



**POOR BUGGER WHITEFELLA GOT NO DREAMING:**

**The representation & appropriation of published Dreaming narratives with special reference to David Unaipon's writings**

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**To my parents and inspiration:**

**Max and Aileen GALE**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis critically reviews the many and varied representations of Aboriginal Dreaming narratives that have appeared in print since Australia's colonisation. It begins with early representations by missionaries, who judged the beliefs of their Indigenous charges as 'heathen', and those of early ethnographers who shared their contempt. It then considers representations by other non-Indigenous recorders, including government surveyors, anthropologists, bushmen, wives of pastoralists and those with an interest in the exotic. It looks at the works of Indigenous writers, some of whom were influenced by representations by non-Indigenous writers before them. However, in more recent years alternative printed representations have emerged that challenge the status quo and push the boundaries of what audiences have come to expect of this 'most sensitive genre'. These alternatives retain that strong sense of personal ownership and authority that is still evident in oral versions of Dreaming narratives, and a strong sense of Place and connection with the land that is missing in many past representations. They also give their narratives a place in the present, rather than relegating them to some long distant 'Dreamtime'. This thesis celebrates these new and alternative representations.

A special focus of this study is the writings of the Ngarrindjeri man, David Unaipon, who appears on the Australian fifty dollar note. He was the first Indigenous person to publish in this genre, and went on to become a prolific producer of syncretic narratives that defy categorisation. My literary and linguistic analysis reveals that every Dreaming text that reaches the publication stage is influenced by the circumstances in which it is produced. Whether by non-Indigenous writers or people working in close collaboration with Indigenous story-tellers, there are always political and social factors that influence the adopted style of representation. Dreaming narratives contain knowledge, and all knowledge systems are influenced by the circumstances in which they emerge. This thesis challenges those with an interest in representing Indigenous knowledge in print, particularly in the form of Dreaming narratives, to respect the rights of the Indigenous owners of that knowledge, and to strive to maintain the integrity of their texts.

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

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Mary-Anne Gafe

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## CHAPTER 1



### WHOSE DREAMINGS, WHOSE STORIES?

*While there has been a popular revival of Dreamtime/creation stories in children's literature it is my firm opinion that these should be exclusively written by Aboriginal people. Much information written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals has been patronising, misconstrued, pre-conceived and abused. We've had so much destructive material written about us that we must hold together the very fabric of the stories which created us. Out of all the material written about, for and by Aboriginal people, this is perhaps the most sensitive genre.*

(Jackie Huggins, 1994:12-13)

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Jackie Huggins is an Indigenous historian and writer from Queensland. Her insistence on exclusive rights over Dreamtime narratives may seem confronting - particularly to those white writers who have appropriated such texts in their work. This thesis seeks to review published Dreaming narratives, written by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, and to explore the issues of appropriation and representation of this "most sensitive genre".

Many Aboriginal Dreaming 'myths' and 'legends', which invariably originated as oral texts told by Aboriginal people (often in their own Indigenous languages) have re-emerged as published books that differ markedly in style and form to the original oral texts. Typically the Dreaming texts that are accepted for commercial publication are re-worked into a form that appeals to white publishers and a mainstream audience. This inevitably results in the Dreaming texts being translated into a standard form of English, and being given a story line that will appeal to both children and adults.

The degree of appropriation of Dreaming texts by non-Indigenous writers is astounding, as is the lack of credit given to the Indigenous sources of the original narratives. Furthermore, copyright is invariably completely assumed by the white appropriators. At the fourth biennial Children's Book Council (C.B.C.) conference held in Adelaide, in May 1998, during the session "Whose Dreaming? Whose Story?", Melissa Lucashenko managed to ruffle the feathers of many a conference delegate. It was her talk, and the reactions to her talk, that caused my thesis to take its current direction. Lucashenko not only warned non-Indigenous writers not to steal "our stories" but also not to steal "our voices":

Our land is stolen, our children are stolen, our culture is attacked and fragmented. But we still have our voices. We know and have lived the stories of colonisation. We

know the stories from before. Its getting on, but its still not too late for you, the chained people [white colonisers], to learn to listen.<sup>1</sup>

The response to Lucashenko's, and other presentations at the C.B.C. conference, are telling. Among the conference delegates were representatives of the children's book publishing industry, established and published writers, budding authors and teacher-librarians. It is to these people, among others, that I direct the findings of my research.

The conference was held in the relatively plush surrounds of the Adelaide Convention Centre, and by the end of the first day the 600 delegates were all feeling very comfortable about the way the conference was proceeding. The opening plenary session was taken by Boori Pryor, a Murri friend of Lucashenko, also from Queensland, who cracked lots of jokes about his Aboriginality and enticed numerous delegates up on the stage to dance with him. He had recently published *Maybe tomorrow*, about the work he does in schools to try and promote understanding and reconciliation between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Australia. By the end of his session we were all feeling reconciled. White authors who had written books inclusive of Aboriginal Australia felt they were promoting Boori's cause, and teacher-librarians were feeling good because their school libraries were selectively purchasing books that gave positive representations of Aboriginal people. Penguin was especially pleased that their latest author was such a hit with the audience, while we all promised ourselves that we would immediately buy Boori's book, and share its message with others.

But Lucashenko's talk the next day made the audience feel anything but reconciled. She admitted she was very nervous about giving her talk, because she knew that what she was going to say was not what the audience wanted to hear. She began by telling the audience that Indigenous Australians "conceive of knowledge in a really different way":

In a western framework knowledge is something that's freely available; it can be bought or sold; that you can go to and look for on the internet; that is your socially given right from the time you were a tiny child. It is there and everyone is encouraged to find it and use it. An Indigenous Australian view of knowledge is so different to that that it's difficult to put into words....

Like Lucashenko, many Aboriginal people believe that much of their cultural knowledge is not something to be bought or sold. It is not something that can be put on the internet willy-nilly, nor borrowed by would-be writers wanting to capitalise on current market demands for anything Indigenous. Nor is it something that should be fictionalised or reconstructed by those with the literary skills or well-established careers in the world of publishing.

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<sup>1</sup> All papers and presentations at the 1998 C.B.C. conference were recorded by the conference organisers, and copies sold to delegates. All quotes from Lucashenko's paper that appear in this chapter are transcribed verbatim from her recorded session.

Amazingly, this antithetical view about knowledge seemed completely new to many of the conference delegates. It is a matter for concern that such sentiments are not clearly articulated in academic papers, although the discipline of cultural studies has started to address this issue in more recent years (see e.g. Attwood & Arnold, 1992).<sup>2</sup> This omission, or 'silence'<sup>3</sup> is probably understandable among academics, particularly those who make their living by representing the knowledge of Indigenous people in their books and university courses. For them to admit that such knowledge is not freely available for them to exploit and publish would render some both voiceless and jobless. But at the same time, these issues of representation and the construction of knowledge about the Other, and questions about whose voice is really being heard in postcolonial literature, have furthered the careers of academics working in the Academy in the relatively new disciplines of cultural studies and postcolonial criticism. I contend, however, that those academics who theorise specifically about the representation of Australian Aborigines (such as Hodge & Mishra, 1990 and Muecke, 1992) fail to clearly articulate the fundamental difference between Indigenous Australians and western academics in their attitudes towards rights over cultural knowledge. It is similarly difficult to find Indigenous voices on issues of representation in academic papers, because the privileged world of academic publishing can be even more silencing and alienating than that of commercial publishing.

Why do Indigenous people, like Huggins and Lucashenko, hold such strong opinions regarding the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge? One reason is that some of the knowledge currently being appropriated from old archival texts is considered, by many Indigenous people, to be their rightful property. The information in these texts was told by their ancestors. Claims that these texts are from 'extinct tribes' are erroneous. Brunato (1972:Forward), for example, regarding the Kaurna People of the Adelaide Plains, claims that "A few years after the white settlers came, the tribe became extinct". Although for many Indigenous people, their land is now concreted over with major city developments, their descendants are alive and kicking. Their languages and their Dreaming narratives are now being brought back to life, or "awoken" from their sleep, with archival and historical records being retrieved and reclaimed, particularly by the Kaurna people (see Amery, 1998). Many Indigenous people believe (see Chapter Nine) that their languages and stories, which are held within old written records, are not there for the taking by white appropriators. Non-Indigenous academics and writers are being told they can no longer sit in the comfort zone of caretaker or custodian for posterity's sake, nor can they appropriate them for spurious aesthetic reasons. However, my research on published Dreaming narratives shows quite

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<sup>2</sup> A commissioned report: *Our culture: our future: report on Australian Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights*, has recently been released, which I discuss further in Chapter Nine.

<sup>3</sup> Note W.E.H. Stanner first wrote of a similar "Great Australian silence" in 1968, referring to the omission in Australian history books of our bloody past and the ill-treatment of our Indigenous people as Australia was colonised (see reprint Stanner, 1991:18).

clearly that this message has not been heard. The Indigenous cultural renaissance that began in the 1990s is rife with appropriation. As Lucashenko said at the C.B.C. conference:

You took our children, our sisters, our brothers, our mothers, our fathers, our grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles and aunties, but we kept our stories. A rich Indigenous folklore arose from the missions and camps blending with the stories that have been in this country from the beginning. We kept our stories. The use of Aboriginal languages in the missions was banned. Those speaking their language were severely punished. We were not to corroboree, not to sing. The devil was in our stories. The chained people had come to tell us that our spirituality was wrong, and the white God could save us. But we kept our stories, whispered them at night, and hid away in the bush and saved them. A few of the chained people didn't try to destroy our culture but most of you did. Most of you saw savagery and idolatry because that's what your chains told you to see. We didn't care, we struggled. We kept our stories....

Question time, after Lucashenko's talk, revealed she believes Indigenous writers also have exclusive rights to fictionalise Aboriginal characters in novels.<sup>4</sup> Needless to say her views were at odds with the non-Indigenous members of the panel. James Moloney and Elizabeth Hutchins have both written and published children's books with Indigenous main characters (see Moloney, 1993 & 1994; Hutchins, 1998). Lucashenko was also at odds with the many budding authors in the audience who aspire to writing 'politically correct' novels that are inclusive of Aboriginal people, and with the many teacher-librarians in the audience who have been buying and recommending books with Indigenous themes, inspite of them being written by white authors.

But to be fair, Lucashenko is probably also at odds with some other Indigenous writers. Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson), has an opposing view:

where else would Australians go for cultural inspiration than to Indigenous culture? It is about time that we gave away such words as 'appropriation' and 'misappropriation' and set out to build an Australian culture and literature which is based on and in Australia, that is, on the land and on the songlines which make known the land. Universality should be the aim rather than an exclusivity which will not work and which will only allow the songlines to become forgotten. Culture is never static and the past is there to be used and built upon.

(Mudrooroo, 1997:23)

Mudrooroo says he is echoing the view of the late T.G.H. Strehlow, the well-known anthropologist, who published the large 1971 volume *Songs of Central Australia*. Mudrooroo valorises Strehlow's efforts, as well as the epic and poetic quality of the songlines he recorded in print. Mudrooroo concludes his valorisation, and his chapter on "The Songlines", with the comment:

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<sup>4</sup>Lucashenko was quite adamant that only Aboriginal people have the right to write novels with both Aboriginal characters and white characters, because it is only they who have the life experience of living in both worlds: "... We can't remain ignorant [of white people] and live. You can remain ignorant of us and live your whole life.... OK That's why we can write about white people with knowledge....". I have heard similar sentiments from local Aboriginal people regarding picture books written for children, by non-Indigenous authors, that focus on Indigenous themes and characters. I have also heard positive comments from Aboriginal people about similar books.



the importance of poetry to the Arrenthe [sic] people is stressed by Strehlow who declares that in Arrenthe [sic] society it was the poet, the knower of sacred songs, who had prestige. He ends his huge volume with an appeal which echoes my own: that if Australia is to develop a truly national culture it is to the land and environment that Australians must go: 'It is therefore to be hoped that a perusal of the ancient material that constitutes the aboriginal [sic] sacred songs of Central Australia will not prove entirely unrewarding to our future poets: the imagery found here does harmonise with the outward shape and inward spirit of our continent.' (1971: 729)

(Mudrooroo, 1997:32)

However Mudrooroo fails to acknowledge the different era in which Strehlow worked. The prevailing belief when Strehlow was collecting these songlines (from 1930s to early 1960s) was that the Aboriginal people were a 'dying race'. It was Strehlow's own opinion that the Aranda<sup>5</sup> culture was dying. Strehlow, at the time, became the repository of much Aranda knowledge, and in his (1947) *Aranda Traditions*, he writes:

Many of the legends and much of the information contained in these three studies were obtained from old native informants under a promise of secrecy during their lifetime, and that is why these papers were not published earlier.

Time has wrought many changes in Central Australia... and all the main informants mentioned in this volume have now passed away, taking the last of their secret knowledge with them.

This book is dedicated to their memory.

(Strehlow, 1947:Preface)

Strehlow knew that Aranda knowledge was bestowed upon him by his "old native informants" because he was trusted (being brought up on the mission and speaking their language), and because the younger generation were not considered ready for the responsibilities associated with such knowledge. Mudrooroo himself uses the term "property" when paraphrasing Strehlow's understanding of Indigenous knowledge: "such songs - and this is an important point which should be remembered - were the property of the fully initiated males" (Mudrooroo,1997: 25). Yet Mudrooroo, fifty years later in the so-called Decade for Reconciliation, draws the conclusion that Indigenous knowledge is there to be used by all Australians in order "to develop a truly national culture" (Mudrooroo, 1997:32). Mudrooroo himself has played the 'Indigenous card' in his own writing career, and written on numerous Indigenous themes in both fictional and non-fictional genres, including his experimentation and construction of highly syncretic novels (e.g. Mudrooroo, 1983 & 1991; see Hosking, 1997).

Perhaps the antithetical 'hands-off' attitude of Lucashenko and Huggins should be considered in the light of their own individual experiences of being brought up in Queensland. Lucashenko told us her grandmother was stolen when she was eight, and the day before the conference she herself had been to yet another funeral of one of the 'stolen generation' who couldn't cope with life any longer. Huggins, in an article addressed to white

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<sup>5</sup> Aranda is now spelt Western Arrarnta, or Central and Eastern Arrernte. It is unclear why Mudrooroo has chosen the spelling: 'Arrenthe'.

writers, tries to warn us of the differing attitudes towards whites among Indigenous communities:

don't expect Aboriginal people to easily welcome you into their world. Some of us will be more open and tolerant than others. There is a long history of violence, mistrust, guilt and fear that cannot be erased overnight. Know when you are an intruder rather than an accomplice.

(Huggins, 1994:12)

On the third day of the C.B.C. conference in Adelaide it was disconcerting to observe the very warm welcome afforded Patricia Wrightson. Wrightson (now in her eighties) is described on the blurb of her latest book (Wrightson, 1998) as "Australia's most distinguished writer for young people". She was introduced by her publishers, Random House, as a writer who has greatly influenced the way Aboriginal people and their culture are now perceived by other Australians. She was one of the few writers of her time to introduce Aboriginal themes into her fictional writing for children, beginning with the mystical character "Potkoorok" in her 1972 novel *An older kind of magic*. Since then many "Aboriginal folk figures" have featured in her books, which her publishers told us "paved the way" for other books for children with Aboriginal themes, such as those by Percy Trezise and Dick Roughsey. Wrightson was at the conference for the launch of her most recent book: *The Wrightson list*, which is the fulfillment of a promise she made twenty years ago at an I.B.B.Y. conference in Sydney to publish her collection of card files that lists the sources for her "Aboriginal folk figures". We are told in her Foreword (Wrightson, 1998:v) that the purpose of this list was:

not to produce another picturesque retelling; quite the opposite. This was to guard the folklore against picturesque retelling; to protect its authenticity by opening my sources to public inspection. It could then be seen how much was established by real collectors, and what Aboriginal authority, and how much came from my own response.

Wrightson herself (1998:v) admits that some of the detail in the list was later gathered through research by her son, Peter Wrightson, who is the co-author of the publication. He himself (in the Compiler's Note) reveals the purpose he sees for such a compilation (note my emphasis):

We have... included a section listing those beings which share some characteristics. This is an aid that Patricia often longed for - a way to find a certain kind of spirit that could belong to a certain kind of area. If, for instance, you happen to need a shape-changer that might be met with at Lake Alexandrina, you need not search the entire list to locate one. You can much more easily consult the list of shape-changers and find *Malapi*.<sup>6</sup>

(Wrightson, 1998:xxxvi)

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<sup>6</sup> I assume the "Aboriginal folk figures", in the form of a "shape changer", that Wrightson is referring to is the 'Melape' in Taplin (1879b:129) glossed as 'devil'; also known today as 'Muldarpi'.

Obviously this book was compiled for budding authors, whether Indigenous or not. In fact, in her speech at the launch, Wrightson said that she was delighted that the book had already been put to use by the writer Elizabeth Honey, who needed to know what "hairy man" she could use for the particular location in her forthcoming novel. We are told in the Publisher's Note (at the beginning of *Wrightson's List*) that at the same conference where Wrightson first promised this book (now twenty years ago) there was an "electrifying moment" when "the poet and playwright Jack Davis stood up and encouraged her to be even bolder in her writing and... to go on". Mudrooroo could have had the same intentions as Wrightson when he compiled his similar collection, published in 1994, called *Aboriginal mythology: an A-Z spanning the history of Aboriginal mythology from the earliest legends to the present day*. However Mudrooroo's collection does not cite his sources, giving the impression that he collected the contents himself: "I have sat around the campfire in dry, dusty places and in clearings in rain forests listening to our story-tellers. It is as much their book as it is mine" (Mudrooroo, 1994:xii). But on the previous page he apologises for revealing any "secret sacred material [that] may have been inadvertently used". During Wrightson's launch, at least, Wrightson herself said that she had only included the "non-sacred Aboriginal spirits that we are not frightened or forbidden to touch"!

Huggins writes about the very genre that this thesis is about: that of published Dreaming narratives. She refers to the "little hairy men", which is one of the entries in Wrightson's List:

While there has been a popular revival of Dreamtime/creation stories in children's literature it is my firm opinion that these should be exclusively written by Aboriginal people. Much information written about Aboriginals by non-Aboriginals has been patronising, misconstrued, pre-conceived and abused. We've had so much destructive material written about us that we must hold together the very fabric of the stories which created us. Out of all the material written about, for and by Aboriginal people, this is perhaps the most sensitive genre. We never refer to these stories as "myths" because how can the Bible be a myth?

If Jungaris or little hairy men or any other Aboriginal spiritual characters are written about they must emanate from the right source/region/owners/of the people to whom those stories belong. Jungaris are not found everywhere throughout this country and appear for specific purposes only with rituals attached to them. Some writers treat those characters with the same applicability and generality as they do with ghosts, witches, and gnomes. One playwright told me he 'just put them in for effect', not realising the protocols involved. I prefer that people don't write about them at all to save the colourisation and tokenism.

(Huggins, 1994:12-13)

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF MY RESEARCH

The aim of my research has been to review and analyse the content, style and structure of a broad sample of the published Dreaming texts that have found their way onto library and bookshop shelves in Australia over the last 200 years. I consider the way these narratives have been represented as written texts, but ask in particular Who is doing the representing? I

also ask further questions such as: Whose voice is being heard in the text? and Who is the considered audience? I also discuss the issue of appropriation, and therefore ask of particular texts: Who was the original source of the oral text? Who has reworked the text into a written form? How has the text been reworked? and Who holds copyright for the final published product? In asking these questions, a pattern emerges revealing that a very large majority of published Dreaming narratives that have been published over the years, and continue to be published, have been appropriated by non-Indigenous writers, who have little interest in acknowledging the primary, and sometimes secondary, sources for their stories. For them, such 'tales' from 'the Dreamtime' are perceived as national resources that are there for the taking, and if reworked and marketed well are very valuable money earners for both authors and publishers.

Of particular interest in this thesis are the published Dreaming texts of David Unaipon, an Indigenous man from Point McLeay mission in South Australia. He was the first Aboriginal writer to publish in this genre, in about 1925, and his occasionally syncretic modes of representation pose some interesting challenges to modern day writers and representers of Dreaming narratives. I also investigate the writings of Katie Langloh Parker, who was the first to publish a collection of texts of this same genre, with her first collection, *Australian Legendary Tales*, being published in 1896. Her numerous published collections continue to be a major source of narratives for those wishing to rework and publish in this much popularised genre. A 1975 illustrated "adaptation" of texts from her original collection continues to appear in Angus and Robertson bookshops, and in their annual Christmas catalogues.<sup>7</sup> This thesis reviews and explores, however, many other publications, from both the nineteenth and twentieth century, and discusses how the attitudes of the writers largely determine the way in which they choose to represent the narratives. My discussion includes publications by: Marine Captains, Governors, Anthropologists, Missionaries, Government Protectors, Surveyors, Bushmen, Linguists, Ethnomusicologists and others, probably best categorised as Appropriators. I also review and discuss more contemporary publications that have been written by Indigenous writers themselves, as well as publications that are the result of close collaboration between non-Indigenous writers and the original Aboriginal narrators of the Dreaming texts.

The title of my thesis, "Poor bugger whitefella got no Dreaming", is an adaptation of the title of W.E.H. Stanner's book of essays: *White man got no Dreaming*. The original quote was from "one intelligent old man" called Muta of the Murinbata (now spelt Murinh-Patha) group

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<sup>7</sup> This 1975 publication, called *Tales from the Dreamtime*, is written or "adapted by Vashti Farrer" and illustrated by Walter Cunningham. It acknowledges that its texts were "selected from *Australian legendary tales* collected by K. Langloh Parker". It was published by Angus and Robertson, and has been reprinted by them many times, and appeared in their 1997 Christmas catalogue. It was still on sale in their bookshops in 1999.

of the Daly River area of the Northern Territory (N.T.). Over fifty years ago Muta commented to Stanner, an anthropologist and strong supporter of Aboriginal rights:

White man got no dreaming  
Him go 'nother way.  
White man, him go different.  
Him go road belong himself.

(Stanner, 1979:23)

My title also encompasses the sympathetic expression that one often hears amongst Aboriginal people in the desert regions of Central Australia, when they commiserate about someone's misfortune. Often heard, for example, are expressions such as: "Him got no family, poor bugger" or "Him got no dog, poor bugger" or "Him got no language, poor bugger", when an Aboriginal person expresses their concern for a newcomer to their community who they perceive as lacking the important things in life. This common expression, or linguistic tag at the end of expressions of Indigenous sympathy, no doubt also inspired the N.T. songwriter Ted Egan to incorporate similar words in his well known Land Rights song: "Poor Bugger me Gurindji" in the early 1970s.

My title reflects the findings of my thesis. It expresses the amazement, and sympathy, that many Indigenous Australians feel regarding the lack of belief and understanding White people have for The Dreaming. At the same time it explains the need or compulsion White Australians have to record and appropriate the Dreaming narratives of Indigenous Australians as if they were their own. But this thesis does not only review the appropriation of Dreaming narratives by White Australians (or Goonyas)<sup>8</sup>. It also reviews the way Indigenous Australians themselves have represented their own Dreaming narratives as published texts (occasionally in close collaboration with Goonyas), and in doing so offers some alternative approaches in the representation of this important genre.

## 1.2 DEFINITIONS

I seek to clarify my chosen topic with some definitions, particularly definitions for the key terms.

### 1.2.1 'The Dreaming'

I begin with the most obvious term: 'The Dreaming', which I have written throughout this thesis with a capital 'D',<sup>9</sup> just as the Bible is spelt with a capital. Such a convention is now

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<sup>8</sup> Indigenous people from the Adelaide area and its surrounds refer to themselves (and other Indigenous people) as Nungas, and to non-Indigenous people as Goonyas (sometimes also spelt Gunya).

<sup>9</sup> I was tempted, as a precautionary measure, to place quotation marks around this problematic word throughout my thesis, largely because of its seemingly ubiquitous and haphazard usage over the years by non-Indigenous people in particular. A brief search on the WEB reveals thousands of sites of usage, including its use by new-age non-Indigenous Americans. Examples of its more local use include: In the print media,

followed by many writers out of respect for the importance placed on this concept as a belief system of Indigenous Australians. The term itself of course originates from English, but its origin lies in a related English term "dream times", first used by Spencer and Gillen earlier last century to define the "native term" term *alchéringa* (Spencer & Gillen, 1904:745).<sup>10</sup> Stanner claimed, in 1953, that he had heard the term used by Aborigines themselves:

The Australian Aborigines' outlook on the universe and man is shaped by a remarkable conception, which Spencer and Gillen immortalised as 'the dream time' or *alcheringa* of the Arunta or Aranda tribe. Comparable terms from other tribes are often almost untranslatable, or mean literally something like 'men of old'. Some anthropologists have called it the Eternal Dream Time. I prefer to call it what many Aborigines call it in English: The Dreaming, or just, Dreaming.

(Stanner 1979:23)

It was anthropologists such as Elkin who Stanner would have been referring to, who wrote twenty years earlier of "the great dreaming" and the "eternal dream-time" (see Elkin 1933:11 and later in 1938, see 1948 reprint:146). According to Elkin:

The ancient time of the heroes is the 'dream-time', but not the passing dream of night; rather it is the eternal dream-time of spiritual reality to which of historical significance is attached.... the great 'dreaming' or dream-time was the age of the mighty heroes and ancestors, who indeed still exist.

(Elkin, 1933:11)

Since then, both terms, the 'Dreaming' and the 'Dream Time', have become immortalised in oral and published narratives, and are used by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous narrators and writers.<sup>11</sup>

According to Stanner, "a central meaning" of the term "The Dreaming" is:

a sacred, heroic time long ago when man and nature came to be as they are; but neither 'time' nor 'history' as we understand them is involved in this meaning.... We shall not understand The Dreaming fully except as a complex of meanings. A blackfellow may call his totem, or the place from which his spirit came, his Dreaming. He may also explain the existence of a custom, or law of life, as causally due to The Dreaming....

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particularly in *The Advertiser* (January 26, 1998:1) where headlines state: "Australian dreaming comes true for Cathy". The article is reporting on the Indigenous athlete Cathy Freeman being announced as Australian of the Year for 1998. The same year in Adelaide, an event was named "Parklands Dreaming". It was organised by community groups with concerns about past abuse and the future use of the city's parklands. Participants in the festivities were offered their "chance to 'have a say' on Adelaide's precious parklands whilst enjoying some of our most talented Indigenous and local entertainers.... Help us make a dream come true" (Flier advertising the event, 29 March 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Spencer & Gillen (1904:745) define the term *alchéringa* in their glossary as "Name applied by the Arunta, Kaitish, and Unmatjera tribes to the far past, or dream times, in which their mythic ancestors lived. The word *alchéri* means dream." The alternative spelling now used for the groups referred to by Spencer & Gillen are Western Arrarnta or Eastern Arrernte, Kaytej and Anmatyerre respectively.

<sup>11</sup> As with 'Dreaming', the terms 'Dreamtime' and even 'Alcheringa' are also used and appropriated ubiquitously for an assortment of purposes by non-Indigenous people. For example, the theme chosen for Bookweek by the Australian Children's Book Council for 1989 was "Dreamtime". More recently, Peter Haynes, the winner of the International Horse Trials held in November in Adelaide in 1998, claimed he named the horse he rode to win the event "Alcheringa" because he was a "dream to ride" (*The Advertiser*, early November, 1998).

[But] One cannot 'fix' The Dreaming *in* time: it was, and is, everywhen.... it has for them an unchallengeably sacred authority.

Clearly, The Dreaming is many things in one. Among them, a kind of narrative of things that once happened; a kind of charter of things that still happen; and a kind of *logos* or principle of order transcending everything for Aboriginal man.

(Stanner, 1979:23-24)

Sutton, a contemporary anthropologist and linguist, defines "The Dreaming" as:

the founding story, the great drama of the creation era, in which the landscape took its present form and the people, animals, plants, and elements of the known world were created. But the Dreaming is also the inner or spiritual dimension of the present. Things contain their own histories. There is no contrast of the natural and the spiritual, and there is no geography without history and meaning. The land is already a narrative - an artefact of intellect - before people represent it.

In the Dreaming, heroic characters travelled about the land, doing ordinary good and evil things people do today, and also performing extraordinary feats of creation and destruction, cooperation and conflict. These characters, the Ancestral Beings, who are also called the Dreamings, have their physical manifestations now in the form of animals, plants, elements, places and people.

(Sutton, 1988:brochure for the Indigenous art exhibition "Dreamings")

Rose, an anthropologist who has worked with the Yarallin community in the Victoria River district of the N.T., explains the notion of Dreaming specifically for the Yarralin. I quote this longer definition in full in Appendix 1.1. Rose also reiterates, as does Myers (1986) and others, the enduring Time aspect of the Dreaming, as first emphasised by Stanner:

Dreaming life is different from ordinary life in that that which exists as Dreaming endures....

Dreaming can be conceptualised as a great wave which follows on behind us, obliterating the debris of our existence and illuminating, as a synchronous set of images, those which endure....

Dreamings exist all the time, so to speak. Stanner (1979:24) refers to Dreaming as an 'everywhen' - it's a useful term....

In sum, both Dreaming and ordinary exist in real, named, local space. Both are grounded in the earth. Ordinary time, which individuals experience as days and nights, dry seasons and wet seasons, youth, middle age and old age, is a period in which our western concepts of time have a certain explanatory power. Dreaming, in contrast, is marked most powerfully by synchrony, and it, too, is located in real named space.

(Rose, 1994:180-181)

The anthropologist Tony Swain (1993:14-19) has problems with the actual term 'Dreaming', and the definitions offered for this concept by some anthropologists, particularly because of the Time aspect they impose. Rather controversially, he argues there is no Time aspect to Dreamings, and Rose's reference to the Dreaming contrasting with "ordinary time" is misleading (Swain, 1993: 15). Some would argue that by removing the Time element Swain himself is being misleading. Swain also criticises Nancy Williams and her use of the descriptive term "cyclical" to describe Aboriginal perception of Time. He argues that descriptions of circular time versus linear time merely reflect our blinkered Western need for a binary opposition regarding any concept of time:

Rather than prejudicing the issue with the word 'time', I suggest it is best to state that Aborigines operate from an understanding of *rhythmed event*.... In the popular Western view, time still, so to speak, ticks on even if nothing occurs; its emancipation from events is ensured by its own subjugation of an ongoing numbered measure. But in Aboriginal thought there is nothing beyond events themselves. This is entirely apparent in their cosmologies, which lack any reference to ultimate pre-event origins. For Aborigines, there is nothing more fundamental than the statement: events occur.  
(Swain, 1993:19)

Swain traces the roots of this so-called "bastardised" term as follows:

'Dreamtime' or 'Dreaming', as T.G.H. Strehlow has noted, emerged with a mistranslation of the *altjira* root [in Aranda], which has the meaning of 'eternal, uncreated, springing out of itself'. *Altjira rama*, literally 'to see the eternal', is the evocative description for human sleep-dreams, but the so-called 'Dreaming' is derived from *Altjiringa ngambakala*: 'that which derives from *altjira*'....

The word 'Dreaming' or 'Dream Time' has, nonetheless, returned from academic coinage through popular culture to spread throughout virtually all Aboriginal English speech....

Early professional anthropologists such as Elkin popularised use of the phrase 'Dream Time', and while Stanner warning against (although continued) this practice, it is still used uncritically in contemporary literature. Even those who employ Stanner's preferred term, 'Dreaming', still seem to hold the echo of the 'time' suffix. Thus, for example, Rose makes the distinction between 'Dreaming Time' and 'ordinary time'.

(Swain, 1993:21)

Swain (1993: 21-22) also criticises Howard Morphy for his translation of the term *Wangarr* in Yolngu Matha (spoken in north east Arnhem Land) as " 'Ancestral past', a remote 'period of time' ". To contradict these translations Eric Michaels and Francoise Dussart "rendered the Warlpiri *Jukurrpa* as 'Ancestral present' ". Swain himself (who also worked with Warlpiri people) coined the alternative phrase the "Ancestral Now", but stresses that such a phrase is unnecessary if the concept of Time is removed altogether:

If we accept on the other hand, that Aborigines constructed their world in terms of *rhythmed events* then we can instead inquire into the nature of the so-called 'Dreaming' as a class of events. Following Strehlow's rendering of the original Aranda meaning, 'eternal events' approaches the reality but perhaps still harbours too many unjustified time referents. The words that I find most applicable in English are *Abiding Events*. Collectively, I suggest these form an Abiding Law (which I ... often... abbreviate to Law).

(Swain, 1993:22)

Like a number of non-Indigenous academics embroiled in the discourse of Aboriginalism, Swain assumes the right to suggest further alternative English terms to replace 'problematic' terms such as the 'Dreamtime'. He contends a more accurate English descriptor would be "Dreamplace" (Swain, 1993:14). But no matter how convincing Swain's arguments are for proposing this alternative term, for the popularised Aboriginal English term or for the vernacular terms *Wangarr*, *Altjira* and *Jukurrpa*, I have deliberately persisted with the use of the term 'Dreaming' (but not 'Dreamtime') throughout this thesis. Despite its misconstrued origins, and its supposed temporal connotations, I maintain its usage here because it is a term



that is used today by many Indigenous people. Despite the criticism one could receive from contemporary anthropologists for using this and other terms, such as 'tribal' and 'totem', I persevere with these terms because I am intentionally privileging the opinions and voices of Indigenous people in this thesis. I will, however, return later to the problematic issue of Time, when I discuss individual Dreaming narratives and their ubiquitous and popularised introductory phrases, such as: "In the Dreamtime..." or "Long, long ago in the Dreamtime...".

Although many of the narratives reviewed in this thesis, in their appropriated and over-simplified forms, may seem to lack any sense of "real named space" or may not seem particularly "grounded in the earth" (to use Rose's terms, 1994:180-181), they are included because they are best characterised as Dreaming narratives. I include texts that have been categorised as 'myth', 'legend', 'folklore' and 'Dream time stories' by the non-Indigenous, but would still be referred to by many with the generic term 'Dreaming story'. The equivalent term in Warlpiri is *Jukurpa*, and in Western Desert languages is *Tjukurpa*.<sup>12</sup>

Paddy Roe, an Indigenous man from the West Kimberley, who collaborated with Stephen Muecke in the publication of a selection of his narratives in the seminal book *Gularaburu* distinguishes three "types of story": "trustori (true stories) *bugaregara* (stories from the dreaming) and *devil stori* (stories about devils, spirits, etc.)". The second of these two narrative types is also referred to as "the law", while the third "may be about quite recent events as well as distant ones", just as Roe explains (1983:vii) how the "Worawora spirit woman" of a *devil stori* "still lives today". Perhaps this is Stanner's "everywhen" aspect of Roe's narratives. Both Roe and the Warlpiri agree on the contrasting category of narratives that tell of events in the living memory of people today. Roe calls these *Trustori* (which Muecke curiously equates with "legend", see Roe, 1983:vii)<sup>13</sup>, while the Warlpiri call them "Oral Histories". Although I am aware of the mythologising by Indigenous people of certain characters and events in Australia's colonial history, such as Captain Cook and Ned Kelly (see Maddock, 1988; Mackinolty and Wainburranga, 1988; Rose, 1994), I persist in this study with a distinction between *Jukurpa* and Oral Histories.<sup>14</sup> But just as academics acknowledge the apparent merging of Aboriginal mythology and their contact history (see Swain, 1993; Beckett, 1994; Rose, 1994; Rumsey, 1994; Merlan, 1994 and Gale, 1995), so too would Indigenous narrators (or 'myth makers'), who tell of the Ancestral Heroes Captain

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<sup>12</sup> The same term is spelt differently by these two different language groups because of their contrasting orthographies. Warlpiri uses a 'j' for the alveo-palatal stop while Pitjantjatjara uses 'tj'; similarly Warlpiri uses 'rr' for the trilled rhotic rather than 'r'.

<sup>13</sup> I assume Muecke is using the term 'legend' in the sense of a past hero becoming a 'legend' in contemporary mythology, rather than the sense which is almost synonymous with 'myth'.

<sup>14</sup> Note the Dreaming or *Jukurpa* genre also contrasts with other genres now being published under the label of 'Aboriginal literature', including the burgeoning biographical texts, poems and the more incipient fictional novel (such as those of Mudrooro and Lucashenko).

Cook and Ned Kelly, probably categorise their narratives as Dreaming stories, rather than Oral Histories.

### 1.2.2 Representation

There are two meanings to be read into the term 'representation', which I discuss further in my next chapter. The first is 'Representation' in the sense of writing or re-writing a text on behalf of another, while the second is the sense of 'Re-presentation' or the presenting of a text again in another form. It is the first of these meanings that is adopted in this study, unless indicated otherwise. The term 'representation', and the issues surrounding the act of one person representing another (or another's cultural knowledge) in print, are currently extremely topical in the Academy, particularly in postcolonial literary criticism. Again, these issues are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

### 1.2.3 Appropriation

The Oxford dictionary definition for 'appropriation', which is the one adopted (and adapted) here for the purposes of defining the appropriation of Dreaming narratives by the non-Indigenous. Appropriation is the act of taking possession of a text, whether oral or written, as if it were one's own. The act of appropriation, therefore, involves one assuming the right to rework or change a narrative to suit one's own purposes in committing it to print and eventual publication. All writers (or re-writers) who have been deemed 'Appropriators' in this study are those who have used other people's published (or unpublished) Dreaming stories to rewrite and publish their own versions of the same narratives. They invariably assume sole copyright over the final published text, and only occasionally name or acknowledge their secondary sources. They never name the original (Indigenous) and primary sources of their narratives. The most prolific appropriator, whose works continue to be reprinted and sold in the year 2000, would have to be A.W. Reed, whom I discuss in Chapter Three. Another appropriator, Dr. William Ramsay Smith, whose 1930 book is now available under a new title, *Aborigine*, also continues to sell in 'reputable' bookshops. His work was appropriated from the Indigenous writer David Unaipon, and is discussed at length in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

### 1.2.4 Aboriginalism

Aboriginalism is an extension of Said's term "Orientalism", whereby the colonised are always represented by the colonisers rather than themselves. Walton and Christie (1994:82) define "Aboriginalism" as: "the story about Aborigines told by whites using only white people's imaginations. Aboriginal voices don't contribute to this story, so in Aboriginalism, the Aborigines always become what the white man imagines them to be". Walton and

Christie also talk of the need for Aboriginal people to create a "counter-discourse" to the discourse of Aboriginalism, which incorporates their voices rather than those of the non-Indigenous. Martin Nakata, a Torres Strait Islander researcher, currently based in Adelaide, expresses similar needs in his 1999 paper. These are also shared by the Indigenous local educator and researcher Lester Irabinna Rigney (personal communication, May, 2000). In the final two chapters of this thesis I return to discuss both Nakata's and Rigney's passion for Indigenous voices to not only be heard, but to be agents of change. I also discuss the possibilities of a 'counter discourse' in the genre of Dreaming narratives in which Indigenous people are both the agents of change and the predominant voice.

### 1.3 EARLY ACCOUNTS OF 'THE NATIVES'

As a way of providing an early historical framework to what follows in this thesis, I begin below with a review and discussion of some very early, but sketchy, accounts of Aboriginal 'superstitions', written by Englishmen nearly 200 years ago. None of these writers recorded, or even discussed specific Dreaming narratives, and avoided the use of the term 'religion' in describing Indigenous beliefs. But I include this review of their journals and reminiscences here, because they provide a lucid picture of the attitudes of the so-called 'civilised world' at the time of their writing. It was not until a century later, when anthropology was developing as a scholarly discipline, that ethnographic writers would even acknowledge that Indigenous Australians had their own non-theistic form of 'religion'.

In 1962 Stanner (in 1979:108) asked the all important question of why there was this "blindness" amongst early ethnographers regarding the possibility of Aboriginal belief systems:

It should not be supposed that they lacked information, learning or humanism. For the most part they were knowledgeable, serious-minded men. They were sufficiently interested in the Aborigines to write *about* them in an epoch that had little time or understanding of such interests. Some were good observers.... But they were sure of their vision. They were genuinely unable to see, let alone credit, the facts that have convinced modern anthropologists that the Aborigines are a deeply religious people. That blindness is an important part of our study. It profoundly affected European conduct towards Aborigines. It reinforced two opposed views - that they were a survival into modern times of a protoid form of humanity incapable of civilisation, and that they were decadent from a once-higher life and culture. It fed the psychological disposition to hate and despise those whom the powerful have injured, or wish to injure. It allowed European moral standards to atrophy by tacitly exempting from canons of right, law, and justice acts of dispossession, neglect, and violence at Aboriginal expense.... It weakened both the charity and the wisdom of much Christian evangelism. And it deeply confused scholarly understanding. The blindness was not that of men who would not see. In a profound sense it was organic with the European mind of the day.

So what Captain Tench, Collins Esq., Captain Grey and others observed in those early days of the colony were what the "mind of the day" allowed them to see. It contrasts with the

observations and recordings of later writers, which appear in my next chapters. But at the turn of the century, and even well into the 1900s, the 'intelligence' of Indigenous Australians was still under question. This doubt haunted David Unaipon, who strived throughout his life to prove the intelligence of his 'race', as well as his own genius, and hence silence those who looked down on his people as sub-intelligent. Unaipon, who was a prolific reader and a self-educated scholar of classical literature, was well aware of the debates surrounding the status of his people. He understood the importance western thought placed on deities, and the importance of a creationary Father to Christianity (he was brought up on a mission and his own father was a lay preacher). My analysis of the syncretic Dreaming narratives written by Unaipon from the mid 1920s (discussed in Chapter Seven) demonstrates his determination to represent the mythology of his people as a belief system as credible as that of Christian mythology, and as poetic and sophisticated as the mythologies of the ancient Greeks.

Although there has been some acknowledgement over the last 100 years of what Emile Durkheim (see Stanner, 1979:108) calls the "profoundly religious character" of Australian Indigenous cultures, it doesn't seem to have impacted on the way many observers have chosen to represent their Indigenous Dreaming narratives. As Hodge and Mishra (not altogether accurately) observe:

'Aboriginal myths in English' typically consist of short and pointless narratives, full of acts of unmotivated sex and violence, with punch-lines consisting of implausible 'just-so' scraps of natural history. The language used is a curious form of standard English, which manages to be both childlike and dull, pedantic and imprecise.  
(Hodge and Mishra, 1990:77)

I argue that the child-like nature of many of the published Dreaming narratives that have appeared on bookshop shelves over the last century are written in this way, by non-Indigenous writers, partly because it feeds the false perception in the minds of non-Indigenous people that Indigenous Australians (and their Dreaming narratives) are essentially child-like. These perceptions are confirmed in the foreword, written by the literary scholar Andrew Lang (also a scholar of Greek literature), of the very first published (1896) collection of Dreaming narratives, or 'Folklore', recorded by Katie Langloh Parker (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, until recently Indigenous people have not been encouraged or invited to write their own Dreaming narratives because they were considered incapable of representing themselves, and their own narratives in print. What follows demonstrates that the first interested observers, from the very early days of the New South Wales colony, were apparently not only blind to any religious or spiritual beliefs of the colony's Indigenous people, but they also had great difficulties in accessing and communicating with the different groups they encountered in the vast new colony.

### 1.3.1 Captain Watkin Tench

One of the earliest published accounts, regarding the native inhabitants of the new colony, was that of Captain Watkin Tench. The other was an account by the first Governor himself, Arthur Phillip, which was also published in the same year. Tench was a Captain of the Royal Marines when he served initially on the First Fleet, and then in the new colony of New South Wales, over a period of six years. Tench's first publication *A narrative of the expedition to Botany Bay*, was published in 1789, and was written during that first year of the journey and the First Fleet's arrival in New South Wales. It was republished, as was Phillip's, much later by Angus and Robertson in 1961, in which it was stated that "Professor G.A. Woods has praised Tench's books as 'the most accurate, most orderly, and most valuable description of life in the colony in the first days' ". It even claims Tench to be the "father of Australian literature" (Editors Introduction, 1961:xxi).

However, Tench confesses that his first observations of the natives were made up of "detached observations, taken at different times, and not from a regular series of knowledge of the customs and manners of a people, with whom opportunities of communication are so scarce, as to have seldom been obtained" (Tench, 1961:46). Tench continues, however, to note the vastly different "habits and manners" of the "savages", to his own:

To their religious rites and opinions I am equally a stranger. Had an opportunity offered of seeing the ceremonies observed at disposing of the dead, perhaps, some insight might have been gained....while I write, ...greater progress in attaching them to us has not been made.... To what cause then are we to attribute the distance...? I answer, to the fickle, jealous, wavering disposition of the people we have to deal with, who, like all other savages, are either too indolent, too indifferent, or too fearful to form an attachment on easy terms, with those who differ in habits and manners so widely from ourselves.

(Tench, 1961:51-53)

In 1793, Tench published a second more detailed account, covering much of his four years spent in the new colony (from January 1788 to December 1791). *A complete account of the settlement of Port Jackson* contains 28 pages (in the original edition, pages 178 - 204) of information and discussion on the Indigenous inhabitants of the new colony. On his return to England, he was often asked the all important question of whether "these people" had a "religion" or "a belief in a deity". Despite his earlier misgivings, his response was more enlightened and tolerant than some of his contemporaries (see Collins later in this section):

Until belief be enlightened by revelation, and chastened by reason; religion and superstition, are terms of import. One of our earliest impressions, is the consciousness of a superior power....

The native of New South Wales believes, that aspects and appearances of the heavenly bodies, predict good or evil consequences to himself and his friends. He oftentimes calls the sun and moon 'weeree', that is, malignant, pernicious. Should he see the leading fixed stars (many of which he can call by name) obscured by vapours, he sometimes disregards the omen; and sometimes draws from it the dreary conclusions. - I remember Abaroo running into a room, where a company was

assembled, and uttering frightful exclamations of impending mischiefs, about to light on her and her countrymen. When questioned on the cause of such agitation, she went to the door, and pointed to the skies, saying, that whenever the stars wore that appearance, misfortunes to the natives always followed. The night was cloudy, and the air disturbed by meteors. - I have heard many more of them testify similar apprehensions....

I shall close by expressing my firm belief, that the Indians of New South Wales acknowledge the existence of a superintending deity. Of their ideas of the origin and duration of his existence; or of their own emanation from him, I pretend not to speak....

The question of, whether they believe in the immortality of the soul, will take up very little time to answer. They are universally fearful of spirits. They call a spirit, *Mawn*: they often scruple to approach a corpse, saying that *mawn* will seize them, and that it fastens upon them in the night when asleep. When asked where their deceased friends are, they always point to the skies. To believe in after existence is to confess the immortality of some part of being...

(Tench, 1961:278-280)

It was not until the turn of the twentieth century that concepts such as 'animism', and 'totemism' (see Spencer and Gillen, 1899, 1904 & later Róheim, 1925) were acknowledged by White writers - the idea that people have a close relationship with animals and the land, rather than a deity. This relationship is fundamental to Aboriginal belief systems and Dreaming narratives. By contrast, Tench's comments reflect the only possible avenue of religious belief at his time of writing - of believing in a deity. But we cannot escape the fact that Tench, like his contemporaries, is harsh in his judgement of the Indigenous people of New South Wales, when he speaks of their lack of clothing against harsh climates, and their ignorance on cultivation techniques. Of them he says: "a less enlightened state we shall exclaim can hardly exist" (Tench, 1961:281).

### 1.3.2 David Collins Esq.

Another very early published account, that considers the native inhabitants of the new colony, was that of David Collins. He published in 1798 his 620 page volume: *An account of the English colony in New South Wales*, after serving as the Judge Advocate and Secretary of the colony in its early days. It is very detailed in its descriptions, but contrasts with most other accounts discussed in this chapter, in that Collins considers the Indigenous inhabitants of New South Wales had no elements of religious belief whatsoever. He is, of course, impervious to any alternative forms of religion beyond a mono-theistic belief system:

No country has yet been discovered where some trace of religion was not to be found. From every observation and inquiry I could make among these people, from the first to the last of my acquaintance with them, I can safely pronounce them an exception to this opinion. I am certain that they do not worship either sun, moon, or star; that however necessary fire may be to them, it is not an object of adoration; neither have they respect for any particular beast, bird, or fish. I never could discover any object, either substantial or imaginary, that impelled them to the commission of good actions, or deterred them from the penetration of what we deem crimes. There indeed existed among them some idea of a future state, but not connected in anywise with religion; for it had no influence whatever on their lives and actions....  
Conversing with Ben-nil-ling after his return from England, where he had obtained

much knowledge of our customs and manners.... I then asked him where the black men (or Eora) came from? He hesitated. - Did they come from any Island? His answer was, that he knew of none: they come from the clouds (Boo-row-e). He wished to make me understand that they ascended in the shape of little children, first hovering in the tops and in the branches of trees; and mentioned something about their eating, in that state, their favourite foods, little fishes....

(Collins, 1798:547)

In Collins' "general remarks" just three pages earlier, he acknowledges that there was a communication problem between the colonisers and the Indigenous people of this new colony. Yet he does not seem to make the connection between this lack of understanding between the two parties, and why he was unable to decipher any "trace of religion" from the Port Jackson inhabitants:

Language, indeed, is out of the question; for at the time of writing this (September 1796,) nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party; and it must be added, that even in this the natives have the advantage, comprehending, with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, every thing they hear us say.

(Collins, 1798:544)

In light of Stanner's claim of a prevailing "organic" imperative of "blindness", at the time of Collins' writing, we should not be surprised that Collins writes in detail about the numerous ceremonies and dances he witnessed in his time in the colony, particularly funeral ceremonies, yet he fails to associate them with a form of alternative religion. This serves to demonstrate how entrenched the Eurocentric religious views of the British colonisers were, and how they were unable to see beyond the mono-theistic principles, and the moral teachings, of Christianity:

The internment of Ba-loo-der-ry was accompanied with many curious ceremonies. From being one day in apparent perfect health, he was brought in the next extremely ill, and attended by Ben-nil-long, whom we found singing over him, and making use of those means which ignorance and superstition pointed out to him to recover his health.... On the following morning he was visited by a car-rah-dy, who came express from the north shore. This man threw himself into various distortions, applied his mouth to different parts of the patient's body, and at length, after appearing to labour much, and to be in great pain, spit out a piece of bone about an inch and a half long (which he had previously procured). Here the farce ended...

(Collins, 1798:601-602)

Presumably it was no surprise to Collins that Ba-loo-der-ry soon died. Besides his contemptuous attitudes and an inability to communicate, other reasons for observers such as Collins failing to record any mythological narratives from the inhabitants of Port Jackson could have been that they simply asked the wrong questions, or maybe they were dismissive of the answers and responses they received. But maybe Bennelong and others simply chose not to impart such knowledge to these white Christian men from England, particularly those who overtly judged their explanations with such scepticism. Alternatively Bennelong, who was much used as a go-between and source of Indigenous information, may not have been at liberty to divulge the information sought by Collins. When he acted as a guide and interpreter

for expeditions by Collins into new territory, he was at times not even on familiar or friendly relations with the other Indigenous groups they encountered.

### 1.3.3 Sir George Grey

Nearly forty years hence, the Governor of South Australia, George Grey, published two volumes that discuss the Indigenous inhabitants from the opposite side of the continent: *Journals of two expeditions of discovery in North-west and Western Australia*. These expeditions took place from 1837 to 1839, with volume two containing three chapters devoted to the "natives" Grey encountered. In his chapter ten, entitled "Their traditional laws", he states:

mere oral traditions are handed down, which teach that certain rules of conduct are to be observed under certain penalties, and without the aid of fixed records, or the intervention of a succession of authorized depositaries and expounders, these laws have been transmitted from father to son, through unknown generations, and are fixed in the minds of the people as sacred and unalterable....

I may state my impression that it would seem, from the laws and customs of the natives of Australia, to have been willed that this people should until a certain period remain in their present condition.... it was impossible that they could emerge from a state of barbarism whilst these remained in force... it seems equally impossible that they could have been abrogated, or even altered, until the race subjected to them came into contact with a civilized community, whose presence might exercise a new influence, under which the ancient system would expire or be swept away.

(Grey, 1841:223)

Grey's belief in the superiority of his fellow "civilized" colonisers influenced the way he chose to govern South Australia, and the way he treated its Indigenous inhabitants. Yet he was a man of paradoxes. He had an intense interest in Aboriginal people and, in his following chapter, embarked on an insightful description of some Indigenous beliefs:

each family adopts some animal or vegetable, as their crest or sign, or *Kobong*, as they call it.... A certain mysterious connection exists between a family and its *kobong*, so that a member of the family will never kill an animal or species, to which the *kobong* belongs.... This arises from the family belief, that some one individual of the species is their nearest friend, to kill whom would be a great crime, and to be carefully avoided.

(Grey, 1841:228)

No doubt, the *kobong* in Western Australia is the system of belief that anthropologists, by the turn of the century, were calling 'totemism'. Thus we find in Grey's writings the first hints, on the part of white commentators, of a recognition of the intimate relationship Indigenous people had with animal 'totems' of this land. We also see a developing awareness of the important function that oral tradition (and oral narratives) had for the Indigenous people all over Australia. There is a significant silence, however, even in Grey's writings, regarding the close relationship each Indigenous group had with their land. An official



acknowledgement of such an attachment would have threatened the very premise of Terra Nullius, on which this new colony was seized.<sup>15</sup>

But Grey had contradictory attitudes. He had a keen interest in Indigenous languages, customs and beliefs, about which he researched and wrote quite profusely. Yet he saw them as mere artifacts to be "swept away" by the civilising forces of English colonisation. Perhaps that is why I have only managed to find, in his writings, discussions about their beliefs, rather than any of the actual Dreaming narratives themselves. His contemporaries in South Australia, for example the missionaries Meyer, Teichelmann, Schürmann and later G. Taplin, did provide more detail and occasionally actual narratives in their published writings (see Chapter Three), but they too wrote with scepticism and moral judgement on their 'heathen' charges. It wasn't until the next century that Indigenous beliefs were credited with the possible status of 'religion'. Thus the observers writing in those very early years of colonisation, such as Tench, Collins and even Grey, were quite in keeping with the blinkered judgements of their times. Even the observations of more enlightened missionaries (such as Teichelmann and Schürmann) failed to turn the tide on prevailing racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people, as confirmed by S. Staniland Wake, a Director of the new Anthropological Institute, who said in 1871, according to Stanner, that the Aborigines:

'possessed hardly any of what are usually understood as phenomena of intellect', and that 'any idea of abstract morality, or even a true instinct of moral propriety' seemed absent from their minds. How could people representing, as he said, 'the childhood of humanity itself' be capable of religion?

(Stanner, 1979:109)

My inclusion of this discussion of the very early observations of the Indigenous peoples of Australia, that were written by men of standing in the colony, serves to demonstrate the strength of the tide that later writers were swimming against when some of them saw fit to credit Indigenous people not only with a 'religion', but also with intelligence. The cruel and blunt judgements of writers such as Collins were not exceptional. They persisted, for example, in the 1863 publication of Sir Roger Therry<sup>16</sup>, a judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, who wrote in his *Reminiscences of thirty years' residence in New South Wales and Victoria*<sup>17</sup> (the emphasis is mine):

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<sup>15</sup> Grey had considerable contact and dialogue with the Adelaide-based German missionaries Teichelmann and Schürmann while serving as Governor in S.A. in the early 840s. The publications of these two relatively enlightened scholars, who recognised the importance of land to Indigenous people, are discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>16</sup> Therry also makes the following observation of Aboriginal belief:

'They have a strange, superstitious dread of the imaginary Evil Spirit, but they give no notion of what it is, except that it is some hideous, destructive monster, inhabiting swamps. None of them allege they ever saw it, and their idea of it is altogether vague, and somewhat similar to that which children in the nursery entertain of hobgoblin' (Therry, 1974:298-299). Thus we read, in Therry, one of the earliest published references to a character of a Dreaming narrative - no doubt the renowned Bunyip, that was later to become mythologised into Australia's fictional literature.

<sup>17</sup> A facsimile edition appeared in 1974.

Hitherto we have not succeeded in implanting in the heart or understanding of one the truths of Christianity.... If in the arrangement of an All-wise Providence, at whose disposal all things are, this poor inferior race of people should altogether become extinct, their disappearance could not well be regarded as a calamity. They possess remarkable instinctive faculties, but in intellectual endowment they are, perhaps, the lowest race at present known to exist in the world, far below not only the warlike races of the South Sea Islands, but even in intelligence below the Hottentot of the Cape.

(Therry, 1974:299-300)

Despite the benevolent intentions and favourable attitudes towards Indigenous people by the early governors to the colonies, particularly Hindmarsh and Gawler in S.A., their desires for their Indigenous charges were not always shared. Sentiments similar to Therry's were soon taken on board by government policy makers, and set the course for the enactment of policies that favoured the white settlers. Similarly, the very accounts about Indigenous people represented the beginnings of misinformation and misunderstandings about Aboriginal mythology and (lack of) religion, thus justifying the assumption that the future of Aboriginal people, should they survive, lay in them inevitably becoming 'civilised' and converting to Christianity.

#### 1.4 HAVE THINGS CHANGED?

Some may argue that we should excuse the early writers for their racist commentaries, on the grounds that they were writing in times when racist attitudes were not questioned. Slavery was still endemic, and viewed as an acceptable practice until well into the nineteenth century. But one could equally argue that these early founders of Australian literature were in fact contributing to, and indeed constructing, the prevailing views of their time regarding the Indigenous people of these new colonies. After all, they were the first to write about them.

But have attitudes really changed all that much, and has the misinformation ceased? Do white people still write and publish about Aboriginal people, and their mythology, in misleading ways? Unfortunately, this thesis confirms that the answer to that question is yes - particularly in the genre of Dreaming narratives. There has, however, been an apparent shift in the discourse of Aboriginalism, which I discuss later. Furthermore the motives for writing in misleading ways have varied over time. But it seems the motive now is primarily to make money, rather than to reaffirm beliefs of colonial superiority. Writers who refuse to write in collaboration with Indigenous story-tellers, and insist on controlling the pen (and the representation) also insist on retaining full copyright over the texts. This is what I call appropriation, no matter how much publishers try to disguise their products with educational or reconciliatory blurbs. Take just one example of a series of children's books that can be purchased in the shop of the Tandanya Cultural Institute in Adelaide. The series was published in 1996 by Pancake Press, and imprint of Pan Macmillan, and includes four titles. The Foreword of each states:

These wonderful legends of the native Australians have been adapted to be read and understood by children. Young ones too, can gain an insight into the rich and complex culture that existed for tens of thousands of years before Europeans landed. The stories are not intended to be exact replicas of the original tale but attempt to convey the narrative in a manner to which children can relate.

No doubt the fact that these narratives are not "exact replicas" lets Pan Macmillan off the hook in a number of ways. They have given themselves full copyright for each title (even though the non-Indigenous 'authors' are named on the covers) and they see no need to acknowledge the original sources of the texts. The series includes: *The magic colours*, *White clay and the giant kangaroo*, *The frog who wouldn't laugh* and *The willy-willy and the ant*. The first of these titles is discussed further in Chapter Three, and reproduced in full in Appendix 3.9.

It is understandable (though not acceptable) how white appropriators produce the types of texts they do - especially those aimed at a mass white audience. Even when collaborating closely with Indigenous people in the publication of their narratives, the process that begins with the recording of the oral texts, and culminates in presenting that same text in a written form that will be accepted by publishers, it is often very tempting to rework the original and 'authentic' oral text - particularly when the target audience is not just an Indigenous one.

#### **1.4.1 Two insightful story-telling events.**

To demonstrate my point, I wish to relate my personal experience of being the enthralled audience for two different, but related, story-telling incidents. At the time, I was very busy collaborating with a prominent and wonderful Aboriginal woman, Veronica Brodie, in the writing of her autobiography. This involved me recording her life story on to audiotapes, transcribing the tapes verbatim, and then editing them (in collaboration with Auntie Veronica) into a coherent written form that would be accepted by a publisher.<sup>18</sup> One glorious afternoon, while sitting recording Auntie Veronica's story, as the sun streamed through my sunroom window, my two girls arrived home from school, and Auntie Veronica spontaneously told them a Ngarrindjeri Dreaming narrative.<sup>19</sup> This was told in English (which is Veronica's first language), and according to her introduction, the same story was once told to her by her mother. It was a captivating story, and kept my two children spellbound as they listened to hear the outcome of a contest between two birds - a big eagle and a little wren, or *Watji* bird, as Auntie Veronica called it.

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<sup>18</sup> The manuscript has been accepted by Wakefield Press and is currently undergoing further editing work (which, in itself, is an interesting research project not unrelated to my PhD)

<sup>19</sup> The story was a compelling one, and fortunately we kept the tape recorder rolling - which brings up an important issue that I will return to later.

The story tells of how all the birds gathered to watch a contest between the boastful big eagle and the cheeky little Watji bird, to see who could fly the highest. As expected, the story was told with the full expression and detail of a gifted orator. Eventually Auntie Veronica ended her story by relaying a moral that explained the consequences of cheating in a fair competition. You see the little Watji bird did manage to fly as high as the big eagle, but he did it by cheating. He hid under the wing of the big eagle as it soared high up into the sky. According to Auntie Veronica, the outcome was punishment for that little bird. So today that little wren remains as a tiny bird and can only fly as high as the Watji bush, which still grows down the Coorong in South Australia. Auntie Veronica then told the girls that she would take them down to her father's country one day, to show them that little Watji bird. Auntie Veronica actually grew up on the same mission as David Unaipon, which is now a community known as Raukkan.

Over a year later, while sitting by the fire in that same room, another close Aboriginal friend (and one time work colleague) of mine told me one of her Dreaming stories or *Jukurrpa*. This text was also told to her by her mother, but in this case it was told in Warlpiri<sup>20</sup>, which is Janet Nakamarra's first language. Janet Nakamarra was staying with me for a brief holiday in Adelaide and, being a keen musician, had brought her guitar. On her guitar and guitar case she had elaborately painted the *Wardapi* (or goanna) Dreaming. I was admiring her artwork when Janet spontaneously proceeded to tell me of the Wardapi Dreaming. My ability to speak and understand Warlpiri is now a little rusty, so for my benefit, she told the story in English, but retained a number of Warlpiri words - especially for the main characters and place names. Again the story was captivating, but this time was not intended for my two girls (who had already been told to go to bed). Even though they remained in the room, and listened intently to the story, they didn't really understand the story's detail.

For Nakamarra, essential elements of this story telling event involved her explaining to me which country her narrative was associated with and what relationship that country had to her (for example the destination for the male goanna in the story is Little Sandy Creek, or *Ngarnalkurru*, which is her grandfather's country). She also explained who were the bosses (*kirda*) and guardians (*kurdungurlu*) for the Jukurrpa she painted: she is *kurdungurlu*, while my skin (*Napangardi*) is *kirda*. But what was compelling for me was the dramatic events Nakamarra relayed so well in her narrative, and the animated way in which she portrayed the actions of the main characters. None of this, of course, can be captured in a written version of the same text.

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<sup>20</sup> Warlpiri is a language spoken in the central western region of the Northern Territory, particularly at Yuendumu, Lajamanu and Willowra (which is Janet Nakamarra's home community). I taught at Willowra for two years from 1980-81.

Nakamarra's narrative tells of the travels of a male and female long-tailed goanna to see their family at Little Sandy Creek. On arrival, the male goanna has an incestuous affair with another female goanna. This is much to the anger of his female travelling companion, who shouts, "Naa. You can't do that - that's breaking the law! ... When you marry you've got to marry, you know, the right skin as a wife." Eventually a big fight erupts and the righteous female inflicts punishment on the incestuous male by biting his tail off. During his agonising attempt to tie his tail back on, the other female goanna (who by now is heavily pregnant) is also chased by the righteous female goanna. She desperately tries to lay her eggs safely, but in the commotion the eggs get covered in brown dust. To this day goanna eggs are brown in colour, and many goannas that are hunted today still have a short tail - including some female goannas.

There are some aspects of Janet Nakamarra's narrative that I didn't really understand - particularly the order of the events as they unfolded, which didn't make sense to my linear mind; events weren't placed chronologically in the narrative. Other parts had sexual references that could not be explained because of the presence of my two girls (who wouldn't go to bed), such as the formation of two sand mounds by the joining of the two goannas with semen. Apparently these mounds can still be seen today at Little Sandy Creek. But my lack of comprehension did not detract from my realisation that this story-telling event was a very enjoyable and most entertaining one - not just because of the narrative's dramatic events, but because of the oratorical skills Janet Nakamarra brought to the event.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two questions should be asked at this stage: First, how are these two separate story-telling events relevant to my thesis topic on published texts? And second, what are the research questions that come out of these two incidents? My immediate thoughts, on being told these Dreaming narratives, was what great books these stories would make.<sup>21</sup> The Watji bird text would make an interesting picture book for children, which Auntie Veronica could submit to the local publishers, Omnibus Books. The Wardapi text would go well in a collection of Jukurrpa - possibly aimed at tourists - with Nakamarra's paintings illustrating each of her captivating texts. I already knew that both women are keen to see their narratives, and their names, in print. The thought of royalties was tempting.

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<sup>21</sup> I must confess that I love books, and I love making books. In fact, my associations with both these women, Janet and Veronica, were initiated through me working collaboratively with them on books. When I worked at Willowra with Janet our jobs (me as teacher-linguist and Janet as literacy worker) were to produce books in the Warlpiri language for the local bilingual program. And it was I who approached Veronica and asked her if she would be interested in collaborating with me on her autobiography. I must say I have found working with both (exceptional) women a rich and rewarding experience.

But then I started to think about the many published Dreaming texts that I had already read, and started to analyse, and the origins they may have had. I asked myself how many of the Dreaming texts that had been published over the years in English had similar oral origins, just like the two that were related to me by Auntie Veronica and Janet Nakamarra. How many were spontaneously told to white 'friends', who subsequently had them published in their own names? How many acknowledged the original sources of their texts? How many actually recorded the stories on tape, or made an attempt to write them down verbatim in the original language of the story-teller? How many white collaborators tried to maintain the original authenticity of the text? How many re-wrote the stories into a literary style that they thought would be more appealing to a white audience? How many deleted details about the tracts of land or country mentioned in the story? How many deleted details of kin relations in the story? How many white collaborators considered the issue of intellectual ownership of Dreaming texts? How many of the white 'authors' of Dreaming texts created their own texts from archival sources, or from other published Dreaming texts? If this happened, why did they do it?

These are all important questions that I proceed to ask throughout this thesis. They are especially important in the current political climate, I believe, as we White Australians continue to struggle to reconcile ourselves with our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This thesis demonstrates that we do need to question the way we have represented (and continue to represent) Indigenous Australians, and their cultural heritage, in print - particularly their Dreaming heritage.

## **1.6 FRAMING MY RESEARCH**

A number of significant elements of oral Dreaming narratives became very apparent to me as I listened to Janet Nakamarra and Auntie Veronica tell their stories. My experience of listening to other Indigenous story tellers, as they relate their Dreaming narratives to an audience, confirm that for many Indigenous narrators these same elements are important aspects of the story telling process. Below I outline these essential elements of oral Dreaming narratives, and explain how they have emerged as a framework for my analysis of published Dreaming narratives.

The first thing both Nakamarra and Auntie Veronica mentioned before they began their narratives was WHO first told them the story. They pointed out the close relationship they had to the original story-teller, which legitimated them having knowledge of that same story, and gave them the authority to tell their narrative to others. The second element that both women saw as important to the story telling event was to outline the PLACE that this story related to. In the case of Auntie Veronica it was the Coorong; for Nakamarra it was primarily Little Sandy Creek. Nakamarra was also keen to establish whether I (as the audience) was

familiar with the country she was referring to, while Auntie Veronica promised to take my girls (her audience) down to the place where her story was set.

In my analysis of many published Dreaming texts, since these two story-telling events, it has been of particular interest to me to observe whether any mention of PERSON or PLACE features in the printed form of narratives. I ask whether these published texts mention the PERSON who owns or tells the story. I have also asked whether there is mention of the PLACE in which the narrative is set, or the country to which the narrative belongs. It has become apparent that both these elements are absent in many published texts, particularly those aimed at children. My study investigates who is deleting such detail and why this should be the case. I also ask the controversial question of whether it matters if reference to PERSON and PLACE is edited out, especially texts primarily intended for small White children.

Another element I explore, which relates in particular to the overall structure of published Dreaming texts, is that of TIME. Why is it that published Dreaming texts inevitably begin with some sort of time reference, such as "In the Dreamtime" or "Before time began...". It is significant, I think, that there was no explicit reference to time in the introduction of the narratives told by either Auntie Veronica or Nakamarra (see also Swain, 1993:14-22 & 36).

Before outlining the structure of my thesis, I would like to briefly return to Nakamarra's Wardapi text. Nakamarra actually retold the same narrative onto a tape, again in English, before she left Adelaide.<sup>22</sup> This raised some other issues and questions that I address in this study. In what language did other 'collectors' of oral narratives record their texts, such as Langloh Parker and more recent ethnographers? Or did they invariably request they be told in some form of English? And how did they record them: by writing them down verbatim, or perhaps on an audio-recorder, or did they just make sketchy notes? Further questions arose as I began to transcribe Nakamarra's text, and I was reminded that there were some parts of the Wardapi text that weren't clear to me (even though I had asked Nakamarra to clarify them). I could only assume I lacked the cultural knowledge and understanding required for one to have a full appreciation of the significance of the text. This realisation raises another research question: How many of the Dreaming texts that are sold in bookshops today are radically edited, re-worked, or westernised by White 'authors' to make them more acceptable to a majority White audience? How often are the time frames or order of events changed in a text? How often are morals explicitly written into a text, and whose moral values are being represented anyway? These are the questions that I address in the following chapters.

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<sup>22</sup> For over two years Janet Nakamarra and I had been discussing the possibilities of getting some funding so Janet can produce a book of her own paintings and associated stories. She had, in fact, already started taking photos of every painting she had sold and writing down a Warlpiri and English text for each one, that explained "what it's all about" for the purchaser.

## 1.7 OUTLINE OF MY THESIS STRUCTURE

Thus far, in this introductory chapter, I have clarified my research topic and outlined my main research questions. I also defined the term 'Dreaming', and set the boundaries of my research area (of published Dreaming narratives), yet identified some important elements of oral Dreaming narratives that serve as a reference point for analysing Dreaming narratives in print. The text types that I consider in my study include those often labelled: 'myth', 'legend', 'folk-lore', 'fable' and 'tale', which incorporate texts aimed at children as well as adults. I also briefly reviewed some of the very earliest published accounts of Aboriginal belief systems, or perceived lack of them, by men of 'high esteem' in the new colony. Their candid accounts demonstrate the underlying blind prejudices that existed amongst white writers, about Indigenous peoples and their beliefs, in those very early years of Australian colonisation, which set the literary scene for those writers who followed.

My second chapter outlines my research methodology, which is primarily library research, but also dwells in some detail on the debates and issues surrounding literary criticism and postcolonial texts in a postmodern age. This is followed by a third chapter that selectively reviews the published Dreaming literature 'authored' by non-Indigenous writers. Its companion chapter, Chapter Four, reviews published Dreaming literature written by Indigenous writers. These two review chapters set the scene for the following fifth chapter, which celebrates the collaborative efforts of Indigenous story tellers and writers who have been able to work closely with non-Indigenous linguists, editors and publishers in having their Dreaming narratives committed to print. The relatively fewer books discussed in this chapter are particularly noteworthy for their apparent Aboriginal voices, whether they be in English, Aboriginal English, or an Indigenous language. They not only demonstrate that (cf. Spivak, 1988) the Subaltern can speak, but also that it is possible to retain a strong sense of both Place and Personal ownership in published Dreaming narratives that are derived from oral texts.

The focus of my thesis changes in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight when I concentrate in detail on the life and writings of David Unaipon. This Ngarrindjeri man is significant not only because he was the first published Australian Indigenous writer of the Dreaming genre, but because his syncretic texts reveal a discourse that encompasses both a Christian mythology as well as the mythology of his own people. I also discuss Unaipon's publications that appeared in the 1930 book *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aboriginals*, published under the name of the Adelaide doctor, W. Ramsay Smith.

My thesis concludes with a chapter that explores the issue of Indigenous rights regarding Dreaming narratives. I discuss the system of custodianship that operates amongst Yolngu in Arnhem Land, largely to demonstrate the complexity of their system, and review the findings



of a recently commissioned report on Indigenous intellectual copyright: *Our culture: our future*. Then, in keeping with the intention of this thesis, the final word is given to a number of Indigenous people who have either spoken out publicly, or written, on the issue of Indigenous rights. They stress that any form of representation must be pursued with the interest of the original Indigenous story-tellers and owners uppermost in the minds of all involved.

The era that this thesis endeavours to cover spans a long period, and the number of texts that are discussed is large. There are further texts that deserve discussion, such as Ursula McConnel's many early works (eg. McConnel, 1957), and Jennifer Isaacs' (1980) stunning compilation of Dreaming narratives *Australian Dreaming: 40,000 years of Aboriginal history*, and Peter Sutton's *Dreamings: the art of Aboriginal Australia*, but space does not allow it. This thesis is lengthy by necessity. Many of the early published texts that I discuss are not readily available, and are therefore quoted verbatim either within the main body of my thesis or in full in the Appendices. Other primary materials are archival and not easily accessible. Therefore the large amount of primary and secondary data included in this study should be viewed as essential material that helps contextualise my argument, as well as promote an understanding of how Dreaming narratives have been represented over the last two hundred or so years.



## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

#### 2.0 SOME THEORETICAL DILEMMAS

My topic presents me with a number of theoretical dilemmas. Because it is decidedly interdisciplinary, I could embrace methodological approaches offered by a number of disciplines, including linguistics, literary and cultural studies, and anthropology. My topic involves issues of 'representation', which is one of the central concerns of postcolonial criticism and theory, and my chosen genre of 'Dreaming narratives' clearly locates my work within the context of colonial discourse theory. Aboriginal people were colonised on their own land and many of the narratives I discuss are written in English as a result of the processes of colonisation. Robert Young (1995:163) describes Said, Spivak and Bhabha as "the Holy Trinity" of colonial discourse theory, implying that their work cannot be ignored by those researching colonial and postcolonial texts. Despite the pitfalls of structuralism (see e.g. Harris, 1981, Toolan, 1996 & Mühlhäusler, 1996), the linguistic tools of analysis offered by structuralism can assist me in my textual analysis, particularly when working below the text level. Similarly my subject matter can also benefit from the knowledge and understandings offered by the discipline of anthropology, even though it is itself in a state of flux, having to justify itself as a discipline and defend its historical roots in structuralism within a world now dominated by postmodern thought. But the fact that colonial discourse theory and postcolonial literary criticism force one to consider the political, social and historical factors that influence the very nature of any texts makes them essential tools for my study. Theories which take into account the factors that influence the processes of text construction, and cause one to ask how much agency the producers of such texts really have are central to my concerns. I have therefore chosen to adopt the theoretical tools offered by colonial and postcolonial discourse theories, as well as the analytical tools offered by linguistics, particularly for the phrase and word level of analysis.

My topic cannot be divorced from contemporary Australian politics. This is particularly so since the controversial Mabo, and later Wik legislation, were passed by Federal Parliament. The debates over such legislation revolved around the rights of Indigenous Australians to their land, and the government's dilemma of reconciling these rights (as verified in the High Court of Australia) with those of pastoralists and other non-Indigenous Australians. Since the 1970s, Australia has witnessed a cultural renaissance within its Indigenous communities, with a revived interest on the part of dispossessed groups in re-establishing and affirming their group identity. The tracts of land traditionally associated with each group are increasingly seen by Indigenous Australians as an important aspect of their identity. Since the passing of the Mabo legislation in 1993, Indigenous people making land claims have been

drawing more and more on their own oral histories, as well as seeking out written historical records and anthropological information, that prove their ancestral ties to their land.

Postmodern theory enables us to consider the political influences on text construction and production, but at the same time presents problems for Indigenous people who choose to draw on old colonial texts to construct new texts for contemporary situations. Postmodern claims that the colonial texts of missionaries and early ethnographers are biased representations, and that new Indigenous texts are 'social constructions', are a slap in the face for the dispossessed. This is particularly so for those who have lost their language and the mythology associated with their land, and are now struggling to relearn what they can from the remnants of oral and written records. The recent and highly publicised claims of "fabrication" in the Royal Commission, regarding the mythology associated with Hindmarsh Island which the Ngarrindjeri women put forward to protect their island from further development in South Australia, serves as a strong reminder of the volatile and political nature of Indigenous affairs in this country. Similar emotions came to the fore across the Tasman Sea recently in a hostile debate in New Zealand that pursued the publication of a paper by the post-modern cultural anthropologist Hanson (1989) who spoke of Maori culture using terms such as "cultural invention" (even in the title of his paper).

The timing of my present study finds me caught up in the middle of a "revolution" in the humanities, which Hodge (1995) has called the "postmodern turn". In this era of the "New Humanities" topics of study can question existing edifices of knowledge within a discipline, often because they are inter-disciplinary:

The emergence of the 'New Humanities' is a textbook instance of a Kuhnian revolution. It is an event on the same scale as what Foucault (1970) called an "epistemic rupture", in which there is a radical change in underlying codes, principles and modalities of order across sets of disciplines.

(Hodge, 1995:36)

The inter-disciplinary nature of my topic allows me to exploit this time of "radical change", and legitimises my adoption of theoretical and methodological tools from a range of disciplines. It also allows me to question the assumptions made by postcolonial critics and to challenge contemporary debate on certain aspects of colonial and postcolonial discourse theory. But one cannot deny the very important issues this debate raises, particularly regarding the representation of Indigenous knowledge and texts. It raises the all important questions about whether texts that are authored by the Other, will inevitably be the mere "mimicry of colonial discourse" (Maxwell, 1991:71) or whether the possibility exists for the "native" Other to be a "historical subject and combatant, possessor of another knowledge and producer of alternative traditions" (Parry, cf. Spivak, in Maxwell, 1991:70). The debate also addresses some of the many problems facing those who have decided to participate in the business of representing the Other. I identify some of these very practical problems, both

within this and my introductory chapter, and demonstrate throughout the remainder of my thesis how past representers of Dreaming narratives have chosen to deal with such problems. In my final two chapters, I present some of the options available to those who continue to choose to represent Indigenous texts, in the genre of published Dreaming narratives, which undeniably belong to Indigenous Australians.

A dilemma for me, which is a consequence of my choice of genre, is the difficulty I have in reconciling the tendency for postmodern theory to view narratives as social constructions, which reflect the social and political needs of their makers at the time of their construction, with the opposing view of many Indigenous people who view Dreaming narratives as the 'truth', and as relatively fixed entities of knowledge. To use Derrida's term (see Spivak, 1988:87), most Indigenous Australians view the pre-colonial past with "nostalgia" and have great respect for their past cultural traditions and beliefs. The narratives of 'the Dreamtime', that have been passed on for generations, are seen as part of a primordial culture and belief system to be maintained (or even re-learned). The anthropologist Webster (1993) argues that this idealisation of the past by contemporary Indigenous societies (in Webster's argument, the Maori) has occurred because of the dominance of "*a priori* cultural essentialism which has emerged from language- or meaning-based anthropological theory". He says that the recent Maori Renaissance rejects the recognition of "the workaday culture" of the majority of contemporary Maori, instead turning to "the fundamentally unthreatening appeal of the romantic or traditionalist image of Maori culture" (Webster, 1993:228). This warning follows Spivak's (1988:87) caution that "a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism". When considering the current plight of Indigenous youth in both Australia and New Zealand, with its high rates of crime, alcoholism and family breakdown, one should not be surprised that elders who are seeking answers look to the past. When one is trying to re-establish a sense of purpose in life, and seeking an identity of difference (from the coloniser), why would one look at the "workaday culture" of the present?

There is a belief amongst many different Indigenous people that 'Dreaming stories' serve the same function as the Bible does for Christians. I have heard such sentiments from a number of Aboriginal people, such as the Ngarrindjeri woman Veronica Brodie (see Brodie, forthcoming). Not only do they contain creation stories of the land and the animals that inhabit it, but it is believed they also serve as moral guides to the way we should behave on this earth. There is an understanding that the knowledge imparted through these narratives, and the messages within them, are fixed and timeless. It is thought that they have as much meaning today as they did when they were first told by the elders thousands of years ago. Such knowledge is seen as something that is important, and something that should be sustained by future generations. The fact that many of these narratives have been lost is one of the laments of current generations as they seek to reaffirm their Indigenous identities in

these troubled political times. To imply that such knowledge was 'constructed' by their ancestors, or even worse, to imply that the remnants that current generations retain are pure 'fabrications' is viewed as a bitter insult. Indeed Katrina Power's suggestion that we should call for an investigation into the truthfulness of the Christian belief that the Mary, the mother of Jesus, was actually a virgin was a great source of amusement to Nungas, and their supporters, who were protesting against Premier Brown's 'inquisition' into the so-called women's business relating to Hindmarsh Island, on the steps of parliament house in Adelaide in 1995.

Although current colonial and postcolonial criticism and discourse theories present me with a number of ideological dilemmas, to dismiss them would deny this study of the important debates that surround so many of the issues of relevance to my topic. To ignore postmodern theories just because they are hard to reconcile with the popular Indigenous belief that cultural knowledge and Dreaming narratives from the past are the indisputable 'truth' would also be negligent. Instead, I have chosen to reflect on current literary theories as I critique the way non-Indigenous Australians have represented Dreaming narratives in Chapter Three. In Chapter Four I critically engage with the work of Spivak in particular, as I discuss published narratives represented by Indigenous Australians themselves. While there is always a danger of my discussion sounding Eurocentric or judgemental, it is necessary for me to draw on the methodological tools offered by the Western traditions of linguistics and literary criticism. It is necessary to acknowledge that the Indigenous writers I critique have chosen to partake in the production of a written genre that has its roots in a Western literary tradition. They have also chosen to be published, which means that their texts are available to a non-Indigenous audience and to non-Indigenous critics employing western literary criticism (whether postmodern or otherwise). The approach I have adopted inevitably involves compromise. I seek to critique texts which originated from an oral society that saw no need for writing and had no connection with the print media in their pre-colonial past.

My consistent aim has been to address the difficult, and often sensitive, issues relating to the 'representation' or 're-representation' of Indigenous Dreaming narratives honestly and pragmatically. In Chapter Five I critique several publications that offer challenges to past representations of Indigenous knowledge. I contest that the modes of representation, adopted by "producers of alternative traditions" (to use Parry's phrase, 1987:34), such as Rockman and Cataldi as well as Raymattja Marika, should be seen as valid and viable options. This thesis strives to say something about the very real and difficult problem of representation and the very real dangers of appropriation.

