Of Life made laws that all were asked to obey, but some grew quarrelsome and were troublemakers.

The Mother Of Life scolded them saying "For those who keep my laws, I will reward them well and I will give to them a human form. They and their children and their children's children shall roam this earth forever, for this will be their land. For those who break my laws, they shall be turned into stone never to walk the earth in human form."

So the law breakers were turned to stone and became mumbins and hills, to stand forever and watch over the tribes hunting for food at their feet.

Those who kept her laws, she turned into humans and the Mother Of Life gave to them their own totems of the animals from where they came.

So the tribes knew themselves by their own totems. The kangaroo, the carpet snake, the emu totem and so on.

In order that all should eat and be happy and that none should starve and be unhappy, she demanded of them, that none should eat of their own totem, but of other totems they could eat.

In this way Nature's larder was never empty and there was food for all.

So they all lived together in the land given them by their mother The Rainbow Serpent, the Mother Of Life.

And the land will always be theirs and no other tribe shall ever take the land from them.

Figure 5 "The Beginning of Life", Manuscript Version

Source: Fryer Library, University of Queensland, by courtesy of Petrina Walker



The arrangement of the type in the manuscript version of stories such as “The Beginning of Life” consciously represent a number of shapes including: the Rainbow Serpent, Mirrabooka, Curlew, the Bora Ring and the Yam Stick. The significance of the textually embedded figures, like the page motifs that Margaret Tucker used to order her manuscript sections, is that they adapt traditional Aboriginal iconic representations. The culturally significant figures are textually embedded to signal a difference from Western literary traditions. This adaptation of traditional iconic representation within Western literary traditions is significant because it refuses to corroborate the primitivist trope, which would view contemporary adaptations as “inauthentic” representations of Aboriginal culture. These stylistic devices, carefully arranged by the author in the original manuscript, do not appear in the edited publication.

The iconic presentation of the legendary stories in the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* asserts that Aboriginal traditions retain relevance and are available for contemporary adaptation by Aboriginal people. Later in her life Oodgeroo made public her artistic practice in the paint and print media. This art, which further develops her interest in the adaptation of Aboriginal iconic markings, has been described as an amalgam that reclaims aspects of Aboriginal tradition (not always only from her own people) within a contemporary context. Ulli Beier writes of her art as, “A mixture of Aboriginal lore, modern environmentalism and her own individual whims and moods. The little creatures of her early childhood are symbols to her of the universe at large, archetypal images that have to be approached with awe” (Beier 32). Oodgeroo was unapologetic about transgressing anthropological paradigms (prevailing until the 1980s and beyond) that aligned “real” Aboriginal art with the “primitive” and demanded evidence of cultural authenticity (McLean 122). The inclusion of new legends, “modern, twentieth century legends out of my head” (Turcotte 95), in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* corresponds with the typographic embodiment of the traditional legends (in the manuscript version) as markers of Indigenous cultural difference and vitality. Ian Mclean suggests that the convergence of Aboriginal traditions with European forms signifies that artistic, “negotiations by Aborigines have given their traditions and mythologies the capacity to occupy a contemporary Western space” (McLean 110).

Oodgeroo herself argued for a fusion of the worlds a generation earlier:

I feel there's a need now for the present generation of artists to create a twentieth-century Aboriginal art form, both in writing and in art work. So this is very contemporary artwork, only I'm using the Aboriginal way of doing it. It's a beautiful fusion of the worlds. And in the case of my writing new legends it was because I'm a conservationist [ . . . ] I felt that if I were to tell the children the Aboriginal names of all the trees and draw a story around them then they would see them as I do and not chop them down (Turcotte 95).

For Oodgeroo, a twentieth-century, contemporary Aboriginal art form combines traditional Aboriginal "ways of doing" with contemporary cultural concerns. Thus the writing of new legends incorporates political and educational goals, and the visual presentation of traditional legends asserts their contemporaneity.

Oodgeroo's assertion of Aboriginal cultural contemporaneity through the rendering of the legends in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* challenged several key assumptions about primitivism. The rhetoric of colonisation relies upon the maintenance of a set of relations between the colonising and the colonised cultures; one fast-moving, technologically advanced and economically powerful, the other slow-moving or stagnant, without technology and practising "stone-age" economics (Spurr 6). Binary oppositions between orality/literacy, savage/civilised, mythic/historic have justified the historical subjugation of non-literate communities by European colonisers (Biddle). The recent theoretical reversal of the "great divide theory", while freeing Aboriginal communicative practices from the slur of "pre-literate" status, has not adequately accounted for traditional inscriptive forms which have particular and important representational functions in Aboriginal cultures. Quoting Derrida, Biddle argues:

No thought is given to culturally specific inscriptive forms that always already exist; the 'dignity of writing is refused to the non-alphabetic signs' as Derrida puts it. [ . . . ] No orthography has been designed in which existent inscriptive practices were conceived as having something to contribute to, if not already offer in a model of, systematic techniques of classification and representation, that is, writing (Biddle 29).

Oodgeroo's incorporation of culturally-specific inscriptive forms into her writing illustrates the complexity of her communicative practice, complexity that is not addressed by

a simplistic oral-versus-literate binary. In these six manuscript legends Oodgeroo does not privilege alphabetic signs over visual cues. Instead, the positioning of alphabetic signs marks the *present absence* of the culturally significant figure. In illustration 6 (below) it can be seen how the deliberate placement of the type in the manuscript version of "Burr-Nong: Bora Ring" creates the shape of the bora ring.

*Submitted*      *accepted*  
A.R.      BURR+NONG (Bora Ring)

The time of learning in the Aboriginal world never stops. It goes on and on.

From the time the children are able to sit up, they are taught to draw the reptiles, animals and birds in the sand.

This is to teach them how to recognise all the animals birds and reptiles. They also learn how to imitate their cries.

The most exciting time of learning comes when they are about twelve years of age.

This is when they learn the lesson from within the Bora Ring. This the time of testing and they continue until they have passed the tests when they are between 16 and 18 years of age.

After they have passed through the Bora they are called men of the tribes.

During the Burr-nong (Bora) <sup>men</sup> training, the boys are handed over to the tribal elders <sup>of the</sup> ~~of the~~ tribe and the girls are handed over to the tribal women.

No more will they then play with the children. Then they must keep with the tribal men <sup>the boys</sup> and women.

They are taught all the secrets of the tribe.

They are taught the "art" of man and womanhood.

No woman may witness the Bora ceremony of the boys and no man may witness the Bora ceremony for girls.

Boys are taught the legends of the ~~the~~ tribe and must learn them off by heart.

Figure 6 "Burr-Nong: Bora Ring", Manuscript Version

Source: Fryer Library, University of Queensland, by courtesy of Petrina Walker

The absent presence of the bora ring is made manifest in the space between the writing. Its removal in the edit highlights the inability of Western binaries and signifying practices to accommodate alternative world-views.

The present absence of iconic signs of the Rainbow Serpent, Mirrabooka, Curlew, the Bora Ring and the yam stick in the manuscript version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* acknowledges that the supernatural continues to co-exist with the physical world despite the inability of Western literary forms to accommodate such views. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that there are points in the production of subaltern histories when the attempt, “to bring the history of that group into a relationship with a larger narrative (of class, of the nation, etc) develops a degree of intractability” (Chakrabarty 21). This attempted incorporation of minority histories in to the larger narrative is often hindered or made difficult by historians’ need to account for belief that a supernatural order or power has influenced their past and should inform its retelling. Chakrabarty writes, “subaltern pasts do not give the historian any principle of narration that can be rationally defended in [disenchanted] modern public life” (Chakrabarty 29). The iconic outlines in the manuscript version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* challenge any attempt to categorise and incorporate Aboriginal cultural practices into the easy binary oppositions orality/literacy, savage/civilised, mythic/historic that justify Western notions of cultural superiority. The iconic outlines remind the Western reader of the manuscript that the, “disenchantment of the world is not the only principle by which we world the earth. There are other modes of being in the world” (Chakrabarty 30). The editorial preparation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* rendered Oodgeroo’s iconic signs into conventional paragraph format. Aspects of the manuscript such as these iconic signs were removed because they suggest a contemporary Aboriginal viewpoint on Aboriginality. These signs presented a vibrant and adaptable culture that contradicted the primitivist understanding of Aboriginality as ancient, stagnated and dying.

In contrast to the manuscript designs, the legends in the first edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* are firmly positioned within a modern primitivist paradigm. The text and the drawings stand adjacent to each other, maintaining a stark separation of alphabetic and visual signs. The primitivist style of the illustrations also has the effect of reducing the legends to artefact status. These sketches, particularly “The Midden”, represent Aboriginal cultural practices as museum pieces, remnants of bygone days to be accompanied by an explanatory

diagram. Note the contrast between the iconic outline of the digging stick in the manuscript version and the illustration and text from the 1972 edition (illustration 7 and 8). The illustration published in the first edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* literally demonstrates how an Aboriginal man heaps bones onto the midden. The legend is reduced to the level of lifestyle instruction and demonstration rather than gesturing to the spiritual/ritual foundation and significance of everyday practices such as the maintenance of midden sites.

*Submitted*  
*A.F.R.*     *She*     MIDDEN     *Occupied*

No the food gatherers went out every day at fairly light, walking many many miles to gather food for the tribe.

The women and children, dug for yams and hunted the sand lizards and witchetty grubs.

The men went out with spears and in canoes to gather the larger food.

They would break a branch of the trees growing beside the waterholes and sneak towards the ducks swimming upon the lagoons and when close enough would pull the duck under the water by its feet.

Before the startled duck had time to call out, its neck would be wrung and hung to a belt tied round the hunters waist. The belt was made from the hair of the women and wound together with vines.

Sometimes they would use the skins of the animals such as kangaroos and wallaby and possum.

The women would follow the tracks of the smaller animals like the 'possum to their sleeping place. The 'possum sleeps by day and becomes easy prey for the wise hunters.

The flying fox hangs up upside down, sleeping the daylight away and they too are easy prey for the hunters.

When the sun is low in the sky in the west, the hunters return home with the days catch.

Burning fires welcome them home.

The smell of roasting flesh makes hungry mouths water and children wait impatiently for their share of the food.

When all have eaten and their bellies full, the bones and shells are carefully gathered together and placed on top of each other.

*rule*  
This is a law all must obey, for if they were careless and scattered the bones and shells, Biami the good spirit, to punish the would scatter the live fish and shells and animals.

*rule*  
And when the hunters went out the next day, *they would say* their catch might be small indeed.

When the white man came, he saw the middens (eating place) and why the bones and shells were so neatly stacked in the middens.

But all Aborigines know that it is the law of Biami, who is great in power. *rule* *the law of Biami*

In order to fill the bellies of the tribes, the Aborigine must always keep the laws of Biami, for she is carrying out the laws of *rule* *the Mother Of Life*, their much loved one who now sleeps in the rocks in Australia.

Figure 7 "The Midden" Manuscript Version

Source: Fryer Library, University of Queensland, by courtesy of Petrina Walker

## The Midden

**A**FTER the Rainbow Serpent had created the tribes, the food-gatherers went out every day at early light, walking many miles to find food to bring back to the camps. The women and children dug for yams and lily roots and hunted sand lizards and witchety grubs. The men went out with spears into the bush and across the plains, or launched their canoes to gather the larger food. Sometimes, they would break a tree branch beside a waterhole and move silently towards the ducks swimming on the water. When they got close enough, they would pull a duck out of the water by its feet. Before the startled bird had time to call out, its neck would be wrung and it would be hung on the belt tied round the hunter's waist. This belt was woven from the hair of the women, wound together with vine tendrils, or else from strips of kangaroo, wallaby or possum skin.

Sometimes the women would follow the tracks of smaller animals such as the possum to its sleeping-place. For the possum sleeps by day, and is easy prey for the wise hunter. The flying-fox, too, sleeps away the daylight, hanging upside-down—and it, too, is easy prey.

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**Figure 8** “The Midden” First Edition

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The deletion of the typographic designs during the editorial process denied *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the opportunity to articulate the dynamic relationship between contemporary Aboriginal culture and traditional Aboriginal spirituality. The removal of the iconic outlines also silenced a possible critique of the inability of Western paradigms to allow Aboriginal people to represent their culture in their own terms.

The editorial alterations to the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, although not numerically large, inhibit the potential of the text to communicate contemporary Aboriginal culture to a mainstream audience. To summarise, the editor's primitivist view of Aboriginality required significant alterations to the original manuscript. These included the removal of the typographic designs, the reduction of the primacy of Aboriginal perspectives, the deletion of references to Aboriginal knowledge, spirituality and cultural practices, the description of Aboriginal culture in the past tense and the deletion of contemporary references to Indigenous relationships with nature. Editorial changes in these categories all support a primitivist view of Aboriginality and Aboriginal culture.

There were other losses suffered in the manuscript's journey from typescript to publication, among them was the exclusion of stories rejected by the publisher prior to the collation and editing of the existing text.

### **The Stories that "A&R" Rejected**

The stories rejected by the editor prior to the collation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* seem to be ones that challenge primitivist representations and racist stereotyping of contemporary Aboriginal society. The three stories I will discuss all deal with cross-cultural relations between Aboriginal communities and white society. They represent a cohesive and close Aboriginal community dealing with: the stresses of urban life, the needs of vulnerable white people excluded from the mainstream, and the foolishness and weakness of racial prejudice.

As mentioned previously, notebooks in the Oodgeroo collection at the Fryer Library list the stories that had been written and submitted to Angus and Robertson for inclusion in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, then provisionally titled *Stories from Australia*. The publisher rejected four stories written by Oodgeroo. One of these stories was "accepted" but not included in the collection. Two of the stories were legends, titled: "Koo-Poo" and "Gubbin and Grasshopper", which will not be detailed here. Three stories were rejected from the "Stories from Stradbroke" section: "Cookie", "The Bunyip" and "The Turtle". It appears that the parameters of primitivism, towards which the stories accepted by Angus and Robertson were edited, required the exclusion of these stories.

“Cookie” and “The Bunyip” are both stories in which white people are the primary characters. The story “Cookie” concerns the decline and eventual death of an alcoholic white man who draws nurture and support from the Aboriginal community. “Cookie” represents white society as callous in contrast with the practical caring and acceptance of the Aboriginal community. This story presents Aboriginal culture as contemporary, vibrant and strong. “The Bunyip” also describes a responsive Aboriginal community, which contrasts with the frailty and vulnerability of the white characters. In this story two white children who disregard the instruction of an Aboriginal man are lost in the bush. They fear the unknown bush and recall terrifying stories of the bunyip before their rescue. In this story the white children learn to acknowledge the veracity of Aboriginal legends and bush craft.

Cookie is an alcoholic white man who joins the local Aboriginal community after a period of committal to the Dunwich Benevolent Asylum on North Stradbroke Island. His “weakness for the bottle” and growing inability to care for himself during a “bender” are accommodated by the Aboriginal community who “would accept responsibility for his general health” (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*). The story closes with Cookie dying alone in a park during a trip to the mainland. His body is returned to Stradbroke Island, “to those who not only loved him but also understood his weakness” (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*). In this story Aboriginal community is pictured as strong, accepting and responsive, in contrast to white society which alienates and rejects the weak. The story is spoken from the perspective of the Ruska family and the wider Aboriginal community. Thus the story is told through multiple perspectives, not the individual narrative voice. In this, one could argue that the form of narrative address is similar to the communal voice identified in Margaret Tucker’s *If Everyone Cared*. The editorial exclusion of “Cookie”, like the editorial handling of *If Everyone Cared*, illustrates how the bildungsroman model of autobiography does not easily acknowledge or accommodate the communal function of Aboriginal women’s life narratives.

“The Bunyip” features two white children, Karen and Ken, on holiday with their Aunt and Uncle on Stradbroke Island. They meet Sam, an old Aboriginal fisherman, who tells the tale of the fierce Bunyip guarding the blue lake in the centre of the island. Disregarding Sam’s advice to avoid the area, the children walk to the lake and get lost. Sam joins the search party and finds the children at dawn.



Despite the terrors of the night Ken boasts that the Bunyip didn't get them. To this Sam replies:

"Oh, the Bunyip", Sam said. "I forgot to tell you. He don't worry himself about white kids. Don't like the taste of them at all. Too sickly looking for him, I think. He never touches them. He only likes black kids. Their his speciality. Reckon black kids taste nicer somehow" (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*).

This story challenges the centrality of white experience in Australia and affirms the ongoing vibrancy of Aboriginal cultures in settled areas of Australia. "The Bunyip" addresses an Aboriginal readership and represents a black voice as capable of excluding white people on the basis of race. This turns the tables on the cross-cultural status quo, where Aboriginal people experience exclusion on the basis of their race.

The third story, "The Turtle", is noted as having been accepted by Angus and Robertson for inclusion in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, yet it is not found in the collection. Like "Cookie", Aboriginality is enunciated within its contemporary cross-cultural context, not as an ancient and pristine artefact. The story is situated in suburban Brisbane and the central character is an Aboriginal boy, Robert, who takes a turtle from the bush and attempts to domesticate it, "I'll keep him and I'll make him very happy. I'll prove to him I mean no harm [ . . . ] and he will grow to love me as I love him" (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*). Like the turtle, Robert's parents were taken from their land and forcibly assimilated:

He knew little of the ways of the Aborigines because his parents lived now like white people. He knew they were not very happy. Often he heard them talk about the old ways of their people. [ . . . ] Long before the white people separated and scattered their tribes. Before they were forced to live in white society (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*).

In this story the turtle represents the plight of urban Aboriginal people. Unlike white mainstream society, which does not respect other cultures or ways of living, Robert eventually chooses to release the turtle back to its bush home.

This is a rite of passage in which Robert finds, "growing up and being a man is hard business" (Noonuccal, *Papers Box 28*). The story names the loss of the "old ways" suffered

by Aboriginal people whom “the white people separated and scattered their tribes [and] forced to live in white society”. In this way “The Turtle” is an allegorical story, which utilises the same mode of address as the legends in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. “The Turtle” was incompatible with the editor’s vision for *Stradbroke Dreamtime* because it critiques white society and represents urban Aboriginality as a wise contemporary culture that is aware of the consequences of contact history. Further, the story’s mode of address does not align with either the autobiography or the folklore genres into which the editor organised the published text.

The rejection of “Cookie”, “The Bunyip” and “The Turtle” prior to the editorial collation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* suggests that the author did not share the editor’s primitivist vision of Aboriginality, which shaped the published text. These three stories represent a dynamic, contemporary Aboriginality that transgresses the primitivist view of indigenous cultures as authentic only when practised by “pre-historic” traditional people. The stories also mount a critique of white society, building a community of black readers by directly addressing their shared experiences. The authorial submission of stories that did not align with either autobiography or folklore also supports my argument that the division of the text into these generic categories was an editorial decision.

Barbara Ker Wilson’s rejection of stories that deal with issues of contemporary Aboriginal life and cross-cultural experience by suggests that the publishers held a firm opinion regarding the tone and intention of the emerging text prior to the editorial preparation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. The exclusion of stories that clearly contradicted the primitivist conception of Aboriginal life reveals that even at the earliest stage of editorial collaboration, before the final five stories were written and submitted, a strong difference of conception and intention for the text existed between Oodgeroo and her editor Barbara Ker Wilson. The subsequent editorial treatment of the twenty-seven stories that were accepted for inclusion in the text corroborates this argument.

## Conclusion

This chapter opened with the words of Penny van Toorn, who suggested that Oodgeroo's early poetical publications should not be understood as breaking an Aboriginal silence. Van Toorn contests that Oodgeroo's powerful voice, "end[ed] a period of white deafness, by bringing a powerful Aboriginal voice into earshot of large, mainstream audiences" (Van Toorn 29). This research suggests that the phenomenon of "white deafness" was replaced, not by a perpetually open and receptive ear, but by selective hearing.

Oodgeroo's move away from poetry to prose reflected a significant shift in her life and politics. The equal rights platform that supported Oodgeroo's protest poetry proved an insufficient foundation for her developing understanding and appreciation of the politics of identity. Adapting earlier international struggles such as the Negritude movement and Pan-Africanism to the Australian situation, Oodgeroo sought to strategically salvage and reinvigorate Aboriginal culture. Oodgeroo resigned from her peak-body political commitments, moved back to her ancestral lands, abandoned Western style dress and embarked upon a politics of cultural and environmental conservation. Writing and publishing *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was an important educational component of this project. The original manuscript attempts to enunciate a vibrant contemporary Aboriginality that has maintained significant links to traditional land and spirituality. This enunciation promised to provide the targeted children's audience with alternative, progressive representations of Aboriginal cultural life and cross-cultural relations. The genre-mixing performed by the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* further challenged white perceptions of contemporary Aboriginality and the role and potential of emerging Aboriginal literary expression. The story, "In the New Time", for example, deals with the impact of contact history, the cultural potential of Aboriginal literature, and portends Oodgeroo's significance as a foundational Aboriginal writer. These challenging attributes of the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* did not find a receptive editorial ear.

Instead, models of modernist primitivism informed editorial choices, redirecting and effacing the radical potential of the manuscript. Barbara Ker Wilson worked within the professional environment of the day, her task to attract a targetted audience for the text. It is only with hindsight that colonising processes such as those identified in cross-cultural editorial

collaborations are understood differently. The historical situatedness of the writing project contextualises the losses suffered by the *Stradbroke Dreamtime* manuscript. The life of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, in four editions over twenty years, further illustrated the role of the book as a carrier of social relations. The altered packaging of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* predominantly reflected the publisher's conception of market demand and potential, not the author's strategic cross-cultural educational initiative.

## **Section IV**

### **Re-membering Foundational Aboriginal Women Writers**

## Nine

### ***Reading Other-wise: Colonial Mimicry and Editorial Double Mimesis***

#### **The Status of Foundational Aboriginal Women's Texts**

The purpose of this thesis has been to enact a recuperation of three foundational Australian Aboriginal women's life narratives: *Karobran* by Monica Clare, *If Everyone Cared* by Margaret Tucker and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* by Oodgeroo Noonuccal. These autobiographical narratives were published in 1978, 1977 and 1972 respectively. After publication *Karobran* passed into almost immediate obscurity, while *If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* enjoyed lasting sales success and a wide popular readership. None of these titles, however, received any significant critical attention or gained lasting status within the proliferating "canon" of Aboriginal women's writing, despite their position as foundational texts. I found this loss of status intriguing, as all three women were successful and active leaders in their Aboriginal communities and within pan-Aboriginal political organisations. Margaret Tucker received an MBE in 1958, as did Oodgeroo in 1970, public recognition for their contribution to Aboriginal affairs and public life (Oodgeroo later returned her MBE to the Governor General in 1988 to protest the celebration of the bicentenary of white invasion/settlement of Australia). Aboriginal autobiographers such as Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo wrote from long-established positions of community leadership and maturity.

The biographical chapters in this thesis trace their political paths and testify that long after their deaths Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo are remembered and mourned by their communities. Anne Brewster argues that such autobiographers, "Clearly [ . . . ] write and speak from a position of social prestige and achievement, and their work is a conscious articulation of an oppressed history" (Brewster 56). Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo: three foundational Aboriginal women authors, were all outspoken and successful advocates of Aboriginal rights. Their autobiographical publications were intended as conscious articulations of suppressed histories, the suppressed history of Aboriginal experience of dispossession, racism and child removal, and the suppressed history of Aboriginal women's political participation in the struggle to right these situations. Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker

and Oodgeroo were among the very first literary voices to present Aboriginal perspectives and experiences to a white readership. A central concern of this thesis has been to ascertain why the first articulations of suppressed Aboriginal history have been cast aside from academic critical memory, particularly when they appear to have retained ongoing value and relevance within their communities of origin or have achieved sales success and a wide popular audience. The paucity of critical attention devoted to these foundational Aboriginal women's texts was clear from the earliest literature review I conducted. Upon public release, *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* together elicited only two academic reviews in scholarly journals.