## 2.1 MY THEORETICAL POSITION

I need to clarify further my use of the fundamental terms 'representation' and 're-presentation'. Maxwell (1991:76) outlines the distinction made in Spivak's (1988) work between the two different "categories of representation". Spivak (1988:276) contends that the collapsing of these two categories has led to some contradictions in literary theory debates. The first category of "representation", as used in politics, means "speaking for", while the second category is the "re-presentation" of something, "as in arts and philosophy". It is the latter category which concerns me in this thesis, which is the "re-presentation", or presenting of texts (in my case mythological narratives) in an alternative way to a literate audience. But it should be acknowledged that the first category of "representation" cannot be entirely divorced from my discussion of the Dreaming genre. So many non-Indigenous writers have preceded Indigenous people in presenting Indigenous Dreaming narratives in written and published forms with the pervading assumption that they not only have the right, but the privileged position to re-present such texts on behalf of Indigenous people. Throughout this thesis I use the term 'representation' (rather than 're-presentation') but acknowledge the double meaning this term offers.

Similarly, I refer to the term 'postcolonial' throughout this thesis, without the hyphen, acknowledging that texts produced in the era since Australia became independent of its British coloniser still bear some semblances with texts from colonial discourses. To write of 'post-colonial' with the hyphen implies there has been a break from the shackles of the colonial era, and a discourse has emerged that is of another era, relatively shackle-free. Although I contend that the shackles still remain, this thesis challenges Spivak's model of the colonised Other as the silent subaltern. My research and analysis of a number of Dreaming narratives, that are either written by Indigenous Australians or produced in close collaboration with Indigenous people, demonstrate that the Indigenous Australian subaltern is not always mute, on the contrary. There are a number of Dreaming narratives by Indigenous writers for which several readings are possible. One of these is that their texts are mimicking a colonial discourse. There are other texts that are less clear and even ambiguous at times, but it is indisputable that there are a number of Dreaming narratives that have been produced in a written and published form that set out to challenge the colonial representations previously offered by non-Indigenous writers. Such texts are discussed in Chapter Five, particularly those that demonstrate powerfully, through their very choice of an Indigenous language as the main language medium, that their representers not only refuse to mimic the language of their colonisers, but are also constructing their own discursive practices through text production.

I align myself with Parry, who contests that the 'native' is not (always) mute, and the native does (on occasion) have agency by taking up a speaking voice in text production. In this study I discuss published texts that arguably demonstrate that some Indigenous writers such

as Fogarty (discussed in Chapter Four) and all the story-tellers (discussed in Chapter Five) are striving to break free from colonial shackles. Similarly, writers such as Unaipon are at times “confronting” their audiences with hybrid texts that represent “another knowledge” (see Parry, 1987:42-43). My reading of such Indigenous text, is at odds with Spivak’s, which is succinctly summarised by Parry:

Spivak is theorizing the silence of the doubly-oppressed subaltern woman, her theorem on imperialism's epistemic violence extends to positing the native, male and female, as an historically-muted subject. The story of colonialism that she reconstructs is of an interactive process where the European agent in consolidating the imperial Sovereign Self, induces the native to collude in its own subject(ed) formation as other and voiceless. Thus while protesting at the obliteration of the native's subject position in the text of imperialism, Spivak in her project gives no speaking part to colonized, effectively writing out the evidence of native agency recorded in India's 200 year struggle against the British conquest and the Raj - discourses to which she scathingly refers as hegemonic nativist or reverse ethnocentric narrativization.

(Parry, 1987:35)

Another deconstructionist to unravel the 'native's' role in colonial texts, but who comes to different conclusions to those of Spivak is Homi Bhabha. He recovers the voice of the 'native', by introducing the idea of "mimicry" as "a strategy of colonial subjection through reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other". He sees mimicry as an inappropriate imitation of colonial discourse that has the effect of threatening colonial authority (Bhabha, 1984:126). I discuss the notion of mimicry, and its use by different Indigenous writers in Chapter Four, as well as acknowledging its presence in some of the texts by Unaipon (discussed in Chapter Seven). However, I argue that Unaipon's work is more significant for the way he challenges colonial discursive practices through his production of hybrid texts (also discussed in Chapter Seven and Eight). The notion of 'hybridity', and the challenge it offers to colonial texts, is also taken up by Parry in her critique of the deconstructive writings of Spivak and Bhabha:

For in the 'hybrid moment' what the native re-writes is not a copy of the colonialist original, but a qualitatively different thing-in-itself, where mis-readings and incongruities expose the uncertainties and ambivalences of the colonialist text and deny it an authorizing presence.

(Parry, 1987:41-42)

Although Parry has her critics (see Maxwell, 1991), I share her frustration with the way colonial discourse analysis has perpetuated theoretical debates and distracted its readers from addressing the more practical issues of representation:

When the writing of an alternative history of colonialism on theoretical grounds refuses the authority of official western historiography, rejects a marxist version charged with 'reducing out imperialism-as-history', and distances itself from liberationist histories accused of weaving a seamless narrative, but does not produce its own account of change, discontinuity, differential periods and particular social conflicts, there is a danger of distinctive moments being homogenised....

(Parry, 1987:33-34)



Historical contexts are important. Indigenous people, who have lost their land, language and traditional cultural knowledge cannot reject “official western historiography”, because the early ethnographic records about their people, by missionaries and other interested parties (however biased and ‘colonial’ in its perspective), is often all they now have got to draw from. Indigenous groups, who still have access to “liberationist histories”, in the form of oral traditions of dispossession and violence, would argue that their narratives are not “seamless narratives”, but are valid and important narratives unique to each group. Brodie’s (forthcoming) life narrative, which tells of her grandmother and great-grandmothers’ dispossession of their land at Port Adelaide in the 1890s, is a stirring example.

Like Parry, and unlike the deconstructionists, I hear the voice of the colonised in texts, particularly in those Dreaming narratives written by Indigenous writers, and others produced in collaboration in an Indigenous language, even though there may be evidence of colonial contamination. In the chapters that follow, I demonstrate that the “voice of the native” may have been erased in many colonial texts produced by non-Indigenous writers (and even some Indigenous writers) within the genre of Dreaming narratives, but I also demonstrate that more recently published Dreaming narratives portray Indigenous Australians as “possessor(s) of an-other knowledge and producer(s) of alternative traditions” (Parry, 1987:33-34). Before I outline the methodological tools I adopt to pursue this demonstration, I must raise a few further concerns I have with colonial discourse theory, and the current debate on postcolonial criticism, a number of which are also shared by Parry.

## **2.2 A FURTHER COMMENT ON COLONIAL DISCOURSE THEORY**

Two problems in particular cause my ambivalence towards colonial discourse theory. The first stems from my uneasiness about the dichotomy of Self and Other. Said found it a useful dichotomy to explain past perceptions by the West regarding the Orient, but if one is to embrace a definition of culture that is dynamic and changing, it is not so useful. This is particularly the case, in this postcolonial world of increasing economic globalisation, as I seek to analyse the representation of the mythology of Indigenous Australians, whose cultures can only be described as increasingly syncretic. To persist with the use of the terms Other and Otherness perpetuates the practices of Orientalism and Aboriginalism, which were coined and admonished respectively by Said and his followers, including Hodge and Mishra. Another problem I have is the apparent abhorrence Spivak has for essentialism, which she dismisses with phrases such as “the clandestine restoration of subjective essentialism” (Spivak, 1988:280). I simply don't think it is possible for us to dismiss its very real presence and role in the current political climate of postcolonial Australia. Evidence of genealogical origins has become an important justification for membership of particular Indigenous groups in Australia, as well as for the right to call one's work 'Indigenous'. Indeed, with the current favourable economic climate for Indigenous art works, this right is often abused. One recent

scandal within the Indigenous art world involved the Indian artist (who took on the Indigenised name Sakshi Anmatyere) whose so-called 'Aboriginal artwork' remains on the ceiling of the Mary McKillop Chapel in Sydney. He falsely claimed his father was an Indian doctor, and his mother Aboriginal.<sup>1</sup> The "stolen generations" of Indigenous Australians, who were taken from their Aboriginal families over a period of sixty years (see Wilson's 1997 report), in the name of assimilation, claim the right to call their works "Indigenous". To contest such rights is politically incorrect in the current era of Reconciliation. Similarly postmodern condemnation of biological essentialism and persistent arguments for cultural relativism, leave the stolen generation in an apolitical vacuum. This is particularly so for those now seeking to reaffirm their identity as Indigenous Australians, and express their anguish through art and literature.

The constant debates on 'authenticity' in academic literature, as well as in the popular media can only be viewed by the stolen generations as furthering their keen sense of loss and deprivation of their Aboriginal cultural roots. When so many Indigenous Australians, for numerous and complex reasons associated with the violent nature of colonialism, have lost their languages as well as a knowledge of its associated songs and Dreaming narratives, it is not easy to demonstrate an identity of difference to their colonisers. The perception still persists among so many Australians that 'real Aborigines' have dark skin, brown eyes and speak an Aboriginal language. In fact one can still hear such perceptions voiced publically by government authorities.<sup>2</sup> In 1996 during an ABC television interview, the then Chief Minister of the Northern Territory made a snide comment challenging the authority of the other invited (Indigenous) speaker to discuss a particular issue on behalf of Aboriginal people. When the exchange became heated, the Chief Minister retorted: "Aboriginal people don't have blonde hair and blue eyes Michael". This racist comment was levelled at Michael Mansell, the well-known Tasmanian Indigenous activist, but was heard by many via national television. Unfortunately the stolen generations often only have essentialist arguments left when they are forced to justify their claims of Aboriginality.

I also have difficulty with the way the 'Other' has been homogenised by some postcolonial critics, as if the colonial experience of all Indigenous people can be exemplified through the Indian experience (see also Young, 1995:164). Like Parry, I see it as problematic to reject all colonial texts relating to the Other as representative of imperialism. I contest that we should consider early anthropological texts on their individual merits, just as we should be more receptive to individual texts produced by Indigenous people, despite the colonial influences on their production. But many of Said's (1978 & 1989) criticisms of the West, in the way it

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<sup>1</sup>His artwork, adorning stationary with an Australiana theme, published by Steve Parish, was still available in newsagents in Adelaide in June 2000, possibly being off loaded outside Sydney prior to the Olympics where there is a vigilant watch for fraudulent people cashing in on the tourist trade associated with the Olympics.

<sup>2</sup> See P. Gale (1996) for similar institutionalised perceptions of what constitutes Aboriginality.

represents the Other in the form of Orientalism, must be acknowledged. Hodge & Mishra take this further in the Australian context, with the concept "Aboriginalism":

As Said argues, this kind of regime should not be allowed to go unchallenged....[because of] the negative meanings that are strongly encoded in it: smugness and sense of superiority, racist stereotypes, and assertion of rights of ownership in the intellectual and cultural sphere to match power in the political and economic spheres...

(Hodge & Mishra, 1989:27)

My analysis of a number of Indigenous Dreaming narratives that have been recorded and rewritten (or 're-presented') by white observers, who then claim copyright over the texts, verify Said's concerns. But because of the colonial discourse critics' sensitivity (or paranoia) about misrepresenting the colonised Other, they have occupied themselves with theoretical debates about how and why this misrepresentation has taken place in the past, with no practical solutions for the present. Because of their fear of accusations of misrepresentation, or possibly appropriation, postcolonial literary critics have refused to enter into any meaningful discussion about how the Other could be represented in more appropriate ways - whether it be done by the colonised themselves or in collaboration. Nor do they discuss the important issues of what languages and genres are available to the colonised, should they choose to write from 'the contact zone' and represent themselves. Attempts by Parry (1987) to address such issues are met with doubts and further criticism (see Maxwell, 1991:71-73). Even Parry's suggestion of alternative readings of some texts, which are less critical of past literary representations of the Other, is criticised. I agree with Parry and her claim that "colonial discourse analysis has generated its own theoretical difficulties" (Parry, 1987:33). In my view, it has almost become theory for theory's sake - an opinion Bhabha would reject out of hand (see Maxwell, 1991:72, on Bhabha). I also agree with Parry's (1987:33) contention that colonial discourse analysis fails to produce "its own account of change, discontinuity, differential periods and particular social conflicts".

It is significant, I think, that Said, Spivak and Bhabha all hail from the homelands of the Other. I contend that a desirable consequence of the debate they inspired would be suggestions on how the Other can possibly start to remove the shackles of colonial discourse, and begin to represent themselves in print, using new forms of post-colonial discourse. Spivak (1988), however, writes with pessimism, implying that the shackles are well and truly fastened, and any attempts by the "subaltern" Other to be heard is "muted". It is ironic that her own style of writing is alienating to the very people whose cause she is promoting (i.e. the colonised women). I concur with Parry's argument that "in focusing on the deconstruction of the colonialist text, [the colonial discourse critic] either erase(s) the voice of the native or limit(s) the native resistance to devices circumventing and interrogating colonial authority" (Parry, 1987:34). In the chapters that follow, I not only strive to avoid erasing the voice of Indigenous Australians, but also attempt to give their voices authority, whether or not Spivak would consider it "muted". I also take seriously the rights of Indigenous people to

represent themselves, again whether or not their representations appear shackled. The Indigenous texts in Chapter Five are undoubtedly less muted than many other representations of Dreaming narratives.

### 2.3 MY METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS

Because postcolonial critics consider the all-important historical, social and political circumstances of text production and representation, the critical tools they offer are essential to this study. Such insights, from the discipline of literary studies, have helped me to come to some understanding of the processes involved in the production of published Dreaming narratives. However, because I am considering Indigenous texts, this study also considers factors that are important to the discipline of anthropology, such as territorial language boundaries and the geographic scope of particular song cycles. For the level of analysis I undertake with some individual texts, though, I need to go beyond what is offered in the disciplines of anthropology and literary studies. This is because I delve beneath the text level, and analyse some texts at the phrase, word and even phoneme level. The methodological tools I have adopted for such indepth analyses are derived from the disciplines of linguistics and sociolinguistics.

A couple of examples will demonstrate the inter-disciplinary nature of the approach I have adopted. One example is the ethnographic method I adopted when observing events, which I have already reflected upon in my introductory chapter. My method could be labelled the "participant observation" approach, because for each of these instantaneous story-telling events, I was a receptive participant in the audience. The events were instigated spontaneously by two Indigenous story-tellers, and it was only later that we decided to record their stories on tape for possible publication in the future. A second example could be the informal interviews I conducted with various Indigenous people when discussing the issue of Indigenous rights and the publication of Indigenous Dreaming narratives. These interviews were not conducted just for the purposes of my research, but also because of a mutual interest we shared in the issue of Indigenous copyright. Some interviews were audio-taped, while others involved me just taking notes on paper, sometimes after the discussion. Such ethnographic methods could be labelled "active participation", and are common to both anthropological and education research. Some interviews conducted would probably be better described as "informal discussions", partly because they occurred spontaneously during the course of other projects with which I was involved. For example, Auntie Veronica Brodie mentioned the Ngarrindjeri man David Unaipon on several occasions when we were working together on writing her own life story. Some of these discussions were on tape, others not. But on all occasions of my research, I have been quite open and honest with all those whom I have recorded or quoted in some way regarding the purposes of my PhD studies, whether they be Indigenous friends or non-Indigenous colleagues.

I began collecting published Dreaming narratives in the late 1970s. Initially I began collecting books that had Aboriginal content or themes for my work as a teacher in Aboriginal schools, the aim being primarily to give my Indigenous students the impression that books did not always have to be about foreign people and concepts. It wasn't long before I started to question the 'authenticity' and suitability of some of the texts I discovered in not only second-hand bookshops, but those still in print and available in regular bookshops. Then when I started revisiting the books from my childhood, that had some 'Aboriginal content', I became even more concerned. As my teaching career progressed, and I was employed as a teacher-linguist to oversee the production of vernacular books in two different Aboriginal bilingual schools, my interest grew regarding the issue of the representation of Indigenous knowledge in the print media. During my work it was necessary for me to discuss, with Aboriginal literacy workers and teachers, the issue of why, how and what we should be putting in books for use in Aboriginal classrooms. If we were to produce written forms of Dreaming narratives, we had to justify our method and content to the elders who provided the stories in oral form.<sup>3</sup> When I looked at my growing collection of Dreaming narratives published in English, I realised that not too much consultation with, or acknowledgement of, the original Indigenous story-tellers has occurred over the years.

From these beginnings in the workplace, my informal research began on the representation of Indigenous Dreaming narratives in print. It was not until I actually enrolled in my PhD that the formal aspect of my research began. Below I list the numerous informal and formal approaches that I have adopted over the years, and for which aspects of my research they were adopted:

1. Extensive library research and the scouring of new and second-hand bookshops for published Dreaming narratives.
2. Library and electronic searches for the academic literature on issues relating to my chosen topic.
3. Extensive archival research looking into the people and processes involved in the production of early Dreaming narratives, particularly those written by David Unaipon, but also those by Katie Langloh Parker, Daisy Bates and various anthropologists.
4. Accessing and viewing a microfilm copy of the (1924-25) manuscript written by David Unaipon "Legendary tales of the Australian Aborigines", and making detailed linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> In Gale (1997) I discuss in detail what was produced in various Aboriginal schools, over the years, in different Aboriginal languages, and the history of how this development took place.

comparisons with an edited version of this same texts later published by Ramsay Smith (1930).

5. Conducting both formal and informal interviews with Indigenous story-tellers, and Indigenous people interested in the issue of Indigenous rights, regarding the publication of Dreaming narratives.

6. Conducting formal interviews with non-Indigenous people who have an academic interest in the issue of re-presentation of Indigenous knowledge in print.

7. Undertaking linguistic analysis of different published texts, particularly Dreaming narratives, but also other genres such as early mission accounts about Aboriginal beliefs. An example is a comparative analysis of the terms and spelling used for individual Dreaming ancestors and characters within different versions of the same narrative.

8. Seeking (and responding to) active feed-back from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous critics on perceptions I have made and conclusions I have drawn regarding this study.

In relation to my linguistic research tools, involving the linguistic analysis of individual texts, I have been most influenced by the methods offered by the 'Dixonian school' of linguistics at the Australian National University (see Dixon, 1980). This is particularly so when analysing texts below the sentence level. When analysing texts at or above the sentence level, the ideas offered by Ian Malcolm's paper (1980-82) on the ethnography of communication have been useful, but they do not account for the historical and political factors that are important to my topic. To a lesser extent, I have also been influenced by the linguistics ideas offered by Systemic Functional Grammar, drawing in particular from the terms developed by Halliday, and by those (such as Christie, Rothery and Martin) who have further developed his functional approach to language in the form of Genre Theory. An example would be when I discuss the prevalence of time words at the beginning of published Dreaming narratives aimed at small white children, such as: "In the Dreamtime..." or "Long, long ago in the Dreamtime...". Halliday calls the initial elements of a sentence the "theme", and when particular words continually occur as the themes in sentences, it is called "topicalisation". The topicalisation of time words in Dreaming stories immediately focusses the readers' attention on the narrative's place in history - in this case, in the long distant mythical past. Halliday's approach has also popularised terms such as "coda", which incorporates the concluding sentences of a narrative. Many past representations of Dreaming narratives, particularly those rewritten by white writers, include an obligatory coda that provides some form of explicit moral or rationalisation of the narrative's purpose.

## 2.4 TWO MORE STORY-TELLING EVENTS

Because my research topic focuses particularly on the study of Dreaming narratives in print, of which there are ample to observe, my research methodology has not included any formal period of observation of the telling of oral 'Dreaming' narratives. However, I fully recognise how such a formal study could be enlightening on possible alternative means of representing these same narratives in print. I reflect here on some of the informal observations I have made over the years of Indigenous people telling Dreaming narratives. Before concluding this chapter, I also relay two further story-telling events that contrast considerably, but together demonstrate some of the difficulties facing those involved in the representation of Indigenous narratives in any form.

Berndt and Berndt (1988:242-243) point out that:

Over much of Australia, sacred myths do not take the form of spoken narratives. They are told through songs, which provide key words, or references, and not full descriptions.... Because nearly all sacred myths and corresponding actions are connected with specific localities, sometimes with sacred objects as well, the songs help people to remember the appropriate details.

However, when the occasion arises, Indigenous people who have the knowledge and rights to recount a 'myth' as a spoken narrative will do so. Such narratives are told by different individuals with different degrees of content variation (Berndt & Berndt, 1988:242) and skill. When working in a bilingual school in Warlpiri country in Central Australia, one of my tasks was to oversee the production of books in the Warlpiri language for use in the school. Older people in the community were regularly paid to come into the school to tell *Jukurrpa* (Dreaming stories) onto audio tapes, so they could be transcribed and eventually reproduced in the printed form for classroom use. It was openly acknowledged that certain old ladies told fantastic stories that were full of excitement and humour; they were always rewarded with a ready audience while making the recording. Others were not so popular, and I would occasionally find them sitting alone in the literacy centre talking away in animated Warlpiri with just a lonely tape-recorder as an audience. Their visit would be followed by complaints from the Warlpiri literacy workers, employed by the school, who would then have to sit for days transcribing these very long, tedious and (to them) not very captivating narratives. It was amid such complaints that I used to question our methods and approach of providing potential reading material for our young students.<sup>4</sup>

Outside of the education field, I would hear Dreaming narratives being retold in the context of Indigenous artists explaining the meanings associated with the symbols on their paintings. Janet Nakamarra's telling of the 'Wardapi Dreaming', which I discussed in the previous chapter is a case in point. In Arnhem Land artists would relay the events and places

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<sup>4</sup> See Gale (1997) for further debate on this controversial issue.

associated with the symbols depicted on their bark paintings, while Central Australian artists would relay the narratives depicted by the circles and dots on their canvases. Often one is not afforded the myth in narrative form by the artist, but instead just an explanation of what each symbol in the painting represents. Other artists, particularly those with the knowledge and authority, plus a flair for story-telling, would be happy to give graphic retellings of the narratives associated with their paintings. This difference in willingness to share a myth in narrative form is demonstrated in the glossy Indigenous art book that emanated from another Warlpiri community, entitled *Yuendumu doors*, by the Warlukurlangu artists (1987).

It wasn't very often during my time working in Warlpiri country that I witnessed the spontaneous telling of Dreaming narratives. Perhaps this was partly because of my single status, but also because I mainly befriended younger Warlpiri women who did not have the authority to tell such narratives to me. This is not to say that I didn't witness any story-telling events. The community I worked in is known among other Warlpiri communities to have maintained a 'strong' story-telling tradition. The young women delighted in telling me stories daily of different camp events or incidences, usually with a stick in hand, as they drew in the sand, marking out the position and direction of movement of each character in the story. Such use of sticks, amid wild gesticulations of the hands, are also used by older women as they relay Dreaming narratives. On weekends we often went hunting in my Datsun ute, usually with the family of one of my co-workers. On such outings, I would occasionally hear the elder of the women in the back singing a song relating to the land on which we were entering, but again on such occasions I was never told the corresponding narrative.

I have also witnessed, in a contrived situation in Adelaide, the telling of a Dreaming narrative by an Anangu person from the Pitjantjatjara Lands. I was intrigued to see for the first time the way she accompanied herself by beating a small stick on the ground as the story unfolded. But I was even more intrigued to see, at a later date, very small Anangu children at play (on a home-made video) mimicking older women, beating a stick in the same way, as they relayed a story to other children. At the Adelaide Festival, held in March 2000, audiences were also rewarded with similar displays of story-telling at the performance by two Anangu women (Nura Ward and Nelli Patterson) in "Ochre and Dust". Although the advertising material intimated some of the narratives would be "Tjukurpa" (Dreaming stories), the women chose instead to tell of their early contact experiences and of the British testing of bombs at Maralinga on Pitjantjatjara lands. However, both story-tellers told their narratives in Pitjantjatjara to the same accompaniment of a rhythmically beating stick, as Ruth Anangka translated their narratives into English for the audience.

By way of contrast, two further story-telling events, neither of which I was involved with, illustrate alternative circumstances and methods of relating narratives to a specific audience. The first event causes one to reflect on the moral issues associated with the business of



cultural reproduction and representation. It presents a challenge to the reader to accept that there are aspects of some narratives that are best left completely 'unrepresented' in print, which is an issue I return to in Chapter Nine. This event is relayed by the anthropologist T.G.H. Strehlow, and aptly demonstrates the difficulties of divorcing a narrative from the physical environment in which it is traditionally told. It also demonstrates the loss of meaning that can occur when a narrative is taken from the context of a ritualised oral performance. The second story-telling incident is in some ways similar to the situation I was involved in at the Warlpiri school described above. It is a staged story-telling event that occurred largely for the purpose of recording, and hopefully maintaining, Dreaming narratives in some form or another for future generations. Its structure and content would probably be viewed by Spivak as typical of that told by the 'muted' subject, and therefore as a colonial construction. I contend it would not be so readily judged and rejected by Parry.

In the first incident, Strehlow tells of how a Dreaming narrative was conveyed to young Aranda (or Western 'Arrarnta') initiates in Central Australia around the 1930s. Because it is a very long and graphic account, I have been selective in quoting just segments of Strehlow's account. But even in this reduced form, I believe it aptly demonstrates the manner in which such Aranda narratives were told. Strehlow's purpose in relating his detailed account was to contrast it with the meaningless manner in which Indigenous Dreaming narratives were then being represented in print for white audiences. Strehlow was always critical of the way "native Australian legends" were being collected, and subsequently translated into "good simple English" for public consumption. He saw little value in the ultimate product when, despite editorial intervention, they "still remained poor and childish tales of little interest to any save the anthropologist" (Strehlow, 1947:xx). Strehlow's detail confirms the important point of my thesis that Aboriginal myth is intricately interwoven with ritual life and language. To assume Dreaming narratives can be divorced from this complex context, and represented in print without significant loss of purpose and meaning, is naive.

Strehlow (1947:1)begins:

Aranda myths are rarely elaborate in form... They are handed down through word of mouth by the older leaders of a group to the younger generation of initiated men, usually on the occasion of a visit to the local sacred cave where the *tjurunga* sticks and stones are kept.

A brief description of such a visit may throw some light on the importance of this totemic ceremonial centre in helping to preserve the original myth in its traditional form through the passing centuries.

Strehlow gives an elaborate account of a visit by some Aranda elders, accompanied by himself and some young Aranda initiates, to "the sacred cave of Ulamba" in the Western MacDonnell Ranges of Central Australia. He writes of his observations of the party as they "move off in silence" towards the cave, which "must be approached with awe and

reverence". He relays how the elders stop from time to time during their journey to relay different segments of the Ulamba Dreaming narrative to the young initiates:

From time to time the leader halts, points out rocks and trees which figure in the legend of the Ulamba ancestor, and neatly explains their significance by means of sign-language. No questions may be asked, the young men must be content with such explanatory remarks as the leader is prepared to give them. If these are insufficient for a complete grasp of the myth, the young men must wait respectfully until another of these rare opportunities presents itself....

After half an hour's steep climbing the leader stops. He points towards a huge boulder... [which] has an opening in it; and the leader signals that it was from this rock and through this very opening that the Ulamba ancestor first burst into life."

(Strehlow, 1947:2)

A little further on in their journey, Strehlow describes the: "magnificent view" which can be seen of "the two highest peaks in Central Australia", where the leader explains: "in the beginning, the Ulamba ancestor often used to stand here on cold mornings, and scan the horizon around with keen eyes for human victims".

On eventual arrival, Strehlow describes the cave itself, and the activities the party undertake during their visit:

[It] consists of two huge boulders piled high upon each other. The dark bottom mass is the body of the Ulamba ancestor himself.... Mortally wounded by his victim, he had struggled back to his own home.... His father had awaited him here and had cast himself down in grief over the prostrate body of his son. They had changed into great rocks, filled with the seeds of life....

In the narrow cleft between the two boulders rest the sacred *tjurunga*. At a signal from the leader, the party sits down in a half-circle on a convenient ledge of rock at the base of the cave.... [The leader] takes out several bundles of *tjurunga*, closely wrapped around with hair-string....

Then the leader ... takes up each bundle in turn, unwinds the hair-string, and chants the song which relates the wanderings of the Ulamba ancestor. Gradually the party takes up the verses of the chant; and in low, hushed voices their song bursts upon the silence that has enfolded the cave up to this moment....

All the while the traditional song re-echoes from the steep mountain wall.

(Strehlow, 1947:3-4)

Strehlow then explains the complexity of the Aranda chants associated with the Ulamba Dreaming:

It requires much explanation. It contains a great number of obsolete and obscure words, which, furthermore, have been dismembered and had component parts re-grouped in the chant-verses for metrical purposes. This re-grouping of the dismembered parts effectively prevents the uninitiated from being able to understand any portion whatever of the chant when it is being sung. Yet it is upon this old traditional chant, the words of which are jealously guarded by the old men of the group, that the whole Ulamba myth is based.

(Strehlow, 1947:4)

Strehlow ends his account by explaining the final descent from the cave, and the evening's activities that follow, involving "sacred ceremonies in honour of the Ulamba ancestor":

Then they gather around the old leader once more, and begin to decorate themselves under his guidance for a ceremony in remembrance of the Ulamba ancestor, whose life-story they have heard this afternoon. The ceremony which is now enacted is intimately connected with the chant and the myth: it is, in short, the dramatic representation of one of the many memorable events in the myth centring around the person of the ancestor.

(Strehlow, 1947:5)

This graphic retelling by Strehlow, of such a meaningful event in the education of young Aranda men, highlights the inevitable problems of transferring a narrative, such as the Ulamba myth, into any meaningful written form. Because of its captivating detail, I have reproduced Strehlow's account in full in Appendix 2.1.

The second story-telling incident involves the late Daisy Utemorrah, whose work is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. She was an Aboriginal woman from Kunmunya in Western Australia, who was one of the last remaining speakers of the Worrorra language.<sup>5</sup> She has had a number of Dreaming narratives published in English for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. Mark Clendon (personal communication, 1998 & 1999) a linguist and colleague<sup>6</sup> worked extensively with Utemorrah before her death in 1994, and collected many Dreaming narratives in the Worrorra language on audio-tape. He has since transcribed this collection, and translated it into English, and made several copies to return to Utemorrah's family and community. The collection, which also contains narratives from two other story-tellers, has just been published as three books by the Kimberley Language Centre (Utemorrah, et. al., 2000).

Clendon has also conducted some linguistic analysis on these Worrorra texts, and sees in some of them hints of Utemorrah's modern additions to the traditional story-line that was told to her as a girl. For example, in one of her narratives, called "Dumbi", about the mistreatment of an owl by mischievous children, Clendon has an inkling that Utemorrah has changed the ending in several ways. In the narrative, the ancestral being "the Wandjurna" sends a flood to punish the children for hurting Dumbi the owl. Instead of all the people perishing in the flood, Utemorrah provides a happy ending with two of the children being saved, so that they may procreate. Furthermore, in order to reach higher ground, Utemorrah has the two children hopping onto the back of a kangaroo - something Clendon found extremely amusing (and implausible).<sup>7</sup> He suggests this contemporary ending of Utemorrah's could be a result of her mission upbringing, where she learnt of Biblical floods, and the need for people to

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<sup>5</sup> The convention in the past, by linguists (e.g. Love) and anthropologists (e.g. Elkin), and more recently by Clendon and the people of the western Kimberley, has been to spell this language name as "Worora", with the single "r", even though the "r" is a trilled rhotic. The convention now is to spell the name as "Worrorra".

<sup>6</sup> I am particularly grateful to Mark Clendon for this information. Mark worked extensively with Daisy Utemorrah to record her language and Dreaming narratives before she passed away.

<sup>7</sup> I have a picture book from my childhood (published in 1963) called *The magic boomerang*, which tells of an Aboriginal man "Kinjiwa" who has lost his "magic boomerang". The story-line has two little white girls, called Jenny and Sue, who try to help Kinjiwa find his lost boomerang. Among some of their many outback adventures, while travelling far and wide in search of the boomerang, was a ride on the back of a kangaroo!

survive to procreate. She was also a teacher in local schools, and learnt that children's books in English are usually structured with very clear beginnings, middles and ends, and that these endings are invariably happy. He also suggests that her Christian education in the mission dormitory has caused her to adjust the content of certain stories so that they seem less implausible, and demonstrate a more scientific understanding of the world and its solar system. For example, she adjusts her narrative "The snake that bit the sun", to have just one single daughter sun, that rises into the sky and then sets in the evening, before returning to rise the next day. In the original narrative the sun that rises in the east is seen each day as another daughter sun, rather than the same sun that just goes to rest.<sup>8</sup>

Spivak (1988) would see Utemorraah as the typical "muted native subject", who has little opportunity to speak freely from the shackles of colonial discourse. However, Maxwell (1991:73), influenced by Said, would suggest Utemorraah's solution as being more conciliatory, thus presenting the possibility of producing Indigenous texts that meet halfway, and allow the "overlapping of cultural boundaries". My analysis of David Unaipon's narratives, discussed later in detail in Chapter Seven, demonstrates such a cultural overlapping. His Dreaming narratives show the same weaving of Christian morals, and the appropriation of scientific understandings, that Utemorraah chose to adopt. However, Spivak would argue (according to Maxwell, 1991:77):

the native subject is historically muted as a result of 'the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project', where the native was prevailed upon to internalize as self-knowledge the knowledge concocted by the master. This required of the native that he re-write his position as object of imperialism by domesticating the alien as Master and himself as a self-consolidating and silent Other, a process which brought about the European 'worlding' of the native's own world.

Parry (1987:34) argues that both Spivak's and Bhabha's "deconstructive practices", and their dissimilar methods, "act to constrain the development of an anti-imperialist critique". Furthermore, Spivak's theory assigns "an absolute power to the hegemonic discourse in constituting and disarticulating the native." I agree with Parry's criticism that the voice of the colonised is being constrained by Spivak's and Bhabha's reading of texts, and like Parry, I actively strive to hear the voice of the colonised in texts. In my analysis of Dreaming narratives, I consider the possibility that there is a uniquely Indigenous voice striving to be heard, which is not always muffled by the coloniser. I would argue that Unaipon, in particular, has more agency in the production of his narratives than Spivak's theory allows. Not only does Unaipon incorporate Indigenous markers (such as words and phrases from his own language), but I argue (later in Chapter Seven) that there is also a sub-text, with messages of subversion, in at least one of his narratives. I also consider the production of

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<sup>8</sup> Another version of this same narrative has been published in the series retold by Pamela Lofts in 1984, called *When the snake bites the sun* (see Chapter Three). In this version, told by the late David Mowaljarlai, there are two suns: a mother sun and a daughter sun.

hybrid texts, by Unaipon and other more contemporary Indigenous writers, in the light of the prevailing anthropological idea that cultures are dynamic and changing, and so too is the mythology of a colonised people.

The emphasis I would place on the significance of the story-telling event witnessed by anthropologist Strehlow, points out a further problem that postcolonial literary criticism presents, which I alluded to earlier. Their rejection of anthropological texts, on the grounds of their colonial 'misrepresentation' of the Other, would discount recounts of events such as Strehlow's. However, Indigenous groups in Australia who have lost their land, their language and much of their mythology, yet strive to assert their own unique cultural identity that contrasts with mainstream Australians, have little option but to draw on early colonial texts. Many groups, such as the Kaurna people of Adelaide (see Amery, 1998), only have the written recordings of early missionaries, or scant ethnographic texts that they have been able to retrieve from the archives. If these colonial representations had been as detailed and numerous as those of T.G.H. Strehlow, and his missionary father Carl Strehlow before him, the Kaurna would have had a lot more to draw from today.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have outlined some of the theoretical dilemmas that face anyone undertaking inter-disciplinary research, particularly in an area such as the one tackled in this thesis. I openly admit that I am analysing and discussing texts that emanate from Indigenous cultures, yet am forced to use a theoretical framework and methodological tools designed by (and arguably for) Western texts. However, I acknowledge the problems and dilemmas my topic raises, and have chosen to use a range of methodologies from different disciplines in an attempt to reconcile, in so far as this is possible, some of these difficulties. I have found the arguments of Benita Parry most useful in determining my own position in the context of current debates in colonial and postcolonial theory. This is because Parry presents me with a theoretical stance that gives some agency and voice to the Indigenous subject. My reading of the huge range of texts, which I analyse in the following chapters, reveals that Australia's Indigenous people have not always been 'mute' or shackled.

Despite the thorny issues raised by the very topic of representation of Indigenous knowledge, throughout this thesis I contend that the most important issue in the representation of any Indigenous text is WHO is in control. Spivak believes it is inevitably the coloniser. Parry isn't so sure. It is this issue of control, and whose voice is actually being heard, that will arise continually throughout the chapters to come. Spivak would probably argue that even if the voice of the subaltern is being heard, it is not an 'authentic' one - it is always that of a puppet, with the ventriloquist voice of the coloniser. This accusation is one that I return to

later, when discussing Unaipon and the criticism he attracted for the role he played with the missionary organisation, the Aborigines' Friends' Association.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A REVIEW OF 'DREAMING' NARRATIVES AS REPRESENTED BY THE NON-INDIGENOUS

#### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the 'Dreaming' narratives of Australia's Indigenous peoples that have been represented in print by the non-Indigenous. Over the past 150 years, there have been numerous texts of this genre published, each by a writer with his or her own agenda. The compilers or 'authors' of such texts have included missionaries, government Protectors, anthropologists, wives of station owners, established writers, and many others with an interest in the exotic. It is only since 1924, with the publication of David Unaipon's work, that Indigenous people have been given the opportunity to represent themselves in print. In more recent years other Indigenous writers have followed, with the publication of works by Kath Walker (or Oodgeroo Noonuccal), Dick Roughsey and May O'Brien, to name just a few. Their publications are the foci of the following chapter. But it is the attempts of representation by the non-Indigenous that is the concern of this chapter. I hope to provide some form of chronological and literary context for my analysis, in subsequent chapters, of Indigenous writers and their works, particularly the seminal writings of David Unaipon.

Here I review and discuss the broad spectrum of Australian literature by a variety of 'authors' that come under the categories of: 'Aboriginal myths', 'Dreamtime stories', 'legends', 'tales' and 'folklore', as well as the more recent term 'Dreaming narratives'. But with such vast amounts of literature to review, and with such a diverse range in this sometimes disparate genre, how does one do justice to the task at hand? A review of just the anthropological literature on Aboriginal mythology would produce a very long chapter indeed. However, it is not the literature about Aboriginal mythology that concerns me here. It is the published texts of the 'myths' themselves that I intend reviewing. But I cannot ignore the anthropological literature completely, because numerous mythological texts are reproduced in various forms within this academic literature. To ignore such texts would result in an unrepresentative review of my chosen genre.

In Chapter One I briefly discussed some very early published colonial accounts of Aboriginal people and their beliefs, including those by the government marine (Tench) and other government appointees (Collins, Grey and Therry). All these accounts draw from their first-hand observations of Indigenous people in the newly formed colony of New South Wales, excepting Grey, who writes of his experiences in Western Australia, before taking up his position as Governor of the colony of S.A. All but Therry's (1863) account pre-date the publications discussed in this chapter. For the purposes of this review chapter, some criteria

had to be established, and some boundaries drawn to decide which writers and texts deserved discussion. I have categorised all the non-Indigenous representers according to their professions. I have also tried to order these categories chronologically, both in my list below and in the review that follows. However, I acknowledge that there are overlaps in time for when these narratives were written and eventually published. The categories I have chosen to identify the various representers of Indigenous beliefs include:

- Missionaries
- Government Protectors and the Police
- Wives of Pastoralists
- Government Surveyors and Explorers
- Anthropologists
- Bushmen
- White Writers and Poets
- Wives of missionaries
- Artists and Art Curators
- Ethnomusicologists & Linguists

The original primary sources of the vast majority of published Dreaming narratives are, of course, the Indigenous people of Australia who originally told the narrative to someone. Even Dreaming narratives that have been written by contemporary Indigenous writers were once told to them by their parents, grandparents, or some other relative. For all the narratives that have been represented in print by the non-Indigenous, there was some stage when each oral narrative was told to an intermediary, who has taken it upon him/herself to represent that narrative in a written form. Many of the published texts by non-Indigenous writers have been produced from secondary or even tertiary sources, involving absolutely no personal contact with the original Indigenous narrator. A well-known example of this type of representer is the prolific publisher of 'myths' and 'legends' A.W. Reed. For such representers of Indigenous texts, I have added a further category: 'White Appropriators'.

I reveal in my discussion that the way in which each of these representers, or appropriators, have chosen to represent the Dreaming narratives entrusted to them, is to a large extent determined by their motives for publishing such texts. I therefore do not include here non-Indigenous people who have chosen to collaborate closely with Indigenous story-tellers in the representation of their Dreaming narratives. An example of such a collaboratively produced work is the relatively recent (1995) publication compiled by Rockman and Cataldi *Warlpiri Dreamings and histories: yimikirli*. The works of such collaborators, as well as the writings of Indigenous people, are the subject of the next two chapters. I include however, for reference purposes, a list of some of the collaboratively produced works, as well as those written by Indigenous writers, in Appendix 3.1.



It is impossible to discuss every writer for each category. I have included the more well-known representers, such as Katie Langloh Parker, because they tend to have been the most influential in the way this written genre has emerged as a body of literature. But I also discuss texts by some lesser known writers, particularly if they display features that lead us to some understanding of why this genre has developed the way it has. For the purposes of contrasting differing representations of 'similar' narratives, I continually revisit 'The Seven Sisters Dreaming' in particular. However, I have not restricted myself entirely to this narrative. I also discuss narratives that I deem important because they exemplify some academic point regarding this intriguing genre.

I have a particular interest in texts that have been published from narratives told by the Indigenous people of the southern parts of South Australia, particularly those told by relatives of Nunga friends of mine from the Adelaide area. There are two reasons for this. First, because I wish to share with these friends my findings and discussions - which I hope will ultimately be useful to them as they seek to find out more about their Indigenous heritage, and indeed to publish themselves in this genre. Second, because a major focus of this thesis is the writings of David Unaipon, who was inspired to 'weave literature' from narratives he himself collected from the southern parts of Australia. It is insightful to compare his publications with other Dreaming narratives that relate to the same themes and characters featuring in his narratives, particularly those narratives published by anthropologists.

### 3.1 THE MISSIONARIES

Over the last two decades, the issue of representation has become very topical when discussing Indigenous literature. Fortunately most of us have learnt from past mistakes, and now acknowledge that the ways in which Aboriginal people have been represented in print, over the years, were invariably racist and paternalistic. Furthermore, writers are now becoming more aware of the sensitive issues regarding who has the right to represent Indigenous people's beliefs and cultures, and how this could be done. As Headon (1988:20) reminds us: "It is no longer either desirable or possible for whites to do the talking and interpreting for whole Aboriginal groups."

But in the early days of colonial Australia, when the first missionaries arrived to 'Christianise' and 'civilise the natives', such issues were never considered. For most missionaries, Aboriginal people were 'heathens' in need of salvation, not only from their 'unenlightened beliefs', but also from the 'depraved' and 'sinful' ways they had adopted in order to survive the onslaught of colonisation. When these missionaries took it upon themselves to represent the beliefs and ways of their 'native' charges in print, their main motives were to draw attention to their mission work, and hence propogate support for their

cause. The missionaries not only hoped to secure much-needed monetary benefits and support for their work, but also to muster sympathy and understanding, for their Indigenous charges, from the increasingly hostile white colonists.

### 3.1.1 C.G. Teichelmann

Despite its brevity, the first published Dreaming narrative from the colony of South Australia, as far as I am aware, is that written by the German missionary Christian Gottlieb Teichelmann. In October 1838 Teichelmann arrived in Adelaide with his colleague Clamor Schürmann, to work with the local Indigenous people of the Adelaide Plains. In 1841 he published a 13 page pamphlet: *Aborigines of South Australia: illustrative and explanatory notes of the manners, customs, habits and superstitions of the natives of South Australia*. It was published "for the benefit of the German Mission to the Aborigines", and its author writes in the preface: "May it now please the Lord of the Church to use these pages for the animation of our zeal and efforts towards the Christinization of our benighted fellow creatures" (Teichelmann, 1841:4).

Teichelmann begins his pamphlet with an attempt to correct false assumptions held by his readers regarding the local Kaurna people: "The Aborigines of South Australia have generally been represented by those who have reported of this land, as a race of beings differing little from the higher animals. If the statements are intended to apply to the mental endowments... they are incorrect" (Teichelmann, 1841:5). Such declarations, no doubt, were intended to reassure his supporters of the academic potentials of the children in their mission school. However, to justify the evangelical and moral teachings of his mission, he goes on to write with no compunction: "But regarding their moral state, they are, in many instances, almost upon a lower scale than the beasts" (Teichelmann, 1841:5).

There is no doubt that Teichelmann had nothing but contempt for the 'traditional' beliefs of the Kaurna, and writes with surprising honesty and openness of the debates he had with them:

One Sunday evening we took two lately tatoed Natives home to our house and spoke of the rite they had just undergone, the origin of which they ascribe to the red species of kangaroo. We endeavoured to show them the foolishness of this practice, and spoke to them of Jehovah, that he alone was to be feared, and not the red kangaroo; as they believe when they do not cut themselves in this way, the kangaroo will kill them. One of them growing angry said, why do you charge us with a lie, i.e. reject our opinion, we do not charge you with lies; what you believe and speak of Jehovah is good, and what we believe is good. We replied that only on one side the truth could be, and that was on our side.

(Teichelmann, 1841:12-13)

With such unabashed claim on the 'truth', it is little wonder that Teichelmann admits that: "The opinions which the Aborigines of South Australia entertain about the visible world are

limitedly known, as they carefully conceal them from Europeans" (Teichelmann, 1841:8). However, despite his obvious evangelical zeal, Teichelmann did manage to extract some beliefs held by the Kaurna, which he proceeds to relate to his readers:

They consider the firmament with its bodies as a land similar to what they are living upon. Therefore they say, the milky way is a large river, along the banks of which reeds are growing, the dark spots in it are water lagoons, in which monsters called *yura* are living; the white clouds near the milky way are the ashes of a species of paroquets [parokeet], which are assembled there by a constellation and afterwards treacherously roasted.

It is their opinion that all the celestial bodies were formerly living upon earth, partly as animals, partly as men, and that they left this lower region to exchange for the higher one. Therefore all the names which they apply to the beings on earth they apply to the celestial bodies.... The first celestial body that left this earth was the moon, who is considered to be a male; - he persuaded all the rest to follow, that he might have companions. The sun is his wife, who beats him every month that he shall die; but in dying he revives again. Besides this he keeps a great number of dogs for hunting, which have two heads and no tail. The Pleiades are girls, gathering roots and other vegetables; the Orion are boys, and are hunting, - so that celestial bodies are believed to obey the same laws as men and animals on earth....

The earth itself is considered a male, formerly without rivers, which were made by a certain animal called *Nanno* or *Nadno*, that he may live upon the craw-fish [crayfish] and fishes that are in the river. Under the earth, are three layers of water; under them two monsters, who are nursed by the two first; though they are not children, they continually utter a deep roaring noise. The animals have all been men formerly, who transformed themselves.

(Teichelmann, 1841:8-9)

Teichelmann then proceeds to give just one brief account of a Dreaming narrative, in which he explains such a transformation of men into animals:

Two men were once fighting with each other, whale and lark, the lark speared the whale twice in the neck, who perceiving that he was painfully wounded, escaped into the sea, became the present large monster, and blew water through the wounds that they might heal; but as they never heal, he blows water through them to this day.

(Teichelmann, 1841:8-9)

Teichelmann (1841:9) ends his account of Kaurna beliefs with a comment on their understanding of the origin of man himself: "Their own origin they derive from a kind of lizard, which separated the sexes, but made the female inferior, - therefore the slavish state in which they are kept. Whether this animal has been man before or not cannot be stated with certainty".

Teichelmann does enquire of the Kaurna whether they have a belief in the afterlife, about which he concludes: "regarding their soul or spirit, they seem to believe its existence after death" (Teichelmann, 1841:9). He also enquires about any belief they may have in a Supreme Being, to which he finally concludes: "From all this it is evident that we have neither to expect idolatry, nor the idea of any being superior to themselves, nor any kind of worship amongst these Natives" (Teichelmann, 1841:10). Missionaries were quick to enquire about Indigenous beliefs in a Supreme Being, particularly those who planned to translate The Bible into the local vernacular. Analogies were subsequently drawn and substitutions made to

assist them in their evangelising. It seems, however, Teichelmann found no such parallel amongst the Kaurna, and dismissed the Ancestral Hero 'the red kangaroo' as far from any form of Biblical 'truth'. This contrasts with the many parallels to be found by others who followed, particularly the Indigenous evangelisers such as Unaipon.

### 3.1.2 H.E.A. Meyer

Five years later, in 1846, Teichelmann's Dresden Mission Society colleague Heinrich Meyer published *Manners and Customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay tribe; South Australia*. Meyer paraphrases a number of 'myths' of the Ramindjeri people of Encounter Bay, who occupied the land in the Victor Harbor region, south of the capital Adelaide. Meyer, who learnt the Ramindjeri language very quickly after his arrival in S.A., could have recorded these narratives in the vernacular, but chose to reproduce them in English in their published form. His slim volume of fifteen pages was printed and published in Adelaide, "for Government", and begins on page one with an explanation of the strong attachment the "natives of Encounter Bay and the Lower Banks of the Murray" have to their land. He states "each tribe derives its name from the district to which it belongs, and which they claim as their own property, as Ramong, the district belonging to the Raminjerar". Certain landmarks, and their place names, feature in the mythological narratives that Meyer paraphrases, such as Rosetta Head ("Kungkengguwar", see Meyer, 1846:15) now known as The Bluff. This is significant, because there is a marked absence of reference to 'Place' in a large number of subsequent publications by other white writers.

As with Teichelmann, Meyer justifies his evangelical mission to the 'natives' by emphasising what he perceives as a complete lack of moral integrity. Perhaps it is such accounts that inspired Unaipon (who comes from the same cultural bloc as the Ramindjeri) to write so persistently, eighty years later, of the high moral integrity of his people's beliefs. Meyer commences: "As the mythology and traditions of other heathen nations are more or less immoral and obscure, so it is with these people" (Meyer, 1846:11). Below I quote sections of the passage that follows his contemptuous introduction, but must say that Meyer's zeal for judgemental moralising probably explains why he chose to paraphrase the narratives, rather than record them in their original colourful forms<sup>1</sup>:

The sun they consider to be female, who when she sets, passes the dwelling-places of the dead. As she approaches, the men assemble, and dive into two bodies, leaving a road for her to pass between them! they invite her to stay with them, which she can only do for a short time, as she must be ready for her journey of the next day. For favors granted to some one among them she receives a present of a red kangaroo skin; and therefore, in the morning, when she rises, appears in a red dress. The moon is also a woman, and not particularly chaste. She stays a long time with the men, and from the effects of her intercourse with them, she becomes very thin. and [sic] wastes

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<sup>1</sup> The text that follows is quoted (as with all quotes in this chapter) as it appears in its original (1846) form, complete with typographical and punctuation errors.

away to a mere skeleton. When in this state, Nurrunderi orders her to be driven away. She flies, and is secreted for some time, but is employed all the time in seeking roots which are so nourishing that in a short time she appears again, and fills out and becomes fat rapidly.

(Meyer, 1846:11)

Meyer goes on to paraphrase another narrative, which tells of the exploits of the Ancestral Hero of the Ramindjeri people, "Waijungngari". I quote Meyer's paraphrasing in full in Appendix 3.1A, but I mention it here because a very short section of this same myth was actually recorded earlier by the Aboriginal Protector William Wyatt, between 1837 and 1839. Although his version of the text wasn't published until 1879, it was probably the first recording of an Aboriginal myth in an Indigenous language from S.A. It was recorded by Wyatt in the language of Kaurna people, the northern neighbours of the Ramindjeri, who called this Spirit Ancestor "Monana" (see Wyatt in Woods, 1879).<sup>2</sup>

Meyer's work is important not only because it is one of the first publications on the mythology of the Indigenous people of S.A., but also because it displays the disdain and contempt that was shared by so many early recorders of Aboriginal mythology - many of whom were missionaries. This same disrespect was shared by Teichelmann and Schürmann, as well as the missionary George Taplin who, over a decade later, established Point McLeay mission for the Ngarrindjeri people. Taplin was prolific in his ethnographic research, but regarded the beliefs and "superstitions" he recorded as something not to be encouraged.

Meyer's explanation of the Ramindjeri myths displays his persistent scepticism, yet intrigue, in relation to their explanation of particular land formations still to be seen in the present. This is evident in the following extract (with my emphasis underlined):

They do not appear to have any story of the origin of the world; but merely all animals they suppose anciently to have been men who performed great prodigies, and at last transformed themselves into different kinds of animals and stones! Thus the Raminjerar point out several large stones or points of rock along the beach, whose sex and name they distinguish. One rock they say is an old man named Lime, upon which women and children are not allowed to tread; but old people venture to do so from their long acquaintance with him. They point out his head, feet, hands, and also his hut and fire. For my part, I could see no resemblance to any of these things except the hut. The occasion on which he transformed himself was as follows:- A friend of his, Palpangye, paid him a visit and brought him some tinwarrar (kind of fish). Lime enjoyed them very much, and regretted that there were no rivers in the neighborhood, that he might catch them himself, as they are a river fish. Palpangye went into the bush and fetched a large tree, and thrusting it into the ground at different places, water immediately began to flow, and formed the Inman and Hindmarsh Rivers. Lime, out of gratitude, gave him some kanmari (small sea fish), and transformed himself into a rock, the neighborhood of which has ever since abounded in this kind of fish. Palpangye became a bird, and is frequently near the rivers. The steep hill and large ponds at Mootabarringar were produced by the dancing of their forefathers at that place...

(Meyer, 1846:13)

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<sup>2</sup> The same word, spelt "Munana" is glossed as 'Ancestor' by Teichelmann in his 1857 unpublished Kaurna wordlist. It may have been a misunderstanding by Wyatt that the Ancestor's name was "Monana" (personal communication: Rob Amery, June 2000).

Meyer paraphrases a number of Dreamings narratives, including the origins of the whale, and a number of other animals (all reproduced in Appendix 3.1B), as well as the origin of rain. There is also a fascinating account of the origins of the different languages (see Meyer, 1846: 14, paragraphs 2 & 3). He concludes his small booklet with the Ngurunderi Dreaming narrative, but in a conflated form for reasons of "decency". His version is an important one because, as far as I am aware, it is the first published recording of this now well-known and important creation narrative (which I return to in Chapter Eight):

Nurunderi... He was a tall and powerful man, and lived in the East with two wives, and had several children. Upon one occasion his two wives ran away from him, and he went in search of them. Wherever he arrived he speared terror amongst the people, who were dwarfs compared with him. Continuing his pursuit [sic], he arrived at Freeman's Nob, and there made water, from which circumstance the place is called Kainjenuald (kainjamin, to make water). Disappointed at not finding his wives, he threw two small nets, called witti, into the sea, and immediately two small rocky islands arose, which ever since have been called Wittungenggul. He went on to Ramong, where, by stamping with his feet he created Kungkengguwar (Rosetta Head). From hence he threw spears in different directions, and wherever they fell, small rocky islands arose. At length he found his two wives at Toppong. After beating them they endeavoured again to escape. Now tired of pursuing them, he ordered the sea to flow and drown them. They were transformed into rock, and are still to be seen at low water. Discontented and unhappy, he removed with his children to a great distance towards the West, where he still lives, a very old man, scarcely able to move. When he went away one of his children was asleep, and in consequence, left behind. Nurunduri, when arrived at the place where he intended to remain, missed him, and making fast one end of a string to his maralengk, he threw the other end towards where he supposed his son to be, who, catching hold of it, helped himself along to his father. This line is still the guide by which the dead find their way to Nurunduri. When a man dies, Nurunduri's son, who first found the way to his father by means of the line, throws it to the dead man, who catching hold of it, is conducted in like manner. When he comes near, the old man, feeling the motion of the line, asks his son who is coming. If it is a man, the son calls all the men together, who, by a great shouting, arouse the half-stupified man. When come to himself, he silently and sadly approaches Nurunduri, who points out to him where he is to reside. If he belongs to the Encounter Bay tribe, or one of the Goolwa tribes, he is allowed to live in Nurunduri's hut; but if of one of the more distant tribes, at a distance off. Before he goes away to the place pointed out to him, Nurunduri carefully observes his eyes. If tears are flowing from one eye only, it is a sign that he has left only one wife; if from both, two; if they cease to flow from one eye while they continue to flow from the other, he has left three wives; and according to the number that he has left, Nurunduri provides him with others. Old people become young, and the infirm sound in the company of Nurunduri. This is what the poor uninstructed people believe; therefore no fears about the future, or concerning punishments and rewards, are entertained by them.

(Meyer, 1846: 14-15)

Like Teichelmann, it seems Meyer was so blinkered in his perception of what constitutes 'Biblical truth', that he failed to see any parallels between his own Christian belief and those of the people he came to evangelise. The fact that his account mentions Ngurunderi's son as the life-line between the dead and his father seems significant. Wasn't it God's son who said: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no-one comes to the father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Furthermore, Meyer's account regarding 'the old becoming young and the infirm

sound' also resonates with Jesus's message of The Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven..." etc. (Matthew 5:2). But one can only speculate on whether Meyer's narrator adapted the Ngurunderi narrative to please Meyer, merging his Dreaming narrative with that of Christian mythology. This merging is certainly something that is apparent in Unaipon's later rewriting of the same legend (see Unaipon, 1924-25. Mitchell Ms. Text 16 and my discussion in Chapter Eight). It is also something that Yolngu Christians are doing today in North East Arnhem Land with their own Dreaming narratives (see Magowan, 1995).

### 3.1.3 George Taplin

Rev. George Taplin was a Congregationalist missionary who founded the Point McLeay mission in 1859, on the shores of Lake Alexandrina in S.A. Although he initially scorned the beliefs and customs of the Aboriginal people to whom he ministered, he paradoxically became a prolific recorder of ethnographic information relating to the Ngarrindjeri people (or as he spelt it, "Narrinyeri"). In 1873 his comprehensive writings were first published, entitled *The Narrinyeri: an account of the tribes of South Australian Aborigines inhabiting the country around the Lakes Alexandrina, Albert, and Coorong, and the lower part of the River Murray: their manners and customs.*<sup>3</sup> Within this account of the Ngarrindjeri, he devotes a ten page chapter to their "mythology". Although he relies heavily, and quotes from Meyer's 1864 account of the Ramindjeri for this chapter, there are some original ideas worthy of consideration. As with Meyer, the manner in which Taplin records his findings reveals the contempt he felt for Ngarrindjeri belief (see my emphasis below). However, unlike so many recorders of later years, Taplin does choose to retain the placenames of different sites associated with the different narratives he refers to in his early writings:

The Narrinyeri call the Supreme Being by two names, Nurundere and Martummere. he is said to have made all things on earth, and to have given to men the weapons of war and hunting. Nurundere instituted all the rites and ceremonies which are practised by the Aborigines, whether connected with life or death. On inquiring why they adhere to any custom, the reply is, because Nurundere commanded it....

Although the natives say that Nurundere made all things, and that he now lives in Wyrrewarre, yet they tell many ridiculous traditions about his doings when he inhabited the earth....

He is represented to have been a great hunter....

Once upon a time, it is said, that Nurundere and Nepelle together pursued an enormous fish in Lake Alexandrina, near Tipping. Nepelle caught it, then Nurundere tore it to pieces, and threw the fragments into the water, and each piece became a fish, and thus ponde, tarke, tukkeri, and pommere, different kinds of fish had their origin. But another sort of fish, tinuwarre (called bream by the whites), was produced in a different manner. Nurundere went to Tulurrug, and there finding some flat stones, he threw them into the Lake, and they became tinuwarre....

After these things Nurundere went to Wyrrewarre, taking his children with him. The Narrinyeri always mention his name with reverence.... My opinion is that he is a

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<sup>3</sup> In 1879 a second edition of Taplin's 1873 account *The Narrinyeri* was published in Woods (1879). I have been unable to locate a copy of the first 1873 edition of Taplin's work, therefore all quotes are from his second edition, which was published in Woods (1879:1-156).

deified chief, who has lived at some remote period. The natives regard thunder as the angry voice of Nurundere, and the rainbow as also a production of his.

(Taplin in Woods, 1979:55-58)

In 1874 the Governor of South Australia, Sir A. Musgrave, responded favourably to the recommendation made by a Dr. Bleek of Cape Town to make inquiries into the manner, customs and "especially the folk-lore" of the "aborigines of South Australia" (just as he had done in South Africa). Taplin immediately warmed to the idea, and advised the Governor that "a series of questions should be prepared, and distributed to all the keepers of aborigines' depots throughout the colony, and to all persons who are known to be acquainted with the manners, customs, and languages of the aborigines." Subsequently Taplin was requested "to draw up such a list of inquiries", which were then printed and distributed throughout the South Australian colony, and the Northern Territory, which was then administered by South Australia (see Taplin, 1879a:B).

In 1879, the same year of Taplin's sudden death, the responses to Taplin's ethnographic inquiries were published in the collection *The folklore, manners, customs, and languages of the South Australian Aborigines*. As editor, Taplin writes:

It is of great importance that we should gain a knowledge of the customs and folklore of the aborigines. Not only is it useful as the subject of scientific inquiry, but as a means of benefiting the natives themselves. We shall deal with them much more easily if we know their ideas and superstitions and customs.

(Taplin, 1879a:Preface)

There were twenty four respondents. Below I discuss information provided by two of the missionary respondents, and later some of the other respondents, particularly to Taplin's questions 20 and 21:

20. Have they any beliefs in gods, demons, or supernatural beings? If so, what are they?

21. Are there any legends or traditions amongst them? If so, please relate some of them? If possible, give one in the native language with a literal translation.

(Taplin, 1879a:6)

The Rev. R.W. Holden's was the first documented response, actually regarding his past contact with the "Maroura" of New South Wales. Holden was the former superintendant of the Poonindie Native Institution on Eyre Peninsula in S.A., as well as a missionary to Aboriginal people in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. The "Maroura Tribe" occupied the land at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers. To question 20 he responded "They believe a great deal in evil spirits." To question 21 he replied:

They think 'Norallie' once walked about on earth amongst them, but after a time he became dissatisfied, and departed to the world above. One day he saw how the aborigines were destroying the game on account of the great tameness of all animals.



So he came down and called all animals around him and addressed them, telling them to beware of natives. Ever after birds and beasts became wild and more difficult to catch. The serpent was doing much mischief, when 'Norallie' came down and killed him. They say 'Norallie's' wife is very cruel, and will punish all black men if she can. 'Norallie' will never die; he had no beginning. Some think he has one son, a good boy.

(Holden in Taplin, 1879a:18)

In an endnote Holden elaborates further, confirming that his 'Norallie' character is in fact the Ancestral Hero Ngurunderi, who is also prominent in Ngarrindjeri Dreaming narratives<sup>4</sup>:

They believe in 'Norallie', one who made all things, and that he married, and they consider his wife will punish bad natives bye-and-bye.

They consider the course of the Murray was pursued by the winding of a very large serpent, and that this serpent was killed by this great man 'Norallie'....

The moon disappears each month to form stars, and 'Norallie' makes another moon when he has finished making the stars...

(Holden in Taplin, 1879a:27)

Taplin's own responses to these questions were, of course, regarding the "Narrinyeri Tribe" of the Lower Murray. They were relatively comprehensive, and were combined with those less detailed responses of Police-trooper E.H. Deane of Wellington, Police-Corporal John Dann of Milang, and Crown Lands Ranger George Wadmore of Meningie - all of whom had associations with the different clans of the Ngarrindjeri people. Police-trooper Moriarty also reported on a clan of the Ngarrindjeri from the Goolwa region, but because of his "very able and intelligent series of answers", they are recorded separately by Taplin (1879a: 33), and will be discussed later.

As with his first (1873) account of the "mythology" of the "Narrinyeri" (see its reproduction in Woods 1879:55-65), Taplin's rendition of their "folklore" is very similar in content to that recorded by Meyer in 1846. Taplin's (1879a) account begins as follows:

The great god of the Narrinyeri is Nurunderi. They also believe in several demi-gods called Waiungare, Napelle, and demons Pepi, Melapi, Nalkaru, Mulgewanke, and Karungpe. The traditions of the Narrinyeri all refer more or less to Nurunderi and his adventures and exploits.

Nurunderi, their great and wonderful god or chief, came down the Darling with his followers. When he arrived at the lower River Murray he sent back two of his men to tell those from whence he came of his arrival. They never rejoined Nurunderi. The chief and his party are said to have crossed the country from the Murray - apparently from the south bend - to the lakes, striking Lake Albert. They found the country around the lakes in possession of blacks under Waiungare and Nepelle. Various marvellous adventures are told of these personages....

(Taplin, 1879a:38)

Taplin's entry continues with similar accounts to those referred to in his 1863 publication. However, his 1879a account is significant because it is the only one of two entries (in this

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<sup>4</sup> In Chapter Eight I elaborate in detail on different accounts of the Ngurunderi epic, that begins at the junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers. In Taplin's and other accounts, Ngurunderi pursues a giant Murray Cod, rather than the 'serpent' referred to in Holden's (1879) account.

1879 volume) to record a mythological narrative in the original language of the Indigenous people under study. In fact these two (as far as I am aware) are the first published texts in an Aboriginal language of the Dreaming narrative genre.<sup>5</sup> Taplin's runs for only five lines, along with an English translation. I quote his entry in full below:

The following is a native myth in the vernacular of the Narrinyeri:-  
'Norar ngertir ulangk, kar morokkir an mamar. Kar tuppil an mamar Tipping.  
Wanyar muldurar ngungyin namuramb an mamar. Wunyar pulkeri muldurar pettir an mami. Wunyar norar ngrakkuwallir. Wunyar norar muldarar mendir. kar pingkir muldarar brugungai wunyar Kinemin wunyar norar balpewallin lun ellin tukkeri.'

Translation - 'The pelicans fished in the lake and caught some tukkeri fish. They carried the fish to Point Sturt. Then the magpies made a fire to cook the fish with. The greedy magpies then stole the fish. The pelicans were angry with the magpies, and they fought. The magpies were rolled in the ashes, which made them black. Then the pelicans became white like the tukkeri fish, which they had eaten.'

(Taplin, 1879a:39)

This text is of particular interest because it is very similar in content to the many 'myths' that have been published as children's stories in Australia since the turn of the twentieth century. For reasons speculated upon in this study, Aboriginal Dreaming narratives that are aetiological in nature, particularly regarding the origins of Australia's (often unique) birds and animals, have become popularised over the years in children's literature. Narratives that tell why the crow is black, or why the emu cannot fly, and countless others of this sub-genre, continue to be published today by both white and Aboriginal-run publishing houses. The above text of Taplin's is, as far as I am aware, the beginnings of this sub-genre. It is only preceded by his earlier (1863) account of the same 'myth', which he writes of in English. This was accompanied in the same volume by a second 'how-so' narrative, which was again paraphrased in English by Taplin:

the Narrinyeri tell some curious but absurd stories about animals. For instance, they say that originally the turtle possessed venomous fangs, and the snake had none; so the latter begged the former to make an exchange, offering to barter his own head for the turtle's fangs, alleging, as a reason, that he lived on the shore exposed to the attacks of the black fellows, while the turtle occupied a secure position in the Lake. So the turtle consented to the bargain, and ever since then the snake has had venomous fangs, and the turtle a snake-like head and neck.

(Taplin in Woods, 1979:62)

Taplin's accounts of such 'how-so' narratives differ from the popularised style of this sub-genre in two important respects. First, Taplin includes Place as a point of reference for both these narratives, referring to Point Sturt in the first narrative, and "the Lake" (Lake Alexandrina) in the other. Second, Taplin (in 1879a) chose to reproduce his narrative about the magpie becoming black using the voice of its original narrator, and in particular in an

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<sup>5</sup> The other account given in the vernacular is that by Police-trooper Moriarty regarding the Ngarrindjeri clan living in the Goolwa region (see Taplin, 1879a:51). The same year a very brief segment of a Kaurna Dreaming narrative was also published in the vernacular, originally collected by Wyatt, the former Protector of Aborigines (see Wyatt, 1879:25), which was also reproduced in Woods (1879:181).

Indigenous language, rather than just paraphrasing in English (as he did in Woods, 1879:62).

### 3.1.4 Clamor Schürmann

After working with Teichelmann among the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains, the Lutheran missionary Rev. Clamor W. Schürmann moved west to work amongst the Parnkalla (also spelt Barngala) people on Eyre Peninsula in S.A. He had a good ear for languages, and quickly learnt and published on the local Indigenous language, but also published on his ethnographic findings. His work: *The Aboriginal tribes of Port Lincoln in South Australia, their mode of life, manners, customs, etc.* was published in Woods (1879:209-251). It seems Schürmann shared the same contempt for Aboriginal beliefs and 'mythology' as that held by his fellow Lutheran missionaries Teichelmann and Meyer. Of Parnkalla Dreaming narratives he writes:

The Aborigines have a great number of fabulous traditions handed down to them by their forefathers, all of which are characterised by a high degree of improbability and monstrosity, as will be sufficiently apparent from a few that I shall mention:-

I. Pulyállana was in days of yore a great man, who conferred on succeeding generations the benefit of having given names to many localities in the southern and western part of this district, which they retain to this day. He had, however, the misfortune to lose both his wives, who absconded from him - an event that by no means contributed to keep him in good humour. After a great deal of fruitless search, he at last hit upon their track, and, following it, overtook them somewhere about Cape Catastrophe, where they were both killed by him. They were then converted into stone, together with their children, and all may be seen there at the present day in the shape of rocks and islands; and their breathing or groaning be heard in a cave, into which the roaring sea rushes a long way underground. Pulyallana himself was subsequently raised into the sky, at or near Puyundu (the native name for Cape Sir Isaac), where he is sometimes seized with violent fits of rage. On such occasions he raves and storms about among the clouds, and keeps shouting most lustily, like a native when under the influence of violent passion, thus producing what is commonly called thunder. He is armed with waddies, which he used to throw at the natives, particularly the pardnapas, whom he frequently cut through in the middle, hurling the upper and lower parts of the body in opposite directions. Their ancestors, however, entreated him to spare the pardnapas, and hit the sheoaks instead; and this prayer prevailing with him, he now vents his rage on them. The lightning is also his production, being caused by the sudden jerking or opening of his legs in his furious gestures.

(Schürmann in Woods, 1879:238-239)

Schürmann paraphrases four more narratives related to him by the Parnkalla, but concludes his account with the barbed comment: "The natives have many more similar tales among them; the above, however, which seemed to possess more of an interest than any of the rest, will be sufficient to show the monstrous and in every respect ridiculous character" (Schürmann in Woods, 1879:241).

Despite Schürmann's judgement on the credibility of such 'monstrous tales', it should be acknowledged that he did see fit to record them, even if in English, and to retain the

geographic details in the narratives that give them some sense of Place, even providing the Indigenous name in some instances. He did, however, choose to paraphrase them solely in English, despite his proficiency in the local vernacular. I quote the remaining four paraphrased narratives by Schürmann, in their entirety, in Appendix 3.2 (from Woods, 1879:239-241). The second and fourth narratives are of particular interest because they tell of Parnkalla belief regarding the origins of the native cat (the quoll species) and the curlew, respectively. I discuss further narratives, from other sources but from the same region, which also relate to the origin of these same animal and bird species in Chapter Seven. I have chosen to quote Schürmann's narratives in full because many Nungas brought up at Point Pearce, who are seeking to reclaim their languages and cultural knowledge from old historical sources, have a great interest in narratives from the York and Eyre Peninsula region. Schürmann (in Woods, 1879) is, of course, no longer in print.

### 3.1.5 Christina Smith

Just a year following the publication of the above ethnographic writings, edited by Taplin and Woods, a small booklet was written by Mrs. James Smith: *The Booandik Tribe of South Australian Aborigines: a sketch of their habits, customs, legends, and language*. It included a further sub-title "Also an account of the efforts made by Mr. and Mrs. James Smith to Christianise and civilise them". It was published in 1880 by the South Australian Government free of charge. Christina Smith's purpose in publishing this book, of 139 pages, was:

...solely from a sense of duty. This once numerous and powerful tribe of South-Eastern natives is now represented by a miserable remnant, which will in a few years, with other aboriginal peoples of Southern Australia, have withered away.... she trusts that in the future it will not be found unserviceable to the historian, the antiquary, and the philologist. ...The aborigines themselves are fully conscious of the decline of their race, and lament it bitterly, and many of the more intelligent of them have often requested the authoress not to allow them to be entirely forgotten.

(Smith, 1880:iii-iv)

Christina Smith was the wife of the missionary James Smith, and worked herself even after her husband's death with the Booandik (also spelt Boandik and Bunganditj) as a missionary and teacher for 35 years. In her 1880 publication she includes ten narratives, seven of which are Dreaming narratives; the remainder are historical accounts of the Booandik. The Dreaming narratives run for ten pages, and include:

- The first Blacks
- The origin of the kangaroo
- How fire was obtained
- Why the emu has short wings
- The end of the last of the giants
- Origin of MacDonnell Bay

## Tennateona (the devil)

These texts are of particular significance because of their early publication, but also because the majority are reproduced as complete narratives, rather than being paraphrased, or discussed within a commentary by the author (as in Meyer, 1846). They all appear in English only, although some Booandik words are retained for story characters. I quote below in full the narrative "Why the emu has short wings", and another, "How fire was obtained", appears in full in Appendix 8.3. They are both aetiological in nature, explaining why different birds and animals appear as they do today. Many versions of this same emu narrative have appeared in Dreaming 'stories' published for children over the last century. I argue that a popularised and predictable structure has developed over the years for such 'how-so' narratives, particularly aetiological animal narratives. Smith's rendition is therefore a very early precursor of what has become a popularised sub-genre of Dreaming narratives for children. However, unlike later versions or renditions, Smith retains some sense of Place in her narrative, and provides vernacular names for her main characters:

### WHY THE EMU HAS SHORT WINGS

The emu and the turkey were very friendly. Their families played together, and lived together sometimes. The emu made a large fire, and asked the 'Laay' (turkey) to bring her children and kill them, and then she (the emu) would kill her's, and they would have a grand dinner. The simple 'laay' killed all her children, roasted them at the fire, and they ate them. Then came the emu's turn to kill her children; but she refused, and hid them. After a time the 'laay' made friends with the emu again and invited her to come to Merrigpean, told her what good wings she had, and that she could brush the ashes with her wings. The emu followed to Merrigpena, and put her wings to clear the fire away; but she burned them down to a stump. Thus was the emu rewarded for telling a lie by having her wings shortened.

(Smith, 1880:22)

The second narrative from Smith, which I reproduce in the appendix, differs in that it does include some commentary by the writer within the narrative itself. Again it is aetiological in nature. The way this aetiological theme, involving the metamorphoses of human-like characters into birds and animals, has become popularised in Australian literature is an issue that will be discussed throughout this thesis. It will also become evident, as I discuss more recent representers of Dreaming narratives for children, that certain narrative details have been consistently removed over the years, such as specific names of story characters and the location of events. But it is interesting to speculate on the origins of such how-so narratives, even prior to the seminal work of representers such as Katie Langloh Parker. We see, I believe, hints of these origins in Smith's work, particularly when she confesses that she has "often asked who or what caused these metamorphoses" (Smith, 1880:21).

Another noteworthy feature of Smith's rendition of Booandik narratives is the way she begins two of them with some reference to time. In her introduction to "How fire was obtained" she begins: "A long time ago...". This is the only narrative she begins in this way,

although her "Origin of MacDonnell Bay" narrative begins: "At one time, it is said,..." (Smith, 1880:22). This particular way of beginning a story for children is not specific to Australian narratives of course, but it seems that Smith was one of the first to use this long-ago-time-centred introduction in published Australian Dreaming narratives. The first (as far as I am aware) was Samuel Gason, discussed below, who first published on the Dieyerie (also spelt Diyari and Dieri) of the Cooper's Creek region in 1879 (in Woods). He began "The Creation" narrative in a rather biblical manner with: "In the beginning...". It is interesting to observe how a formulaic beginning has developed, over the past century, for many Australian Dreaming narratives, particularly those aimed at children. The popularised 'how-so' sub-genre invariably now begins: "In the Dreamtime...", or "Long, long ago in the Dreamtime...". But it wasn't until the concept of a "Dreamtime" was introduced into the ethnographic literature, at the turn of the twentieth century by Spencer and Gillen (whom I discuss later), that such formulaic beginnings became commonplace.

### 3.1.6 Daisy Bates

Daisy Bates was a remarkable woman who, as a journalist, travelled from England to Australia in 1899 to investigate alleged cruelty to Western Australian Aborigines (see Bates, 1972:1). It was this trip that triggered Bates into choosing to spend the remainder of her life living with the Indigenous people of Australia. This was not because she wished to Christianise them; for that reason she should not (theoretically) be categorised as a missionary. She chose to live with them because she feared that they were a dying race, and wished to make their lives better, knowing that it was because of her own people that the Indigenous people's lives and cultures were threatened. She worked for no mission, and she belonged to no particular church; all her life's savings were spent on providing for the Indigenous people she chose to live with and learn from. That is not to say, however, that she did not have a faith:

...They trusted me, they were sure of me, and through me they believed and understood, I hope, of the All-Loving. My veneration for my own religion is too great for me to reduce it to pidgin English, and I have found it impossible to translate into any one of the 115 aboriginal languages with which I am acquainted. There are no words, no possible association of ideas, in which to convey our own beautiful prayers full of imagery and the passion of supplication.

(Bates, 1972:154)

In *The Passing of the Aborigines*, first published in 1938, she writes of her early observations in Broome:

I realised that the Australian native was not so much deliberately secretive as inarticulate. He looked upon his 'black life' as apart from his association with the whites, few of whom had shown any interest in it. I also realised that to glean anything of value, I must think with his mentality and talk in his language. By the wells and the creeks, sitting in the camps in the firelight, on horse-back and on foot, my notebook and pencil were always with me.... I Pretended that my native name was Kallowar, and that I was a *mirru-roo-jandu*, or magic woman who had been one

of the twenty-two wives of Leeber, a patriarchal or "dreamtime" father.... At last, with the utmost simplicity and frankness the old men disclosed to me little by little their most secret rites and initiations, without fear of ridicule or objection, just as they disclosed the mythologies and allegories of the mind of the primeval black man as mystical in their beauty as the sagas of the old Norse gods.

(Bates, 1972:24-26)

Bates was a prolific recorder of cultural information, and on her death in 1951 donated all her notes to various libraries. Eighty portfolios are held in the National Library, while various notes are held in the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide. However, despite Bates' voluminous recordings, and production of newspaper articles, she only ever published one book: *The Passing of the Aborigines: a lifetime spent among the natives of Australia*. This book, which has been reprinted several times since 1938, documents Bates' time with various Indigenous groups, and records a number of their traditions. She also paraphrases two Dreaming narratives, one within the chapter on her time at Ooldea, and the other in her appendices. They are both written in English: the first "The legend of Ooldea water" (Bates, 1972:164-6), and the latter (of two pages) "Legend of how the Eagle-hawk brought the water to Yuria Gabbi" (Bates, 1972: 247-8). The second features Eagle-hawk and Crow, which are two characters that occur in many narratives from across eastern and southern Australia (see Tindale, 1939), and are assumed to have links with past conflicts between different Indigenous groups, or even with the origins of kinship moieties (see Elkin, 1948:82-83). Such conflict narratives inevitably revolve around the theme of relationships and marriage, with the predictable stealing of wives by protagonists - in Bates' case, by little hawk. Bates does feature a very small portion in the vernacular (in this case a Western Desert language) in the form of the mocking voice of the crow. In both of her Dreaming narrative accounts there is some reference to Place, which contextualises the narrative in the country of the Kokatha. Both texts are aetiological in nature, explaining the origins of the physical attributes of various animals and birds.

Bates probably intended publishing a book on the myths of the various Aboriginal groups, because she recorded many. But it wasn't until after her death that Angus and Robertson published the book *Tales Told to Kabbarli: Aboriginal legends collected by Daisy Bates*, in 1972. The many texts that appear in this book are "retold" by Barbara Ker Wilson, and according to Ker Wilson, represent "a small part" of the original Daisy Bates collection (Ker Wilson, 1972:dustcover). Ker Wilson reproduces 34 narratives, and typically begins them with a phrase that sets them in a "long ago period when men first began to inhabit the earth" (see Ker Wilson's preface, 1972:9). They also typically tell of the exploits of spirit men and women, or of animals before they took on the forms they have today. See Appendix 8.4 for one sample of these narratives, as represented by Ker Wilson, called "The Mulgarguttuk and Mardyet".

## 3.2 GOVERNMENT PROTECTORS and POLICE

Although I discuss the publications of the government appointed Protectors of Aborigines and Police together in this section, it should not be assumed that they all shared the same attitudes to Aboriginal people and their beliefs. Some of the later Protectors did share the same contempt felt by the police, who found themselves working in remote parts of Australia. However, for some of the earlier Protectors, this was not the case.

### 3.2.1 The first Protectors of Aborigines in South Australia

The very early Government appointed Protectors of Aborigines, to the newly founded colony of South Australia, were instructed in their job specifications to endeavour to learn the local language of the 'natives' in their charge: "no time should be lost in acquiring a knowledge of their native tongue" (see the instructions of the Colonial Secretary, Robert Gouger, quoted in Amery, 1998:141). This requirement was taken seriously by a few of the early appointees, particularly by William Wyatt and Matthew Moorhouse, both medical doctors who published wordlists of the languages spoken by the people in their charge.<sup>6</sup> Moorhouse, who followed Wyatt as the Protector from 1839 to 1857, adopted the linguistic conventions developed by the missionaries Teichelmann and Schürmann, who published a grammar and wordlist of the local Adelaide language in 1840. Jane Simpson (1992:410) proposes that, along with the Meyer, these early recorders form an "Adelaide School of language researchers". Amery (1998:172) adds to this school another Dresden missionary Klose and the Wesleyan lay preacher Weatherstone. He would now add a further member, Edward John Eyre, who drew from and published on the earlier linguistic and ethnographic works emanating from The Adelaide School (personal communication, June 2000)

Eyre served as the Protector at the Moorunde ration depot on the Murray River, but is probably better known for his explorations throughout central Australia. In 1845 his journal of two volumes was published: *Journals of expedition of discovery into Central Australia and overland from Adelaide to King George's Sound*. Added to this is "An account of the manners and customs of the Aborigines and the state of their relations with Europeans". Within this account, he discusses similarities between different 'tribes' of Aboriginal people he encountered on his exploratory travels, as well as findings from Moorhouse and others from the Adelaide School, and his own observations of the Moorunde people. In his brief section on "Religious Ideas" he concludes:

...different tribes give a different account of their beliefs, but all generally so absurd, so vague, unsatisfactory, and contradictory, that is impossible at present to say with

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<sup>6</sup> Wyatt (in Woods, 1879) published a wordlist of the Kurna language of the Adelaide Plains and the Ramindjeri language spoken by the Encounter Bay 'tribe', while Moorhouse (1846) published both a grammar and wordlist of the Ngayawang language spoken on the Murray River from Wellington to the Rufus.



any certainty what they really believe, or whether they have any independent belief at all.