*Stradbroke Dreamtime* was the subject of one academic review, published by Ruth Doobov in *Australian Literary Studies* in 1973. Ruth Doobov, was at this time a tutor in English at the University of Queensland. She had been involved with the Brisbane Tribal Council and ABSCHOL for several years when she wrote this review of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. The first prose work by Oodgeroo, renowned Aboriginal poet and activist, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was almost completely ignored by the literary establishment. This was not unusual given its presentation as a book for children. The text was widely reviewed in newspapers and has sold-out four editions over a twenty-year period, yet *Stradbroke Dreamtime* has never received the sustained academic interest or criticism that these indicators and subsequent publication in autobiographical format might suggest it would merit. This response is not surprising given that *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* ambiguous genre status (as children's book) did not easily align with Oodgeroo's reputation as both a poet and an activist.

*If Everyone Cared* also received wide publicity in the newspaper reviews in 1977 and upon the release of a second edition in 1983. Piggybacking upon the 1984 success of the television documentary *Lousy Little Sixpence* which featured Margaret Tucker and her sister Geraldine Briggs, *If Everyone Cared* gained a position on Higher School Certificate reading lists in New South Wales and Victoria ensuring the ongoing sale and circulation of the book. *If Everyone Cared*, like *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, carries the hallmarks of public success, yet it received scant academic critical attention until Robert Manne used Margaret Tucker's story of forced removal from her family as the basis of his 1997 Stephen Murray-Smith Memorial Lecture, "The Stolen Generations". Manne's lecture was subsequently published in the February 1998

edition of *Quadrant. If Everyone Cared* has since received extended critical attention in Rosamund Dalziell's 1999 publication, *Shameful Autobiographies*.

*Karobran* was also the subject of a single scholarly review, by M.J.E King Boyes in the *Australian Book Review* in 1978. After the success of *My Place* a discursive space was created for Aboriginal literature. *Karobran* gained the critical eye of Joy Hooton in *Stories of Herself When Young* (1990), Mudrooroo Narogin in *Writing from the Fringe* (1990) and a more extended treatment by Carole Ferrier in *Gender, Politics and Fiction* (1992) and "Written Out of This text?" in Rowan and McNamee's *Voices of a Margin: Speaking For Yourself* (1995). It appears that *Karobran*, although not enjoying the wide publicity or sales success, later attracted more sustained criticism than *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and *If Everyone Cared*. This criticism came from feminist, left-wing and Aboriginal scholars who shared a common commitment with Monica Clare. This thesis clearly demonstrates the impact (both enabling and disabling) of communities of commitment upon the lives of foundational Aboriginal women authors and the role they played in the production, publication and shelf life of these foundational texts. These foundational authors wrote without the benefit of an existing canon of Aboriginal work to mentor or inspire and, hence, without market-driven publishing opportunities. In this historical context the power of a community of commitment to harness industry contacts and market share was of considerable benefit to these new and unprecedented voices. When the Australian academy was still battling the cultural cringe, only politically-committed critics in common cause with these Aboriginal writers lent the power of their critical opinion.

What does critical neglect look like? I will illustrate with an example from a recent publication by an established and respected Australian academic, whose treatment of first-wave autobiographical narratives is representative of the cursory attention that these texts are afforded. Gillian Whitlock published *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* in 2000. It is an ambitious text that examines intersections between race, gender, autobiography and colonialism across the historical and geographical sweep of the British Empire. In chapter five: "Autobiography and resistance", Whitlock makes a comparison of Black South African and Australian autobiographies. To establish the Aboriginal Australian autobiographical field for the reader, Whitlock draws upon scholarship and terminology



established by Anne Brewster in her influential text *Literary Formations* (Brewster 41).

Whitlock writes:

Autobiographical writing has been fundamental to this process of resistance in Australia and South Africa. Autobiographic narratives by Aboriginal women began to appear in the late 1970s: Monica Clare's *Karobran: The Story of an Aboriginal Girl* (1978), Ella Simon's *Through My Eyes* (1978), Shirley Smith and Bobbi (Roberta) Sykes *Mum Shirl* (1981) and Elsie Roughsey's *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of the Old and the New* (1984) are representative of this 'first wave'. Two books which came out within a year of each other, Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987) and Ruby Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town* (1988), are the most widely read and discussed. Although *My Place* wasn't the first autobiographic narrative it was, in Ruby Langford Ginibi's words, 'the first to open this country up', an act of 'intercultural brokerage' (Whitlock 156).

Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972), the very first autobiographical narrative, and Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* (1977) are absent from Whitlock's list of representative "first-wave" texts. *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, it is important to note, was first published as a children's text and this limited its acceptance as "literature" and therefore its notice by mainstream academics. What other features of these texts make them unrepresentative, despite their position as foundational publications, chronologically first and second? By contrast, Monica Clare's *Karobran* is remembered by Whitlock as the first autobiographical text, although it sold a fraction of the copies the earlier titles achieved and was only rediscovered by academics in the wake of the second-wave of Aboriginal autobiographical texts. Whitlock posits an explanation to this question by describing the importance of Sally Morgan's *My Place*. Whitlock writes, "Although *My Place* wasn't the first autobiographic narrative it was, in Ruby Langford Ginibi's words, 'the first to open this country up'. *Karobran*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, although pioneering texts, did not "open this country up". They did not "succeed" as intercultural brokers, and particularly not with an academic readership, whose criticism commends the text to future generations of readers. As was noted previously, an absence of aggressive marketing techniques or supportive discourses in literature or politics prior to 1988 resulted in limited audience access for foundational Aboriginal texts.

Whitlock contests that autobiography can supply the Aboriginal author with an authoritative discourse that, given serendipitous timing, may perform the type of intercultural brokerage attributed to *My Place*, "Autobiographic writing can offer black women access to

authoritative discourses and to a public that, in certain times and in certain places, allows their political histories to perform important political work and to engage with social change" (Whitlock 166). This dispensation ascribes agency and political affect to Aboriginal autobiographical narratives only "in certain times and in certain places" that seem dependent primarily upon synchronous timing with or admission by prevailing white paradigms. Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives will only perform "important political work and engage with social change" when a serendipitous intersection occurs with the institutional and popular discourses and epistemologies through which the dominant culture constructs racial identity and interracial relations.

Attention to the social conditions of production and circulation of an Aboriginal text identifies "multiple determinations which tend to trigger certain sorts of texts" (Muecke 137). Viewing the Aboriginal text as a site of numerous "constraints pertaining both to form and contextual relations" (Muecke 138) necessarily acknowledges that relations between the publishing industry and Aboriginal authors are politically ambiguous and that "signifiers of discursive authority are arbitrary, socially specific and subject to change over time" (Van Toorn 112).

This thesis has sought to acknowledge the difficult environment into which early Aboriginal women's autobiographies were published one decade before the more spectacular intercultural brokerage of second wave texts such as *My Place* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. Foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographies such as *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* engaged in complex and often vexing relationships with the authoritative discourses of their day. These authors did not wait for a certain time and place that would "allow" their political histories to engage with social change. Motivated by the urgent political imperative of Aboriginal realities, these women pressed against the restrictions of their day and harnessed available discourses to actively prompt, promote and prepare for a future "opening up" of the country. As the biographical chapters of this thesis attest, Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo spoke with impatient and insistent voices for change. In the 1970s, mainstream white Australia was not attuned to listen to these voices. These Aboriginal women found sustaining pockets of interest within white society, particularly within communities of ideological commitment.

The cost of Monica Clare's, Margaret Tucker's and Oodgeroo's strategic engagement with prevailing authoritative discourses was the acceptance of pragmatic compromise. This compromise was negotiated between the Aboriginal author and the agent who brokered the production of the text: a community of commitment, a professional editor and/or a press. The social and political networks of Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo form the significant historical contexts in which their foundational autobiographical narratives were brokered. Within this general political and social frame the collaborative relationships between author and editor emerged as critical to the shaping of the text. Close comparison of each original manuscript with the published version of the texts substantiated the type, quantity and possible impact of editorial alterations. These comparisons laid bare the invisible work of the editor and made plain the friction generated by the editorial attempt to fit Aboriginal knowledges within Western genres. This friction manifests itself in the number of significant alterations that diminished the textual representation of Aboriginality as understood by the Aboriginal narrator. At these key points of tension in the texts' production passages deemed as an inappropriate or unacceptable representation were substituted with a non-Aboriginal view of Aboriginality.

This chapter will present a comparison of the circumstances of the collaboration, the editorial approach and editorial outcomes identified in the production of *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. This comparison and contrast demonstrates how the editors altered the narratives to mimic stereotypical categories of Aboriginality available at the time. I would characterise these as mimicry of the "political radical", the "respectable Aborigine" and the "authentic or romanticised primitive". The editorial imposition of these stereotypes arises from the colonial demand, still prevalent in Australia in the 1970s: that the black person "turn white or disappear" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 100). This aspect of my work, though founded upon the concept of mimicry developed by Fanon and elaborated by Bhabha, advances to discuss the outcomes of mimicry performed by the white editors. Kaja Silverman and Diana Fuss develop the concept of double mimesis, which is useful in theorising the editorial collaborations discussed thus far.

This identification of editorial double mimesis, which prioritised the demands of white Western paradigms (e.g genres and targeted audiences) over the authorial intention or desire to represent Aboriginal perspectives and knowledges, marks a decisive departure from previous

academic assessment of *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. As argued in the introduction to this thesis, influential critics have judged first wave Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives as "assimilationist". In the ground-breaking critical text *Writing From the Fringe* (1990), (then) Aboriginal-identified academic Mudrooroo Narogin argued that the style of address in foundational Aboriginal life stories was unduly influenced by the paternalistic supervision of white benefactors, supporters and editors. Mudrooroo claimed that the adoption of white generic forms or "assimilationist models" results in Aboriginal writers "thinking white" (Narogin 45). Within the first-wave of Aboriginal women's life writing, Mudrooroo had praise for only one of the eight books, "If it was not for the neglected masterpiece, *An Aboriginal Mother Tells of Old and New* by Labumore (Elsie Roughsey, 1984), Black Australian women's literature might be seen as advocating assimilation" (Narogin 150). Mudrooroo criticised *My Place*, along with earlier Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives as overtly "white-washed" texts.

An Aboriginal woman author's association with white institutions such as Christianity, communism or conservative groups like the Country Women's Association (CWA) and MRA were assessed to be overridden by determinants in the epistemology of the autobiographical narratives produced in collaboration with white editors. Philosophies of history, or grand narratives, which undergird these institutions, were strategically adopted by Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker, and in a much more ambivalent and provisional fashion, Oodgeroo. Lyotard argues that these, "great narratives [ are the] means of which we attempt to order the multitude of events [ . . . ] within the course of a history whose end, even if it is out of reach, is called freedom" (Lyotard 313). Foundational Aboriginal women writers adopted and adapted, and in the case of Oodgeroo, attempted unsuccessfully, to abandon the grand narratives of their day in an effort to attain what Lyotard describes as the "end" of history, "freedom" for their people.

The academic neglect of first-wave Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives such as *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was perpetuated by the social unfashionability of the particular grand narrative frames the texts harnessed and that made their publication possible. Texts which appeared to be heavily influenced by white collaborators or by white ideological frames were silenced by a critical shaming mechanism which, "is uncomfortable with [ . . . ] unfashionable commitment to religious values

introduced by European missionaries, to Moral Re-Armament, or even to political values” (Dalziell 173). This thesis has attempted to move past the critical embarrassment evoked by the now unfashionable textual commitment of *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and, to a lesser extent, *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. This has not been motivated by a desire to resurrect an “authentic” Aboriginal autobiography, but to remember, historically nuance and honour the personal and political struggle that was the path to publication for these Aboriginal women. The thesis attempts a partial recuperation of them now, for a different audience that is positioned to accept them in original form, and to prompt a reassessment of their significance.

This engagement with foundational Aboriginal women’s life narratives seeks to challenge an assumption that these writers wholly accepted the premises of their collaborators’ ideological paradigms without strategic cultural adaptation. Such critical (assimilationist) assumptions purport that foundational Aboriginal women’s autobiographical narratives do no more than mime Western ideologies. As Homi Bhabha reminds us, colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, “a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 126). The reformed Other displays a white artifice, but is still denied the subjectivity available to the white colonising self. Mimicry desired by a colonial power does not, therefore, succeed in either harmonising or repressing difference, rather, cultural difference is merely camouflaged by the mimic’s mask. The on-going denial of full subjectivity creates a dynamic tension between white mask and black body which still can be seen to create a space and potential for political subversion behind the camouflage of the mimic’s mask. These women placed faith in the principles of a universalising philosophy of history, pragmatically bowed to their contingencies and used the resources available to them for their own political ends. This thesis has unmasked the original intentions of the Aboriginal autobiographical narrative, which flowed with but were not absorbed by the grand narrative and its community of commitment.

### **Black Skin, White Masks**

Frantz Fanon uses the evocative image of black skin covered by white masks to argue that colonial relations posit a contradictory position for the black body: both hypervisibility and simultaneous invisibility. The black body is denied the individuation and transcendence available to the white liberal-humanist body, but is trapped instead in the laterite of black

corporeality (Mohanram 27). The black body, Fanon argues is overdetermined from without, "I am a slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance [ . . . ] And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *Fixed* (Fanon, *Black Skin* 116). Fanon discusses an encounter with a white child in metropolitan France, an incident that demonstrates the impossibility of occupying his black body through his own conscious subjectivity. He is, he confesses, triply divided. In this famous incident the white child views and understands Fanon only in his blackness. The child audibly exclaims, "Mama, see the Negro, I'm frightened!" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 112). The child's representation of Fanon fixes him in his black corporeality and his individuality disappears:

I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other . . . and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared. Nausea . . . I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 112).

The popular construction of blackness, encapsulated by the projected image and speech of the domestic slave, defeats the black person's attempt to escape a purely racial epidermal schema. Fanon recognises that he, "suffers his body differently" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 138) from a white person, and that colonial racialisation and depersonalisation requires that the black person, "turn white or disappear" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 100). In these circumstances the adoption of a white mask promises a route to limited or qualified subjecthood under the colonial regime:

I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination upon me, makes me a colonised native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me I am a parasite on the world, that I must bring myself as quickly as possible into step with the white world [...] Then I will quite simply try to make myself white: that is, I compel the white man to acknowledge that I am human (Fanon, *Black Skin* 98) (sic).

The white mask (demeanour, taste, and occupation) can be a convincing artifice inscribed on the black body, "What is all this talk of a black people, of a Negro nationality? I am a Frenchman. I am interested in French culture, French civilisation, the French people [ . . . ] What have I to do with a black empire?" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 203). Attempting to make oneself white by adopting the white mask, however, does not rid the black body of its epidermis nor

of its discursive construction by, “the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 111). Under the colonial regime the adoption of the white mask as a path to subjectivity is simultaneously required and denied.

Fanon rails against the colonial social structure that makes hallucinatory whitening, “to dream of a form of salvation that consists of magically turning white” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 44), an (imposed, necessary and impossible) pathway to subjecthood, “The black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, *turn white or disappear*: but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 100). The colonial subject who is required to simultaneously occupy the contradictory positions of white-mask and black body experiences both depersonalisation and dislocation. From these experiences, Homi Bhabha suggests, swells eventual political and psychic subversion:

‘Black skin, white masks’ is not a neat division: it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once that make it impossible for the devalued, insatiable ‘*evolve*’ [ . . . ] to accept the colonisers’ invitation to identity: ‘You’re a doctor, a writer, a student, you’re *different*, you’re one of *us*’ (Bhabha 44).

The distance between the mask of the colonist self and the colonised Other is a volatile space where the consequences of cultural imposition and denial fester. The path of political subversion emerges from this space as, “disavowal of the Other always exacerbates the edge of identification, reveals that dangerous place where identity and aggressivity are twinned” (Bhabha 62). Bhabha argues that the disavowal of black identity not only produces cultural confusion for the white-masked colonial subject, but also a “dangerous place” where, “the depersonalised, dislocated colonial subject can become an incalculable object, quite literally difficult to place” (Bhabha 62). Behind the façade of the white mask the colonial subject can avail an unknown and menacing subterfuge, “In that uncertainty lurks the white-masked black man; and from such ambivalent identification - black skin, white masks - it is possible, I believe, to redeem the pathos of cultural confusion into a strategy of political subversion” (Bhabha 62). The political subversion available to the white-masked colonial subject is found in the “tension of meaning and being” between the black body and the white mask (Bhabha 62).

It is not a revolutionary throwing-off of the mask, rather a strategic use and maintenance of the mask as a technique of camouflage:

It is a form of power that is exercised at the very limits of identity and authority, in the mocking spirit of mask and image; it is the lesson taught by the veiled Algerian women in the course of the revolution [. . .]. [The veil] becomes a technique of camouflage, a means of struggle - the veil conceals bombs (Bhabha 63).

The black body that is camouflaged by the mimic's mask does not give comfort or security to the colonial power. As Fanon notes, a symbol of social control such as the bugle call is both inhibitory and stimulating for the native troops, "for they do not convey the message 'Don't dare budge'; rather, they cry out 'get ready to attack'" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 41). The ambivalence and uncertainty of the colonial subjects' identification promulgates anxiety for the coloniser, as mimicry is, "uttered between the lines and as such against the rules and within them" (Bhabha 89). The mimic's mask suggests both the possibility of assent to the colonialist status quo and the uncertainty of hidden, strategic dissension. The surveillant colonial power cannot know which "veil conceals bombs", how or when mimicry is deployed to perpetuate the struggle for self-determination. Citing Michel de Certeau, Penny van Toorn suggests that for the Indigenous life writer, the subversive potential of mimicry lies in their engagement with alien forms and institutions, "What today's stories and yesterday's narratives have in common is that they must 'play on a terrain imposed . . . and organised by the law of a foreign power'" (Van Toorn, *Indigenous* 3). Making use of "blind spots, interstices and fleeting, opportune moments" the Indigenous writer manages to "elude, contest and/or appropriate the power invested in those institutions within which their life narratives have been produced, transmitted, interpreted and put to work" (Van Toorn, *Indigenous* 3).

### **Mimicry and Foundational Indigenous Literature**

Foundational publications by Aboriginal women writers have been judged by influential critics as advocating assimilation. The most resounding criticism was voiced after the second wave of indigenous women's writing, which opened the field to accommodate a multiplicity of Aboriginalities and in particular styles of cultural expression that did not rely upon the production of a white artifice to gain acceptance.



The critical distrust and condemnation of Indigenous texts produced by an officially endorsed “native elite” has foundations in radical critique of anti-colonialist thinkers such as Frantz Fanon. In his preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre discusses the manufacture of a native elite. Sartre suggests that colonising powers selected promising adolescents for assimilation in the mother country, then returned them home to echo the colonisers’ ideals:

They branded them, as with a red-hot iron, with the principles of western culture; stuffed their mouths full with high-sounding phrases, grand glutinous words that stuck to the teeth. After a short stay in the mother country they were sent home, white washed. These walking lies had nothing left to say to their brothers, they only echoed (Fanon, *The Wretched* 7).

Fanon suggests that early literary production is carefully supervised and authorised by the colonial power. Even protest literature is permitted because on the whole, “it serves to reassure the occupying power” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 192). Fanon writes:

The colonialists have in former times encouraged these modes of expression and made their existence possible. Stinging denunciations, the exposing of distressing conditions and passions which find their outlet in expression are in fact assimilated by the occupying power in a cathartic process. To aid such processes is in a certain sense to avoid their dramatisation and to clear the atmosphere. But such a situation can only be transitory (Fanon, *The Wretched* 192).

Fanon argues that Indigenous literature, paralleling liberatory struggle, develops in waves and must pass through this foundational phase before it can be assessed as a “literature of the people”. The crystallisation of what he calls “the national consciousness” will disrupt endorsed styles and themes and create a new readership:

While at the beginning the native intellectual used to produce his work to be read exclusively by the oppressor, whether with the intention of charming him or of denouncing him through ethical or subjectivist means, now the native writer progressively takes on the habit of addressing his own people (Fanon, *The Wretched* 193).

The eventual production of a “national literature” or a “literature of combat”, Fanon argues, reincorporates and reinvigorates oral traditions for contemporary purposes. The eventual formation of a “national” literature that draws from and transforms culturally specific traditions and knowledges is noted as a key movement toward the development of a national

consciousness, “the emergence of the imagination and of the creative urge in the songs and epic stories of a colonised country is worth following” (Fanon, *The Wretched* 194). There are of course, significant differences between settler societies such as Australia and decolonised nations that possessed and maintained a black majority. Yet similar strategies of colonial domination and assimilation produced a common effect of ambivalence and resistance in the nature of the colonial subject. In Australia, critical attention given to texts from the second wave of Aboriginal women’s writing is not so much a reflection of an emergent “national” literature but the desirability of Aboriginality as a supplement to white settler identity. This desirability, however, still allows second wave Aboriginal women’s texts (to a limited extent) to revitalise and incorporate Aboriginal oral traditions, deploy Aboriginal English and Aboriginal cosmology in a fashion that was not manifest, and it will be argued (with reference to the editorial emendation of the original manuscript) was not permitted, in first wave Aboriginal women’s writing. The critical excitement that accompanies these developments in Aboriginal literature has one unfortunate outcome; it diminishes the achievements of the preceding generation of first-wave writers.

Fanon warns his readers in his anti-colonialist manifesto *The Wretched of the Earth* not to judge the efforts of resistance carried out by the preceding generations harshly. Each generation, he argues, matures to the struggle under different circumstances:

The preceding generations have both resisted the work of erosion carried on by colonialism and also helped on the maturing of the struggles of today. We must rid ourselves of the habit, now that we are in the thick of the fight, of minimizing the action of our fathers or of feigning incomprehension when considering their silence and passivity. They fought as well as they could, with the arms they possessed then; and if the echoes of their struggle have not resounded in the international arena, we must realise the reason for this silence lies less in their lack of heroism than in the fundamentally different international situation of our time (Fanon, *The Wretched* 166).

This caution is salient in the reassessment of foundational Indigenous literature produced under a different set of colonial conditions in Australia. The most marked difference is in the attitude of the colonial power towards Indigenous culture. In many African colonies and in continental India where an indigenous majority existed under colonial rule, the continuing vitality of pre-colonial religious and cultural expressions was recognised (the impact of nativism and negritude movements often forcing acknowledgment). In regions of Australia such as the east coast, where colonial contact was early and settlement heavy, a different

attitude towards Indigenous culture prevailed. In these areas it was believed that the indigenous population was dying out and that the surviving remnant had lost their culture and religion. Under these conditions of denial, the reclamation of Australian Indigenous culture and traditions by foundational Aboriginal women writers is all the more noteworthy and laudable.