(Eyre, 1845:356)

Eyre's own vague observation of Indigenous beliefs raises some interesting issues. We know that the Dresden missionaries had contempt for the beliefs of the Kaurna and the Ramindjeri people, and openly challenged them to believe only in their Christian God. The so-called 'unsatisfactory' responses that Eyre received to his enquiries could have been intentionally 'vague', knowing that what they divulged could have been ridiculed. Furthermore, the 'sacred' songs that were revealed by Captain Kack in confidence to missionaries Teichelmann and Schurmann were actually published in their 1840 book, only to be republished in Eyre's volume. Eyre follows the song by citing the missionaries commentary: "The first word in each line denotes things sacred or secret, which the females and children are never allowed to see" (Eyre, 1845:241). Unlike the Dresden missionaries, Eyre does not paraphrase any Dreaming narratives, but instead makes the following comment on their creationary beliefs:

The account given me by some of the natives of the Murray of the origin of the creation, is, that there are four individuals living up among the clouds, called Nooreele, a father and his three male children, but there is no mother. The father is all-powerful, and of benevolent character. He made the earth, trees, waters, &c., gave names to every thing and place, placed the natives in their different districts, telling each tribe that they were to inhabit such and such localities, and were to speak such and such a language. It is said that he brought the natives originally from some place over the waters to the eastward. The Nooreele never die, and the souls (ludko, literally a shadow) of the dead natives will go up and join them in the skies, and will never die again. Other tribes of natives give an account of a serpent of immense size, and inhabiting high rocky mountains, which, they say, produced creation by a blow of his tail. But their ideas and descriptions are too incongruous and unintelligible to deduce any definite or connected story from them.

(Eyre, 1845:356-357)

Eyre's commentary (see my emphasis) not only confirms his doubts on the credibility of Indigenous beliefs, but also his communication problems. Although he drew from the published and unpublished wordlists of others for his own 1845 publication, he never published a wordlist of the Moorunde people. Although Wyatt's work predates Eyre's, his work wasn't published until later.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.2.2 Later Protectors and Police

Following the challenge to Christian beliefs in creation, with the emergence of Darwinian theory in 1865, there was much debate in the late 1800s regarding the origin and status of Indigenous peoples such as the Aboriginal people of Australia. Interest began to grow in their physical features as the search continued to scientifically prove, or disprove, Darwin's 'origin of the species'. An interest also developed regarding Indigenous customs and beliefs, and

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<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately Moorhouse's journal was never published, despite it containing much detail on the Kaurna people and other Indigenous peoples who later converged on Adelaide after 1836. To this day, the original journal has never been located, and nor has Wyatt's (personal communication, Rob Amery, June 2000).

questions were raised about whether these so-called 'savages' were a lower form of human existence, and whether they were in fact less intelligent than their colonisers. Such a finding would help justify the British usurping Indigenous land and depriving its people of the same rights afforded British citizens. This interest in the status of Aboriginal people became especially urgent as the world began to realise the very real possibility that the Indigenous people of Australia could 'die out'.

By the mid 1870s, a number of publications had emerged containing wordlists and grammars of different Aboriginal languages, due to the efforts of missionaries and some early government Protectors, along with commentaries on Aboriginal 'customs' and 'habits'. But little progress had been made in making any comprehensive or systematic recording of Aboriginal beliefs and mythology. Thus the attempt by Taplin, in the late 1890s, to send out his questionnaire to ascertain more about the beliefs of Australia's Indigenous people. The responses he received from government workers (such as Protectors, Rangers and the Police) are discussed below, and reveal that many of the respondents held Aboriginal people and their beliefs with contempt - if they deemed their Indigenous charges had any beliefs at all. One of the exceptions, however, was the publication of the earlier works of Wyatt.

### 3.2.2.1 William Wyatt

William Wyatt was appointed as the interim Protector of Aborigines to the colony of South Australia in 1837, and served until 1839.<sup>8</sup> He was the first and last (to my knowledge) to record a Dreaming narrative from the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains in the Kurna language. Although Wyatt's research was conducted in the late 1830s, his findings were not actually published until 1879 (in Woods, 1879:157-181) as *Some account of the manners and superstitions of the Adelaide and Encounter Bay Aboriginal tribes*. Within his vernacular wordlist, he cites a small portion of a Dreaming narrative. Despite its brevity, it is an important text because it represents the only portion of a Kurna Dreaming narrative that exists in the vernacular form. It appears as a final sentence among a handful of example sentences within his wordlist (see Wyatt in Woods, 1879:181). It is reproduced below, with Wyatt's chosen anglicised spelling system intact, along with his fairly literal English translation:

*Monána aráche kaia pemane, ea pemáne, ea pemáne, boora kaia kurra pemáne,  
kaia kurra yewáne, kotinne kaia yewáne, kotinne kaia yewáne, burra yerta yewane;  
Monana kaia Tateene kurra winneen.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> He followed Bromley, who was drowned in the Torrens River. See Amery (1998) for more details on the linguistic work conducted on the Kurna language by these early ethnographers.

<sup>9</sup> This text is written in a "Jargon Kurna" (see Simpson, 1996:192-193). It is not clear whether the pidgin features of this text are due to 'Captain Jack' having told the story in a simplified 'foreigner talk' register, or whether it was due to Wyatt having simplified the form of the text in line with his understanding of Kurna grammar and syntax. However, it does display the language repetition that one expects in Dreaming narratives told in the vernacular, an observation also made by Simpson (1996:193).

Monana threw many spears, here threw, here threw, by and by a spear upwards threw, the spear above stuck fast, by and by in ground stuck fast; Monana (by the) spears climbed, above went.

(Wyatt in Woods, 1879:181)

This brief narrative is similar in theme to the longer Waijungngari narrative recorded by Meyer, except the Ancestral Hero in Wyatt's text is Monana - not Waijungngari (remembering, in the Kurna language, Monana actually means 'ancestor'). Wyatt concludes his translation of his example text with the comment: "This statement is in the words of Monaicha wonweetpeena konoocha<sup>10</sup>, or 'Captain Jack'" (Wyatt in Woods, 1879:181). Hence we find one of the earliest recordings of a Dreaming narrative that actually names and acknowledges its original Indigenous narrator.

### 3.2.2.2 Corporal Shaw and others

As already mentioned, in 1879 Taplin published *The Folklore, Manners, Customs, and languages of the South Australian Aborigines*. In order to gather the information for his book, he had to appeal to any literate person (besides other missionaries) who had regular contact with Aboriginal people, and who might have some knowledge of their 'folklore', whether they were qualified to respond or not. An obvious source of information were those employed at the time to run the government depots that distributed rations to Aboriginal people. Below I outline their published responses to Taplin's queries, specifically regarding their 'folklore'. Together they reveal the lack of understanding and sympathy these police constables, troopers and rangers had for their Indigenous charges in the 1870s.

Corporal Shaw was the second respondent to be documented in Taplin's 1879 publication, with his reporting on the "Overland Corner Tribe" of the Upper Murray, which he called the "Rankbirit". Shaws "informant" was "an intelligent native named 'Noontoo Pertchy', who resided at Chowilla" (Shaw in Taplin, 1879a:29). It is a pleasant surprise to find, in reading these responses, that the original sources of the information were usually named and acknowledged - which was rare in later publications of this genre. For this Taplin was mainly responsible, as he requested in his questionnaire the names of their sources (rather than the police themselves wanting to give credit where credit was due). Of the "Rankbirit", Shaw claims: "They have no belief in God. They believe in a devil, which they call 'Pootera', but they cannot describe it". Shaw then proclaims "I do not think they have any legends or traditions" (Shaw in Taplin, 1879a:29). A similar response was given to Taplin by Police-trooper Ewens of Blanchetown, regarding the "Moorundee tribe", also on the River Murray. He responded "in the negative" to both questions on religion and extant "legends" (see Taplin, 1879a:30)

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<sup>10</sup> The Kurna name provided for Captain Jack by Wyatt contrasts with the name used by Schürmann. He referred to the same man as Minno Kunuitya Kadlitpinna (personal communication: Rob Amery, June 2000).

By contrast, Police-trooper T. Moriarty of Goolwa, who reported on the "Tanganarin" (or Goolwa) clan of the Narrinyeri, was unusually knowledgeable about his charges. He made the following observations, quoted below question-by-question, beginning with their belief in the here-after:

19. The aborigines here believe that they will be taken to Wyr (heaven) by Ngurundere, who is now the great king of the place.

20. They also believe in Muldarpe, and a host of minor demons.

21. They have a stock of mythological legends. Ngurundere had two wives who caught a large fish and a small one. They gave him the small fish to eat, and baked the large one for themselves. When he ate his, he saw the large one and became very angry, and said to them "You shall die for that, and all the Tanganarin shall die, and there will be fighting and sickness, and evil spirits until then". Ngurundere, after creating them, made everything for their use, and taught them to use their implements and weapons in hunting, fishing, and fighting. But after the sentence of death by him for the deception practised by his wives, he deprived Tanganarins of knowledge and power, and, in his anger, left them, and ascended to Wyr (their heaven). They were then ignorant and powerless, and they lived like the beasts of the field. After a long time there was born of a *virgin* a good and wise man, who was named Wyungare. He returned to them their lost wisdom and power, and taught them sorcery. When this great teacher had regenerated them, he [sic] was taken up to Wyr by Ngurundere, where he is now the second king of that place; and when a Tanganarin dies Wyungare takes his spirit up to Wyr, and gets him a fine place in that country from Ngurundere.

The following is the above legend in native:- "Ngurundere nak ningkaiengk nape. Kengk ngartin hikke grauwe mami Kurangk muralappe. Kengk pempir kinangk hik muralappe takuramb. Kengk merammin hikkai grauwe mami Kenggunambe. Ungunuk il takker, kil nakkir grauwe mami. Kil un enggunangk nyenungkun. Kil yarnin Kenggaunangk ngurl hik onduaniratye porna kanangk. Kar Tanganarin hik onduaratye pornani, kanangk wunyl wiwirri, wirrangar, brupar, mendin." <sup>11</sup>

(Moriarty in Taplin, 1879a:51-52)

Despite Taplin's request, Moriarty was the only other respondent (besides Taplin himself) to collect and reproduce a 'legend' in the vernacular for this publication. This particular narrative from Moriarty is yet another version of the Ngurunderi Dreaming, which was also paraphrased by Meyer (1846) and mentioned by Taplin (1879a & 1879b). It has since become one of the most well known Dreaming narratives from S.A., and has been published and reproduced in numerous forms of media, including film and print (see e.g. Langloh Parker, 1898 & Unaipon, 1990). For this reason, this particular narrative is the focus of Chapter Eight.

Another police-trooper to respond to Taplin, for his 1879a volume, was Police-trooper Samuel Gason, of Barrow Creek, S.A. He responded regarding the "Dieyerie Tribe" (or Dieri / Diyari) of the Lake Eyre and Cooper's Creek region in the north of S.A. Of their beliefs, he wrote: "Mooramoora is a good spirit, god, or divine being; and although they have no form of religious worship, they speak of Mooramoora with great reverence". Gason spent nine years working in the region, and wrote his own fifty page account, entitled *Manners and*

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<sup>11</sup> Moriarty seems to have conferred with Taplin, as he has adopted the same spelling conventions (such as word initial "h", use of double consonants "kk" and "mm" and the palatal stop "ty" etc.).

*customs of the Dieyerie tribe of Australian Aborigines*, which was published in the 1879 Woods collection. He includes the following account of creation, according to the Dieyerie:

#### THEIR TRADITIONS. - THE CREATION

In the beginning, say the Dieyerie, the Mooramoorra (Good Spirit) made a number of small black lizards (these are still to be met with under dry bark), and being pleased with them he promised they should have power over all other creeping things.

The Mooramoorra then divided their feet into toes and fingers, and placing his forefinger on the centre of the face created a nose, and so on in like manner afterwards eyes, mouth and ears. The spirit then placed one of them in a standing position, which it could not, however, retain, whereupon the Deity cut off the tail, and the lizard walked erect. They were then made male and female, so as to perpetuate the race, and leave a tribe to dispute their ancestry with Darwin's monkeys.

Men, women, or children do not vary in the slightest degree in this account of their creation.

(Gason, in Woods, 1879:260)

It is significant that Police-trooper Gason had enough interest in the Dieyerie people to prepare his own account, which includes a Dieyerie wordlist. But it seems, like the Lutheran missionaries also serving in the Cooper's Creek region, he held certain aspects of their 'customs', particularly their ceremonies, with disdain. It should be noted that it was under considerable physical hardship, but with great zeal, that the first mission to the Dieyerie was established at Lake Killalpininna in 1867 (see Kneebone & Rathjen, 1996). Gason actually claims it was primarily to assist these missionaries in their work that he decided to publish his ethnographic findings after working for nine years in the region. Gason states (1879:Preface) that he hopes his writings "may be of some assistance to those pious missionaries and others, who are extending so greatly inland this vast continent, civilisation, through its gracious handmaiden, Christianity."

Police-trooper Gason was unusual in providing such detail for Taplin's 1879 publication. From Police-trooper Humphries, of Border Town, there was no response regarding the 'legends' of the "Tatiara and South-Eastern Tribes" (see Taplin, 1879a:57). Similarly, R. Lawson of Padthaway, writing of the "Coolucooluck Tribe", claims: "These people have no ideas of a future state, nor of gods or demons, neither are there any legends or traditions amongst them" (Lawson in Taplin, 1879a:59). There were also no responses from Chief-rangers Singleton and Tolmer regarding the "Naracoorte and south-east Coast Tribes" (see Taplin, 1879a:59-61), and no further insights on the same group were provided by the shepherd Charles Fisher of Tarpeena (see Taplin, 1879a:61).

In the same volume, Edward McEntire, Crown Lands ranger of Kadina and Wallaroo, writes of the "Wallaroo Tribe" on the Yorke Peninsula, with the disparaging claims: "They have no belief in anything beyond the evidence of their own eyes" and "They have no legends nor traditions beyond their own experience" (McEntire in Taplin, 1879a:62). Others, such as Police-trooper Noble, who responded regarding the "Flinders Range Tribe", just chose to

leave these particular sections of the questionnaire blank (see Taplin, 1879a:64). From Mr. Bedford Hack, reporting on the "Mount Remarkable Tribe" or the "Noocoona" (or Nukunu, from between Port Pirie and Port Augusta), the response was: "They believe in an evil spirit only" (Hack in Taplin, 1879a:65).

Of the "Ku-ka-tha tribe" of the west coast of South Australia (from Port Lincoln to Fowler's Bay), the Corporal of police Chris Provis, formerly of Streaky Bay, said the following:

20. They have some vague idea of something which they call mun-da-bi (spirit), or pur-ka-bid-ni (devil), which they imagine can do them harm, and which they appear afraid of meeting, particularly at night; but they have no idea whatever of a god, or creator, or anything pertaining to futurity.

21. I never heard of any traditions or legends.

(Provis in Taplin, 1879a:95)

And from the Crown Lands ranger Cole, of Port Linclon; Police-trooper Clode, of Venus Bay; Mr James Bryant, of Yardea (Gawler Ranges) and Police-trooper Richards, of Fowler's Bay, there was no response at all regarding any mythology of the Indigenous people of their jurisdiction (see Taplin, 1879a:93). Such was their lack or interest.

Taplin himself concedes that regarding his findings from the Northern Territory (which was administered by South Australia at the time), both the police and the Protector of Aborigines replied with "the most meagre and unsatisfactory description" (Taplin, 1879a:92). He had to, therefore, turn elsewhere for information, namely to the medical officer Dr. Sturt, who reported on the "Larakeeyah" of the Port Darwin Peninsula. But still no 'legends' were recorded. However, Christopher Giles Esq. who was the telegraph station-master at Charlotte Waters in central Australia, had the following to say of the mythology of the "Antakerrinya Tribe":

20. They speak of a demon appearing in the form of a blackfellow, and sometimes as a white man. He is said to travel near the surface of the ground, but not on it, and consequently can never be seen. The natives here do not seem to fear travelling at night, and their dread of the demon does not appear extreme, as is the case in other parts of this continent.

21. No legends or traditions, so far as can be at present ascertained.

(Giles in Taplin, 1879a:91)

Unlike many of Taplin's other respondents, at least Giles conceded that there may be "legends", but he just hadn't been able to "ascertain" any. In contrast to this lack of inquiry

or interest displayed by the many police and rangers working in isolated parts of both S.A. and the N.T., more concern was shown by women who found themselves living with their husbands in isolated pockets of Australia. The following section will demonstrate that a couple of women in particular, whose circumstances meant their main source of human company were the local Indigenous people, would have responded with great interest to a questionnaire from Taplin (if he had survived long enough to send another a decade or so later).

### 3.3 WIVES OF PASTORALISTS

Up until the 1890s, the dominant representers of Aboriginal Dreaming narratives were missionaries and government workers, who inevitably showed contempt or passed judgement on the beliefs they wrote of. Furthermore, they invariably chose to paraphrase the narratives, and only included them as a novelty within their longer commentaries on the 'habits' and 'manners' of the different Aboriginal groups they described. There was never any attempt to publish a collection of mythological narratives simply for their own literary or mythological interest. That was, of course, until the seminal publication of Katie Langloh Parker's book *Legendary tales* in 1896. But before I discuss her quite prolific works, I shall set the literary and scientific stage that she was entering upon in the 1890s.

In 1878 the Folklore Society (which is still in existence) was founded in London, by a group of enthusiastic men "who wished to see surviving scraps of folklore collected and printed". They were concerned that the remnants that remained amongst Indigenous peoples could be lost for ever, so immediately issued a journal. This was published in London by David Nutt, "an esteemed and successful publisher", whose son, Alfred Nutt, was a founding member of the society. Another member was "the well known writer" Andrew Lang, who was later to write the Introduction to Langloh Parker's first book. Andrew Lang's own book, *Custom and Myth*, was first published in 1884. Lang was also a reader for David Nutt. In 1891 an International Folklore Congress was held in London. It was written up in the British press and aroused great interest. These same papers were read in the colonies, sowing the seeds of interest among the isolated wives of pastoralists in the Australian bush (see Muir, 1982:148-149).

In 1889 Dr. Alan Carroll wrote an article in the *Sydney Quarterly Magazine* noting the lack of written material on the mythology and traditions of Australia's Indigenous people. No doubt the lack of detail in both Taplin's (1879a) and Woods' (1879) ethnographic collections would have come to his notice. Carroll wrote with regret of the ignorance and prejudice amongst colonists regarding Aboriginal people's beliefs:

...the natives are unable to reveal, to even Europeans who have learned enough of their dialects to be able to hold a conversation with them, those things that are to them

such sacred mysteries that they are not to be spoken of to anyone, white or black, who has not passed the degree of initiation that would permit of such revelation... For these and other reasons, although a century's intercourse has been had with these blacks, very few writers have been able to lay before their readers the mass of mythology, tradition, legend, &c. that exists among the tribes of Australia.  
(quoted in Muir, 1982:148-9)

Within a few years an Australasian Anthropological Association was formed, and a journal established (Muir, 1982:149). It was in this atmosphere of concern, that Aboriginal people and their folklore would be lost forever, that Katie Langloh Parker took up her pen, and Dr. Carroll's challenge, to collect and eventually to publish the 'legendary tales' of the Noongahburrahs of the Euahlayi tribe in central New South Wales.

### 3.3.1 Katie Langloh Parker

One cannot undertake a study of the published Dreaming narratives of Australia's Indigenous peoples without paying considerable attention to the works and influences of Katie Langloh Parker. In 1982, Marcie Muir gave Langloh Parker's writings justified and well-overdue attention in her reflective biography of Langloh Parker's life, which also incorporated the release of Langloh Parker's own autobiographical work "My bush book". In 1998 Hilary Carey, a theological historian, also gives some interesting insights into the influences of Langloh Parker's writings on popularised representations of Dreaming narratives, claiming her "collections have strongly influenced popular accounts of Aboriginal mythology for much of this century" (Carey, 1998:207).

Carey (1998:203 & 208-209) focuses in particular on Langloh Parker's incorporation, within her narratives, of the "Great Spirit Baiame" or "All-Father", which Langloh Parker spells "Byamee". Carey claims there is an increasing dominance of Byamee in Langloh Parker's later works, as she becomes more influenced by Lang and the seminal ethnographic works of Spencer and Gillen, with their introduction of "the long dominance of the Dreaming as a term attached to a particular reading of Aboriginal mythology" (see Carey, 1998:209). Carey asserts that by the time Langloh Parker published her third collection in 1905 she was following fashion by declaring: "Byamee... is to the Euahlayi what the 'Alcheringa' or 'Dream time' is to the Arunta... [O]ur tribe give, as the final answer to any question about the origin of customs, 'Because Byamee say so' (Langloh Parker quoted in Carey, 1998:209). This contrasts (according to Carey, 1998:209) with the "important but not overwhelming figure" of Byamee that appears in Langloh Parker's first publication in 1896, where she simply glosses "Byamee" as "big man (Creator, Culture hero)" (see Langloh Parker, 1978 reprint:183).

Because of the detail in Muir's review of Langloh Parker's life and works, and because of Carey's critical analysis of the influence Langloh Parker has had on the emergence of



"popular writing" on Aboriginal mythology, I do not intend to replicate their findings in my discussion below. Instead I shall briefly review the undeniably important and quite prolific works produced by Langloh Parker throughout her lifetime, and try to complement the findings of both Muir and Carey with my own further analysis of her work.

### 3.3.1.1 Review of K. Langloh Parker's work

In 1896 Langloh Parker's first collection of narratives was published concurrently in Melbourne and London. The London publisher was David Nutt, who was also the publisher of the *Folklore* journal. Langloh Parker's book was given the title: *Australian Legendary Tales: folklore of the Noongaburrahs as told to the picaninnies*<sup>12</sup>. The Introduction by Andrew Lang in this first book reveals the current prejudices and preconceptions that were held in the minds of the colonisers of Australia regarding its Indigenous people:

Australia makes an appeal to the fancy which is all its own... The manners and rights of the natives were far the most archaic of all with which we are acquainted. Temples they have none: no images of gods, no altars of sacrifice; scarce any memorials of the dead.... The archaic intricacies and taboos of the customs and the regulations of the marriage might puzzle a mathematician, and may, when unravelled, explain the less complicated prohibitions of totemism less antique. The people themselves in their struggle for existence had developed great ingenuities. They had the boomerang and the weet-weet, but not the bow; the throwing stick, but not, of course, the sword; the message stick, but not hieroglyphs; and their art was almost purely decorative, in geometrical patterns, not representative.... They were adroit hunters, skilled trackers, born sportsmen; they ride well, and, for savages, play cricket fairly.

(Lang in Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:14-15)

Lang writes, as a distant observer of Indigenous people and their folklore, as if they are already in the past, believing it is only the remnants of these "savages" that remain to tell their 'tales' to the likes of Langloh Parker. It was probably such widely held prejudices, as articulated by Lang, that prompted anthropologists such as Elkin, and later the Berndts among others, to go to such lengths to explain the intricacies and meaning of Aboriginal myths, song and art in their writings four decades later. But rather than excuse Lang for his prejudicial Preface it is more important to try to understand where he was coming from. Andrew Lang was a classical scholar who had a strong interest in the oral literature of the Ancient Greeks, particularly in Homer. To him the the Homeric epics were "immortal", and an indicator of the pinnacles reached by Ancient Greek civilisation. In 1899 Lang's own English translation of "The Homeric Hymns" was published, revealing his strong interest as a "modern Homerologist" and scholar of Ancient Greek. In his "Introductory Essay", Lang contrasts the Homeric Hymns to the Homeric epics the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*:

To the English reader familiar with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the Hymns must appear disappointing, if he comes to them with an expectation of discovering merits like those of the immortal epics. He will not find that they stand to the *Iliad* as Milton's

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<sup>12</sup> According to Muir (1982:170) Langloh Parker actually disliked the term "picaninnies", and did not intend her book to be solely for children, hence the sub-title was probably a marketing ploy by the publisher.

'Ode to the Nativity' stands to 'Paradise Lost'. There is in the Hymns, in fact, no scope for the epic knowledge of human nature in every mood or aspect. We are not so much interested in the Homeric Gods as in the Homeric mortals, yet the Hymns are chiefly concerned not with men, but with Gods and their mythical adventures. However, the interest of the Hymn to Demeter is perfectly human, for the Goddess is in sorrow, and is mingling with men. The Hymn to Aphrodite, too, is Homeric in its grace, and charm, and divine sense of human limitations, of old age that comes on the fairest, as Tithonus and Anchises; of death and disease that wait for all.

(Lang, 1899:6-7)

It was therefore against the Homeric Hymns and 'immortalised' Homeric epics that Lang was contrasting Langloh Parker's collection of Australian oral narratives. In them he was looking for Gods<sup>13</sup> and Goddesses, who had that same "divine sense of human limitations" attributed to Aphrodite. He didn't find any Homeric-like epics, so he subsequently designated Langloh Parker's collection as *Kinder Märchen*, from the German "Children's Fairytales", thus defining Langloh Parker's audience as children. I argue that it was because of these blinkered comparisons by such 'learned' gentleman as Lang that David Unaipon, two decades later, chose to model his own renditions of Australian mythological narratives on those of the Greek oral epics - complete with Goddess figures and regular outpourings of human emotion. I discuss Unaipon's representation of Dreaming narratives in detail in Chapter Seven, but in contrast I also discuss, in Chapter Five, the collaborative work of Peggy Rockman and Lee Cataldi. Their 1994 collection of Warlpiri Dreamings demonstrate that Indigenous oral narratives, still being told today, can be favourably contrasted with the classical Greek epics, particularly in the way they portray the full range of human emotions.

Of Langloh Parker's first collection, Lang explains that there are: "many aetiological myths, explanatory of the markings and habits of animals, the origin of constellations, and so forth" (Lang in Langloh Parker 1896:15). He then proceeds to denigrate their literary standing with the comment:

They are a savage edition of the *Metamorphoses*, and few unbiased students now doubt that the *metamorphoses* are a very late and very artificial version of traditional tales as savage in origin as those of the Noongahburrah. I have read Mrs Parker's collection with very great interest, with 'human pleasure,' merely for the story's sake. Children will find here the *Jungle Book*, never before printed, of black boys and girls. The sympathy with, and knowledge of beast-life are worthy of Mr Kipling, and the grotesque names are just what children like."

(Lang in Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:15).

I return later to Langloh Parker's use of vernacular terms for different characters within her narratives, but commend her here for her bravery in persisting with their use in her second

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<sup>13</sup> This would explain Lang's emphasis on the Byamee figure in his Preface to Langloh Parker's collection.

collection, published two years later, amid such criticism from Lang regarding such "grotesque names". Lang judges the stories of the Noongahburrah as lacking "the ingenious dramatic turns of our own Märchen.... In brief, we have pictures of savage life by savages, romances that are truly realistic" (Lang in Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:16).

Despite Lang's Introduction, Langloh Parker's first book became a classic in its field. Although the publishers seemed to aim it at children, being the first collection of its genre, it also attracted the attention of adult enthusiasts of folklore, and even 'scientists'. In a letter written<sup>14</sup> by Langloh Parker accompanying complimentary copies of her first two books, which she sent to a Lady Braumont, Langloh Parker writes:

I have been asked to send you my two little books on Australian folklore as told to me in their legends by the blacks on my husband's Western stations. - I am sure I do not know if you care in the least for folklore - if not you would probably find the books boring so it would be better to pass them onto a child or scientist - it is strange how the extremes of intellect meet on the folklore ground....  
(letter in an 1897 edition of Langloh Parker's first book, held in the Barr Smith Library)

Langloh Parker's first two collections (of 1896 and 1898) were published at a time when the discipline of anthropology itself was just emerging as a 'scientific' field of study. Langloh Parker (in her 1896 Preface) justifies her reasons for publishing her collection, when she states that "on the authority of Max Müller" (Professor of philology in the University of Oxford) she believes that the "folk-lore of any country is worth collecting":

...There are probably many who, knowing these legends, would not think, as I do, that we should try, while there is yet time, to gather all the information possible of a race fast dying out, and the origins of which is obscure. I cannot affect to think that these little legends will do much to remove that obscurity, but undoubtedly a scientific and patient study of the folk-lore throughout Australia would greatly assist thereto. I, alas, am but an amateur, moved to my work by interest in the subject, and in the blacks, of whom I have had some experience.

(Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:11)

Langloh Parker's first book was so well received by its eager audience that a second edition was published the following year. Langloh Parker immediately responded to the demand by also preparing a second collection, subsequently published late in 1898, which she called: *More Australian legendary tales*. This collection contains 'legends' from not just the Noongahburrah, but also from further afield, including her rendition of the "Ngroondoorie" narrative of S.A., which I discuss in detail in Chapter Eight. Langloh Parker acquired this narrative from her maternal uncle, Simpson Newland, who wrote the classic *Paving the way*. These two books were later bound together "sumptuously", in blue cloth with special gilt-edged paper, as a single volume by Ballantyne Press. Owing to their continued popularity,

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<sup>14</sup> The letter was dated August 27, and was probably written in 1898. It is glued to front of an 1897 reprint of Langloh Parker's first book *Australian legendary tales*.

they were much more recently republished (in 1978) again bound together, but in a much less sumptuous edition by Bodley Head publishers.

In 1903, after Katie and her husband, Langloh Parker, were forced off the station, owing to constant drought and subsequent financial difficulties, Katie's husband passed away in Sydney. Within two years Katie remarried, and took on the married name of Catherine Stow. With her solicitor husband, Percy Randolph Stow, she took up residence in suburban Glenelg, Adelaide. However, she vowed to continue to write of her life in the bush, and subsequently her third book, *The Euahlayi tribe*, was published in 1906.<sup>15</sup> This publication is an ethnographic account of the Indigenous people she spent so much of her time with on her former husband's station, Bangate. Like her second book, it received favourable reviews from both the academic and popular press:

Both for the anthropologist who wants well-sifted and trustworthy material, and for the ordinary reader who would like to know something about the life of the native Australian, this is a most useful book.... There is no other work on the Australians which gives anything like so good a general view; it is clear of superfluous technicalities, eminently readable, and written with so much sympathy.

(*Nature* April 26, 1906)

Almost all of this third book was written during Langloh Parker's last years on the station. The work was originally intended as the latter chapters of her proposed autobiographical book "My bush book". On the advice of Lang, her autobiographical sketch was deleted, and a new title was provided for the remaining chapters (see Muir, 1982:151-152). Langloh Parker's autobiography was eventually published posthumously in 1982 as *My bush book*, along with further background and biographical notes by Muir (see Muir, 1982). Had Langloh Parker's 1905 book retained her autobiographical account of her life among her many Aboriginal friends at Bangate, it would have predated Aeneas Gunn's famous classic *We of the Never Never*, which was first published in 1908.

Langloh Parker continued to write from Adelaide, but after 1905 under her married name of Stow. She wrote articles for different magazines and journals, reflecting on her twenty years at Bangate, and contrasted her bush life with that of the people she visited on her regular trips abroad. She also became a busy Adelaide socialite and compiled several cookbooks to raise money for different charities (see Muir, 1982:144-169). In 1918 a much smaller book of adapted 'legends' was published called *The walkabouts of Wur-run-nah*. Of this, Carey is quite critical, claiming it is "much more infantile in presentation than the legendary tales... [and] with the childlike drawings by Marion Hart, it depicts the legendary world of the Australian Aborigines as a world of magical transformations" (Carey, 1998:210).

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<sup>15</sup> The book has the date 1905 on the title page, but it did not actually come out until 1906 (see Muir, 1982:161).

Fulfilling her hopes, Langloh Parker eventually had a third, but final collection, of 'legends' published in 1930, entitled *Woggheeguy: Australian Aboriginal legends*. As with her last book, it was published under her married name, Catherine Stow. It contained 'legends' already published elsewhere, but also included some new narratives previously collected at Bangate. These later two publications were quite obviously aimed at children much younger than the intended audience of her earlier two collections. Langloh Parker wrote, in a draft Preface that was not to appear in the eventual 1930 publication:

These fairy tales are but 'Chips from a Folk-lore Workshop'<sup>16</sup>, strung together as fancy dictated, in a form meant to be readable to younger children than perhaps would quite follow in their entirety *Australian Legendary Tales* and *More Australian Legendary Tales*.

(draft Preface by Langloh Parker quoted in Muir, 1982:156)

This was the last book of the Dreaming genre to be written and published by Langloh Parker, and interestingly, according to Carey (1998:210-211), it reveals that she herself was becoming increasingly influenced by the slowly emerging genre of popularised fiction of "bush stories" for Australian children. Such popular works included those of Ethel Turner, as well as Mary Grant Bruce, who wrote a book of "Aboriginal legends in the Parker style". In her "influential book" *The stone-axe of Burkamukk*, which Grant Bruce had published in 1922, she replaces Langloh Parker's Byamee with her Victorian "Bunjil" (see Carey, 1998:210).

Carey sees in Langloh Parker's final two publications, a clear shift in her work involving an "abrogation of ethnographic purpose". She sees *Woggheeguy*, in particular, as representing "a new stage in the European transformation of Aboriginal mythology". Of Langloh Parker's work, Carey claims that "her first collection made it clear that the stories were translations of the children's stories of a living culture, which had a sophisticated adult mythology". But in her last collection, she "takes the literary step of placing her original informants within the fairy-tale world of her literary mythology." Carey further condemns Langloh Parker's move away from 'authenticity' and 'ethnographic purpose' with her scathing comments on the accompanying commissioned illustrations by Nora Heysen, the daughter of the famous South Australian artist Sir Hans Heysen: "They [the illustrations] add an elegant, jazz age feel to this book which contributes to the sense of cultural displacement, of repeated dismemberment and regurgitation evident in the text" (Carey, 1998:211).

My reading of Muir's biography of Langloh Parker, tells me that she was an intelligent and perceptive woman who had a genuine interest and respect for the Indigenous people she befriended at Bangate. She dedicated her first collection to "Peter Hippi King of the Noongahburrah". She also had a strong interest and desire to represent Peter Hippi's

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<sup>16</sup> This phrase was undoubtedly coined by Langloh Parker from the title of the popular 1894 book by F. Max Müller *Chips from a German workshop*.

people's 'legends' and their culture in an 'accurate' and 'scientific' manner. She was delighted with the fame and respect that her first two books earned her, however, it was not long before they, and any later editions, were out of print. After the wave of nationalism began to subside at the turn of the twentieth century following Federation, publishers were not so forthcoming with their offers of publishing further editions. But in the early 1900s, Mrs. Stow soon developed a strong desire to write and publish more. She was also an astute person, and learnt, as a writer, what the public and the publishers were demanding. She soon learnt, from her Adelaide socialite friends, when her first two collections were actually being reprinted, that "Aborigines were very unfashionable, and many people considered this aspect of Mrs Stow rather 'way out' " (Mrs. Kenneth Chatterton quoted in Muir, 1982:163).

I suspect that Stow's burning desire to be published yet again caused her to adopt the more popular Grant Bruce-style of representing Indigenous 'folklore'. Hence we find in Stow's later work a magical fairytale depiction of 'legends', with much less emphasis on ethnographic accuracy. It is this aspect of popular Australian literature, which results in books inevitably aimed at children, that Carey feels compelled to criticise. It actually took Stow some time to find a publisher for her last collection, which was exacerbated by the lack of interest in Australian books, rather than British books, in the pre-Depression years (see Muir, 1982:152).

Fortunately, interest in things Australian, and in particular in Indigenous Australian culture, has not remained at a low ebb. Some thirteen years after Langloh Parker's death in 1940, interest in her original collections gained an unprecedented high in 1953 with the republication of many of her original 'legends' in a special collection *Australian legendary tales*. The legends included were selected by Henrietta Drake-Brockman, and were published by Angus and Robertson. The book immediately attracted media interest when it was awarded the Children's Book of the Year Award in 1954, and earned the publishers considerable monetary rewards with its popularity by going into ten editions. The last edition appeared in 1973. Earlier editions included a special school edition in 1955 and even a Russian edition in 1965 (see Muir, 1982:176). A later section in this chapter reveals that Drake-Brockman's collection, and the original Langloh Parker collections, have been a major source of material for numerous white appropriators wishing to write and publish Indigenous Dreaming narratives. Sometimes the written source is acknowledged, and sometimes not, but never are the original Noongahburrah story-tellers named and acknowledged.

It seems the ever-growing demand for things Indigenous, including Indigenous literature, comes at a cost. Although a growth in interest in Indigenous people's Dreaming narratives usually also means an increase in respect for Indigenous people and their cultures, it can also bring out the non-Indigenous appropriators and sharks wishing to benefit financially. For them, Langloh Parker's original work, which is now well outside the original 50 year

copyright protection period, is a rich and ready source. I shall return to this issue later in Chapter Nine. But first, I take a closer look at the original two, and most appropriated, collections of Langloh Parker's: *Australian legendary tales* and *More Australian legendary tales*.

### 3.3.1.2 A closer look at Langloh Parker's early works

When *Australian legendary tales* first appeared in time for Christmas sales in 1896, it was the first of its genre, and was therefore, according to Muir (1982:171), received by the critics "politely but with a total lack of understanding":

This pretty and thoroughly Australian Christmas book... will be received with pleasure by Australian children for the sake of the stories it tells that will make them acquainted with what the Aboriginal inhabitants of this continent thought of these things, besides teaching them that their own country has stories to tell quite as interesting as the fairy tales and folklore legends of older lands.

(*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 28, 1896)

By the time its successor appeared two years later, Langloh Parker's work was known, and its ethnographic value had been acknowledged in the 'scientific' world. Thus *More Australian legendary tales* generally received more favourable reviews, such as that in the academic journal *Science of Man*:

but to anthropologists, who have studied similar compositions of other peoples they represent far more interesting characteristics than mere amusement, or fairy tales. They show us, not only how the Australian blacks think, but how they account for many different things, but they also reveal their ancient mythological heroes, and the spirits of such heroes gradually passing into good or bad deities, ready to avenge slights, or transgressions, or to reward or assist those deemed worthy of their favour... There is so much to admire in this publication that we hope it will not be long before Mrs Parker again favours her readers with some more of her collections, in which there is so much to instruct about the Aborigines, and so much to admire in the literary forms of their interesting legends.

(*Science of Man*, July, 1898)

The first collection comprises 31 narratives, which were all collected from the Noongahburrah people of the Narran River district, a 'branch' of the Euahlayi 'tribe' of central N.S.W. They were collected by Langloh Parker during her married life at Bangate station: "I was much in touch with the natives the whole time I was on the station, and during the eleven years which I practically devoted to the study of their folklore, I had as many as I could, in various capacities, the result of which was often scraps of folklore revealed incidentally" (Langloh Parker quoted in Muir, 1982:146).

Of interest to me is the method Langloh Parker adopted in collecting the oral narratives from her sources. Both her biographer and Drake-Brockman emphasise the language abilities that Langloh Parker developed in the local vernacular, and mention how the object and verb are often reversed in her adopted writing style, as a direct result of her meticulous recording the

speech style of her sources (see Muir, 1982:147 & Drake-Brockman, 1953:192). Muir also mentions (1982:146) the pages of "pencil notes of Aboriginal vocabularies" which came into her possession from Langloh Parker's estate, inferring (I presume) that the narratives could have been collected in the language of the Noongahburrah. She goes on to say that these same "pencil notes" are "the first clue to her interest in the legends", and that realising "the importance of gathering their folklore... [Katie] was scrupulous in putting it down as it was told to her" (Muir, 1982:146-147).

However, clues to the method, and language, of collection lie in a letter of response by Langloh Parker herself (now held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney) to a not so favourable review of her first collection. The reviewer, A.G. Stephens of *The Bulletin*, wrote that her book had "ethnographically little significance" and that "the Noongahburrahs are evidently as happy in thoughtlessness as all their kindred" and "The undoubted value of the collection is chiefly that of a literary curiosity" (*The Bulletin*, January 9, 1896 [sic -1897] quoted in Muir, 1982:171-172). Langloh Parker was never one to "suffer fools gladly" (see Muir, 1982:165), and wrote a long and fortuitously detailed letter that includes a description of her method:

I can safely say that every idea in the legends in my books is the idea of a real Black - I am very careful to get them as truly as I can. First I get an old, old Black to tell it in his own language (he probably has little English). I get a younger one to tell it back to him in his language; he corrects what is wrong, then I get the other one to tell it to me in English. I write it down, read it, and tell it back again to the old fellow with the help of the medium, for though I have a fair grasp of the language, I would not, in a thing like this, trust to my knowledge entirely.

(Langloh Parker quoted in Muir, 1982:172-173)

Further evidence indicating that the original narratives were not written down in the Euahlayi language by Langloh Parker, but in a station variety of English, is the fact that Langloh Parker could not immediately oblige when requested by her London publishers to provide one of the narratives in the Euahlayi language, on the suggestion of Dr. E.B. Tyler (see Langloh Parker, 1896:Appendix; 1978 reprint:187). To meet the request Langloh Parker had to seek out "another old woman" to re-tell the Emu and Bustard narrative 'in language', as indicated in the footnote:

The old black woman who first told me the tale is away, but I got another old woman of the pre-white era to tell it again to me yesterday; it is almost the same, minus one of the descriptive touches immaterial to the story as such, in fact, to all intents and purposes, the same.

(Langloh Parker, 1896:Appendix; 1978 reprint:189)

It seems, therefore, that Langloh Parker was told each narrative in English, probably in a station variety known by the younger generation of Noongahburrah. She would have translated the narratives into standard English. When she occasionally quotes these same people in letters or within the Preface of her books, and in her autobiography, their language has the appearance and grammar of the contact language Pidgin English. Typically, her



informant's variety of station English is interspersed with vernacular terms, in this case from the Euahlayi language of the Noongahburrah. In the letter Langloh Parker wrote to Stephens, for example, she quotes the Noongahburrah's reaction to her sketches of animals: "You make im tail too long. You make im head too short. You make im belly too big. What for you make im too much booloong (dark)" (Langloh Parker, quoted in Muir, 1982:172).

The first text that appears in Langloh Parker's first collection is "Dinewan<sup>17</sup> the emu, and Goomblegubbon the bustard". The entire narrative is quoted in Appendix 3.5A, but I include a small segment here:

#### DINEWAN THE EMU, AND GOOMBLEGUBBON THE BUSTARD

Dinewan the emu, being the largest bird, was acknowledged as king by the other birds. The Goomblegubbons, the bustards, were jealous of the Dinewans. Particularly was Goomblegubbon, the mother, jealous of the Dinewan mother. She would watch with envy the high flight of the Dinewans, and their swift running. And she always fancied that the Dinewan mother flaunted her superiority in her face, for whenever Dinewan alighted near Goomblegubbon, after a long, high flight, she would flap her big wings and begin booing in her pride, not the loud booing of the male bird, but a little, triumphant, satisfied booing noise of her own, which never failed to irritate Goomblegubbon when she heard it. Goomblegubbon used to wonder how she could put an end to Dinewan's supremacy...

(Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:17)

The narrative continues with Goomblegubbon the Bustard plotting to teach Dinewan the Emu a lesson. As a result Emu is tricked into cutting off her own wings with a tomahawk, but when she realises she has been tricked she plots her revenge. Emu eventually convinces the Bustard to kill all her chicks but two. Thus the two birds have paid their price of jealousy and revenge ever since.

This particular narrative, and its variations, has probably been the most widely published Dreaming narrative in Australia over the years. But in Langloh Parker's version, as in her other early narratives, she has not adopted textual features that have become commonplace in so many later representations of this written genre. She does not begin her narrative with a phrase that sets it in some long distant past, such as 'Long, long ago' or 'In the Dreamtime'. Nor does Langloh Parker choose to replace the vernacular terms she adopts for her characters, and other significant vernacular terms within her narrative, with English terms, despite suggestions by her critics to do so in later editions (see Muir, 1982:175). This is clearly demonstrated in the titles she chooses for her 31 narratives in her first collection, and again in the 22 narratives that comprise her second collection. I list the titles of the entire 54 narratives in Appendix 3.6B, but provide just a few titles below:

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<sup>17</sup> In more recent times the linguist Peter Austin has compiled and published a dictionary of the Kamilaroi language (which he spells "Gamilaraay"), which is a dialect of the same language as Euahlayi. He lists (Austin, 1992:39) 'emu' as "thinawan".

- 2 The Galah, and Oolah the Lizard
- 11 The Cookooburrahs and the Goolahgool [water-holding tree]
- 26 The Borah of Byamee
- 36 Bilber and Mayrah [spring wind]
- 37 Brälghah the Dancing Bird

I mention these narrative titles in particular because I contend that it is Langloh Parker's insistence on using vernacular terms in texts such as these that has popularised the adoption of Aboriginal words into Australian English. In 1990 Dixon et. al. published a book that traces the roots of Australian Aboriginal words in English, citing each Aboriginal word's earliest occurrence in philologist's wordlists or other published or unpublished texts. The book also suggests which Aboriginal language was the source for each adopted word. However, Langloh Parker rates only a small mention within this comprehensive and well-researched volume:

Yuwaaliyaay, [spoken] between Lightning Ridge and Mungindi, are... dialects of the same language as Kamilaroi. A good deal of Yawaaliyaay culture and legends, and some words, were documented by Mrs K. Langloh Parker, especially in *Australian Legendary Tales* (1896) and *The Euahlayi Tribe* (1903) [sic 1905]. 'Euahlayi' was Mrs Parker's transcription of the name Yuwaaliyaay.

(Dixon et. al., 1990:30)

I suggest that Langloh Parker was the first to use the terms "Galah" and "Brälghah" within a published text, and hence promote their adoption into the English language. Dixon et. al. (1990:90) attribute "Galah" to a neighbouring dialect Yuwaalaraay, claiming it first appeared in a published or unpublished source in 1862, but do not specify the source. They also suggest a former spelling of "Galar" and "Gillar". I suggest that Langloh Parker was not only the first to use the current spelling, but also the first to use this spelling in print. Similarly Dixon et. al. (1990:87-88) attribute "Brolga" to the neighbouring dialect Kamilaroi, but dates the un-named original source as 1896 - the same date of publication of Langloh Parker's first book. I suggest Yuwaaliyaay (or Euahlayi) was the source language and the spelling has become anglicised since Langloh Parker's first usage. Dixon et. al. (1990:91-93) attributes the word "Kookaburra" to Wiradhuri, citing its first appearance in a published text in 1834 (as "Gogera" and "Gogobera", and again in 1847 in the Moreton Bay Courier (as "Cucuburra"). I suggest that Langloh Parker's use of the word "Cookooburrah", in 1896, was not only a step closer towards the eventual adoption of current spelling, but also helped promote its usage in English.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The term 'Bilby' became popularised into the English language in 1984, probably coinciding with the orchestrated decision to replace the Easter Bunny with the Bilby to bring eggs to Australian children at Easter time. The term is now widely used for the rabbit-eared bandicoot, *Macrotis lagotis*, and its origin is attributed by Dixon et.al. (1990:63) to the neighbouring dialect Yuwaalaraay. It is possibly cognate with the word "Bilber" used by Langloh Parker (1978 reprint:124-125) for the "soft-furred sandhill rat" that features in a narrative in her second collection.

Langloh Parker did not restrict her use of vernacular terms to animal and bird names. She also used terms from the Euahlayi language for people, weapons and other cultural items, Ancestral heros (such as "Byamee") and for features of the environment (such as "Borah").<sup>19</sup> A total of 234 vernacular terms are listed in a combined glossary, that appears at the back of the 1978 reprint of her first two collections. These include terms such as: *Daen* 'black fellow', *Comebee* 'bag', *Comeboo* 'tomahawk'<sup>20</sup>, *Bouyou* 'legs', *Gubbah* 'good',<sup>21</sup> *Gahreemay* 'camp', *Eurah* 'a drooping shrub', *Dungle* 'water hole', *Euloowirree* 'rainbow', *Gurburreh* 'north' and *Gwai* 'red'. When reading the narratives, the meanings of these vernacular terms are not always obvious from the context. The glossary is therefore a necessary addition.

On occasion, Langloh Parker also uses a whole vernacular phrase representing direct speech, such as that in the "Ouyan the curlew" narrative from her first collection: "Soon they heard him crying as if in pain: 'Yuckay, yuckay, yuckay nurroo gay gay" (Langloh Parker, 1978 reprint:63). Such inclusion of vernacular terms and phrases, and the particular way Langloh Parker has anglicised the spelling of her vernacular words, bears a remarkable resemblance to the later writings of David Unaipon. I suspect, as he wrote his own narratives for publication in the mid 1920s, that he could have read the relatively recently republished edition combining Langloh Parker's first two collections, and was influenced by her use of vernacular terms. However, Unaipon did not include a glossary with his 1924-1925 manuscript.

One textual feature that stands out in many of Langloh Parker's early narratives, that does bear a resemblance to more recent popularised renditions of Dreaming narratives, is her almost persistent exclusion of any reference to specific sites and locations. She mentions 'camps' and 'the bush' and the homes of birds in 'the trees', but only occasionally mentions specific place names. There are several exceptions, however, particularly in narratives telling of the formation of particular sites. Take for example her fourth narrative "The origin of the Narran Lake", where she makes numerous mentions of different sites and land formations throughout the narrative:

Old Byamee said to his two young wives, Birrahgnooloo [sic?] and Cunnunbeillee....  
While I go for the honey, go you two out and get frogs and yams, then meet me at Coorigel Spring....  
Having swallowed the two girls, the kurreahs [alligators] dived into an opening in the side of the spring, which was the entrance to an underground watercourse leading to the Narran River.....

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<sup>19</sup> "Bora" is attributed to the Kamilaroi language by Dixon. et. al.(1990:150), but to an un-named 1851 source, while "Byamee" is not listed at all.

<sup>20</sup> The same word is spelt "Combo" in narrative one. There are a number of inconsistencies between the spelling of vernacular terms in the glossary and their spelling within the narratives. I suggest these inconsistencies were probably introduced by the publishers.

<sup>21</sup> Compared to "Gaba" for 'good' and "Buyu" for 'shin' in Gamilaraay (see Austin, 1992:53 & 35).

On swiftly sped Byamee, making short cuts from big hole to big hole, and his track is still marked by the morilla ridges that stretch down the Narran.

(Langloh Parker, 1896, 1978 reprint:24-26)

Another notable exception is the unusually longer narrative "Borah of Byamee", also from her first collection. This particular narrative bears some similarities to the narratives that are still told by older Aboriginal people today in their own languages, and can be seen in the published form in works such as Rockman and Cataldi (1994). Such similarities include her mention of specific place names throughout the narrative, and its central theme of a journey from one place to another, that is so common to many Warlpiri men's narratives today (see Gale, 1995). I suspect that this narrative was told to Langloh Parker by a Noongahburrah person whose intent was to include all the detail that would be told to possibly a young initiate - rather than as a simplified version of a story for 'picaninnies' or 'white women'. It indicates that Langloh Parker recorded this particular narrative exactly as it was told to her. The inclusion of this narrative in her first collection is unusual, because it is in the Preface of her second collection that she indicates: "The former series were all legends as are told to the black picaninnies; among the present are some they would not be allowed to hear, touching as they do on sacred subjects, taboo to the young" (Langloh Parker, 1898, 1978 reprint:105).

I find it curious that Langloh Parker hints at the "sacred" nature of some of the narratives in her second collection, because for this she did not restrict herself to the Noongahburrah people as her source. In her preface to the second collection, she again gives us clues to her methods of narrative collection:

The present series of legends have all been collected by myself from the Blacks, as were the previous ones. But in this instance I had much help given to me by friends, who either told or sent me scraps of legends they themselves had seen or heard. On receiving any such I immediately made inquiries amongst the Blacks, and I was often enabled to complete the scraps, gaining through their hints a whole legend. For should the local tribes know nothing of what I wanted to hear, I would get them to make inquiries of wandering Blacks from other tribes whom they might meet during their periodic 'walk-about', or at corroborees they attended. I myself have had opportunities of knowing well members of nine tribes, though that which I know best is the Euahlayi-speaking one.... Some of the Blacks who have helped to build up this series belong to the Murrumbidgee, Darling, Barwon, Paroo, Warrego, Narran, Culgoa and Castlereigh rivers; the Braidwood, Yass, Narrabri, and other districts of New South Wales; to Balonne, Maranoa, Condamine, Barcoo, Mulligan rivers, and the Gulf country in Queensland. But I have confined myself as far as possible to Noongahburrah names.... To such as were told in song I have tried to retain something of the rhythmical rendering. I have no doubt a skilled writer could have mosaicked these legendary scraps with flowery language into a beautiful work of art, but I have preferred to let the Blacks as far as possible tell their legends in their own way...

(Langloh Parker, 1898, 1978 reprint:101-102)

But once these narratives, as told by the Noongahburrah, were made available to the public as published texts, particularly after their republication in 1953 by Drake-Brockman, they

have in fact been "mosaicked ... with flowery language", and appropriated by would-be writers wishing to exploit the growing public interest in things Indigenous.<sup>22</sup> I conclude my review of Katie Langloh Parker's work by giving the last word to her biographer, Marcie Muir:

Each generation makes its own assessment of the literature it has inherited from the past, and takes what is still interesting and alive for its own use. The *Australian legendary tales* have been accepted as of anthropological value, and as simple legends; they have been adapted, modified, and plagiarised, but their vitality has not and cannot be questioned.... The time may now have come when Katie Langloh Parker's books, produced as the result of eleven years of dedicated study of the folklore of the native people to whom she was so devoted, should be regarded as a part of Australian literature.

(Muir, 1982:177)

### 3.4 GOVERNMENT SURVEYORS

Men employed by governments, in the early years of Australia's colonisation, to survey the 'unknown' lands beyond the more populated coastal towns, inevitably encountered many different Indigenous groups. Their role as surveyors was to assist the colonisation process of opening up new tracts of land, especially land that was deemed suitable for future agricultural and pastoral enterprises. Getting to know and understand the Indigenous people, whose land they were surveying, was not a part of their agenda. However, some government surveyors found themselves unexpectedly fascinated with the lives and mythology of the Indigenous people they encountered. One such surveyor was Robert Hamilton Mathews. He became so interested that he became a prolific recorder and published writer of Indigenous Dreaming narratives, and other cultural matters. But his motives differed to those of the missionaries. Although he also found some of the narratives of an "obscene character" (Mathews, 1898:Preface), his intent in fraternising with Indigenous people around their camp fires was not to judge or convert them. It was to learn and record as much as he could of their beliefs and customs. However, it is significant that in recording their narratives he seemed to fail to fully perceive the strong attachment his informants had with their land - after all, he was assisting governments in the acquisition of that very same land. In fact, it was Indigenous migratory' habits that he chose to focus on in the very first narrative to appear in his first publication in 1899.

#### 3.4.1 Robert Hamilton Mathews

During his working life as a government surveyor Robert Hamilton Mathews worked throughout Victoria, Queensland, much of New South Wales, and even South Australia. On his travels he encountered a great many different Aboriginal groups and developed a great

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<sup>22</sup> The 1975 adaptation *Tales of the Dreamtime*, comprising several of Langloh Parker's narratives, adapted by Vashi Farrer, was still being advertised and sold through the Angus and Robertson Christmas catalogue in 1997.

interest in their mythology, languages and cultural life. During the day he would work as a surveyor, and in the evening he would seek out the camps of local Aboriginal people, and meticulously record their answers to his many questions (see J. Mathews, 1994:159-162). In the later stages of his life he devoted much of his time to researching and publishing on various aspects of the Indigenous people he had befriended over the years, and apparently became initiated on the south coast of New South Wales - where he was known as "Miranen", and was allowed to view secret men's ceremonies.

R.H. Mathews was (as far as I am aware) the second person after Langloh Parker to write a book (probably better described as a booklet) devoted to the genre of the "folklore" of Indigenous Australians. This 35 page booklet was called *Folklore of the Australian Aborigines* and was published in 1899. It contains seven mythological narratives that have been paraphrased by Mathews in English:<sup>23</sup>

1. Arrival of the Thurrawal Tribe in Australia
2. Destruction of Mullion the Eaglehawk
3. The Journey of Kurrilwan
4. The Kurrea and the Warrior
5. Thoorkook and Byama's Sons
6. The Wareengary and Karambal
7. The Hereafter

Mathews writes in his Preface:

The specimens of Australian Folklore reproduced in the following pages are from articles I have contributed, from time to time, to *Science of Man*. They are only a few out of a large number copied into my note books on this highly interesting subject during many years resident in the back country. Those now published are examples of the traditions respecting the migrations of the Natives - their mythology - the institution of the sacred bullroarer in the ceremonial of the Keeparra - and the importance of a compliance with the class and totemic laws of the tribes. It will doubtless add to the value of these traditions if the districts within which they have been collected are stated. Nos. 1 and 7 are current among Natives occupying the south-east coast from Botany Bay to the Victoria boundary. No. 2 is well known among the Kamilaroi people on the Barwon and Namoi Rivers, and also among the Wiradjuri Tribes of the Castlereagh and Macquarie, and farther to the south-east. Nos. 3 and 4 are Kamilaroi legends told by the Natives of the Macintyre, Barwon, Mehi, Weir and other rivers in that part of the country. No. 5 is a legend of the Manning, Hastings, and the Macleay Tribes, but the version is slightly different on each of these rivers. No. 6 is met with among the Bunjellung and Koombangary Tribes, inhabiting the Clarence River and its numerous affluents.

I have omitted many portions of the stories as told to me by the Natives, owing in some cases to their obscene character, and in others for want of space. I trust that gentlemen residing in districts where similar legends are current, will copy them from the mouths of Natives, and either send them to me, or publish them on their own

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<sup>23</sup> These narratives have since all been republished, in a revised form, within the larger collection.

behalf in order to preserve as much as possible of the Folklore of the Australian Tribes.

R.H. Mathews  
Parramatta, 3rd September, 1898.

No doubt Mathews felt the same commitment to "preserving" the "folklore" of Australian "Natives" as did Langloh Parker. The first narrative in his 1899 booklet, which was told to him by "Natives" from the south-east of N.S.W. is about the journey of animals to a new land and is particularly about the whale and starfish. It is called the "Arrival of the Thurrawal tribe in Australia" and is reproduced in full in Appendix 3.6A. Unlike Langloh Parker's narratives, Mathews sets this narrative, and several of his others, in the remote and distant past. He also explains, through the narrative, that the "Thurruwal Tribe" are in fact migrants to the land around Sydney, and like the British, came to Australia by boat (or canoe) from "beyond the sea". The narrative begins:

In the remote past all the animals that are now in Australia lived in another land beyond the sea. They were at the time human creatures, and resolved to leave that country in a canoe, and come to the hunting grounds in which they are present. The whale was much larger than any of the rest, and had a canoe of great dimension; but would not lend it to any of his fellows.

(Mathews, 1899:7)

Whale narratives are of particular importance to many Indigenous groups living on the coast of Australia, from the northern tips of Arnhem Land to the Ngarrindjeri of S.A. I quote this narrative of Mathews' in particular because it bears some similarity in content to two narratives, written by David Unaipon in the mid 1920s; the first being "How Teddy lost his tail", and its sequel "Wondangar and Goon Na Ghun: Whale and Star Fish". The first was published around 1924 in an (unknown) magazine, and the latter was published much later in *Paperbark* (see Davis et. al. 1990:33-52). Mathews and Unaipon's narratives feature a Koala, which Unaipon calls a "Teddy Bear" and Mathews a "native bear", who acts as a leader of the migrating animals. Similarly, both Mathews and Unaipon write of a villainous character, in the form of Whale, who mercilessly batters his victim Starfish. I suspect that the similarities are not coincidental. Unaipon did not draw on the mythology of his own Ngarrindjeri people for inspiration in writing his texts, even though he incorporates vernacular terms from his own language (such as "Muldarie" for 'magpie' and "Tolkamia" for 'south-west'). I say this because Unaipon generally indicated the oral source for his narratives, by naming the language group on his 1924-25 manuscript, now held in the Mitchell Library. However, neither of his Teddy bear narratives have a named source. I suspect that Mathews' rendition of the Whale and Starfish narrative was Unaipon's source. Unaipon is notorious (as I demonstrate in Chapter Seven) for re-creating hybrid and epic narratives from material provided by Aboriginal people from all over southern Australia. But he was not a frequent visitor to the Sydney region, where he locates his narrative, as did Mathews. Note that Unaipon mentions places in his narrative such as Shoal Haven (the

landing place of the migrating animals), The Blue Mountains, and the Hawkesbury and Hunter Rivers (see Unaipon, 1924-25 Texts 27 & 30).

Mathews' second narrative is the "Destruction of Mullion the eaglehawk", different versions of which have been told to Mathews by the Kamilaroi people on the Barwon and Namoi Rivers, and the Wiradjuri of the Castlereagh and Macquarie, and beyond. This narrative is reproduced in full in Appendix 3.6B, partly because the eaglehawk features as a main character in many Dreaming texts that have been published over the years, but also because it tells of the use of fire as a means of destroying something evil (in this case the man-eating eaglehawk). In the narrative, a smouldering fire stick is placed under the nest of the eaglehawk by two men, and is told not to ignite until later. This idea of delayed destruction by fire features in a number of Dreaming narratives from across Australia (e.g. Meyer, 1846, tells of the Ramindjeri narrative of Pungngane setting a firestick upon the hut of Waijungngari, who is living with Pungngane's two run-away wives. He tells the fire to ignite once the threesome are sleeping). Another notable feature of this narrative is how Mathews again commences by setting it in the distant past: "Long ago an eaglehawk, Mullion...". He also immediately locates the narrative in the Barwon River area "near Girra" (see Mathews, 1899:11).

I quote a further narrative in full in Appendix 3.6C, called "The Wareenggary and Karambal", which also appeared within his 1899 booklet. It is about the Seven Sisters, which became the stars known in English as the Pleiades. Various versions of this narrative are known throughout much of Australia by different Indigenous groups, and it has been published on many occasions as texts for both children, and for a wider audience - always in English. The Seven Sisters narrative, in more recent years, has become the source of much public controversy in S.A., where certain Ngarrindjeri women claim it is a myth not to be shared openly with others; I shall return to this issue in Chapter Nine. I also quote sections of Mathews' version below (with my own highlighting of particular sections), followed by a discussion, because this is the first published version of this now important, yet controversial, narrative. This version was told to Mathews by the "Bunjellung and Koombanggary Tribes" of the northern coast of New South Wales.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE WAREENGGARY AND KARAMBAL

On the Clarence River there once lived seven young women who were sisters, named Wareenggary; they were members of the Bunjellung tribe, and belonged to the Wirrakan division. They were very clever and had yamsticks, in the ends of which were inserted charms, which protected the girls from their enemies. Every day they went out hunting for carpet snakes, and always carried their yamsticks with them on these occasions. A young fellow named Karambal, of the same tribe, and of the division Womboong became enamoured of one of these young women, and followed

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<sup>24</sup> Alternative contemporary spellings for these language names are Bandjalung and Gumbaynggir respectively.



within sight of them every day, but they did not favour his suit. He watched for an opportunity, and at length came suddenly upon one of the sisters.... and carried her off, taking her to his own camp. Her companions became very angry, and held a consultation as to what was best to be done to release their sister from Karambal, who was of the wrong division for her to marry....

Accordingly, they went away and brought the Winter, and on the place where Karambal was camped with their sister they made the cold so exceptionally severe that he was almost perished with the frost. The girl whom he had captured did not feel this terrible cold, because her sisters had managed to send her by a secret messenger the charmed yamstick she formerly carried when out hunting with them. In a short time Karambal was glad enough to let Wareenggary return to her own people....

After this trouble the Wareenggary resolved to leave the earth altogether, but before doing so they went into the mountains, and made springs at the heads of all the rivers, so that their people might always have plenty of water throughout their hunting grounds. The seven sisters then went up into the sky where the constellation known as the Pleiades still represents their camp. They come into view every Summer, bringing pleasant warm weather for the benefit of their tribe, after which they go away gradually towards the west, where they disappear. They then send the Winter to warn the kinsmen not to carry off women of the wrong totemic division, but to select their wives in accordance with the tribal laws...

(Mathews, 1899:26-29)

At the time of Mathews' writing of such narratives, there was a growing interest, within the newly emerging discipline of anthropology, with the concept of 'Totemism'. Mathews was a reader and contributor to journals such as the *Science of Man*, and obviously had an interest in contributing to western understandings of such 'primitive' constructs. He also had an interest in contributing to the debate on how 'primitive societies' were socially structured. Mathews reveals how inadequate western understandings were, at the turn of the century, regarding Australian Aboriginal social organisation, by using the term "class" in his 1899 Preface. Mathews' version of the Seven Sisters narrative reveals to his audience the strict rules and punishments, within Indigenous societies, regarding marriage. He chooses to conclude his narrative with a moralising coda to reinforce this fact. My later analysis and discussion, in Chapter Five, of Dreaming narratives recorded much more recently by Rockman and Cataldi (1994), reveal that explicit moralising codas are not necessarily an obligatory feature of Warlpiri oral narratives. This suggests that the introduction of obligatory codas, within so many published versions of popularised Dreaming narratives, are an innovation inspired by western literature, particularly of the 'folklore' genre - possibly inspired by *Aesop's Fables*.

As with many of his published narratives, Mathews makes some reference to the general location in which the narrative is set. This contrasts with Langloh Parker, and may be the result of Mathews being a travelling surveyor, rather than any intention of his to emphasise the critical importance of land to his Indigenous narrators. Reference is also given (at least in the Preface in 1899) to the name of the group (or "tribe") who told the narrative, but the specific story-teller is not acknowledged. But, like other prolific ethnographers of both the 1800s and 1900s, who chose to work amongst numerous groups, more attention is given to

the commonality of the folklore among different groups, rather than the details of different versions. As with Langloh Parker, he was influenced by the growing interest in aetiological narratives that were popularly known as "folklore". Such texts explained the origins and peculiar physical features of the many indigenous animals of Australia that were considered a curiosity in the mother country. This provided ideal exotic characters for books to be read by receptive audiences in both the colonies and in England.

Mathews went on to become a prolific writer and publisher on numerous aspects of Australian Aboriginal cultural life and their languages (not just in New South Wales, but also in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory). In the area of mythology, he was only to publish further in journals and Royal Society proceeding papers, including: the *Royal Society of New South Wales* (in 1904); in *Folklore Collectanea* (in 1908 and 1909); in *Queensland Geographical Journal* (in 1903/4); in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (in 1904); in *The American Antiquarian* (in 1907) and *Zeitschrift fur Ethnologie* (in 1908).

Nearly a century later, in 1994, the Aboriginal publishing company Magabala Books published the book *The opal that turned into fire*. It was compiled by Janet Mathews (an ethnomusicologist and the grand-daughter-in-law of R.H. Mathews), who herself researched and recorded Dreaming narratives throughout much of New South Wales in the 1960s. From her own research, and from the notes, journals and correspondence belonging to R.H. Mathews (that eventually came into her possession) J. Mathews was able to compile this anthology of Dreaming narratives. It comprises over 100 texts organised under different chapter themes. It includes the seven narratives from Mathews' 1899 publication, with some minor title and spelling changes. Unfortunately J. Mathews was unable to shed any more light on the individual sources of these narratives, although she acknowledges the sources of the narratives she herself recorded - hence a real sense of ownership is maintained.

A number of the texts in this anthology are not so much narratives, but commentaries about a particular myth narrative. For example, under the sub-heading or theme "Pleiades", the original Seven Sisters narrative from Mathews 1899 appears under the title: "The Bundjalang: The Warenggary and Karambal" (being from the Bundjalang people), and is accompanied by two brief commentaries from the Muruwari people and the Ngemba (or Ngiyampaa) people. The Muruwari commentary is as follows:

The Muruwari name for the Pleiades was Gambu Gambu, meaning shy virgins. Some were so elusive that they could only be seen by people with particularly good eyesight because they were always trying to hide. During mid-winter they rose about three hours before the sun and it was believed that they urinated on the ground when in that position. Their urine, or gua: wet the ground but they were so pure this moisture turned into frost or ice by sunrise.

Jimmie Barker said that when he was a child he always put a dish of water outside on winter nights. He liked eating the ice and was never deterred when his mother, who was Muruwari, said, "My boy, you are eating Gambu Gambu gua."  
(Mathews, 1994:48)

Jimmy Barker, of northern N.S.W., became well known in literary circles when he collaborated with Janet Mathews from the 1960s in the writing of his life story. In 1977, after his death, his book *The two worlds of Jimmie Barker: the life of an Australian Aboriginal, 1900-1972* was finally published. It has become a classic in Australian literature, being one of the first of its genre of Aboriginal life histories. It includes a number of Dreaming narratives, as related by Jimmie Barker to Janet Mathews.

### 3.5 ANTHROPOLOGISTS

For academics, in the past and still today, the main means of peer assessment and career advancement is to impress others with what one writes and publishes. Although some anthropologists do write the occasional text for lay people, their audience generally tends to be their peers. Their purpose, therefore, in publishing about Indigenous people and their 'mythology' is not just to record the narratives for posterity's sake, but also to advance the 'scientific' discipline of anthropology. More specifically in Australia, particularly in the formative years of anthropology as a discipline, researchers wished to unravel the mysteries of where Aboriginal people came from (and when), and how the customs and beliefs of different 'tribal' groups were inter-related.<sup>25</sup> There was a considerable deal of interest, therefore, in recording and contrasting the Dreaming narratives of different Indigenous groups. Although I have no intention of reviewing all the publications of anthropologists that relate to Australian Indigenous mythology here, I will briefly discuss some of the published texts that emerged from their halls of academia in the genre of Dreaming narratives. I will also discuss certain individual anthropologists who published prolifically in this area, and highlight those who seem to have been the most influential in their discipline of study.

Anthropology became established as a discipline of scientific study just before the turn of the century, with Tylor being appointed Reader of Anthropology in 1884 at Oxford, England. The emerging interest in physical anthropology, and the so-called 'primitive' societies, was fuelled of course by Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* theory in 1865. Although he never visited Australia, Tylor and a number of other influential thinkers of his time, continued to theorise about the religion and beliefs of Australia's Indigenous peoples. They became particularly interested in the relationship Aboriginal people had with animals, which feature so prominently in their Dreaming narratives. Tylor actually coined the term

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<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that the discipline of archaeology is now more concerned with the origins of Indigenous peoples, and anthropology is now more concerned with understanding "why different peoples do what they do" (personal communication Fiona Magowan, November 1999).

"Animism" for his discussion of this close relationship (see Tylor, 1871). It was also Tylor who read the early manuscript of Katie Langloh Parker's 1896 *Australian legendary tales*, and suggested she include a transcript of one of the texts in the Noongahburrah language as an appendix. This, he said (see Langloh Parker, 1896:Appendix), would appeal to the philologist, but no doubt Tylor also hoped it would help authenticate the work of the non-academic Langloh Parker.

In 1899, the classic *The native tribes of central Australia* was published in London, not actually by an anthropologist, but by the biologist Professor Baldwin Spencer, along with Gillen, the post master from Alice Springs. This book contains one chapter on myths which discuss, very briefly in English, the Western "Arunta" (now spelt Arrarnta)<sup>26</sup> narratives relating to the origins of: the sun, the moon, the evening star, the magellanic clouds and the Pleiades. Arunta terms are cited for each of these celestial bodies, as are the names of the various spiritual ancestors included in these 'myths'. Spencer and Gillen use the term "totem" in their text, which had just been coined in the anthropological literature. The following extract on the Pleiades gives some indication of their style of commentary:

The Pleiades are supposed to be women who in the Alcheringa<sup>27</sup> lived at a place called Intitakula, near to what is now called Deep Well. They went up into the sky and there they have remained ever since.

(Spencer and Gillen, 1899, 1968 reprint:566)

It is significant that the judgemental language "supposed to be" is adopted by the authors, despite the obvious interest they showed in the mythology of the Arrarnta. However, as in the anthropological writings of those to follow Spencer and Gillen, they have maintained a sense of Place in their commentary, thus recognising its central role in Dreaming narratives. This is something that many other writers have failed to recognise when reproducing Dreaming narratives for broad public consumption.

At the turn of the twentieth century, under the influence of social anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown, interest grew in the mythology of Indigenous peoples. However, the only avenue for the publication of studies on the mythology of Australia's Indigenous peoples was through local self publication, or through various British or American anthropological societies. The advantage was that influential European thinkers were able to read of, and discuss, Australia's Indigenous people from afar. The French sociologist Emile Durkheim, for example, discusses the religious beliefs of Aboriginal people in his 1915 classic *The elementary forms of religious life*. In 1926 Radcliffe-Brown published a short paper in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* on "The rainbow-serpent myth" in Australia.

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<sup>26</sup> The people of Eastern 'Arrente' language have adopted a different contemporary orthography, hence the different spelling.

<sup>27</sup> Note the Arrarnta term "Alcheri-nga" literally means 'Dream - LOC.' or more colloquially 'In the Dreaming' (with today's Arrarnta spelling for Dreaming being "Altyerre"). It is Spencer and Gillen who are attributed with coining the concept 'The Dreaming', through their work with the Arrarnta.

Typically he wrote about the myth and its widespread distribution, and commented on its significance in Aboriginal Australia. It was only in the British *Folklore* magazine that the actual myths themselves were published in their full form.

### 3.5.1 Professor A.P. Elkin

In 1920 A.P. Elkin was appointed as the first Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. Elkin was actually the first to use the term "Dream-time" in the anthropological literature, in 1933, in reference to the beliefs of the Karadjeri people of the Kimberley region of W.A. However, Elkin is probably best known for his 1938 classic *The Australian Aborigines: how to understand them*, where he explains the idea of "the doctrine of pre-existence" (see Elkin, 1948 reprint:176) and popularised the terms "dreaming or "eternal dream-time" (146) and "totemism" (182-3). The latter concept was to become a very popular topic of discussion in anthropological publications in the 1930-40s.<sup>28</sup>

In his 1938 classic (reissued and reprinted many times), Elkin gently criticises the few earlier publications of Aboriginal "folklore", which had obviously been read widely and influenced people's understandings of Australia's Indigenous peoples (hence the sub-title of his book). Elkin speaks of a prevailing misconception that Aboriginal mythology merely comprised "just so" stories, and goes to some effort to explain the underlying philosophies of their complex belief systems:

Now what is Aboriginal mythology? It is not a mere collection of stories concerned with the sun, moon and stars and various natural features, though these do figure in myths. We are apt to get a wrong idea of mythology from books, large or small which give us lists of stories quite unrelated to the social, economic and religious life of the tribe. The natives do possess make-believe and "just-so" stories, but mythology is a very important institution... it describes what are believed to be historical events and processes ... it provides the authority for present day social and religious life. Indeed, so important is mythology that cult societies or lodges are organised to be responsible for its transmission, interpretation and application. This reminds us that mythology is not just a matter of words or records, but of action and life, for the cult societies, the totemic lodges, do not spend their time at meetings reciting and chanting only; they also re-enact the myths, and do so because the heroes and ancestors were, in their belief, actual persons and totemic beings; what they did in the course of their labours must now be done in ritual, and the places associated with them must be visited and cared for. In this way the myth is lived out. The purpose of this is to ensure the well-being of the tribe by keeping in living touch with the creative dream-time [my emphasis]. In other words, *the myth is life-giving*. [Elkin's emphasis]

(Elkin, 1938, 1948 reprint:192)

Elkin was probably criticising the "large" books of Langloh Parker and the "small" book of R.H. Mathews' (and possibly Smith's), which he obviously felt decontextualised the

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<sup>28</sup> This term is no longer used amongst many contemporary anthropologists, despite its continued use by many Indigenous Australians today. An alternative term used by anthropologists is mythical "Ancestor" or "Ancestral Hero".

mythology that they recorded and published as "folklore". He obviously felt the religious meanings of the narratives in their books were lost. In order to publish about Aboriginal mythology himself, Elkin chooses to represent individual texts within his own discussion, rather than quoting them verbatim or re-presenting them in his own prose (see Elkin, 1948 reprint:192).

In 1930 the 'scientific' anthropological journal *Oceania* was launched by the University of Sydney, under the editorship of Elkin, as "a journal devoted to the study of the native peoples of Australia, New Guinea and the islands of the Pacific Ocean". It soon became a popular venue for anthropologists to publish the findings of their research amongst Australia's Indigenous people. By this time, Ronald Berndt was studying under Elkin at the University of Sydney, where he soon met and married Catherine Berndt. Throughout the volumes of this important journal, one can see a running record of notable anthropologists (and linguists) who have devoted their energies to researching the field of Aboriginal Australia - people such as Radcliffe-Brown (on the Yarlalde), Elkin (in the Kimberley), Roheim (central Australian mythology), the Berndts (on the Lower Murray and Arnhem Land), Maddock (on the "Walbiri"), Warner (on the Murngin), Thomson (in Arnhem Land) and T.G.H. Strehlow (on the "Aranda"). Other notable scholars include: P. Kaberry, A. Capell, W.E.H. Stanner, L.R. Hiatt, and N.B. Tindale.

It is to Tindale and Strehlow that I turn next, both being Adelaide-based scholars. I will later return to the Berndts, who did considerable research with the Ngarrindjeri people of the Lower Murray in South Australia (to which Auntie Veronica Brodie belongs). But before I do, I will briefly mention the establishment of anthropology as a discipline of study at the University of Adelaide.<sup>29</sup> In 1946 T.G.H. Strehlow was offered a Research Fellowship by the university to pursue research on different aspects of Indigenous culture in Central Australia. He was in a unique position as a researcher because of his upbringing at Hermannsburg mission in the N.T., being the son of the missionary Carl Strehlow, as he grew up speaking the Western Arrarnta language fluently. He called the language one of his "mother tongues" (Strehlow, 1971:XIV). This gave him deeper insights into the mythology of these people than other contemporary anthropologists could ever hope to achieve - particularly those who wrote papers after brief research expeditions into the 'interior', relying completely on interpreters for accessing information. No doubt Spencer, who collaborated with post master Gillen, came into that category of researchers criticised by Strehlow (1947:Preface). Some of this criticism was also, no doubt, aimed at the prolific writer and researcher Norman Tindale, who was based at the South Australian Museum, adjacent to the University of Adelaide.

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<sup>29</sup> The Anthropology Department was not established at the University of Adelaide until 1974 (see Department Handbook, 2000).

### 3.5.2 Norman B. Tindale

Despite his prodigious writing and publishing, Norman B. Tindale was never to secure an academic post in an Australian university, even though he was to be offered, and accepted, later in life a teaching position at the University of Colorado in America. Tindale initially began at the South Australian Museum as a cadet in entomology (collecting insects), but on an expedition in 1922 to Groote Eylandt, off the north east coast of the N.T., he soon developed a strong interest in the Indigenous peoples of Australia, particularly in the area of physical anthropology. Under the influence of Spencer, he became a diligent keeper of daily journals, and up until his death in 1993, he hand-wrote (and had bound) over 100 volumes of journals. These journals became the source of the many papers and articles he was to publish on Aboriginal people. A large proportion of these publications actually appeared in *Records of the South Australian Museum*, but others appeared in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society of South Australia*, and in *Oceania*. Of his 135 publications in the area of anthropology, eleven are specifically in the area of Aboriginal mythology.

I choose to highlight the work of Tindale here because his meticulous recording of Aboriginal genealogies, from all over the country, has since become a very important source of information for contemporary Aboriginal people working on their family histories. But his journals have also become a source of information for Aboriginal people seeking to reclaim other aspects of their cultural heritage. His recording, and subsequent publication of two Dreaming narratives told to him by a Ngadjuri man Barney Warrior in 1935, for example, has become of particular interest to his granddaughter Josie Agius. She remembers her grandfather telling her stories as a child, but was delighted to rediscover these same annotated stories in detail within Tindale's journals.<sup>30</sup> These journals are now held in the South Australian Museum collection.

Tindale recorded some narratives in English, and others in the first language of his storytellers using a script developed by the University of Adelaide. He transcribed these texts verbatim, and then proceeded to translate them into English, with the help of his bilingual "informants". In the early 1930s he actually made oral recordings of narratives on Edison wax cylinders in the Jaralde (Yaraldi or Yaralde) language, as told by Frank Blackmoor ("an aged full-blooded aborigine of Peltangk", see Tindale, 1935:266-267). Tindale also worked closely with the Clarence Long (also known as Milerum), who was one of the last Ngarrindjeri 'narumbe' or initiates (see Mattingley, 1988:17 & 37). Tindale planned to produce a "Milerum book", but this task was never to be completed (personal communication, Philip Clarke, 1997). However, in 1954 Tindale collaborated with the writer H.A. Lindsay to write a book for children, called *The first walkabout*. Using fictional

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<sup>30</sup> These same narratives were also published in anthropological journals (*Transactions of the Royal Society of S.A.*) but Agius was unaware they were her grandfather's. They are discussed later in Chapter Seven.

characters, such as "Ug" and "Gunju", they tell of the early migration of the "Negritos" people to Australia and eventually Tasmania, claiming they were the "prehistoric people who lived in Australia long before our present-day aborigines arrived here" (Tindale & Lindsay, 1965 reprint:ix). The book was awarded the 1955 Children's Book of the Year, by the Children's Book Council of N.S.W., and was reprinted at least twice. Following this success, Tindale again collaborated with Lindsay in 1963 to write a second book, this time aimed at the general public, called *Aboriginal Australians*. Within it he discusses several mythological narratives in his "Literature" chapter, and reproduces a few texts in English in the following chapter called "Examples of Literature". One of these texts (see Tindale & Lindsay, 1963:97) is actually the Eagle and Crow narrative he collected earlier from Barney Warrior.

Of interest to me is the difference between this more 'literary' rendition of Warrior's narrative and the original version that appears in Tindale's journal. Whether the apparent adoption of certain literary features, which have become popularised in 'Aboriginal legends' aimed at children over the years, were the work of Lindsay, rather than Tindale, can only be surmised. Such adaptations include all references to particular locations or country in the story being removed. This chapter will demonstrate further texts, particularly Dreaming narratives represented by non-anthropologists, also playing down the significance of Place. Another adaptation in Tindale and Lindsay's text is a new introduction that immediately sets the narrative in the distant past: "Far back in the dreamtime, when birds and animals were human beings...". Placing such narratives in the past, and divorcing them from the present, is one of the criticisms that Elkin makes regarding popular representations of Aboriginal mythology (quoted earlier). Unfortunately, such representations have become increasingly common over the years, particularly when published Dreaming narratives are aimed at children. A further adaptation to Tindale and Lindsay's text is the complete lack of acknowledgement of Warrior as the original source, although they do mention that "the story comes from the Ngadjuri tribe, whose country lay to the north of Adelaide" (Tindale & Lindsay, 1963:95). This removal of any sense of Person is another typical adaptation made by writers of popularised versions of published Dreaming narratives. Any expressions of narrative ownership, made by story-tellers during the recording process, are either ignored or deleted by the recorders.

Tindale himself, in his earlier academic writings, makes the important point regarding the strong attachment that mythological narratives have with specific tracts of land owned by Indigenous groups. In his 1935 paper on extant recordings of the Wajjungari legend, Tindale makes the following observation:

The association of the legends of the Southern Australian tribes with geographical features has not been stressed sufficiently in the earlier accounts of their mythology. There is a marked identification with the topography of the country in which they are related. They are in this respect little different from many stories of the wandering of



the totems ancestors of the Central Australian peoples such as have been so ably detailed by C. Strehlow and others.

(Tindale, 1935:273)



Similarly, Tindale (and Lindsay) explain in their 1963 book, regarding a "dream-time chant" they replicate: "This does not make sense unless studied by one who knows the territory once owned by the Tanganekald tribe" (Tindale & Lindsay, 1963:93).<sup>31</sup> Tindale does not always heed his own advice, particularly when reproducing Warrior's Eagle and Crow narrative, when writing in collaboration with H.A. Lindsay. Perhaps this is because together they had successfully enchanted a literary world that did not require, or demand, such anthropological detail.

### 3.5.3 T.G.H STREHLOW

I have already mentioned T.G.H. Strehlow's unique position as an anthropologist, and recorder of Dreaming narratives, because of his ability to speak the Western Aranda (or Arrarnta) language. In his revealing 1947 book, *Aranda Traditions*, which I drew from in Chapter Two, Strehlow discusses the process he used to record the narratives of the Aranda people in the Aranda language, "thanks to the patience of his informants" (Strehlow, 1947:xx). This book makes an important contribution to this study, because within it Strehlow also discusses the process used by other ethnographers in their collecting of mythological narratives. In his introduction he challenges the authenticity of the texts collected by others, including those gathered by his colleagues:

I have sometimes felt that the anthropologists of the past tended to over-emphasise the differences between the Australian natives and ourselves; and this, I venture to suggest, has been due largely to the language barrier between them and their informants. Too often traditions and customs were noted down in their barest outlines; and the details were later filled in by the scientists themselves according to their own conception of what the natives' ideas ought to have been on certain subjects.

(Strehlow, 1947:xvi)

Strehlow goes on to criticise particular expeditions such as the Horn expeditions on which Baldwin Spencer collected his "Aboriginal data... largely through the assistance of the Postmaster of Alice Springs, Mr. Gillen" (Strehlow, 1947:xvi). He is particularly critical of those who collected their texts in "pidgin English":

Northern Territory pidgin English is not English perverted and mangled by the natives; it is English perverted and mangled by ignorant whites, who have in turn taught this ridiculous gibberish to the natives and who then affect to be amused by the childish babbling of these 'savages'.

(Strehlow, 1947:xvii)

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<sup>31</sup> Note that the authors put the Tanganekald people in the past, assuming they no longer have any attachment to the land "they once owned" - just as they set the Eagle and Crow narrative in the past.

Strehlow obviously had great respect for the depth and vitality of Aranda Dreaming narratives, and to make his point he rewrites, in part, the tragedy of Macbeth in pidgin - to "bring home the ruinous effect of pidgin English on any moving story" (Strehlow, 1947:xviii-xix). He concludes (with my emphasis) that:

This pidgin English account of the tragedy of Macbeth reveals the injustice and the insult that is done to any story told in this medium. The old tale immediately becomes utterly childish and ridiculous. All details are omitted. Even the general outline of the story is by no means accurate. Only a few characters are mentioned by name; and their names are distorted till they become merely funny. The whole account is an inadequate, untruthful, and malicious caricature of a great story. It would be impossible, even for a great writer, to compose a serious tragedy from such material as this. Yet this is the medium in which most native legends have been noted down in the first instance by white scientists!

It may now be clear why, even after such ridiculous pidgin English versions have been smoothed out into good simple English, the native Australian Legends have still remained poor and childish tales of little interest to any save the anthropologists.

(Strehlow, 1947:xix-xx)

It is interesting to observe that the same criticism was still being dealt out four decades later by the linguist William McGregor, who criticises those who choose to record and publish narratives in Aboriginal English (see McGregor, 1989:49-50). This criticism contrasts with Muecke's endorsement of Aboriginal English in *Gularabulu*, and his suggested use of Aboriginal English as a bridging language for understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (see Muecke in Roe, 1983)

Strehlow's 1949 book contains many narratives in Part 1 entitled "Northern Aranda Myths". He says this part of the book was written in 1934 at the University of Adelaide for the English Association, and its contents were read to members in that year. He says many of the myths "were obtained from old native informants under a promise of secrecy during their lifetime, and that is why these papers were not published earlier." Over a decade later, Strehlow dedicates his book "to their memory" - and says that "all the informants mentioned in this volume have now passed away, taking the last of their secret knowledge with them" (Strehlow, 1947:Preface). The fact that Strehlow published their narratives posthumously has ensured that not all their secrets went with them.

In Part 1 of Strehlow's book there are eleven sections, each named by a theme that constantly recur within the myths, that are both cited (in English) and discussed by Strehlow. He starts with the creationary myth "The Great Father". Of particular interest to me are sections V and VII: "Landscape fashioned by Totemic Ancestors" and "Love of Native Soil" respectively. Both stress the particular importance of Place to the Aranda in their mythology, but it should be noted that within all the myths that Strehlow relates, he never fails to mention particular sites or tracts of land with which the myths are associated. In fact Strehlow includes the landscape as part of his definition for a myth:

The myth is the sum total of the many and varied explanations given by the old leaders of a group to the younger men concerning the traditional chant, the sacred ceremonies, and the physical features of the landscape associated with the life-story of any given totemic ancestor who is revered by the group.

(Strehlow, 1947:5-6)

Another insightful element of Strehlow's book is the explanation he provides for the circumstances under which these myths are 'traditionally' told by the Aranda: "They are handed down through word of mouth by the old leaders of a group to the younger generation of initiated men, usually on the occasion of a visit to the local sacred cave where the *tjurunga* sticks and stones are kept" (Stehlow, 1947:1). A typical scenario is then provided by Strehlow, continuing for five pages, full of vivid detail:

Let us suppose the scene of such a visit to be the sacred cave of Ulamba... From time to time the leader halts, points out rocks and trees which figure in the legend of the Ulamba ancestor, and neatly explains their significance by means of sign-language. No questions may be asked, the young men must be content with such explanatory remarks as the leader is prepared to give them. If these are insufficient for a complete grasp of the myth, the young men must wait respectfully until another of these rare opportunities presents itself....

The party is now close to the cave. At a signal from the leader every man stoops down and picks up a handful of sticks, stones or pine needles. ...the cave suddenly bursts into view; stones and sticks and pine needles are flung towards it: the spirits of the ancestors must be warned of the approach of human visitors, for to disturb them rudely means to court their displeasure, and this may result in a sudden death in the near future.

(Strehlow, 1947:1-3)

Strehlow concludes the scenario with mention of a concluding ceremony, performed that evening after the climb to the cave. This ceremony is "intimately connected with the chant and the myth: it is, in short, the dramatic representation of one of the many memorable events in the myth centring around the person of the ancestor." (Strehlow, 1947:5) This is one of the main points missed by many who have reproduced myths in the written form for a mass audience. They have not understood that Aboriginal mythology is intimately connected to dance and song, and to record myths as texts that can stand alone, completely decontextualised from the People and the Place to which the myth belongs, results in a loss of considerable meaning.

In 1971 Strehlow's book *Songs of Central Australia* was published, which was, in part, the result of research he conducted between 1932 and 1960 on Aboriginal songs and myths. During this time he collected 4,270 "aboriginal song verses, most of which were in couplet or quatrain form", including songs from groups besides the Arrarnta. In addition Strehlow collected "well over a hundred Aranda and Loritja myths and many traditions" (Strehlow, 1971:XIV). But he goes on to admit to his readers that:

Only a small fraction of these myths, traditions and songs have been translated. They were all written down in the native languages; and the only words annotated were those which were unfamiliar to me at the time of recording. It has always been my intention to make a complete translation of this collection of myths and songs.

Knowledge of the old ceremonial languages has already become extinct in several of the areas where I collected my material.

(Strehlow, 1971:XIV)

Strehlow passed on in 1978, and this was his last publication. But he implies his intention in translating the material was to make it accessible to the non-Indigenous, not the younger generation of the Indigenous people who confided in him: "it is difficult to see how future linguistic and anthropological students could ever succeed in completely unravelling the meaning of these interesting documents of an ancient culture unless dictionaries, grammars, and translations were prepared now" (Strehlow, 1971:XIV). Strehlow points out that his 1971 book is "unique" because it "gives a cross-section of every type of native song once found in the Central Australia area". They are also presented in their "true metrical" form, rather than the prose form that his father Carl adopted, in his German publication of Aranda and Loritja verse (Strehlow, 1971:XV). A quick scan through the contents pages of Strehlow's very long and detailed 1971 volume reveals that he has not restricted his publication to non-sacred songs. Although long out of print, this book is readily available, and for loan, from university libraries. But it is not just a collection of sacred and non-sacred myths and songs. It is designed as a text book, and contains considerable commentary by Strehlow explaining the meaning and significance of song and myth to Central Australian Aboriginal people. I choose not to replicate any of his narratives here. But Strehlow was not the only anthropologist who openly published men's songs that come under the sacred category.

#### **3.5.4 Berndt and Berndt**

After Catherine Helen Webb arrived in Sydney, from New Zealand, and met fellow student Ronald Berndt at the University of Sydney, they married in 1941 and together embarked on a career of anthropological research that spanned a period of over fifty years. They became, according to some, "the most important and productive writers on Australian Aborigines" (White, 1994:1). Ronald Berndt became the founding chair of anthropology at the University of Western Australia, but as a team with Catherine, continued with regular field research throughout much of Aboriginal Australia. Like Strehlow, they too are critical of the way Aboriginal mythology has been represented by others:

other writers have published books and pamphlets on what are called Aboriginal myths, legends and stories. Some are presented in simplified form, as being better suited to children than adults. Others are romanticised or distorted, considerably anglicised, and viewed out of context: they belong under the title of Australian-European literature, rather than Aboriginal.

(Berndt & Berndt, 1988:389)

The Berndts began their ethnographic field work in the 1940s at Ooldea on the transcontinental railway line in the west of South Australia, and with the "Yaraldi" (or Jaralde) of the Lower Murray region in South Australia. They then worked on cattle stations in the north west of the Northern Territory, and later spent many years in Arnhem Land, with the Gunwinggu (now spelt Kunwinjku) in the west and with the Yolngu in the north east. They wrote and had published many generalist anthropological texts on Australia's Indigenous peoples, perhaps their most well-known being *The world of the first Australians*, which was first published in 1964, and is now considered a classic in its field.<sup>32</sup> Within one chapter there is a sub-heading "Oral literature", which includes a number of narratives. The Berndts are quick to point out the problems of writing down and publishing oral narratives, recognising that the process of "oral story-telling" is a "dramatic art", often involving gesture, song and "excitement". This means the current social context in which an oral narrative is told inevitably affects the telling of the narrative, as does the mood of the storyteller: "the actual words he uses are only a skeleton, a framework upon which the narrative itself is built up and comes to life" (Berndt & Berndt, 1988:390). Nevertheless they proceed to provide, in this chapter, a brief free English translation for 23 narratives from different Indigenous groups with whom they worked.

One of these narratives is *Curlew and Owl*, which was actually told to Berndt by the same Ngadjuri man that Tindale worked with - Barney Warrior. This narrative was also published much earlier by R. Berndt in *Oceania* in 1940, where he acknowledges his Indigenous source. No sources are acknowledged in the later version published in 1964, and reissued through to 1988. I choose not to reproduce this text again here, because Barney Warrior's grand-daughter hopes to republish this same narrative in collaboration with her family in the near future. The Berndts also published many books that dealt specifically with the culture and mythology of individual groups. One of these publications was authored solely by Ronald, being on secret men's business in north east Arnhem land, entitled *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*. The book includes many erotic songs recorded in Ronald's own script for Yolngu Matha, which he has translated word-by-word into English (appearing as interlinear glosses) before a free translation is provided.

Two relatively recent publications of the Berndts, which I shall discuss in more detail below, deal predominantly with the mythology of the Gunwinngu (Kunwinjku) of western Arnhem Land, and the Yaraldi (Jaralde) of the Lower Murray (who are more generally known today as the Ngarrindjeri). *The speaking land: myth and story in Aboriginal Australia* was published in 1989 and is a collection of "myths" that were recorded by the Berndts since 1941 from "traditionally-oriented Aborigines". It contrasts with the collection of narratives

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<sup>32</sup> This book was reprinted, revised and reissued many times. The last and fifth edition was published in 1988 by the Aboriginal Studies Press in Canberra, with a variation in the original title: *The world of the first Australians: Aboriginal traditional life: past and present*.

that appear in the appendices of their later publication *The world that was: the Yaraldi of the Murray River and the lakes, South Australia*, in that the Berndts considered the Yaraldi material to be of a "memory culture", rather than from first-hand contact with a "traditional" culture. Although the intention of the Berndts, on their arrival in the Lower Murray region, was to research the contemporary situation of rapid cultural change in Aboriginal people's lives, they found themselves instead looking at the "traditional past" - because of the apparent clues it gave them of the present (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993:9). They worked closely with two primary informants, Albert Karloan and Pinkie Mack, whom they respected greatly. Of Karloan they said he "was without doubt an intellectual of the highest calibre" (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:6).

When working with the Yaraldi, the Berndts always sought out the older people who were living in fringe camps in the region. In fact Ronald Berndt worked initially for a brief period in 1939-1940 with Mark Wilson, who had died by the time he returned with Catherine. Ronald had no anthropological training at this stage, and it was Mark Wilson who directed him on the course of pursuing anthropological training (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:3). Like Strehlow, the Berndts saw that it was their duty to systematically record information provided to them by the most senior Indigenous people of a group, to ensure it was preserved in some form (and eventually in a written and published form) for future generations of Indigenous people. They were like missionaries in their zeal for the task at hand. They chose to work with the older people because they saw them as the sources of the most authentic information. They actually dedicated their 1993 book to their senior informants "in fulfilment of our promise that this social history would be made available to the descendants of the Narrinyeri<sup>33</sup> people and to all Australians".

It was this very book that was, in fact, under great demand by many Australians from both sides of the controversial Hindmarsh Island affair in the mid 1990s (including white lawyers and the media) just after the book was released. Lawyers for the dissident women, who claimed "fabrication" regarding the "women's business" that halted the building of the Hindmarsh Island bridge, were quick to argue that there were no secret women's myths, particularly on the Seven Sisters Dreaming, within the Berndt book. This should not be surprising, given the predominant role Ronald Berndt played in collecting the material, and given the inexperience of both the Berndts at that time. In *The world that was*, Appendix 4 runs for 178 pages and contains 163 narratives, all appearing in a Ngarrindjeri clan language, with English interlinear glossing. A large number of these are "myth" narratives, with some English commentary by the Berndts. This style of reproduction is very similar to that used by Ronald Berndt in *Love songs*, and some are of a similar sensual and sexual nature. Although I have been told by one senior ethnographer that the Berndts tended to "see the world through

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<sup>33</sup> Now spelt Ngarrindjeri.

sex coloured glasses", I suggest that the young and inexperienced Berndts would not have had access to any women's 'secret' or 'sacred' Yaraldi narratives in the early 1940s!

The Berndts' 1989 book, *The speaking land*, by contrast reproduces all of its "myths and story" in English, even though most of the texts were collected "in the local language of the narrators" (see Berndt & Berndt, 1989:6-7).<sup>34</sup> The Berndts, who were experienced ethnographers by the time they published this book, introduce the narratives with the observation:

No traditional Aboriginal myth was told without reference to the land, or to a specific stretch of country where the incidents it narrates were believed to have taken place. No myth is free-floating, without some local identification. Without this anchorage, they could be regarded as being simply 'just so' stories. In other words, the land and all within it was irrevocably tied up with the content of a myth or story, just as were (and are) the people themselves.

(Berndt & Berndt, 1989:5)

The Berndts go on to reproduce 195 narratives from across much of Indigenous Australia, and in contrast to their earlier books, they actually acknowledge individual story-tellers and their language affiliations. Before I complete this section on the Berndts, and on the anthropologists, I should make brief mention of a small publication that was written by Catherine Berndt for children in 1988: *This is still rainbow serpent country*. This little book, with glossy colour illustrations is her small contribution to the Gunwinggu people, from whom she recorded the text. Like many of the Berndts books, it indicates that this diligent couple strived to convey a positive message of Australia's Indigenous peoples to a wide Australian audience.

## 3.6 BUSHMEN

### 3.6.1 Bill Harney

W.E. (Bill) Harney was a bushman, yet he produced as many books on Aboriginal themes as some of the 'learned' anthropologists.<sup>35</sup> During his early years in the Northern Territory, he lived and worked in remote areas as a "cattle- and boat-man", and eventually married a "coloured girl" from the Church of England mission established for "half-caste" Aboriginal people on Groote Eylandt in the Gulf of Carpentaria.<sup>36</sup> He was considered in those days as

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<sup>34</sup> Despite the availability of such technology, the Berndts did not record any Indigenous narratives on audio-tape until 1958 (Berndt & Berndt, 1989:6).

<sup>35</sup> His titles included: *Taboo, North 23°, Brimming billabongs, Songs of the songman, Life among the Aborigine, Tales from the Aborigines, Content to live in the sun and Grief, gaiety and Aborigines*.

<sup>36</sup> The product of this marriage was Bill Harney (Junior), but the marriage mustn't have lasted long, because Harney Jr. was brought up by his Aboriginal stepfather "old Joe Jomornji" (see Harney Jr. 1996:v-vi & 3). Harney Jr. later collaborated to write his own book: *Born under a paperbark tree*. Because Harney Jr. never went to school and never learnt to read and write, he had to tell his story onto tapes, to be transcribed by his co-writer Jan Wositsky (Harney Jr. 1996:vi). His book tells of his life as a bushman, working on remote stations in the N.T.

part of "Combo society" (i.e. belonging to the 'coloured' people), but was later appointed by the the Native Affairs Branch as a "protector of aborigines". The Indigenous people he encountered in this later role considered him a "little-bit-policeman" (see Harney, 1959:xvi).

There is no doubt that Harney knew Aboriginal people well. He had the reputation among his white readership of being their supporter and friend, much like the missionaries. But is there another side? There is an oral traditions in Arnhem Land about "a yella-fella from the Roper River area", by the name of "Balayni"<sup>37</sup> ("also known as Bill Harney") who took part in murderous plunders around the time of the First World War. A small booklet produced at Yirrkala School in 1981, written by Wuyuwa Yunupingu, explains how Balayni led a band of "armed men" and "rode into the camp and shot the older women.... The other young women were captured by Bill Harney's men" (Yunupingu, 1981:4 & 10). Yunupingu continues: "Bill Harney returned the next year and collected the skulls of the people and sold them to a museum in southern cities and made a lot of money" (Yunupingu, 1981:13).

The killings in remote parts of Arnhem Land began much earlier than WWI. Pastoral leases were taken up from Katherine to the Gulf Carpentaria from the late 1870s. A "Guerilla war" ensued, as the Indigenous men sought to protect their land and their women. Most leases proved financially unviable and were abandoned by 1890, but the London-based Eastern and African Cold Storage Company had grandiose plans, and took up all the abandoned and available leases between 1899 and 1903. The company then hired killing parties to rid the land of its Indigenous inhabitants (see Harris, 1990:691-692). It was during these troubled times that the Roper River mission was established, by the Church of England in 1908, on the southern edge of Arnhem Land, as a refuge for local Indigenous people (Harris, 1990:693). The bushman Bill Harney was born in 1895, so he was a boy of eleven years when Bill Conway professes to have led such a "hunting expedition" into Arnhem Land (see Harris, 1990:692). However in a more recent publication, Trudgen draws on both Harris (1990) and Yolngu oral tradition to shed further light on the severity and timing of the "Pastoral Wars" against the Yolngu of Arnhem Land. He claims there were two other Pastoral Wars prior to the arrival of Balayni and his plunderers, and Balayni didn't appear until the "Dry season of 1927 or 1928" (Trudgen, 2000:31). It was then that he conducted his "murderous campaign" against the Yolngu of the Dhalwangu clan living at Gangan just above the Koolatong River in south-east Arnhem Land. Trudgen's recount of this particular episode, and other that followed, is graphic and chilling (Trudgen, 2000:31-34).

Of the many books Bill Harney wrote, telling of his experiences living and working in the N.T., a number retell Dreaming narratives told to him over the years by different Aboriginal

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<sup>37</sup> The name "Bill Harney" would be pronounced as Balayni or Bilayni by a Yolngu Matha speaker, with the "h" being deleted (see Yunupingu, 1981).



elders. In one of his later books, *Tales from the Aborigines*, Harney justifies his method of collecting his "tales":

...To gather these stories I went to those aborigines who understood both English and their own tongue and who were, by their initiation and knowledge of ritual, experts in the story-telling art. With this medium of translation I have gathered the tales in their natural environment. In this approach the anthropologist may say that I am wrong, but I have always found that the aborigines are expert translators in their own right and rarely think much of the achievement of a white person who has mastered their tongue.

(Harney, 1959:19)

The grandfather of Australian anthropology, Professor A.P. Elkin, must have been one who approved of Harney's methods, because in 1949 he collaborated with him to produce *Songs of the Songmen: Aboriginal myths retold*.<sup>38</sup> This book retells Indigenous "myths" in the form of verse. Two stanzas of one verse begins:

THE MOTHER (Anula Tribe)

Down by Mingara's sweet lagoon  
Where brolgas dance, and lit by the moon  
The spirit-children swim and play  
And skip towards the coming day,  
The sacred rituals first were danced,  
Their mystic power by "gods" enhanced.

A magic form, a sacred name,  
Mother of all, we hail her fame.  
A cloud, in form like a boab tree,  
Giant and squat - beside the sea,  
She swung along the powerful stride;  
And guarding her on either side  
A band of Totem heroes strode,  
Marking the way of the Dreamtime road...

(Harney & Elkin, 1968 edition:17)

The last third of the book contains cultural notes by Elkin that attempt to explain aspects of each poetic-myth. The notes on the above poem, which actually runs for ten stanzas, take one page and explain details of the Kunapipi narrative and ritual of eastern Arnhem Land. Elkin begins his commentaries with a subdued confession that reveals the texts within the book are not translated from Aboriginal languages. He acknowledges that others before him have reproduced translated versions of songs in published forms, and cites the "beautiful translations of the Wonguri-'Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon-Bone' by R.M. Berndt" and "another excellent example is T.G.H. Strehlow's rendering of the chant form of the 'Myth of Ankotaringa' ".<sup>39</sup> He then goes on to say, after citing a few stanzas from Strehlow's work, "nothing like this is attempted here. The songs simply express myths, beliefs, experiences, customs, and chants in verse, using forms, length of line, accent, and rhythm that seem to

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<sup>38</sup> A revised edition of this book was published in 1968.

<sup>39</sup> From *Oceania* 19,1:16-50 and *Oceania* 4,2:190-192 respectively.

convey best the feeling and atmosphere and, in the case of chants, the ritual 'beat' " (Harney & Elkin, 1968:123-4).

Harney's 1959 book, *Tales of the Aborigines*, deserves further mention here because it was relatively ground-breaking in its attempt to retain an oral style within the written form. Both the Dreaming texts and the contact stories have been reproduced in a dialogue form, with some of the narrators' commentaries remaining in Aboriginal English - the language in which they were told. But Harney has gone one step further. Harney also provides the reader with the actual setting and circumstances in which the narratives were told, hence maintaining the important performance element of oral texts (stressed in the writings of both Strehlow and the Berndts). Harney explains:

So we would sit and talk beneath the shady trees. I told them stories, as they would expect me to do, and amidst the tales I heard the names of the great story-tellers. 'Pat Laurie... him savee plenty language and mob stories... Mirawong... can' lick that old man for proper story... when him talk-talk all-about cockatoo must listen for him to make 'eye come out' and 'ear-hole crack'.

I made a mental note of these great story-tellers and as time went on I met up with them. But I always noticed that to get a good story I must let them tell it in their own way... Each part is told in its natural surroundings and to hear them I must remember it all. To begin writing would make them falter and I would be branded as a 'Strong-fellow-face'. So I took my time over the years and became as the aborigines - 'Level 'gether all-a-same we'. Thus did I travel amidst the people, watching, but not intruding. I asked no questions but waited for the bird or animal or some little incident that would bring a picture to the mind of my native friend. Out of that picture would come a story or a part of a story...

(Harney, 1959:26-27)

Harney is also to be commended for individually acknowledging not only the name of his Indigenous narrators, but also identifying their language and land affiliations. The following extract illustrates the style adopted by Harney, in his 1959 book, as he relates just one of the oral narratives that he himself was told by a Pitjantjatjara man. It is just a segment of the narrative "Pungalung and the mice-women":

#### PUNGALUNG AND THE MICE-WOMEN

From our resting place, on the side of Ayers Rock, the conglomerate mountains of Olga were indigo-blue against the back lighting from the setting sun....

Minyinderri of the Pitjinjarra tribe and I looked long at the changing colours. I was silent as I looked upon the natural picture.... I could tell that he was re-calling from his subconscious mind the myths relating to the land before us.

'My country that way,' he commented nostalgically as he pointed westward, 'good place my country...'

After scrambling for a while through this water-washed ravine we came to a mass of boulders that had broken away from cliff face ages ago. Beckoning me to be seated beside him on one of the larger boulders that gave to us an unrestricted view of the country beyond, Minyinderri told me the tale of Pungalung and his troubles with the Minggarri mice maidens.

'Long time ago,' he began, 'a hunter called Pungalung lived in this country. He was a great hunter and the old people of my tribe who told me the story, said that he was as big as one of these mountains. He was so tall that he carried the kangaroos he

killed in the hunt by just tucking their heads under the human-hair belt around his waist...

'Well, right there lived some young women,' he continued, 'never make trouble with anyone, and knowing nothing about men they did not run away when they saw Pungalung coming.'

'That Pungalung get big surprise when he try "playabout" and found that Minggarri women know nothing about man...

(Harney, 1959:82)

We can only take Harney's word that he had a good enough memory to retain the specific language style and content details of each narrative until he was able to write it down, knowing that recording it while being told would have caused him to be branded a "Strong-fellow-face". Such names were surely reserved for anthropologists and linguists, whose 'scientific' method required them to record things word-for-word.

### 3.7 WHITE WRITERS AND POETS

During the 1950s and 60s as Australia was becoming increasingly aware of its own emerging identity, distinct from that of the mother country, Australian writers began looking towards developing a literature that was uniquely Australian. Some established writers began to turn towards the oral literature of Indigenous Australians, as either an inspiration for their own creativity, or as a primary source of material to be re-worked and ultimately published. Some acknowledged their sources, by naming the original Indigenous story-tellers, while others did not. It is those who made some attempt to acknowledge their Indigenous sources who will be dealt with in this next section. Those who did not are discussed under the section "Appropriators".

#### 3.7.1 Roland Robinson

Roland Robinson was one of the Jindyworobak poets, and with the same intent of his artistic colleagues, he developed an interest in things Indigenous. He began collecting Dreaming narratives first-hand from Australia's Indigenous peoples in 1946. His first collection to be published was *Legend and Dreaming*, in 1952, containing Robinson's rendition of narratives he recorded from the Roper River area of Arnhem Land. The narratives were told to him "in their basic, or 'pidgin' English", which he later says he reproduced with "Biblical rhythms and cadences" in order to convey their "dignity and religious nature" (Robinson, 1966:xii-xiii). Several books later, and after some experimentation, Robinson's 1966 collection of narratives was published, called: *Aboriginal myths and legends*. This seminal anthology of Dreaming narratives, most of which were collected by Robinson himself, come from many different regions of Australia. Also included are narratives collected by Strehlow, Milligan, Howitt, Langloh Parker and McConnel. It is, in Robinson's words, "the first general collection of Aboriginal myths and legends to be made" (Robinson, 1966:15).

The collection has six sections, which include a total of 56 texts, under the themes: "Ancestral Beings, The Rainbow-Serpent, Universal Themes, Fertility Myths, Tribal Law and The Lost Dreamtime". Of them, the critic Swain says:

Robinson's own material from Arnhem Land and the Central and Western Deserts, focusing on traditional themes (ancestor, Rainbow Serpent, fertility, law), may fail to conform to anthropological rigours, but the final section on the South-East region happily adds to our knowledge in an areas [sic] where anthropologists were then remiss.

(Swain, 1991:92)

Robinson's 1966 collection is significant because within it he breaks the pervasive literary convention of Indigenous anonymity, by acknowledging the individual sources for each of his narratives. He names the Indigenous "narrator", and the collector or "transcriber", under each narrative title in the contents pages (see Robinson, 1966:v-viii), and again acknowledges the narrator and their "tribe" affiliation under the title of each text within the main body of the book, always with the words "related by..." or sometimes "narrated by...". An example of such acknowledgement is: "The flood and the Bird-men. Related by Kianoo Tjeemairee, Murinbata tribe" (see Robinson 1966:85). This particular collection is also significant because it displays Robinson's continued attempts to allow his "informants to speak for themselves":

An Aboriginal narrator, I found, using English, or basic English, makes his own translations. His style, turns of phrase, imagery, allegory, similes, cadences and punctuation, all stem from an original source and are aboriginal [sic] in character and feeling. The Aboriginal nature, its character and feeling, have been the qualities I have looked for in making this selection. So much of Aboriginal mythology which has been recorded suffers from what the poet A.D. Hope has described as 'the treacherous tongue of paraphrase.'

(Robinson, 1966:xiii)

Strehlow would have probably challenged Robinson's use of "Basic English" as the chosen medium for such story-telling, but at the same time agreed with the "treachery" of other non-Indigenous paraphrasers. Following on from Harney's innovations in *Tales from the Aborigines*, Robinson has tried to avoid the use of Standard Australian English, and his own idiosyncratic literary style, and instead experimented with minimal editorial interference and the adoption of the oral styles of his narrators. An example of such styles can be seen in the ubiquitous Emu narrative, "related by Maria Boney", who was living at Brewarrina in N.S.W., when she narrated three texts to Robinson for his written collection:

## DINNAWUN AND BURRALGA

Related by Maria Boney, Yoalarai tribe<sup>40</sup>

There was an emu and a native-companion. They was mates, and they used to feed about together. And one day this emu said, "Hey, why don't you get rid of some of those little ones of yours? We'd have a good feed then." This emu is talking. He has his little ones planted in the grass and scrub.

So this native-companion did away with a lot of his children. And two were left. Then this native-companion, he started to cry. He was sorry about the little ones, see. You hear them native-companions sing out, they make a terrible noise.

While the native-companion was crying, this emu, he went and brought all his young ones out. He put his wing out and he ran round the native-companion with all his little ones. This old emu, he was getting flash and runnin' round with his wing out showing off all his children.

Ah, the native-companion was sorry then. But he said to himself, "I'll catch him."

So the native-companion left it until the emu forgot all about the trick he played.

Then one day the native-companion said, "Ah, I know what we'll do. We'll cut our wings now so we can have a decent feed." He said to the emu, "We'll get a good pick."

So, anyway, the emu, he cut his wing. But the native companion, he didn't cut his. He flew round the emu telling the emu what he could do. "Ngurroo gulgai!" he called. That means, "I've got arms to fly about with!" The native-companion just showed that old emu what he could do.

But I don't know what the old emu said. He couldn't say nothin'. He'd cut his arms. he'd only got short arms.

That's why when you see the native-companion, he's only got two little ones. But when you find that emu's nest, he's got a lot of little ones.

(Boney in Robinson, 1966:196-7)

Similar versions of this same Emu and Native Companion (or Turkey) narrative are willingly told by many Indigenous narrators from across Australia, when asked by non-Indigenous collectors to provide a story. It has become widely known, and told, and tends to no longer relate to any specific place in Australia, and is therefore aimed at a wide and invariably child audience. I return to this particular narrative later in my thesis, but mention it here because it contrasts with other narratives within Robinson's 1966 collection. Many of Robinson's other narrators have chosen to retain a sense of Place in their texts, particularly at the beginning, when they contextualise their narrative by making it quite clear as to which country their Dreaming narrative relates. This can be seen, for example, in the first three texts narrated by the famous artist Albert Namatjira (or Tonanga, of the "Aranda tribe", see Robinson, 1966:5-18). His first narrative, "The Old man and his Six Sons", begins: "An old-man started out from a cave in a hill at Merina, which the white-man calls Haast's Bluff. He carried a big tjurunga with him, and he carried a spear and a woomerah..." (Tonanga in Robinson, 1966:5).

I contend that Robinson would have made considerable effort, as the years went by, to collect more narratives from Indigenous narrators such as Tonanga that were not specifically aimed at children. This is reflected in the small-print and adult-like presentation of his 1966 collection. One assumes that Robinson also became more attuned to detail in his later years of

<sup>40</sup> The same language group as the Euahlayi 'tribe' of Langloh Parker's work.

collecting, and developed a stronger awareness of the essential elements of mythological narratives, and a better understanding of Aboriginal cultural beliefs. In some narratives, which he collected earlier from the Djauan in the N.T., he retains little sense of Place within the published form of the narratives. In the important narrative of central Arnhem Land, for example, which Robinson calls "Marrgon the Lightning", the narrator tells of the revengeful acts of the Ancestral hero "Marrgon, the lightning and thunder man", as dictated by an anonymous "old-man" whose wife has absconded with another man. However, despite the considerable journeying of the old man, no mention is made of where he travels, or the name of the site where Lightning man kills his wife and abductor (see Robinson, 1966:140-143). Despite Robinson's introductory notes (Robinson, 1966:140), stating that: "This narrative is a clear and detailed account of a magico-religious practice", one can only wonder whether the story-teller, Rinjeira, chose to leave much detail out of his narrative, knowing it was to be shared by others in the future. Alternatively, Robinson himself could have missed the detail of specific names provided, in the Djauan language, for different characters and places mentioned by the narrator. This particular narrative actually reads like a quick outline of a much longer narrative, remembering, that Robinson began "recording mythology" in 1946 on a zoological collecting expedition on the Roper River in Arnhem Land, where he says he "mingled" with some of the Djauan people camped there:

...the old man Goodoonoo who was cooking flying foxes over the fire... began to tell me of a time when the Aborigines did not have fire. I soon realized that the old man was speaking of 'In the Dreamtime', 'In the Beginning'. After this I began to write down all the stories these Aborigines related and sang to me. These narratives formed my first collection, *Legends and Dreaming*.

(Robinson, 1966:xii-xiii)

As his 1966 collection verifies, Robinson went on to collect texts from narrators representing many different language groups, but always had to rely on the English language skills of his Indigenous narrators. But his Preface displays that he did develop a deeper understanding of Aboriginal mythology than many other writers of his time:

Often, a myth which is of great anthropological interest, or which to the Aboriginal is sacred and profound, is, to the alien mind of the alienated white man, of little literary interest. To us, literature often means mere entertainment or diversion. To an Aboriginal a sacred myth is an oral incantation of the eternal creation-time.

(Robinson, 1966:xi)

Nevertheless Robinson was a writer and poet, and he still viewed the narratives he collected with a critical literary eye:

...Quite often however, myths are encountered which measure up to our best ideas and ideals concerning literature. These narratives have artistic form. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end. They have interest, conflict and drama. Their themes are beautifully developed and brought to a dramatic or satisfactory conclusion. ...Even in their translated and transcribed forms, their drama and poetry is evident.

(Robinson, 1966:xi-xii)

But one must remember too that it was during the era of assimilation, before Indigenous Australians had citizenship rights, that Robinson was first collecting these narratives. He therefore shared the fear that such narratives could be lost forever, and saw his retrieval work amongst different groups as important for posterity's sake: "In recent years I have been gathering myths and legends from Aborigines and caste-Aborigines, who are 'fringe-dwellers', in New South Wales" (Robinson, 1966:xii), and:

...While it is hoped that the inevitable pressure of our civilization will eventually accept the Aborigines as fellow human-beings, or citizens, it is also realized that the spiritually integrated culture of the remaining tribal Aborigines and the racial memories of de-tribalized Aborigines will be things of the past.

This, I feel, is why this present collection, the first general collection of Aboriginal myths and legends to be made, is important.

(Robinson, 1966:xv)

There can be no doubt that Robinson's collection was, and still is, an important one. But unknown to him, it was not to be the "first general collection" of its kind in 1966, even though its integrity and authenticity far outrivals the two collections compiled and published just a year before by A.W. Reed (discussed below). I have quoted in full the Seven Sisters Dreaming narrative, that appears in Robinson's 1966 collection, in Appendix 3.7. It was told to him by "Minyanderri" of the "Pitjantjara tribe" (see Robinson, 1966:91-93). He was actually the same story-teller sought out by Bill Harney a number of years earlier. This account helps to demonstrate the style adopted by Robinson to represent the Dreaming narratives he collected, as well as showing the type of introductory comments Robinson made for each text he published. In more recent times, selections from Robinson's early collections has been republished in picture book form with glossy colour illustrations by the Indigenous artist Bronwyn Bancroft. An example is the book *Dirrangun*, which contains two narratives collected from two different narrators about the mythical figure "Dirrangun". The two narrators represent two different Indigenous groups, Euston Williams (of the "Githawul tribe") and Lucy Daley (of the "Bunjalung tribe"), and are acknowledged on the front cover. We are told on the credits page that 'Gran' Daley "originally told this story about 40 years ago for one pound - a huge sum at that time" (Bancroft et. al. 1994:Inside back cover).

### 3.8 WHITE APPROPRIATORS

Over the years a number of white writers (and appropriators) have re-written, re-worked and re-edited Dreaming narratives for publication by drawing solely on secondary sources. They have used collections that were collected, compiled and eventually published by others, but have published their own versions in their own names. One major question I ask in the following section on these appropriators is: Who holds copyright over these works? It will be seen that invariably the appropriator assumes copyright over the entire published product, whether or not they name and acknowledge any primary Indigenous sources or their secondary sources. There is, fortunately, the odd exception. Some appropriators have

managed to sell many copies of their books, for which they claim sole copyright, particularly A.W. Reed.

### 3.8.1 A.W. Reed

A.W. Reed is an unashamed self-made publisher<sup>41</sup>, who is probably best known for his first two books *Myths and Legends of Australia* and *Aboriginal Fables and Legendary Tales*, both published in 1965. They preceded Roland Robinson's best known collection by just one year.

The first of these, *Myths and Legends*, has an introduction plus six sections under the following theme titles: "Creation Myths, Legends of Sun, Moon and Stars, Legends of Animals, Legends of the Birds, Legends of River, lake, and Shore and The Winjarning Brothers and other hero stories." He reserves the "shorter folk tales, particularly ones relating to animal and plant life" for his second book (Reed, 1965a:11). The purpose of Reed's books is quite clear - to make money out of a perceived market demand for books containing Aboriginal "myths", "legends" and "fables" that will have wide public acceptance and appeal. Both books are shameful in their appropriation of texts, with no acknowledgement of the original Indigenous story tellers. They have been in print over a period of many years, and were followed in 1978 by two more compilations: *Aboriginal legends: animal tales* and *Aboriginal myths: tales of the Dreamtime*. Then in 1993 another 414 page combination of his earlier books appeared, entitled *Aboriginal myths, legends and fables*. It again reached wide appeal, because it was reprinted in 1999 by the Reed New Holland publishing house.

It seems Reed has no compunction about claiming personal copyright to collections of published texts that he himself has reproduced entirely from secondary sources. The original Indigenous narrators, who were the primary sources of the reworked narratives, are completely forgotten, while the secondary sources only occasionally rate a mention. Reed sees any published Indigenous narratives as resources ripe for exploitation and appropriation, as he indicates in his Introduction to *Myths and legends*:

It is important that white Australians should appreciate the wealth of imagination displayed in aboriginal legend. It is part of the literature of Australia. We shall not put our roots down into the soil until we have incorporated their folklore into the indigenous literature of the southern continent, and can see the land through the eyes of the primitive, clever, imaginative people who had to fight to gain their nourishment from Mother Earth.

(Reed, 1965a:9)

Of his first book, Reed pronounces in his Introduction: "The legends contained in this book have been gathered from many different sources. It is a comprehensive collection which

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<sup>41</sup> Reed's early books were all published by his publishing company A.H. & A.W. Reed., which had branches in Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington and Auckland. In 1965 A.W. Reed was the Chairman of Directors of this publishing house, which was then New Zealand's largest (see Reed, 1965a:Dustcover).



originated among different tribes and can be regarded as a typical sampling of the beliefs of Aborigines in every part of Australia" (Reed, 1965a:9). He then goes on to reveal his published sources, citing Drake-Brockman's "modern version" of Langloh Parker's works and Ramsay Smith's *Myths and legends* as major sources. He then confesses (note my highlighting) that: "Many books [which he lists in a Bibliography] have been used freely as source material, but variant accounts have been compared and the tales rewritten in a form that is hoped will appeal to readers of the present time" (Reed, 1965a:11). Unfortunately it is impossible to identify which of Reed's rewritten narratives come from which published source, as no mention is made of individual sources within the main body of his collection.

Reed attempts, also in his Introduction, to give his collection some authority, by quoting Professor Elkin of Sydney University. Reed begins:

The presentation of myths and legends in a form which is acceptable to the present day must necessarily depart from the spirit of the Eternal Dreamtime in many respects. To the Aboriginal the stories were not simply pleasant tales to beguile the evening hours. As Professor A.P. Elkin remarked, 'Mythology is not just a matter of words and records, but of action and life, for the cult societies, the totemic lodges, do not spend their time at meetings reciting and chanting only; they also re-enact the myths.... For the most part, the details of any myth are only important because they enable the present-day men to walk the path with fidelity, which leads into the sacred dreamtime, the source of life.'

(Reed, 1965a:10)

Unfortunately, it seems Elkin's words were lost on Reed, because he proceeds throughout all of his collections to recreate countless "tales" or "fables" that do appear to be rewritten simply for pleasure, or to "beguile the evening hours" away, as well as being relegated to the "Eternal Dreamtime". Of this he seems unashamed: "The value of this compilation may well lie in its representative nature. With hundreds of tribes and hundreds of languages, there was no homogeneity, but there was a common ethos which can be readily found by sampling the variant legends of different tribes" (Reed, 1965a:11). I contend it was largely A.W. Reed's early publications that were responsible for popularising the sub-genre of "myths" and "legends", which have become so common place in texts (still published today) for children in particular. This particular sub-genre is distinguishable by the way its narratives are divorced from any immediate sense of Person, Place or Present time. By this I mean they are invariably presented as mere stories that bear no reference to the original story-teller (i.e. Person); they rarely mention any recognisable location or country, unless the theme of the text is the creation of a significant landmark (i.e. Place); and the narrative is almost always relegated to the long distant past in the 'Dreamtime'.

Reed is unapologetic in his appropriation of Indigenous texts - he views it as an inevitable, if not necessary, part of the colonisation process. Prior to launching onto the Australian publishing scene with his 1965 books, he had reworked Indigenous narratives for five books on the mythology of the Maori people of New Zealand, including titles such as *Myths and*

*legends of Maoriland* and *Treasury of Maori folklore*. Although Robinson also strived to incorporate Aboriginal oral literature into the emerging body of Australian literature, there is a vast gulf between the methods adopted by him and Reed. Robinson strove to retain the identity and integrity of the Indigenous source for each of his narratives, while Reed always wrote from a distance, never ever meeting the story-tellers. All his texts were acquired from secondary sources, then re-written with little concern for authenticity: "All the stories have previously appeared in print but have been retold for this collection (Reed, 1965b:5). Reed was in the business of making books, and inevitably into making money. This disregard for authenticity is displayed in the way Reed deals with vernacular terms from many different language groups within the texts he appropriates:

An arbitrary selection of aboriginal names for living creatures has been made and adhered to throughout in order to avoid confusion, but it will be appreciated that such names varied according to tribe and locality. A glossary of names and aboriginal terms is given in an appendix.

(Reed, 1965a:10-11)

This glossary of two pages, in *Myths and legends*, bears no reference whatsoever to the original language from which each word originated - just as his notorious book *Aboriginal words of Australia* bears no reference to the original source languages of their smorgasboard collection of words.

Below I quote in full one of Reed's reworked narratives, that tells of the creation of the Murray River, which is taken from his second book, *Aboriginal fables and Legendary tales*. This book contains "shorter folk tales", according to Reed (1965a:11), and therefore displays how Reed manages to reduce much longer narratives from his source material into mere "tales". The source used to rewrite this "tale" would have been "Fishing" in Ramsay Smith (1930:228-236), originally written by David Unaipon (discussed in detail later). Being a narrative about a well known landmark, however, Reed has retained some sense of Place.

#### HOW THE MURRAY RIVER WAS MADE.

Long before the Murray River became a broad torrent of refreshing, life-giving water, an earth-quake shook the barren land and formed a long trench or chasm. Occasional rain storms swept across the land, and a tiny stream flowed down the newly-formed rent.

Then came another tremor which caused the land to dance as though a corroboree was being held far under the earth. Rocks and soil heaved, and from the very bowels of the earth an enormous fish shouldered its way to the earth.

It was borne on the crest of a wave of water. The sun sparkled on the silver torrent which boiled and eddied in the trench, following the trail of the fish which swam down the stream. It was far too large for the narrow bed. It dug its head into the earth and scooped it up on either side, widening its path with strokes of its powerful tail. The water filled the hollows made by the head and tail of the fish, and behind it the broad stream flowed gently with many turns and bends as the agitated water subsided.

So the bulldozer of ancient days excavated the bed of the Murray River and filled it with water as far as lake Alexandrina. There it was arrested by the hand of Nepelle, the Great ruler of the heavens. He picked the fish up and cut it into small pieces

which he threw back into the river, where they remain as the ponde (Murray cod), pomeri (mud-fish), tarki (perch), tukker (a flat, silvery fish), kundegulde (butterfish), tinuwarre (bream), and mallowe (Murray Mouth salmon).

(Reed, 1965b:73-4)

This rendition of Reed's demonstrates his use of some of the literary traits that have now become entrenched as stylistic necessities for this sub-genre of 'legends' that Reed helped popularise. The first is in his title, with its formulaic beginning: "How the..." (or in other cases "Why the..."). In Reed's *Aboriginal fables*, there are 15 texts that begin with the title: "How ...". The second feature is the way Reed begins with an introductory time phrase that immediately places the text in the long distant past: "Long before the...". He also makes reference to the past in the final paragraph: "so the bulldozer of ancient days...", reaffirming the antiquity of his "fable". Of course there is no mention of the original story-teller, or the identity of the group from which that narrator came, nor is there any acknowledgement of the specific narrative or clarification of which specific secondary source was used by Reed to rewrite this creation 'tale'. It is A.W. Reed, and him only who retains the credit and copyright for this recreation! But he was soon to be followed by other home-grown appropriators.

### 3.8.2 Other Appropriators

A large number of picture books have been published for young children over the years that retell Indigenous Dreaming narratives; largely of a 'how-so' or 'just-so' aetiological nature. Issues of authenticity have not concerned most white writers of such texts; the main purpose of the books being to entertain. An exception was published in 1972, however, in the form of a picture book for older children, that was researched<sup>42</sup> and written by the South Australian writer Madeleine Brunato, called: *Worra and the Jilbruke legend*. In this book, Brunato seeks to contextualise the story-telling process of a Kurna elder, of the Adelaide Plains, telling the important Tjilbruke creation narrative to a young Kurna boy, whom she calls "Worra". This literary device gives Brunato's book a strong sense of Place and Person as well as a sense of the here and now. It is unfortunate though that Brunato contradicts this contextualisation by stating in her Foreword that: "A few years after the white settlers came, the tribe became extinct". Contemporary Kurna elders, such as Lewis O'Brien and Georgina Williams, plus younger Kurna such as Karl Telfer, are living testament to the vitality of the Kurna community today, who continue to live on the Adelaide Plains, and to spiritually re-live the Tjilbruke Dreaming. Brunato wrote a second book in 1975 using a similar literary device to tell of Dreaming narratives of the Indigenous people of the south east of S.A., but this time relied on the published works of Christina Smith (whose works I discussed earlier). Her second book is called: *Worra and legends of the Booandiks*.

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<sup>42</sup> Brunato acknowledges the "assistance with research and advice" given her by people such as the anthropologists C. Mountford and R. Edwards (Brunato, 1972:Acknowledgements).

With much less research and forethought, a series of twelve picture books were published in 1979 by the Scientific Research Association (S.R.A.) under the name "Australian Legend Series". These largely comprised very much simplified and decontextualised re-writes of texts from Langloh Parker's early publications. They were all rewritten by L.&G. Adams, and include titles such as: *The tale of the platypus*; *The spirit in the stream*; *Mopoke and the moon*; *Wowie the river monster* and others. The first of these can be seen in full in Appendix 3.8. Then in 1980, Robert Roennfeldt published a humorous children's book entitled: *Tiddalick: the frog who caused a flood*, which he subtitles "an adaptation of an Aboriginal Dreamtime legend". Again, the book is not concerned with authenticity; its purpose is to amuse very young children with the antics of Australia's indigenous animals. This text was adapted from a previously published narrative, but it is unclear from where - neither Langloh Parker's collections nor Reed's seem to include such a story. Full copyright for this later version lies with Roennfeldt.

In the very early 1980s, Pamela Lofts (whose credentials were unknown) wrote to a number of Aboriginal community schools, in the N.T. and W.A., asking them to provide her with stories she could publish in a series of books. I was working within the bilingual program at Willowra school at the time, which received one of these requests. We didn't respond, fearing the possibilities of exploitation. Apparently a number of communities did respond, because over a period between 1983 and 1987 a series of picture books was released, published by Ashton Scholastic. This series comprises aetiological animal narratives, and includes: *How the birds got their colours*, *The echidna and the shade tree*, *Dunbi the owl*, *How the kangaroos got their tails*, *Warnayarra - the rainbow snake*, *The bat and the crocodile*, *The kangaroo and the porpoise* and *When the snake bites the sun*. It has proved to be very popular, especially in non-Aboriginal schools, because they have been reprinted on several occasions.

The earlier books were published in 1983 and 1984, and gave credit on the front cover to Lofts as: "retold and illustrated by Pamela Lofts". They also name the original narrators, as in *How the birds got their colours*, which also states on the front cover: "Told by Mary Albert". However, it is Lofts who retains sole copyright for this and the other four books published in this period. In later reprints of these same books, the original narrators are named as the copyright holders, while Lofts is given copyright only over the "compilation". Lofts must have since reconsidered the copyright issue, because in 1987, when the remaining four books in the series were released, the front covers state: "Compiled by Pamela Lofts", and the credit page states: "The original story remains the property of....." An example is *The kangaroo and the porpoise*, which states on the front cover: "told by Agnes Lippo. Compiled by Pamela Lofts." On the Credits page, it states that Lippo is "from

Belyuen Aboriginal Community, near Darwin" and that "The original story remains the property of Belyuen Community". Therefore, the people who are given credit and copyright for the books in these series varies, depending on when they were published or reprinted.

One of the very first books to appear in this series was *How the birds got their colours*, which I quote in full below, as "retold" by Lofts. Note its introduction, placing the narrative in the distant past, and the simplicity of the text, positioning it as story for very young children:

#### HOW THE BIRDS GOT THEIR COLOURS

Long, long ago - in the Dreamtime - when the land and animals were being made...  
...all the birds were black - all one colour. Till...  
...one day, a little dove flew around looking for food. He flew down to the ground to catch a big juicy grub.  
But instead, he landed right on a sharp stick!  
It pierced his little foot and made him very sick. For days, he lay on the ground in pain. His foot swelled up. He was dying!  
All his mates gathered around to see how they could help. All except crow.  
He just wandered around with his hands behind his back. Suddenly, the parrot rushed forward - and with her sharp beak...  
burst the little dove's swollen foot!  
Colour splashed out all over the parrot. Red and green and blue ran down her chest, wings and tail.  
It splashed out all over the other birds. Some got red, some brown, some blue, some yellow.  
Some got spots, some got stripes. All got colours.  
All except crow, who was standing away from the others. Crow got no colour at all!  
So that's how the birds got their colours.  
And as for the dove, he soon got better, thanks to the parrot... and was able to fly away.

(Lofts, 1983)

Another interesting aspects of Loft's appropriation with this series is the way she has chosen to illustrate the narratives. She herself actually adapts the colourful paintings provided by children from the cooperating schools; for example on the back cover of *How the birds got their colours*, there is a colour photograph of a young Aboriginal girl (un-named) with the caption: "One of the children from St Mary's School, Broome, Western Australia, on whose paintings the illustrations were based." We are told on the credits page on the inside cover of this same book: "This book is based on a story told by Mary Albert of the Bardi tribe to Aboriginal children living in Broome, Western Australia. The illustrations are adapted from their paintings of the story." It is significant that the later publications name the children that appear in photographs on the back cover, giving the book a stronger sense of Person, and who the narrative belongs to.

Jean Ellis is another writer who has been successful in having her books of Dreaming narratives published, including *From the Dreamtime: Australian Aboriginal legends* in 1991, and in 1994: *This is the Dreaming: Australian Aboriginal legends*. Like many other

appropriators, Ellis has not acknowledged her sources, although we are led to believe that Ellis did collect some texts herself. We are told in the Foreword of both collections that some texts are included from her "personal authenticated collection". As with all the above white appropriators, copyright for the collections remain with Ellis, rather than the original story-teller or the compilers of her secondary sources. By contrast, in the early 1990s, Alex Barlow<sup>43</sup> "retold" for publication a number of Dreaming narratives. The result was the Australian Legend series, which drew from a variety of published materials. The series includes eight titles on various animal themes, such as *Emu and Brolga*, in picture book format with illustrations by various Indigenous artists. Credit must be given to the series coordinator for giving full details of the published secondary sources, and for acknowledging the name of the original story-teller when such information was available. Copyright, however, lies with Australian InFo International, who supposedly funded the project.

In 1996, a picture book series aimed at very young children was published by PanMacmillan. The series includes four books which were all rewritten from secondary sources by Cecilia Egan. None of the sources are named or acknowledged. One of these books is *The magic colours*, which has a remarkably similar story line to that of Lofts' book *How the birds got their colours*. On the back cover of Lofts' book there is a quote from Mary Albert, the story's narrator, saying: "Would you like to hear a story from long ago? My mother used to tell me lots of stories, but this story I loved the best, because I loved the birds." It seems Mary Albert's story also won appeal with PanMacmillan, whose own version is reproduced in full in Appendix 3.9. This unashamed appropriation is reminiscent of the A.W. Reeds books of the 1960s, proving that some writers and publishers haven't learnt much over the last three decades, particularly respectful acknowledgement of Indigenous people's rights over their oral literature. The Foreword of the PanMacmillan series (under the imprint Pancake Press) reads as follows:

These wonderful legends of the native Australians have been adapted to be read and understood by children. Young ones too, can gain an insight into the rich and complex culture that existed for tens of thousands of years before Europeans landed. The stories are not intended to be exact replicas of the original tales but attempt to convey the narrative in a manner to which children relate.

Neither the primary or secondary sources of these adaptations are provided, and copyright remains with PanMacmillan. Instead they simply begin their narratives with the introductory line: "Long ago, so the Koori storytellers say...." (see Egan, 1996:1). Mary Albert of the Bardi group in W.A. is definitely not Koori!

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<sup>43</sup> Barlow, with Marji Hill, worked for years at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra on the annotated bibliography: *Black Australia*.

### 3.9 THE WIFE OF A MISSIONARY - Ann E. Wells

In 1971 Ann E. Wells, the wife of Edgar Wells, former superintendant of the Methodist missions at Milingimbi and Yirrkala in Arnhem Land, compiled and had published the book *This their Dreaming: legends of the panels of Aboriginal art in the Yirrkala Church*. This book outlines the Dreaming narratives associated with the bark paintings that were placed at the front of the Methodist church at Yirrkala in the 1960s. These paintings were the precursors of the collaboratively produced paintings that became famous as the Bark Petition, sent to Canberra in 1963 to protest over the impending mining on the land surrounding Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land. The Wells were of great support to the Yolngu of Yirrkala in the bid to try and stop the mining of Bauxite, and the subsequent building of the town of Gove. The Yolngu lost, and the mining went ahead, but the Bark Petition remains in a prominent position in Parliament House, Canberra.

As with Christina Smith, Langloh Parker and other women who found themselves living and working for extended periods among Aboriginal people, Anne Wells developed a strong interest in the cultural beliefs and Dreaming narratives of the people she worked with in Arnhem Land. Wells was also inspired by a political need to share their Dreaming paintings and stories with others. So with no anthropological training, she went about representing their narratives, in English, the best way she knew how. In 1973 Wells also compiled a series of three books "Legends of Arnhem Land", that retold in English a number of Dreaming narratives from the same area. They include: *The dew-wet earth; Daybreak and Stars in the sky*. On the dust-cover we are told that "Mrs Wells has given us authentic tribal folk-lore", the collecting of which is explained in Wells' Introduction:

These stories were told by many people. Almost always the telling took place out in the open in sight of the sea. These people were the Aborigines who were still living in their tribal state and they have behaved with the courtesy of a people at home in their own place.

Some of these stories were told by the old men. Wise and careful in their way of speaking, they sorted out the things they remembered by using twigs to draw little pictures and charts on the earth. The old men were very pleased to have the stories of their people and the old ways written down "so that someday their children's children would be able to read about that thing" and learn something of their background, and of the past life of their people.

The old men sat on rugs or on pandanus mats under shade trees, smoking their long pipes while one and then another told a story. The man who knew English best was always ready to translate when need arose. Sometimes when a strange word or name was mentioned he held up a long finger and said, "that one an inside word." This meant the word was for ceremonial purposes only and was not to be made public.

When the women told a story they were always busy with their hands, weaving pandanus baskets, or making fans of coconut leaves, or sewing. Their quick eyes sought out small children at play nearby to see that none came to any harm. Theirs were usually joyous story-telling times, the tales being told with laughing contradictions and corrections. It was not unusual for one woman to interrupt another with Aboriginal words flowing quickly. Sometimes one would say, "that story belongs to my mother's people. I must ask her if I can give it to you." Even the

simplest story belongs to one family more than to everyone, and that family has to give permission before it can be told or its pictures painted on bark.

(Wells, 1973a:11-12)

So we see that Wells understood the importance of ownership over stories, and who had the right to tell Different Dreaming narratives, and which stories (and words) were considered for public consumption and which were not. Wells' first book in the series contains five narratives, her second another five, and her third another six (on the star constellations). However, Wells fails to acknowledge the owners of each narrative by providing the name of the narrator within any of these books. It seems this was the way things were done in the era in which she writes, with Wells herself being acknowledged as the author, and retaining sole copyright over each book.

Although any sense of Person is lost in these small books, with the narrator being written out of the text, Wells at least retains some sense of Place. Wells' re-tellings of one narrative, "The Morning Star" (from Wells, 1973c), can be seen in Appendix 3.10. It is a publically available version of the Seven Sisters Dreaming narrative. In the Introduction to her second book, Wells explains how she pieced together different versions of such texts in compiling her books:

The folk of the north-east corner of Arnhem Land are inter-related to a bewildering degree. However, each group living on a specific land area claims its own personal share of the local mythology.

For instance, the Story of the Stones was told in some detail by Baraltja of Milingimbi, but some Yirrkala artists paint the same story in its various sections on the bark paintings of Yirrkala, while the great boulders themselves are located along the coast bordering the island of Galiwinku.

On the other hand, the legend of the Shooting Star was told in a general way by the people of Milingimbi, but the detailed parts of this story came from Mawalan, the great artist of Yirrkala, who was called home to the Spirit-Place some years ago.

(Wells, 1973b:11-12)

It seems Wells saw no problem with piecing together narratives from a variety of sources, thus taking ownership and acknowledgement away from the individual narrators. This is an issue I return to later in my discussion. Her books are presented as an illustrated series that would have wide appeal, not only to children but also to adults. They are positioned as a contribution to the emerging genre of Australian literature, which draws on 'authentic' Indigenous knowledge and stories, rather than a detailed rendition of Indigenous Australian oral literature. In the 1970s, it seems, this was not only possible but desirable.



### 3.10 ARTISTS & ART CURATORS

#### 3.10.1 Ainslie Roberts.

In 1963 the anthropologist Charles Mountford collaborated with the artist Ainslie Roberts in his production of a series of paintings "to communicate his deep involvement with Aboriginal mythology". These were the words of Mountford, at the opening of Roberts' Adelaide exhibition, and he went on to say: "In years to come, these paintings will be recognised as a major factor in preserving the image of the Australian Aborigines as they were..." (cited in Roberts & Mountford, 1971:Dust-cover). Roberts' paintings, accompanied by an explanation of each 'myth' being depicted, were reproduced in two publications: *The Dreamtime* and *The dawn of time*, which subsequently sold close to 100,000 copies. This was followed in 1971 by a third book in the series called *The first sunrise*. No acknowledgement is given by Mountford regarding his source for each 'myth', and only occasionally is the Indigenous group affiliation mentioned in his text. Mountford also speaks of Australia's Indigenous people as if they are an extinct people. See Appendix 3.11 for his rendition of the Nurunderi narrative.

The critics Hill and Barlow, in *Black Australia 2* (1985:36) are less than complimentary of these publications and consider them "thoroughly disembowelled versions of Aboriginal stories.... They have downgraded these stories completely in their retelling, by isolating them from any Aboriginal context which could have authenticated them...". Hodge and Mishra (1990:78-79) are similarly appalled by Mountford and Ainslie's efforts, claiming they:

deliberately set out to popularise Aboriginal myths, and it succeeded in its own terms.... But there is a curious precision in this seemingly loose rhetoric.... The myths are attributed to no author, no tribe or community, no language, no context.... In the verbal text, all traces of oral form have been effaced.... What is left is content without form - or more precisely (since that is impossible) a 'content' ruthlessly extracted from its original conditions of existence, deprived of life, energy and the possibility of beauty.... There is a total contradiction between Mountford's claims and his editing practices.... The strategy is a potent mix of celebration and contempt.  
(Hodge & Mishra, 1990:78-79)

This collaborative effort by the anthropologist Charles Mountford was not his first attempt to make Aboriginal Dreaming narratives accessible to mass audiences. In the 1930s he wrote a series of "Legends of the Flinders Ranges" which were published each Saturday in *The Advertiser* over a period of 12 weeks. One such text was "How the Crow got his black feathers: as told to C.P. Mountford, illustrated by an aboriginal artist". As expected in that era, the texts show little reference to Person, with texts being presented anonymously by the story-tellers.

### 3.10.2 Others

There has been a surge in interest over the last two decades, both nationally and internationally, in Australian Indigenous paintings by Indigenous artists (rather than artists such as Roberts). This interest has seen an increasing number of art exhibitions being mounted world-wide, some of which are accompanied by glossy catalogues that give details of the narratives associated with the Indigenous paintings on offer. One such publication is *Djalkiri Wānga: the land is my foundation. 50 years of Aboriginal art from Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land*. This particular catalogue, published in 1995, gives quite the opposite message to that of Ainslie Roberts' exhibition. The message of the Yirrkala exhibition, which was held thirty years later, is one of continuity of myth and culture - not extinction.

At World Expo '88 in Brisbane, again the theme of an Indigenous art exhibition was that of continuity, in "The Inspired Dream", which displayed works from the Museum and Art gallery of the N.T. This was accompanied by the publication in the same year: *The Inspired Dream: life as art in Aboriginal Australia*. This book is comprehensive in its discussion of the development of the Indigenous art industry in Australia, but also contains 95 colour plates, each with an accompanying explanation. The brief nature of these explanations is fairly typical of art catalogues, for example, Plate 73 by Mithinari (deceased) is labelled: "The Djangkawu; 1967 Ochre on bark; Galpu Clan; Dhuwa moeity". The explanation reads as follows:

This bark depicts the sacred waterhole (in the centre) which the Djangkawu made for the Galpu clan. It is located in the flat coastal plain country which is covered with paperbarks (the background design). As they placed the sacred rangga objects in it, the water rose up (horizontal band). Swamp birds on the lagoon are depicted.

(in West, 1988:94)

I have personally been told many brief explanations of paintings, as well as detailed explanations, particularly by Janet Nakamarra Long (a successful Warlpiri artist of the dot on canvas tradition). When catalogues provide sketchy details, such as the one quoted above, it gives the unfortunate impression that there is no detailed narrative to accompany each painting. The opposite is generally the case. In some circumstances it is the decision of the Indigenous artist to provide only sketchy details, but when they are willing to divulge much detail, it is always a public version that is provided, particularly if they are aware of their narratives ultimate publication in a published catalogue.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> I discuss the publication *Yuendumu doors* in the next chapter, which reveals considerable variation of detail in the explanations provided by Warlpiri men for their paintings.

### 3.11 ETHNOMUSICOLOGISTS and LINGUISTS

Like the anthropologists, some ethnomusicologists and linguists have striven to make some of their collections of Aboriginal Dreaming texts accessible to a popular audience through book publications (rather than esoteric journals). One of the first publications to date, of a Dreaming narrative in song form is the University of Adelaide publication *Inma Nyi:nyi: recordings, song texts, explanations and illustrations*. It was compiled, and published in 1975, by the ethnomusicologist the late Cath Ellis, who founded the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM). It is a Pitjantjatjara Tjukurpa (or Dreaming) of the zebra finch, heralding from the remote north west of South Australia. For many years this song was actually taught to students by Pitjantjatjara elders as a part of their course at CASM. The publication provides the Pitjantjatjara text, or songline, with interlinear glosses in English - along with an explanation of its meaning in English. Like T.G.H. Strehlow before her, Ellis was breaking new ground with this publication, but other ethnomusicologists have not been swift to follow. This has not been the case, however, for some linguists.

#### 3.11.1 Dorothy Tunbridge

A relatively recent publication, aimed at the book buyer looking for that quality glossy, coffee-table-book Christmas gift with a touch of the exotic, is *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. This book was published in 1988 and was compiled by the linguist Dorothy Tunbridge. It contains 49 Dreaming texts from the Adnyamathanha people of the Finders Ranges region in S.A. All texts appear in English, and are interspersed with quality photos of the local landscape and an occasional photo of the Adnyamathanha people themselves. As with all other publications discussed in this chapter, the copyright for this book lies with the white compiler. This is rather surprising, given that the book is such a recent publication, and knowing the project was a collaborative one with the Adnyamathanha people.

The main source of the texts in this book was the late Annie Coulthard, who told many of the narratives in her own language, Yura Ngawarla. Some additions were made to texts, in consultation with Coulthard, through discussion with other Adnyamathanha people, or from old records (such as the texts collected by the anthropologist Mountford in the 1930s and 1940s). Narratives told in Yura Ngawarla were translated into English by Tunbridge, and edited in consultation with the original story-teller. Considering that the sources of each text are made so clear in this publication, it remains a puzzle why Tunbridge retains sole copyright. Tunbridge even knew the original sources of most of the texts collected by Mountford, so anonymity cannot be used as an excuse. Like, many earlier anthropological publications, Tunbridge provides introductory notes on each Dreaming narrative for the benefit of the white reader. The source for the Seven Sisters narrative and notes, quoted

below, was Mountford and the Adnyamathanha woman Molly Wilton. Note the similarity in the cultural notes for this narrative to those provided by Jimmy Barker to Janet Mathews.

#### ARTUNYI THE SEVEN SISTERS.

At Yandara in New South Wales, a great serpent called Akurra ate up a whole camp of Yuras. Among these was a group of women called Artunyi.

Later on a big storm burst over the land, and in the floods which followed, the serpent was drowned. The storm went on for weeks and weeks, and the water rose so much that it almost touched the sky.

The dead Akurra who was floating on top of the water, finally burst because his body rotted, and this blew the Artunyi into the sky where they have remained ever since.

#### INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

*Artunyi, the Pleiades (a cluster of stars in Taurus), played an important role in Adnyamathanha traditional life. Here (and in other Aboriginal and European cultures) they are seen as a group of women (artunyi, being the plural of artu 'woman'). In particular they marked the seasons. They disappear from the sky in winter (around May), and in the evening do not reappear until November. They rise in the early morning in July, however, and this signifies that it is malkada time - the time for the ceremony when the boys are made Vardnapas.*

*The appearance of Artunyi up over Wayanha (Mount McKinlay) marked the beginning of the frost in Adata Madapa ('Frost Valley', where Nepabunna is situated). The two celestial Urndakarra, who kept their hair in place with a net, would let it down when the Artunyi appeared in the east. It reached the ground, thus making the frost. When it came, the young boys and girls would get up early and go down to Nipapanha Waterhole where they made a fire of vada ('dead finish'). As the sun began to rise, they threw a firestick at it to make the summer come.*

*The children then started running around the trees, dodging the sunbeams (yurndu arti), lest one catch them and stop them growing. They then collected the ice on the water and the frost on the ground and ate it and rubbed it all over themselves so that the girls would grow large breasts and the boys would grow long beards.*

(Tunbridge, 1988:16)

#### 3.11.2 R.M.W. Dixon

In 1990 the linguist R.M.W. Dixon had his collection of Yidiny narratives published by Queensland University Press as: *Words of our country: stories, place names and vocabulary in Yidiny, the Aboriginal language of the Cairns-Yarrabah region*. It contrasts with that of Tunbridge's (an ex-student of Dixon's) in that it is a much cheaper publication, lacking the glossy colour cover and photos. However, despite its obvious narrower appeal, as a more affordable publication it serves an important educative function. Dixon commenced his linguistic fieldwork in eastern Australia in the 1960s with true missionary zeal. His primary aim was to record and describe as many Australian languages he could, and ultimately to unravel genetic links that may lie between them. He was quick to recruit many enthusiastic students to assist in this task when he took up the foundation chair in linguistics at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1969.

In *Words of our country*, Dixon has reproduced 24 narratives in the Yidiny language, a number being Dreaming narratives, with quite narrow English translations for each sentence.

They are accompanied by introductory notes on each narrative, along with details provided by Dixon of who told him the narrative and when. The following brief quote on Text 22 gives some indication of his adopted style:

#### THE WATER SPRITE BRIDE

Legend about how a man found and married a Burrawungal, water sprite. A man once went upriver looking for eels, but found two female 'water fairies' bathing and beating out a rhythm. He sneaked up on them, making sure that they didn't see or smell his approach, and grabbed the younger one, putting sand in his hands so that she wasn't able to slip through his grasp. He then took her back to his camp and heated her over the fire so that he could rub and scrape all the eel-like slime from her body. He then made her his wife, and made sure that she was never sent to the river for water. Eventually someone did tell her to fetch water and she went to the river, never to return. Told by Dick Moses in the coastal dialect; recorded at Yarrabah on 19 August 1975 (duration 9 minutes, 30 seconds)

1. *Yingu waguuja galiiny/nganjaada/bugamugu wanggaajinyu/...*  
This man went out, along the creek. [He] got up at daybreak...

(Dixon, 1990:112)

This text is not only invaluable for those Yidiny people living at Yarrabah today wishing to reclaim their language, but also for those interested in relearning the Dreaming narratives that were fortunately recorded in detail by Dixon before the last fluent speakers of Yarrabah passed away. Whether or not Dixon's book sells in large numbers is an issue that Queensland University Press was obviously willing to gamble on.

Another collection by Dixon, co-edited with Martin Duwell, is: *The honey-ant men's love song and other Aboriginal song poems*. It was also published by Queensland University Press in 1990, and contains not only "song poems" in Dyirbal (collected by Dixon), but other song poems in Anbarra (collected by Margaret Clunies Ross), in Anmatjarra (collected by Stephen Wild) and in Wangkangurru (collected by Luise Hercus). It is unclear who influenced the poetry form adopted for the English translations of each song (perhaps Duwell, an English lecturer), and the verse structure of the songs in their respective languages, originating from northern and central Australia as well as coastal Queensland. The collection received reserved commendations from two of its reviewers. Cataldi (1991:107-108) questions the "accuracy" of the translations, claiming that the translation of song is particularly difficult because of the esoteric nature of words in song, particularly with its change in word stress placement. She says the task of transcribing and translating a song is a complex one, and requires a close "partnership" between the Indigenous sources and their collaborators. Donaldson (1991:84-87) also dwells on the difficulties of translation, and suggests the publication would benefit if it were accompanied by an audio-recording of each song performance, some of which are actually held at the Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.

The beginning of one of the songs in Dyirbal (recorded by Dixon in the 1960s) appears below. It is accompanied by the footnote by Dixon: "A man may claim his 'promised' wife when she is about ten and take her to live in his camp. But he may not sleep with her until she reaches puberty. A man sang this song to his child bride to make her grow quickly":

#### SONG TO MAKE HER GROW

Burrandu  
yanngu yanngu ngaja  
Burrandu  
Bilbaymali burmbil  
Bayali...

In the Burran style  
I am singing in this style  
In the Burran style  
To make this young girl grow  
This is how I must sing...

(Dixon & Duwell, 1990:40-41)

This book contrasts with virtually all other publications discussed thus far in this chapter in that copyright for the vernacular version of each poem remains with the Aboriginal man or woman who performed for their white researchers. It is this feature that distinguishes the books discussed in this chapter with those to be discussed in the next two chapters - which review Dreaming narratives produced either in collaboration with Indigenous people, or were written by Indigenous people themselves.

### 3.12 DISCUSSION

Before concluding this chapter I wish to contrast and discuss in more detail the works of Tunbridge and Dixon. Tunbridge's publication, in particular, epitomises the prevailing attitude of white missionaries, academics and writers who chose to compile books in the genre of Dreaming narratives. Their primary purpose was to make these narratives accessible to a white audience so that they may become a part of Australia's emerging literature - particularly one that contrasts with the canon of English literature that emanates from Britain. Although they often dedicated their books to the people who provided their source material, and although they often said in their Forewords that they "wrote" these books for the Indigenous children of their story-tellers, they always felt compelled to say that these books were also for all Australians. Tunbridge's Foreword is an example:

This book has been written first and foremost for the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, as a permanent record of a precious part of their cultural heritage which was in danger of slipping away. It has also been written on their behalf for all Australians and for the world at large. It is the hope of all those who have contributed to this book that you the reader, will comprehend the richness of Adnyamathanha (and Aboriginal) culture; that you will come to appreciate the Flinders Ranges in a whole new way as you look through this window with us at the Dreaming...

(Tunbridge, 1988:xix)

The intent, however, of the late Annie Coulthard (the source of most of the narratives in Tunbridge) was to tell the narratives in Yura Ngawarla for Adnyamathanha children. "She was one of the last Adnyamathanha to tell these stories to her people in the language to which they belong, Yura Ngawarla. She wanted the children to know them, and she laboured right to the end of her life to bring this about" (Tunbridge, 1988:xvii). Yet Tunbridge's glossy publication in English seems to be at cross-purposes with Annie Coulthard's wish. The younger Adnyamathanha are wanting to revitalize their language, and would have appreciated these narratives to be made accessible to them in Yura Ngawarla as well. Ironically, they still do not have access to the language material and narratives in Tunbridge's possession (personal communication, Jillian Marsh<sup>45</sup>, 1996 & October 2000).

The cold facts of the publishing industry are that manuscripts are accepted by publishers when presented in a language and style that will appeal to a mass audience. The writer and publisher A.W. Reed was quick to learn and exploit what sells well. Fortunately publishers such as U.Q.P. are willing to take more risks. However, before a manuscript reaches the publisher, the control over what goes in it, and the form it takes, lies with the one who assumes copyright. This chapter has demonstrated the decisions that have been made by non-Indigenous holders of copyright. The following two chapters demonstrate the decisions made by Indigenous copyright holders, and their non-Indigenous collaborators and publishers.

Some of the research recently conducted by Fiona Magowan demonstrates the function oral Dreaming narratives play in communities where they are still being learnt and passed on. By understanding this, we can come to some understanding of the potential functions to be served by such Dreaming narratives when preserved in a written and published form. Magowan's PhD thesis demonstrates the importance of both narrative and song in the maintenance of Ancestral Law. Her research, on the songs of women of north east Arnhem Land, was conducted at Galiwin'ku from 1990-1992. This part of Arnhem Land is one of the fortunate (and relatively isolated) parts of Australia where Indigenous people have been able to maintain their languages and ceremonies, as well as their many Dreaming narratives and associated songs. Magowan claims:

When asked... men and women assert that stories are the primary mode of conveying the Ancestral law. The songs are an artistic and aesthetic product of knowing the mythology. Yolngu ancestral narrative, like the mytho-poetic song texts, is a specialised form of language that is understood by having access to knowledge of cultural specifics about people, land, ancestral beings and events. This knowledge is drawn upon, in every sphere of formal and informal communication in Yolngu life, to assert kin ties, claims to land and to establish clan networks and authority in ritual.

(Magowan, 1995:110-111)

Magowan's thesis is also useful in the way it analyses "how clans dramatise the spoken word for their own social, ritual and political advantage" (Magowan, 1995:111). She says:

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<sup>45</sup> Jillian Marsh is an Adnyamathanha woman and a close descendant of Annie Coulthard's.

Narrative is the main mode of formally teaching rules about the social structure and passing on information about the history of property and possession inscribed in ancestral mythology. There is no prose delivered for prose's sake, i.e. its own intrinsic aesthetic value, although mythological narration may be viewed as projecting aesthetic qualities... Indeed no set verses, such as rhymes or riddles which play on words, existed until the teaching of nursery rhymes at school from the early 1930's.  
(Magowan, 1995:123)

This contrasts with the motives of early white recorders of Indigenous Dreaming narratives, such as Langloh Parker, who collected texts to be published not only for their aesthetic appeal, but also for their curiosity value as prose with a difference. The same could be said of Ann Wells' publications, which in fact originated from the same region as Magowan's research. Other recorders adapted the narratives they collected to verse, such as the very early ethnographer William Cawthorne, who published in 1858 *The legend of the Kuperree: or the Red Kangaroo*. In this seminal publication, Cawthorne rewrites in "metric verse" the Dreaming narrative of the Red Kangaroo, which he says is from the "Port Lincoln tribe".<sup>46</sup> The writing of an aesthetically pleasing text of literary curiosity was obviously a primary motivating factor for Cawthorne. The perceived purpose for writing, for such writers, was not to preserve Dreaming narratives for future generations of Indigenous people, particularly because they chose to record them primarily in English.

Unfortunately, in the southern and more settled parts of Australia where whites compete with Aboriginal people for their land, many of the Dreaming narratives and songs have been lost, along with the original language in which they were told. For others, just fragments remain in the hands of a few.<sup>47</sup> Published collections of Dreaming narratives, relating to ones own specific Indigenous group and land, are often all some groups have to draw on when reviving their cultural heritage. In Arnhem Land, however, where a rich cultural heritage continues, Magowan explains that the telling of oral narratives serves a complex and important function:

Yolngu often cloak a narrative in terms that are personal to the listener or that will have a special affiliation with them... when telling a story the speaker may emphasise his own political concerns couched in the symbolic language of the Ancestral Law. This is a vital technique in song texts used to stress clan identity and ownership.  
(Magowan, 1995:124)

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<sup>46</sup> Cawthorne was a keen ethnographer who conducted research among the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains, and incorporates vernacular terms from the Kaurna language, probably to 'Aboriginalise' his verse on the Kuperre legend.

<sup>47</sup> I think one of the cruel realisations that was brought home to the Ngarrindjeri 'mimins' (or 'women'), who are still in the year 2000 involved in the continuing saga of the Hindmarsh Island bridge affair here in S.A., is just how much of their culture and oral traditions have been lost. The young women have now started asking more about their Ancestral law, and asking the older women to tell them what they still know of their Dreaming narratives. I have no doubt that some women have retained some of these Dreaming narratives in their memories. Veronica Brodie is one of them, having been told narratives relating to the Hindmarsh Island region by her late sister Leila Rankine (who worked at C.A.S.M. with Cath Ellis).



The opportunity for a narrator to adapt his or her oral text to the circumstances and context in which the narrative is being told is true of all oral narratives - Dreaming narrative or otherwise. This was an important point concerning Socrates (the Greek Philosopher) who resisted writing down his oral performances for fear of misinterpretation by his anonymous audience. He considered himself the "father" of his oral texts and did not wish to relinquish control of them to others, although his student Plato was eventually to pass on his "father's" thoughts to others (see Gee, 1990:32-33). One can only wonder what the oral narrators, who first told their Dreaming narratives to Langloh Parker, only to be re-written yet again by A.W. Reed and others, would think of contemporary published versions of their narratives. It is little wonder that the Ngarrindjeri people of S.A. chose to keep so much to themselves, even if it did mean much of their cultural heritage would be lost forever!

Both Rudder's (1993) and Magowan's (1995) research in Arnhem Land demonstrate the complexity of meaning to be derived from oral Dreaming narratives and song. In Chapter Six of her PhD thesis, Magowan (1995:157-169) goes into more detail on this idea when she considers the different levels of meaning in the songs performed by Murukun, a senior woman of the Ngurruyurtjurr Djambarrpuyngu clan at Galiwin'ku. Magowan (1995:156) says [with my emphasis]:

When Murkun [sic] performs any song subject she interprets its meaning in relation to the natural environment. The large number of terms used to describe the environment, such as, the sloshing of canoes through water, or the variety of colours and smells of flowers and trees, provide a symbolic discourse of nature which is a metaphor for social relations.... The text is then composed from an informed knowledge of the environment.... For both men and women, the meaning of an image is not static or fixed. Meanings communicate personally to the singer, and generally to the listeners, from a communally shared knowledge of the song mythology.

Magowan (1995:168) explains that:

The names chosen by a singer [within a song performance] reflect their interest in asserting some song meanings over others. Some names will establish moiety connections, some clan links, others subset relationships and yet others individual family ties.... It is the personalisation of song meanings, the emphasis of one's clan identity over another, that renders each performance unique.

And so it is with the telling of narratives. Just as a song performance in Arnhem Land today is dynamic and interactive, with the emerging song text being determined by the social and political circumstances in which the Yolngu performer sings, so it is with the telling of Dreaming narratives. The actual choice of what narrative is to be told, and the level of meaning to be divulged, is directly determined by the knowledge and rights of the narrator, and the relationship they hold with his or her audience. What understanding the audience brings to the story-telling process is also dependent on their own rights and understanding of different levels of cultural knowledge. Magowan explains, using the symbolism of the Shark:

All clans' ancestors are symbolised by their body parts metaphorically embedded in different geological form. Rudder (1993:49-51) has shown how the forehead, back, belly, elbow, throat, mouth, nose, cheek, thigh, brain, eye and liver of the shark are represented in the land formations of the sacred shark site in the Wessel islands... The names of these features are multi-referential. For example, one shark name, *Wanda*, can refer to cliffs at *Wandawuy*. It also means the deep ancestral knowledge of the clan leaders as well as being a term for the head of ancestral shark. When Murukun sings the name *Wanda*, she may be referring to one or all of these meanings...