Early Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives which appear to mimic Western ideologies and were responded to as assimilationist were, "uttered between the lines and as such against the rules and within them" (Bhabha 89). The representation of Aboriginal difference in foundational texts such as Monica Clare's *Karobran*, Margaret Tucker's *If Everyone Cared* and Oodgeroo's *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was both within and against the colonial desire for, "almost the same but not white" (Bhabha 130). Aboriginal representations of Aboriginal difference survive under the camouflage of Western forms, be they ensconced in the ideals of communism, Christianity or Aboriginal authenticity rooted in the myth of primitivism. A reclamation of the agency of foundational Aboriginal authors becomes possible when the ambiguity of the white-masked black body is acknowledged.

Fanon urges us to remember that members of the previous generation, "fought as well as they could, with the arms they possessed then" (Fanon, *The Wretched* 166). The original research I conducted for this thesis testifies to the strategic and creative use Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo made of the "arms" available to them in the early 1970s. In these autobiographical texts the white-mask of genre that covers traces of an unrepressed Aboriginal perspective reflects an adopted white belief system to which the women adhered and a range of political and religious communities to which they belonged. The adoption of the white mask, the "arms" available to their generation, enabled these women to gain publication. The original manuscripts reveal that, having availed themselves of the resources of the community of commitment, these Aboriginal writers then attempted to structure their stories in a way that witnessed their Aboriginal difference within the white form(s) or belief system.

The demand that the Aboriginal subject dons the white mask is not the limit of effacement. This thesis importantly documents an additional effacement that occurs as the editor engages with the mimic's facade. The coloniser's injunction is that the colonised mime alterity to the satisfaction of the subjugating power, "The colonised are constrained to

impersonate the image the coloniser offers them of themselves; they are commanded to imitate the coloniser's version of their essential difference" (Fuss 146). The failure of the foundational Aboriginal woman writer to mimic her alterity to the white collaborators' satisfaction results in a double effacement through double mimesis. Fuss, recalling the work of Kaja Silverman, argues that this double mimesis, in effect, reinforces conventional power relations.

Unlike mimicry of subjugation, which can provide unexpected opportunities for resistance and disruption, cross-cultural impersonation or double mimesis by the dominant white subject does not erode their position of power, "Keeping in mind the power relations involved, there may be little if anything subversive in cross-cultural impersonations that work in the service of colonial imperialism" (Fuss 148). Fuss argues that cross-cultural impersonation masks a will to power. The cross-cultural impersonation of an Aboriginal persona by a white editor illustrates this will to power. When double mimesis veers into identification with the subaltern or subjugated class, this identification is mediated through culturally available "screens" or stereotypes (Silverman 48). The three manuscript studies I conducted reveal that the editors engaged in double mimesis to produce a stereotyped Aboriginal subject: the "political radical", the "respectable Aborigine" and the "authentic or romantic primitive".

Despite editorial double mimesis that refashioned the texts, *Karobran*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* represented Aboriginal voices and perspectives and founded a readership for forthcoming generations of Aboriginal writers. Beneath the white mask the black body of the text survives, and is available for recovery and re-membering. This re-membering accepts the scars of editorial effacement as evidence of the original attempt to present Aboriginal difference within a mainstream cultural production.

Generational distaste for the adoption of white epistemology and genres by foundational Aboriginal women writers, the white mask covering the black text, has resulted in a homogenised critical re-membering of their publications. With the exception of one first-wave text, *Mudrooroo* determines that, "Black Australian women's literature might be seen as advocating assimilation" (Narogin 150). The white mask available to foundational Aboriginal women writers was not uniform in features, and it was used by these writers in an attempt to assert their Aboriginal difference on Aboriginal terms. My research reconstructs the diverse circumstances in which Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo prepared their

manuscripts. This section will compare and contrast the collaborative production, editorial approach and editorial outcomes for these texts. This comparison reveals that a blanket charge of “advocating assimilation” does not credit the initiative of these foundational Aboriginal women writers. These women engaged in protest, resistance and accommodation within the different contexts and the various resources available to them, and they suffered differently from editorial double mimesis.

Re-membering foundational Aboriginal women writers, then, requires reassessment that acknowledges the difficult and contested process of textual publication. Re-membering, Homi Bhabha reminds us, should not be a quiet act of introspection and retrospection that draws from our existent pool of assumptions and prejudice. As Homi Bhabha writes, “It is a painful re-membering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (Bhabha 63). Re-membering *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* has not always been a comfortable process. The research methodology included meeting and interviewing three of the four editors and many other community members. These were women and men of integrity and commitment to their beliefs and professions. Reconciling their memories of close community and well-intentioned actions with the editorial harm enacted upon the Aboriginal autobiographical text was a painful task. However, reinvoking the dismembered and forgotten past does give salience to the trauma of the present.

### **Re-membering *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime***

In this thesis the act of re-membering, or putting together the dismembered past has included investigating the influence of communities of commitment upon foundational Aboriginal publications. Re-membering also acknowledges that a philosophy shared (in a complex, nuanced and possibly ambivalent fashion) by editor and author influences the style and extent of editorial alteration of the manuscript. In the case of *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared* the adoption of the mimic’s mask secured the publication of the text, but within a politics of dominance and submission that resulted in significant compromises or alterations to the original manuscript. In contrast, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* radically refused the white mask. This refusal tested the resolve and influence of Oodgeroo who had recently severed ties with her political community when she embarked upon the editorial collaboration. Under

these circumstances the outcome of the editorial phase for *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was not a degree of pragmatic mutual compromise, as it had been for *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared*, but the adoption modernist primitivism over the avant garde representation of Aboriginal difference.

### ***Karobran***

Monica Clare was a committed socialist and an activist for Aboriginal and women's rights. Her socialist beliefs provided her with a network of vigorously committed allies and a community experienced in the wide dissemination of their (often-unpopular) ideals. The Communist Party of Australia had proved a reliable ally, supporting the Aboriginal rights movement in word and deed since the 1930s. Publishing was a traditional tool of the socialist project and through her socialist community Monica Clare accessed ideas, editorial assistance and a willing publisher. The adoption of the white-mask of socialism promised many benefits for Monica Clare. Clare's loyalty to socialist political ideals during the crisis and collapse of organised communism suggests it was a heartfelt adoption. Her attempt to modify Socialisms' tenets by foregrounding race over class, however, suggest that Monica Clare's adherence was not unquestioning, but rather, strategic.

Monica Clare's commitment to Aboriginal and socialist politics is reflected in the adaptation of generic conventions of socialist realism to the task of writing about Aboriginal lives. The evocation of socialist solutions to the injustices suffered by Aboriginal people held considerable emotional power for Party faithfuls such as Clare in the early 1970s. As Clare was writing her Aboriginal life narrative the CPA experienced two major splits and organised communism went into decline in Australia. The *Karobran* manuscript was written on the cusp of these changes and could not predict the impending loss of relevance that the generic style would suffer within a five-year period. Monica Clare died unexpectedly in 1973 before her manuscript reached the editorial phase. Monica Clare's death resulted in a time lag between the completion of the manuscript and the publication of the text in 1978. In this time period the CPA increasingly struggled to maintain the centrality of the communist project. After the 1971 split, communists scattered and joined the disparate projects of the New Left. Here they, "leavened the new social movements as well as the old with their skills and knowledge, but they did so as dedicated individuals" (Symons, *Communism* ix) rather than as members of

a cohesive, centralised party machine. The historical particularities and emotions that informed *Karobran's* manuscript in 1971 would mean little to the audience available in 1978. Thus between 1973 and 1978 the editorial team preparing *Karobran* attempted to remake yesterday's generic fashion according to current designs and tastes. The reshaping of this Aboriginal life narrative, in the absence of the author, was undertaken in good faith by well-intentioned people. We can not know how Monica Clare would have responded to the editorial effacement of her text.

Jack Horner, who knew Monica Clare through his association with FCAATSI, edited *Karobran*. In addition, Mona Brand who represented the New South Wales branch of The Society of Women Writers made a final reading. Mona Brand and Jack Horner, though initially unaware of their mutual association with the *Karobran* manuscript, had known each other for fifteen years in the Aboriginal rights movement. Both Jack Horner and Mona Brand worked from a socialist standpoint (Jack Horner identifies as a Christian Socialist, Mona Brand as a Humanist Socialist). Mona Brand edited the opening chapters of the manuscript before Jack Horner took over the project. Mona Brand then reviewed and approved the edited manuscript before it went to print. The editorial process, conducted voluntarily or for minimal pay, took many years. During this time the implied socialist reader had all but disappeared and a formerly unimagined, politically aware pro-Aboriginal readership had emerged. In response to these changes the editors engaged in editorial double mimesis and strengthened *Karobran's* Aboriginal rights agenda. They also introduced the text with numerous explanatory pieces: a publishers note, foreword, acknowledgments, preface and introduction. These apologetic voices explain and give legitimacy to the text and author, presenting it to the new readership and refashioning the outmoded generic features to mimic the fashions of the day.

Critical perceptions of socialism overshadowed the adaptation of socialist realism and the primacy of the Aboriginal cause in *Karobran*. Horner and Brand's reputations as socialists and the unusual circumstances surrounding the completion of the *Karobran* project dominated public discussion of the book. The few critics who responded to the publication speculated that the manuscript was, "strained to fit the socialist ideals of its editors" (Hooton 330). My examination of the editors' markings on the manuscript counters this critical view. Although the text was heavily edited, with over 6075 changes, significant alterations to the manuscript did not include the editorial imposition of a socialist realist form. Editorial double mimesis,

instead, attempted to engage the interests of the new emerging readership, which had no time for the politics, or solutions of the Old Left.

The editorial engagement in double mimesis presents the image of the “radical Aboriginal” in an attempt to strengthen market appeal by bolstering the Aboriginal rights platform. Strategic editorial substitutions heighten the political impact of the manuscript. For example, the speech and actions of both pro-Aboriginal and racist white characters are intensified. This strategy further polarises the novel's decidedly Manichean portrayal of white characters, risking overstatement and being dismissed as overtly didactic. This double mimesis typically reinforces the powerful position of the dominant white subject. The editorial impersonation of the radical Aboriginal is enacted strictly in accordance with the agenda of the dominant party. Thus the radical Aboriginal protestor is unproblematically depicted in a text where editorial procedure has also included muting of Aboriginal perspectives on land and spirituality and the emotive portrayal of child removal, all issues notably present in the agenda of Aboriginal radicals such as Monica Clare.

My reading of the original manuscript suggests that the editors did not emphasise or impose a CPA agenda via the socialist realist form. The form was present from the outset, however the preoccupations of the original text centre on Aboriginal rather than workers' rights. Socialism as a political philosophy and socialist realism as a genre are both deployed to make possible a discussion of Aboriginal rights. *Karobran* engages with and redirects socialist realist requirements for the demonstration of militancy, didacticism, optimism and typicality to serve Aboriginal political outcomes. Black identity and difference, although compromised, are not wholly erased by the adoption of the white mask. In the case of *Karobran* the mask of socialism facilitates a radical discussion of Aboriginal experience through a familiar political genre. Herein lies the tension between white mask and black body. By the time of publication the grand narrative of socialism was announced to be defunct, yet Monica Clare's supporters maintained the mask of socialism and adapted it to align with contemporary black politics. This enabled the text's publication, if only to a small audience receptive to black politics on socialist terms. My critical lifting of the white mask reveals the complexity of Monica Clare's identification as communist, particularly the negotiation and compromise required for incorporation into an Aboriginal world-view.