(Magowan, 1995:169-170)

Magowan also explains the analogies of the Turtle, and the significance of certain rock formations to Murukun:

In ritual, the sacred area of dwelling, such as a funeral shade or house where the corpse is placed, is analogous to the rock just as the shade is analogous to the shark's nest for the *Gundangur Djambarrpuynu*... The corpse inside the shade is analogous to the body of the turtle inside the canoe. As each symbol is open to further levels of interpretation, each image has an underlying ambiguity. As an inanimate object, the shade represents both the canoe and the rock, in which the corpse lies like the turtle, each being an analogue of the other.

(Magowan, 1995:171)

Magowan goes on to point out how "The imagery of the turtle chase encapsulates the whole Yolngu life cycle" (Magowan, 1995:174). Murukun sings for Magowan the song of Mukarr the turtle hunter (see her Appendix A 6.12 & 6.13), in which she says "Each stage of the life cycle is represented in the song through the events of the hunt." In this case a hunt for the flatback turtle "dhalwatpu". This same narrative is detailed in Rudder (1980 and 1993). He says "There is no simple or single meaning to the myth... it has many aspects, and each, with its particular meaning reinforces or complements the others" (Rudder, 1980:446).

In Arnhem Land, according to Magowan, each clan has their own version of the same myth with different names for the hunters. She says "The *Rirratjingu* turtle hunt takes place at *Yalangbara* near *Yirkala*, led by the ancestral headman *Mururuma*. Once the turtle is speared, it is brought back to their respective clan lands. *Murukun* lives on *Galiwin'ku* and her version of the song is located at *Djuranalpi* and the sea around *Galiwin'ku*" (Magowan, 1995:176). One can only wonder what the different Yolngu (from various clans), who told this same narrative to Ann Wells, would think of her published rendition, in which she combines details to form one neat narrative in English for her white audience.<sup>48</sup>

Magowan's research is important because it demonstrates that there is much more to a Dreaming narrative (which she analyses in the medium of song) than meets the ear, or the eye in the case of published texts. For the 'uninitiated', oral Dreaming narratives can provide an apparent surface meaning, but for deeper and more subtle meanings, that are culturally

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<sup>48</sup> Later Magowan (1995:177) discusses Murukun's explanation of her song on the cooking of the turtle (Appendix A 6.14&.15) and how "the event is personalised by Murukun for her clan subset, as she situates the hunt at her *Wotjara* places.... By naming her clan areas. Murukun is asserting rights of the *Ngurruyurtjurr* subset in the turtle hunt."

embedded within the discourse, only the privileged will hear. This point is confirmed in Magowan's conclusion:

Without prior knowledge of the analogous meanings of Murukun's songs, we could be mistaken in thinking that each conveyed disparate and disconnected images. On the surface they tell of heroic stories of ancestral hunters, epic feats of strength, endurance and creative powers. [But] Songs of ancestral beings do more than encode the species of the natural environment. They create a 'real' link between the unknown forces of the spiritual realm and Yolngu physical experience, representing an evocative means of encoding belief.... the range of meanings and levels of interpretation are extensive and variable.... As Murkun's knowledge has deepened over the years, she has been able to establish symbolic links at various levels to discuss metaphors connecting the ancestral and natural worlds.

(Magowan, 1995:190-191)

But the level of meaning and detail that is revealed by knowledgeable narrators, or singers such as Murukun, when telling oral narratives for publication, is something that only the narrator can decide. But once an oral text is recorded, and taken out of the hands and control of the original narrator, it is up to the skill and conscience of the recorder to determine the texts' ultimate fate. This chapter has demonstrated that the fate of far too many oral narratives has not always been in the best interest of their Indigenous narrators.

### 3.13 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to review and critically analyse the manner in which the Dreaming narratives of Australia's Indigenous peoples have been represented, over the years, in print by the non-Indigenous. What binds the narratives that are discussed above is the way ownership is assumed by the non-Indigenous translators, writers, rewriters and appropriators of these texts. With the exception of Dixon & Duwell (1991), who allow the Indigenous narrators to retain copyright over the vernacular versions of their songs or narratives, and Loft's later (1987) compilations in English, copyright is assumed by all the non-Indigenous compilers of these publications. It is clear that many non-Indigenous writers and researchers, even post 1967 when Australia voted to acknowledge Aboriginal people as citizens of Australia and to offer them the same rights afforded the non-Indigenous, have continued to treat oral Indigenous narratives as uniquely Australian resources rich for the taking. Those non-Indigenous Australians who recognise that their fellow Indigenous Australians have rights over their Dreaming narratives, and therefore choose to record and publish them in close collaboration with Indigenous narrators, are discussed in Chapter Five.

This chapter demonstrates the many different ways in which various non-Indigenous 'authors' have chosen to represent Dreaming narratives. I have organised the chosen representers according to their professional status or identity, revealing that their motives for compiling books on Indigenous narratives is very much determined by their station in life. The early missionaries, for example, invariably viewed the cultural beliefs and Dreaming

narratives of their 'native' charges as 'obscene', and therefore chose only to paraphrase their 'legends'. Even though many missionaries became fluent speakers of Indigenous languages, they still chose to represent their stories in English, leaving out much cultural and linguistic detail. It was not in their interest to record detailed narratives which they believed were better lost and forgotten. Their aim as missionaries was to convince the 'natives' to believe in Christian and Biblical 'truths', and not their 'stories' about the exploits of their Ancestral Heros.

Other categories of representers of Dreaming narratives that I have discussed include: Government Protectors and the police, Wives of pastoralists, Government surveyors and explorers, Anthropologists, Bushmen, White writers and poets, Wives of missionaries, Artists and art curators, plus Ethnomusicologists and linguists. Each category tends to represent the narratives in a way that reveals their motivations for representing such texts in print. They are also very much influenced by the attitudes of the times in which they write, and by the expectations and prejudices of their white audience about Aboriginal people and their beliefs. Langloh Parker, as the wife of a pastoralist, wrote her two books of 'legendary tales' in the late 1890s to provide books that would sell well at Christmas time. They were received warmly for their curiosity value, not only as gifts for children but also by the more scientifically minded among the adults. By contrast, anthropologists tried to educate their public about prevailing misconceptions about Aboriginal people, particularly Elkin with his 1939 textbook. But in 1949 Elkin succumbed to public demand, like so many other anthropologists and representers, to produce a book of doubtful authenticity, comprising "Aboriginal myths retold" in English verse. For this he collaborated with the Bushman Bill Harney, who had already won wide public appeal as a 'writer' and representer of Indigenous Dreaming narratives.

The manner adopted by the majority of non-Indigenous representers has been to reproduce the narratives in a language and form that will win the same public appeal enjoyed by others before them. The chosen language medium, therefore, has invariably been standard English. It is this process, of either translating a narrative from an Indigenous language to English, or from non-standard English to a more standard form, that has excused the compilers of books into assuming they have copyright over the resultant published texts. Some compilers (such as Robinson, Lofts, Tunbridge and Dixon) have chosen to acknowledge, by name, their oral sources. Others have not. Some compilers had absolutely no contact at all with the original Indigenous narrators, and have rewritten their collections of narratives entirely from secondary sources. One such appropriator, who continues to this day to reprint and sell his many collections, is the New Zealand writer and publisher A.W.Reed. His books are still selling in large numbers, in the year 2000, in the bookshop of the S.A. Museum, obviously with the endorsement of the museum staff.

My review and analysis of the numerous ways in which different writers have chosen to represent Indigenous narratives is followed by a discussion of the recent research conducted by Magowan amongst Yolngu people in Arnhem Land. Her work reveals that there are certain aspects of Yolngu belief that are accepted truths, such as the paths of the creationary journeys taken by Ancestral heroes across certain tracts of land, and the relationship these Ancestors have with different Yolngu clan groups. But there are also aspects of Yolngu Dreaming narratives that are not fixed, particularly the meanings that are read into the symbols that are referred to in the narratives and songs: "the range of meanings and levels of interpretation are extensive and variable" (Magowan, 1995:191). It is this same ability to adapt the symbolism available within narratives to contemporary situations that has been exploited by Indigenous writers of more recent times, such as Unaipon (see Chapter Seven) and Mudrooroo (see Hosking, 1998). Just as Unaipon chose in the 1920s to Christianise his narratives, so do contemporary Yolngu of Arnhem Land adapt their songs and narratives to Christian interpretations:

At a spiritual level, the inscription of the ancestral forms in the landscape reflect the identity and essence of clan members with their sacred homelands. When the song symbols relating to these ancestral forms are adapted for a Christian context, the symbols do not change, but they are imbued with different meanings which enable a song to be interpreted simultaneously in various ways. ...symbols of songs are multi-representational and multi-transformational.

(Magowan, 1995:192)

This important feature of Indigenous cultural belief, whereby Dreaming narratives can be interpreted and adapted to accommodate contemporary situations, is one that has been misunderstood by many. Such adaptability is a key reason why Indigenous oral traditions have been able to survive the pervading onslaught of white Australians onto their land over the last century and a half (see e.g. Swain, 1993). This adaptability was misunderstood by the plaintiffs in the Hindmarsh Island bridge saga. I contend the 'secrecy' that now surrounds the 'women's business' once conducted on Hindmarsh Island, and related Dreaming narratives (such as the Seven Sisters Dreaming), demonstrates how once open and public levels of interpretation, have become restricted because of outside threats of cultural 'genocide' on Ngarrindjeri beliefs. Public versions of the same narrative are not considered 'secret' for some Indigenous groups, and are openly told to white people, and have been published on a number of occasions, as this chapter testifies. However, it is in times of dramatic social and cultural upheaval that groups are forced to adapt and change their cultural belief systems. It is at such times that sacred narratives become profane, or alternatively the profane may become sacred, as is the case (I believe) for the Seven Sisters Dreaming narrative for the Ngarrindjeri 'mimimis'.<sup>49</sup> It is this complexity, of who has access to the different levels of knowledge and meaning to be found in Indigenous Dreaming narratives,

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<sup>49</sup> This is probably why this Dreaming narrative was never told freely to the Berndts, even though versions of the same narrative were offered openly to other white anthropologists, linguists and writers who have been discussed in this chapter. I have heard a version of this same narrative being told openly by Pitjantjatjara women to young seven to eight year old children, from non-Indigenous homes, in an urban school setting.

that is little understood by would-be-appropriators and re-writers of oral narratives that belong to others.

## CHAPTER 4

### DREAMING LITERATURE BY INDIGENOUS STORY-TELLERS AND WRITERS

*Long long time before our Dreaming, the earth at our feet had no shape, it had no colour, there was no light, and nothing walked across it. There were no emu tracks and no kangaroo tracks. It was dust without water, no river flowed, the earth was empty.*

(from: Gulpilil, 1983:2)

*Ngajunyangu marlujarrapala yananyarra nyampu kakarrumparra, marlujarrapala yananyarra. Yananyarrapala nganayi, yangkapala yanu nganayi - nyarrparaku karnarla nguruku yalikila warrirni? Nganayiki Parntarlarku.*

*These are my two kangaroos. There they went, along the east side. The two kangaroos travelled along the east side. They went, where, where am I trying to remember?*

*They went to Parntarla.*

(from: Cook, Henry Jakamarra. Marlujarrakurlu: The two kangaroos. In: Rockman & Cataldi, 1994:46-47)

### PROLOGUE

Contemporary debates on postcolonial literary theory are very sensitive to the issue of literary critics presuming the role of arbiter or judge on postcolonial texts (see e.g. Ahmad, 1995). Who is to say that one particular representation of Aborigines is 'better' or 'worse' than another? Similarly, who is to say that one particular published Dreaming narrative represents the voice of Indigenous Australians more than another? Is there such a thing as an 'authentic' Aboriginal voice? Such questions are problematic and rife within the Academy, and have political ramifications outside of the academic arena.

The purpose of this thesis is not merely to participate in a theoretical literary debate, but to try and retrieve from the debate some tangible alternatives for those daring enough to attempt to represent Indigenous knowledge in print. Therefore I shall focus on a few select publications, discussed specifically in Chapter Five, which I contend stand out amongst all the other texts discussed in this thesis as publications that dare to challenge, more than other texts, the modes of textual representation that have already been adopted for the problematic genre of Indigenous Dreaming narratives. At the risk of being accused of standing in judgement, I discuss the features that stand out as being different in these select publications, and suggest such features be treated as serious options by others contemplating publishing in this "most sensitive genre" (to use Huggins' phrase, 1994:13).

All of the published texts selected for discussion in the next two chapters comprise Dreaming narratives that have been either written by Indigenous people, or have been compiled by non-Indigenous people working in close collaboration with Indigenous story-tellers. The collaborative works that are discussed contrast with those texts discussed in the previous chapter because the emphasis throughout their production has been on true collaboration,

rather than exploitation or appropriation.<sup>1</sup> The non-Indigenous people involved in the production of the books discussed in Chapter Five, in particular, chose to work closely with Indigenous story-tellers with the purpose of assisting them in the process of getting their narratives published. Both authorship and copyright for the final productions remain with the Indigenous story-tellers. This contrasts markedly with the majority of publications already discussed in Chapter Three. The books I discuss in Chapter Five include the works of the Indigenous story-tellers: Paddy Roe (1983), Elsie Jones (1989), Dhunggala Marika (1989) and the Warlpiri story-tellers Peggy Rockman Napaljarri (1994) and Jimmy Jungarrayi (1994).

In discussing other Indigenous texts within a separate Chapter Four, the intention is not to condemn them as being less representative of Indigenous voices, or of being mere mimicry of other more colonial representations of Dreaming narratives. In fact for some, such as the 1987 publication *Yuendumu doors*, it could be argued that the Indigenous story-tellers are anything but "mute" (to use Spivak's term, 1988). The select texts discussed separately in Chapter Five provide decisive, and arguably very important challenges to past representations of Dreaming narratives, not only by their very choice of language, but also by their explicit intentions to silence (as much as possible) non-Indigenous voices within their texts. These decisions, of course, are as much political as they are literary; and these particular texts are exemplary in a postcolonial sense.

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review some of the published Dreaming narratives that have been written by Indigenous Australians. I also discuss a number of publications compiled with the assistance of non-Indigenous people, where the emphasis has been on collaboration, rather than appropriation. Although some of the texts discussed in the previous chapter may seem to have had the cooperation of Indigenous story-tellers<sup>2</sup>, the story-tellers seem to have had little say in how their narratives were to be represented, or what form they would take in the final published products. One of the main criteria I have used to distinguish collaboratively produced books is whether the copyright for the published texts remains with the Indigenous narrators.<sup>3</sup> Copyright for nearly all previously discussed published texts is assumed by the non-Indigenous writers, researchers or publishing companies.

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<sup>1</sup> I am not inferring here that all texts discussed in the previous chapter were examples of exploitation or appropriation. Some non-Indigenous writers did choose to afford their Indigenous collaborators copyrights over their narratives (eg. R.M.W. Dixon & P. Lofts).

<sup>2</sup> Note, the primary source of all published Dreaming narratives were the original Indigenous story-tellers, whether they are acknowledged or not.

<sup>3</sup> Exception to this are several texts that were produced in Aboriginal bilingual schools in the N.T., where the schools' Literature Production Centres assume copyright.



Not all the texts reviewed below, however, were produced in collaboration with White people. Some were written solely by Indigenous writers from their own repertoire of Dreaming narratives, while others were collected and rewritten by Indigenous writers for publication. The purpose of this chapter is not to valorise the approach or conventions adopted by Indigenous writers of the Dreaming genre, just because they are Indigenous. It will become evident that some of the textual features they adopt in their representations seem to mimic the colonial discourse of non-Indigenous representers, justifying Spivak's (1988) claim for the colonised "mute". One feature in particular is the placing of Dreaming narratives in the long distant past by beginning their narratives with the formulaic introduction: "Long, long ago in the Dreamtime..." Such conventions were discussed in the last chapter. This chapter is a celebration of the initiatives taken by some brave Indigenous writers (and Indigenous-run publishing houses) who dare to be different, challenging the modes of representation adopted in the past.

The books discussed below are presented in chronological order, according to their publication date, beginning with the earliest publication. The collaborative works are not dealt with separately, but are interspersed among other publications written by Indigenous writers. The collaborative process adopted for particularly challenging publications form an important part of my discussion. It is significant that by far the majority of publications written by Indigenous writers in the genre of Dreaming narratives were aimed at children. This says several things about what Indigenous Australians see as the purpose for publishing Dreaming narrative. It not only indicates that the Indigenous writers and story-tellers are wanting to pass on their cultural knowledge to children, but also that the detail that they are prepared to reveal in print is that which they would reveal to a child. A precedent has been set, by past non-Indigenous representers of Dreaming narratives, who almost always pitch their narratives at a child audience. The options available for Indigenous people to present their Dreaming narratives in the printed form for an adult audience are in need of further exploration and experimentation. The texts discussed in Chapter Five, two of which are pitched at adult audiences, provide some interesting alternatives for Indigenous writers of the future.

#### 4.1 THE WRITINGS OF DAVID UNAIPON

Perhaps the most well known and celebrated Indigenous writer in South Australia, and possibly Australia, is the Ngarrindjeri man David Unaipon. He has been popularised as the first published Indigenous writer by some scholars (see Shoemaker, 1989), but was in fact preceded nearly a full century earlier by Indigenous contributors to the *Flinders Island Chronicle*. This chronicle was produced weekly in the late 1830s by Indigenous Tasmanian men under the care of Robinson (see Rose, 1994). David Unaipon was, however, as far as I am aware the first to be published in English in the genre of Dreaming narratives.

The writings of Unaipon are a major focus of this study, and a detailed discussion of both his life and his works appear in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. The main purpose here is to highlight Unaipon's position, both chronologically and socially, among other Indigenous writers. His first piece of writing was published in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper in 1924, but his first narrative of the Dreaming genre appeared a year later in *The Home* magazine. Later publications were funded by the Aboriginal Friends' Association (A.F.A.), beginning with *Hungarrda* in 1927. Unaipon grew up on the Point McLeay mission, which was administered by the A.F.A. during his formative years, and the A.F.A. were keen to promote the writing abilities of their protégé. It was at this time, that Unaipon was commissioned by the Adelaide doctor W. Ramsay Smith to collect "legends" from other Indigenous people throughout southern Australia. These same narratives were later published in 1930, under Ramsay Smith's name, as *Myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines*. This same book has been reissued and reprinted several times since then, but Unaipon's contribution has never been acknowledged.

A manuscript written by Unaipon between 1924-25, which was purchased by Ramsay Smith for his 1930 publication, is currently held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. A comparison between this manuscript and Ramsay Smith's book forms a major point of discussion in Chapter Seven. Unaipon went on to publish further "legends" in the 1950s and 1960s, which are also discussed later.

#### 4.2 UNCLE WILLIE MACKENZIE'S "LEGENDS".

Following Unaipon, one of the earliest books to be written by an Indigenous Australian of the Dreaming genre was published in 1967 by Jacaranda. It is called *Uncle Willie Mackenzie's legends of the Goundirs* and was written by Uncle Willie's niece Sylvia Cairns (at the time, a well-known singer). It was illustrated by Sylvia's nephew Fred Cobbo, and is presented as a picture book aimed at children "aged between nine and twelve" (1967:dustcover).

This publication contextualises the narratives it contains right from the beginning, by explaining who told the stories, and where they come from. A sense of Person is immediately established by a photograph of the narrator, Uncle Willie Mackenzie, appearing straight after the title page. Cairns establishes this sense of Person further, as well as a strong sense of Place, in her two page introduction:

My grandfather on my father's side was Budroonbupple of the Darwarbada tribe. This tribe roamed the area from Boubyjan to Kilroy in Queensland, Australia. He died when I was eleven. I met him when he was a hundred years old, just before he died. ... As was the custom of the Aborigines it was my Grandfather who had taught the legends of the lore of the tribe to my Uncle Willie Mackenzie. Uncle Willie Mackenzie

was the son of Grandfather's sister and Grandfather was therefore his uncle. It was always the uncles who taught the children as soon as they became twelve years old. Thus it was that Uncle Willie Mackenzie, who is the last surviving member of the tribe, taught me the legends which you will read in this book. He said to me one day, 'This is no good, Daughter. You must write all this down for *your* daughter, for this is *Ginyard* (her inheritance) and it must not be lost to her. She is the direct blood line from your Grandfather'. I agreed. These stories are precious to me. This is all I have left of the Darwarbada tribe. I like to think that through this book I am presenting a great tradition, not only for my own great grandchildren but for children everywhere.

(Cairns, 1967:1)

Cairns proceeds to relate ten Dreaming narratives in her book, as they were told to her by Uncle Willie, just as they were once told to him by Budroonbupple, her grandfather. Unlike so many narratives rewritten for children by white writers, there is an apparent absence of a Time frame in Cairns' representations (except one which speaks of a time before the laws were made). This follows Uncle Willie's philosophy: "You don't need to consider whether the stories are of human, animals, stars, rocks or hills. All nature was one family. Everyone shared a oneness" (Cairns, 1967:1). I think this "oneness", in both time and form, is something that white representers have failed to convey in published Dreaming narratives. They have misunderstood the philosophy of continuity between the past and present which, by contrast, is succinctly conveyed in the oral telling of Dreaming narratives by many Indigenous story-tellers. In turn, white writers have conveyed this misunderstanding to their white readers, who have come to believe that Dreaming narratives are only about events that happened in the long distant past, and have little relevance or connection with the present. This is probably why Cairns' repeats Uncle Willie's oneness philosophy on three occasions in her book.

The ten narratives related by Cairns include: "The first tree creeper, The dingo story, The first platypus, How the laws were made, Mr koala and Mr beetle, The eastern giant, How the cockatoo received the small bald patch, The burning secret, The first carpet snake, and finally The porcupine and the crow". I have reproduced the third narrative in Appendix 4.1, which contrasts in a number of ways with another platypus narrative rewritten over ten years later by L.&G. Adams for the S.R.A. Series (which appears in Appendix 3.6). One contrasting feature is the way Cairns' locates Uncle Willie's narrative in the Brisbane River region, giving the narrative a strong sense of Place (I have highlighted two occasions where the story names its location). This sense of Place is noticeably absent from renditions of similar narratives rewritten for children by many white writers. Another contrasting feature is the way Cairns begins the platypus narrative, with no reference to Time at all: "The elders were busy sorting out the young men. They were to be trained in the way of the tribe..." (Cairns, 1967:11). Also to be noted is her insistence on the use of particular vernacular terms, such as the main character *Jengery*, and the word for platypus *Marewaare*, as well as the place up the river called *Mimburry*.

### 4.3 DICK ROUGHSEY

Dick Roughsey is probably the most well-known Indigenous writer in the Dreaming genre. This is not only because of his relatively prolific output, but also because his picture books were (and still are) very popular with children. Their vivid double-page-spread colour illustrations and captivating story-lines appeal to the imaginations of the young. People now in their 20s remember them as their "favourite books" (personal communication Jo Procter, 1997) when they were growing up. *Gidja the moon* remains a favourite picture book for my youngest daughter. So who was Dick Roughsey, and why have his books been received so well? And who was his collaborator in later years? The name Percie Trezise mysteriously appears as the sole author and illustrator on later publications in the 1980s and 1990s, but the style is distinctly that of Dick Roughsey.

Dick Roughsey, or Goobalathaldin, was an Indigenous man from Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland. His first book *Moon and rainbow: the autobiography of an Aboriginal* was published in 1971 by A.H. & A.W. Reed, and in the foreword (written by Percy Trezise) it is claimed to be "the first genuine book by a full-blood Aboriginal seeking a better understanding of his people by white Australians" (1971:9). Maybe Trezise was unaware of Unaipon's earlier efforts, and perhaps Douglas Lockwood's *I the Aboriginal* (first published in 1961) was not considered a "genuine" account of the life of Waipuldanya or Phillip Roberts. There can be no doubt that *Moon and rainbow* is a seminal text, particularly because it goes beyond the autobiographical. It also includes "legends" and oral history accounts of important events in the life of Roughsey and the families of the Larumbanda, or the South-Wind Lardil of Langu-Narnji. In the chapter "Legends of the Larumbanda", for example, Roughsey provides the following fascinating interplay between (what white people would consider) history and legend:

In the beginning, our island homes, now called the North Wellesleys were not islands at all; they were part of a peninsula running out from the mainland. Geologists who came to drill for oil on Mornington Island thought that the peninsula might have been divided into islands by a big flood which took place about 12,000 year ago. But our people say that the channels were caused by Garnguur, a sea-gull woman who dredged a big walpa, or raft, back and forth across the peninsula.

The geologists did not find oil. At about 3,000 feet they struck rock too hard to drill and so gave up. They had foolishly drilled in the very place on the ridge at Bugargan where Thuwathu the Rainbow Serpent had gone into the ground. The old people knew that the drill had struck the bones of Thuwathu, and nothing could drill through them.

The Balumbanda people came along that peninsula long before it was cut up into islands. They came across the mainland from the west; Balumbanda means "man of the west". According to our legends there werethree people. Marnbil was the leader: he had with him his wife Gin-Gin, and her uncle Dewallewul. Marnbil called Dewallewul son-in-law, and so could not speak to him: he spoke to him through Gin-Gin. This was the law.

They came along the peninsula and made all the places as they travelled. They made sand dunes behind the beaches and then dug wells at their bases for water. They made fish traps and dugong and turtle traps from stones and bushes. They saw fish and

birds, animals and plants and gave each a sacred place. They made ceremonies for each of these totem creatures to [sic] that the people who followed after would know what to do to keep up the numbers of these things....

When Marnbil came to the place which is now my father's country, he stayed a long time and made ceremonies for the sacred places. These include the places of Gurngin the Wallaby and Thanba the Shovel-nosed Shark, Red Bill the Pied Oyster Catcher, Ngarrawaun the Blue-fish, the Black Snake, and the great flood-making story place. These stories still have special significance for my people today...

(Roughsey, 1971:20-21)

Roughsey goes on to say that "the Gidegal and the Rainbow Serpent legends are two of our biggest stories" (Roughsey, 1971:86). He gives accounts of these legends in his first book, and later produced picture books versions of these same legends for children: *The rainbow serpent* and *Gidja*, the latter in collaboration with Trezise. By the time of the writing of his 1971 autobiography, Roughsey was an acclaimed artist and had held a number of exhibitions throughout eastern Australia. He became chairman of the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1973, and in that same year had his first picture book published *The giant devil dingo*. Two years later he published *The rainbow serpent*. These first two books were highly successful, and to meet their demand in schools were reproduced in kit form in 1977 and 1978 respectively, consisting of a book, audio-cassette and filmstrip.

In the late 1970s Roughsey's first collaboratively produced picture books were published under the name of Trezise and Roughsey. Together they produced six picture books: *The Quinkins* in 1978, *Banana bird and the snake men* in 1980, *Turramulli the giant Quinkin* in 1982, *The magic fire sticks* in 1983, *Gidja* in 1984 and *The flying fox warriors* in 1985. But who was (or is) Percy Trezise, and what role did he play in this collaboration? Answers to these questions are provided, in part, in Roughsey's autobiography. The arrival of Percy Trezise (or "Warrenby") into the life of Roughsey is given an entire chapter: "The arrival of Warrenby". Trezise is a non-Indigenous pilot, writer, artist and enthusiast on Aboriginal culture, and became a close friend and colleague of Roughsey's from the time they met in 1962. It was Trezise who provided the opportunities, encouragement, and art lessons for Roughsey to launch his career as an artist and writer.

One can only assume that for their collaborative productions, Roughsey provided the illustrations and Trezise (re)wrote the narrative; my reasons for this assumption are that Trezise holds copyright for the text and Roughsey for the illustrations in their later publications (even though they held joint copyright for their earlier books). Not all their books and narratives are based around the people and land in the vicinity of Mornington Island. For the book *Gidja* one can assume that Roughsey was the oral source of the narrative. In Roughsey's autobiography we are given a further insight into their collaborative relationship:

For some years Warrenby had been exploring the sandstone country around Laura [on Cape York Peninsula] for caves containing paintings of the old people. He had

found many big galleries and was about to start recording them for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies. Most of the Aborigines in that area had been killed by miners during the Palmer River goldrush, nearly 100 years ago, and there were only a few old people left that knew anything about the paintings, but they were too shy and just didn't trust any of the white people. They remembered too much of how white people had killed off all their tribes. Warrenby asked me to talk to the old men and explain that he only wanted to record the old stories and customs so they would never be forgotten.

I met the old men at the Laura settlement. They were living with their families in a row of tin shanties by the Laura River. One old man, George Pegus, was a Gugu-Yalanji from the Palmer River country and I found that he was my father in the kinship system. He soon introduced me to the others. They were Willy Long and old Barney of the Olkula people, Jerry Shepherd and Joe Musgrave of the Taipan people, old Starlight of the Kandju from up Coen way, and a few others. I soon made firends with them and they agreed to help Warrenby in his work. Old George and Willy were to become his friends later on and he wrote a lot about them in his book *Quinkin Country*....

(Roughsey, 1971:139)

A quick perusal of the dust cover and credits page of their picture book, *The Quinkins*, and of their five other collaborative works is disappointing in that there is no mention of the narrators, or of the sources of the narratives they collected from the Indigenous people of Cape York Peninsula. Roughsey does, however, provide a note "About this legend" in the back of his first picture book, *The giant devil dingo*, acknowledging:

The legend of Gaiya the giant devil-dingo belongs to several tribes in the lower Cape York Peninsula.

I heard it first from my old friend Jugumu of the Gugu-Yalanji people. He said that unlike all the other animals and birds, the dingo was not a man in the beginning, but had always been a dog.... My people the Lardil of Mornington Island, also say that the first dingoes came from the west, across Arnhem Land.

The dingo was very important in hunting and I have seen many sacred paintings of dingoes in secret caves in Cape York. In one of the caves, the dingo can be seen to be tracking a kangaroo which had been wounded by a spear.

(Roughsey, 1973)

In 1986 the book *Ngalculli: the red kangaroo*, which bears all the hallmarks of the earlier collaborations, appeared as a sole production by Percy Trezise. It was actually dedicated to: Dick Roughsey "My colleague and friend of many beautiful years". Then in 1988, more Trezise picture books appeared: *The cave painters* and *Black duck and water rat* (illustrated by Mary Haginikitas), and again in 1991 when *Mungoon-gali the giant goanna* was published, which is actually set in N.S.W. Finally, in 1997, Trezise returned to the Cape York Peninsula with his publication *Land of the magpie goose people*, which he again dedicated to "my colleague of many years, Aboriginal author and artist Dick Roughsey". There is no doubt that Trezise has had much success through his collaborative work with the late Dick Roughsey, so much so that it has enabled him to pursue a career in his own right as both a writer and illustrator of Indigenous Dreaming narratives. In Appendix 4.2 I reproduce in full their second collaborative effort *Gidja*, for which they claim equal credit: "written and illustrated by Percy Trezise & Dick Roughsey". Its text, however, has the same Trezise-like textual style which is evident in his later books (such as *Ngalculli: the red kangaroo*)

particularly his formulaic introduction, : "In the beginning in Dreamtime..." (Trezise, 1986:1). In a recent television program "Outback Adventures with Troy Dann" (Channel Seven, January 10, 2000), Percie Trezise was interviewed by the adventurer Troy Dann. During the interview Trezise explained why he had worked with Roughsey on his books, and claimed that "when I was a kid there was nothing like this around [referring to his books]", so he said he was "determined" to change the situation.

#### 4.4 OODGEROO OF THE NOONUCCAL

The late Kath Walker, more recently known as Oodgeroo Noonuccal, is probably better known for her poetry, being the first published Aboriginal poet. Her first collection, *We are going*, was released in 1964, then in 1972 her book *Stradbroke Dreamtime* was published by Angus and Robertson. It was republished in 1993 with spectacular illustrations by the Indigenous artist Bronwyn Bancroft. The first half of this book, "Stories from Stradbroke", comprises narratives by Oodgeroo telling of her eventful days growing up as a girl on Stradbroke Island, just off the coast of Queensland. The second half of the book is called "Stories from the old and new Dreamtime", and relates 14 Dreaming narratives.

Oodgeroo begins her Dreamtime section with a creation narrative: "The beginning of life". It is written in Biblical tones, and places the creation of the earth, as we now know it, "in the Dreamtime". She introduces us to some concepts that have become popularised in contemporary Aboriginal writing of this genre, such as the creator or "Mother of Life" in the form of "Rainbow Serpent". She also writes using terms, both shamelessly and repeatedly, such as "tribes" and "totems", despite their usage being considered inappropriate in anthropological circles of late.<sup>4</sup> Oodgeroo's creation narrative, "The beginning of life", is reproduced in full in Appendix 4.3

In her other narratives, Oodgeroo uses further concepts, which have also become popularised among Indigenous writers, such as "Mother Earth" and "the Good Spirit" called "Biami", whom she claims is "one of the wisest men whom the Rainbow Serpent created at the beginning of time" (Oodgeroo, 1993:64). This same character features in the narratives published by Langloh Parker in 1896, spelt "Byamee", who is "old man Byamee, the mightiest of Wirreenun, who is "a priest, doctor or wizard" (see Langloh Parker, 1978:79-85, see also Carey's 1998 discussion which on its popular usage). These same characters feature in Oodgeroo's Dreaming narratives as well as her poetry. Both also feature in another of Oodgeroo's Dreaming narratives, "Curlew", which I cite below, as are the terms "tribal brother" and "blood brother":

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<sup>4</sup> Oodgeroo is not the only one to use such terms. Many Indigenous writers and artists insist on maintaining the usage of words such as "tribe", "Tribal" and "totem" in their contemporary work. An example is the hit song "Tribal voice" by the successful contemporary Aboriginal band "Yothu Yindi" in the 1990s.

## CURLEW

Curlew was a tribe that stayed close to Mother Earth, and carefully guarded his own people. They never slept by night, but stayed awake to give the warning cry should danger come near those they loved. When the tribes heard curlew's cry in the night, they knew some danger was present. They feared the cry, yet they loved the Curlew for his watchfulness. He was a true brother to them.

One day Biarni the Good Spirit called Curlew before him and said, 'Your love of your tribe shall be rewarded. Tell me how.'

Curlew replied, 'Turn me and my people into birds. Give us wings so that we may fly, and let us be the guardians of the departed ones. Allow us to warn the tribes when death is at hand. We shall carry the shades of the dead to the shadow land. We shall carry the shades of the dead when the time comes for their last journey.'

Biarni saw the wisdom of Curlew's words, so he granted the request he had made. And now Curlew carries to the shadow land the shades of men who have departed this life. First, he gives warning three times, so that the tribes will know he is coming, and will not be afraid. Curlew's cry tells the tribes that all is well for their loved ones in death, that they are not alone. They know that their blood brother, Curlew, will always be with them when they make their last journey.

(Oodgeroo, 1993:73)

Because of the status Oodgeroo gained as a writer and activist during her lifetime, she has served as an inspiration to many other Indigenous writers of today, particularly those working in the genre of poetry. It should therefore not be surprising that her use of terms, such as "Mother Earth", has become popularised amongst contemporary Indigenous writers who are now working in a range of genres.

## 4.5 AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY PRESS

### 4.5.1 *Djugurba*

One significant publication that seems ubiquitous to most Australian school libraries is the publication *Djugurba: tales from the spirit time*. It was published in 1974 by the Australian National University (A.N.U. Press) complete with glossy full-page pictures throughout. It probably became part of the essential resource list for Australian schools because of the rarity in the early 1970s of publications by Indigenous writers in the Dreaming genre. It is claimed on the dust cover of this collection of 14 narratives that "this is the first time a group of Aborigines has written and illustrated some of their own myths and legends." I believe this claim is correct, as far as my research has been able to ascertain.

It is interesting now, a quarter of a century later, to look back on the names of the "story-tellers" and "artists" who contributed to this book. At the time of publication they were among the first group of Indigenous teacher trainees in the Northern Territory, studying at Kormilda College in Darwin.<sup>5</sup> Many are now leaders in their own communities, either in their

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<sup>5</sup> The Aboriginal teacher training program has since moved its operations to Batchelor College, south of Darwin.



respective community schools or other positions. They all retained copyright over the narratives they wrote and illustrated for *Djugurba*. The title for their book comes from the word common to many central Australian Indigenous languages, meaning "Dreaming", but is spelt in various ways by different language groups; for example in Warlpiri it is spelt "Jukurrpa", in Pitjantjatjara "Tjukurpa".

The students who contributed were being trained, at the time, by white educators, so it should not be completely surprising that the style of writing adopted by the Indigenous contributors to this collection often follow the writing style of past white writers within this genre. They place their narratives in the distant past, invariably beginning with "Long, long ago, in the Dreamtime..." . They inevitably chose narratives that are open to the public, and often of an aetiological nature, relating why certain animals have the characteristics they bear today. These texts have been written to appeal to children, which isn't surprising seeing these writers were training to be teachers. But they also relate to the specific country from which each writer comes. This can be seen, for example, in the narrative "Inganarr the Great Serpent", which is quoted in full in Appendix 4.4. This narrative, written by Bunug from Melville Island in central Arnhem Land, tells of the role of a Giant Serpent in the creation of man. It correlates in detail with narratives reproduced by the anthropologist Warner in 1937, who wrote extensively on cultural beliefs in Arnhem Land. It contrasts, however, in content and style to the narrative on the same theme by Oodgeroo, from Queensland, cited earlier.

#### 4.5.2 *Milbi*

In 1980 A.N.U. Press published another collection of Dreaming narratives, this time told by a single Indigenous author Tulo Gordon, entitled *Milbi: Aboriginal tales from Queensland's Endeavour River*. The narratives were told in Guugu Yimidhirr, and the linguist John Haviland is acknowledged as the translator. The fifteen narratives appear in English and are presented in a picture book format, with colourful illustrations, also provided by the narrator Tulo Gordon. Although Gordon's people have been living on Hope Vale Mission near Cooktown for some years, these narratives demonstrate a strong sense of Place - mostly centred around the Endeavour River. They tell of the formation of different land forms in the area, of the characteristics of different local animal and plant species, and of the birth of different languages.

One such narrative is "The giant dingo dog", which is actually another version of a similar narrative retold in Roughsey's first picture book. Gordon's version features an "old carpet snake", rather than an old woman, who directs the giant dingo to his fate with the two brothers. Roughsey's version was originally told to him by a Gugu Yalanji friend (a neighbouring language group to the Guugu Yimidhirr). Another narrative that features in

Gordon's collection is "How the giant Nhinhinhi fish changed the languages", which typically begins with a reference to a specific named Place:

Long ago all men had a single language, which everyone could understand. One time word went out to all the different tribes of people that there would be a big dance. People came together from the East, from the West, from the North and from the South. They all gathered together at a big lagoon called Ngurrayin, to have their corroboree...

(Gordon, 1986:17)

Gordon's collection should be viewed as a celebration of the survival of Guugu Yimidhirr narratives, at least in a written form, despite the considerable disruptions to their language and culture over the years. According to Haviland, who provides some insights into the collection's origins in "Behind the myths" at the rear of the book, it is a miracle that the narratives have been preserved at all:

This book... represents something more than a collection of stories from a group of Australian Aborigines. For, whatever the original contexts in which these stories were told, and whatever the inter-dependencies between these tales and traditional Guugu Yimidhirr society and environment, the present collection represents a rather different expression of Aboriginal life, in a modern context. It is in fact miraculous that the stories (and the story-teller) have survived at all, let alone the community of Guugu Yimidhirr people to which they belong. The fragmentary nature of the collection, the hybrid language in which the stories were retold, and the salvaged remnants of tradition and lore around which they revolve all give forlorn testimony to the fate of the original inhabitants of the Endeavour River.

(Haviland in Gordon, 1986:58)

Haviland also gives us a clue into the nature of the original language of Gordon as he narrated each story, and the difficulties of transforming them into a written form:

Although in the English versions we have tried to keep both elements of Guugu Yimidhirr storytelling style and the special flavour of both Guugu Yimidhirr and Hopevale English phrases, there is a fundamental difference between a story, written, punctuated, and spaced on a printed page, and a tale enacted by a gifted storyteller (like Tulo Gordon), complete with dialogue, drama, and sound-effects. These stories are meant to be heard, and Guugu Yimidhirr people deserve to have them recorded and published in their own language. Needless to say, the translations draw heavily upon Tulo Gordon's English as on his Guugu Yimidhirr.

(Haviland in Gordon, 1986:58)

The issue of transforming the oral word into print is a difficult one, which is complicated even further when an oral text has to be translated into another language for publication. Haviland's honest reflection of the difficulties involved in the production of Gordon's book are both enlightening and valuable. At the time the book was published, not too many Australians would have been aware that Aboriginal people still spoke their own Indigenous languages, let alone thought about complex translation issues.

## 4.6 DAVID GULPILIL

The origins of Gulpilil's collection of twelve Dreaming narratives *Gulpilil's story of the Dreamtime*, remains a puzzle. It was published by Collins Publishers in 1979, and from the choice of their title, it seems the non-Indigenous compilers, Hugh Rule and Stuart Goodman, are capitalising on the name and popularity of the Indigenous actor David Gulpilil to promote their collaboration. They originally produced and directed a television film series entitled *The Dreamtime*, in which Gulpilil enacted the same narratives that appear in this book. They tell us in their introduction:

This collection of Aboriginal legends has been compiled with the help of Gulpilil. Gulpilil learnt these stories from the elders of his tribe when he was a small boy living in Arnhem Land. The photographs were taken during the filming of the television series, *The Dreamtime*.

Gulpilil is from the far northern coastal, and tropical, community of Ramingining in Arnhem Land, however, the photographs reveal that the filming was not undertaken in Gulpilil's own community. There are also some unusual foreign elements in the 'stories' as well. The book reveals stories of birds, animals and plants which are unfamiliar to Gulpilil's community, such as: lyre birds, emus, koalas, wombats, kangaroos and the waratah (the floral emblem of New South Wales). However, the Indigenous language terms used in some of the texts are clearly from Gulpilil's own language, Mandhalpuy.<sup>6</sup> These include words such as: *Boarta* for 'Turkey' (usually spelt "buwata"); *Wooripun* for 'emu' (usually spelt "wurrpan"); *Meyalk* for 'girl', *Gurukman* for 'frog' (usually spelt "garkman") and *Moola* for 'pelican' (usually spelt "mola"). For 'corroboree' he uses the term *Bora* for (1979:66), first used in such texts by Langloh Parker, rather than his own term *bungul*. I am unable to establish (from published wordlists) the origins of the vernacular term *Wonga* for 'pigeon' (1979:108), but admit it has similar phonotactics to Yolngu Matha words. One further mystery is the absence of any copyright holding on the text itself. Copyright for the photographs, and for the drawn illustrations, are held by the non-Indigenous collaborators, yet there is not mention of who holds copyright over the text.

Why would Gulpilil allow himself to be accredited with a collection of published narratives that appear to have been adapted from a variety of sources? One can only assume that Gulpilil took on this project, or initially the making of the film series, just as he took on all his past acting projects - as an actor. The publishing of this book obviously came out of the acting project, and issues of authenticity were not considered paramount in the minds of either Gulpilil or his white "compilers". But Gulpilil obviously did "help" Rule and Goodman in

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<sup>6</sup> Gulpilil (pronounced phonemically /gulparil/, but now spelt with the conventional spelling 'Gulpilil') comes from Arnhem Land in the N.T. His country is near Ramingining on the other side of the Glyde River. His "bapurru" or clan group is Mandhalpuy (or Mandhalpingu). His language is similar to Djinang, which differs from the more widely spoken Yolngu Matha language of north eastern Arnhem Land. However, Gulpilil also speaks Yolngu Matha, and there are certain number of words shared by the two languages. (personal communication Howard Amery, August 2000).

small ways by contributing some of his own language to the texts - just as he used his own language in his very first acting job *Walkabout* - for which he used the Yolngu Matha language for a narrative set in the middle of the Australian desert.

A similar photographic book bearing a text "told by Gulpilil" is *Birirrk: our ancestors of the Dreaming*, which was published in 1983 by L.&S. Publishing. This glossy, lavish publication would probably be better described as a coffee-table book with its eye-catching photographs by Neil McLeod. The text is presented more as an accompaniment to the photographs, which feature Gulpilil in various different poses and stunning landscape panoramas of Arnhem Land, plus the children from the Gulpilil's home community. The text is a creation narrative, in which Gulpilil tells of the formation of the earth, and the creation of all things on the earth. The story line is similar in content and style to that of Oodgeroo's creation narrative (see Appendix 4.3), but in Gulpilil's narrative the creator figure is the "Birirrk", rather than the the Rainbow Serpent. Gulpilil calls Birirrk "our great spirit ancestors" (1983:4).<sup>7</sup> Like Oodgeroo, Gulpilil also refers to the earth as "our Mother" (Gulpilil, 1983:7). I quote Gulpilil's creation narrative in full in Appendix 4.5, but the narrative begins: "Long long time before our Dreaming, the earth at our feet had no shape, it had no colour, there was no light, and nothing walked across it. There were no emu tracks and no kangaroo tracks. It was dust without water, no river flowed, the earth was empty" (Gulpilil, 1983:2).

The creation story by both Gulpilil and Oodgeroo share similarities with the creation stories written by Unaipon (discussed later in Chapter Seven), who was inspired by The Bible for much of his writing, particularly by the creation story in the book of Genesis. The dustcover of Gulpilil's book calls Gulpilil "the author", and he is given copyright for "this version of the story", but this is accompanied by a statement: "Copyright in the original story told in this book belongs to the traditional owners of the story". They are not acknowledged by name.

#### 4.7 EDDIE BENNELL

Eddie Bennell's collection of twenty Dreaming narratives *Aboriginal Legends from the Bibulmun tribe* was published in 1981. Bennell writes in his foreword:

The collection of myths and legends in this book is unique in that never before has any material of this nature been written or recorded about the Aboriginal people of the south-west of Western Australia...

I have never been ashamed of my Aboriginality, and even as a child I was interested in the traditions of my people. My earliest memories are of my grandfather and my old grannies telling me stories of the old wise ones who had the gift to take the form

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<sup>7</sup> Again I am unable to trace the language source for a term. The alternative word *Wangarr* is used by Yolngu people today when talking about a creator God. The term *Birirrk* must be a Mandalpuy term, and does not appear in either the available Djinang or Yolngu matha worldlists.

of any bird, animal, or plant they chose. In my generation I was one of the few who spent a lot of time with the old people, listening to their stories and trying to understand their philosophy of life....

In these stories of creation I have attempted to preserve the unique and almost forgotten history and mythology of my ancestors, the Bibulmun people, hopefully to revive a rich and meaningful culture which, although not entirely lost, has become dormant in the minds of many of my mixed-blood brothers and sisters.

(Bennell, 1981:7)

The publishers of Bennell's book, Rigby, tell us on the (front) dustcover that "The stories and legends of the Bibulmun tribe of Western Australia form a unique and valuable collection", and that the Bibulmun were "once [a] powerful Aboriginal nation", but are now "a vanished people". They continue on the (back) dustcover to tell us that Bennell has "attempted to preserve some ... legends... as a reminder to the many mixed-blood descendants of the Bibulmun tribe of their priceless heritage". The publishers describe Bennell as being of "Aboriginal descent", confirming their belief that Bennell and other "mixed-blood descendants" are not contemporary representatives of the Bibulmun people, "who once inhabited the south-west area of the State" (my emphasis). Such attitudes could help explain the decontextualised nature of many of Bennell's narratives, with very little specific reference to Place. Apart from his occasional introductions, such as: "Many years ago in the south-west area of Western Australia" (Bennell, 1981:13), his narratives could be set anywhere in Australia. They are largely aetiological in nature, explaining why certain animals now have their present characteristics.

There are a few exceptions, which indicate Bennell's familiarity with the country and the contemporary importance this country still has to his people. However, specific Place details seem to have been de-emphasised by his publishers in other narratives. One such example of a narrative with a sense of Place is "Snow, the Jenark kangaroo", which begins: "About 160 kilometres south-east of Perth there is an area covered with salt lakes. Many years ago the Aborigines from the surrounding tribes would go hunting there for kangaroo and emu..." (Bennell, 1981:15). This narrative tells of the "fearsome, white boomer" which forced away the Bibulmun from their hunting in the vicinity of the salt lakes. Another interesting exception is the narrative of "The magpie and the curlew" (see Appendix 4.6), which actually sets the telling of the narrative in post colonial times "on the outskirts of a town in the Great Southern area of Western Australia, approximately 250 kilometres from Perth". It is significant that the specific name of the town is deleted. The narrative tells of an Aboriginal boy who was beckoned "many years ago" by a weerrlow bird "in a trance-like state to a high rocky dead-end canyon", where he witnesses a battle between "the most magnificent birds he had ever seen" (Bennell, 1981:21-24). With the detail of the many participants in this saga, one wonders whether that actual boy was Bennell himself. A further exception, where Bennell actually names the Place in his narrative is within "The swan brothers", which begins:

Many years ago lived two brothers of the Swan tribe that roamed the south-west of Western Australia. In Bibulmun lore, the old people say that long, long ago all the

swans were glossy black and their main tribal area was the sacred caves near Wandering, about 145 kilometres south-east of Perth.

(Bennell, 1981:39)

One of the things that perhaps detracts from this collection are the realist, elaborate, and colourful illustrations by the non-Indigenous artist Anne Thomas. They remind one of the style of portrait paintings one could buy in the 1960s on plates, black velvet and tea-towels, of the stereotypical (and anonymous) desert Aboriginal with glowing white teeth, huge eyes and tussled hair. No expense has been spared by the publishers on this glossy and marketable publication.

#### 4.8 PAT TORRES

Pat Mamanyjun Torres is an Indigenous writer and artist who has written two books for children, both published in 1987 by Magabala Books, an Indigenous controlled publishing house based in Broome on the north west coast of Western Australia. Herself from the Dampier Peninsula region of Kimberley, Torres collaborated with speakers of Indigenous languages of the region to provide diglot texts for both books. Such efforts by Torres to produce what she calls "bilingual books" are considered to help meet the aspirations that McConvell (1985) writes of regarding speakers' strong desires for language maintenance. The first book, which will not be discussed in detail here, is a book of poems *Jalygurr: Aussie animal rhymes* which (according to the front cover) were "adapted from Kimberley Aboriginal Folk Stories". According to Torres, this book "features the Yawuru language and the Yawuru people were the traditional people of the Broome area. It's my grandmother's people" (Torres, Video Interview, 1993)<sup>8</sup>. The English text is written in rhyme, and is accompanied on each page with a translation in the Yawuru language. The Yawuru text was provided by Jack Edgar, Elsie Edgar and Thelma Saddler, and although it is not rhyming, attempts have been made to lay the text out in a poetic form.

Torres' second book *The Story of Crow* also adopts a rhyming poetic style for its English text.<sup>9</sup> For the Indigenous language component, Torres collaborated with Magdalene Williams to incorporate another Kimberley language, the Nyul Nyul language. Again Torres explains in her interview: "The Nyul nyul book, which is *The story of crow*, , that is a Dreaming story about the crow becoming a black bird.... that's in the Nyul Nyul language, which is my grandfather's people". In this second book, The Indigenous language text appears in red italics across the top of each page. I have quoted the beginning of the Nyul Nyul text and all of the English text below:

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<sup>8</sup> This interview features on the Open Learning Series: "Windows on Indigenous Australia: Aboriginal languages", Episode 3, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> I wrote to Torres asking her why she adopted this poetic style for her two books, but unfortunately did not receive a response.

## THE STORY OF CROW

*Jooyi nyimoongk jabal,  
Wangkid jinijirr jabal yoomboon Waragayin?....*

I wonder if you know, The story of the crow?  
His feathers once were white, Not black and charcoal bright.  
He sang a song so full of joy, they say, Not like the croaking voice he has today.  
In Dreamtime he stole the eagle's wife, And that's what brought the strife.  
When the angry husband soaring high, spied the two, He thought about what he would do.  
The Eagle swooped down to the ground, and grasped a burning coal that he had found.  
Then he searched both high and low, To find the handsome but naughty crow.  
When all at once he saw the crow singing below! The eagle flew up high to drop the coal all a-glow.  
Inside his throat the colour red, Shows the world the burning coal that Crow was fed.  
Today he's burnt right through, To show the world what they shouldn't do.  
So keep the laws, don't mess around, Don't put yourself on sacred ground.  
(Torres, 1987:4-25)

A pronunciation guide and a glossary for the Nyul Nyul words are provided in the back of the book, as well as a map locating Ngarlan, which "is where the Nyul Nyul people live". Like Sally Morgan (see below), Torres is an accomplished artist, and together with her engaging text has been successful in producing a book that has wide appeal amongst Australian children. I am told that when reading her text to a class of school children the audience is spell bound by her professional performance (personal communication Rob Amery, 1993). Although Torres has made efforts in the preface of the book to locate her poem in Nyul Nyul country, and with Nyul Nyul people, like Morgan's (1997) children's book, if relying on the English text alone, the story could have taken place anywhere in Australia. Torres dedicates her second book "to the living descendants of the Nyul Nyul people, the original tribe of the Ngarlan, or Beagle Bay Mission, Western Australia" (Torres, 1987: inside cover). Of both books Torres concludes:

I was basically paying respect to my grandparents and my elders by producing the books bilingually, and mainly because both languages are considered under threat. Because with the Nyul Nyul language there's only three people speaking it, and the Yawuru language there's only ten people speaking it."

(Torres, Video interview, 1993)

### 4.9 YUENDUMU DOORS

*Yuendumu Doors: Kuruwarri* is an innovative book which I have discussed elsewhere in detail (see Gale, 1997:205-207). For this reason, I hesitate to include it in this review chapter; also because copyright for the book is held by its publishers (known then in 1987 as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies). However, in the book's postscript the late Eric Michaels (1987:137-138) explains how the authors, the Warlukurlangu artists, made a request to the Institute to fund the book, which would ultimately financially benefit them. My discussion below will further explain my reasons for including it here.

*Yuendumu Doors* could well be considered an art-book with a difference. It comprises colour plates of thirty dot-style paintings done by the Warlukurlangu artists of Yuendumu in central Northern Territory. These senior male artists have also provided explanatory texts, in Warlpiri for each painting. The book differs from other Aboriginal art books, in that the texts appear in both Warlpiri and English, with some of them texts retelling the actual Dreaming narrative associated with their painting, rather than a brief description of what's in the painting. The book takes its name from the fact that the paintings were originally painted on the doors of Yuendumu school, originally for the educational benefit of the local school children. The Warlpiri term "Kuruwarri" means 'painting, design'.

In Appendix 4.7 I quote in full the English version of the "Bush Turkey and Emu" narrative from *Yuendumu doors*, which was told by Darby Jampijinpa. He is an old and much respected story-teller from Yuendumu. It begins:

I am telling the story of Turkey who lived at Parirri rock hole and gathered for himself a big pile of yakajirri berries. Jangalas and Jampijinpas lived there and now it is their country - I have it now. Where Turkey was living at Parirri, in the Dreamtime, he used to pick berries and make them into big fruit balls.

(Darby Jampijinpa, Warlukurlangu artists, 1987:39)

Darby goes on to tell of a conflict between Turkey and Emu, which are two characters that abound in books already published in the Dreaming genre. I have selected this particular narrative because it has been particularly illuminating to me in coming to understand the possible origins of narratives that have become ubiquitous throughout Australia. Unlike Jampijinpa's narrative, many previously published narratives about the Turkey and the Emu have aetiological themes; either explaining why the emu cannot fly, or why the turkey only has two chicks. They are rarely located in any particular country or Place. The question is often asked as to where the origins of these now ubiquitous stories lie, and in what form they are told when related by a story-teller who still has strong connections with their land and their language. Jampijinpa's narrative comes close to answering this question.

The strong sense of Place is quite evident in Darby's narrative, right from the beginning, when he locates Turkey, and himself, at the site Parirri. Jampijinpa also gives his text an immediate sense of Person, by stating that the country at Parirri belongs to his own skin group as well as to the Jangala group. It is significant that although the English translation of Darby's narrative uses the term "Dreamtime" on two occasions, Darby also relates his narrative to the present with the statement: "Jangalas and Jampijinpas lived there and now it is there country - I have it now." The actual word used by Darby in Warlpiri (rather than 'Dreamtime') is "jukurrpa" and "jukurrpawarnu". These could just as easily be translated as 'the Dreaming' and 'from the Dreaming' respectively, which doesn't carry, semantically, that distant sense of time encompassed within the phrase: "in the Dreamtime".



As with most Warlpiri men's narratives, Jampijinpa's narrative incorporates an element of travel by its main characters, and typically the direction of travel is always articulated. What is not articulated is some sort of coda (invariably found in published Dreaming narratives about animals) about why the animal characters look the way they do today. Hence it differs in outcome to the popularised versions of emu and turkey narratives. Instead Jampijinpa chooses to conclude his narrative by relating the events back to country, and pointing out the origins of "rocky hills and boulders spread over the ground at that place" today. He also deems it important to validate his narrative's authenticity with the following coda: "This story is a true Dreamtime story which the old people used to tell, the old Aboriginal people who have gone before us." It is not hard to see, however, how just a little literary license would be required, on the part of creative writers, to turn Jampijinpa's narrative into something with an aetiological theme that would appeal to a publisher looking for manuscripts for children's story books - particularly with an all-Australian animal theme. One could imagine a simplified version of this same text in a children's book without any reference to Place at all, and with a contrasting coda that explains why the bush turkey has black rings around its eyes today, or why the emu and turkey are no longer friends! Thus we see, in Darby Jampijinpa's narrative, the possible origins of popularised animal narratives, such as the Turkey and Emu narrative, which have become ubiquitous to the genre of published Dreaming stories for children.

#### 4.10 THE COULTHARDS

In the late 1980s a series of Dreaming texts were published as part of the Aboriginal Australia II series, which included the book *Moon man*. Although the Indigenous authors, Terrence Coulthard, Cliff Coulthard and Buck McKenzie, are given full credit on the front and back covers of their 1987 book, copyright remains with the publishers of the series: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Despite this fact, I include a discussion of this small book for children here, because it feeds into my discussion of a later book by Terrence and Clem Coulthard *Awi Irta* published by The Anglican Education Centre in 1997, for which the rightful authors retain copyright.

The first book, *Moon man*, appears in English only, with no reference to the Indigenous language of the authors. I quote the English text in full in Appendix 4.8, which begins:

In the Dreamtime there lived an old Aboriginal man and his young nephew. As the years went by the old man taught his nephew all the rules about living the traditional Aboriginal way. The old man said to his nephew, 'You must always share food with other people because sharing is one of the most important rules of our people.'  
(Coulthard et al, 1987:6)

This particular narrative shares a common theme that can be found within many Dreaming narratives told across Australia - that of greed and conflict between young initiates and the

older generation. But the perspective taken, in this particular Adnyamathanha version of the narrative, regarding who is the greedy villain of the story (and therefore becomes the moon) is very interesting. This version was written by three younger Adnyamathanha men who are all well-known in Aboriginal education circles for their contributions to Aboriginal Studies curriculum in South Australia. The greedy protagonist of their narrative is the young nephew, who steals from and taunts his uncle, from whom he should be learning. Retribution results in the greedy fat nephew being left in the sky as the moon, to share his light with others.

Another Adnyamathanha version of the moon narrative was published a year later in Tunbridge (1988:70), this time with the uncle as the protagonist. This version was originally told in the Adnyamathanha language, Yura Ngawarla, by Wally Coulthard, and was later translated into English for publication by Dorothy Tunbridge (see my previous Chapter Three). The uncle, Ngamarna, is the protagonist because the two nephews "were sick of him telling them they couldn't eat the meat they caught". As time passed, the uncle climbed a gumtree to get witchetty grubs, and as he climbed: "the two boys pulled the gumtree down until it was quite small. As for their old Ngamarna, he wandered around the sky really angry. The pair shouted to him: 'Uncle! You must climb up and shine! Then you must gradually die and become smaller' ". According to Tunbridge, this same tree now stands in Wilpena Creek, in the Flinders Ranges region of South Australia (Tunbridge, 1988:70).

Obviously there are alternating versions and perspectives on the moon man narrative amongst the Adnyamathanha people. In Wally Coulthard's narrative it is the greedy uncle who is punished, not a greedy nephew. The version offered by the younger Coulthard men meets the expectation that many audiences now have of Aboriginal Dreaming narratives. It bears a lesson on two universally popular themes: greed, and respect for one's elders. The three Indigenous authors have been key contributors to the compulsory Aboriginal Studies curriculum that has been taught now for over a decade in all South Australian schools, from Reception to Year 8. Curriculum documents prepared on "The Dreaming" contain explicit explanations of what Dreaming narratives are "designed to teach". One of these is: "Rules for living: The Dreaming Stories are a major way of teaching Aboriginal children about right and wrong behaviour and the laws of the society. The stories provide examples of sharing, being honest, showing respect for elders, good manners and so on" (Education Department of S.A., 1988:22).<sup>10</sup>

Another book written by the Coulthards, this time Clem and Terrence, appeared a decade later: *Awi Irtta*. This particular "Adnyamathanha Dreaming story" was published in diglot form, and states on the credits page that it was "written in Yura Ngawarla by Clem and

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<sup>10</sup> The other two things that the Aboriginal Studies curriculum claims are taught through "Dreaming Stories" are aspects about "the natural environment" and about "the spiritual world" (Education Department of S.A., 1988:22).

Terrence Coulthard". However the formulaic introduction and conclusion for the English text indicates that it has been translated using the style of language that audiences have come to expect of beginnings and endings in Dreaming narratives (see the English text quoted below). The story-line is brief and simple, with the predictable aetiological coda explaining why the Robin now has a red breast. One cannot help suspecting that the Yura Ngawarla version has been simplified for this publication. Similarly, the English text uses in its introduction the term "Aboriginal people", compared to the Yura Ngawarla text which uses the word 'Yura', meaning, more specifically, 'Adnyamathanha people'. The more inclusive English term takes the narrative beyond the boundaries of the Adnyamathanha, which is made possible because there is no specific reference to Adnyamathanha country within the narrative. I quote below the English text in full, but just the introductory text in Yura Ngawarla:

AWI IRTA / The story of the Red Breast Robin

Wadu matyarri Yura-apina wanggangga Awi irta vanbi ikangga....

A long time ago the Aboriginal people said there lived a red breast robin couple.  
Then one day the husband male robin stood eating mistletoe berries.  
*Come here old man, come here old man*, his wife called out. *Come here old man*.  
His wife was making a shelter, and she was making it by herself.  
His wife looked up and saw the rain clouds coming over the peak. *Come here old man, come here old man*, his wife called out. *Come here old man!*  
The husband stood and ignored his wife's call while still eating the mistletoe berries.  
Then the rain got close and started to fall on top of them. *Come here old man, come here old man*, his wife called out. *Come here old man!*  
*Quickly, quickly old man, come and tell the rain off because it's falling down here!*  
*Wait dear wife, for I am eating the mistletoe berries.*  
His wife then got a waddy and hit [him] on the head drawing blood from him which ran down over his chest. That is why he has got a red breast today.

The challenge that this book offers to its audience is its prominent inclusion of the Indigenous authors' own language at the top of each page. Yura Ngawarla actually holds greater prominence than the English text simply by its position on the page. Similar tactics, and hence statements on the legitimate place that Indigenous languages have in children's books of this genre, were made by Magabala Books in Pat Torres' publications.

#### 4.11 BILINGUAL SCHOOLS IN THE N.T.

In 1973, bilingual education was officially introduced into five pilot Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory, as a Commonwealth government initiative. After the submission of various positive reports, bilingual education became the adopted language policy in a number of larger and remote government-funded Aboriginal schools, such as Milingimbi, Galiwinku, Yirrkala and Yuendumu. The same policy was soon adopted by Catholic schools at Port Keats and Bathurst Island as well as in an independent school in Alice Springs: Yipirinya. Realising the urgent need for local production of reading materials in the Indigenous languages of these schools, within a few years funding was also made available, by the

Commonwealth, for Literature Production Centres to be staffed and equipped with printing presses.

Thus began the on-site publishing of varied vernacular materials, in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, for local consumption. I write in detail of the vast range in quality and content of this "flood of literature" in my recently published book (Gale, 1997). The locally-based production of books in Indigenous languages was soon commenced in many more Aboriginal communities, and by 1996 twenty schools were operating accredited bilingual programs in thirty four Indigenous languages. Three of these schools were Catholic and one independent. There were ten schools operating Literature Production Centres and eight running smaller Literacy Centres (see Bubb, 1996:38-39). However, in 1998 the Northern Territory (Country Liberal Party) government announced that they would be withdrawing funding for the ongoing operation of bilingual education programs in all government-run Aboriginal schools. This meant that the extra funding they provided to run Literature Production Centres, and to employ Aboriginal literacy workers, would no longer be available. A number of Aboriginal schools are still fighting this decision, amid support from both national and international forums. However, the impact the government decision will have on the local production of vernacular literature is predictable. What follows is a brief discussion of some of the publications that came out of Aboriginal bilingual schools prior to 1998.

In Gale (1997) I discuss how the published texts that came out of Aboriginal Literature Production Centres, some of which were Dreaming texts, were not actually published and marketed for a mass audience. Although it is possible to purchase booklets printed in bilingual schools directly from some schools, such as Yirkala and Nguuu (or Bathurst Island), their intended audience for their books was primarily local. They therefore contrast with most of the books reviewed thus far in this study, which can generally be purchased in mainstream bookshops. The publications that I have chosen to analyse and discuss below all emanated from schools because of the presence of their bilingual programs. The first two are available in bookshops. They were self-published by Yipirinya school, but are marketed in Alice Springs, which has a large tourist trade. The others are only available through their source schools, Yirkala and Nguuu, but are included because they are particularly useful to this study. The publications discussed in this section provide quite startling contrasts, in numerous ways, to many of the texts discussed thus far in this chapter, and of course to all those reviewed in the previous chapter.

#### **4.11.1 Yipirinya School**

In 1988 Yipirinya school published the small diglot booklet *Yeye Apme Kwerlaye-iperre / The rainbow serpent*. The narrative was told in Western Arrente by Elaine Sharpe, and was

transcribed by Jennifer Inkamala, who also illustrated the book. The text is accompanied by a one page description of Yipirinya school, plus a map and photo of the local area in which the narrative is based. An information page on the Western Arrernte language appears at the back. The narrative itself only appears on four pages, and the text is presented with the Arrernte and English version side-by-side on the same page. The English version is quoted in full below:

### THE RAINBOW SERPENT

Long, long ago, in the waterhole at Glen Helen there lived a rainbow serpent.

People used to come and camp there, making their camp a good distance away from the waterhole where that rainbow serpent lived. They didn't want to camp anywhere near that rainbow serpent with its blind eyes. Instead, they camped some distance away on the high, flat ground.

They came and camped there for a while and then they went back to their own place. If they camped too close to that waterhole a big wind would blow. Then they would have to get up and move away from that place.

They would make their camp far away in the open country. The waterhole was a sacred place. The rainbow serpent might take them into the water and drown them. Perhaps the Rainbow Serpent is still lying there today, deep under the water.<sup>11</sup>

This glossy-coloured book was the winner of the picture book category of the Australian Multicultural Literature Award, probably not so much for the quality of its line-drawings or simple story-line, but more so because of its educational value for its non-Indigenous audience. The book demonstrates that some Australian languages, such as Arrernte, are still alive and well today, and that Arrernte beliefs are also being maintained. The setting of the narrative in this book is Glen Helen, which is a popular tourist destination 150 kilometres west of Alice Springs. This book teaches tourists to respect the country, and therefore the beliefs of the Arrernte, when visiting this site.

A year later, in 1989, Yipirinya published a second and much longer book: *Ampe urreye artnterrentye akweke akerte / The Crawling baby boy*. Again they went to the expense of having it printed with glossy colour illustrations, this time by the skilled artist Thomas Stephens, who was once employed for many years as the artist at Papunya school's Literature Production Centre. Such centres don't have ready access to the quality print facilities accessed by Yipirinya school for this particular publication. The narrative was written by Margaret Heffernan on a theme which is not untypical of Dreaming narratives from central Australia. It tells of a neglectful Aboriginal mother who left her young baby to fend for himself each day as she went hunting. This resulted in her baby dying from snake bite, and ultimate retribution on the mother, by the baby's father, in the form of a severe belting around the head and then being thrown on the fire. The unarticulated lesson to this narrative

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<sup>11</sup> I have copied the inconsistent capitalisation of the "rainbow serpent" as it appeared throughout the original text.

is for women to take care of their children, or else. This violent story is one that would not appeal to commercial publishers of children's books, and the book won no awards.

Commercial book publishers, particularly those who regularly submit their products for annual book awards, are extremely selective when accepting manuscripts for publication. This is particularly so with picture books, which are expensive to produce. The more the publishers manage to sell, the better chance they have of not only covering their high costs, but of making profits. Book awards also increase sales, so each manuscript accepted is a potential candidate submitted for an award. In the past the Dreaming texts were re-written by non-Indigenous authors for their white audience, and unpleasantries were avoided, especially in children's books. Now that Indigenous people themselves are submitting manuscripts to publishers, they are challenging the boundaries that publishers have taken for granted in the past. This is particularly pertinent when issues of 'authenticity' are being raised by some critics. Is a narrative that has been 'toned-down' by its publishing editors, for example because of its demonstrable violence towards women, still a legitimate representation of an Indigenous text?<sup>12</sup> I return to such issues in my final two chapters.

#### 4.11.2 Yirrkala School

In Gale (1997) I discussed in detail, and in celebration, the editorial work of Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj for her work on the two publications from Yirrkala school, in north east Arnhem Land: *Ganbulapula: the story of the land around the old Dhupuma College* (in 1988) and *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku: the song of Yirrkala* (in 1989). They both contain Dreaming narratives that were recorded from senior clan leaders of Yirrkala and then transcribed and translated into English to be reproduced in diglot publications. I discuss these two texts further, in this study, for two reasons: first because their story-lines display typical features of oral Dreaming narratives told in this region of Australia, and second because they demonstrate a daring alternative to the modes of representing Indigenous narratives. Together, I consider them to be seminal works in the genre of published Dreaming narratives. I briefly discuss the first, and much shorter, of these two texts below, but reserve my discussion of the second, and arguably most challenging, until Chapter Five.

The first publication, *Ganbulapula*, tells of the travels and exploits of the Yirritja spirit ancestor, Ganbulapula, in the country surrounding Yirrkala. The narrator, a Gumatj leader Djalalingba Yunupingu, was audio-taped when instructing the post primary students on a cultural workshop at the old site of a now defunct Aboriginal boarding school, Dhupuma College. Like many narratives from this relatively densely populated region of the Northern

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<sup>12</sup> Lee Cataldi (personal communication, June, 1998), who was working at Lajamanu school when Pamela Lofts was seeking narratives for her series of children's books, says they had great trouble finding suitable stories for Lofts because most of them were "too violent" for children.

Territory, it serves to reaffirm the affiliation that the many different clans groups living in the area have with particular tracts of land, and hence stabilise social relationships between them. I quote the full English translation of Yunupingu's text, and some of the Gumatj text, in Appendix 4.9, which begins:

This place (where Dhupuma College was) used to be a ceremonial ground. This is where they danced. From here..... to Datjala, through the bush, to the point where the track goes down the escarpment, perhaps you know that track. It belongs to the spirit man called Ganbulapula, also known as Yängunitji, and Murayana. Through this land he travelled, looking upwards, following the stringy bark flowers looking for native honey. This land is ceremonial ground.

(Yunupingu, Djalalingba, 1988:1)

Unlike many published Dreaming narratives, this particular narrative has an instructional style with the inclusion of features such as rhetorical questions. It also defies the rule that all book editors tend to abide by: that all good stories have a clear beginning, a middle and an end. Djalalingba Yunupingu concludes his narrative as abruptly as he begins it, which is not uncommon to many other narratives I have heard and read (see the Warlpiri narratives in Rockman & Cataldi discussed later in Chapter Five). Often the only indication that a Warlpiri narrative has ended, when being told by Warlpiri narrators, is the simple concluding statement "That is all I have to say". This contrasts with the neatly packaged conclusions we have come to expect in earlier Dreaming publications, that end with an explicit moral, or with an aetiological statement declaring that this story tells why certain animals today have their distinctive markings or features on their bodies. The Ganbulapula narrative is the relatively unedited product of a Dreaming narrative being told in a contextualised situation to a specific audience. The purpose for the original narrative being told to an expectant and immediate audience is evident in the final printed product. It reads as an oral narrative, and the reader is allowed to become "one of the youngsters" to whom Djalalingba talks and explains this obviously important Yirritja ancestor. The 'untampered' and 'un-edited' nature of the printed text adds to its vitality and meaning. This is an approach that is also pursued by Muecke, who chose to represent Paddy Roe's narratives in a similarly 'oral' mode, to be discussed later in Chapter Five.

### 4.11.3 Nguiu School

Many of the Dreaming narratives, published by the Nguiu Ngingawila Literature Production Centre at Nguiu school on Bathurst Island (just north of Darwin in the N.T.), tell of the origins of Tiwi songs and ceremonies. According to Sr. Jenny Kirby (the school's teacher linguist, personal communication, 1992) the narrative *Nyingawi - the little spirit people* "tells the origin of the kurlama ceremony, which is one of two ceremonies which are important to the Tiwi today". I quote the full English translation of this text (which appears at

the back the book) in Appendix 4.10. Below I quote just the beginning of the narrative in Tiwi<sup>13</sup>, and its English translation :

NGIRRAMINI NGINI NYINGAWI - THE LITTLE SPIRIT PEOPLE  
(Told by Aloysius Puantulura (Tupwanikini))

Parlingarri Ngingawi pitirikipirni kurlama kapi Tumarripi. Ngingingaji wutawa pitirikipirni kurlama ngawauroyaka, kiyi ayipa pirima. Pirrimantuluwi ngarra arikulani awarra. Awuta Nyingawi kurlama pitirikuruwala:  
'Jipalangipirikitawurra-m-m Puwuranjiniwunjirrakininga-m-m. Ngya-mirani awurrini awunjirrangimila-mm.'  
Wayawungani pitirikurwalamini:  
'Angiwala ampirikitaawurra tuwarrawujanawu.'...

Long time ago the little spirit people had kurlama at Tumarripi. All of them took turn to sing in the kurlama. Pirrimantuluwi was the eldest of them all. So he and all the little spirit people sang. This is what they sang:  
*I'm saying this word. The tree broke up. My son was sleeping.*  
And all the women sang after their husbands:  
*He's just saying that word.*

This Dreaming narrative, which tells of how the Tiwi people learnt to sing the kurlama ceremony, contrasts with the epic Dreaming narratives of central Australia, which invariably tell of long creationary journeys over vast tracts of land by various Dreaming ancestors. However, what is common to both styles of narrative is the strong sense of Place, which locates each text firmly in the country of the story-teller. This is evident within both the first and the final lines of the above Tiwi narrative, which locates itself at Tumarripi. The narrator actually states, towards the end, that "we'll take the children to that place and teach them about the land at Tumarripi" (Puantulura, 1990:21). The narrative is also instructional, in a similar way to Yunupingu of Yirrkala's *Ganbulapula* narrative, in the way it explains the origins of the important kurlama ceremony and its different aspects, such as the cries of pain, the body-painting designs and the songs associated with the ceremony. It also explains how aspects of the ceremony were stolen by the current owners of the ceremony, the Tipungwuti. It began by Tipungwuti stealing "the kurlama yams" from Pirrimantuluwi, the eldest of the little spirit people, and placing them in a bark basket. Tipungwuti (and now the Tipungwuti people of today) also took the song that was sung by the "Nyingawi - the little spirit people". This same song is repeated twice within the Dreaming text. This theme of theft is common in the Dreaming narratives told by the Yolngu of eastern Arnhem Land, where the land is more densely populated (than in central Australia), and occupied by many different clan groups. The Tiwi narrative concludes by instructing the audience on the various names now used by the little spirit people. The learning of the many alternative names for people, places and species is a very important skill and aspect of Tiwi cultural knowledge, just as it is for Yolngu people and many other Indigenous groups.

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<sup>13</sup> The Tiwi language that appears in books produced for use at Nguiu school is 'New Tiwi', a less complex form of 'traditional Tiwi'.



Tiwi Dreamings include narratives of an aetiological nature, such as the narrative: *Ngirramini ngini tini Yirrikipayi yima: Legend of Yirrikipayi: the man who became the crocodile*. It was told by Gerardine Tungutalum and was published in 1991, as a "Tiwi legend". I quote the English translation of the narrative in its full form in Appendix 4.11. What is significant, for this discussion, is the prominence that is given in the narrative's introduction to Person as well as Place:

A long time ago I was told a story by my grandmother, my father's mother. Also my husband told me the story. My father's brothers Purtipuwiyi and Nokota were teenagers when they were told this story. Long ago in the dreamtime, a man called Yirrikipayi was sitting by himself all alone at Wiyapurali, a place near Cape Fourcroy.

(Tungutalum et.al., 1991:11)

Great importance is placed, by the narrator of this Crocodile narrative, on explaining the relationship she has to the people who originally told her the narrative, as well as when it was told. This obviously adds authority to her right to re-tell the same text for others. Another interesting feature is the way the narrator instructs the audience in the various alternative names given to the mother of Yirrikipayi, the main character in the narrative. The citing of these alternative names gives authority to the narrator, because it displays the depth of knowledge she has of this particular Dreaming. It also has an instructional function; if the younger generation are to learn the songs associated with various Dreamings they must learn the many alternative names that are sung for places and characters within song cycles. Songs were, and still are for many Indigenous groups, like encyclopaediae of the cultural knowledge and Dreamings belonging of each group. It is significant that the above narrative, as in many published Tiwi narratives, contains some song lines within the text. These songs were not actually sung by the narrator herself, but by two other Tiwi women. They are given credit for their contribution in the credits page.

My reason for including the above narrative in this chapter is to highlight the way it differs from those simplified aetiological narratives discussed in the previous chapter. Although Tungutalum's narrative tells of why the crocodile has the spikes on his back today, the narrator is quite diligent in providing her narrative with a very strong sense of both Person and Place. Not all Dreaming narratives published by Nguiu school are as particular in their detail. The last narrative I shall discuss seems to be purely entertaining, with few instructional elements at all. Nor does it make specific reference to Person or Place. It bears more resemblance in form to the types of Dreaming stories re-written in the past by non-Indigenous authors for young children, than to the above Crocodile narrative.

The credits page tells us *Rainbow and flying fox* is aimed at a reading level of Year three children. It was produced by the school's Literature Production Centre in 1990 for children to read themselves, rather than as an instructional text to be read to children. Funding for this centre is provided by the N.T. Education Department primarily to produce accessible reading

material in Tiwi for children in the bilingual program. The aim of this booklet is obviously to provide accessible texts in the Tiwi language for young emerging readers, along with coloured illustrations, as an alternative to the glossy English books they find on their library shelves. It was written in Tiwi by Marguerita Kerinaiaua, and was illustrated in colour by Ancilla Puruntatameri. I quote the beginning of the Tiwi text below, but provide the complete English translation:

NGIRRAMINI NGINI AMPIJI AMINTIYA TARNIKINI: RAINBOW AND FLYING FOX

Parlingarri ngingingajiwutawa tokwampuwi purumuwu kapi yirringarni. Ninkiyi ngarra tarnikini yuwuriyi kapi wuta japuju. Ninkiyi yoyi pirimamani. Kiyi awarra tarnikini jurrumumi jiyimi angataw yimanga....

Long ago there were all sorts of birds living near a billabong. Then a flying fox went to their camp. Then they had a dance. So flying fox tried his spear to see if it was sharp. As he did so he cut his nose. When they went home, the flying fox took his spear then threw it at the rainbow serpent. The rainbow serpent jumped up with blood flowing down her side. All the birds cried out in fright, 'Oh!' Then the rainbow serpent died. Flying fox then had his wife, the whistle duck who he loved.

(Kerinaiaua, 1990:1-2 & 7)

#### 4.12 DAISY UTEMORRAH

The late Daisy Utemorrah was a Worrorra woman from the western Kimberley who, until her death in 1994, was one of the few remaining speakers of the Worrorra language. Her Dreaming narrative, "Dumbi: the Owl", is just one in a much larger collection of Worrorra narratives recently published in August 2000. In addition to this more recent collaborative work with Clendon, Utemorrah provided the same Owl narrative for two other books for children, both published in 1983, but with the modified name "Dunbi".<sup>14</sup> Together, these three published versions of the same Owl narrative provide exemplary and contrasting approaches to the different ways oral narratives can be represented in print. The first book, simply titled *Dunbi*, was published by the Education Department of Western Australia, and was the result of a collaborative project aimed at bringing appropriate literature to young Aboriginal children in schools, in an effort to promote their understandings of literacy. In the introduction we are told it was produced so children would "have the pleasure of reading one of their traditional stories, written in a simple way". The book is credited to Daisy Utemorrah.

The second book, as discussed in Chapter Three, is one of a series of picture books compiled for children by Pamela Lofts in the 1980s.<sup>15</sup> Utemorrah's narrative, *Dunbi the owl*, was the

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<sup>14</sup> Utemorrah and Clendon were puzzled over why both publishers spelt the owl's name "Dunbi", rather than as it is pronounced by Utemorrah, as "Dumbi" with a bilabial nasal "m" (personal communication, Clendon, November 1999). Perhaps it is because Utemorrah's form looks too close to the English word 'dumb', or maybe because it doesn't follow English phonotactic conventions.

<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Three, in 1980 many Aboriginal schools received letters from Pamela Lofts requesting texts in English for publication, including Willowra in the heart of Warlpiri country in the N.T. I was working in the school at the time, which chose to ignore the letter because the request didn't seem to offer any benefits to the story-teller or the school (at the time we were trying to produce books in the Warlpiri

first to be published in the series by Ashton Scholastic. The front cover bears the words: "told by Daisy Utemorrah" above the credit: "retold and illustrated by Pamela Lofts". Lofts holds copyright for the publication, as she did for the next two books in the series, published the following year in 1984. On the back cover appears a colour photo of Utemorrah, with ceremonial face paint, and her words:

I used to live with my parents in a humpy house. My Grandmother, my aunties and even my Grandpa told me stories from the Dreamtime. I kept the stories till I was old enough to tell children. We want to share our stories with all children so they learn what Aborigines used to do.

The initial part of this tribute is intended, no doubt, to authenticate Lofts' text, while the latter section is to justify its publication by Lofts. But I ask Lofts: why was it necessary to re-write the text yourself, and what did Utemorrah think of your rewritten version? Lofts chose to rework *Dunbi the owl* to fit the stereotypical style of the genre we have now all become so familiar with. It begins with: "In the time before time began, a tribe of people lived on their land near the coast..." This contrasts markedly with the more abrupt beginning of the oral version of the same narrative, provided to Clendon, by Utemorrah in the Worrorra language. Clendon translates this beginning into English as: "They were living in the bush, and they told their children, 'When you see that barn owl, don't torment it or kill it. We're going over that way to go hunting for kangaroos and to look for some honey..." (Utemorrah & Clendon, 2000:5). Interestingly, Lofts has modified the 'less authentic' finale, which Clendon recorded in the Worrorra language, that has two children being saved from the flood by a passing kangaroo, who gives them a ride on his back to higher ground. Lofts has a man and woman grabbing the tail of the kangaroo, then ends the narrative with the formulaic coda: "...And still today, we are forbidden to harm owls, because we remember what happened in that long-ago time." Utemorrah's Worrorra coda also contrasts with Lofts' English version, particularly with its absence of any explicit moralising messages. Instead Utemorrah chooses to validate her stories authenticity: "And to this day we still tell this story just as they told it to us, the same story about how they killed the owl long ago. That's the way the story is told by the Worrorra, Wunambal and Ngarinyin people. They all know this story" (Utemorrah & Clendon, 2000:12).<sup>16</sup>

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language, rather than English, for the children to read). In hindsight, I think we should have negotiated hard, as Lajamanu school did, and demanded that any book produced be on our terms and be of benefit to the school.

<sup>16</sup> Although we have no way of knowing, one cannot help wondering whether Utemorrah has been, in some ways, influenced to by the Biblical story of Noah and the flood, and the imperative of having two survivors (one of each sex) to procreate: "the Wandjina destroyed all the people. They all drowned and all the land was left empty. And when those two had gone on the kangaroo, they told this story" (Utemorrah & Clendon, 2000). Clendon (personal communication) has wondered about this parallel himself. I am not questioning, however, whether an oral narrative tradition exists among the Worrorra about a flood that does cause great devastation.

Apart from the insights that can be gleaned by comparing the Lofts and Clendon representation of Utemorrah's oral Owl narrative, the choice of language presentation and layout of Utemorrah's final publication deserve some discussion. Utemorrah's latest collection of Worrorra narratives have been published by the Kimberley Language Resource Centre in a series of three books. One, *Worrorra Lalai: Worrorra Dreamtime stories*, contains just Utemorrah's narratives. The other two also include narratives from the story-tellers Patsy Lalbanda and Amy Peters. The publishers have chosen to privilege the Worrorra language in the layout, by placing it on the left of each page in a larger font size than the English. The English translation appears on the right of each page. This is a significant decision, considering that Worrorra is a language that is no longer spoken by the younger generation. Each narrative is accompanied by line illustrations drawn by younger members of the community. The front covers are quite stunning and feature ochre coloured drawings of the "Wandjina" Dreaming Ancestor, from the Kimberley area, who features in the Owl narrative among others. I have reproduced Clendon's English translation of the Worrorra version of the Dumbi narrative in full in Appendix 4.12, as well as Lofts' contrasting and simplified English rewrite.

Daisy Utemorrah was also involved in another publishing project, with Magabala Books, resulting in her book *Do not go around the edges*. It was published in 1990, and is an interesting pastiche of Utemorrah's "Story about my life" and Dreaming texts in the form of poetry. No doubt the success of Torres' previous books, written in rhyme and also published by Magabala, have influenced the approach taken. Note that Torres is also this book's illustrator. According to Clendon (personal communication, November 1999), however, at least one of the poems, "Galanji", is an English translation of a "traditional oral chant or song", which I quote from her book in full:

GALANJI  
Far far away far far away  
is my Island home  
called Galanji  
Far far away!  
Far far away  
is my Island home!  
Aw-aw-aw.

(Utemorrah, 1990:3)

Utemorrah's life story of being brought up on Kunmunya Mission runs continuously (in italics) along the bottom of each page. Each double page of the book features a poem by Utemorrah, accompanied by quality glossy illustrations by Torres. The shorter and more repetitive poems, or chants, in this collection would have undoubtedly been influenced by Utemorrah's knowledge of 'traditional' Worrorra chants.<sup>17</sup> But, like Unaipon, it seems

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<sup>17</sup> At least one of the shorter texts, "The Quoll", which appears in Utemorrah's collection (2000) compiled with Clendon of Worrorra narratives, was "a song made up" by Utemorrah "for the kids in the school (according to Clendon, personal communication, November 1999). It too has a repetitive and poetic style.

Utemorraah was also influenced by her mission upbringing, and had no qualms about the production of hybrid texts. Three of Utemorraah's 1990 poems are quoted in full in Appendix 4.13.

#### 4.13 MAY O'BRIEN

May O'Brien is a prodigious story-teller and writer, having produced a number of books for children in the genre of Dreaming texts. She was born in the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia, but was taken to Mount Margaret Mission at the age of five. After teaching for many years, and then serving as Superintendent of Aboriginal Education in WA, she retired and turned to writing, with the assistance of some literary grants. In 1990 *The Legend of the Seven Sisters* was published, and in 1991 *Wunambi the water snake*, both by the Aboriginal Studies Press in Canberra. This press does not shirk on expense with their glossy publications, hence these two picture books by O'Brien, with their stunning colour illustrations by the Indigenous artist Sue Wyatt, make very attractive books for children. As with all her books, O'Brien has dedicated them to her own people, the Wongutha, as she states at the beginning of her first book: "Dedicated to the children of the original descendants of the Wongutha people who came from all over the eastern Goldfields to live at Mount Margaret Mission in Western Australia." (O'Brien, 1990:i)

In my first chapter in this study, I discussed how different Indigenous groups have different versions of the Seven sisters narrative, and some versions are considered more open than others. For O'Brien and her people, her published version of *The Legend of the Seven Sisters* is obviously a profane narrative to be shared freely with others, particularly children. In her introduction, she states:

As you look up into the sky at night you can see many stars. The Wongutha people of the Eastern Goldfields area in Western Australia tell stories about the stars. These stories explain how the stars came to be where they are. Some stars are grouped together and have special names. This is the story of the stars called the Seven Sisters.

(O'Brien, 1990:i)

O'Brien explicitly states in both her first and second book the importance of her narratives to her people, and any lessons that can be learned by children who read them. Later O'Brien wrote a number of other picture books in a series for children that were published in 1992 by Fremantle Arts Centre Press, including: *How the crows became black*, *Why the emu can't fly*, *Barn-Barn Barlala, the bush trickster* and *The kangaroos who wanted to be people*. In Appendix 4.14 I quote the first of these in full, which begins: "Long long ago, on a hot and stormy night, a flock of crows flew into the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. It seemed as if they had been blown in by the storm. No one had seen them in these parts before. They were not like the crows of today..."

Each narrative in the Fremantle Press series is set in O'Brien's country, The Eastern Goldfields, and a considerable amount of the text is in her own language, particularly the direct speech. We are also provided with a pronunciation guide and glossary at the back. O'Brien introduces each book in the series with an interesting prologue, which contextualise her narratives:

These are the stories which were told to children who lived in the area shaded on the map. They are unique to this location. Other groups who lived in different places, have their own language and own stories to tell about how things began. The reason for this, is that the stories came from a time when there was little contact between different groups.

Stories were told so that children would come to understand their land, their people and their beginnings. These stories tell of the animals that shared the land with the people and of how they came into being. Some tell of animals who, through pride, made mistakes and were punished. Others tell of the events that help children understand their roles and responsibilities. The stories had a particular purpose and were important parts of the children's education.

Now the stories which used to be told can be written, to serve a similar purpose, which is to help today's children understand and appreciate the Aboriginal past as well as the present...

(O'Brien, 1992:3)

O'Brien continues each of her prologues with an explicit statement of the lesson to be learnt from the incumbent book, as with the following example: "*How Crows Became Black* explains how the crows who were grey, wanted to change colour because no one liked their silver-grey feathers. They felt left out and thought if they were black they would be accepted" (O'Brien, 1992:3). Classroom teachers who are compelled to teach Aboriginal Studies in schools would be very appreciative of O'Brien's explanatory notes. It makes their job of preparing lessons much easier when recommended Aboriginal Studies materials are packaged this way, with clear expressions of the purpose of the Dreaming story, and an explanation of what can be learnt from them. In South Australia, in particular, where Aboriginal Studies is a compulsory part of the school curriculum, many non-Indigenous teachers feel quite insecure about how and what to offer in their programs, and therefore feel very comfortable using books like O'Brien's. Being an ex-teacher, O'Brien and her publishers probably perceived this need. No expense has been spared with the glossy colour illustrations by the Indigenous artists Sue Wyatt and Angela Leany. Nor have they skimped on the pages, with pronunciation guides, maps, and several introductory pages.

#### **4.14 TJARANY / ROUGHTAIL**

In 1992 the diglot book *Tjarany / Roughtail: The dreaming of the roughtail lizard and other stories told by the Kukatja* was published by Magabala Books in Broome. It was written collaboratively by Gracie Greene from Billiluna Station and a non-Indigenous school teacher Joe Tramacchi. It contains a compilation of eight Dreaming texts, in both English and Kukatja:

##### **1. The Roughtail Lizard Dreaming**

2. The Crow and the Eagle
3. The Emu and the Turkey
4. The Black Goanna
5. The Witchetty Grub Man Dreaming
6. Kalpartu the Dreaming Snake
7. How the Emu got short Wings
8. The Seven Sisters

This book is worthy of celebration because it joins the small but growing collection of quality diglot books published for a mainstream audience, including both adults and children, in which an Aboriginal language and English are given equal status. It seeks to enlighten non-Indigenous people that many Indigenous languages are still spoken in Australia, and their speakers are proud to have them used in books. In this case the language is Kukatja. In 1993 this book won the Eve Pownall Award for Information Books (a category within the Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards)<sup>18</sup> and the Book of the Year and Children's Book Award (NSW Premier's Literary Awards) plus the Children's Book Award (WA Premier's Book Awards). No expense was spared by Magabala in producing this book, who received assorted funding for the project, with its high quality glossy, colour dot-style illustrations by the Kukatja woman Lucille Gill. Copyright remains with Gill for the illustrations, and for the text with Green and Tramacchi.

The narratives that feature in this book are particularly pertinent to this study because they put Place back into Dreaming texts for children, including those with story-lines that seem ubiquitous to Australia. The very first narrative, which gives its name to the book, relates to a place "by a waterhole called Ngamarlu" (Greene, Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:2), and tells of how the songs and dances were given to the men of that area. It both begins and concludes with reference to this particular country. I quote the English version of the narrative in full in Appendix 4.15, but it should be noted that the Kukatja version is given equal prominence in the book, appearing in a second column on each page in orange. The English version of the narrative begins: "A long time ago in the Dreamtime, there lived a Roughtail Lizard man who had a lot of Dreaming and songs he kept to himself. One day he was sitting by a waterhole called Ngamarlu, when some men, who were staying by the water, heard him sining." It concludes: "And so from north to south, from east to west, each has a song from the Dreamtime. Today if you go over there to Wirrumanu [Balgo] you can see this waterhole called Ngamarlu." (Greene, Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:2-4). The Roughtail narrative is post-scripted with a statement in italics, which introduces all the remaining narratives in the book: "Here are some of the stories that people have sung and danced since that time." (Greene,

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<sup>18</sup> The Children's Book Council of Australia select books for their annual awards by: "primarily for literary merit but the judges also take other factors into consideration including the books' appeal to children; design and illustration." The Eve Pownall Award is for "outstanding non-fiction books". (Internet Web Site: <[www.dymocks.com.au](http://www.dymocks.com.au)> August, 2000)

Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:4) Hence, Roughtail acts as an introductory authorisation for the remainder of the book.

It is hard to tell what influence both Tramacchi and Magabala's editor Peter Bibby had on this book. We are told (note my highlighting) at the very beginning of the book (1992:viii) that:

The stories were told by Gracie in Kukatja and English, while she was visiting Lucy and Joe at Nookanbah, about halfway between Wirrumanu (Balgo) and Broome, in Christmas 1987. Helen Nagamara, Patsy Mudgadell and Christine Mudgadell wrote the stories out in Kukatja. Joe Tramacchi wrote them in English.

Because Greene also told the narratives in English, or Aboriginal English, Tramacchi did not have to rely solely on the oral Kukatja versions for his Standard English translation. However, the English versions that appear in this book invariably begin in that stereotypical style of previously published Dreaming texts, which were re-written by non-Indigenous people: "A long time ago in the Dreamtime...". Compare this, for example, with the Kukatja beginning for the Roughtail narrative: "Kurralka Tjukurrta Tjaranypa nyinama kutja kalyungka, Ngamarlungka". According to the comprehensive glossary at the back of the book, and my knowledge of Warlpiri (a reasonably closely related language) this introductory sentence could be translated as: "Long ago that Dreaming Lizard lived in the water at Ngamarlu".

Greene's role as the original story-teller of each narrative is made quite clear in the sixth narrative, which tells of the Dreaming snake Kalpartu (note my highlighting):

#### KALPARTU THE DREAMTIME SNAKE

The Dreamtime snake Kalpartu lives in the deep waters in rivers and lakes and rockholes. He is a spirit snake. When we take strangers or children to a waterhole or a swimming place for the first time, we tell them to throw in a rock so the snake can 'know' them.

If the snake doesn't know someone he might get inside them and make them ill. Or he might come up from his resting place and make a whirlpool to pull the stranger under. The Dreamtime snake lives in the stars. Children who stare at the stars too much will find their hair turns white when they are older.

My mother told me the story of a waterhole called Tarnku. This is the story of Tarnku.

In the Dreamtime this place was a ceremonial ground and the people were having a corroboree....

(Greene, Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:26-27)

Greene's Kukatja version of this same text, *Kalpartu Tjukurrta Lingka*, begins with: "Tjukurrta Kalpartu nyina kalyunga", which literally translates (according to the glossary) as 'Dreamtime Kalpartu [snake] lives in the water'. After Greene tells us that this story was told to her by her mother, which authorises her to retell the story, she commences in Kukatja: "Tulkuya kantunma laltuya yanama tulkuya pungama....", which literally translates as 'A lot of those dancers stamped their feet, those dancers coming along dancing'. This same text



appears in the English version (as in the quote above): "In the Dreamtime this place was a ceremonial ground and the people were having a corroboree".

My intention in pointing out the literary license that Tramacchi appears to have taken, in his English translation of this particular text, is not to criticise. It is more to point out how non-Indigenous re-writers have become conditioned to adopt a style of writing full of colloquial beginnings, or with phrases they know their audience expects. It is significant that Greene's reference to her mother (as the source of her story) is not deleted in Tramacchi's English version, hence giving the narrative that sense of Person that is so often absent in earlier published Dreaming narratives.

Most texts retain some reference to Place as well, which was also invariably edited out of texts re-written for children in past years. Even the Kukatja versions of the narratives that are seemingly ubiquitous to Australia, such as "The emu and the turkey", states before it begins: "This story started somewhere east of Yaka Yaka / Ngaatja Tjukurrpa Yaka Yaka Kakarra". (Greene, Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:10) However, the two Kukatja narratives "The crow and the eagle" and the much published children's story "How the emu got short wings", make no specific reference to Place within the texts themselves. But the reader is supplied with a map on one of the introductory pages that locates all but one of the narratives in Kukatja country. Greene also makes the important comment at the end of the Snake Dreaming narrative that: "Ngaatjun nyakun kuwarri / All this is still here today", giving the sense that the characters in these stories and sites do not just belong in the past, but also the present. (Greene, Tramacchi & Gill, 1992:29). In Kukatja *nyakun* literally means 'You can see it' (it's still there today).

The third Kukatja narrative "The Black Goanna" is particularly interesting to me, because it revolves around the same theme of incest as the Goanna / Wardapi narrative that I discussed in my first chapter, told by Janet Nakamarra Long. Long is a Warlpiri woman, from across the border to the east of Kukatja country. Greene's narrative also shares the common act of setting fire to the camps of villains as they sleep, as punishment, also to be seen in narratives rewritten by R.H. Matthews, Langloh Parker and Unaipon.

The final narrative in the book "The Seven Sisters" is widespread throughout Australia, but still, before beginning the text the reader is given a sense of Person for this Kukatja version. We are told: "This is the Napaltjarri and Tjakamarra Dreaming", which are the two skin groups of the sisters, and of their pursuer Tjakamarra. We are also told: "This story starts from somewhere down south". It is interesting that this particular Dreaming narrative is the only one not located on the map at the beginning of the book. Nor are we told, in this Kukatja version, where the particular cave and hill is located that is referred to in the narrative. Possibly this detail is esoteric knowledge, and hence was intentionally left out by Greene.

The book also contains cultural notes at the back. These start with with an in-depth explanation of the Kukatja relationship system and how it works, by Joe Tramacchi (1992:37-43), under the heading "Stories and Kinship". The section begins with the statement:

The Tjukurrpa you have just read are often told among family groups after an evening meal. Their telling is part of family life and helps to keep the culture and law of the Kukatja people. These stories, and the tracts of country they are connected with, belong to different kinship groups....

This section is followed by an outline of the sound system and pronunciation of the Kukatja language, entitled "Notes on Kukatja", and finally a long Glossary. Such notes on Kukatja cultural life and language go far beyond what readers have ever been provided with before within books of this genre, particularly for children. I contend the book awards this particular publication received were well deserved, and that Magabala Books should be congratulated on the precedent they have set.

#### 4.15 MARY CHARLES

Strehlow (1947), McConvell (1985) and McGregor (1989) all criticise publications that present Dreaming narratives in Aboriginal English only, when their Indigenous narrators also tell the same narratives in an Indigenous language. Magabala books would be aware of such criticism, and perhaps made efforts to counter such criticism when they published Mary Charles' little book *Winin: why the emu cannot fly* in 1992. It is presented as a diglot book, with the text appearing in both the Nyulnyul language and English. Now there are very few Nyulnyul speakers remaining, and this particular story-teller, Mary Carmel Charles, is the oldest speaker. However, the child-like simplicity and westernised-voice of the English text causes one to wonder how much more the Nyulnyul people have lost. This narrative contrasts markedly with its lack of cultural detail and knowledge that is evident in other recently published diglot books (such as *Tjarany/Roughtail* discussed above, also from Magabala, and *Warlpiri Dreamings and histories*, to be discussed in the next chapter). I quote Charles' English text in full below:

##### WININ: WHY THE EMU CANNOT FLY

In the dreamtime the emu lived in the Milky Way; that was his home.

At that time the emu could fly.

The other birds flew down below, near the ground.

The other birds were jealous of the emu, because it could fly higher than them.

One day the emu and the brolga were talking together. The brolga said, "If you cut your wings, you will be able to fly well, not like the other birds."

"You'll be able to fly up high in the sky, not like us other birds."

And so the emu really did what the brolga asked and let the other birds cut off his wings.

He tried unsuccessfully to fly like the other birds.

But he fell over; he couldn't fly.

These days, he runs and walks, without wings, not like the other birds.

The emu is like that today; it has short wings. He can't fly up in the air any more. It will be like that forever.

The book is presented as a picture book for young children, with cartoon-like caricatures of the birds. The simplicity of the text indicates it could be aimed at emerging readers in schools. Charles' text was actually "translated and edited" by the linguist McGregor. The story-line is very similar to other Emu narratives of this genre that have appeared in print over the years, indicating this simplified version (which bears no reference to Person or Place) has been absorbed into the repertoire of many Indigenous story-tellers, including the Nyulnyul of W.A.

#### 4.16 LIONEL FOGARTY

Lionel Fogarty, a well-known Indigenous poet, had his first children's book *Booyooburra: a story of the Wakka Murri*, published in 1993 by Hyland House. According to the back dustcover:

Lionel Fogarty was born on Wakka Wakka land at Barambah, which is now known as Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve. This was one of the Queensland 'punishment' reserves where individual and their families who spoke against the authorities were sent. His traditional background is the Mulinjari and Gudjela tribes.... Although he has published five books of poetry, he regards himself as a 'speaker' not a 'writer'. *Booyooburra*.... is an expression of his spirituality, and his desire to teach his culture to people all over the world....

(Fogarty, 1993:dustcover)

We are also told on the front dustcover that:

Lionel Fogarty's authentic words and Sharon Hodgson's mystical pictures will take you back to a time before the white man came to Australia. A time when the Wakka Wakka people of South Burnett, Queensland, roamed the land freely, giving names to the animals and places they saw.

I quote Fogarty's "authentic words", from *Booyooburra*, in full in Appendix 4.16, which begins:

This is the story about a fishing dat your people dem Wakka Murri done long ago in our land  
Well big lot got fish line made of vines and spear  
and went from camp up not far to big rock,  
right near where you get the water for home.

Like his poetry, Fogarty's text is written in a non-standard version of English. His style of writing is closer to that of a spoken style, than written, hence the comment on the dustcover regarding him being more a "speaker" than a "writer". But, like Muecke's representation of Roe (to be discussed in the next chapter), Fogarty was probably trying to make a point with the literary world when he chose to present his text the way he has. One could imagine this

children's text (his first) being read aloud as a performance rather than being read by children themselves.

The bibliographic details in this book are accompanied by an interesting note:

To Whom It May Concern

As a direct descendant of the Wakka Wakka tribe of the Cherbourg area, also a spokesperson for the traditional elder Mr Joe Button (Snr), I give permission to Lionel Fogarty to write the story of Booyooburra and all material associated with it.

B.C. Button

Wakka Wakka, Cherbourg, Queensland

Indigenous rights to write about and publish texts in the genre of Dreaming narratives are obviously taken very seriously by Fogarty, and the people of Cherbourg. It will be a slow, but I contend a necessary process for non-Indigenous writers to become educated about how seriously Indigenous people take the issue of ownership of narratives, and the subsequent rights of potential writers to share this knowledge with others. This issue is well understood by some, and unfortunately less so by others.

#### 4.17 YANGKANA LAUREL

In 1997, the Kadjina Community School self published the book *Walungarra stories*. According to the books introduction, Walungarra "is the name of the hills around Kadjina, the school and the Aboriginal name for Millijidee Station" in the Kimberley. It was written by Yangkana Laurel, with some assistance with the illustrations by other family members. Laurel's book is a compilation of seven narratives in Laurel's own language, Walmajarri, with English versions appearing at the back of the book. Four of them are Dreaming narratives. It has been printed on very heavy duty paper with black and white lino cut illustrations. It would have been an expensive book to print. Efforts to market the book widely seems to indicate their target audience goes well beyond Kadjina.

I quote the entire English version of the first narrative below:

##### AT A PLACE CALLED MANKANKARTA

Mankankarta is a place between Millijidee and Cherrabun boundary, on the Fitzroy River. A long time ago some people saw two people in the night swimming and splashing in the water. Even these days when people go there and camp the night, they can hear them splashing water. We call them Ngapangarna because they belong to the water. The two mermaids have a snake looking after them.

Written by Yangkana.

(Laurel, 1997)

The brevity and varied style of the English texts would not appeal to all parents wanting to buy an entertaining book to read to their children. One of the narratives "Kampayirti" is also quite distressing, telling of the police killings in Jocelyn Valley. Some of the texts are also

clearly not of a narrative style, reading more as a description of what appears in the accompanying illustration, similar to the descriptive texts within *Yuendumu doors*, discussed earlier.

Are audience demands for consistent texts containing English-like narrative structure an unreasonable one, knowing that many oral narratives of the Dreaming genre don't always follow the pattern of having a clear beginning, middle and end? Maybe not. But when severely reduced versions of a narrative, such as some of those in Laurel's book, are presented in print, their lack of detail can challenge the reader. It is interesting to note that, despite their brevity, all the texts but one in Laurel's book have a very strong sense of Place. In fact, it seems that an explicit statement identifying the country in which each text is set is its primary element, rather than relating details about events that occurred there. The prominence that is given to the Walmajarri language text, in large print in the main body of the book, also seems a priority. The book, however, is not presented as informative text about Walmajarri people and their culture. Apart from a very small map at the beginning, there are no cultural notes or information to enlighten non-Indigenous people beyond the information we glean from the narratives themselves.

#### 4.18 SALLY MORGAN

Sally Morgan is probably Australia's most well-known Indigenous writer and artist. In 1981, she became internationally renowned for her best-selling autobiographical book *My Place*. This first book has now sold over 500,000 copies<sup>19</sup>, and is probably responsible for opening the eyes of many mainstream Australians to the plight and personal tragedy of Aboriginal families growing up with racism in rural Australia, and to the plight of those living in urban areas. Since then, Morgan has written a further biographical book, *Wanamurraganya: the story of Jack McPhee*, plus a number of fictional picture books for children. In 1992 her children's book *The Flying Emu and other Australian stories* was published by Viking. A later edition came out in 1997 with Puffin Books. Morgan begins the preface of the later edition as follows (note my emphasis):

My people, the indigenous people of Australia, have a tradition of story-telling that extends over thousands of years. I was brought up in a family where story-telling was an important part of our life. The stories you will read in this book are not traditional ones, but some of them are drawn from my own childhood, while others were suggested by the interests of my children and nieces and nephews.... My grandmother introduced me to the idea of bush creatures having their own stories to tell. I remember once crawling up as close as I dared to a goanna and thinking seriously about what it might say if it could speak.

(Morgan, 1997:vii-viii)

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<sup>19</sup> This figure was provided by Fremantle Arts Centre Press in October 2000.

The blurb on Morgan's book tells the reader that they "will enter a world of magic and imagination, of unexpected happenings and some very eccentric characters". And that is exactly what one does discover when reading this collection of twenty "Australian stories". Morgan has allowed herself considerable imaginative literary license, perhaps because her maternal grandmother, around whom the narrative of *My Place* revolves, remained silent about so much regarding her Aboriginal roots, despite Morgan's persistent questioning. What is interesting about Morgan's narratives in this latter book is their all encompassing Australian flavour designed to appeal to a very wide audience. She concludes her preface with the dedication: "These stories are dedicated to all the naughty children in the world, but most especially to the Aboriginal children of Australia, who are some of the greatest story-tellers of all" (Morgan, 1997:viii). The glossary at the back of the book, giving meanings to words such as: *spinifex*, *gumnut*, *echidna*, and *billabong* indicating that the book is very much aimed at an international as well as a national audience.

The first story, from which the book takes its name, is reproduced in full in Appendix 4.17. It tells of the brash emu, who is arguably the most ubiquitous of Australian creatures to feature in texts written by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers of this genre. Morgan's rendition provides an Aesopean flavour with its moralising tones, yet she is also keen to make the text very Australian, beginning with: "Emu was once the most colourful bird in Australia". She makes no claim for her story being specific to any particular region of Australia, nor is there an attempt to ascribe the story to any particular Indigenous group within Australia. The story is simply set in Australia. No doubt the text would appeal to young readers with the way Morgan insists on using colloquial speech familiar most Australian kids. The publishers, Puffin, have marketed the book well throughout Australian schools, via book clubs run by Scholastic Australia. Many teachers in mainstream schools would happily read-out-loud these amusing, easy-to-comprehend short stories to their classes in that five minutes before the siren goes at the end of the day.

In writing *The flying emu*, Morgan's intention was never to produce a collection of "traditional" stories (Morgan, 1997:vii). But there is no doubt that Morgan has been influenced by the many and varied 'Dreaming stories' that have been rewritten and popularised by non-Indigenous writers over the years. Does the fact that these texts have been revived and re-written by an Indigenous author, with an added touch of "magic", make them any more Indigenous?

#### 4.19 CONCLUSION

The original source or inspiration for all published Dreaming narratives were of course, at one stage, Indigenous people. In my last chapter I discussed texts for which non-Indigenous re-writers and appropriators of Dreaming narratives invariably claimed copyright over the

final published product. In contrast, in this chapter I have discussed a selection of published Dreaming narratives that have been written by, or written in close collaboration with, Indigenous people. Therefore it is the Indigenous writers and Indigenous story-tellers who are acknowledged as the full copyright holders of the published texts. I have selected a large range of books for discussion, covering a period of seventy years, from all over Australia. Nevertheless there are a considerable number of texts by Indigenous writers which are not included in my discussion, simply because space would not permit it. There is a recent burgeoning of recent publications, particularly glossy Aboriginal art books and picture books aimed at children - too many to discuss. Earlier texts which I have not discussed include the significant writings of the Diyari man, Sam Dintibana, who filled up an exercise book with Dreaming narratives in Diyari in the early 1930s for the anthropologist H.K. Fry. Although these were published under Fry's name, (in the *Folklore* journal) and could have been discussed in the previous chapter under anthropological publications, I mention them here because it is important to acknowledge Dintibana as one of the earliest Indigenous writers in this genre, writing in the same period as Unaipon (see Gale, 1997:65 for further details).

Space precludes me from discussing in detail the Indigenous artist and writer Arone Raymond Meeks. After illustrating a number of picture books for children, including Catherine Berndt's *This is still rainbow snake country*, published in 1988, Meeks wrote and illustrated his own book *Enora and the black crane*. It was published by Ashton Scholastic in 1991, with quality colour illustrations, and a formulaic text style resembling that of so many Dreaming narratives published in the past. It makes no mention of Person or Place, although we are told the narrative is set in the rainforest, but could have originated from any Indigenous group living in subtropical Australia. This book contrasts markedly with one of the last books I reviewed in this chapter, *Wulungarra stories*, by Yangkana Laurel and other members of the Kadjina community, which was self published. By comparing Meeks' with Laurel's books, the current dilemma Indigenous writers find themselves in when trying to get their Dreaming narratives published becomes quite apparent.

The publishing world is highly competitive. In order to get published, writers must convince their publisher that their potential book will not only sell, but will sell well. In order to get a Dreaming narrative published one has either to negotiate extremely hard with the publishers to maintain the integrity and style of the original narrative, or compromise and adapt the manuscript to fit the mould and style of books that are marketable in the eyes of the publishers. At the same time, however, I acknowledge the fact that some Indigenous writers have limited linguistic and cultural knowledge of the Dreaming narratives belonging to their group. This, therefore, severely restricts the content and detail they can include in their manuscripts. It is a sad fact that many Indigenous people today, who have the initiative and ability to write, and to seek a publisher for their manuscripts, simply do not have the option of writing Dreaming narratives in their traditional language, or specifying the specific sites to

which their narratives relate. Sally Morgan, for example, has no option but to write and represent her narratives in the way she does.

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate a range of solutions that have been taken by Indigenous writers of Dreaming narratives. I also hope it has demonstrated that the ability to negotiate with a publisher very much depends upon which publishing house one is dealing with. In the following chapter I discuss a number of very different and challenging texts, also of the Dreaming genre, which have not only managed to get published, but whose publishers have been convinced that it is possible to challenge the status quo and dare to be different in the style and mode of representation of this most 'sensitive genre'.



## CHAPTER 5

### ALTERNATIVE REPRESENTATIONS

*Many Aboriginal writers have a political agenda in seeking to have their writings disseminated. In effect, they seek to tell "the truth" about the condition of the indigenous people within Australia and part of the telling of the "truth" concerns the structure of their writings as well as the content.*

(Mudrooroo, 1994:15)

#### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

There are a number of challenges being made by the books discussed in this chapter. One of them is their choice of language. Their texts defy the imposed hegemony of standard English as the accepted medium for written and published texts in Australia. Two of the books privilege Indigenous languages by presenting the entire written text in the Indigenous languages of the story-tellers, while the other two include phrases and words from the story-tellers' own languages. Another challenge presented by these books is their insistence on portraying printed narratives in a way that directly remind us of their origins as oral narratives. There has been no attempt on the part of the editors or publishers to rework transcriptions into more writerly or literary forms. The style of the spoken story is privileged.

The Indigenous story-tellers obviously chose to narrate their narratives in the languages that both they and their immediate audiences felt most comfortable with. But it is also apparent that each story-teller had a non-Indigenous collaborator, who not only took pains to record the narratives in their precise oral forms, but were also aware of the contemporary debates on postcolonial representation. Collaborators lobbied publishers successfully for both the Indigenous language components and the oral style of the story-tellers to be retained in the published texts.

Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin (1995:1) tell us that post-colonial literatures are a product of the "interaction between imperial culture and the complex of indigenous cultural practices". But in this interaction:

The immensely prestigious and powerful imperial culture found itself appropriated in projects of counter-colonial resistance which drew upon the many different indigenous local and hybrid *processes* of determination to defy, erode and sometimes supplant the prodigious power of imperial cultural knowledge.

(Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995:1)

I contend that the books discussed in this chapter are examples of post-colonial texts (with the hyphen), which have set out to "defy" the dominant assumptions made by so many past writers and publishers of Dreaming narratives about how such genres should be re-presented in a

written form. They have tried to address some of the problems that Indigenous writers and critics, such as Mudrooroo, have been stressing over the years:

Usually, most Aboriginal writers come from outside the mainstream and have little knowledge of how a manuscript is reduced to a published text. They place their manuscripts with a publisher, as if what they have written will be placed in print exactly as they have written it, little realising that they are entering a domain with specific rules and regulations, genres and stylesheet.... Some publishing companies are sensitive to Aboriginal manuscripts, but still there is a tendency to edit towards genre and public consumption.... The problem is massive in its proportions.

(Mudrooroo, 1994:16)

The approach adopted by some of those involved in the publication of books that resist the "rules and regulations" of accepted mainstream genres has not been to remain on the fringe, but to join the mainstream by challenging it into adopting alternative approaches of representation. Paddy Roe's two books are examples of such challenges.

### 5.1 PADDY ROE

*Gularabulu: stories from the West Kimberley* is a brave attempt on the part of its editor, Stephen Muecke, to present Dreaming texts in a printed form that retain their oral style and integrity. The teller of these texts is Paddy Roe, an Indigenous man from the Kimberley in the north west of Western Australia. Muecke states in his introduction: "I believe that this is the first time that Aboriginal texts intended as narrative art have been presented in this way" (Muecke in Roe, 1983:v). Muecke acknowledges that the process of translating speech into writing, "especially writing considered suitable for public consumption, involves editing which is massive in its proportions and implications". This book is Muecke's way of demonstrating an alternative, tamper-free approach to representing Indigenous narratives:

The stories as they are presented here are word for word transcriptions from tape recordings. Hesitations and the occasional intervention from a listener are included. I have edited the texts to the extent of normalizing spellings (the few variations that do exist represent variations in Paddy Roe's pronunciation) and creating unitary texts by closing the transcription at what I consider to be the appropriate point.

(Muecke in Roe, 1983:v)

Not all the narratives within Roe's collection are Dreaming narratives. Roe actually classifies his texts into three categories: "*trustori* (true stories), *bugaregara* (stories from the dreaming) and *devil stori* (stories about devils, spirits, etc.)" (Muecke in Roe, 1983:vii). But the means of representation chosen for each text is the same. Any dialogue between Roe and his audience, during his telling of each narrative, is retained in print. This can be observed in the *bugaregara* text "Worora woman", which is reproduced in full in Appendix 5.1. The approach adopted for this seminal publication has interested literary critics. It was after the publication of Roe's book that Mudrooroo's (1994) paper appeared discussing the many problems facing Aboriginal writers and story-tellers in their dealings with mainstream editors and publishing houses.

Nancy Keesing (1983:16), however, is less obliging and does “express some misgivings” about Roe’s book. She refers to Muecke’s non-editing approach as of the “new school”, and contrasts it with the “poetic renderings” of much earlier publications of song-cycles by Berndt, and the “admired” translations by Strehlow. Keesing declares: “As a general reader, I unrepentantly prefer the older mode, just as I prefer the King James version of the Bible to all the later translations, although I perceive necessities for change and as far as I can to follow new theories and arguments” (Keesing, 1983:17).

Undeterred, Roe and Muecke continued to collaborate a year later, along with Muecke’s Moroccan friend and artist Krim Benterrak, to produce an even more elaborate and adventurous book: *Reading the country: introduction to nomadology*, published in 1994. This book represents a journey of three ‘nomads’ (Roe, Muecke and Bentarrak) as they travel across Roe’s country, Roebuck Plains, in the western Kimberley region east of Broome. The journey is represented in the form of oral narrative, essay and painting, by its three respective creators. Roe’s oral narratives are presented in print, verbatim, just as they were in *Gularabulu*. They tell of his land and the importance it holds for Roe and his people: “I am walking on my dream” (Roe in Benterrak et.al., 1994:70). Muecke tells us “This book is a record of Paddy Roe’s dreaming at its most important nexus: the country itself. Of course, as the spoken voice is transformed into writing and the country then becomes the book, the traveller in turn becomes a reader” (Muecke in Benterrak et.al., 1994:14).

Muecke acknowledges that each of the book’s three contributors came to this collaborative project with their own sets of “intellectual baggage” (Bentarrak et.al., 1994:21-22), but insists again on representing Roe’s oral narrative as a performance in print:

I would never want to take on the undignified attitude of speaking on their behalf. For Paddy Roe one of my functions is that of the scribe, just as I was also the “driver” - a specific job up in Broome. He was in charge of the words, I operated the machinery (tape-recorder, car, typewriter) to move them around.

(Muecke in Benterrak et.al., 1994:231)

The concept of taking Roe back to his country, and recording his country’s narratives on site, makes huge sense. It was an approach adopted earlier by Strehlow in Central Australia, and by other more recent collaborators such as Cataldi and Rockman. As the three nomads began their journey, Muecke soon found: “each spring has its song, ritual and set of stories. Activity is contingent upon the place, stories come to mind as one moves towards the site at which they can be repeated.... If one is not prepared to take the trouble to go to the place, then its story can only be given as a short version.” (Muecke in Benterrak et. al., 1994:72). Roe’s narratives in this second book, however, are not primarily Dreaming narratives. The book is more a travelogue of Paddy Roe’s journey back to the Roebuck Plains, which triggered his memory into relaying different incidents from his early life. It is an oral history of his life and work on

Roebuck Plains Station, interspersed with snippets of the occasional Dreaming narrative, all told on location at the different sites that Roe and his Nyigina kin have chosen to share with their non-Indigenous collaborators.

My reason for discussing Roe's two books is not just to highlight the alternative means available for the representation of oral narratives as printed text. His books also present some interesting challenges to the all important question of: Which language medium should one adopt for published Dreaming texts? Muecke is unapologetic about the language medium adopted by Roe for their collaborations:

...Paddy Roe and I were in the habit of working with English as our means of communication, since I was not competent in any of the traditional languages which he speaks. When story-telling time came around it was still important for us that I should understand him and play the role of listener. The performance of the narratives depended in part on this listener response.

(Roe, 1983:v)

But the version of English that is adopted by Roe is Aboriginal English, for which Keesing is particularly critical in her review of his first book:

in the sense of reaching a wider audience, I have to think it perhaps unfortunate that Roe and Sullivan<sup>1</sup> speak any form of English at all! Had they been taped in Aboriginal languages their editors [Muecke and Shaw] would have been forced to translate, albeit, no doubt avoiding 'poetic renderings'.... Pidgin, and what linguists nowadays call 'Creole', is all very well in person, or on film, where it is helped out by gesture, facial expression and vocal emphasis. But I, as a general reader, feel strongly that... Paddy Roe and Jack Sullivan have been deprived of their wider audience rights by the utmost but perhaps debatable goodwill of up-to-the-minute scholarship.

(Keesing, 1983:17-18)

This choice of language has also spurred criticism from other quarters, particularly linguists such as McConvell (1985) and McGregor (1989). Muecke foresaw such criticisms, however, and justifies their choice of language in his introduction to *Gularabulu*:

...Aboriginal English is a vital communication link between Aboriginal speakers of different language backgrounds. It also links blacks and whites in Australia, so, as it is used in these stories, it could be said to represent the language of 'bridging' between the vastly different European and Aboriginal cultures.

(Roe, 1989:iv)

Muecke had possibly read of T.G.H. Strehlow's earlier (1947) but stinging criticism of expeditioners who recorded the "myths" they collected in "Pidgin English". In Strehlow's opinion, they failed to grasp the deeper meanings of the narratives. McConvell (1985) is a little more forgiving. He begins his critique by acknowledging the "valuable contributions" both

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<sup>1</sup> Keesing's review is not only of Roe's collection, but also of the life story of an eastern Kimberley man, edited by Bruce Shaw: *Baingaiyerri: the story of Jack Sullivan* (1983). According to Shaw, who wrote a response to Keesing's criticisms (Shaw, 1984:48), Sullivan "spoke in creole because it was the only language he knew fully. By his own account his knowledge of local Aboriginal languages was shaky".

Muecke and Shaw have made to the recording of oral narratives from the Kimberley, but then goes on to make the important points:

Most older Aboriginal people in the Kimberley, who possess the knowledge and right to tell stories, are bilingual in a traditional language and Kriol/Aboriginal English, or multilingual, including more than one traditional language in their repertoire.... Because of the semantic properties of language choice, a story told in a traditional language is not the same in form or content as a story in Aboriginal English which is in a superficial sense describing the same events. Certain types of story are not told at all in Aboriginal English, as a rule, and if they are, the result is usually a pale imitation of the traditional language version. Certain aspects of discourse which are prominent in traditional language story-telling, which make use of highly elaborated fields of meaning in traditional language, such as directional terminology, are virtually absent or dramatically depleted in Aboriginal English discourse. The use of different registers, dialect forms and switching into other Aboriginal languages (including Kriol) for expressive effect which enriches traditional language discourse are similarly lost in an Aboriginal English version.

(McConvell, 1985:76)

McGregor elaborates further:

Choosing to use a traditional language can carry sociolinguistic meaning: the speaker is a member of this group. If interviews are limited to Aboriginal English, the speaker is denied the opportunity to express this type of meaning - and it is possible that he/she will respond by limiting the range and purposes of the texts produced.

(McGregor, 1989:48)

Both William McGregor and Patrick McConvell are linguists who have considerable experience working on (and recording narratives in) a number of Kimberley languages. They see the choice of language medium in the recording of Dreaming texts as crucial, not only for aesthetic, cultural and sociolinguistic reasons, but also for political reasons. McConvell is acutely aware, through his involvement with Language Centres in the Kimberley region, of the implications of choosing to represent Indigenous cultural knowledge in Kriol or Aboriginal English:

Authors should also be aware of the effect their methods of publications could have on the evolving language situation in which they worked. Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have made it clear that what they want above all for their languages is maintenance of at least some of the traditional languages, which they see as storehouses of cultural and environmental knowledge for the coming generations... To choose to publish only in English or Kriol, where an alternative is available, is in effect to perpetuate the official policy of ignoring the traditional languages, which has in large part led to the decline in which they now find themselves. On the other hand, to record stories in traditional languages as well as Aboriginal English, to involve knowledgeable Aboriginal people in the process of transcription and translation, and to publish bilingual editions of such stories where possible, as some authors have done, are all statements of recognition and support for the traditional languages in their hour of need.

(McConvell, 1985:76)

McConvell is also critical of the way both Muecke and Shaw dealt with the relatively few "traditional language words and phrases" that they do include in their published texts. Although McConvell dwells in more detail over the "mistranslations", from Kriol to English, by Shaw he does comment on the "serious" nature of both collaborators in their "failure" to make use of the

“excellent description including vocabularies” of the languages spoken by their Indigenous story-tellers: “It is unfortunate then that the spellings are idiosyncratic... and that apparently little use was made of these resources in assisting accurate transcriptions and translations” (McConvell, 1985:75). An example of this lack of care with traditional Indigenous terms is apparent in *Reading the country*. The book includes a map of Roebuck Plains, which locates and names a swamp with the spelling *Biyarrugan* (see Benterrak et.al., 1984:24). This same hill is spelt in two different and alternative ways (*Biyarraugan* and *Biyarrungan*) within the text on the following few pages (see Muecke’s essay in Beterrank et.al., 1984:25-27).<sup>2</sup> One could argue that the primary audience for this book is probably English speaking, and therefore such detail would elude them. But, as McConvell reminds us, increasingly publications on Indigenous knowledge are becoming important resources for younger Indigenous people who wish to maintain both their cultural knowledge and their traditional languages. For them place name details are important and therefore need to be accurate.

Muecke confirms, in his introduction, that Roes’ first book is not just for the non-Indigenous, but also for the Indigenous people from the area he names *Gularabulu*, “which stretches from La Grange in the south, through Broome, and north... as far as One Arm Point”:

Paddy Roe stresses that these stories belong not just to him, but to all these people from the traditional tribal groupings of the Garadjeri, Nyigina, Yaour<sup>3</sup>, Nyul-nyul and Djaber-djaber tribes. And when he says that the book is for everybody, he is also including white people, thinking that 'they might be able to see us better than before'.  
(Muecke in Roe, 1983:i)

Muecke takes a lot more care with English. He justifies his decision to include all of his own English responses to Roe’s narrative performance, within the final published text of both their books, on the grounds that “the performance of the narratives depended in part on this listener response” (Muecke in Roe, 1983:v). However this argument comes unstuck when Muecke chooses to ignore any interaction that occurs between Roe and his Indigenous audience which is uttered in Nyigina (an Indigenous language spoken by both Roe and Butcher Joe). In the *Worawora woman* text, for example, there is an interchange between Butcher Joe and Roe in Nyigina, which occurs in the middle of the story-telling performance, which Muecke simply represented in print within brackets as “(speaks to Butcher Joe in Nyigina)” (see Roe, 1983:32). According to a footnote, the two were discussing whether the smoke from Butcher Joe’s cigarette was bothering Muecke. Even though Muecke chooses to include Roe’s explanation to him, about their Nyigina conversation, within the published text (in Aboriginal

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<sup>2</sup> In the 1996 revised edition, this inconsistency has been corrected. The term *Biyarrugan* is actually the title of a brief chapter that tells of a Dreaming narrative relating to Roe’s father’s country, in which a woman is turned into the hill, *Biyarrugan* and two men, *Bugarrigarra*, are turned into brolgas. There are further spelling inconsistencies of Aboriginal place-names, however, which are not corrected in the revised edition. One such example is at Sheep Camp Bore, spelt *Djarmangunan* on the map (1996:30) but a few pages later as *Djarmangunan* (1996:34).

<sup>3</sup> I can only assume this language is the language of the Kimberley usually spelt 'Yawuru'. It is unclear why Muecke chooses to spell this language in a non-standard way with an unusual vowel cluster.

English), he deletes the Nyigina dialogue entirely - presumably making a judgement that it was not an important part of the "performance". All of Muecke's interchanges in English are included, however, including the laughter and the Mm's, Ah's, and Oh's.

Roe's two collaborative works not only present future representers of Indigenous texts with plenty of food for thought on the issue of language choice, but also offer some interesting challenges on the alternative means available to those seeking to represent the spoken word in the printed form.

## 5.2 RAYMATTJA MARIKA-MUNUNGGIRITJ

In Gale (1997) I discussed the work of Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj, particularly the editing role she played with the seminal publication *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku: the song of Yirrkala*, published by Yirrkala School in 1989. I also discussed an earlier work, *Ganbulapula*, with which she was involved, in the previous chapter. Both publications contain accounts of Dreaming narratives from the north east Arnhem Land region, that were told by senior clan leaders. Their narratives were recorded and then transcribed and translated into English to be reproduced in diglot publications. I discuss *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku* further here because its story-line displays typical features of oral Dreaming narratives told in this region of Australia, and second because it demonstrates a daring alternative approach for the representation of Indigenous narratives of this genre.

*Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku: the song of Yirrkala* is presented in Marika-Mununggiritj's own clan language, Rirratjingu, which belongs to the Dhuwa moiety. It complements the booklet *Ganbulapula*, which is related in Gumatj, and tells of the creationary travels of an Ancestral Hero of the opposite moiety, Yirritja.<sup>4</sup> As with *Ganbulapula*, the reader is provided with maps and cultural notes that relate to the narrative. *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku* tells of the Salt Water Dreaming, which describes the origins of the Yirrkala area and of the sacred Merri string. But what is unique about this book is that the narrative is not presented in prose form, but in song form. Furthermore this song is accompanied with an "interpretation" by the song-man, which appears in diglot form throughout the book, in Rirratjingu and English, on the opposite page to the song text. The Rirratjingu songlines were originally sung by the late Rirratjingu elder Dhunggala (1) Marika, who says on the credits page (in Rirratjingu, but with a translation in English): "This book will remain here for the children who come after me. When I am finished, this is their story, so that they will learn from this book. The message contained here is a history for those to come. No one else can take this story. This history is for the Rirratjingu

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<sup>4</sup> The second Garma international cultural festival held near Yirrkala in September 2000 featured the narrative, songs and dances associated with the Ancestral Hero Ganbulapula.

clan." This dedication helps explain why the book was never submitted to a commercial publisher, and is only available through Yirrkala school. It is now out of print.

This book has a number of significant features that contrast with many other published Dreaming narratives. The song itself does not adopt a prose style; but like songs from so many cultures it is probably better described as poetic. The song's interpretation, on the other hand, is instructional, much like the style adopted for *Ganpulapula*, and other published texts that choose to retain the oral form of narratives which have been told to specific audiences in either an Indigenous language or Aboriginal English (such as *Reading the country*). If not tampered with by editors, such texts have a very personalised style, with continual reference to the audience. A good example, in *The song of Yirrkala*, is the narrator's comment: "... And this is how we lived in the old days, and no, you new people, you don't do that" (D. Marika, 1989:19). This reflective and personalised style, of course, is not specific to the genre of Dreaming narratives. It can also be seen in Aboriginal life narratives (see, for example, Brodie, forthcoming).

The naming of places and different species is also a key element of Marika's narrative (both within the song and the interpretation): "...Then they would sit amongst the rocks called Gumukul and Batjila, sitting in a line facing the sea called Buladi, that is, Yarrunydjunda, Guykuda, Dalurminy, Warrambirpir, there at Mawunhuwa, as if they were actually the rocks themselves" (D. Marika, 1989:19). For Yolngu, songs are a major means of remembering the many alternative names of places and characters in Dreamings, in fact some names are only ever heard in song during ceremonies. Dreaming songs and narratives also play an important role in the teaching of these alternative names to others, as already mentioned for the Tiwi people.

The use of repetition and onomatopoeia is also present in the songlines of Marika's interpretation (and songlines):

*Yo, banha dhanal yakan marryuwanam ngayanganyha marryuwa, ngayanganyha marryuwanan, djadaw'yumana yana linggu... yana linggu... yana linggu... yana linggu...*

Yes, they danced on and on, kept on dancing, on and on, dawn came... on and on... on and on... on and on... kept dancing... kept dancing... (D. Marika, 1989:11)

The importance of this particular booklet, and more importantly, the approach Marika-Mununggiritj has adopted in her role as editor, cannot be over-emphasised. It is seminal because it privileges Indigenous languages more so than other diglot books of this genre. Only one small column appears in English, on each double page, implying the intended audience is not primarily English-only speakers. This book is also different because it presents an Indigenous perspective on the song's meaning and interpretation. It is the song-man,



Dhunggala Marika, who interprets the song for his audience, rather than a visiting anthropologist, or a non-Indigenous linguist, who would carry with them their own intellectual baggage and cultural biases. Marika also knows his language, and all its double meanings and metaphors, better than any visiting academic could ever hope to understand it.

This book is also important because of its format. In presenting the Rirratjingu Salt Water Dreaming, it chooses to do so in song. It may not have been the first book published that presents songs from the Yolngu of Arnhem Land (see R.M. Berndt's *Love songs of Arnhem Land*), but it was the first published representation by Yolngu themselves of an important Dreaming in song form. It has therefore adopted a format that is deemed by Yolngu to be appropriate. The song itself is not translated at all. There is no 'poetic rendering' by an anthropologist seeking to make the song available to a wider English-speaking audience. Nor does Marika-Mununggiritj herself make any attempt to translate the song, even though she has the necessary language skills. Instead the song remains untranslated in the Rirratjingu form it was originally sung. Only its "interpretation" is made available to those who only speak English. Thus the song, and the book, remains within the hands and control of those for whom it was always intended.

### 5.3 ELSIE JONES and *THE FALLING STAR*

*The Falling Star* is a book, in my view, worthy of celebration because of its determination to contextualise its Dreaming narrative with a strong sense of both Place and Person. This is done through its use of photographs and dialogue balloons. The adopted format not only locates itself physically within the country to which it relates, on the Darling River in western N.S.W., but also among the Paakantji people to whom the narrative belongs. The book includes photographs of the story-telling event itself, and of the country in which the narrative is set, as well as pictures drawn by a Paakantji person of the events and characters within the narrative, such as Malkarra, who was "a murderer or criminal" (Jones, 1989:9). Such contextualising details thus locate the narrative within a specific localised region of Australia, which was a strategy often avoided by past non-Indigenous representers of this genre, particularly when their books were aimed at children. Editors working for commercial publishers aimed at broadening their readership, rather than limiting it, and tended towards representing narratives as pan-Australian stories that belonged to everyone and could have occurred anywhere.

The *Falling Star* Dreaming narrative was originally told by the Paakantji woman Elsie Jones, but the production of this award winning book involved many more Paakantji people, most of whom appear within its pages as her captive audience. Through the use of collage, Jones is strategically placed on many of the book's pages as the ever-present narrator. As the story unfolds, Jones tells of the heavy rains that flooded the Darling River region, after her Paakantji

ancestors failed to heed the warnings of Malkarra about the dangers of the falling star. She tells of how her people were eventually dispersed by the floods into two kinship groups: *Kiilparra* and *Makwarra*, and explains how different members of her Paakantji family are categorized. This is explained throughout the book on pages that capture photos of the country in which the narrative set. Retaining a strong sense of both Person and Place are extremely important elements of Dreaming narratives, for Indigenous people, and this book is a brave experiment into ways of keeping this strong connection. It therefore serves as an important example of the possibilities and approaches publishers can adopt when attempting to transform oral texts into written and published forms.

It was in 1989 that the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Islander Studies first published *The Falling Star*. Since then it has been reprinted (in 1991) and has won three design awards in the Australian Book Publishers Association Design Awards (see Aboriginal Studies Press catalogue, 1994-95:20). The book was eight years in the making and was very much a team effort. The layout, which is what makes this book unique, was "developed in response to the community's preference in book design" (see Acknowledgements page). Its production was sponsored by the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council (W.R.A.L.C.), which says: "We are proud of the generous teamwork that has made this book possible, for without the contribution of this very large number of people, it would have remained a dream. Together we have produced a book that celebrates Paakantji land and heritage" (W.R.A.L.C., 1989:Acknowledgements page).

*The Falling Star* is also significant because of the way it deals with Time. Unlike so many non-indigenous rewriters of Dreaming texts, and indeed some Indigenous writers, the team of presenters have chosen not to set their texts in the remote past - way back in the 'Dreamtime'. Instead, the approach adopted gives the *Falling Star* narrative a timeless quality. It not only locates the story in the present, but also relates it to an incident in the 1950s, as well as to the past when *Malkarra* roamed the earth. The book begins with Frankie, or "Pop" telling his grandchildren about an incident when he was younger, at a time when his mother, Eliza Johnson,

once saw a big star fall out here on Murtee Station. This was back in the 1950s.... she said it lit up the whole sky brighter than day. She said she heard this **rumbling** noise from the sky, after. It frightened her very much. Not too long after, we got a spell of real bad weather... a lot of rain, wind and that.

(W.R.A.L.C., 1989:2-3)

Frankie features in a photo on the next page pointing out the very site where his mother saw the falling star, and the reader is given a sketch map of the Darling River, locating the exact site. Then Elsie Jones enters the scene, to narrate the Dreaming story that comprises the remainder

of the book. Jones begins by immediately giving her narrative the status of being a "Paakantji story", and outlines the authority she has to tell this story:

Now this story that Frankie's telling his grandchildren is very interesting. It reminds me of **another** story that starts at the same place... but this story is so old, we don't even know how old it is. But it's a Paakantji story, about Paakantji land and Paakantji people. I heard this story from my granny, Sarah Cabbage....

(W.R.A.L.C., 1989:5-6)

A formulaic introduction that states one's identity and therefore one's right to relate a narrative is a very common feature among Indigenous story-tellers. Stating who owns a story and who passed the story onto the present narrator is often viewed as much an obligatory element of the story-telling process as the story-line itself. The way Elsie Jones begins her story is reminiscent of a number of oral introductions I have heard, by different Indigenous women, during story-telling sessions. Janet Nakamarra's Wardapi text, discussed in Chapter One, began with what could be called a Prologue, which authenticated her text, and justified her right to tell the story to me. Similarly, Auntie Veronica Brodie began her Watji bird text, also discussed in Chapter One, by indicating how her mother told her the story she was about to relate. Such Prologues are not apparent in representations of Dreaming narratives that have been published over the years, presumably because editors and publishers have edited out such information, if it ever appeared in the manuscripts that grew out of oral story-telling sessions. A.I.A.T.S.I.S. has therefore chosen to go against publishing conventions in ensuring the contextualising and authenticating Prologue remains.

Whilst *Falling Star* is written primarily in English, A.I.A.T.S.I.S. has also retained a considerable number of vernacular terms within the published text, despite their target audience going beyond the Paakantji community. Jones, for example, tells of *Malkarra*, who was "some special kind of person" - though he was not Paakantji - he was "Thuraka wiimpatja yithu! Waankawaankaathu! No-good Blackfella, he was! He was a rogue!..." (Jones, 1989:8). It needs to be understood that unlike Warlpiri, Riratjingu and some of the languages of the Kimberley region, Paakantji is no longer spoken fluently. This book stands as a testament to its speaker's efforts to revive their language and cultural knowledge. Jones includes instructional detail of the two moieties of the Paakantji people, the *Makwarra* and the *Kiilparra*, and the "totems" associated with each: "Kangaroo is one of the totems on the Makwarra side. Emu are on the Kiilparra side. That's Paakantji language. That was their religion. We called it our totem or our meat" (Jones, 1989:58). Throughout the remainder of the book, every opportunity is used to explain further cultural information about the Paakantji, still being narrated by Jones. Landmarks and formations are pointed out, including the molten rock where the burning star fell, and foot tracks in the rocks faces of the surrounding hills where the Paakantji ancestors scrambled to safety. The different foods eaten are also pointed out in the rock paintings in the caves where they sheltered. She also tells of ..."the big black goanna we call **Ngaarnuru**.

They was the spirits of the ones that was **killed** when the purli fell. Our people would never eat the goanna because it's the spirit of those people long ago" (Jones, 1989:78).

What is appealing about this book is the intense personalisation of the narrative, with page-upon-page of photos of the many, many Paakantji people who travelled to the actual country and sites to which Jones' narrative relates during the making of this book. The reader gets to share in the fun of the community barbecue, and to read the thoughts of the participants as they are told of the exploits of their ancestors. There is no doubt left in the reader's mind regarding the authenticity of the narrative, and there is definitely no confusion regarding the people and the place to which the narrative of the falling star belongs.

#### 5.4 WARLPIRI DREAMINGS AND HISTORIES

The narratives that feature in the seminal book *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories - Yimikirli* are particularly pertinent to this study. My discussion of this collection should be considered a celebration of the possibilities that exist for publishing books in the genre of Dreaming texts, particularly for adults. *Warlpiri Dreamings* is an exceptional collection primarily because it presents its Dreaming narratives in an Indigenous language, thus retaining the integrity and authenticity of each narrative in the language and style that the original story-tellers chose to adopt. However, the book is a diglot publication, and each narrative has been translated and reproduced in English, making the book also accessible to a wider audience. It was published in 1994 by Harper Collins, but unfortunately is now out of print.

Each narrative was told in the Warlpiri language by respected Indigenous story-tellers from several communities in the N.T. They were recorded, transcribed and eventually translated into English by the compilers of the book, Peggy Rockman and Lee Cataldi. Rockman is a Warlpiri woman of the Napaljarri 'skin' group, from the Lajamanu region, while Cataldi is a non-Indigenous teacher, poet and fluent speaker of Warlpiri. Perhaps a clue to why this book is daring in what it achieves is the fact that the book was never the main purpose of the initial project. The original project was a community initiative, funded by A.I.A.T.S.I.S., that aimed to record on audio tape a collection of the most important Warlpiri Dreaming narratives for future generations of Warlpiri speakers. Older Warlpiri people from Lajamanu, Yuendumu and other Warlpiri speaking communities "wanted the stories on tape for kids and young people" (Lee Cataldi, Interview June 25, 1998).

*Warlpiri Dreamings* is one of the few (but slowly growing number of) diglot books in which complete texts have been reproduced in both the original Indigenous language, in which they were told, as well as in English, with neither language being privileged above the other. This book is also exceptional because editorial interference with the written text has been very

minimal. Rockman and Cataldi reproduced the Warlpiri telling of each narrative into the written form by painstakingly transcribing each narrative word for word. In so doing they chose to retain the oral style of each text, and avoided any temptations to edit out features of oral speech, such as repetition. They were also fairly literal in producing their English translation for each narrative; however, they did edit out some repetition in the English version. Taking Liddy Nakamarra's narrative "The battle at Yumurrpa" as an example, Cataldi explains: "Liddy uses a lot of repetition.... we left it out of the English a bit because its not a figure in English narration. But we didn't leave it out in the Warlpiri. It's all there.... because after all, these are aesthetic decisions made by the narrator, and who are we to butt in" (Lee Cataldi, Interview June 25, 1998). Minimal interference with the written text is, however, something that many book editors apparently find difficult, even more so when the text originated in an oral form.

The level of language adopted for the English translation in *Warlpiri Dreamings* was not that of mono-lingual English speakers, but that of Rockman herself: "the English had to be comprehensible by Peggy," according to Cataldi. The English had to be both understandable and "accurate" in the eyes of Rockman. Cataldi says "One reviewer of the book criticises us for not using sort of epic European style, which would make it sound like John Milton. Well if we'd done that Peggy wouldn't have understood any of it" (Interview June 25, 1998). Interestingly, it is the prose of Milton that David Unaipon aspired to emulate in his representation of some Ngarrindjeri Dreaming narratives, which he wrote in English some seventy years earlier (see Chapter Seven).

Cataldi observes that the most skilled translator that she has seen in action is the Warlpiri woman Valerie Patterson Napanangka, who worked for years with the non-Indigenous Bible translator Steve Swartz at Lajamanu. She did the English translations for the oral history narratives that appeared in the 1995 publication, edited by Pet Vaarzon-Morel, *Warlpiri women's voices/Warlpiri karnta karnta-kurlangu*:

She makes the English sound like them. She is miraculous at translating. And that's from Warlpiri to English which is a second language.... She's just the best translator. She actually got in those the flavour. I mean you can almost hear the actual women speaking.... naturally she's just really gifted. Yet working with Steve would have made her better at it....

Peggy and I did the translations for ours.... We did it quite slowly and carefully.... So I provided most of the English, but she [Peggy] provided some of it. But she monitored all of it.... It hasn't got this flow.... It doesn't read like the Warlpiri's sounded in the ways that Valerie's do, but I think certainly for the Warlpiris its fine, and that's the main thing.

(Lee Cataldi, Interview June 25, 1998)

Cataldi has indulged her non-Warlpiri readers, at the end of each narrative, with a concise but brief explanation of the particular significance of the narratives to the story-tellers. She was conscious, however, of approaches adopted in the past by representers of Dreaming narratives,

and the prominence given to the voices of non-Indigenous collaborators, over those of the Indigenous story-tellers. This is a criticism that Mudrooroo makes in his 1990 book *Writing from the fringe*. Cataldi therefore strived to ensure it was not she, but the story-tellers, who were given “the last word” in the book (personal communication, Lee Cataldi, 1993).

Rockman (herself one of the story-tellers in the book) makes the following comments about how the texts were collected:

At the beginning, some time ago, Napaljarri [Lee Cataldi] and I talked about how people tell these stories, these really true stories about the law. At first we went around Lajamanu. We collected stories from people in their homes, one by one. We went around collecting them. Some people said to us, 'No, we do not know any!' But from many other people we were able to record their stories.... Then we travelled to other places, Napaljarri and I. In these places, people also spoke to us really well. Some of the stories were very long, long stories... the people of Yuendumu spoke to us in very strong Warlpiri, either Ngaliya or Warnakaya Warlpiri. They spoke really well. They told us many important stories. They recorded the stories that belonged to themselves and their country.

People in Willowra also spoke in the same way. They speak very well about their country, and the things that belong to it. They also speak very strong Warlpiri. These stories are very good, very important.... This is the way we travelled around, talking with people. Some of them spoke really well, but others unfortunately became frightened and nervous. They became ashamed. This may be because they do not know all the things they should, because maybe their fathers and mothers or their grandparents have not taught them properly and have not told them all the stories that belong to them. So they are ignorant and cannot speak.

(Rockman & Cataldi, 1995:xiii-xiv)

Jimmy Jungarrayi, a much respected elder of the Willowra community, told his narrative of the Budgerigar Dreaming to Peggy Rockman, who is a younger custodian of this same Dreaming. In Appendix 5.2 I reproduce the opening paragraph of Jimmy Jungarrayi's narrative in Warlpiri, plus the entire English translation of his narrative. I have highlighted segments that demonstrate how the narrative takes its shape from the presence of Peggy Napaljarri in particular (compared to an anonymous audience of listeners or readers). Jungarrayi's narrative is particularly interesting because it demonstrates the instructional role that oral narratives still play in contemporary Warlpiri society. It also displays other features that are fairly typical of oral Warlpiri narratives, which are probably shared with narratives still told in many other parts of Australia in Indigenous languages. I discussed some of these features in an earlier paper (see Gale, 1995), but have chosen to revisit them here because these same features are invariably absent from so many published representations of Dreaming narratives.

One may argue that some of the differences between written narratives and oral narratives are an inevitable result of transforming an oral text into a written one. But Rockman and Cataldi, as well as Roe and Muecke, defy such inevitabilities. Rockman and Cataldi, in particular, have demonstrated, in my opinion, that it is possible to present a narrative in a written form, as a word-for-word rendition of its oral form, without the text losing its immediate vitality and

audience captivation. The real problem, I contend, is that book publishers, and buyers of children's books, have a preconceived notion of what a Dreaming story must look and sound like. This notion is something that has been shaped by those recorders and writers of 'myths' who have published in the past, such as Katie Langloh Parker, and the many other non-Indigenous 'myth makers' reviewed in Chapter Three. Many of these early writers found themselves writing for children, largely because the prevailing and popular view on Aboriginal people was that their 'mythology' could only be simple and 'child-like'. Thus, simplified and non-personalised versions of oral narratives, that once had great meaning and significance to their original story-tellers, have become the accepted norm for publications of this genre. It is significant that *Warlpiri Dreamings* was published by Harper Collins as a part of The Sacred Literature Series, which is aimed at adults, not children.

In Jimmy Jungarrayi's narrative, we see that the relationship between the narrator and his audience is crucial. The style of language adopted, with the continual use of direct speech to Peggy, and the detail that is included in the narrative for Peggy's sake, are explained by Cataldi in her Translator's Note (with my emphasis):

This story was told by Jimmy Jungarrayi, the senior traditional owner of the budgerigar dreaming at Patilirri... which belongs to the Jungarrayi-Japaljarri men and Nungarrayi-Napaljarri women. The main purpose of the narrative is therefore to instruct, but this does not detract from the sonorous and stately poetry of the way it is told. However, the selection of items to include is influenced by the presence of Peggy.... Jungarrayi's central concern in telling the story is to place all the associated jukurrpa - the two men and the emu, the thieving cockatoo and the yam, the budgerigars, and the wind - in their correct relation to the place, Willowra (or Wirliyajarrayi) where he is, to Patilirri which he owns, and to Peggy, the interlocutor, and her associated jukurrpa. This follows the Warlpiri modes of address in which two people are addressed according to their relationship both to each other and to the speaker.  
(Cataldi, 1994:102-103)

The important points that Cataldi makes regarding the audience, and how it influences the direction that an oral narrative takes, relates to an issue that not only concerned the early Greek philosopher Socrates, but is also discussed in Magowan's (1995) work regarding story-telling in contemporary Arnhem Land.

My intention in outlining some of the important features of Jungarrayi's Budgerigar Dreaming narrative below is not to imply that all Indigenous narratives, told in Indigenous languages, incorporate the same features, nor to imply that most Warlpiri oral narratives share such features. My intention is more to demonstrate the kinds of features that Warlpiri narrators typically bring to their story-telling performances, and therefore what can potentially be lost in the complex process of transforming an important Warlpiri Jukurrpa into a written and published form.

### 1. The Authority to tell a narrative

Jungarrayi introduces his narrative by declaring his personal authority to tell the Budgerigar Dreaming: "... I have the right to tell this story, and I can tell it truthfully" (Jungarrayi, 1994:95).<sup>5</sup> This issue of authority to tell a narrative is a very important one for Indigenous people, and is addressed in more detail in Chapter Nine. A disagreement actually arose in Jungarrayi's home community, when Rockman and Cataldi were collecting narratives in 1990, over the right one narrator had to tell a narrative she was already half way through telling. The result was the narrator switched to another language to appease her challenger.

Jimmy Jungarrayi later reiterates his authority during his performance: "All this story lies in the country belonging to us, the people of the budgerigars, and we the owners always live in the country that belongs to us" (Jungarrayi, 1994:97). And again: "I know the whole of this dreaming, the songs, and also I have walked around the whole of this country. I have followed the tracks of the budgerigars. I have followed their travels to the east. I have followed them everywhere they went. I can relate this law" (Jungarrayi, 1994:99). He also states what is not appropriate to convey to his audience: "I cannot say any more about this.... The two men went there, because it is a matter of shame, I cannot tell you about the journey to Ngarnka" (Jungarrayi, 1994:97).

### 2. The primary importance of Place

Jungarrayi also introduces his narrative by stating the importance his country, Patilirri, and therefore the importance of its associated Jukurpa or Dreaming: "The budgerigars belonging to the dreaming came from that place.... Patilirri, our place, is a very, very important place" (Jungarrayi, 1994:95).

### 3. Narrative as a journey that Maps the country

Jungarrayi proceeds in his narrative to follow the journey of the "the two men", the budgerigar men, naming place after place to which they travel, always clarifying which direction their journey takes, and providing alternative names for places: "From Patilirri, the budgerigars flew away spreading out towards Jurntu, towards Yinapaka and Warlangarra and Karntawarranyungu and Murlinjarri.... Kumpurlawurru is the place we also call Karntawaljanyungu, beside Pussy Cat Bore, in the east" (Jungarrayi, 1994:97). Maintaining a sense of Direction, from the location of the narrator, is also important, and is helped by the constant hand gesticulations used by Warlpiri narrators.

### 4. Instructional element

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the quotes in this section are provided in English from the translations prepared by Rockman and Cataldi. The original narrations were, however, all in Warlpiri and can be seen in the original 1994 publication.



The amount of detail included in the telling of a narrative is determined by the narrator, and what they consider necessary for their audience to know. During Jungarrayi's narration of the Budgerigar Dreaming to Peggy (a younger but trusted custodian of the Dreaming), he instructs her to listen carefully, because she in turn will have the responsibility to pass on the details of the same Dreaming: "Please try to follow what I say closely so that when you tell the story later others can learn from you (Jungarrayi, 1994:95).

In addition to the mapping details, Jungarrayi also provides alternative names to Peggy for places and participants in the narrative. One of the participants is the white cockatoo, "the one who lives in hollow trees". He explains: "We call this cockatoo warlkirri, purluwanti or wiringarri. It has many names" (Jungarrayi, 1994:97). As with other Indigenous people, being able to provide large numbers of alternative names for places and species is highly regarded by the Warlpiri.

#### 5. Bringing the narrative into the present

Jungarrayi is masterful in the way he brings his Budgerigar narrative into the present, and constantly reminds Peggy of the importance that his Dreaming has today. There is certainly no inference of distant and past events having only spiritual connections to the present. He even makes mention of the performance of ceremonies, which directly relate to his narrative, being performed just the day before Peggy arrived to hear his narrative. As Jungarrayi traces the journey of the two Budgerigar men, he names for Peggy the geographic features that they come across and stresses that these sites remain there still: "From Patilirri, they travelled to the hills that stand along Yarmarnpatu, near Yuendumu. There they stand [*Ngula ngarnu*]" (Jungarrayi, 1994:99). Perhaps the most notable device Jungarrayi uses is the way he cleverly concludes his performance with the enigmatic and rhetorical question: "*Nyangunkulujana yalumpungurlu nyampukurraju / Do you see them as they come towards here?*" (Jungarrayi, 1994:100-101).

#### 6. Stylistic features similar to classical oral epics

Although stylistic features are important performance elements of Warlpiri oral narratives (as they are with any oral Indigenous narratives), they have generally been neglected by academics. In recent years, however, in a number of papers, Cataldi has begun exploring this issue, particularly looking at the use Warlpiri narrators make of diction and other rhetorical devices for aesthetic effect (see e.g. Cataldi, 1998). Although I have been concentrating on features that are apparent in Jimmy Jungarrayi's narrative thus far, below I include stylistic elements that Cataldi has highlighted in her analysis of some of the other 14 narratives that appear in her 1994 publication.

One such device is the use of Rhetorical Questions. This strategy is common to Jungarrayi's narrative in particular: "What were they [the two budgerigar men] thinking about? Were they missing their own country? They were becoming home-sick for Jarra-jarra, for their own country. They flew up into the sky and went to Jarra-jarra.... What happened then? (Jungarrayi, 1994:95).

Another device is the use of Repetition. Cataldi (1998a) discusses this stylistic feature in detail in reference to Molly Tasman Napurrurla's narrative "Jajirdi-kirli", which is the Dreaming of the spotted cat, or native quoll. Cataldi contends that "with good narrators, repetition is really important. It's a really important rhetorical figure." She says there are several functions served by repetition in Warlpiri narratives, including: Duration (of time and in the sense of a repeated action); Emphasis; and finally Amplification. It is the last of these functions that Cataldi draws on to compare the aesthetic quality of Molly's narrative with those studied and admired by scholars of classical epics, such as Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. According to Cataldi, Amplification is a "highly developed rhetorical implement" that was first acknowledged among classical scholars within oral epics that originated in languages such as classical Greek and Latin. As a device, it serves to "make the subject appear larger or more important or grand", such as the Cyclops in *The Odyssey* and the 'Kinki' (giant or monster) in Molly's narrative. Cataldi claims that "Molly uses repetition with great skill. One might even say with great genius", particularly the way she combines it with alliteration. She capitalises on the structure of the Warlpiri language which, like classical Greek and Latin, has case endings on its nouns and declension endings on its verbs that lend themselves to alliteration: "Molly has really deft and very elaborate use of alliteration in her repeated segments, even using rare case endings" (Cataldi, 1998a):

*Kujalpa nyampujarra mirdipijipiji-nyinaja. Ngulalpa yangka kujarlu kujalpa nyangu, tuurl-pajirninjarla parnkajarralpa. Kujarlu manulpanyanu yumpa! Yarturlukulku yarnkajarra, yarturlukulku manu wurrangku. Manunjunurra yarturlulku. Parnkajarni, parnkajarni, yarda tarda-yanu. Ngapajilparlajinta nganta wapal-wapal-pakarnu, wapal-pakarnu, wapal-pakarnu, wapal-pakarnulparlajinta ngapaji...*

Time passed. Still it had not had a drink. It still had not managed to swallow even a drop. Again it [the giant] bent down to the water, he stung it again, on the chest near the heart.

'Ohh!' It beat itself with the stones. 'Ohh, ohh, ohh, I am beating myself!'

Then he [the spotted cat who turns himself into an ant] stung it again. Again it bent down to the water, again it looked around trying to see what was tormenting it, again it started to pierce its flesh, again and again...

(Molly Napurrurla, 1994:15-17)

Cataldi (1998a) demonstrates how this particular passage, among others within Molly's Spotted Cat narrative, demonstrates Molly's use of rhetorical devices that are generally described as a "grand or high style". Such literary terms are generally reserved for describing the aesthetics of epics in classical languages, particularly because their grammatical structures

allow rhetorical devices that English grammar does not. But for Molly's passage, told in *Pijirdi nyayirni* or 'very hard'<sup>6</sup> Warlpiri, we find:

with its marvellous combination of repetition and variation, which uses not only the lexicon but the freedom of word order and the case and other markings available in a language like Warlpiri or Latin or classical Greek does entirely fulfill the rhetorician's requirement for the 'grand style', mainly to delight the ear by the derived sounds and to move the mind with considerations of the high affinity and concord of the matter.  
(Cataldi, 1998a)

There are further aesthetic features and devices used by Warlpiri narrators that have compelled Cataldi (1998a) to compare their works with classical epics. Cataldi draws on the nineteenth century works of the classical scholar and literary critic Matthew Arnold (see *On translating Homer*), when she says Molly Napurrurla's narrative uses Homeric devices of Rapidity, Plainness and Directness in both her diction and thought. She says there is a certain "clarity and directness" in the way ideas are simply portrayed in Warlpiri narratives, which contrasts markedly with the demands placed on English writers to use ambiguity and metaphor in their written prose. Cataldi therefore concludes that Molly's narrative is not only "eminently noble", but has "rapidity of movement, plainness of diction, simplicity of ideas and is grand styled.... It is a very polished and splendid work and demonstrates... artistry of the highest order."

There is much to be learnt from the entire collection of oral narratives within *Warlpiri Dreamings and histories*, and not just Jimmy Jungarrayi's Budgerigar narrative, despite the "sonorous and stately poetry" of its telling. But there is no denying that Jungarrayi, as well as the many other contributing story-tellers, are gifted orators. The fact that some people are more gifted than others in the art form of story-telling is undeniable, and is an important factor that should be taken into consideration when proposing that oral texts can be represented in the written form, word-for-word. This is an issue I raised with Cataldi, when I asked her how they selected the fifteen narratives for their book, out of the many more that they collected and transcribed during the course of their project:

We just picked the ones we liked. It's an interesting selection you see. Some are just terrific... Well Kajingarra Napangardi and Molly Napurrurla are absolute - Jajirdikirli and Marlurlukurlu - they selected themselves.... some are just stunning, and Peggy liked them. Peggy thought they should be clear. We both agreed that they shouldn't be too repetitive. Repetition should be functional but not excessive....  
When you transcribe you get very sensitive about the lack of clarity, lack of structure. You've got to get buried in it, so to speak, and boring repetition gets very irritating.... See Jacko, I mean Dick Morton and Jacko - people who had good reputations as good story tellers lived up to them.... Kajingarra had a very good reputation in Lajamanu. So I mean those ones were... by people who were just terrific at it. Tiger Japaljarri's Warnajarrakurlu story, well that was just brilliant. He does ramble a bit, but it was brilliant because of the situation. And it was just well told. I mean some of them are

<sup>6</sup> Cataldi (1998) defines Pijirdi 'hard' Warlpiri (compared to Rampaku 'light' Warlpiri), as: Having few English borrowings; A rich and well chosen Warlpiri lexicon with the use of many synonyms; The use of 'learned' features of Warlpiri grammar; and Forms not usually used in everyday speech such as double preverbs and infrequently used tenses.

important Jukurrpa. The witi and the two snakes - I mean you could hardly have a story of Warlpiri stuff without them, and we had very good examples of all of them. There were ones that we could have published that didn't.

(Interview with Lee Cataldi, June 25, 1998)

I know through my own more recent experience, working with local Nunga women on their life stories, that the job of transforming audio-tapes into a written form that is acceptable to publishers is a very complex issue. But I have also learnt that working with gifted orators, who have the abilities to capture their audience from the time they open their mouths, can make the task of their collaborators and editors a lot easier. Veronica Brodie is one such story-teller.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

There is a lot to be learnt from Rockman and Cataldi's book. It reveals much about Warlpiri culture and Dreamings, and also a great deal about the possibilities that exist for the representation of Dreaming narratives. The book received good reviews, from both *The Courier-Mail*<sup>7</sup> and *The Australian*, demonstrating that both book critics and audiences are ready to be challenged with new representations of 'old' genres. Marshall-Stoneking wrote for *The Australian*:

Walpiri [sic] Dreamings and Histories ... invites us to participate in the life of the land and the people, out there. But in this case, each story-teller speaks directly, from the page to the reader.

The dreaming stories are particularly evocative, full of space and the music of speech, which is underscored by the Walpiri [sic] language versions which accompany the English translations of each story. One can almost hear the voice of the story-teller. The casual, conversational tone meanders along at the same pace one might stroll through the bush. One listens instead of reads. The speech, the details of character, the emotional feeling, all help to bridge whatever gap might exist between the story-teller and his or her audience.

(Marshall Stone-King, in Review in *The Australian*, April 30, 1994:7)

A gap of cultural knowledge and understanding has existed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people since the first European arrived on Australian shores. But publications such as *Warlpiri Dreamings and histories* can help bridge such gaps.

Tiffin (1995:95) tells us that: "pre-colonial cultural purity can never be fully recovered.... Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity." The Warlpiri people of central Australia have not only shared their own unique "local identity" through this book, but also demonstrated that their "hybrid" representations of their culture and identity have not been compromised by post-colonial forces. Although Cataldi (1998b) herself acknowledges that contemporary renditions of narratives have emerged to

<sup>7</sup> This review is by Terry O'Connor, and appear in *The Courier-Mail*, Saturday, April 23, 1994, in the Weekend Section on Books.

accommodate the changed socio-economic and political circumstances that Warlpiri story-tellers now find themselves, their narratives still serve some common purposes. Cataldi's insightful paper, "The chance to speak", contrasts an earlier rendition of the important Warlpiri Jukurrpa "Warlukurlangu kurlu" ('about belonging to fire'), told by Darby Jampijinpa in 1979, with Uni Nampijinpa's 1990 rendition. In contrast to Darby's 'pre-colonial' representation of a sacred narrative, that seeks to assert ownership by traditional law over particular country, and order over the passage of knowledge from one generation to another, Uni's 'post-colonial' telling brings "justice" and "morality" into the equation. According to Cataldi, Uni's version:

has different functions, corresponding to the different reality in which Uni finds herself and which she seeks to order.... [In Uni's reality] the transition from one generation to the next is a much greater problem for the Warlpiri than loss of land. If sons cared for their father, as the two Jangala do, and if fathers cared for their sons, as the Jampijinpa conspicuously does not, the outcome for young Warlpiri men might be more hopeful. These new circumstances inscribe a morality in Uni's narrative that was absent before.  
(Cataldi, 1998b:18-19)

Two of the constant and important functions that Warlpiri narratives still serve, however, are shared by both Darby and Uni's narratives, and that is: to map one's country, and to assert one's rights and responsibilities to particular tracts of land, and its encumbent Jukurrpa. These same functions are shared by the other narratives that have been presented in this chapter. The fact that these two primary functions are immediately apparent in these published representations is a tribute to their compilers.