***If Everyone Cared***

When Margaret Tucker started to write her autobiography in the early 1970s she was an active, long-term member of MRA. The MRA community in Melbourne became a significant support group for Margaret Tucker, influencing the creation, reception and ongoing life of *If Everyone Cared*. MRA members, particularly her friend and editor, Jean Hughes, supported Margaret Tucker in the writing process with a quiet space for writing, transport, emotional support and important retreats back to her country. MRA ultimately published and promoted the title through their own publishing house, Grosvenor Books, when the original publishers, Ure Smith, refused to publish a second edition. Like Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker was a fervent and loyal convert to her chosen philosophy and its community of commitment. Her adoption of the white mask included the alteration of her speech and manners to conform to white standards, and the improvement of her literacy and public presentation skills. The adoption of the white mask, however, does not succeed in either harmonising or repressing difference. Margaret Tucker was eager to attempt to meld her traditional Aboriginal world-view with the belief of MRA. Extended passages in *If Everyone Cared* discuss the morality of traditional law and the strict codes of her elders, which supplemented and, as I illustrated in the thesis, often exceeded the MRA agenda. There are also many moments of counter-resistance in the text despite its overall conformity with MRA ideologies.

When *If Everyone Cared* was released, critic Peter Corris argued that Margaret Tucker's conservative political position and her attempt to reconcile Protestant Christianity with her Aboriginal beliefs compromised both traditions. Corris argued that this was, "an adjustment only possible by holding to very simplified versions of both systems of belief" (Corris). In Corris' assessment the framing function of the Christian grand narrative compromised the "authentic" Aboriginality of the text. This reflects the prevailing response to *If Everyone Cared*, in written critique or manifest as academic neglect.

My examination of Margaret Tucker's hand-written manuscript counters the assumption that *If Everyone Cared* unquestioningly advocated assimilation. The hand-written manuscript shows many signs of cultural difference, some of which were minimised or erased before publication. This thesis highlights the effacement of what were deemed to be inappropriate representations of Aboriginality in the editorial process. I identified a total of 830 changes to the entire hand-written manuscript. Within this total were 117 alterations that diminish,

delete, or qualify issues held as important by Margaret Tucker and the Aboriginal community or render them passive and/or respectable. Importantly, the original organisation of the text changes. The original manuscript is organised thematically and in a circular form which begins/ends with relationship to the land and kin and represents the view of one from within the Aboriginal group. Demonstrating no understanding of the radical nature of this presentation, or in the absence of an audience to accept it, the editors produced a different narrative that conforms to conventional autobiographical form.

The original thematic ordering of the manuscript is circular; organised by kin and place. The manuscript begins at Moonachulla where Margaret Tucker spent her early childhood, and finishes at Blacks Mountain (now known as Black Mountain, Canberra). In this ordering, Margaret Tucker's story does not end with her public achievements rather, it ends at the beginning with her spiritual conception place, her land and her people. Instead the chronological bildungsroman form of the published text mobilises a linear narrative oriented to individual life achievement, presenting Margaret Tucker as the central actor, around whom events unfold as the reader walks through chapters 1 - 16 of her life course. The alteration of the original ordering of the manuscript suggests that the stylistic demands of the traditional genre overwhelmed the attempted presentation of an Aboriginal world-view in terms of narrative structure.

Significant Aboriginal cultural markers such as references to traditional land and lore and the lengthy extrapolation of kinship networks were reduced and sometimes removed. The text was also sanitised to minimise the chance of offending or alienating the (assumed) white reader. Margaret Tucker's suffering as a child and her experience of racist treatment are minimised. In these instances the editor imposes the mask of the "respectable Aborigine" on the implied narrator. As Oodgeroo famously contested in the foreword to *The Dawn Is at Hand*, atrocities are never mentioned by nice people, "But hush, you mustn't say so/Bad taste or something" (Collins, *Oodgeroo of the Tribe* 112). Editorial decisions reshape *If Everyone Cared* producing a fictionalised voice that impersonates the respectable Aborigine. This impersonation redeems the representation of white people in the text.

Most references to whiteness or white people have been replaced with the racially unmarked, universal term "people". The use of "people" instead of "white people" presumes a white

majority and a racially marked Other (Spivak 199). For example, the original manuscript negatively portrays “white people” who laughed at a beloved old uncle’s funeral procession, which included a pack of rabbiting dogs. This negative reference to white people is erased in the published edition. The removal of other references to whiteness in the published text inhibits the challenge the original manuscript brings to bear upon the non-Aboriginal reader to reflect upon her/his own position as benefactor of Aboriginal dispossession. These interventions reveal the cultural bias of the editors and/or the deliberate tailoring to suit a non-Aboriginal readership.

The identified editorial interventions also suggest a process of negotiated compromise between author and collaborator. Differences between the original manuscript, the typescript and the published text suggest a series of compromises were made in the handling of Margaret Tucker’s enthusiasm for moral judgment. The editorial strategy minimises the text’s preoccupation with moral standards to levels that (still adequately) reflect the religious commitment of Margaret Tucker without alienating a secular audience. Margaret Tucker’s original manuscript makes overt and continual references to moral decline and the virtues of a “holy” lifestyle. Sixteen extended discussions of declining moral standards are removed from the text. Margaret Tucker’s condemnation of the abuse of alcohol, drug use, illicit sexual practices and the social acceptability of nakedness are removed, but many, many more references to the moral laxity of the present generations remain.

This is not to say that Margaret Tucker did not achieve a form of self-respect through the adoption of MRA principles (a white mask). Margaret Tucker’s MRA alliance gave her respectability at a time when Aboriginal people received little public recognition or respect. However, markers of cultural difference within the original manuscript are undoubtedly masked by the style of editorial intervention. These changes were negotiated in consultation with the author, however their differential relation to power aids the interests of the collaborator and the projected reader. This process of negotiation is evident in the type and extent of changes to the text. As Bhabha argues, colonial mimicry is, “a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed” (Bhabha 89). As the narrative voice of Tucker’s manuscript mimics the upright Christian citizen, it also attempts to incorporate Aboriginal practices and knowledge within the boundaries of “what is known and permissible”. Further, the editorial emendations provide

another performance space where the 'respectable Aboriginal' is impersonated in the text. This double mimesis requires the deletion or modification of excess Christian zeal, moral outrage and over-emphasis upon Aboriginal practices and knowledge, "that which though known must be kept concealed".

### ***Stradbroke Dreamtime***

Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba, wrote her autobiographical text *Stradbroke Dreamtime* at a time of turmoil and change in her personal and political life. The nature and outcome of this upheaval is reflected in the generic and textual choices identifiable in the original manuscript and in the editorial engagement with the text.

Chapter five identified a relationship between Oodgeroo's political activism and her changing style as a writer. Oodgeroo's position as a high profile "people's poet" in the early 1960s reflected her deep political commitment, a commitment also manifest in her tireless work for pan-Aboriginal political organisations. By the late 1960s the priorities and white domination of these groups, FCAATSI in particular, became increasingly difficult for Oodgeroo to endorse. Oodgeroo could no longer prioritise an "equal rights" platform that ignored the significance of cultural difference and identity. Her alliance shifted to Aboriginal controlled organisations in 1970/71. The structure and goals of the newly formed National Tribal Council promised to satisfy Oodgeroo's increasing appreciation of and demand for emphasis upon Aboriginal cultural difference and identity within the restrictions of the day. As an Aboriginal-led political body, the NTC sought cultural rejuvenation as well as pragmatic political outcomes. Oodgeroo's coalition with the NTC, however, was short-lived. Family conflict forced Oodgeroo's sudden resignation from NTC. With her health and stamina broken, Oodgeroo retreated to her homeland on North Stradbroke Island. Here she drew new strength from a rekindled relationship with her land and cultural traditions. From Stradbroke Island her writing turned from poetry to children's prose. The production of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in 1972 reflected Oodgeroo's commitment to the education of children and cultural conservation through relationship with the land.

The unusual generic combination of autobiographical stories and tribal legends in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* reflected Oodgeroo's political commitment. In Western generic terms, autobiography and folklore are not viewed as natural partners. As a genre originally established and practised by white Western male writers, autobiography developed as the triumphant re-telling of an individual life. By contrast, folklore has been viewed as the enunciation of the accumulated wisdom of the collective. Oodgeroo's deliberate transgression of these genre boundaries reflects an attempt to reclaim Aboriginal cultural traditions and expressions of community life. Styled to appeal to children, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* reveals Oodgeroo's commitment to educational methods founded upon Aboriginal epistemology.

The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* is ordered alphabetically, mixing legends and autobiographical stories according to title, refusing to differentiate between stories of personal experience and stories of communal wisdom. This amalgamation is in keeping with Indigenous cultural beliefs where personal individuality is a secondary reference, with totemic affiliation, guardianship over stories and relations to kinship systems taking precedence. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* challenges individualistic underpinnings of autobiography and offers a contemporary understanding of Aboriginality that melds traditional spirituality with urbanised daily realities. The design of the text as children's prose also reflected Oodgeroo's emerging commitment to engage with "the next generation". Oodgeroo's amalgamation of autobiography and folklore interferes with traditional genre expectations and represents the articulation of a specifically Aboriginal "outlaw genre" in Australian autobiography.

The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was written between 1969 -1972, a seachange period in Oodgeroo's life. Oodgeroo experienced enormous personal upheaval, severing twenty-year-old ties with a committed political community and suffering personal betrayal and rejection. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* articulates the changing convictions that contributed to the dramatic shift in Oodgeroo's political allegiances. The editorial collaboration between Oodgeroo and Barbara Ker Wilson was a significant test of Oodgeroo's stamina at this time of vulnerability and weakness. Unlike Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker, Oodgeroo had rejected or felt compelled to leave the significant communities of commitment that had been a mainstay of support during two decades of high profile political activism. In the case of FCAATSI, this severing of ties was based on the insufficiency of the group's

epistemology to provide an adequate foundation for Oodgeroo's Aboriginal activism. This insufficiency was also experienced by Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare, who responded by attempting to strategically adapt their grand narrative investment for the purpose of Aboriginal life writing. By contrast, Oodgeroo's actions constituted an attempted refusal to mask the black body. As a black woman living in and constructed by white settler society, Oodgeroo's lone attempt to refuse the mimic's mask had a slim chance of success, if possible at all. Ashis Nandy reminds us that:

Colonialism colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonised societies to alter their cultural priorities once for all. In the process, it helps generalise the concept of the modern West from a geographical category. The West is everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds (Nandy xi).

Oodgeroo, however, embarked upon the decolonisation of the mind through her formulation of a substitute standpoint. Her strategy of resistance included the drafting of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* and involvement with the NTC's Burnong Mumba project. Both projects attempted to recuperate Aboriginal cultural priorities as a valid vehicle for artistic expression. Edward Said theorises such resistance strategies as a process, "in the rediscovery and repatriation of what has been suppressed in the natives' past by the processes of imperialism" (Said 253). Resistance works to recover forms that have been invariably, "influenced or infiltrated by the culture of empire" (Said 253) and necessarily relies upon what Benedict Anderson and Hannah Arendt have described as "imagined solidarities" that recreate the common memory (Said 260). Oodgeroo's resistance work in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was hampered by the absence of political solidarity with her fellow Aboriginal activists.

Oodgeroo's perceived loss of support from crucial members of the NTC, particularly her son Denis, seriously undermined her capacity to defend and sustain her strategy of resistance during the editorial phase of *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* publication. The epistemological foundation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* asserted the contemporaneity of Aboriginal identity and claimed personhood (deemed the preserve of white Western subjects) on Aboriginal terms. In the editorial phase, however, *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* challenge to the directive, "turn white or disappear" was dramatically reversed. As Fanon asserts, "The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 110), "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real

world challenged my claims [ . . . ] I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 110-12). The "real world" challenged the claims made by the manuscript version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, particularly the refusal to turn white. In response to this refusal of the mask, the assertion of contemporary Aboriginal identity in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was rendered invisible by editorial intervention. The published text remained tethered to the stereotypes of romanticised Aboriginal primitivism and contemporary Aboriginal cultural degeneracy it sought to eschew. The editorial response to the generic border-crossing performed by the original manuscript (crossing autobiography, myth and children's literature) was to reinstate genre boundaries. This differentiation subverts the attempt to maintain continuity between the cultural past and a contemporary present and obscures the alternative view of the world that the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* offered.