Much more could be said about the structural properties of oral narratives told by Indigenous Australians, as well as the role of variation in the telling of oral narratives (an issue I address briefly in Chapter Eight). These important issues are dealt with elsewhere by contemporary linguistic-anthropologists such as McConvell (1989), who considers satirical portrayals of Dreaming characters in contemporary Pitjantjatjara narratives, and Carroll (1995), in his substantial work on Kunwinjku story-telling. Rather than draw on the work of classical rhetoricians, as Cataldi does, McConvell and Carroll draw on the work of more contemporary theoreticians. The overall aim of this chapter, however, has been to give privileged space to a few seminal books that sought to present alternative representations of Dreaming narratives, and to challenge the choices made in past representations of this 'problematic' genre. It is therefore a celebration of the daring initiative of these book compilers, a tribute to the generosity of their story-tellers, and an acknowledgement of the bravery of their publishers in seeking to challenge their readers.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE WRITINGS OF DAVID UNAIPON

*As a full-blooded member of my race I think I may claim to be the first - but I hope, not the last - to produce an enduring record of our customs, beliefs and imaginings.*

(David Unaipon, 1924-1925)

#### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

David Unaipon's portrait appears on the current Australian fifty dollar note alongside his words, quoted above. David Unaipon was reputed to be the best known Indigenous Australian during his lifetime, particularly for his scientific inventions, his public speaking and preaching, and as an advocate for his people. But he was also a collector and writer of Indigenous narratives, and is known today as the first published Aboriginal writer of this genre. It is for this reason that he is the focus of this chapter.

The above quotation is taken from the hand-written preface of a manuscript now held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. It was eventually published in 1930 as *Myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines*, but under the name of an Adelaide medical doctor, William Ramsay Smith. There is absolutely no mention, within its covers, of David Unaipon's contribution to the writing of this book.

The manuscript, entitled "Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines. Told by David Unaipon", was originally prepared for Angus and Robertson book publishers, with whom Unaipon had an offer of publication. Unaipon began his Preface as follows:

My race - the aborigines of Australia - has a vast tradition of legends, myths and folklore stories. These, which they delight in telling to the younger members of the tribe have been handed down orally for thousands of years. In fact, all tribal laws and customs are, first of all, told to the children of the tribe in the form of stories, just as the white Australian mother first instructs her children with nursery stories; Of course the mothers and the old men, in telling these stories, drag them out to a great length, putting in every detail, with much gesture and acting; but in writing them down for our white friends I have used the simplest forms of expression, in order that neither the meaning nor the "atmosphere" may be lost....

In Chapter Seven I discuss the writings of Unaipon that were eventually published "for our white friends", whether under Unaipon's own name or not. I examine Unaipon's earliest texts published in the 1920s in newspapers and magazines, as well as in pamphlets funded by the Aborigines' Friends' Association (A.F.A.), all under Unaipon's own name. I also discuss the 'legendary tales' that appeared in the very large volume of 48 narratives published under

Ramsay Smith's name in 1930, as well as later publications from the 1950s which were, once again, published in Unaipon's own name.

I contextualise my critique by first giving the reader a brief biographical sketch of Unaipon. A far more detailed account of the life of this complex and, at times, contradictory man appears in Appendix 6.1. For this longer account I draw from a variety of sources, with the hope that they contribute to my analysis of Unaipon's writings, as well as to a further research project currently being undertaken by Adam Shoemaker and Stephen Muecke. Their aim is to write the official biography of David Unaipon in cooperation with his relatives. I trust my research provides further pieces to the jig-saw of his life story.

## 6.1 A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF UNAIPON

David Unaipon was born in 1872 and raised by his parents on the Christian mission station Point McLeay. He admits himself that he was "a product of the Pt. McLeay Mission", even though his father, James Ngunaitponi, was an initiated Ngarrindjeri man. James encouraged his son David to be a devout Christian: "He used to take me into the solitude of the bush, read the Bible to me and pray that I might grow up to be a good man and live at peace with all men" (Unaipon, 1951:13). Major influences on his life, however, lay beyond the mission, because from an early age he developed a desire "for a walkabout among the white races" (Unaipon, 1953:8). This 'walkabout' lasted for much of his adult life, stemming from his insatiable thirst for scientific knowledge and discovery - particularly in the field of physics:

[I] would sooner live in a house and read books than lie in a wurlie in the lap of wild nature... I would sooner be working in an engineering shop in the city than living in the bush. I would not care if I never saw the bush from one month's end to the other.

*(The Advertiser July 14, 1914, quoted in Jenkin, 1979:253)*

Life away from the mission wasn't always easy for Unaipon, and he was soon to discover there were limits to what he could achieve in life. He struck prejudice, even from those he considered 'friends', and was often refused accommodation during his travels. Even while visiting white friends in the Adelaide Hills he encountered people who refused to sit at the same table on account of his colour (personal communication Tony & Cynthia Rathjen, November 1999). But life was also difficult because of Unaipon's constant financial troubles, especially in raising the funds to pursue his career as an inventor. To him this was a major frustration, preventing him realising his life's dream: to discover the secret of perpetual motion.

Unaipon was a survivor in a world that offered him few options. He sought solace in the writings of his favourite authors, especially Henry Drummond. He says he "read and re-read 'Natural Law in the Spiritual World' and 'The Ideal Life'. From these I obtained very valuable



lessons" (Unaipon, 1951:12). Drummond's words would have provided some comfort for Unaipon, as he read of the "most tragic trials" that Christ himself had to endure (Drummond, 1898:87). His words would have helped the young Unaipon sustain his unhappy marriage (see Jones, 1990:304), and the despair he felt when his wife Cissy finally died at 50 years of a "fit" in 1924 (see Mortlock Library SRG 698/1/1). But his family life continued to hit rough times, as he often found himself appealing for leniency when his son ran into trouble with white authorities (eg. Aborigines Department records, GRG 52/1/88 1920).

Unaipon simply wished 'to paddle his own canoe' on the sea of life, but instead found himself being continually tossed by angry waves - some generated by his own people, and others by the white society amongst whom he chose to live. At times he just wasn't understood by either:

...the effect of all saintly lives upon the world is the same. They are to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.... It applies to inventors, to discoverers, to philosophers, to poets, to all men who have been better or higher to their time. These men are never understood by their contemporaries.

(Drummond, 1898:100)

Unaipon was all of these: a discoverer, a philosopher, a poet and most of all an inventor; and he certainly was not "understood by his contemporaries".

In the mid 1920s, when Unaipon was offered payment to write a collection of Aboriginal 'legends', he finally saw an opportunity to fund his ultimate goal of solving the problem of perpetual motion. When this funding dried up, he decided to have some of his writings published in small pamphlets, and so began his long life of pedalling pamphlets from door-to-door to any obliging buyers. At the same time he embarked on a career of lay preaching and public speaking, particularly in Victoria. While on tour, he would often surprise his audiences with a display of his perpetual motion machine, which he always took with him in a large wooden box. Unaipon also felt compelled to discuss the plight of his people with his captivated audiences, and to try and earn respect for their 'traditional' beliefs. He tried to point out the parallels between the Christian belief system and those held by his people, and so create a bridge of understanding between the two societies. But his mission proved to be an uphill battle. The entrenched prejudices of social Darwinism ran deep, and the newspapers of the day were filled with scientific facts on Indigenous skull sizes, that supposedly proved the natural superiority of the 'white race'. Furthermore, he could not relinquish his burning ambition regarding perpetual motion, and his model needed some major adjustments which he could not afford. He had learnt over the years, however, that his only means of financial support was to come from the very white supporters he sought to criticise in his earlier years as an activist for his people. So in later life, he chose his words carefully, particularly in what he wrote.

Even though Unaipon seemed to be questioning some of the basic tenets of the Christian faith just four years prior to his death (see Cath Ellis interview, June 1963), he also chose to use terms (in both his earlier writings and in the interview) to draw parallels between Ngarrindjeri mythology and Christian teachings. He used terms such as: prophet, Our Father, Supreme Being, Holy man, Levitical law and Mosaic law. His intent in his writing was to validate the mythology of his own people in the eyes of a prejudiced, monotheistic Christian society. It was also to demonstrate that there is a place for Aboriginal mythology and belief, alongside Christian theology, and one need not displace the other - just as there is a need for both the white and the black keys on the piano (as he points out in Unaipon, 1951:13).

## **6.2 UNAIPON THE 'INTELLECTUAL'**

In order to understand and really appreciate the writings of Unaipon, it is necessary to examine the political and social circumstances in which he began to write. Because of these circumstances, Unaipon approached his writing of Aboriginal 'legends' as if he were on a journey of scientific investigation. In fact, he chose to undertake considerable research while writing, particularly in the South Australian Museum. This research helped him in his efforts to vindicate and legitimate the religious beliefs of his people, not only to Christian believers, but also to the scientific community whose research he admired. My next chapter asserts, however, that as Unaipon wrote his "enduring record of our customs, beliefs and imaginings", he also allowed his own creative imagination and literary licence to flow freely. In fact, he suggests, in the introduction to his 1924-1925 manuscript, that "Perhaps some day Australian writers will use Aboriginal myths and weave literature from them. The same as other writers have done with the Roman, Greek, Norse, and Arthurian legends". But Unaipon himself did just that - he became a weaver of literature.

By the time Unaipon took up his pen, in the early 1920s, Social Darwinism was taking hold in the Australian mind-set, as well as in Australian politics. Charles Darwin's nineteenth century theory of evolution and natural selection was becoming an accepted theory amongst eminent scientists, so it wasn't long before it was extended, by analogy, to Social Darwinism. It was convenient for the right-wing political thinkers of the time to believe that a natural social hierarchy exists, not only between the classes, but also between different 'races'. They believed that there was a fundamental intellectual difference between different races, and indeed the sexes.

Even the educated, white so-called friends of the Aboriginal people of South Australia, such as Dr. Herbert Basedow, cast doubt in the minds of many on the intelligence and status of Australia's Indigenous people<sup>1</sup>:

...the original habitants of our great southern land has remained 'primitive' in every sense of the word - mentally, morally and physically. He is the most primitive of all living races of man. We have indeed the living equivalent of the fossil man of Europe.  
(Basedow, quoted in *The Advertiser* July 22, 1914)

Such racist views and articles were not isolated. In the same year another article appeared in *The Register* on June 17, 1914 stating:

The native tribes of Australia are generally considered to be at the bottom of the scale of humanity... and probably to be inferior in mental development to many of the 'stone-age' inhabitants of Europe in prehistoric ages. Yet they have every right to be considered man.

#### Human After All

Though infantile in their intellectual development, the Australian natives are thoroughly human, as can be seen by the cubic measurement of their brains (accepting this as one standard ) 99.35 inches as compared with that of a gorilla, 30.51 inches.  
(quoted in Jenkin, 1979:248)

Condescending views such as these could not easily be ignored by those who read the daily papers - especially avid readers such as David Unaipon. One can only surmise that such articles only served to drive Unaipon's ambition to solve "the secret of perpetual motion, and so win world honor for his race" (see *The News* July 22, 1959:10).

Such stereotypical prejudices towards Aboriginal people also generally went unquestioned by white readers of the papers. Therefore, when articles began to emerge in the papers about David Unaipon, who was supposedly different to other Aboriginal people, public interest in him grew. Black people weren't expected to be clever, and they certainly weren't meant to display the signs of a 'genius'. In 1925, the following article appeared in *The Register*, beginning:

### AN ABORIGINAL INTELLECTUAL David Unaipon

**For a twentieth century citizen to be suddenly confronted with a man from the Stone Age would be an experience sufficiently piquant. But suppose, faced with the Stone Age man, he addressed you in cultured tones and proceeded to discuss the harnessing of gravity and the poetry of Milton? Your feelings would probably be somewhat similar to those of the reporter who interviewed David Unaipon on his visit to Adelaide last week.**

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<sup>1</sup> I contend that Basedow soon came to realise the danger of Aboriginal people 'dying out' because of the apathy and prejudice white society held against them. He therefore ran a major campaign in Adelaide from 1919-1921, called "Save the Aborigines Campaign", culminating in a Grand Concert in the Town Hall on December 19, 1921 (see Basedow Collection in Mortlock PGR 324 Vol. II).

A full-blooded Aboriginal, Mr. Unaipon presents in physical structure an unmistakeable resemblance to those reconstructions of the older human types which scientists have sometimes supplied with the help of a tooth and a mouldering jawbone. Only the eyes, flashing with quick thought; limpid, friendly, give the lie to your impression. In manner, he is courteous and dignified, and an almost English purity of accent characterises his cultured voice....

All his acquired culture has not taken away from David Unaipon some of his more primitive gifts. He can still spear fish, for instance, in the milky water of the Murray. Asked whether he regarded civilisation as a privilege or a disaster, he said he undoubtedly preferred his present state to the primitive life which would have been his lot but for the coming of the whites. 'My pleasure in knowledge and in using my mental powers are things I prize exceedingly,' he said. 'The coming of the white man was in itself a blessing. We were isolated from the world's culture. It is true that my people could not adapt themselves to civilization, but that is because it came too suddenly for us.'

(*The Register* Adelaide, October 3, 1925:46)

The acceptance of Social Darwinism not only explains the tone of racist newspaper and magazine articles that appeared earlier this century, but more importantly, it also explains much about the writings of David Unaipon himself. Unaipon was forever trying to elevate his race in the eyes of a prejudiced world, and to legitimise the belief system of Aboriginal people in the minds of a monotheistic Christian society. Many years later, David Unaipon related to his friend Rev. Scarborough a humiliating incident at a scientific conference, at which he had been invited to speak. An anthropologist from overseas, when invited to speak, said that "the brain of an Aborigine was only the size of that of a gorilla".<sup>2</sup> When it was Unaipon's turn to speak, he began:

If I went out to the scrub and took a branch from a tree and gave it to a gorilla to make a boomerang out of it, the gorilla could not do it, but I could do so with a flint axe. Now if I take the lecturer and you ten gentlemen on the platform out to the scrub, and even allow you to take a saw and a rasp, and give you each a branch of a tree to make a boomerang, not one of you could do it. It is you who would be on the level of the gorilla.

(quoted in Scarborough, 1966:45)

I believe Unaipon was also at pains to convince himself, at times, of his people's equal position on the evolutionary ladder, and their status as equal members of the human race. Perhaps that is why he obliged the South Australian Museum by collecting Aboriginal skulls in 1930. In Unaipon's brief article "Totemism", that appeared in his 1929 booklet *Native legends*, he introduces his text in the third person with the tones of a rational scientific writer:

Totemism is one of the most ancient customs instituted by the Primitive Man. The practice of it among the Australian Aborigines and its adoption owes its origin to a Mythological conception during the Neolithic Age.

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<sup>2</sup> It is pure speculation on my part, but this incident could have taken place during one of Professor Klaatsch's visits to Adelaide from Germany. He was known for his collection and analysis of Aboriginal skulls, and Basedow (a friend of Unaipon's) studied under him in Germany. In 1907, for example, Klaatsch gave an address in Adelaide to the Anthropology and Philology Section of the Science Congress entitled: "Some notes on scientific travel among the black populations of tropical Australia in 1904, 1905, and 1906." (*The Register* January 11, 1907)

Evidence is to be found incised [sic] upon Churinga stones, also engravings within caves and upon the surface of horizontal and perpendicular rock boulders in mountainous country and rock-bound coast.

The function of Mythology is admitted by science to be an attempt of the Primitive Man to explain the physical and religious phenomena. There are several Mythologies which have given rise to Totemism. This is one....

(Unaipon, 1929:4)

Such rationalisation of religious phenomena was Henry Drummond's topic, when he wrote what was to become one of Unaipon's favourite books *Natural law in the spiritual world*. Drummond (1902:7) writes: "That the Phenomena of the Spiritual World are in analogy with the Phenomena of the Natural World requires no restatement". He says that: "we do not demand of nature directly to prove Religion. That was never its function. Its function is to interpret" (Drummond, 1902:10-11). Thus Unaipon, I believe, took it on himself to interpret the mythological beliefs of his fellow Indigenous people, using the scientific understandings of his era, and the creative inspiration of the canonised texts of the two writers: Milton and Bunyan. Of course, one of the greatest influential and inspirational pieces of literature for Unaipon was the King James Bible, and the experiences of the persecuted within it. But before pursuing my analysis of Unaipon's inspired writings, I review the circumstances under which his writings were published, particularly those involving a certain medical doctor.

### 6.3 AN OVERVIEW OF UNAIPON'S PUBLICATIONS

David Unaipon's largest manuscript "Legendary tales of the Australian Aborigines" was written by him during the period 1924-1925. Two versions of this manuscript, in the form of two leather bound volumes, are now held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney.<sup>3</sup> Each volume comprises a preface, an introduction and thirty texts of varying genres. One volume (catalogued as Volume 1 by the Mitchell) is undoubtedly the original manuscript. It is predominantly hand-written by Unaipon, but also contains thirteen typed narratives and two newsprint cut-outs of earlier publications by Unaipon. Volume 2 is all typescript, and replicates Volume 1, minus the suggested deletions crossed out by hand in Volume 1. It appears the typist had trouble deciphering some of the vernacular terms that appear in Unaipon's sometimes illegible hand in Volume 1, because Volume 2 has some gaps for missing vernacular terms within the texts, while mis-spelling others.<sup>4</sup> It also has further hand-written editorial changes. A close perusal of these changes seems to indicate the hand of two editors. One set of changes, possibly Unaipon's, includes the addition of some vernacular terms, such as words for different animals.

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<sup>3</sup> Microfilm versions of these two volumes are also held in other libraries, including the Barr Smith Library at the University of Adelaide. Volume I comprises 218 frames, while the longer typescript Volume II comprises 317 frames.

<sup>4</sup> Correspondence from Angus & Robertson to Ramsay Smith confirms that their typist has left gaps in the typescript, where she could not decipher the vernacular terms (see Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205)

Of the thirty texts, most are Indigenous Dreaming narratives, but there are at least nine ethnographic texts which discuss different aspects of Aboriginal culture (including: "Aboriginals - their traditions", "The belief in a great spirit", "Witchcraft", "Marriage customs", "Pan Parl Lowa, spirit of help", "Nhung e umpie", "Hunting", "Fishing" and "Sport"). The majority of the Mitchell Ms. texts were eventually published in 1930 by George G. Harrap & Co. (London, Bombay, Sydney) as *Myths and legends of the Australian Aboriginals*, but under the name of "W. Ramsay Smith (M.D. D.Sc. F.R.S. (Edin.))", with absolutely no mention of David Unaipon's contribution. Nor has there been any mention of his name in the numerous reprints of this same book since 1930, including: in 1970 (by the Johnson Reprint Company), in 1996 under a new title "Aborigine" (by Senate) and in 1998 (by Tiger Books).<sup>5</sup> In Appendix 6.2, I provide an annotated list of all the 48 texts that comprise the 1930 Ramsay Smith publication. These will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Unaipon had already gained some public recognition for his writing prior to the 1930 Ramsay Smith publication, beginning with his August 1924 article "Aboriginals: their traditions and customs. Where did they come from". This ethnographic essay appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper in its "Saturday Magazine" (Alexander, 1997:23). A year later, he had his first Dreaming narrative published: "The story of the Mungingee". As far as I am aware, this was the first ever of its genre to be written and published by an Indigenous Australian. It appeared in 1925 in *The Home* magazine on February 1.<sup>6</sup> Both these texts appeared later in the 1930 Ramsay Smith publication<sup>7</sup>, and both are in the Mitchell Ms. A biographical sketch precedes the former text, which has a slightly different title: "Aboriginals - their traditions", in Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms. (which is crossed out by hand) and is deleted altogether in Volume 2. This sketch would probably have been written for the *Daily Telegraph* article:

The writer of this article is a full-blooded Aboriginal, who was born in South Australia. Educated among white people. Mr. Unaipon became a brilliant scholar. He reads Greek and Latin, is a splendid speaker, and a fine pianist.  
He is also the inventor of several interesting mechanical appliances.

Prior to 1925, Unaipon had two other narratives published in newsprint: "Immortality" and "How teddy lost his tail" (which he subsequently pasted into Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms.). I

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<sup>5</sup> There have been numerous reprints of Ramsay Smith's original book since 1930, including a newly illustrated reproduction from Japan of portions of the book. Tiger Books claim their 1998 edition is one of their best sellers in Australia and overseas (Shoemaker, personal communication, November 1999). The complex web of publishing companies buying the rights to the book from other companies is currently being researched by Shoemaker. He contends all of these reprints are "unethical" if not "unwittingly illegal", and the matter is now being pursued through different legal channels.

<sup>6</sup> I have never been able to locate an original of this issue of *The Home*. Alexander (1997) claims it was a magazine, whereas Beston (1979:337) calls it a journal, and says Unaipon's narrative appeared on pages 42-3.

<sup>7</sup> These texts appeared under different titles in Ramsay Smith (1930); the first as "The customs and traditions of Aboriginals" (which is the first text in the 1930 volume) and the second as "The origin of the Pleiades" (which is the final text in the same volume).

have been unable to trace the publishers of these narratives. Beginning in 1927, Unaipon sought funding from different bodies to have further Dreaming narratives printed in pamphlet form. These pamphlets not only contained his Dreaming narratives, but occasionally his thoughts on different Aboriginal issues. For decades Unaipon pedalled these pamphlets from door to door, or at public addresses he made while travelling throughout his own state and Victoria. In a newspaper gossip column, in 1929, Rufus mentions sitting by his friend David Unaipon on the Hyde Park tram. He says Unaipon: "had been out selling his book on aboriginal folklore. He said he had disposed of eight copies. He had reduced the price to a shilling, owing to the bad times" (*The Register News-Pictorial* July 4, 1929:6).

According to Jones (1990:304), the A.F.A. funded the publication of "Hungarrda" in 1927, "Kinie Ger - the native cat" in 1928, and his *Native legends* booklet in 1929. However, documentation in the State Government archives and the A.F.A. records reveal that Unaipon actually borrowed money to cover the printing costs of at least some of his pamphlets. His requests for money for printing (and reprinting) pamphlets began with the state Aborigines Department in 1926 and continued until at least 1948 (see Aborigines Department records GRG 52/1/55 & GRG 52/1/63). From 1927 onwards he was also requesting money from the A.F.A. for the same purposes (A.F.A records, Mortlock Library 139/1/115-117).<sup>8</sup>

The government eventually lent Unaipon £3-0-0 to publish Kinie Ger, in 1927, as Number one in a projected series entitled *Aboriginal legends*. But there was to be no Number two; perhaps because he failed to repay the loan, as well as another outstanding loan he had with the Department in 1921 (see GRG 52/1/63 1926). The same year the A.F.A. funded the printing of "Hungarrda", and in November were asked by Unaipon to lend him money for a further print run to meet his Christmas sales: "I can definitely say that I am able to make a living independently [sic] of any outside support by the sale of Leaflet.... Hunk. Ellis. still have the block ready for publishing" (Mortlock Library SRG 139/1/115-117).<sup>9</sup>

In 1929 Unaipon managed to secure funding to publish his slightly larger fifteen page booklet *Native legends*. This would probably have been the booklet Unaipon was selling for a shilling. It comprises five narratives: "Release of the dragon flies", "Totemism", "Pah Kowie - the creature cell of life and intelligence", "Youn Goona the Cockatoo" and "Hungarrda / Jew

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<sup>8</sup> The three pamphlets written by Unaipon, one under the auspices of the A.F.A., were reprinted several times over the years. Sometimes they included contributions from Sexton, or a copy of the A.F.A charter. Appendix 6.2. provides a comprehensive list of these numerous compilations of Unaipon's work in pamphlet form. In the mid 1930s he compiled a booklet entitled "Australian Aborigines" which included many photographs from the A.F.A. collection. The cost of reprinting in the 1940s was incurred by both the A.F.A. and the Aborigines Department. *Native legends* was reprinted as a facsimile edition by Beulah Park Books as late as 1994.

<sup>9</sup> "Hungarrda" was also reprinted, in the mid 1930s, within another pamphlet, called *The Australian Aborigines*, that includes Unaipon's narrative "Pah Kowie" and his article "An Aboriginal pleads for his race" (a copy is held in the Rare Books collection in the Barr Smith Library).

lizard", plus a poem: "Narrinyeri saying". In the 1950s, Unaipon had five of the Dreaming narratives in his Mitchell Library manuscript published in the *Dawn* magazine, this time under his own name. See Appendix 6.3 for a complete listing of Unaipon's publications.<sup>10</sup>

#### 6.4 THE RAMSAY SMITH CONTROVERSY

Ramsay Smith, a Scottish-born Adelaide-based physician, had a strong interest in anthropology, being a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. He was at one time the Adelaide City Coroner<sup>11</sup>, and was arrested in 1903 for the trafficking of Aboriginal and European remains to overseas universities (Jones, 1989:10). He must have learnt little from this ordeal, because he failed to completely cover his tracks of deception when he appropriated and published Unaipon's manuscript in 1930. Four of the narratives that appear in his 1930 book had already been published elsewhere under Unaipon's name, including: "The customs and traditions of Aboriginals" (which appeared in 1924 as "Aboriginals: their traditions and customs. Where did they come from"); "The birth of the butterflies" (which appeared in 1924 as "Immortality"); "Kinie Ger - the native cat"; and "The origin of the Pleiades" (which appeared in 1925 as "The story of Mungingee").

Ramsay Smith made some attempt to hide his source by changing the titles of all previously published texts, except Kinie Ger. Twenty seven of the thirty original texts in the Mitchell Library manuscript appear in Ramsay Smith's 1930 book. Those excluded include "How teddy bear lost his tale", and its sequel "Wondagar, A wonderful Bun-ban-rung lizard". The third narrative left out was "Goon na Ghun - whale and starfish", which has since been published in *Paperbark* (Davis et. al., 1990:33-52). A close comparison of Ramsay Smith's publication reveals that these twenty seven texts are actually edited versions of those that appear in the 1924-1925 Mitchell Ms. But they were undoubtedly written by David Unaipon. Nearly all texts within Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms. are hand signed by Unaipon, as well as many within Volume 2. Further documentation held in the Mitchell Library, in the form of correspondence between Ramsay Smith and George Robertson, also confirm that the texts were indeed Unaipon's work (Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205). However, there are a total of forty eight (largely mythological, but some ethnographic) texts in the 1930 publication. Can we assume that these were all written by Unaipon?

It is now becoming less of a mystery, and more a growing controversy, as to how Ramsay Smith acquired the copyright over Unaipon's original writings, and then had them published in

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<sup>10</sup> *Dawn* was the journal of the New South Wales Welfare Board.

<sup>11</sup> According to a fatal accident report in *The Advertiser* (dated September 1 1926) Ramsay Smith was still the city coroner in the mid 1920s, which was when he was dealing with David Unaipon re the publication of his writings.



his own name in 1930. But the circumstances under which the original and typescript copy of Unaipon's manuscript were deposited in the Mitchell Library by Angus and Robertson are unknown. It is also unclear how Ramsay Smith acquired further texts from Unaipon, if he was indeed their creator. And if he did create these additional twenty one texts, who were Unaipon's oral sources, particularly for those narratives pertaining to areas beyond his own country in the Lower Murray region? This and my next chapter seek to unravel this mystery.

According to Jones (1989:10-11), Unaipon already had a "firm offer" of publication in 1925 with the prestigious book publishers Angus and Robertson. In a newspaper interview (*The Register* October 3, 1925:9) Unaipon himself says he had "an offer from Angus and Robertson", and admits that he would not have thought of "studying Aboriginal folklore... but I have become extremely interested in it." In the same interview, Unaipon confirms the publishing agreement: "I am now collecting folk legends for the book, and they are going to publish it." One can assume that Angus and Robertson would have given Unaipon full credit for his texts, because a George Robertson employee mentions in a letter, on November 9 1926, that he intended on printing a portrait of Unaipon on the cover of the proposed publication. He also states in the same letter:

By arrangement Unaipon collected and wrote up for us a number of aboriginal legends and we bought the copyright for two pounds and two shillings per 1,000 words amounting to about 150 pounds.

(Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205)

It is significant that Ramsay Smith has become the villain in the eyes of the few academics writing on this controversy today: "The work was taken from him [Unaipon] artistically" (Shoemaker quoted in *The Weekend Australian* October 24-25, 1998:32). Similar sentiments are felt by his descendants, who are assisting Adam Shoemaker and Stephen Muecke in having the Mitchell Library manuscript republished in Unaipon's name, as a sign of "literary repatriation". In the same newspaper article, Unaipon's great-great-nephew, Harold Kropinyeri says "it was a shame he was used. Because he died a very bitter man". But we should not ignore the fact that Unaipon was paid for his stories, in the order of two guineas for every thousand words, which was a considerable sum in those days. However, this does not excuse the fact that Unaipon was expected to forfeit all personal credit and copyright privileges in exchange for payment of his creative works. Nevertheless, Unaipon did enjoy the brief monetary rewards brought him. According to Shoemaker, Unaipon "liked to travel second class by train, formally dressed, replete with fob watch and chain. By all accounts he cut a fine figure" (*The Weekend Australian* October 24-25, 1998:32).

According to Alexander (1997:23), the publishers bought 29 "pieces of writing" from Unaipon, which together comprised some 80,000 words. This purchase included the acquisition of "copyright on the work". In fact, a close perusal of Volume 1 of the manuscript

held in the Mitchell library displays a dated 'PAID' stamp on nearly all of the texts, along with clear evidence that payment was based on the number of words forwarded. There are regular word tallies noted throughout texts in the manuscript. These stamps are dated between January and July of 1925, which leads one to believe that Unaipon commenced writing them at least in the previous year.

So how was it that Ramsay Smith acquired twenty seven of these texts from Angus and Robertson for inclusion in his own 1930 book? Further light is thrown on this controversy by the correspondence within the Angus & Robertson papers (Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205). It appears in January 1925, while Unaipon was still submitting texts for payment, George Robertson initiated negotiations with none other than Dr. Ramsay Smith. He eventually made an offer of sale to Ramsay Smith of Unaipon's manuscript, and (in an undated letter) points out he has not mentioned their correspondence to "our dusky author". In a letter dated November 9 1926, one of Robertson's staff, Mr. Shenstone, outlined their original intentions regarding Unaipon's manuscript, but reaffirms Robertson's offer:

Quite a charming book can be made of them (the legends), and we intend asking Professor Tucker to prepare it for the press. If however you want them we will transfer the copyright to you for what it cost us, furnishing you with a typewritten copy and reserving the original MS. for ourselves.

(Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205)

It appears Ramsay Smith did take up George Robertson's offer, and was subsequently furnished with a typescript copy of Unaipon's manuscript. According to the Angus and Robertson papers, the manuscript and its incumbent copyright was posted to Ramsay Smith on January 15 1927. He was probably sent a second copy of the typescript comprising Volume 2, but it is unclear whether he was given a version containing the additional hand-written edits. Many of the hand-written editorial changes to this typescript were never to be taken on board by Ramsay Smith.<sup>12</sup> He chose to make his own editorial changes later, many of which disguised the first person voice that would have identified the original writer as Indigenous. Surprisingly, on at least two occasions Ramsay Smith mentions (in a footnote) the 'tribal' affiliation of the original oral source of his narratives. This information was actually provided on the top of a number of texts, by Unaipon, in the original manuscript, particularly for those he collected outside his own country. For example, Unaipon identifies his source for "How the tortoise got his shell" as: "Yuta Yuta Tribe near Echuca". This information is also replicated in

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<sup>12</sup> This is particularly evident in "Immortality", which became "The birth of butterflies" in Ramsay Smith (1930:59-62). This is one exceptional text where the editor has made considerable changes, by crossing out, and completely replacing the original first paragraph. The original text had already been published elsewhere, so this may have been an effort by the editor to make the text appear different in some way. Ramsay Smith ignores all of these suggested changes.

the typescript of Volume 2. For the many narratives originating from his own region, Unaipon simply writes "Narrinyeri".<sup>13</sup>

It is worth noting that many of the editorial changes made to the typescript (comprising Volume 2) were relatively innocuous, particularly in the way they allowed the texts to retain the voice of Unaipon. Most of the editing consisted of minor grammatical changes, such as not splitting adverbial clauses, and capitalising the names of animals (see in particular "How the tortoise got his shell" and "Immortality"). Perhaps this was the editing of Professor Tucker, who assumed the book was to be published in Unaipon's name. But the flamboyant way that Unaipon wrote some of his letters (particularly his upper case A, D, E, F, L, M, N, S & T, and his lower case t) tend to distinguish his handwriting from others, and this style seems to be absent in the hand of the editor.

So who did write the extra 21 texts that appear in Ramsay Smith (1930), but are not a part of the original Mitchell Library manuscript? I contend that they were in fact all written by Unaipon; not just because of the literary evidence (that I discuss in the next chapter), but also because of a number of tantalising clues that can be found in various archival documents. The 21 texts in question include:

- The story of creation
- The coming of mankind
- The peewee's story
- The eaglehawk and crow
- The wonderful lizard
- How the selfish goannas lost their wives
- Kinie ger - the native cat (which we know to be Unaipon's work)
- The Porcupine and the mountain devil
- How Spencer's Gulf came into existence
- The land of perfection
- Kirkin and Wyju
- Cheerooneer
- The Keen Keeng
- Mr and Mrs Newal and their dog
- Woo
- Thardid Jimbo
- Palpinkalare
- Perendi and Harrimiah
- Bulpallungga
- Chirr-bookie, the blue crane
- Buthera and the bat

Some clues, of course, lie in the correspondence between the publisher George Robertson and Ramsay Smith. In a letter from Ramsay Smith, dated November 5 1926, Robertson is told of a conversation between Unaipon (DU) and Ramsay Smith (RS). It indicates that Unaipon was

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<sup>13</sup> It will be interesting to see if this identifying information is retained by the editors of the forthcoming republication of Unaipon's manuscript.

wanting to collect further narratives from Aboriginal people throughout South Australia, but was in need of money for his travels (the emphasis is mine):

RS: Angus and Robertson have got all your ms. that you are going to publish

DU: Yes

RS: Do you think you can collect other legends and myths in the North and elsewhere, and if so, are you going to use them?

DU: No, I am not going to published [sic] what I collect. I thought that I could help you.

RS: How can I help you now?

DU: I want some money for expenses for the trip North. I have arranged for a motor car, but I want some money.

RS: How much do you think you will need?

DU: I think I will want about 10 pounds.

RS: Have you thought of asking any other gentlemen to assist you?

DU: Yes

RS: Whom were you thinking of asking?

DU: I was thinking of asking Dr. Roger, Sir Joseph Verco, The Register (Mr Burns).

RS: Well then, call tomorrow morning and the money will be awaiting you.

DU: Very well.

RS: Where are you going?

DU: To the Nullabor Plains. I am taking a 'medicine man' with me to interpret.

RS: Are you going to any of the Mission Stations?

DU: No, although I may call at Point Pearce.

RS: Then you will let me have the legends when you return?

DU: Yes

RS: I may make some compensation afterwards.

DU: Thankyou Sir.

(Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205)

Sir Joseph Verco, whom Unaipon referred to, is named in the newspaper article in *The Register* (October 6, 1925) where it is reported that a committee is being formed to "control his [Unaipon's] activities" and to "finance his travel". The article goes on to make a public request for money from: "any one desirous of providing financial assistance". Besides Sir J. Verco, the committee included the Director of the Museum, Edgar D. Waite, and the Professor of Anatomy at the University of Adelaide, Wood Jones, and a Dr. R.H. Pulleine, presumably the Dr. Roger mentioned above. Just a few months earlier Sexton went to great lengths, by writing very warm letters of recommendation, to both E.Waite and the Commissioner of Public Works, for Unaipon to be employed as a guide at the museum (see Mortlock SRG 139/1 & State records GRG 52/10/18).<sup>14</sup> I can only assume that this particular committee did not raise sufficient money, so Unaipon found himself appealing, a month later, to Ramsay Smith for funds to travel.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sexton goes so far as stating in his letter to Waite: "The Executive of the Aborigines' Friends' Association warmly recommend him as a most suitable person for the position as they consider he is without doubt gifted beyond any other native in Australia and for such duties as would be required of him at the Museum would be 'to the manner born' (letter dated September 8 1925 Mortlock Library SRG 139/1).

<sup>15</sup> The conversation between Ramsay Smith and Unaipon, reproduced in the November 5 1926 letter, quoted above, actually occurred in October 1925.

When Unaipon was arrested for paltry reasons in 1926 at Point McLeay, it was reported just a week after the above mentioned correspondence between Robertson and Ramsay Smith (see *The Advertiser* November 12 & 18, 1926). The reporter stated that David Unaipon protested about his arrest on the grounds that he was visiting the mission in order to collect information for the University, and promptly produced a "pile of type-written documents" as evidence. Considering the fact that Angus and Robertson were to hand over copyright to Ramsay Smith for Unaipon's manuscript in January 1927, it is not unreasonable to assume that the type-written document could well have included further typed narratives for Ramsay Smith. Rather than heading straight for the Nullarbor Plains, Unaipon could have detoured to Point McLeay to collect Ngarrindjeri narratives for inclusion in Ramsay Smith's forthcoming 1930 publication. Ramsay Smith had been advised by a former superintendant of the mission that Jacob Harris of Point McLeay, a contemporary of Unaipon's, was a "store house of folk-lore, a very trustworthy man and extremely well-educated... Harris and his family have been collecting and writing down... stories" (Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205).<sup>16</sup> Unaipon could well have been visiting Jacob Harris for more 'stories' for Ramsay Smith.

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

It is unclear, at this stage of my research, whether Unaipon was eventually compensated by Ramsay Smith for his further literary efforts. Nor is it clear whether Unaipon himself paid any Indigenous story-tellers for their Dreaming narratives. According to the descendants of Jacob Harris, it seems Unaipon did not compensate his Point McLeay informants, while Norman Tindale claims the Swan Reach people were also unpaid. And so the controversy and contradictions of Unaipon's complex life live on. Further insights into his life, provided by Appendix 6.1, help contextualise my analysis of his published narratives that follows. By developing some understanding of the tumultuous era in which Unaipon lived, and the journey he travelled for the 94 years of his long and productive life, one can come to some appreciation of the distinctive features of his writing. Such features include: a flamboyant literary style, re-occurring Biblical themes, a desire to imprison and then release his villainous characters, a tendency to use scientific reasoning to justify Indigenous beliefs, a preoccupation with different levels of consciousness, cryptic messages of subversion, and a legitimisation of actions of insubordination. These features make Unaipon's work not only interesting, but worthy of the special study it is afforded within the next two chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>16</sup> Jacob Harris is the maternal grandfather of Veronica Brodie of Raukkan. This could, possibly, be one of the visits when Unaipon 'ripped stories off' his people - particularly Jacob Harris.



## CHAPTER 7

### A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WRITINGS OF DAVID UNAIPON

*...Beyond this darkness wherein dwell our Pah Kowie, there is a pathway leading unto a region where there is a Greater Orb that rules and shines supreme. This is the source that supplies eternal Thildarie, Invisible Rays of Light, which sustain and maintain the Life and Intelligence of Mankind, distinguishable from all other creatures of the Earth. This Greater Orb too is the origin from whence existing comet, star, sun and planet and other celestial bodies receive their substance and shining robes.*

*Thus many of the ideas formulated by my ancient fathers may seem to an enlightened age fantastic and absurd, but to us these ideas are the foundation of a structure and edifice of knowledge under whose shadow we live today.*

("Pah Kowie: the creature cell of life and intelligence" in: *Native Legends*, Unaipon, 1929:6)

#### 7.0 INTRODUCTION

In his brief narrative "Pah Kowie: creature cell of life and intelligence", David Unaipon reveals some of the "ideas formulated" by his forebears, such as a belief in "Pah Kowie, the Mother of Our Mother, the creative cell of Life and Intelligence". However he ends his text, in reference to such beliefs, with the metaphor "under whose shadow we live today" (see Unaipon, 1929:6). This is both enigmatic and vexing. Why does Unaipon leave the reader wondering whether he finds these ancient ideas a blessing or a burden ?

We know Unaipon took pride in the ideas and cultural knowledge of not only his own Ngarrindjeri people, but also in the knowledge he was able to glean from other Indigenous people. I suggest the shadow Unaipon refers to in Pah Kowie is that formed by the prejudice and misunderstanding white people had in general about Aboriginal people and their beliefs. Unaipon's goal in writing down and publishing these beliefs was to demonstrate to an "enlightened age" that such beliefs are not "fantastic and absurd". In fact much of Unaipon's writing emphasises the moral integrity of Aboriginal belief systems and the many parallels they have with the teachings of the Christian church. This is particularly evident in his ethnographic narrative "Belief in the Aborigine in a Great Spirit" (No.3 in Mitchell Ms., also in Ramsay Smith, 1930:173-174), which reads as a Prophetic declaration by "Narrundari" ("a great teacher")<sup>1</sup> of laws that must be abided by by young Aboriginal initiates:

Remember (Porun) children (Nukone Illawin) your life is like unto a day, and during this short period on earth you are to educate yourself by your conduct to yourself.... Live as children of your Great Father.

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<sup>1</sup> The varied spellings used by Unaipon for his characters and other vernacular terms are discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight. This particular spelling "Narrundari" is taken directly from Text 3 of Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms.

Nol-Kal-undutch-me-wee control your appetites and desires. Remember never allow yourself become slave to your appetite or desire, never allow your mind to suffer pain or fear; lest you become selfish, and selfishness causes misery to yourself your wife and children and relations, and those with whom you come into contact. Selfishness is not of the Great Spirit. Cultivate everything good, moderation in food and pleasure, be generous to others, develop a healthy state of mind and body. Body and mind governed by good and pure morals with kindness for others, remembering that they are a part of that Great Spirit from whence you came.

(Unaipon 1924-25, Vol.1:2)

This declaration bears similarities to Biblical Mosaic Laws, which would have been taught to Unaipon as a young Baptismal candidate at Point McLeay. Unaipon again drew the parallel, much later in his life, during the Ellis interviews, saying: "our laws, the laws... [with] which I grew was the Levitical law.... Well that's the law of the Blackfellow, or the Mosaic Law" (Cath Ellis interview, Feb. 1963)

Unaipon wrote the great majority of his published narratives throughout the mid to late 1920s, when he was a man in his 50s. His work first began when he was made an offer by the publishers Angus and Robertson of Sydney (henceforth A & R), in the early 1920s, for payment of two guineas per thousand words for the purchase of any "Aboriginal legends" he wrote. This offer would forgo his copyright over the materials, but not necessarily his authorship. When A & R started corresponding with Dr. William Ramsay Smith, in January 1925, offering to sell Unaipon's "legends" for a total £150-0-0 (assuring him they would make "quite a charming book"), Unaipon was still sending legends. By January 1927, A & R had sold all copyrights over Unaipon's work to Ramsay Smith of Adelaide. In the meantime, Unaipon had visited his doctor friend, and offered his services to collect and write further narratives for him. This offer enabled Ramsay Smith to fulfill a request made to him, by the publishers Harrap of London, "to write a volume on Australian Aboriginal myths".<sup>2</sup> By September 1927, Ramsay Smith had dispatched his manuscript to Harrap of London, and by 1930 the book *Myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines* (henceforth *Myths and Legends*) was published in Ramsay Smith's name, with no mention of Unaipon's contribution. The three year delay was due to difficulties in finding an illustrator. (See correspondence held in Mitchell Library, MSS 314/76:151-205 for details of all the above mentioned transactions).

It is generally acknowledged today (for example: Jones, 1989; Carey, 1998; *The Weekend Australian* October 24-25, 1998) that the resultant 1930 publication was, in part, written by Unaipon. However, I contest in this chapter that the entire manuscript forwarded to Harrap of London by Ramsay Smith was an edited version of the writings of Unaipon. *Myths and*

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<sup>2</sup> This offer was made presumably following Ramsay Smith's publication of his 1924 book: *In southern seas: wanderings of a naturalist*. This book is a travelogue of expeditions undertaken by Ramsay Smith to the South Pacific, coastal Queensland and the Darwin region, and finally along the Coorong in South Australia. The author later wrote to George Robinson, saying he was pleasantly surprised regarding "the reviews in the various home papers" about his book (Correspondence January 22, 1925, ML MSS 314/76:151).



*Legends* contains 48 texts; 27 of these comprise the Mitchell Library Ms. (henceforth the Mitchell Ms.).<sup>3</sup> This chapter sets out to prove that the remaining 21 were also written by Unaipon.

Correspondence to Ramsay Smith from A & R in January 1927 reveals that three additional manuscripts by Unaipon (for which Unaipon was advanced six pounds by A & R) were also forwarded to him along with the first instalment of the Mitchell Ms. These were "The Sun Goddess and a creation", "Perindi and Harrimiah" and "Chirr Bookie". Each of these three narratives also appeared later in *Myths and Legends*, along with "Kinie Ger" (also not in the Mitchell Ms.) but definitely written by Unaipon, as it was published in a pamphlet in his name in 1927.<sup>4</sup> These additional texts bear common themes and other stylistic similarities to the remaining 17 narratives whose authorship is in question.

I suggest that several of the texts that appear in *Native legends*, published under Unaipon's name in 1929, and the 17 narratives that I propose Ramsay Smith commissioned Unaipon to write, have more in common than those he sold earlier to A & R. One of these similarities is their hybridity, which will be discussed in detail later. These texts were researched and written at the same time, and a number seem to have common oral sources. Others written in this later period carry similar linguistic signs of Unaipon's creative hand at work (also evident in the Mitchell Ms.) such as the familiar phrase "the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna, Snakes, and Insect Tribes", and its variation "the whole, animal, bird, reptile and lizard tribes" etc.

## 7.1 AIMS OF MY ANALYSIS

In this chapter I set out to demonstrate, through a detailed analysis of key texts, and with further archival, linguistic and anthropological evidence, why I claim *Myths and legends* was entirely written by Unaipon, and not in part by Ramsay Smith. I will also touch on literary evidence, such as the recurrent prose style adopted by Unaipon for his narratives, which was quite clearly influenced by his strict Christian upbringing, as well as his avid reading of the works of his most admired authors. Unaipon was a great admirer of the poetry of Milton (rather than Shakespeare) and hence tried to emulate his work, as well as the work of Bunyan, particularly his book *Pilgrim's Progress*. Like Milton and Bunyan, Unaipon felt compelled to

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<sup>3</sup> The Mitchell Ms. contains 30 texts written by Unaipon, but three were not included in *Myths and legends*: No.27 "Wondangar, Goon Na Ghun", No.28 "A wonderful bub-ban-rung lizard" and No.30 "How teddy lost his tail". The last of these was not actually sent to Ramsay Smith by Angus & Robertson.

<sup>4</sup> As mentioned in the last chapter, in correspondence between David Unaipon, the Chief Protector's office, and the Commissioner of Public Works, Unaipon requested a loan of £3-0-0 for the typing and publication of "Kinie Ger" in November 1926. This was granted on the proviso that he repay the amount from sales of the booklet. Furthermore, the Commissioner states in his letter dated November 13, 1926, that the advance be granted "on the distinct understanding that no further assistance of this nature is to be provided until such a time as he [Unaipon] has honored his obligation in connection with the previous advance of £15 in November 1921." (see Aborigines' Department records GRG52/1/63/1926).

write with Christian themes and morals pervading much of his work. He was also a keen reader of scientific journals, and of the writings of the evolutionist Huxley, which is reflected in some of Unaipon's work.

Like many men on Point McLeay mission, Unaipon devoured any newspapers that came his way, and was well aware of the contemporary debates on evolutionary theory, and the scientific reasoning on the comparative intelligence of his own 'race'. Much of Unaipon's writing appears to be an attempt to counter this prejudice, with his own logical, rational and scientific reasoning, while at the same time using poetic language similar to that of his most admired poets. But much of his writing is also an attempt to prove the validity of Aboriginal belief systems, and even the plausibility of their synthesis with a Christian belief system. Themes of reconciling different belief systems can also be found in one of Unaipon's favourite authors, Henry Drummond. I contend that when Unaipon addresses the topic of potentially conflicting belief systems in his writing, we find his most hybrid and syncretic narratives, and arguably his most interesting texts.

Because Unaipon has written in the order of fifty texts, of which at least nine were ethnographic, it is of course impossible to discuss each one. I do however, towards the end of this chapter, provide a brief discussion, as well as notes (in Appendix 7.6) on all the texts that comprise *Myths and Legends*, as proof of Unaipon's sole authorship. The particular texts that I have chosen for more detailed critical analysis, within this chapter, are representative of the range and style of mythological narratives within Unaipon's corpus, remembering that for inspiration he drew from a variety of oral sources, from different regions within south-eastern Australia. The individual texts to be discussed include:

1. Texts from *Native legends* - particularly "Totemism", "Hungarrda", "Release of the dragon flies" and "Narrinyeri saying".
2. The Creation trilogy - including "Pah Kowie" (from *Native legends*, 1929); "The story of creation" (not part of the Mitchell Ms. but in Ramsay Smith, 1930) and "The coming of mankind" (in both the Mitchell Ms. & Ramsay Smith, 1930).
3. Four related texts collected by Unaipon from the Mid North of S.A. Initially I discuss "Kinie Ger - the native cat" (from *Aboriginal legend No. 1*, 1927 & Ramsay Smith, 1930) and "Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl" (from the Mitchell Ms. & Ramsay Smith, 1930, as "The selfish owl"). I then contrast these with "How Spencer's Gulf came into existence" and "Buthera and the bat" (both in Ramsay Smith, 1930, but neither in the Mitchell Ms. ) I also mention "Bulpallungga" (only in Ramsay Smith, 1930).

And finally, in Chapter Eight:

4. The Ngurunderi epic - titled "Naroondaries wives" (in both the Mitchell Ms. & Ramsay Smith, 1930)

## 7.2 WHAT THE LITERARY CRITICS SAY ABOUT UNAIPON

Unaipon's works have received limited attention from the literary critics thus far. In this section I briefly summarise what they have had to say about Unaipon's work, even though I will continue to refer throughout my own analysis to their contrasting views. Like Unaipon's own writings, the work of Beston (1979:334-350), Shoemaker (1989:41-50) and Hosking (1995:85-101) provide much variety in what they say about this eclectic writer. Perhaps this is, in part, because both Beston and Hosking<sup>5</sup> concentrated on a limited corpus of Unaipon's work, and did not discuss its contents in relation to Unaipon's other (arguably, more pertinent) literary productions. My own analysis will demonstrate that it is revealing to view the 'legends' within Unaipon's small 1929 booklet *Native legends* in relation to his longer narratives on similar themes.

Unlike Shoemaker (it seems), neither Beston nor Hosking see Unaipon as a "white man's puppet". Beston in particular never doubts Unaipon's "strong underlying sense of Aboriginal identity and allegiance" (see Beston, 1979:345). Shoemaker, however, who was aware of Unaipon's Mitchell Ms., is less apologetic and argues that Unaipon "comes across as something akin to a self-professed black prophet or seer.... he was so fully indoctrinated by the A.F.A. that an Aboriginal world view was encouraged and permitted only so long as it did not conflict with Christian tenets" (1989:43-44).<sup>6</sup>

Hosking is less severe:

David Unaipon, writing in the twentieth century, and drawing upon the basis of the British, Christian, literary education he had acquired at the Point McLeay Mission School, was in a more advantageous position to explore the space between Aboriginal and British colonial cultures; he did this with remarkable creativity, producing 'fictions' of a kind that defy categorisation.

(Hosking, 1995:86)

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<sup>5</sup> Hosking's (1995) essay is the most recent published critique and deals only with the small 1929 booklet, *Native legends*.

<sup>6</sup> My research indicates that it was not so much the A.F.A. that had a doctrinal hold on Unaipon, but more its long serving secretary Rev. J.H. Sexton. Sexton slowly developed a financial hold on Unaipon, which ensured Unaipon's support of the A.F.A. on controversial political issues in the late 1930s. Sexton was the one who covered some of Unaipon's unpaid debts, appealed to the A.F.A. to finance the printing of Unaipon's 'legends', and supported his attempts to gain paid work at the S.A. Museum.

As Shoemaker (1989:44) rightly points out, Unaipon: "did not simply write one type of story nor did his style remain constant - even within the confines of one tale". However, Shoemaker does attempt to categorise Unaipon's texts, but not without a proviso:

the atmosphere of his stories occasionally borders on the schizophrenic, for the Christian/Aboriginal synthesis which he repeatedly sought is not always achieved without considerable effort and is sometimes realised at the expense of logic.  
(Shoemaker, 1989:44-45)

Broadly speaking, Shoemaker sees Unaipon's work falling into the following four categories: "the historical/mythological, the Christian/Aboriginal spiritual exempla, the practical/anthropological, and the fairy tale/fable". He says "Totemism", the second text within *Native legends*, is a good example of his first category, which he says has a prose style that "is relatively plain and descriptive" (Shoemaker, 1989:45-46). This contrasts with the style of the second broad category, Christian/Aboriginal spiritual exempla, which he describes as "unashamedly Biblical" (Shoemaker, 1989:46). The first narrative in *Native legends*, "Release of the dragon flies, by the Fairy, Sun Beam" is cited as an example of this kind. The fairy-tale like prose of this particular text, and its possible subversive reading alluded to by Hosking (1995:94-95), is very reminiscent of Charles Kingsley's *The Water babies*, and perhaps the colonial writings of Rudyard Kipling. I would say that Unaipon's creationary narratives that appear in Ramsay Smith (1930), but not in the Mitchell Ms., are far more Biblical in tone than the example cited by Shoemaker. These will be discussed in detail later.

The third general category mooted by Shoemaker is practical/anthropological. This category includes the ethnographic texts, such as "Marriage customs", "Hunting", "Fishing", and "Sport" which are in the Mitchell Ms., and were later published in Ramsay Smith (1930). The prose is decidedly non-Biblical, and is written in scientific and anthropological tones, which Shoemaker describes as "a plain style of expression... which avoids imagery and literary flourishes". But, as Shoemaker points out, occasionally these texts are interspersed with some explanatory 'legends' (Shoemaker, 1989:48). The final category is fairy tale/fable, and includes the 'how-so' narratives that explain why certain animals and birds have taken on their current forms. Examples cited by Shoemaker (1989:48) include: "How teddy lost his tail" and "Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl". He gives inspirational credit for these "more juvenile stories" of Unaipon's to Aesop, Kipling and the Brothers Grimm. Shoemaker even goes so far as to describe Unaipon's teddy bear narrative as "whimsical, humorous fantasy".

Shoemaker implies Beston considered only four of Unaipon's 'legends' in his 1979 critique: "Unfortunately, his [Beston's] sample of Unaipon's writing was so small that he failed to appreciate the author's stylistic diversity" (Shoemaker, 1989:47). But a closer reading reveals that Beston does discuss "other prose pieces" that appear in *Native legends*, including "Totemism", "Hungarrda", "Pah Kowie" and "Narrinyeri saying".

It is true, however, that Beston is more complimentary in what he says of Unaipon's work:

Unaipon's collection of legends is not just the first by an Aboriginal writing in English: it is the best, in its stylistic elegance, in organisation of the material, and its evenness and fullness of development without any lacunae in the stories.

(Beston, 1979:338)

Despite Shoemaker's views on Beston, and other post-modern criticism that could be directed at Beston (because of the value judgements he makes and his 'old fashioned' emphasis on literary 'style') I think Beston's critique on Unaipon's work is worthy of some consideration. In a footnote he suggests that "Kinie Ger" has some "awkwardness in its style" (1979:33), and of other texts says Unaipon "labours under an awkward distinction he calls the Spirit Consciousness and the Subjective Consciousness" (179:344). Beston states that this choice of terminology by Unaipon is: "not an accepted one but is Unaipon's own", and although its adoption in "Hungarrda" is more successful, the text "lacks focus" (1979:344).

Shoemaker does give some credit to Beston for being the first (serious literary critic) to draw attention to Unaipon's literary achievements, assuming Beston's [mis]judgement is because he failed to include in his analysis five of Unaipon's 'legends' published in *Dawn* magazine (one in 1955 and four in 1959), and the entire Mitchell Library manuscript. However, when Shoemaker wrote his own 1989 critique, he himself was unaware that the Mitchell Library manuscript of Unaipon's had been purchased, and later published in Ramsay Smith's name. He writes of these texts of Unaipon's as "unpublished". At the time, Shoemaker was therefore unaware of the extra twenty one narratives that appeared in Ramsay Smith (1930), which I am also attributing here to Unaipon. Therefore, Shoemaker wrote his own critique, like Beston, on a restricted corpus. Shoemaker's critique is only eight and a half pages long, and he only makes mention of ten additional texts by Unaipon, in addition to the six that appear in *Native legends*.

As far as I am aware, the first to publicly reveal that Ramsay Smith had appropriated and published Unaipon's work was Philip Jones of the S.A. Museum (in *The Adelaide Review*, 1989:10-11), the same year of Shoemaker's critique. However, Shoemaker has since become well aware of the 'scandal' and is now working with the relatives of Unaipon to have the Mitchell Ms. republished in his name. Shoemaker and his colleague, Stephen Muecke, see this move as "a form of 'literary repatriation' akin to the return of sacred artefacts" (see *The Weekend Australian* October 24-25, 1998:32). It is a sad irony that *Myths and legends* has had several reprintings, since 1930, two as recent as 1996 and 1998 (under the new title *Aborigine*), still in Ramsay Smith's name. The 1996 edition is still available in Australia, but apparently the later editions are very popular in both Japan and Germany (personal

communication: Adam Shoemaker, March 2000).<sup>7</sup> Copyright laws over authorship are retained for fifty years after publication, which sees the Ramsay Smith estate (technically, although not morally) owning copyright over the Ms. until 1980.<sup>8</sup>

These recent developments should be kept in mind while reading Shoemaker's 1989 analysis of Unaipon's work. Shoemaker writes:

When one examines Unaipon's entire corpus of work, it becomes clear that his storytelling is uneven, inconsistent, and is frequently fraught with tension between the Aboriginal and white Christian worlds. One receives the impression that Unaipon did not have a very great knowledge of traditional Aboriginal matters, and this might partly explain why his legendary stories often take such a sanitised, European form.... the very marked stylistic variance... makes it impossible to consider many of his stories as 'legends': the term does not adequately embrace some of the eclectic elements which Unaipon incorporates into his narratives. This is not to dismiss his work. In fact, some of the author's more lyrical writing, such as 'The song of Hungarrda' and 'The voice of the Great Spirit' impresses through the vivid imagery and fresh cadences.... the confusion and inconsistency of much of his work is both intriguing and revealing.... It illustrates the honest response of a brilliant Aboriginal man to the pressures and expectations of the mission system. It portrays the paradox of a man moving away from traditional Aboriginal society while he ostensibly celebrates narrative and mythical elements of that society in his writing.

(Shoemaker, 1989:49-50)

Hosking also observes this personal dilemma in Unaipon's autobiographical texts, when she refers to Unaipon "repositioning himself" in a "kind of cultural shift" (Hosking, 1995:89).

As a more positive end to this section, I endorse Beston's summary of the dilemma in which Unaipon found himself when writing in an era dominated by racism and calls for assimilation:

Unaipon tells legends that fit in with Christian values in order to convey the point that Aboriginal values are just as deserving of respect. If he loses some dignity by deferring to white culture, he also gains dignity by asserting the worth of Aboriginal values. Unaipon's four legends either rival Christian values or transcend them. The mixture of deference and assertion is inevitable in a subjugated people;...

(Beston, 1979:343-344)

### 7.3 MY THESIS RE UNAIPON'S WORK

My thesis is that David Unaipon's written works both challenge and reflect the stage of colonial literature in which he found himself writing in the 1920s. This post federation period was a time when the Australian nation was struggling to define itself in relation to the mother country, while still clinging to the influences and literary canon of the British. It was also a time when White Australia considered its Indigenous people a 'problem', rather than citizens with rights

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<sup>7</sup> Shoemaker (personal communication, November, 1999) has also been working with the Unaipon relatives on the legal ramifications of the unrelenting reprinting and republication of the book, still with no acknowledgement to Unaipon.

<sup>8</sup> The Johnson Reprint Corporation reprinted *Myths and legends* in 1970, under Ramsay Smith's name, with the "permission of the Original Publishers".

and aspirations of their own. Being the first Indigenous Australian to be published, in his chosen genres<sup>9</sup>, his task was not easy. In his more syncretic texts, such as "Hungarrda" and "Totemism", Unaipon challenges an "enlightened" and scientific age to accept the belief systems of "Primitive Man" as being both plausible and valid. In his creation narratives Unaipon reflects upon the paradox of both differences and similarities between his own people's beliefs and those of Christianity; while in his texts that discuss the training and initiation of Aboriginal youth he points out the strong moral fibre of Aboriginal culture(s), and how it parallels the teachings of the Ten Commandments. However, Unaipon himself was trapped in the colonial discourse of his era, particularly when writing texts of a more ethnographic nature. In order to gain credibility as an authority on Aboriginal culture, he often felt compelled to write in the third person, as if he himself were white. But in all of his texts he never fails to write of his people, and of their beliefs and culture, with dignity and respect.

At the same time, Unaipon had a mission. His mission was to promote harmony between Black and white society throughout Australia, and for his people to live free from oppression. He felt his writing could help bring about a better understanding of his people and a healthy respect for their beliefs. But to get an audience, and indeed even to get his work printed, Unaipon felt he had to write texts that were acceptable to his white Christian supporters. He also wished to impress upon his audience his own creative and literary skills, worthy of the same respect offered an educated white writer. So he peppered his texts with Christian messages of high moral conduct, often through Christ-like characters (such as Wyju, Harrimiah and the Winjarning brothers) who were revered by their people, and always acted with tolerance and goodwill towards others. These features are particularly prevalent in the texts he wrote specifically for Ramsay Smith between 1925 and 1927. At the same time Unaipon was liberal with his inclusion of Egyptian-inspired exotica such as the Sun Goddess, the Goddess of Birth, and numerous other characters and Spirit beings. In fact, a number of his texts (such as "The land of perfection" in Ramsay Smith, 1930:174-182) read like pure fiction, or even fantasy, and well beyond the literary licence normally offered a recorder of 'myths'. However, I suggest Unaipon was quite sincere in the way he chose to portray his people's 'myths' and 'legends'. In his non-ethnographic texts, he was not writing as an anthropologist, but as a creative writer trying to instil in the minds of his readers a respect for his own people and their beliefs.

Unaipon knew there was blind prejudice amongst his readers against his people, and some of this was because of the unpleasant scenes they had witnessed of his people living on the

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<sup>9</sup> It would be incorrect to say that Unaipon was the first Indigenous person to write ethnographic texts. Jacob Harris, also of Point McLeay, wrote several letters in 1894-5 to a white friend about his people's beliefs and customs (see Jacob Harris letters, Mortlock Library, D6510 (L)). We know that Unaipon's own father James Unaipon worked with Taplin in recording his language, and possibly wrote down some cultural details for Taplin, but all such works were published in Taplin's name (see Taplin 1979a 1979b).

fringes of white society. He believed that it was only when his own 'race' came into contact with the white 'race' that the high moral codes of his people's traditions deteriorated. To counter the contemporary evidence of cultural and moral breakdown amongst his people, Unaipon chose to be quite explicit in his writings about the high moral codes his people traditionally lived by. He was also quite explicit about what one could learn from his people's 'myths'. Unaipon had a great pride in his heritage and he aimed to prove, through his writings, that his people's old beliefs were as principled and moral as those of the Christian church. He had no intention of rejecting his people's belief systems as 'unenlightened' or 'primitive'. That is why he chose to highlight the many parallels he saw between the two belief systems, thus representing his people's culture as a hybrid system that already embraced all that is 'good' and 'just' in this world.

### 7.3.1 Problems and dilemmas facing Unaipon

Unaipon had further problems and dilemmas that faced him, as an Indigenous writer and as a devout Christian, that also influenced the style he adopted for his writing, and what he included in his narratives. The way Unaipon dealt with these problems ultimately determined the way he chose to represent his people and their cultural beliefs. I shall mention these problems/dilemmas briefly now, but will discuss them further in my critique of individual texts later in this chapter.

To begin with, Unaipon was the first Aboriginal writer to publish in the genre of Dreaming narratives, therefore he had no Aboriginal models to follow. Nor did any other Indigenous writers quickly follow suite, in order to support Unaipon's attempts to represent Aboriginal narratives in different ways, and to push the boundaries of this newly emerging 'legendary' genre.<sup>10</sup> Unaipon was also the first Indigenous writer to publish ethnographic texts, and thus have the opportunity to write from a first person perspective.

Second, up until the time of Unaipon's literary efforts, Aboriginal Dreaming narratives had been represented by white writers, and usually in patronising ways. Early accounts by settlers and explorers doubted whether Aboriginal people even had their own belief systems (eg. Therry, 1863); missionaries represented their narratives as heathen (eg. Meyer, 1846); pseudo-anthropologists simplified them (eg. R.H. Mathews, 1899); and other enthusiasts, such as Langloh Parker, increasingly represented them as 'fables' with scant reference to the land (see Carey's commentary, 1998).

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<sup>10</sup> However, Sam Dintibana (of the Diyari people in northern S.A.) recorded legends in his own language around 1930 that were later published by Fry (see Gale, 1997:64-65). Similarly, in the early 1930s a "full-blooded Aboriginal man named Frank Blackmoor, of the "Peltindjeri clan" of the Point McLeay region, dictated to a "younger educated native" the Waijungari legend in his own language for the anthropologist Tindale, which Tindale subsequently published in 1935 in English and the "Jaralde" language.



Third, around the time when Unaipon was writing, racism was rampant in Australia and newspapers were continually debating the [sub]intelligence of 'Primitive races', such as the Aboriginal people of Australia (eg. the *Register*, June 17, 1914 states: "The native tribes of Australia are generally considered to be at the bottom of the scale of humanity"). At the same time, Unaipon was establishing a reputation as an exceptional and brilliant man, with his achievements being reported regularly in the papers from 1907 (see the *Advertiser*, April 12, 1907). Not only was Unaipon's reputation at stake, but also the integrity of his 'race'. He could not afford to write narratives that did not impress his newspaper critics. He therefore chose to speak and write like an educated gentleman, and to emulate the prose style of the admired writers of his time, such as Milton and Bunyan. Similarly, for his ethnographic texts, he strove to adopt the academic tones of his white, educated 'friends' and acquaintances.

Fourth, Unaipon himself had been brought up as a devout Christian, by his father as well as missionary Taplin and the Young family, and could not avoid incorporating a Christian cosmology into his texts. In his creation narratives he includes a great Father Spirit analogous to the Christian God, that oversees creation of the earth, and has some form of control over the fate of mankind (see e.g. Ramsay Smith, 1930:23-31). This contrasts with Strehlow's comments (1978:13-14) regarding the lack of influence the Central Australian "emu-footed Great Father" has over earthly events. Unaipon could also not avoid writing his narratives with the speech and tone he so often used when preaching his own sermons, by using the language of the King James Bible with which he was so familiar.

Rather than seeing the 'traditional' beliefs of his people, and their struggle to survive the colonial invasion, as a threat to his Christian belief, Unaipon sought to see the parallels. He states in one of his biographical sketches (Unaipon, 1953) that right from the start, his people were fascinated with the similarities they saw between themselves and the struggles of the Israelites in the Old Testament. Unaipon writes (in the third person) of his fellow Ngarrindjeri preachers of Point McLeay:

[they] showed great originality in their interpretation of the Scriptures.... The natives were particularly fond of some of the Bible stories. In the Old Testament they liked the graphic stories included in the flight of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, and their forty years walkabout in the wilderness. Also the story of Joshua requesting the sun to stand still until he had defeated his enemies, and the story of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi. And in the New Testament the stories of the Lord's supper and the resurrection. All these, and many more, bore some resemblances to items in their own tribal lore.

I suggest that Unaipon was a pioneering writer in the field of melding the Christian message into an Indigenous cosmology and belief system - something that is really only now becoming

acceptable in the eyes of theologians and Indigenous people themselves (see Gondarra, 1988; Rosendale et. al., 1997; and for a brief discussion on the movement Carey, 1996:47-52 &74)

A fifth problem was that even though Unaipon was brought up as a devout Christian, he still maintained a pride and interest in the culture(s) of his people. He spoke his own language fluently, even though he had few he could converse with in his later years, and he still retained some knowledge of his people's most important Dreaming narratives. However, for reasons of cultural survival (see Brodie, forthcoming), his own people placed a veil of secrecy on much of their 'traditional' knowledge. It was therefore not easy for Unaipon to access further details of these oral narratives. When Unaipon was first offered the opportunity to publish a book on Aboriginal 'legends' in 1924, he did not have enough material from his own people to produce an entire book. Therefore he had to seek material from other Aboriginal groups. This was particularly so when collecting further 'legends' for Ramsay Smith between 1925 and 1927. This presented communication problems for Unaipon, as well as raising the issues of trust and authenticity. According to Tindale (1935 Adelaide journal), Unaipon himself offered a small payment to his Indigenous sources.

Sixth, for much of Unaipon's life he was close to destitution. During the 1920s commissioned writing became his main source of income. To get materials printed in his own name, Unaipon was dependent on funding from white organisations (including the A.F.A and the Aborigines' Department). Although Angus and Robertson paid Unaipon a considerable sum for his work, I have not been able to find records of what payments were made to Unaipon by Ramsay Smith, except for the ten pounds offered to cover expenses for his trip to the Nullabor Plains in October 1925. Ramsay Smith did, however, make a vague offer of further compensation to Unaipon before his departure: "I may make some compensation afterwards" (Mitchell Library MSS 314/76/151-205, correspondence dated November 5, 1926).<sup>11</sup> Nearly three years later, Sexton of the A.F.A. wrote: "David Unaipon has no money and is at present seeking the aid of charity to meet his daily needs" (A.F.A. Records, Morlock Library SRG 139/1/115-117). Unaipon was also a frustrated inventor, who had no means of financing his inventions. Consequently all his patent applications lapsed. Although writing provided some means of income for Unaipon during the 1920s, it did not bring in enough to meet his daily needs, let alone the money needed to finance the publication of further works in his own name, as well as the money needed to develop his inventions.

Seventh, Unaipon had to take care not to offend his white supporters and potential readers, so he sought to quell the flames of prejudice through his writings, rather than inflame them. Although Unaipon had already become famous for his achievements as an inventor and

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<sup>11</sup> This particular trip was undoubtedly the source of a number of Unaipon's narratives published in Ramsay Smith (1930), to be discussed later.

preacher, he still faced day-to-day prejudices from the white population. He was often refused accommodation on the grounds of his "colour and race" (Unaipon, 1951:13). As mentioned in Chapter Six, in the late 1920s when working for the museum, Unaipon visited the Birdwood property of his friend August Rathjen, to look for archaeological evidence of past Aboriginal habitation. Unaipon was invited into the house for a cup of tea by Rathjen, but minutes later another visitor (George Russell, employed to dig a bore) refused to enter the same kitchen "because there was a black man at the table" (personal communication: Tony Rathjen, May 1999). Although Unaipon made many white friends, whom he often called on, as he walked from door-to-door throughout the state selling his little booklets, such attitudes were not uncommon<sup>12</sup>.

Finally, it seems authenticity was not an issue for Unaipon. To him it was more important to produce texts that won him acceptance among his white readers as a clever and creative man. He wished to set an example of the potential his people could achieve, if they were only given a chance. His aim was to present his work as something equivalent to that produced by not only the white poets and literary men he admired, but also as texts that were logically argued and scientifically sound.

### 7.3.2 Issues of Representation

Many of the problems and dilemmas raised above, particularly regarding authenticity, are related to the important postcolonial issue of representation. This issue is a complex one, and should be considered in relation to the hotly debated question: Who has the right and authority to represent the colonial Other? Said's seminal work on the phenomenon of 'Orientalism', highlights how colonisers have assumed the sole right to represent the Other:

Under the general heading of knowledge of the Orient, and within the umbrella of Western hegemony over the Orient during the period from the end of the eighteenth century, there emerged a complex Orient suitable for study in the academy, for display in the museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustrations in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses about mankind and the universe.... Additionally, the imaginative examinations of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged.

(Said, 1978:134)

Orientalism has been extended to the Australian context by Hodge and Mishra (1990) with the adoption of the term "Aboriginalism". My review of publications on Indigenous Dreaming narratives (see Chapters Three and Four) demonstrate that Aboriginalism is alive and well today. The majority of published texts, both portraying and discussing Aboriginal beliefs, are

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<sup>12</sup> Unaipon often used to call on his friends the Bartlett's "for water and a chat", at their property "Glenberry" in Hawthorndene, during his travels by foot between Adelaide and Reynella (see Mortlock Library Photo Collection Ref. B60837).

still being written by non-Indigenous people. Colonial discourses such as Aboriginalism, adopted by so many who choose to represent Aboriginal people in print, are seen by a number of critics as potentially very destructive. Maxwell states:

As far as Said is concerned, the destructive forms of representation used by both colonizer and colonized alike must be replaced by more positive and conciliatory modes which emphasize the overlapping of cultural boundaries and the interdependence of the historical narratives belonging to each side. This would involve abandoning fixed ideas of settled identity and culturally authorized definition.

(Maxwell, 1991:73)

Unaipon was a writer who did not adopt a fixed or "settled identity" in his work. Similarly, my reading of much of Unaipon's work is that he was also attempting to reconcile Aboriginal culture with the colonising culture by "emphasising the overlapping of cultural boundaries" between the two. This, however, came at a cost, with more contemporary anthropologists dismissing Unaipon's work on the grounds that it lacked authenticity (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993).

Contrary to Shoemaker's (1989:49) assertions, I argue in my analysis below that Unaipon had a deeper knowledge of "traditional Aboriginal matters" than he is given credit for. I base my judgement partly on the evidence provided by some of the additional narratives, of which Shoemaker was unaware in 1989, as well as evidence provided through interviews conducted by other researchers. During the early 1960s students of Dr. Fay Gale at the University of Adelaide (Elaine Treagus and Ken Patterson) conducted research on the viability of the 'traditional languages' at Point McLeay, and in the process interviewed David Unaipon on a couple of occasions:

After two or three days, Mr. Unaipon informed us that he had been thinking about the language and now felt ready to translate anything, and this proved to be the case. He was able to translate almost anything we asked and also told the Aboriginal legends of the creation of the Murray and described the foundation of the mission in his own language....

In summary it appeared that:

1. Mr. Unaipon is the last surviving person with knowledge of one of the languages of the Point McLeay area as his mother tongue, and that any study that needs to be done regarding this language should be done at once as he is nearly 90 and getting deaf.

(Treagus and Patterson, c.1960)

A number of the 21 additional narratives written by Unaipon (that appear in Ramsay Smith, 1930) were based on Unaipon's own Ngarrindjeri culture, or the Dreaming narratives of his northern neighbours the Kaurna, Narrunga and Ngadjuri people. My reading of them is not that of fictionalised, highly embellished hybrid texts. Instead they contain considerable cultural detail, and specific references to land, with which Unaipon was familiar (although Ramsay Smith would have edited out many of the vernacular terms included by Unaipon). I contest that Unaipon did not feel the need to embellish these particular narratives as fairy tale myths with

Biblical themes, simply because his source material was more reliable and detailed. Two good examples of such narratives, the latter to be discussed in my analysis below, are: "Chirr-bookie, the blue crane" (a Kaurua Dreaming narrative) and "Buthera and the bat" (a Narrunga Dreaming narrative). Two more narratives in this category are the two important Ngarrindjeri Dreaming narratives: "Nurunderi's wives" (to be discussed in Chapter Eight) and "The love story of two sisters", which both appear in the Mitchell Ms., while Chirr-bookie was one of the three narratives forwarded to Ramsay Smith by Angus and Robinson in January 1927, along with the first instalment of the Mitchell Ms.

Unaipon, and other Ngarrindjeri people of his generation, maintained a degree of their 'traditional' knowledge and belief system throughout their entire lives, despite their apparent adoption of Christianity. Even today, individual Ngarrindjeri people still maintain spiritual ties with their "ngaitye" or "totem", and still believe certain birds are the bearers of bad news.<sup>13</sup> Such beliefs are confirmed in the following commentary by Mrs. A. Rankin, made just after Unaipon's death:

I would like to tell you something that happened only last year, about a real old gentleman who lived at Point McLeay. He had been a wise man in his day, and he was very clever, very intelligent. He worked for his people amongst others, he tried to uplift the Aboriginal race; his name was Mr. David Unaipon.

Of the last few days of David's life, I want to tell you a story. He used to talk to a bird that he had, a pet bird, and that was his tribal bird. And he often talked to this bird, and the bird would like to talk to him. When David got sick he was taken away to the hospital. This was in the early hours of the morning, I was home there, and the bird kept on singing out. I thought it just wanted a feed, so I went out and fed it, then I came back inside again. After that I could see that the bird was wanting to tell me something.... I thought then there must be something wrong, that the old chap must have passed on, because the bird flapped his wings and looked straight towards Tailern Bend, and that was where Uncle David was in hospital.... after that we knew what it was saying to us.

(Rankin, 1969)

The Treagus and Patterson Report, referred to above, is also revealing in other ways. It alludes to the difficulties that Unaipon would have had when he visited Point McLeay to do further research on Ngarrindjeri 'legends' for his book. Treagus and Patterson were initially told that the only people who "knew anything of the native language" were three old men, one being David Unaipon:

Apart from these three people most people denied any knowledge of the old language. However one lady whom we were interviewing, after an initial diffidence, said that she did know a few words. When we started tape recording her it turned out that she was able to name many objects, foodstuffs, parts of the body etc. and seemed to have quite a large vocabulary which she used in normal conversation. She said that other people

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<sup>13</sup> The Ngarrindjeri friend of mine, Veronica Brodie, has the ngaitye: the Pelican. Another friend, Auntie Maggie Jacobs told Veronica that at the time of my own father passed away she saw a little Ritjaruki (willy-wag-tail) flittering in her back yard. When she heard the sad news from Veronica about Max's passing, she said: "I knew straight away that little ritjaruki came because of Uncle Max."

on the reserve knew as much as she did, but asked us not to tell them she told us! This remark and various others, coupled with people's denial of knowledge of the language seemed to indicate a certain secrecy, and we got the impression that the language is often used by the Point Mc Leay people as a means of communicating amongst themselves which excludes the Europeans.

(Treagus & Patterson, c.1960:2)

The time when these researchers made their observations was towards the end of an assimilation era in which many threats were made to Aboriginal mothers at Point McLeay, by government authorities, to take their children away (see Brodie, forthcoming). Aboriginal families were expected to bring their children up in 'appropriate' White ways, and mothers had a genuine fear of the consequences of publicly displaying a knowledge and pride in their language and culture. Such research observations indicate to me that Unaipon would have struck difficulties in his own research on two counts. First, his people would have been reticent to break the code of secrecy and openly share with him details of their cultural beliefs, knowing that they were soon to be written down in a book and shared with White people. Second, as people brought up on a mission who regularly attended church, they did not wish to acknowledge publicly that they still maintained a knowledge and belief in the 'old ways'.

I contend that David Unaipon himself found no contradiction in adopting Christianity, while still maintaining a healthy respect for the 'traditional' belief system of his own people. To him this was necessary in order to maintain his integrity as an Aboriginal person. Similar feelings were held by his Point McLeay neighbour, Mrs. A. Rankin, who concludes her commentary as follows:

We still keep these legends in our memories. But now the changes come to us all. We have to look into the future, but still teach our children about our legends; but look into the future we must for our children's sake.

(Rankin, 1969)

Today many Indigenous Australians find no contradiction in being Aboriginal Christians while still maintaining a belief in their Dreaming Ancestors, and strong spiritual ties to their land. The 'Easter Purlapa', or Easter ceremony depicting the crucifixion of Christ, is a regular event held at the Alekerrenge community (formerly Warrabri) in Central Australia. And church leaders in Arnhem Land continue to reflect, synthesise and write on the issue of being an Indigenous Christian in contemporary Australia (see Gondarra, 1988; and Gondarra et al, 1997a & 1997b). But in his day, Unaipon was a pioneer in the field of writing syncretic texts which explored the parallels between Christianity and the beliefs of his own people. He also sought parallels between various Biblical sagas and the contemporary situation of his own people, such as the oppression of the Jews and that of his own people. However, Unaipon felt he had to go much further than that. He also sought, through his narratives, to counter the claims of newspaper reporters, and indeed by his learned white friends and supporters (such as Basedow

and Rev. Blacket, see the *Register* August 31, 1921:8), and demonstrate that Aboriginal people did have "high moral ideals" before the arrival of the missionaries.

Indigenous groups throughout Australia have accommodated the arrival of white invaders into their own cosmology in different ways. Swain (1993) tells us that, over the years, numerous groups have managed to incorporate the coming of foreigners (such as explorers, colonisers, Asian traders and missionaries) into their oral Dreaming narratives as well as into their ceremonies. I have witnessed funerals, and other 'bunggul' (ceremonies), performed by Yolngu in north east Arnhem Land, with all their Macassan influences and trappings, such as colourful flags. So too have Yolngu developed ceremonial songs about the many things they have readily adopted from others into their own culture, such as canoes ('lipalipa'), tobacco ('ngarali'), and even bottles (personal communication, H. Amery, 1999). In fact the merging of historical events into mythological narratives is a commonly discussed topic by contemporary anthropologists (see Beckett, 1994; Merlan, 1994; Rumsey, 1994). Rose, in particular (1984, 1988, 1994), has written of the emergence of mythological characters such as Captain Cook and Ned Kelly into the oral Dreaming narratives of the Yarralin people of the Victoria River district of the Northern Territory, as well as of their rationalisation and ambivalence about adopting Jesus into their cosmology. In fact, the character of Captain Cook emerges in a number mythological narratives across various regions of Australia (see, for example, Maddock, 1988; Mackinolty and Wainburranga, 1988).

For literary critics writing in a postmodern age, it is possible to construct numerous different readings of such syncretic texts. Hosking (1995) makes this very observation when critiquing Unaipon's narratives, and when observing the numerous documents about Unaipon. She confesses that "It is difficult to tell David Unaipon's story.... different stories emerge depending on how this information is assembled and, of course, who assembles it" (Hosking, 1995:85). The story that emerges below, is my reading of Unaipon's work. But at the same time it takes into account the many problems and dilemmas, listed above, that faced Unaipon as he himself assembled and constructed his own relatively large corpus of 'Aboriginal folk lore'.

#### **7.4 NATIVE LEGENDS**

To begin my analysis I must first revisit *Native legends* - the small collection by Unaipon that was published in his own name in 1929. Despite the six texts that make up the collection having already received attention from literary critics (Beston, 1979; Shoemaker, 1989; Hosking, 1995), I feel they require further attention here in relation to the additional texts in Ramsay Smith (1930) that have questionable origins. I argue that the texts in *Native legends*, which were irrefutably written by Unaipon, bear significant similarities to the 17 texts in

question in Ramsay Smith (1930)<sup>14</sup>. They display the same use of florid language and Biblical prose, there are shared characters (such as the Sun Goddess), and they often share themes such as: evolutionary creation, degrees of intelligence and different levels of consciousness. For example the same creationary theme is apparent in the brief Pah Kowie narrative, in *Native legends*, that is in the two narratives: "The story of creation" and "The coming of mankind". These latter two texts appear as the second and third narratives respectively in Ramsay Smith (1930), and could be read as sequels to Pah Kowie. The three texts together could even be seen as a creation trilogy.