The editorial removal of six typographic designs from the traditional tribal legends recounted in *Stradbroke Dreamtime* denied another opportunity to articulate the dynamic relationship between contemporary Aboriginal culture and traditional Aboriginal spirituality. The removal of the iconic outlines also silenced a possible instance of Aboriginal difference inscribed in the text and a critique of the inability of Western paradigms to allow Oodgeroo to represent her contemporary ties to traditional culture.

*Stradbroke Dreamtime* was edited to achieve a text that conformed to then current conceptions of timeless folklore and children's entertainment. The deletion or reduction of Aboriginal perspectives on Aboriginal experience assisted the refashioning of the manuscript from a politically charged text into harmless children's folklore. For example, editorial changes that place Aboriginal culture in the past tense and delete reference to contemporary experience achieve a temporal distance required by the folklore genre. The Dreaming stories of Aboriginal culture are presented in the edited version of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* as tales from a pre-historical past. The deletion of references to contemporary use of Aboriginal knowledge, spirituality and cultural practices also reinforced stereotypes of a static, "authentic" traditional Aboriginal culture that contrasts the projected cultural degeneracy of the contemporary surviving remnant. The deletion of contemporary references to Indigenous relationships with nature cooperates with the severing of contemporary Aboriginal experience

from traditional beliefs and practices. Editorial changes such as these support and perpetuate a primitivist view of Aboriginality and Aboriginal culture.

The editorial subversion of *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* radical textual assertion of contemporary Aboriginal identity illustrates the power and persistence of white adherence to myths of modernist primitivism. The manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* joined Fanon in demanding that black people, "should no longer be confronted with the dilemma, *turn white or disappear*, but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 100). Within the constraints of historical circumstances, the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* claimed the right of existence on Aboriginal terms and attempted the textual representation of this subjectivity. The editorial response to this claim was akin to having, "my message flung back in my face like a slap" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 114). Like the editors of both *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared*, the editor of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* impersonated a fictionalised Aboriginal narrative voice in order to represent an Aboriginality deemed acceptable within white discourses. In this case the editor engages in double mimesis and imposes a primitivist representation of Aboriginality upon the text. Fanon described such rejection of black subjectivity, "I shouted a greeting to the world and the world slashed away my joy. I was told to stay within the bounds, to go back where I belonged" (Fanon, *Black Skin* 114-5). Oodgeroo's initial plans for *Stradbroke Dreamtime* attempted to shout a radical greeting to the world. The more radical aspects of her textual assertion of Aboriginal identity failed to reach publication. *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was made to go back where it was deemed to belong, within the generic bounds of primitivist folklore and harmless children's literature. The format, presentation and marketing of the published editions of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* attest to the generic boundary riding performed by the editor and publishing house.

The editorial intervention performed upon *Stradbroke Dreamtime* contravened Oodgeroo's original manuscript, representing a significant subversion of the radical potential of the text. Political conditions, which fostered the formulation of an alternative politics of identity in the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* also allowed the wholesale editorial subversion of the intentions of the text. Oodgeroo was not afraid to forge her own path and she persevered with her convictions irrespective of community support or dissent. However, the severing of ties with her communities of commitment in 1969 and 1971 left Oodgeroo shattered,



vulnerable and substantially unable to defend the textual expression of her emerging epistemology in *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Remnants of the original political force of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* are retained by the text, but these stories and statements are now devoid of the undergirding order or structure that supported and explained their significance. *Stradbroke Dreamtime*'s combination of autobiography and tribal legends seems ill-matched as presented within the generic frame of children's literature, Western autobiography and folklore. This same combination holds radical potential to represent Aboriginal subjectivity when supported and explained by Aboriginal understandings of individual identity, community and temporality.

### **Editorial Double Mimesis and the Influence of a Committed Community**

My discussion of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran* identifies the editors' impersonation of a desired representation of Aboriginality as a significant similarity between the three texts. In the case of *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran*, this editorial double mimesis is enacted from within the bonds of a community of commitment. Within this community the Aboriginal writers and their editors developed long-term personal relationships, based upon a shared philosophy and common political goals. The editorial handling of *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran* suggest a degree of mutual negotiation between the demands of the grand narrative that undergirds a community of commitment and the authorial desire to represent Aboriginal subjectivities.

Non-symmetrical power relations between the negotiating parties necessarily affect the outcome of even well-intentioned editorial collaborations. The contrast between the original manuscript's degree of non-compliance with or adaptation of the grand narrative philosophy and the compliance of the amended text evinces the impact of differential access to power. The editorial double mimesis of the respectable Aboriginal person in *If Everyone Cared* and the Aboriginal radical in *Karobran* still substantially agrees with the epistemological foundation of the manuscripts, but without the original emphasis upon Aboriginal cultural priorities. In these cases the editors held a philosophical investment in the style of expression and success of the Aboriginal autobiography. Tied as they were to a community and their philosophy, these texts shared the success and/or decline of the grand narratives that underpin them. Unlike *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran*, *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was written in the aftermath of

the severing of community bonds and without a pre-existing relationship or negotiated understanding between editor and author.

In *Stradbroke Dreamtime* the editorial double mimesis of primitive Aboriginality marks a radical departure from the epistemological foundation of the manuscript. It appears that *Stradbroke Dreamtime's* efforts at cultural resistance or "writing back" led to a starker compromise of the intentions of the text than that negotiated for *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran*. Under the editorial hand the original philosophic foundations of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* were excised and the text was recrafted to mimic something else. In the 1970s, when *If Everyone Cared*, *Karobran* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* were produced, edited and published, it appears that the demand to "turn white or disappear" still held a persuasive and/or prevailing power.

### **Conclusion: To Turn White or Disappear**

Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo were all senior women who were leaders in their Aboriginal communities and had achieved recognition for their tireless work from white society. Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker were both long-term members of philosophical communities and attempted to incorporate aspects of their chosen philosophy into their strategy for Aboriginal self-determination. For Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker, belief in the ideologies and relationships with these communities shaped and enabled the publication of their foundational autobiographical narratives. Adopting the white mask of their philosophic community also dogged the publications, particularly as the solutions offered by the texts lost appeal and relevance for ensuing generations of potential readers. For *Karobran* and *If Everyone Cared*, "to turn white" entailed a generational disappearance, with the possibility of recovery and reappearance in the future.

Oodgeroo published her autobiographical narrative *Stradbroke Dreamtime* half a decade earlier than *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran*. Unlike Margaret Tucker and Monica Clare, Oodgeroo was an established poet and well-known public figure when she began writing her autobiographical text. Oodgeroo had encountered the colonial demand to "turn white or disappear" many times in her long political and writing career. Her dramatic severing of ties with FCAATSI was prompted by such a demand; that white priorities and procedure prevail in

the organisation. Oodgeroo refused to turn white or to disappear (on FCAATSI's terms at least). *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was written as an enunciation of her political commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and the prioritisation of Aboriginal identity and difference in the pursuit of this goal. This is a difficult enunciation of resistance, given the impossibility of escaping white discursive domains that construct post-colonial Aboriginality. Oodgeroo's loss of a committed community, loss of health and experience of personal betrayal undermined her capacity to maintain this refusal. During the editorial phase the original philosophic position of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was undermined and altered. The enunciation of Aboriginal difference and vibrant, contemporary identity disappeared beneath the mask of primitive Aboriginality.

To turn white or disappear were the only choices available to Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo in the early 1970s. Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker adopted aspects of the white mask to enable them to achieve recognition within the white dominant culture. Oodgeroo attempted to resist this prescription, but without success in early editions of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. In all cases the white editor textually impersonates a version of acceptable Aboriginality. This drama of identity, Homi Bhabha reminds us in his foreword to *Black Skin, White Masks*, is played out in a dangerous space. Denial, repression and cultural confusion open the stage to the possibility of political subversion, "The point at which the black mask *slips* to reveal the white skin"(Fanon, *Black Skin* xxii).

Re-membering *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran* has entailed a critical return to the point at which the "black mask" of double mimesis slips to reveal the white skin of editorial authority. Unveiling the work of the editor also renews critical appreciation of the craft of this generation of Aboriginal women writers. Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo must be credited, not critically condemned or ignored, for using the tools available to them to the best advantage of their text. Their editors were all dedicated friends or professionals whose work enabled the texts to gain publication, a substantially unprecedented achievement for Aboriginal women. The editorial requirement to incorporate Aboriginal specificities whilst also acceding to press demands for a marketable text proved a difficult task. Importantly, this thesis makes possible a different reading of these foundational Aboriginal women's texts. We can now appreciate the compromises and sacrifices of past

generations of Aboriginal women, enabling new prospects for reading *Stradbroke Dreamtime*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Karobran Other-wise*.

## Ten

### **By Way of Conclusion**

Re-membering foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives *Karobran*, *If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime* has unveiled literary histories of complexity and significance that have hitherto been unacknowledged.

Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo each negotiated a politics of collaboration that was unique and multifaceted. This thesis has challenged and extended critical understanding of the collaborative construction of foundational autobiographical texts, the relationships these women forged and maintained with communities of commitment and the genre boundary-crossing each text performs.

The cross-cultural collaborative construction of foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives has had a significant impact upon the style, content and shelf-life of their texts. Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo mobilised the differing resources of their community of commitment in the preparation and publication of their autobiographical texts. Understanding the political and historical context of collaborative relationships has been established as a crucial "first-step" in moving past the existent pool of assumptions and prejudice that has deemed cross-cultural collaborative publications of the 1970s as uncritically assimilationist or "white-washed" texts.

This research has shown that foundational Aboriginal narratives were both enabled and constrained by collaborative editorial processes. The manuscript studies have demonstrated how each Aboriginal woman writer attempted to indigenise the autobiographical project. Working from within the strictures of Western generic conventions, each author attempted to mould their text to reflect both their Aboriginality and the complexity of their political commitments.

Monica Clare was an active trade unionist and CPA affiliate. Her political career has been neglected in historical studies and her literary achievements barely recognised. *Karobran* was fashioned within the socialist realist tradition, but with a focus on Aboriginal experience.

*Karobran* engaged with and redirected the socialist realist genre to serve Aboriginal political outcomes. Stereotyped critical assumptions regarding socialist realism and the influence of the CPA have meant that Monica Clare's adaptation of white institutions and practices for Aboriginal ends has been overlooked.

Like Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker's original manuscript attempted to marry her Aboriginal world-view with a Western political philosophy. Margaret Tucker's original manuscript held potential to communicate a radical representation of Aboriginal relationships to land, understanding of kinship and approaches to political activism whilst also expressing the values and priorities of the Moral Re-Armament movement. *If Everyone Cared* blurs the boundaries of history, literature and oral traditions. Possible reincorporation of excised sections in future editions of this text, such as the extensive listing of kinship details, offers a rich cultural resource to Koori people. At many stages in the production and reception of *If Everyone Cared* the text has been misunderstood and undervalued. The sales success of *If Everyone Cared*, for example, dramatically contrasts the critical neglect of this foundational text. This neglect points to a critical shaming mechanism that is uncomfortable with unfashionable and uncompromising ideological stances, or overtly politicised generic styles. The fluctuating status of *If Everyone Cared*, particularly following the *Lousy Little Sixpence* documentary, also highlights the impact of media attention, marketing strategies and changing politics of Aboriginality upon Aboriginal publications.

Oodgeroo had a more vexed and provisional relationship with the authoritative discourses and political institutions of her day. Political and family conflict led Oodgeroo to abandon institutionalised politics and retreat to her homeland on North Stradbroke Island. Adapting earlier international struggles such as the Negritude movement and Pan-Africanism to the Australian situation, Oodgeroo sought to strategically salvage and reinvigorate Aboriginal culture. Her autobiographical text *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was an early expression of this approach, which attempted to represent a contemporary Aboriginality that maintained significant links to traditional land and spirituality. The genre mixing performed by the manuscript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* further challenged white perceptions of contemporary Aboriginality and the political role and potential of emerging Aboriginal literary expression. Published as a children's text and reviewed by anthropologists, the first edition of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was framed and impinged upon by neocolonial attitudes towards Aboriginal art.

The differing presentation of *Stradbroke Dreamtime* in four editions reflects changing discourses that enabled different and more sensitive readings of the text, changes that respected Aboriginal cultural practices and the desires of Oodgeroo herself.

The collaborative construction of foundational Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives must now be understood as textual representations of Aboriginality that were constructed within the limitations of their era. This thesis does not seek to critique the good intentions of the collaborating editors, but acknowledges their important role in facilitating the publication of these landmark texts. The identification of editorial double mimesis in this thesis demonstrates how an ideal or stereotyped trope of Aboriginality was imposed to strategically modulate the voice of the autobiographical text. This theoretical insight is a necessary aspect of the reassessment of *Karobran, If Everyone Cared* and *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. Any critique of editorial processes accepts that both editor and author were subject to the operations of masking and double mimesis caught up in different dynamics of race desire. For these foundational Aboriginal women writers the textual representation of subjectivity offered a site of political resistance. Monica Clare and Margaret Tucker adopted the white mask of their philosophic communities, both finding agency to express their Aboriginality within these ideological frames. The address of their text, however, has been read through Aboriginal stereotypes of the political radical and moral respectability. Oodgeroo attempted to resist the masking of her text. Her original manuscript reveals a determined prioritisation of Aboriginal identity and difference. Regardless, her text was read through a modernist lens as a representation of "authentic" primitivism. The pragmatic accommodation of Western priorities and practices was also a political reality for Aboriginal women authors publishing in the 1970s.

The findings of this thesis suggest that a new approach to the production, reception, consumption and ongoing critique of Aboriginal women's narratives is required. Further, the thesis invites a re-evaluation of other foundational Aboriginal publications. The ear of the academy and the reading public must be attuned to listen more attentively to Aboriginal voices.

## **Appendices**



## **Appendix 1**

### **Extracts from the Original *Karobran* Manuscript with Editorial Corrections**

This extract from the original typescript of *Karobran* corresponds with chapter four, page forty in the published text.

Rivers would overflow, and although the summer-time would often bring had droughts and the water tanks would go dry, this was the time of year that the children liked best.

Aunt and Isabela would gather ~~all~~ <sup>the</sup> all the soiled washing into baskets, and with every <sup>taking</sup> available drinking container they could find together with a large picnic lunch, <sup>Aunt, Isabela and Morrie</sup> they would all ~~row~~ <sup>take</sup> up the small creek in the row boat, where Uncle ~~would be~~ <sup>was</sup> stop ~~his~~ <sup>he would stop his work</sup> ploughing, ~~and~~ <sup>light</sup> light a fire under the boiler, for the washing, then they would sit under the big old china pear tree and eat their lunch. Afterwards, while the washing was spread out on lines that Uncle had put up ~~and~~ <sup>on branches and</sup> ~~to dry~~ they would either go for a swim, <sup>gather</sup> gather blackberries or raspberries, or simply climb up and over the mountain and visit a neighbour who lived too far away to get to by the road. ~~Whatever~~ <sup>the</sup> whatever happened, Saturday ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> their picnic day. Throughout the summer,

One night, when Isabela lay awake in bed she began to think about her Dad and she wondered why he had not come to see them. She was bubbling over with the things to tell him. Her thoughts went back to the day <sup>when</sup> she had last seen him at the <sup>railway station</sup> ~~parents~~ place, and as she closed her eyes she could still see that tear that he stopped under his eyelid of his ~~black eyes~~ <sup>his serious and black eyes</sup>.

Then for some reason her thoughts went further back to the children that she and Morrie had played with so long ~~ago~~ <sup>ago</sup>. She wondered if they <sup>were</sup> still eating Emu and Porcupine, and were ~~the others~~ <sup>they</sup> still able to watch the men hitting each other inside ropes. <sup>N.P.D</sup> ~~she~~ she wondered again, ~~perhaps~~ <sup>good</sup> they too ~~had~~ <sup>had</sup> found a place like she and her brother now had.

And that brought her thoughts to the present, and she smiled <sup>thinking</sup> when she thought about ~~the tiny little~~ <sup>their new</sup> foster ~~child~~ <sup>who had recently arrived</sup> ~~they now had~~. He was so small that his hands barely touched the top of the kitchen table when he put them up above his head. <sup>N.P.</sup> Then there were the sad times that she ~~thought about them~~ <sup>could remember</sup>.

## **Appendix II**

### **Extracts from the Original Hand-Written Manuscript of *If Everyone Cared***

These extracts from the hand written manuscript and the typescript correspond with chapter fourteen, page 172 of the published text.



2.

The other people were from overseas, ~~and dark~~ New Zealanders . We liked them so much that we invited them ~~to our home~~ (white New Zealanders) and Australians who were with them, to come to an evening to meet others of our people. It was to be at the home of Alex and Meryl Jackomas. That was about eighteen years ago. We had lots of singing that evening and chatting. I ~~remember asking one of the visitors to speak to all about the work~~ They were all genuine people I remember, and I asked one of them to speak about the work they all seemed to be interested in.

To my surprise a lady got to her feet and everyone quietened down to listen. We had learned earlier that her husband ~~was~~ was a Wing Commander in the R.A.A.F. a pilot <sup>in the World War</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>from first</sup> ~~in~~ the ~~second~~ World War.

These are some of the words she said, which I will never forget. It was the first time I had heard such words said to us Aborigines. Having thanked the host and hostess for the party and ~~the opportunity to meet~~ <sup>for meeting me</sup> our people, she said, "I am glad to have the opportunity to say from my heart how sorry I am for my superiority as a white Australian, and for our treatment as whites, of the Australian ~~people~~ race." Would you please forgive? " She went on to say that she felt dark and white Australians could work together to help make Australia the land which God meant ~~it~~ <sup>for</sup> to be. Then ~~we~~ <sup>Australians</sup> could give the right ~~things~~ <sup>ideas</sup> to the world by creating a pattern ~~of living~~ <sup>in the way we live</sup>.

It touched my heart and many there that evening. It was the beginning of a friendship between white and dark Australians. She had many Aborigines in her home many times, cups of tea, taking us for drives and meals in her lovely home. That great friend who was like a sister to me, has passed on now leaving her husband, Eric Roberts who is known to Aborigines far and wide. Their son is now a University lecturer in Papua New Guinea. Eric has just had his 63rd birthday.

I have never ceased to be thankful for meeting such people as ~~they~~ <sup>was Eric's son</sup>, and many

Typescript If Everyone Cared

Source: National Library of Australia, Courtesy of Maxine Barr

**Appendix III****Extracts from the Original Hand-Written Manuscript and Typescript of *Stradbroke Dreamtime***

These extracts correspond with page twenty-four in the "Stories from Stradbroke" section of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. The hand-written manuscript "The Tank" bears the authorial note that the manuscript had been typed. This typescript is missing from Fryer Library manuscript collection. I have also included the corresponding page from the editorial proofs. Also included are extracts corresponding with page one hundred and four in the "Stories from the Old and New Dreamtime" section of *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. I have included an extract from the original typescript of "Tuggan-Tuggan (Silky Oak)" and the corresponding page from the editorial proofs.



Submitted  
a & R

(1) Accepted

TUGGAN-TUGGAN (Silky Oak).

Tuggan-Tuggan was a hunter of the Moreton Bay tribe. One day as he was searching for food with his boomerang, he came to a slender and very tall beautiful tree.

Tuggan-Tuggan fell in love with the beautiful tree. He knew the tree was unhappy and he asked her what was the matter.

The tree shook her pale silver green leaves in the wind and she told him how she wished she had a cloak to place over her trembling leaves to keep them warm.

Tuggan-Tuggan promised to help her and everyday he searched for a cloak when he should have been hunting for food.

The elders of the tribe grew very angry with Tuggan-Tuggan when he returned each day empty handed from the hunt.

At last they told him if he did not bring food to the tribe he would be punished.

Tuggan-Tuggan took no notice of the elders and continued to search for a cloak for his lovely sad tree, until one day the elders made up their mind to punish him.

When next he returned to the camp they took his boomerang from him and threw it high into the air, telling Tuggan-Tuggan that as he did not use it any more he did not need it and that it would never return to the camp and Tuggan-Tuggan must also go from the camp.

Tuggan-Tuggan watched his boomerang travelling fast from his sight and made up his mind he would follow its path until he found it again. He loved his boomerang as much as he loved the cold tall tree.

He travelled all over the land looking everywhere for his lost boomerang and a cloak for his lovely tree. His travels took him far away.

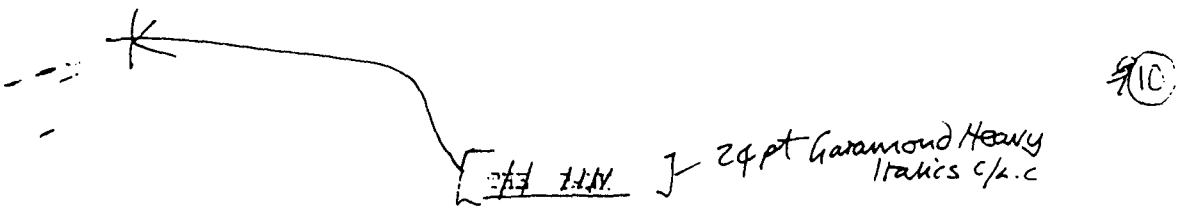
As he no longer owned a boomerang, he never hunted and soon he grew sick and weary and longed for the sight of his tree and boomerang.

So he decided to return and when at last he came to his beautiful tree, he knew he was dying.

Biani the good spirit knew of his love for the tree, so he found and returned Tuggan-Tuggan's boomerang to him.

Tuggan-Tuggan said to the tree this is my last chance to use my boomerang and as I could not find a cloak for you, I will throw my boomerang up into the highest of your branches. It will keep you warm




  
 My father was always on the lookout for the sort of things that would make life a bit easier for all of us. As there was never enough money to buy what was needed, we had to make the most of what we could find lying around—usually on the white man's rubbish dumps.

One day // Dad came home from work with an old leaky water-tank tied to the dray. I well remember the old draught-horse that pulled the dray: ~~Property of His Majesty's Government~~ <sup>the</sup> Government, of course. He looked as though he were always frothing over, hence his name—Sola. One of Dad's mates ~~had~~ helped him unload the old tank, and when they had carried it round to the back of the house, Mother came out to inspect it.

"Sand what," she demanded, "will that leaky thing do for us?"

Dad's look told her to wait and see.

The next day Dad got to work. He built a tank-stand, and then all the family and friends he could muster helped him lift the tank onto the stand.

Mother placed her hands on her hips, the way she always did when Dad wouldn't explain to her just what he had in mind. "It's riddled with holes, it can't hold water, so what ~~can~~" She raised her eyebrows as she awaited Dad's reply.

"I'm going to get some cement and fix up the inside. Then it'll hold water, won't it?" Dad told her.

"Not a bad idea," Mother said. "But how are you going to buy the cement? You're not exactly a millionaire, you know."

Her sarcasm was lost on Dad. He grabbed his hat and waved good-bye, warning us not to go near the so-and-so tank.

"Tank, is it!" Mother yelled after his retreating figure.

Dad never did anything unless he had first planned everything out in detail. He'd known about that discarded water-tank on the dump for a long time, but he'd waited until his holidays came round before he did anything about it, so that he could get on with the job without interruptions.

Editor's Proofs *Stradbroke Dreamtime*

Source: Fryer Library, University of Queensland, Courtesy of Petrina Walker

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