I contest that the texts of *Native legends* and the additional 17 texts in Ramsay Smith (1930), bear more similarities to each other than they do to the 30 texts that comprise the Mitchell Library Ms. This should not be surprising because, as far I can ascertain from newspaper articles and correspondence between Ramsay Smith and George Robertson, the Mitchell Library Ms. was written earlier, between 1924 and early 1925, while Unaipon's other narratives (including *Native legends*) were researched and written later, between 1925 and 1928.

The *Native legends* texts, in order of appearance, include: "Release of the dragon flies", "Totemism", "Pah Kowie: the creature [sic] cell of life and intelligence", "Youn Goona the Cockatoo", "Hungarrda" and the brief poem "Narrinyeri saying". I shall focus in particular on the first, second and fifth narratives, but mention will also be made of the remainder. I discuss Pah Kowie in a later section in my analysis on the proposed trilogy. But I shall begin my discussion with "Totemism", the second narrative to appear in *Native legends*, which incidently also bears similarities to "The coming of mankind".

#### 7.4.1 "Totemism"<sup>15</sup>

In "Totemism", as with a number of Unaipon's mythological narratives, we find Unaipon introducing his text with an appeal to rational and scientific thought:

Totemism is one of the most ancient customs instituted by the Primitive man. The practice of it among Australian Aborigines and its adoption owes its origin to a Mythological conception during the Neolithic Age....

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<sup>14</sup> As already discussed in this and the previous chapter, Ramsay Smith (1930) contains a total of 48 texts. Of these, 27 are irrefutably Unaipon's because they appear in the Mitchell Library Ms. An extra four are definitely Unaipon's (including: "Kinie Ger", which was published in his name in 1927, plus "Chirr-Bookie", "The story of creation" and "Perendi and Harrimiah", forwarded to Ramsay Smith in 1927 with the rest of the Ms.) This leaves just 17 texts which have questionable origins.

<sup>15</sup> "Totemism" is reproduced in full in Appendix 7.1.



There are several Mythologies which have given rise to Totemism. This is one...  
(Unaipon, 1929:4)

The scientific tone adopted by Unaipon is similar to that used in the newspaper articles about public lectures given by academics such as his friend Herbert Basedow, who lectured about his expeditions amongst Aboriginal people throughout Australia. Unaipon would have also been influenced by the tone of the writings of the evolutionist Huxley. Like his admired white academic authors, Unaipon maintains a voice throughout the entirety of "Totemism" which refers to Aboriginal people in the third person. He does the same in his other more ethnographic texts, such as "Witchcraft", "Marriage customs", "The spirit of help among the Aboriginals", "Ngia Ngiampe", "Fishing", "Sport" and "Hunting". However, he does resist the judgemental tones prevalent in many texts written by early white ethnographers and newspaper journalists (except for his own occasional reference to "Primitive Man").

Unaipon proceeds in "Totemism" to discuss the transformation of Spirit Man into that of earthly flesh and blood. However, this transformation has its pitfalls, which includes man being "overshadowed by another self, the Subjective Consciousness". But because man had not had time to adapt to the earth and all its hazards, he begins to fret, knowing he could no longer return to the "Greater Spirit, the Father of all Mankind". However, his dilemma draws sympathy from the other living creatures, so they teach man how to look after himself. And thus: "all tribes have selected these living creatures for companions and guides", and the concept of "Totemism" was born.

Both "Totemism" and "The coming of mankind" relay the story of the arrival of mankind, following the advent of other creatures of the earth. This order of evolutionary occupation of the earth is also discussed in "Youn Goona the cockatoo" and "Hungarrda" (the fourth and final narratives respectively in *Native legends*). Another preoccupation of these four texts ("Youn Goona", "Hungarrda", "Totemism" and "The coming of mankind") is the theme of intelligence, or the gaining of knowledge and wisdom. For example, in "Youn Goona" the male cockatoo says to his wife: "Hath not the Greater Spirit endowed thee with superior Intelligence and Capacity of Conception?" (Unaipon, 1929:8); and in "Totemism" the "Subjective Consciousness" of Man grows in "wisdom and knowledge from [the] instruction of Earthly Creatures" (Unaipon, 1929:5).

It is in "Totemism", however, that we are first introduced by Unaipon to "the Greater Spirit, the Father of all Mankind", who is the all-powerful male character that pervades many of Unaipon's narratives.<sup>16</sup> He is referred to elsewhere by Unaipon in numerous other ways,

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<sup>16</sup> Although Unaipon wrote of the Great Spirit in narratives he sent to Angus and Robertson in 1925, they did not appear in print until after *Native legends* was published in 1929.

including: "the Father of All", the "One Great Father" and the "Spirit of Mankind", and is responsible in Unaipon's narratives for overseeing the creation of the creatures and humans on the earth. However, in contrast to Christianity, Unaipon also includes in his creationary narratives an even more powerful figure, who precedes the Greater Spirit, who is female. He refers to her in numerous ways, including: "Sun Goddess", Goddess of Light" and "Sun Mother". She also features in many of Unaipon's narratives, for example in "The story of the creation", and is the creator of the earth.

According to Clarke (1997:133-134), the sun was portrayed as female in both the mythology of the Indigenous people of the Adelaide area as well as by their southern neighbours, the Ngarrindjeri. Clarke observes in Tindale's ethnographic work that the Tangani clan of the Coorong region referred to "wange" [sic?] as "Sun woman", but says of the Aboriginal people further south that it was reported as "an embarrassment" that the sun was female. Therefore during initiation ceremonies: "Her role in the ceremony was represented temporarily by 'her brother', who carried paired firesticks which were symbolic of those that lit up the earth from above" (Clarke, 1997:134). After accessing the diaries of the missionary Schürmann, Clarke (1997:129) confirms that the people of the Adelaide area were very reticent to share information about the cosmology of the heavens, but did reveal certain things to Schürmann, only on the condition that he tell no other Aboriginal person. Schürmann claimed that the Kurna believed in 'Monaincherloo' (= 'Munaintyerlo'), whom they described as the "highest creature", and who "created all things in the visible world" (Clarke, 1997:129). They also spoke of another ancestral being 'Teendo Yerle', which literally means 'Sun-father', whom Clarke suggests had a father relationship with the sun (Clarke, 1997:129).<sup>17</sup> But we will never really know whether the Kurna were accommodating their missionary friends by naming a male creator in their mythology.<sup>18</sup>

Whether or not there are Ngarrindjeri influences on Unaipon's inclusion of a female creator in his narratives is something on which we can only speculate. Furthermore we can only surmise on whether his construction of an all powerful father figure, in the form of the "Father of all Mankind", is a Christian adaptation. In an interesting paper, Hilary Carey (1998) discusses the All-Father or "Land of Biaime complex" in contemporary "popular writing" on Aboriginal mythology. Hiatt (1996:100-119) also devotes a chapter in *Arguments about Aborigines* to the contentious issue of the existence of "High Gods" within Indigenous Australian belief. He suggests the rise and fall in the popularity of different deity figures in the anthropological

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<sup>17</sup> According to Rob Amery (personal communication, October 1999), the name 'Teendo Yerle' literally means 'sun male'. The term 'yerle' has a number of derivational forms in Kurna, all with the semantics of being 'male'. The term 'Munaintyerlo' is listed in the Kurna wordlist as 'a very remote time, ancient' (Teichelmann & Schürmann, 1840:25), and its derivation 'Munaintyra' is used today by Kurna people as synonymous to the English term 'the Dreaming'.

<sup>18</sup> According to Patrick McConvell (personal communication, May 2001) the sun is almost universally attributed as female throughout Indigenous Australia.

literature (including the "All Father", "Great Father" and "Mother of All") had a lot to do with the current state of religious, philosophical and anthropological debate in the academy.

Carey contests that the Biaime figure first became popularised in Australian literature at the beginning of the assimilationist era in the 1930s, initially drawing on the early writings of Katie Langloh Parker. However, unlike the Indigenous critic Mudrooroo, Carey (1988:215) does not see Unaipon as responsible for further popularising the All-father Biaime. Unaipon makes it quite clear in his interview (with Cath Ellis in February, 1963) that in his view Biaime is the eastern states equivalent to his own people's Ngurunderi. The Ngurunderi character (spelt "Narroondarie" in his Mitchell Ms.) pervades many of Unaipon's narratives, and on a number of occasions, he refers to Ngurunderi as a "prophet" of the Greater Spirit, rather than the All-father himself. This contrasts with the unpublished writings of Jacob Harris, who wrote in a personal letter in 1894 of the "Supreme Being whom we called Nooroondourrie, which as the good old book says, God" (see Mortlock Library, D6510(L)13). Although Ngurunderi does not feature in any of the narratives in *Native legends*, Unaipon does refer to his creationary journey down the Murray River, which is the allegoric theme of his rather tragic poem that concludes *Native legends*, to be discussed later.

Interestingly, in a couple of narratives Unaipon also features an even more powerful female creationary figure - "Pah Kowie: the creature [sic] cell of life and intelligence" (for example in the third narrative by the same name in *Native legends*). She is "the Mother of Our Mother", and gave birth to the Sun Mother from her impenetrable home of darkness "Nawanthee". Unaipon tells us, in "Witchcraft" (see Mitchell Ms. Text 26:2 & Ramsay Smith, 1930:184) that Puckowe [sic] is also known as the "Grandmother Spirit", who inhabits the "dark spot, the Coal-sack, in the Milky Way".<sup>19</sup> She is said to assist the "medicine-man" in performing his healing operations.

Returning to "Totemism", it is worth noting the academic context in which Unaipon wrote this particular text. The term "totemism" itself was not a well established term when Unaipon adopted it for his title. It wasn't until the mid 1930s that it was popularised, probably after the publication of Elkin's 1938 classic: *The Australian Aborigines: how to understand them*. Elkin explained an Aboriginal person's totem as "his friend, or his guardian, and that he must not injure, kill or eat it". He also generalised that a person's "social totemic clan" is always inherited through the mother, and is referred to as their "meat" (Elkin, 1938:79). Unaipon must

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<sup>19</sup> This is the home of 'Yura' the rainbow serpent in Kurna mythology (personal communication Rob Amery, 1999)

have written "Totemism" in the late 1920s, just a decade and a half after the French sociologist Durkheim used the term in his 1912 classic *The elementary forms of the religious life*.<sup>20</sup>

The first to use the term "totem", with regard to the Ngarrindjeri, was Taplin who discusses the *ngaitye* of each "tribe" as: "some animal which they regard as a sort of genius, who takes an interest in their welfare - something like the North American Indian totem" (Taplin in Woods, 1879:63). Twenty years later, the term "totemism" was an entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but was entered as a "superstitious respect" for animals, rather than a religious phenomenon. Then in 1899, J. Mathew used the term "totemism" in his discussion of the Ngarrindjeri, and also mentions its prior usage by Spencer and Gillen. Baldwin Spencer was actually a biologist from Sydney University, and was once a student of Tylor's. He was the first to use the term "totem" for the Australian context in his classic *The native tribes of central Australia* (see Spencer and Gillen, 1899:chapter IV). It was, therefore, in this pseudo-academic climate that David Unaipon adopted the term "totemism" for his narrative. At the time there was no chair held in anthropology at the University of Adelaide, but Unaipon was able to visit the South Australian Museum, which housed a reputable collection of Egyptian mummies and relics, and a growing collection of Aboriginal artifacts. In fact it was in the mid 1920s that Unaipon himself was employed by the museum to work with their Aboriginal collection. It is highly likely that Unaipon also accessed and read the latest anthropological publications, including those by Taplin, Woods, Spencer and Gillen, J. Mathew, R.H. Mathews and others.

My reading of Unaipon's "Totemism" is that it is his attempt not only to justify Aboriginal mythology (in this case, a belief in totemism) as a legitimate set of beliefs, but also to reconcile the conflict of belief systems that was being debated at the time between scientists and the church. Just twenty years prior, Unaipon's favourite author, Henry Drummond, wrote his book *Natural law*. His motive was to try and bring harmony between scientific minds and contemporary theologians. Hence he refers to the laws of gravity and other 'discoveries' of contemporary scientists as "Natural laws", and states:

...we do not demand of nature directly to prove Religion. That was never its function. Its function is to interpret.... The position we have been led to take up is not that the Spiritual Laws are analogous to the Natural Laws, but that *they are the same Laws*.  
(Drummond, 1902:10-11)

Unaipon begins "Totemism" by elevating Aboriginal mythology in the eyes of the reader in his argument that: "the function of Mythology is admitted by science to be an attempt by Primitive man to explain physical and religious phenomena" (Unaipon, 1929:4).<sup>21</sup> He then proceeds to

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<sup>20</sup> The term had earlier been used by the first chair of anthropology in England, Professor Tylor, who coined the term "Animism" in his work on "The doctrine of the souls". The term was used again in 1925 by Roheim in his book "Australian Totemism".

<sup>21</sup> Note that Drummond (1902:7) also refers in his writing to "the Phenomena of the Spiritual World" and "the Phenomena of the Natural World".

incorporate scientific explanations of creation, specifically evolutionary theory, into his explanation of the way the phenomenon of totemism came into being for Aboriginal people. In so doing he aims to reconcile scientific evolutionary theory (with which he sympathises) with the Aboriginal belief system of totemism.<sup>22</sup>

This hybrid text epitomises Unaipon's own struggle to reconcile the apparent conflict the missionaries perceived between Aboriginal religious beliefs and cultural practices on the one hand and Christianity on the other. As a lad, Unaipon himself was unable to undergo the important initiation ceremonies that traditionally all Ngarrindjeri boys underwent, because of the intervention of the missionary Taplin. But in his writings, Unaipon strives to allow these two conflicting belief systems to co-exist, without either dis-crediting or de-valuing the other. More recent writings by Swain and Rose (1988) demonstrate that this struggle of beliefs continues, particularly in Rose's paper "Jesus and the Dingo" (1988:361-75).

Unaipon's strategy (1929:4-5), in "Totemism", of introducing dichotomous concepts such as "Spirit Consciousness" versus "Spirit Self controlled by an earthly Subjective Consciousness", drew criticism from Beston (1979:344), who states that Unaipon: "labours under an awkward distinction". This specific "distinction" is also featured in "Hungarrda" (discussed below) and other narratives published by Ramsay Smith (1930). My interpretation of Unaipon's use of such pseudo-scientific dichotomies is perhaps inspired by parallels he sees in other dichotomies such as: Good versus Evil in Christian theology, and Un-initiated versus Initiated in Aboriginal cosmology. To take the levels-of-knowledge analogy even further, one could add 'Primitive man' versus 'enlightened age' (which are both terms used by Unaipon himself in "Pah Kowie", 1929:6).

My main point is to demonstrate the creative element in Unaipon's writing, as well as the hybrid nature of his ideas and choice of terminology. For example, in the introductory paragraph Unaipon adopts language usually reserved for the genre of scientific writing, using academic terms that position the phenomenon of totemism in time (i.e. the "Neolithic Age"). Then in paragraph three Unaipon contrasts this by introducing more Biblical tones, with his: "At the beginning of creation, Man...". Perhaps it is such contradictory language that led Shoemaker to describe some of his writing as "stylistic schizophrenia" (Shoemaker, 1989:47).

In "Totemism", Unaipon surreptitiously inserts phrases that link scientific theories of evolution with the [Aboriginal] version of creation he is proposing: "the wonderful transformation of Life coming out of the slimy water..." and "After the duration of many periods he [Spirit Man] lived side by side with the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna and the Insect Life..." (Unaipon, 1929:4).

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<sup>22</sup> Totemism as a concept was relatively new to Australian anthropology in 1929, and was misunderstood by many as a form of animal worship. The term itself is often avoided in the discipline of anthropology today.

Furthermore, Unaipon also tries to align his own [Aboriginal] creation story with the Biblical creation story: "Spirit Man observed all through the ages of time that each creature conformed to their type and species" (Unaipon, 1929:4 cf. Genesis Chapter 1 Verse 21). Unaipon then introduces the Christian concept of "Heavenly Home" and, for the first time in *Native legends*, the patriarchal figure "the Father of all Mankind" (Unaipon, 1929:5). The actual advent of totemism, as a phenomenon, comes about in Unaipon's narrative as a result of the animals succumbing to the emotions of pity and sympathy: "The Living Creatures of the earth saw his [man's] plight and were moved with pity and sympathy" (Unaipon, 1929:5). We see similar appeals to the emotions, that are akin to the emotions of Christ in the New Testament, in other works of Unaipon's (see "Narroondarie wives" in the Mitchell Ms. Text 16).

The way Unaipon chooses to conclude this hybrid text is significant:

Thus the Aborigines of Australia have from time immemorial, whether in Central Australia or along the Sea Coast, or living along the banks of the Moo Koolie<sup>23</sup>, River Murray, all tribes have selected these living creatures for companions and guides.  
(Unaipon, 1929:5)

I contend that Unaipon was the first Indigenous Australian author to adopt, in a number of his 'legends', what has now become an obligatory formulaic coda for many written Aboriginal 'legends'. Langloh Parker, the first to publish a collection of 'legends' over a hundred years ago, occasionally adopted such codas for her texts of an aetiological nature (e.g. "And to this day the only noise a crane can make..." in the narrative "The crane and the crow", Langloh Parker, 1978:11). Similarly, many white re-writers of Indigenous Dreaming narratives have since chosen to adopt formulaic endings for their texts. But Unaipon seems to have been influenced as well by the fairy-tale structure of Charles Kingsley's *The Water babies*, which not only ends with an appended "Moral", but also a moralising coda at the end of the saga comprising each chapter. Take for example, the saga of Tom, the amphibious water-baby in chapter five, whose adventures conclude with the moralising comment: "So Tom really tried to be a good boy, and tormented no sea-beasts after that, as long as he lived... Oh, how good little boys ought to be, who have kind pussy mammas to cuddle them..." (Kingsley, 1903:208). But Kingsley did not intend his moralising solely for little boys, and neither were Unaipon's narratives aimed at children. In chapter four of *The Water babies*, Kingsley concludes that "the good old doctor", who learnt not to doubt the existence of other rational beings beside man, "became ever after a sadder and a wiser man; which is a very good thing to become... even though one has to pay a heavy price for the blessing." (Kingsley, 1903:172-173)

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<sup>23</sup> The vernacular term adopted for the Murray River ("Moo Koolie") in "Totemism" is probably a Ngarrindjeri word. Note that Meyer (1838) lists Kuri for 'river, neck', while Taplin (1879) lists Ku:li 'head' and Kure 'neck' (cf. Murrundi "River Murray", Taplin, 1879b). It is common in Australian languages for 'river' to take the same word as the body part 'neck', eg. Yolngu Matha in Arnhem Land has Mayang meaning 'neck, creek, river'.

I contend that Kingsley's *The Water babies* influenced Unaipon in a number of other ways, such as his inclusion of themes of transforming land creatures into water creatures, and the saviour role given to fairies. These, plus structural features such as the inclusion of song texts within narratives will be discussed further below.

#### 7.4.2 "Hungarrda"

Unaipon travelled throughout much of southern Australia in the 1920s to collect oral narratives for his various writing projects. Although knowledge of his own Ngarrindjeri people's cultural practices and beliefs was a major source of material for his creative works, it is evident that Unaipon also sought his inspiration for his texts, as well as many vernacular terms, from a variety of sources. My reading of his work indicates that the narratives Unaipon constructed using characters and story-lines from other groups are more hybrid in form than those based on his own cultural knowledge. The narrative "Totemism", discussed above, is one such example. "Hungarrda" is another.

Such hybrid texts could even constitute a single category of narratives by this diverse writer. I propose the component texts are typically characterised by an all pervading style of Biblical prose, such as: mention of a "Heavenly Home" (in Totemism, 1929:5); and phrases such as: "At the beginning of Creation..." (in Totemism, 1929:4) and "Thus and thus spake..." (in "Hungarrda", 1927a:1). They are also associated with Christian sentiments and moralizing tones, for example: the "pity and sympathy" felt for Spirit Man by the "Living Creatures of the Earth" (in Totemism, 1929:5). Other features include occasional hints of Miltonian verse; compare for example the following lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost* :

...What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,  
And study of revenge, immortal hate,  
And courage never to submit or yield,  
And what is else not to overcome;  
That glory never shall his wrath or might  
Exhort for me....

(Milton, Book I:4)

with Unaipon's song in "Hungarrda", revealing Unaipon's love and emulation of Milton's work<sup>24</sup>:

Thus in wonder I am lost.  
No mortal mind can conceive.  
No mortal tongue express in language intelligible.  
Heaven-born Spark, I cannot see nor feel thee.

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<sup>24</sup> Although Hungarrda (Unaipon, 1927a & 1929) was laid out as a narrative by the printers, rather than as poetry (as I have quoted it above), Unaipon's punctuation betrays his poetic intentions.

Thou art concealed mysteriously wrapped  
within the fibre and bark of tree and bush and shrubs.  
Why dost thou condescend to dwell within a piece of stick?

(Unaipon, 1927a:3)

I suggest that Unaipon's lack of detailed information from certain Aboriginal informants, when undertaking research for his narratives beyond those from his own Ngarrindjeri people, necessitated his liberal re-writing of narratives for publication. Thus the emergence of his hybrid category of texts. This hybridity was probably due in part to communication problems, as Unaipon only spoke English and his own people's language. I contend, however, that Unaipon also intended to "weave" such hybrid constructions. He hints at such possibilities in the Introduction to his book that was to be published by A & R in the 1920s:

Perhaps some day Australian writers will use Aboriginal myths and weave literature from them. The same as other writers have done with the Roman, Greek, Norse, and Arthurian legends.... Aboriginal folk-lore may be among the oldest in the world.

(Unaipon, 1924-25:"Aboriginal folklore")

Unaipon's words on the \$50-00 note today (taken from the Preface of the Mitchell Ms.) refer to his "enduring record" of his people's "customs, beliefs and imaginings" (my emphasis).

One clear example of this intentional hybridity, or "imaginings", which appears fifth in *Native legends* (1929:12-15), is "Hungarrda: Jew lizard". However, it first appeared in print in 1927, two years prior to *Native legends*, in a four page pamphlet entitled *Aboriginal legends*. Its publication was partly funded by the A.F.A., but Unaipon also contributed towards printing costs by paying at least 10 shillings directly to Hunkin, Ellis and King. It appears that this pamphlet was reprinted on at least one occasion in early 1928 through money received from earlier sales by Unaipon (see A.F.A. correspondence, Mortlock Library).<sup>25</sup> I have reproduced

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<sup>25</sup> Pamphlets "containing aboriginal legends" written by David Unaipon were printed and reprinted, on numerous occasions, by the printers Hunkin, Ellis & King in Adelaide between the years 1927 and 1938. Correspondence files held in the Public Records Office (GRG52/1/63/1926 & GRG52/1/55/1937) and in A.F.A. records held in the Mortlock library (SRG139/1/115-117) reveal that the publication of these pamphlets was largely funded by advances made to Unaipon by both the A.F.A. and the Aborigines' Department, on the proviso that they be repaid by Unaipon through prospective sales of the pamphlets. As already mentioned, the first pamphlet to be printed was in 1927, titled *Aboriginal Legends*, contained "Hungarrda". It seems in its second print run, late in 1927, Unaipon added a second brief text "Narrinyeri saying" at the end (see letter dated November 21 to Sexton of the A.F.A. from Unaipon, SRG139/1/115-117). The second, probably also printed in 1927, was *Aboriginal legends No.1: Kinie Ger: the native cat*. The third, in 1929, was *Native legends*. Correspondence in the form of telegrams and hand-written letters and notes, held in the A.F.A. records in the Mortlock Library (SRG139/1/115-117), reveal clues about the funding of the printing and reprinting of Hungarrda. On 21 November 1927, Unaipon appealed to the A.F.A. to fund a further print run of 1000 copies "of my story Hungarrda" for impending door-to-door Christmas sales. That same day the secretary Rev. Sexton wrote to the President of the A.F.A., Archdeacon Bussell, recommending their association oblige. Notes reveal that a reprinting of 1,000 copies would cost £1-0-0, but a "Fresh" printing would cost £1-17-6. Unaipon's November 21 1927 letter to Sexton states that Hunkin, Ellis & King still had the blocks from the first printing of "Hungarrda". In April 1928 Unaipon sent 10 shillings to Sexton to be forwarded to the printers "for two hundred pamphlet Hungarrda". Unaipon must have contributed further to the costs of printing his pamphlet,



Hungarrda in its entirety in Appendix 7.2, but have chosen to reproduce the earlier 1927 and 1928 version, which includes some vernacular terms that were deleted in the 1929 version.

Thus far, this particular narrative has received very little critical attention. Shoemaker (1989:49) just briefly mentions its "more lyrical" language with its "vivid imagery and fresh cadences", while Beston (1979:344) makes passing remarks about its author's purpose of elevating an alternative Aboriginal version of creation and evolution to that proposed by Christianity. Beston concentrated on "legends" in his analysis, and because he does not consider Hungarrda a "legend", pays it little further attention. Hosking (1995:99) does, however, give this narrative a little more space, but unlike her allegorical reading of some of Unaipon's other work, does not see this text as politically suggestive. Instead, she notes (1995:99) it is "Unaipon's interpretation of a Central Australian legend about a spirit ancestor in language appropriate to a stirring Christian sermon". Like "Totemism", she sees it as Unaipon's effort to meld two belief systems (Christian and Aboriginal), which many Westerners would assume incompatible.

I agree with Hosking that this particular text's "flavour is Christian evangelical", but alternatively, I suggest it is more a hybrid construction of Unaipon's rather than a reinterpretation of a "legend". The narrative is told in the first person, as a "Nhan-Garra Doctor"<sup>26</sup> tells of his spirit journey across time and space.<sup>27</sup>

The narrative begins with the archaic language of the Bible:

Thus and thus spake Nha Teeyouwa (blackfellow). Nhan-Garra Doctor: Children, I have many strange stories to tell you. All came to me whilst I slumbered in deep sleep.

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through his sales, because in a letter to Unaipon dated May 17 1928 Rev. Sexton encloses an account from the printers Hunkin, Ellis & King and states that "They require payment for these before they undertake any further printing". Then in a telegram to Sexton dated August 31 1928, Unaipon urgently requests a further 200 copies, and concludes "I am posting money". Records held in the State Record Office (GRG52/1/63/1926) reveal the funding arrangements for the printing of the second pamphlet were also with loans, but this time from the Aborigines Department.

However, as Unaipon grew older and less physically able, he became even more financially dependent on the government and the A.F.A. to meet his daily expenses. Subsequently his £15-0-0 debt incurred in 1921 to the Aborigines' Department was cancelled, as was a £3-0-0 debt from 1926, and he was granted a further £5-0-0 for the reprinting of 400 copies of one of his pamphlets of "aboriginal legends" (see a minute from the Chief Protector of Aborigines dated December 8, 1937, GRG 52/1/55/1937). Unaipon continued to publicly supporting events endorsed by the government and the A.F.A., and continued to receive financial support for the printing of his booklets from both the newly formed Aborigines Protection Board, , and the A.F.A., with no expectations of repayment. Although the original publication date is unclear, in 1940 Unaipon received money from both the A.F.A. and the Board to print 500 copies of a booklet entitled *The Australian Aborigines*. This booklet contains a reprint of both "Hungarrda" and "Pah Kowie", plus Unaipon's 1930 address "An Aboriginal pleads for his race", and one page address by Sexton "Our duty to the Aborigines". The pamphlet was subsequently reprinted in 1941 with financial assistance from the Aborigines Protection Board (see GRG52/1/55/1937).

<sup>26</sup> In contemporary Arrernte this word is spelt 'Ngangkere', and it means 'traditional healer'.

<sup>27</sup> Such travel is not unknown to the Ngarrindjeri today (see Brodie, forthcoming, who talks of her grandfather Dan Wilson, and his "transcendental travels").

Enfolding itself from its appointed place my Spirit Self gently stepped outside my body frame with my earthly body subjective consciousness. And this is my experience...

(Unaipon, 1927a:1)

This spirit Doctor is of the "Harrunda" people of Central Australia (today spelt 'Arrernte') and as he proceeds on his journey across time, he tells of what he sees. He travels back thousands and thousands of years, and witnesses the evolution of creatures coming from the "slimy sea" (a phrase also mentioned in "Totemism"). He continues to watch as "up and up along the winding pathway of the Gulf of Time, like pilgrims" further creatures evolve, and then "silently pass from the rank and file and die by the wayside". Eventually some "strange living forms" evolve, but with the intelligence "like the culture of our present day". Some of these forms have the bodies of humans yet the heads of animals and other creatures, or the head of humans and the bodies of creatures.<sup>28</sup> The spirit Doctor meets Hungarrda, the Jew lizard, whom Unaipon calls a "prophet", and greets him with a special greeting. They sit together and Hungarrda instructs the Doctor in the "secret code of initiation", and tells him about the "origin and the adoption of Totemism". Then he tells him to teach his "neighbouring tribes" what he has learnt, and as a parting gift, the spirit Doctor is given a stone (probably a sacred 'tjuringa' stone) which has inscribed upon it "The song of Hungarrda". This song was sung by Hungarrda to "the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna, Snake and Insect Tribes", and begins in what is presumably meant to be the Arrernte language, with English language glosses.<sup>29</sup> But this two language component, as mentioned earlier, only appears in the 1927 version and the 1928 reprint (with bold sub-headings):

**The Song of Hungarrda  
Jew Lizard**

Wuhl.	Lou.	Mee.	Ingee.	Too.
Fire, Lightning.	Asleep within.	Stick.	Burning.	Brightly
Ma.				
Blaze leap upward.				
<b>Whul [sic] - Fire, Lightning.</b>				

<sup>28</sup> I suggest that Unaipon's research on Egyptian mythology, with its half-human half-animal-like gods, could have influenced the inclusion of such creatures in Unaipon's texts.

<sup>29</sup> The origin of these words is a bit of a puzzle. Because the theme of the narrative heralds from Central Australia, I assume Unaipon has adopted Arrernte words for the vernacular component. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that there are virtually no cognates in the available Ngarrindjeri wordlists. There seems to be a few possible cognates in the contemporary (1994) Eastern and Central Arrernte dictionary, but Unaipon appears to have been rather liberal in the way he has glossed individual words. In the Arrernte language, the causative suffix (used on transitive verbs) is -ileme, while the inchoative suffix (used on intransitive verbs) is -irreme. My educated guess is that Unaipon has asked his Arrernte informant to tell him how to say 'The fire has come to life from within the stick', and his informant has responded simply with the terms: *urtetye weme*, meaning 'rub sticks together to make fire' or *andalkngenthe-ileme*, meaning 'to make a fire flame up'. This latter term contains the causative suffix -ileme, which Unaipon could have anglicised to "Lou Mee". Note that the (1994) Arrernte dictionary lists: 'hot/fire' as *wawe*; 'sleep' as *ankwe*; 'firestick' as *alepe*; 'burning' as *ampeme* and 'lightning' as *alarrkentye*.

The only Ngarrindjeri word listed by Taplin (1879b) similar to Unaipon's is the ending of the word for 'lightning' *nalurmi*. Other words are less similar: 'fire' as *kene & bruge*; 'firestick' as *kene & tauwangi*; 'burning' as *nyrangkin & kuldun* and 'sleeping' as *tantin*.

The next section of The Song is indented and proceeds solely in English. It is only here that the 1929 version of "The song of Hungarrda" commenced:

Bright, consuming Spirit. No power on earth so great as Thee,  
First-born child of the Goddess of Birth and Light.  
The habitation betwixt heaven and earth within the veil of clouds dark at night.

It is unfortunate that someone (in 1929) made a decision to delete the vernacular introduction to The Song, because it provides an important clue to the meaning within the song, as well as clues to how the song should be read. The "First-born child" of the "Goddess of Light" is obviously "Wuhl", which may take either the earthly form of fire or lightning. As the beginning of the song states, while on earth Fire lays dormant in a stick before it burns, just as lightning hides "within the veil" of dark clouds before it comes alive. I contend that "The song of Hungarrda" is a tribute to Wuhl.

The layout of the remainder of the Hungarrda text, which follows the two sections of The song quoted above, is misleading. It confuses the way one reads and interprets the entire narrative. Because the remainder of the text is not indented, one could be led to believe that after a brief song, the Doctor resumes his story. Maybe this confusion explains why Beston (1979:344) suggests that Hungarrda seems to "lack focus". I argue that the entire last half of the narrative, or what Beston calls "a sort of doxology", is in fact the remainder of The song. I suggest that the printers have mistakenly failed to indent nearly a page of text. I also suggest they have failed to highlight one of the vernacular sub-headings ("Lou Mee" in 1927, which was deleted in 1929) as Unaipon intended.<sup>30</sup>

Clues to the presumed errors made by the printers lie in the song text itself. If the entire song does comprise a tribute to the first-born daughter of the Sun Goddess, who takes the two earthly forms of fire and lightning, the first section is a tribute to Lightning. This section begins with the highlighted sub-heading "Whul - Fire, Lightning", which was deleted in the 1929 version. After the section of indented song, already quoted above, the song continues as a tribute to Lightning:

Accompanied by furious wind and lashing rain and hail.  
Riding majestically upon the storm, flashing at intervals, illuminating the abode of man.  
Thine anger and thy power thou revealest to us...  
(Unaipon, 1927a:2, 1929:14)

Then the tribute to Fire begins, under the sub-heading "Lou Mee: Asleep with a stick". The printer has failed to highlight this heading, and I contest, has also mis-spelt the English gloss.

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<sup>30</sup> I have taken the liberty of laying out this narrative in Appendix 7.2 to include a long poetic song, just as Unaipon possibly intended. Note that Les Murray reproduced The song segment only of this narrative in *The new Oxford book of Australian verse*, under the name "Ngunaitponi (David Unaipon)" in 1986, adopting the layout and deletions of the 1929 publication.

The vernacular term "Lou Mee" is glossed at the beginning of The song (Unaipon, 1927:1) as "Asleep within Stick" (my underlining). This error is confirmed when one reads the beginning of the tribute to Fire:

Thus in wonder I am lost. No mortal mind can conceive,  
No mortal tongue express in language intelligible. Heaven-born Spark, I cannot see nor  
feel thee. Thou art concealed mysteriously wrapped within the fibre and bark of tree  
and bush and shrubs.

Why does thou condescend to dwell within a piece of stick?"  
As I roam from place to place for enjoyment or search of food,  
My soul is filled with gratitude and love for thee...

(Unaipon, 1927a:3; 1929:14)

The tribute continues with Unaipon introducing one of his favourite themes of bondage, as he poetically relays the means by which Aboriginal people make fire for their "health, comfort and happiness too":

But to plead is not enough to bring thee forth and cause thy glowing smiles to  
flicker over my frame.

But must strive and wrestle with this piece of stick pressing and twirling into  
another stick with all the power I possess, to release the bonds that bind thee fast.

(Unaipon, 1927a:3; 1929:14)

Although the origin of the vernacular terms used by Unaipon in The song are a puzzle, the other vernacular terms adopted for the remainder of the narrative seem to be from Central Australia. Take for example the following extract:

First I stood outside my mortal frame undecided what to do, and my Spirit  
consciousness revealed to me that I was encased within a bubble substance and as frail.  
Now if my bubble frame did burst, I'd be still within the Spirit World....

I looked toward the earth, sought my body frame, and saw its heaving breast  
still breathing deep in sleep. Then I thought of loved ones, kindred and my tribes. The  
aged honourable Ah Yamba and my people Harrunda. The landscape west, south and  
east, a radius of two hundred miles from Mountain Ah Yamba. In panoramic order lay  
Ellureecha, Kokacha, Hunmajarra, Deiree and Allu Wharra Tribes. All under the  
swaying influence and laws of the Harrunda...

(Unaipon, 1927a:1; 1929:12)

Unaipon did travel considerably to procure material for his narratives, however, my research does not reveal that he travelled as far as Alice Springs. But, Unaipon was quick to befriend any Indigenous people visiting Adelaide from distant towns and reserves. In a newspaper article that appeared in the same year that "Hungarrda" was printed, it states:

Yamba, an aborigine, who says he is the Chief of the Arunta Natives, who are divided into a number of separate groups with different dialects, subsequently called at the office of the Aborigines' Protection League, with Mr. David Unaipon, and informed the hon. secretary that he was greatly concerned about the theft of the sacred stones from the native sanctuary of his race. Only one or two natives besides himself knew exactly where these treasures were deposited, but evidently advantage has been taken of his absence. He is now with the Mounted Police as a black tracker....

He thinks that the churingas should be restored and entrusted to his care as chief.  
(*The Register* August 26, 1927:10)

I suggest that Yamba did more than offer authenticating vernacular terms for Unaipon's narrative "Hungarrda", but in fact inspired Unaipon with the theme for his entire narrative. The newspaper article quoted above appeared because of "the removal of sacred stones<sup>31</sup>, or churingas, by a Melbourne tourist from a native sanctuary". In Unaipon's narrative, the actual "Song of Hungarrda" is that inscribed on a stone (probably a sacred 'tjuringa' or 'churinga') given to the narrator "Nhan-garra Doctor" by Hungarrda the Jew Lizard. Before launching into The Song, Unaipon writes: "And then we sat upon a ledge of rock. He spake unto me in my tongue, Harruna [sic], explaining the secret code of initiation. The origin and adoption of Totemism and its laws that marriage customs must obey" (Unaipon, 1927:13).

One could be tempted to assume that Yamba may have been the source of information for a number of Unaipon's narratives, particularly those that include ethnographic details on initiation processes (such as "The story of the Mungingee" that includes the Central Australian custom of the knocking out of a front tooth). But the timing is wrong. "The story of the Mungingee" first appeared in print (in Unaipon's own name) in 1925, two years prior to Yamba's Adelaide visit. Furthermore, Unaipon would have completed collecting and writing narratives specifically for Ramsay Smith by August 1927, because Ramsay Smith forwarded his completed *Myths and Legends* manuscript to Harrap in London by the second week in September 1927 (see A & R correspondence, Mitchell Library). However, I suggest Unaipon's narrative Totemism, which didn't appear in print until 1929, was also inspired by his meeting with Yamba.

Returning to Hungarrda, I think it is worth spending a little time looking more closely at the vernacular terms Unaipon uses. The central Australian "tribes" that Unaipon lists include: *Harrunda* (now spelt [Eastern] 'Arrernte' or [Western] 'Arrarnta'); *Ellureecha* (now spelt 'Luritja'); *Kokacha* (also spelt 'Kukatja'); *Hunmajarra* (now spelt Anmatyerr); *Deiree* (also spelt 'Diyari' and 'Dieri') and *Allu Wharra* (now spelt 'Alyawarr'). We are told these groups are all in "a radius of two hundred miles from the Mountain Ah Yamba", which is also known as Yamba Station today, but is spelt 'Ayampe' in Eastern Arrernte.<sup>32</sup> Each of the "tribes" mentioned falls linguistically within the Arandic language group, except "Deiree" (which is further south in South Australia). The word for 'jew lizard' or *Hungarrda* in Eastern Arrernte is

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<sup>31</sup> A.F.A. correspondence (Mortlock Library SRG 139/1/104) reveals Sexton became involved, and demanded of the Commonwealth Department of External Affairs that "these treasures be restored". Apparently they were taken by a man just four miles out from Oodnadatta and sold to a Mr. D.H. Dureau".

<sup>32</sup> Yambah Station lies 70 kilometers north east of Alice Springs.

spelt today as 'ankerte', while the word for 'traditional healer/doctor' or *Nhan-Garra* is now spelt 'ngangkere'.<sup>33</sup>

Unaipon uses a phrase in Hungarrda, for the first time in *Native legends*, that one could almost consider a tell-tale trademark phrase in his other writings. The phrase: "the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna, Snakes, and Insect Tribes" (Unaipon, 1927a:2; 1929:14), and its more common variation "the animal, bird, reptile and insect tribes", appear on many occasions in Ramsay Smith (1930), even in texts that are not within the Mitchell Ms. Unaipon was very familiar with the revelations of Darwin before the turn of the century, and was a reader of the evolutionist Professor Huxley. My reading of Unaipon's prolific use of these phrases is that he has transposed scientific (and evolutionary) categories to represent the Aboriginal (and anthropological) concept of "tribe". He categorises all species into four main groups or "tribes": animals, birds, reptiles and insects, and then categorises different species within these groups as "families". One of Unaipon's most revealing narratives, regarding the relationship he sees between different species, is "The flood and its result" (see Text No. 6 in the Mitchell Ms. & Ramsay Smith, 1930:151-168). This narrative tells of the plight of the ancient platypus to win the right to survive, despite being different from others. One can't help but read a political agenda in this text, with the platypus representing the plight of Aboriginal people earlier this century, and the kangaroo representing Unaipon's friend Herbert Basedow, who often spoke in the Adelaide Town Hall to "save the Aborigines" (the *Advertiser* August 18, 1921). According to Unaipon:

The kangaroo called a general meeting for the day before the full moon. When all were assembled he asked that no one should speak out of turn; that no reflections should be made against any tribe or person; and that each should consider the interest that was at stake - the building up of a race that was in decline. He said, "The platypus comes of a very ancient race. Not only so, but he belongs to a very learned and cultured people..."  
(Unaipon, Text 6, 1924-25 & Ramsay Smith, 1930:163)

Unaipon also includes, in this same narrative, an interesting 'Aboriginalising' concept of each tribe having their own chief, as well as an advocate or adviser. The animal chief is the kangaroo, with the wise koala as adviser; the eagle-hawk is the bird tribe chief and the crow his adviser; the goanna is the reptile chief and the tiger-snake his adviser. This dual concept is still common amongst many Aboriginal groups today.<sup>34</sup> Langloh Parker also referred to different animals and birds as "tribes". In "Bootoolgah the crane, and Goonur the Kangaroo Rat, the Fire Makers" (1978:33-36) she writes of all "the tribes" coming together for a "corrobboree", and refers to "the black cockatoo tribe" and "the Native Cat tribe", among others. By contrast,

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<sup>33</sup> I would like to thank the linguist John Henderson, who co-compiled the Arrernte Dictionary (1994), for his assistance in deciphering some of these vernacular terms. Like many linguists and anthropologists to whom I show Unaipon's texts, Henderson found Unaipon's work rather strange and unusual.

<sup>34</sup> The Warlpiri of central Australia, for example, have terms 'kirda' for the owners of particular land and Dreamings, and 'kurdungurlu' for the guardians or advisers for those same Dreamings.

Unaipon rarely refers to individual species as tribes. Instead he groups whole genres (or geni) together as tribes, such as all birds, all animals, all reptiles, or all insects. Another sign in Ramsay Smith (1930) of Unaipon's creative hand at work is the way he refers to, or categorises, reptiles. He occasionally lists lizards and reptiles as different tribes, which could possibly be due to confusion in contemporary debates on evolutionary theory, and the proposed links between different species on the evolutionary scale.

In my opinion "Hungarrda" is exemplary of the types of hybrid texts that Unaipon delighted in creating. As in "Totemism", he chooses to incorporate Christian concepts (such as "Heaven") illustrating his desire to meld the two cosmologies of Christianity and Aboriginal mythology. But rather than introducing a patriarchal father figure, he chooses to incorporate the "First-born child of the Goddess of Birth and Life". He also adopts the archaic language of Biblical prose, while presenting an alternative version of the creation story that is decidedly scientific, especially with its inclusion of an evolutionary theme that has all life beginning from "the slimy sea". Interestingly, however, Unaipon begins this narrative by implying these beliefs came to the "blackfellow" in a deep sleep, referring perhaps to the 'Dreamtime' analogy attributed to Spencer and Gillen in 1899.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, he authenticates his text as being of Aboriginal origins by including vernacular terms with which his white readers would not be familiar. I cannot agree with Beston, who states that Unaipon's Hungarrda Song lacks focus, particularly if one reads it as poetry, as was intended by its author. Hungarrda is one of Unaipon's most syncretic, and arguably, most interesting narrative constructions.

### 7.4.3 *Release of the dragon flies*

One further text in *Native legends* worth discussing is "Release of the dragon flies: by the fairy, Sun Beam". I will not summarise the story-line here, because this was done by both Beston (1979) and Hosking (1995). However, I would like to reflect on some of its themes, particularly because they continue to emerge in other narratives by Unaipon that appeared later in Ramsay Smith (1930).

"Release of the Dragon Flies" reads as a legend-cum-moralising-fairy-tale, and illustrates well Unaipon's repeated effort to synthesise the characters of Aboriginal mythology (the "Mythological Monster" the "Bunyip" and the "aged kangaroo") with a story-line that bears the Christian message of the importance of doing good unto others, and caring for the "weaker ones". Unaipon also incorporates the Christian concept of evil (in the form of "wicked Frogs")

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<sup>35</sup> This "deep sleep" analogy of Unaipon's predates the usage of the term "Eternal Dreamtime" by Elkin in 1933, and Stanner's usage of the term "Dreaming" in 1953. Note that Unaipon also mentions "Dream land" in "Release of the dragon flies" (Unaipon, 1929:2). Spencer and Gillen refer to this mythical "dreamtime" period as "Alcheringa" (1899).

and an ultimate judgement on their actions (in the form of "a cloud like mid-night" with thunder and lightning). As in the Bible, the sinful evil ones in Unaipon's tale eventually succumb to a knowledge of good and evil: "Then a guilty conscience smote them one and all; for the wrong they did unto the helpless, harmless Water Grubs who did need help; the strong should give" (Unaipon, 1929:3).

Unaipon's (1929:3) inclusion of an all-loving "Designer", analogous to a Christian God (with "a Force and Power greater than they [the army of Bull Froggies] possessed, which came to intervene and protect the weaker ones") reaffirms his Christian message. So does his conclusion of repentance (by the Froggies), as they decide not to "hinder the harmless Water Grubs from fulfilling their mission".

Hosking (1995) hints at subversive elements within this particular narrative, but does not commit herself to details. I can see several possible readings, maybe the most compelling being the interpretation of the Water Grubs as Aboriginal people, and their captive homes (their "Pool of water transparent and clean") being the missions and reserves.<sup>36</sup> But to take this analogy further is difficult. Who are the captor Bull Froggies? Are they the missionaries, or maybe the government appointed superintendant at Point McLeay? Or are they the welfare authorities who legislated the restriction of movement of Aboriginal people from the missions? And why does Unaipon equip the "army of Bull Froggies" with "spears and boomerangs and nulla nulla too"? Perhaps this personification is just to give the narrative an 'Aboriginal flavour'. But when Unaipon mentions that the Bull Froggies take "a Day of Rest" from their duties, the analogy with the missionaries is appealing. Support for the analogy of the Water Grubs being captive Aboriginal people is the inclusion of the "greatly feared" Bunyip (whom the "Frog Ventriloquists" mimic in order to keep their charges in captivity). Even today Aboriginal people use fear as a means of disciplining their children and containing their movements.<sup>37</sup>

The Bunyip is a much feared large, black water monster that is said to devour women and children. It originated in Indigenous narratives from south eastern Australia, but has since become ubiquitous in contemporary Australian folk mythology. The word itself is from the Wemba-wemba language of Victoria (from their word 'banib'), and was recorded as early as 1847 in the *Port Phillip Herald* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which claimed sightings of this amphibious monster on the Murrumbidgee (see Dixon et.al., s1990:109). Unaipon also

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<sup>36</sup> We must remember that Unaipon lived through the Protection era (and later the permit system) whereby Aboriginal people were not free to come and go from their mission stations.

<sup>37</sup> During my work in both Arnhem Land and in Warlpiri country in central Australia, I often heard mothers threatening their children to be still or quiet, particularly at night, otherwise either a monster, sorcerer, white-person or policeman would come and get them (they used, of course, the Yolngu term 'mokuy' and 'ngäpaki' in Arnhem land, and 'kinki', 'walypali' and 'palijimani' in Warlpiri).



refers, in other narratives, to the "Mall-dar-pee" as something to be feared at night.<sup>38</sup> The words cited for 'Devil' in Ngarrindjeri in Taplin (1879b:129) are "Brupe" and "Melape". Meyer just lists "Melâpe" in his wordlist, and glosses it as:

devil, evil spirit, sorcerer. He is supposed to appear under various forms, sometimes that of a man with horns, sometimes as a bird. The term is also sometimes applied to the Adelaide natives.

(Meyer, 1843:79)

Returning to Unaipon's narrative "Release of the dragon flies", it is possible Unaipon was inspired by a number of literary sources. Most obvious is the writings of Charles Kingsley, and his book *The Water-Babies*. Both narratives include a theme of imprisonment and then release through transformation from one form to another. However, Unaipon uses Little Fairy Sun Beams and Queens of Sun Beams as transformers, rather than Fairy Queens and guardian fairies. In *The Water-Babies* Tom is a poor chimney sweep, who is transformed into a water-baby, to escape the toil of his human existence; whereas the imprisoned Water Grubs in Unaipon's narrative are transformed into Dragon Flies with "silvery wings" to fly away. Kingsley also features a dragon-fly in his narrative, who is transformed from "an ugly dirty creature" into "the king of all the flies" (1903:94-96), as well as other water creatures including trout and frogs.<sup>39</sup>

The role of the "aged kangaroo" in Unaipon's narrative "Release of the dragon flies" also bears some similarity to the role of Moses in the Old Testament in leading the Israelites from their tormentors. Unaipon's prophet, kangaroo, leads the "Animals, Birds, Lizards, and Reptile Tribes" away from the "terrifying sounds" of the Frog Ventriloquists. He says: "Come, my children, and I will lead the way to some other country, far beyond the mountain range" (Unaipon, 1929:1-2). But the most telling Biblical influence is the message of liberation from the New Testament, which ultimately comes to those who abide with the teachings of Christ. Unaipon tells us that the "judgment [sic] that awaits the Tyrant" will not come to those who do not "hinder the harmless ... from fulfilling their mission". He also tell us that "a guilty conscience" should come to those who do wrong to the "harmless", and to the "strong" who do not help the "helpless" (see Unaipon, 1929:3). Although Unaipon was very grateful in his public addresses to the Aborigines' Friends' Association, who ran Point Mcleay mission (see Unaipon, 1951 & 1953), one cannot help thinking there is a further sub-text in his Dragon Fly narrative. Unaipon was a young man when the trouble arose over who should succeed the late George Taplin in administering the mission at Point McLeay. George Taplin's son Frederick

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<sup>38</sup> Unaipon refers to the 'Mall-dar-pee' as an "Evil Spirit" or "devil-devil" in his ethnographic text "Aboriginals - Their traditions" (see Unaipon, Text 1, 1924-25). In his first published narrative "The story of the Mungingee" Unaipon (1925:42-43) refers to both the "Bunyip and the Muldarpi", and says of the latter figure that it "is a spirit which assumes many shapes".

<sup>39</sup> The imprisonment theme of Unaipon's reoccurs in "Narroondarie's Wives" (Unaipon, Text 16, 1924-25 & Ramsay Smith, 1930:317-331) and will be discussed later.

had earlier been accused (by the Ngarrindjeri leaders in the church) of interfering with the local women, so there was much unrest about his ultimate appointment as superintendent. One wonders whether the fire that prematurely killed Frederick was viewed by the likes of Unaipon as an ultimate judgement for taking advantage of the "helpless". One also wonders whether Unaipon had a message for A.F.A. officials (ie. the Froggies) who insisted that Unaipon himself (ie. a harmless Water Grub) continue to labour as a bootmaker at Point McLeay, when he aspired to a more fulfilling life outside of the mission. I make this suggestion on the basis of Unaipon's concluding sentence:

And from that pool came forth the repentant Froggies all decided that for the future they would not hinder the harmless Water Grubs from fulfilling their mission by transformation and so demonstrating the greatness and wisdom of their Designer.  
(Unaipon, 1929:3)

#### 7.4.4 "Narrinyeri saying"

The final text to appear in *Native legends* is the brief poem "Narrinyeri saying", which one could almost be describe<sup>d</sup> as tragic. It has been discussed briefly elsewhere by Hosking (1995:100) who drew upon my own research in her discussion. But I return to it here because I don't believe past critics are aware that a different version of "Narrinyeri saying" first appeared in 1927 in Unaipon's *Aboriginal legends* at the end of "Hungarrda". This earlier version has its opening four lines in Unaipon's own language Ngarrindjeri (along with English glosses), which were all deleted in the 1929 version. I quote the 1927 version here in full (with the vernacular terms in italics):

##### Narrinyeri saying

*Meewee*<sup>40</sup>

Life

<i>Elin.</i>	<i>Arm.</i>	<i>Porlar</i>
Appearance, Like.	Those	Children.
<i>Pinpin.</i>	<i>Itchie.</i>	
Pushing, Launching	The, Their.	
<i>Youkee</i>	<i>Wingkeen injerr.</i>	
Bark Canoe, Boat.	Romp, Dance, Enjoyment.	
<i>Par Pul.</i>	<i>Ulloo Murr.</i>	
Dejected, Weep.	Ocean Beach.	

Like children at play we begin Life's journey,  
 Push our frail bark into the stream of Time,  
 That flows from snow-capped Mountain.  
 With no care; Singing and laughing as our boat glides  
 Upon the tide wending its way through the steep rocky banks  
 And meadows with bushes and plants abloom, with sweet fragrant flowers.

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<sup>40</sup> The term "Mee Wee" that Unaipon uses for "life" in this poem is listed as "Mewe", meaning 'bowels, inside', in the Ngarrindjeri wordlists by Meyer (1843) and (Taplin, 1979b). This part of the anatomy is still viewed today by the Ngarrindjeri people as the seat of emotion, just as the heart is considered the seat of emotion for many non-Indigenous Australians (see discussion on the term 'Miwi' by Bell, 1998:218-225).

Until we arrive in the Great Ocean where we are baffled and tossed by the angry waves. Onward and onward.  
For three score years and ten. Then we are cast forlorn and shipwrecked upon the shore of a strange land.

(Unaipon, 1927a:3)

This allegoric verse is, of course, a metaphor of life as a journey. But Unaipon cleverly superimposes his poem with the travels of the Ngarrindjeri Ancestral Hero, Ngurunderi, who begins his creationary journey in the east, in the upper reaches of the Murray River, and ends it in the Great Southern Ocean. The poem reveals some of the disillusionment Unaipon apparently felt during his own life's journey, just as Ngurunderi despaired at the loss of his own two wives after pursuing them for many miles along the coast and then into the sea. The way Unaipon crafts this masterful hybrid text, by drawing on the journey of the Ngarrindjeri ancestor, is arguably an incipient challenge to the colonial literature of his time, and represents the beginnings of the emergence of postcolonial Indigenous literature in this country.

Why Unaipon chose to end his 1929 collection with such a forlorn reflection on life is puzzling, unless we begin to take into account some of his own personal tragedies in life. It seems David Unaipon was one of the few in the large Unaipon family to survive long enough to have children (another was his much younger brother Creighton). His father and mother (James Unaipon and Nymbulda) had ten children, and many of these died as toddlers, or in the case of his sister Jemima, in their teens. Furthermore, Unaipon's marriage to Katherine Carter (or "Cissy") seems to have had its own misfortunes. It is rumoured that Unaipon did not treat her well, and restrained her movements when away on his many travels. The Point McLeay register states that Cissy Unaipon died of "a fit" in December 1924, at the age of fifty (Mortlock Library SRG698/1/1). This was the very year that Unaipon began his brief writing career. Perhaps it was this incident that prompted the forlorn tone of his "Narrinyeri saying". But it was not just personal loss that Unaipon would have lamented. He struggled all his life to fulfill his ambitions as an inventor, and to finance his perpetual motion machine. Although he lived well beyond his "three score years and ten", as an Aboriginal person living in a dominant and a racist white society, for many years he obviously felt "baffled and tossed by the angry waves" of life.

Of all Unaipon's writings, it is this brief lament that seems to be most inspired by Unaipon's much admired preacher Thomas De Witt Talmage.<sup>41</sup> This evangelical American preacher of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in New York, had a huge outreach across the world through his published sermons: "They were published weekly by as many as three thousand five hundred newspapers, and it is estimated that they were read by more than 25,000,000 readers" (De Witt

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas De Witt Talmage was born in 1832 and died in 1902, the year before Unaipon's son was born, whom Unaipon named Talmage De Witt.

Talmage, 1957: dustcover). His sermons were also published in books from 1874, and were reprinted in a series in 1957. We know that his sermons were read in South Australia, and were even inspired by the responses he got from this state, because De Witt Talmage states in his sermon "Hard rowing":

last night I received another letter from South Australia, saying that the reading of that sermon [sic] in Australia had brought several souls to Christ. And then, I thought, why not take another phase of the same subject because, for, ... God [may] ... bring salvation to the people who shall hear, and salvation to the people who may read.  
(De Witt Talmage, 1874b:329)

We know from his autobiographical writings (Unaipon, 1951:12) that Unaipon himself did read, and in fact memorised and preached, De Witt Talmage's sermons. The subject that De Witt Talmage was referring to in the above quote was, in fact, that of seeing life as a journey across the sea, which we see in "Narrinyeri saying", and in sermons within almost every other published collection of De Witt Talmage's (see also 1874a: "The voyage to heaven" & 1874c: "The wrath of the sea"). De Witt Talmage analogises the turmoils of life with the challenges that confront those that find themselves at sea in the middle of a storm, and then concludes his sermons with appeals to his congregations to seek God to deliver them safely to the secure shores of heaven. But he also urges them to: "Wait not for the storm before you fly to him. Go to him now, and seek his pardon. Find refuge in his mercy" (De Witt Talmage, 1874c:249).

Like Unaipon, this popular preacher occasionally concludes his prose with poetic verse:

Into the harbour of heaven we now glide,  
Home at last!  
Softly we drift on the bright silver tide,  
Home at last!

(De Witt Talmage, 1874c:249)

"Narrinyeri saying" also bears some resemblance to the situation posed by his favourite preacher's sermon: "Is life worth living?", when reflecting on the mid-life crisis facing a fictitious man with many of life's woes:

Here is a man who has come to his forties. He is at the tip-top of the hill of life. Every step has been a stumble and a bruise. The people he trusted have turned out deserters, and the money he has honestly made he has been cheated out of. His nerves are out of tune.... Forty miles of climbing up the hill of life have been to him like climbing the Matterhorn, and there are forty miles yet to go down, and descent is always more dangerous than ascent. Ask him whether life is worth living, and he will drawl out in shivering and lugubrious and appalling negative, 'No, no, no!'

(De Witt Talmage, c1880sb:319)

De Witt Talmage's sermons always end, however, on a positive note, offering hope from life's battles and woes, through Christ. Obviously, this hope was momentarily absent from Unaipon as he wrote of life's despair in "Narrinyeri saying". But maybe he was reflecting on the fate of

a life at sea without the salvation of Christ? Hence, Unaipon completes his sermon on life, in the form of "Narrinyeri saying", on a negative note.

One could view the conclusion to Unaipon's first autobiography as a sermonic coda. Within it, he chooses to quote the poet Longfellow:

That in even savage bosoms  
There are longings, yearnings, strivings,  
For the good they comprehend not.  
That the feeble hands and helpless,  
Groping blindly in the darkness,  
Touch God's right hand in the darkness,  
And are lifted up, and strengthened.

(quoted by Unaipon, 1951:14)

Unaipon then, in his final remarks mentions the hard times in his own life, and like Longfellow and De Witt Talmage, chooses to acknowledge God as the one who sees him through:

This record of my life would be incomplete without the grateful acknowledgement of the kindly Providence which has guided and directed my steps through the years, assisted me in my struggles to make good, and in my despairing moments has enabled me to take heart again and continue my advocacy of the rights of the aborigines to occupy a more worthy place in the life of the nation.

(Unaipon, 1951:14)

#### 7.4.5 Conclusion to *Native legends*

One last narrative I should mention briefly from *Native legends*, before concluding this section, is "Youn Goona".<sup>42</sup> Again I will not detail the story-line because it has already been summarised by Beston (1979) and Hosking (1995). Like Hosking, I also see elements in this text of western evolutionary theory as well as the Genesis creation story. Like "Totemism" and "Hungarrda", this text seems to be an attempt by Unaipon to reconcile any potential conflict that exists between differing belief systems. There are further parallels with the Genesis story, particularly regarding the eating of the apple by Adam and Eve. But in "Youn Goona" we see the male Cockatoo (Youn Goona) and his wife (Bhoo Yooah) choosing between a Spirit life or "a body of flesh and blood" (Unaipon, 1929:8). This theme of people or creatures acquiring different levels of knowledge re-occurs in many of Unaipon's narratives.

I shall return to "Youn Goona" in the next section, to point out some similarities it has with Unaipon's creation trilogy. I shall also mention "Youn Goona", in a later section regarding the issue of vernacular terms used by Unaipon, to try and ascertain what Unaipon's primary and secondary sources could have been for some of his narratives that come from outside the Ngarrindjeri language bloc.

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<sup>42</sup> The fourth narrative, "Pah Kowie", will be discussed in the next section.

I shall conclude this discussion on *Native legends* with a comment on the supposed 'authenticity' of its component texts. My reading of much of Unaipon's work suggests that his intention was to "weave" a literary product that would appeal to his white readers, and hence sell well as he peddled them from door to door. He perceived his own knowledge of Aboriginal beliefs and cultures as a resource to be drawn from, and had no shame in incorporating information from other Aboriginal people to create his hybrid texts. His incorporation of vernacular words into four of the six narratives that comprise this small publication would have given his 1929 booklet a degree of authenticity in the eyes of its white readers. But I do not believe Unaipon's intention in using vernacular terms was to give authenticity to his narratives. Otherwise he would not have created such hybrid texts, and incorporated so many Christian concepts and other non-Indigenous elements. His intention, I believe, in publishing *Native legends* was to produce a booklet of literary merit that would entertain his readers, and sell well, partly because of its Aboriginal 'flavour'.

It is not surprising that anthropologists such as Tindale referred to Unaipon's work as "romantic rubbish" with "highly improbable concepts entirely foreign to the real stories of an Australian prelithic [sic] people" (quoted in Bell, 1998:129). Nor should those who respect Unaipon's work be offended. I contend that in *Native legends*, Unaipon was creating works of fiction to be judged perhaps by literary critics, not anthropologists<sup>43</sup>. Maybe Ronald and Catherine Berndt, who had little to do with Unaipon, particularly because of his close relationship with the A.F.A., would have been less critical of his 'legends' if they had not read them with the eyes of western anthropologists.<sup>44</sup> It is impossible to know, however, how Unaipon himself would like researchers such as myself, or his own descendants, to read *Native legends* in this new millenium.

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<sup>43</sup> I do believe, however, that Unaipon's seven ethnographic texts, written in the third person, that appear in Ramsay Smith (1930) were not intended as fiction.

<sup>44</sup> Note the Berndts' criticism mentioned in chapter six, saying Unaipon's texts were "far removed from typical Narrinyeri accounts" (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:9).

## 7.5 THE CREATION TRILOGY

*Australian Aborigines are a spiritual people. Their religion is life tuned with the creator who has given the religious laws, ceremonies, teaching, holy sacred land and the mountains for which the term we use today is sacred site....*

*The Aboriginal Christians are convinced and believe that the God of the Bible was with us and our people in the dreamtime.<sup>45</sup> He was very active in our history. He has come to us in many different ways and many different forms to reveal His presence. He spoke to us through his creation, the beauty of the nature that clothes itself in God's glory that convinced us and made us believe that he is also the God of the Aboriginal race in Australia.*

(Djinyini Gondarra in: *Father you gave us the Dreaming*, 1988:1-2)

### 7.5.1 Introduction

The Indigenous Christian leader, Djinyini Gondarra, recognises that we now live in a post-invasion Australia, and the majority of Indigenous Australians can only have a post-missionary understanding of their own spiritual world. However, this does not prevent one contemplating the spiritual beliefs of Indigenous people prior to the white invasion of their land. For south eastern Australia, where the impact of invasion was most severe, we can only surmise the finer details of Indigenous spiritual beliefs prior to 1788. However, scholars such as Swain (1993) have speculated on the emergence of a celestial "All-Father" (often personified as Baiame) in the mythology of Indigenous southern Australia, being rooted in the Christian influences of colonial times.<sup>46</sup>

From my reading of missionaries (such as Webb, 1944 & Chaseling, 1957) and anthropologists (such as Warner, 1969; Elkin, 1948; Berndt & Berndt, 1964 and Strehlow, 1978) my understanding of pre-Christian Aboriginal cultures and beliefs is that in central and northern Australia, there was no single, all-powerful male creator figure. Mention is made of "sky heroes", such as Baiame (see Elkin, 1948:200-202), who had considerable creationary powers, and giant serpents such as "Yurluunggur, the Big Father" (see Warner, 1969:242), who floods the land and devours female creationary figures in Arnhem Land. However, these creationary figures acted in conjunction with other Ancestral Heroes, and are not seen as benevolent God-like figures who wielded more control over the creation of life on earth than other spiritual beings.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> In a more recent paper, Gondarra has moved away from using the terms 'the dreaming' or 'the dreamtime', (saying Yolngu are 'highly insulted' by their use), preferring the term 'the Maḡayin' (see Gondarra et. al. 1998, A.R.D.S. Paper 7)

<sup>46</sup> Swain also poses that the widespread Indigenous belief in an All-Father was, in part, a response to the severe traumas associated with colonisation in southern Australia (Swain, 1993:117-118).

<sup>47</sup> This of course was a problem for the early missionaries, who strove to find analogous God-like characters within the beliefs of different Aboriginal groups, which would assist them in converting their subjects to monotheistic Christianity. Taplin initially adopted 'Ngurunderi' as God, but soon changed this analogy because "Ngurunderi was responsible for many customs with which he was loath to associate with his God" (Hemming

From discussions with Howard Amery, who has 13 years experience working in Arnhem Land<sup>48</sup>, and from my own time spent teaching in Arnhem Land, and later central Australia, my understanding regarding the contemporary beliefs of Yolngu Christians in Arnhem Land is that the identity of God is as much a mystery to them as it is to non-Indigenous Australians. They do believe firmly in his (or her) existence, and that God was always there in the time of the world's creation (see Gondarra, 1988). They also contend that God was the force behind the Yolngu creator beings, but do not identify him as being personified in any particular Ancestral Hero. The contemporary terms used by Yolngu for 'God' vary, including: 'God Bāpa' (literally 'Father God'), 'God Wangarr' and 'Wangarr'. The term 'Wangarr' is a collective noun used in reference to all the Ancestral Heros of the Yolngu, and is glossed in the Yolngu Matha dictionary as "totemic ancestors, cultural heros, beings who originally inhabited the earth then changed themselves into animals, birds, etc." (see Lowe, 1975).

Each Indigenous group in Australia has their own set of land-based Ancestral Heroes, who have strong spiritual and creationary ties with particular tracts of land. In addition there are beliefs and narratives that explain the creation of the sun and the stars of the 'heavens'. But as far as I am aware, there was no single creator spirit in the 'heavens' that created all on earth. As missionary Webb (in 1944:35) points out of Yolngu belief, prior to the establishment of the Christian missions in Arnhem Land: they do not worship, nor believe in one single Supreme Being or Great Spirit.<sup>49</sup> This is confirmed by the anthropologist T.G.H. Strehlow regarding central Australian Arrernte belief, about which he wrote:

It is clear that it would be impossible to regard the emu-footed Great Father in the sky of Western Aranda mythology as a Supreme Being in any sense of this word; for neither he nor his family ever exerted any influence beyond the limits of the sky. As I have written in *The songs of Central Australia*:

They (i.e. these sky beings) have not created the earth, nor any of its landscape features, nor any of its human inhabitants. They had not brought the totemic ancestors into being, nor had they controlled any of their actions. They had no power over winds, clouds, sicknesses, dangers, or death. They were not even interested in anything that went on below. If any crimes were committed, the evil-doers had to fear only the wrath of the totemic ancestors and the punishment of outraged human society.

(Strehlow, 1978:13)

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1988:192). Similarly, Schürmann tried to use 'munaintyerlo' but soon abandoned the idea (personal communication Rob Amery, 1999). Such mission inquiries probably propogated the emergence of an All-Father figure in southern Australia.

<sup>48</sup> H. Amery works with Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Inc., within the Uniting Church. He works in an advisory and support capacity, principally with Yolngu people such as Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra, and spends much time trying to breakdown communication barriers between Yolngu and non-Indigenous people. He does much linguistic work, looking for conceptual parallels between English and the language of the Yolngu people, Yolngu Matha.

<sup>49</sup> I shall discuss the political and social organisation of Yolngu belief further in Chapter Nine.



Unaipon's creation trilogy, however, portrays a very different picture. He features an all-powerful Great Father Spirit, who has control over other powerful female beings, who assist him in the creation of the earth and its creatures. Unaipon begins "The story of creation" with the prophetic announcement: "The voice of the Great Spirit spake unto Bajjara [morning star] and Arna [the moon] in a dream, and said, 'Go forth and tell this story, for I have chosen you as my messengers.' This is the story." (Ramsay Smith, 1930:23). Unaipon then proceeds, in Biblical tones, to tell of an all-powerful "Great Father Spirit" who controls when and how the earth was created, and commands that the Sun Goddess go forth and vegetate the earth, and to create the birds and animals, and eventually "the human race". This "beautiful young goddess", whom he commands to create all on the earth, is the daughter of the Grandmother Sun Goddess, Pah Kowie, who features in *Native legends*.

Unaipon begins his story of creation thus:

For a long, long time an awful deathlike stillness pervaded everything. Within the darkness and stillness of the earth there slept a beautiful young goddess. One day the Great Father Spirit whispered gently to her. 'You have slept and fulfilled my will. Now awake and go forth and give life to the universe and to everything therein. Do all as I command you. First awaken the grass, then the plants, and then the trees. After... bring forth insects and fish, reptiles and lizards, snakes, birds, and animals. Then rest.... Nothing shall come forth that is not for the benefit of other parts of the creation....

Then the Sun Mother came and beheld her work, and saw that it was good.

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:23-31)

Just as Carey (1998) warns readers to be wary of early missionary and anthropological texts, and the way they represent Aboriginal religious beliefs, so too should we be wary in the way we read Unaipon's representation. But close analysis of Unaipon's prolific writings, whoever's name they were published under, can be illuminating. Carey (1998:131) suggests that: "David Unaipon generated a mythology in sympathy with the evangelical and Aboriginal aspirations from traditional Ngurrunjeri [sic] stories". However, in contrast with Mudrooroo, she does not find him responsible for the popularising of the Aboriginal deity "the Great Spirit Biaime" in "popular writing" on Aboriginal beliefs and mythology. For this she holds Katie Langloh Parker responsible, and perhaps the anthropologist Andrew Lang, who wrote the introduction to Langloh Parker's first collection.

Lang later wrote of the significance of Byamee (to use Langloh Parker's preferred spelling) in the journal *Folk-Lore* (Lang, 1899b), and by the time Langloh Parker published her third collection, she was further influenced by the recently published, and influential, works of Spencer and Gillen, and wrote: "Byamee... is to the Euahlayi what the 'Alcheringa' or 'Dream time' is to the Arunta" (Langloh Parker, 1905:4-9). However, Langloh Parker's first two collections of 'Legendary tales' do not give Byamee an all-powerful God-like status, although he is listed in the glossary as "big man (Creator, Culture hero)" (see Langloh Parker,

1978:183). In the fourth narrative in her first collection, entitled "The origin of the Narran Lake", Old Byamee appears as a man who goes in pursuit of his two wives, much the same as Ngurunderi does in the narrative of the Ngarrindjeri people. Langloh Parker was actually sent the Ngurunderi narrative by her uncle, Simpson Newland, so included it in her second collection. In her published rendition of this narrative she gives this cultural hero an even higher status than Byamee: "Ngroondoorie [sic], the giver of laws, customs... [who] became... a God [to the Southern 'tribes' of South Australia]" (Langloh Parker, 1978:181).<sup>50</sup>

In contrast, Carey (1998:203) claims: "Unaipon... chose to distance himself from an over-close identification with the pagan religion, and the names of pagan gods, however Christianised", even though she mentions the "Fairy Sun Beams, Bull Froggies, Spirit Man, Pah Kowie" etc. from his *Native legends* (Carey, 1998:213). I find this observation odd, particularly when one considers Unaipon's creation narratives, and reads of his Sun Goddess who was venerated by the creatures of her creation: "When the Mother Goddess next went forth she was accompanied by insects, snakes, and lizards, who venerated her" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:26). I will return to this issue later in my discussion on the inclusion of a Sun Goddess in Unaipon's texts.

Carey (1998:213) claims Unaipon wrote primarily "as an evangelist for the twin causes of his Christian faith and Aboriginal race, causes which he regarded as mutually reinforcing". Although she (1998:214-215) acknowledges that Unaipon wrote of an "Aboriginalised Great Spirit and his servant Nurrundere", she does not see Unaipon's "Christianised mythologies" as the source of the subsequent "wide diffusion of the All-Father or Baiame complex that soon became popularised in contemporary representations of Aboriginal mythology. Because Carey is critical of the assimilationist motives of the 'soft primitivism' of the Baiame complex, and because Unaipon did not equate Baiame with the Great Father Spirit in his own narratives (cf. Mudrooroo, 1994:171), I think it is important to come to some understanding of how Unaipon himself perceived the Great Father Spirit. Was he equivalent to the Christian God? And who did Unaipon equate with Christ? Was it Bajjara the morning star, or his messengers Baiame and Ngurunderi?<sup>51</sup> These questions are particularly relevant today, as we find Aboriginal Christians, along with their non-Indigenous theological colleagues, grappling with the task of establishing an uniquely Aboriginal theology, such as "Rainbow Spirit theology" (see Rosendale et. al. 1997). A close reading of Unaipon's creation narratives, two of which Carey would not have attributed to Unaipon, simply because they were published under Ramsay

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<sup>50</sup> I discuss this narrative in detail in Chapter Eight.

<sup>51</sup> There is a Christian tradition of viewing the morning star as God's messenger, who was personified in Christ (see the last book of the Bible, Revelation ch.22 v.16: "I am the bright and the morning star". See also the sermon of the popular American preacher De Witt Talmage: "The bright and morning star" c1880b:7-13)

Smith's name and do not appear in the Mitchell Ms., will greatly assist our understanding of Unaipon's version of a hybrid Aboriginal-Christian theology.

### 7.5.2 A review of Unaipon's creation trilogy

Unaipon's Pah Kowie (of *Native legends*) reads to me as a short precursor of the much longer creation narrative, "The story of creation", which appears in Ramsay Smith (1930:23-31). Together the three narratives: "Pah Kowie", "The story of creation" and "The coming of mankind" form what I call a creation trilogy. Neither "The story of creation" nor "The coming of mankind" appears in the Mitchell Ms., but correspondence between Ramsay Smith and George Robertson (held in the Mitchell Library ML MSS 314/76) tells us that "The story of creation" was one of the three extra narratives sent to Ramsay Smith, along with the thirty texts comprising the Mitchell Ms.<sup>52</sup> Two further narratives, that should also be mentioned in relation to Unaipon's creation trilogy, are the ethnographic text "The belief in a Great Spirit" and the narrative "The voice of the Great Spirit", both of which appear in the Mitchell Ms. (the latter is discussed by Carey, 1998:214-215). They also feature the Great Spirit, and will be discussed further below.

The archival evidence suggests that Unaipon was the author of "The story of creation", as well as "Pah Kowie". I see the proposed creation trilogy as further evidence that much more of the 1930 Ramsay Smith volume was written by Unaipon (i.e. than the 27 texts that Ramsay Smith chose to reproduce from the Mitchell Ms.). A further aim of this discussion is to provide proof that the third text in the trilogy, "The coming of mankind", is also by Unaipon. What I find intriguing about Unaipon's inclusion and representation of a Great Father Spirit in his creation narratives is his willingness, or determination, to portray this Great Spirit as an all-powerful, yet all-loving, deity analogous to a Christian God. As I have already mentioned in this chapter, Unaipon's motive for such a deification was to lift the status of his own people in the eyes of his readers. He wanted to prove that Aboriginal people had a belief system, and a set of morals, that paralleled those of the Christian church. This monotheistic representation of Aboriginal beliefs contrasts, of course, with the later writings of anthropologists such as Strehlow. But in the mid 1920s that was of no concern to Unaipon.<sup>53</sup>

Returning to "The story of creation", which appears as the second narrative in Ramsay Smith's (1930) publication, a footnote has been added on the first page (presumably by Ramsay Smith) stating: "This story of Creation was told by a Karraru woman of the west coast of South

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<sup>52</sup> This particular narrative was given a different name by Unaipon: "The Sun a Goddess and a creation".

<sup>53</sup> This fact did not deter Unaipon from later re-publishing (in his own name) his narrative "The voice of the Great Spirit" in the *Dawn* magazine in 1959. By this stage Unaipon would have been aware of Strehlow's published works, and indeed knew Strehlow personally.

Australia. She is sixty five years old, and speaks her language fluently" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:23). I realise that the terminology used for the names of different Aboriginal language groups continues to be problematic even today, but to my knowledge there is no language group in the west coast region of South Australia who refer to themselves as the "Karraru". Listed on contemporary language maps of the region are: the Kukatha (or Gugada), the Wirangu, the Ngalea and the Mirning group (see e.g. Horton, 1994). The term "Karraru" is in fact a moiety term that is shared by Aboriginal people from the Adelaide Plains region right through to Eyre Peninsula (personal communication, Rob Amery & Luise Hercus, October 1999). Either the misunderstanding, on identifying the woman as a "Karraru woman", was on the part of Unaipon himself, or by Ramsay Smith. She may have been from the Karraru moiety, but her language group remains a mystery. But we do know that Unaipon made a trip to the Nullarbor Plains on the west coast in October 1924 to collect "legends and myths", for which Ramsay Smith said he "may make some compensation afterwards" (see letter dated November 5, 1925, ML MSS 314/76). Despite being accompanied by a 'medicine man' as an interpreter, Unaipon has managed to not only create a very Christianised-creationary version of the Sun Dreaming narrative, but also to confuse Ramsay Smith regarding the identity of the oral source of the narrative.

In a newspaper interview in October 1925, Unaipon admitted:

his task of collection was difficult, but not as difficult as it would be to a European. 'I have a totem system to help me,' he said. 'The totem binds us together much as masonry does Europeans. My first duty when I go into a strange tribe is to ask for a totem.

Then, if they say, for instance, "that man is a swan," I say that my mother was also a swan, and he treats me as a relative, and tells me what I want to know. Or I find a man who is a kangaroo, the totem of my father.

(from: "An Aboriginal intellectual" *The Register*. October 3, 1925)

Hosking (1995:97-98) actually questions Unaipon for his use of the totem system, saying: "his methods 'could' be seen as equivalent to the exploitative practices of European anthropologists". So too does Jones (see *The Courier Mail* October 23, 1998) criticise Unaipon for his approach, saying "he [Unaipon] could plagiarise with the best of them". Alternatively, one 'could' give Unaipon the benefit of the doubt, believing he himself was misunderstood, and misquoted, by his European newspaper interviewer. Unaipon was possibly trying to explain how he could use his own family totems as a means of building up a relationship of trust between himself and other Aboriginal people. However, as far as the evidence indicates, his mother was actually of the dingo or wild dog totem (see Cath Ellis interviews, 1963), and his father of the leeches and catfish totem (see Taplin, 1879c:2).

The text "The story of creation"<sup>54</sup> is, in my view, a good example of Unaipon's adaptation of a narrative for which he probably had few details. There is no way that a 65 year old woman (whose only contact with white people was probably Daisy Bates<sup>55</sup> and the passengers on the trans-continental railway line) would have told this narrative with such apparent Biblical tones and parallels. I contend Unaipon adapted this west coast woman's narrative for his own purposes. I say this because narratives on a female Sun have been collected and published by others from this part of the country (see Bates in Ker Wilson, 1972:11). In Bates's version of the narrative, the sun is called Ngangaru, and is married to the moon Meeka. The sun and moon had children, and one of their daughters, Mardyet, was abducted by a sorcerer Mulgarguttuj, who grew "eaglehawk wings" when not living as a man (Ker Wilson, 1972:12). In Unaipon's story of creation, the sun sends a "promised visitor", the moon, to "shed her silvery light upon the earth". The moon then descends to the earth and becomes the wife of the morning star, and hence "brought forth children, who "multiplied in the form of the human race" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:30).<sup>56</sup> Thus "The story of creation" dwells on the creationary powers of the Sun Goddess in bringing forth all the non-human creatures of the earth.<sup>57</sup>

In contrast, the third narrative in the creation trilogy, "The coming of mankind", dwells on the power of the Father of All to create human beings.<sup>58</sup> These humans are, in turn, endowed by their creator with "some greater intelligence in order to assist them in ruling over and caring for the weaker animals, birds, reptiles, and fishes" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:31). This creationary narrative could have been inspired by Yamba, the same informant from central Australia who inspired "Totemism". I say this because Unaipon introduces his text with: "In the long ago, before there were any human beings as now exist, Central Australia and the surrounding country was peopled by strange creatures - animals, birds, reptiles and lizards of the same sort as one now sees" (my emphasis, see Ramsay Smith, 1930:31). I say Unaipon was 'inspired' by another story-teller, rather than 'obtained' his narrative from another source, because Unaipon's rendition of this creation story is pervaded with one of his favourite themes: that is the endowment of 'intelligence' on humans. It also has all the other tell-tale signs of Unaipon's

<sup>54</sup> Rather than summarise this narrative here, I have reproduced it in full for the reader in Appendix 7.4.

<sup>55</sup> Daisy Bates did not attempt to Christianise the Indigenous people she chose to help.

<sup>56</sup> It is unclear what the source of the character names Bajjara and Arna were for Unaipon. 'Arna' (the moon) could possibly be cognate with the term 'Ngangaru', which means 'sun' in Bates' narrative. Note the terms for 'moon' in Ngarrindjeri is *markeri*, for 'star' is *tuldar* and for 'sun' is *nangge* (see Tindale, 1879b).

<sup>57</sup> Across western Arnhem Land, in the N.T., the "Wawilak creation myth" (see Warner, 1969:238-249) tells of the exploits of very important female creationary figures, the "Wawilak sisters". Similarly, across eastern Arnhem Land the Djankawu myth (or "Djunkao", as spelt by Warner), tells of the creationary exploits of the Djankawu sisters (see Warner, 1969: 324-346). In both cases the secret knowledge and rituals they create are transferred from the women to the men. The missionary Chaseling (1957:157-166) also writes of a female creator figure, called "Numma Moiyuk", who has very similar exploits to the Wawilak sisters, encountering a creator python in a pool, whom he names "ambij". Chaseling, several times in fact, actually refers to the female creator as a "Goddess" (Chaseling, 1957:157-158), who was responsible for creating humans on the earth.

<sup>58</sup> Warner (1969:250-251) also writes of an important male creationary figure: "the great python deity, Yulunggur", or "The Great Father Snake", who was angered by the Wawilak sisters, so takes vengeance on them. Unlike Unaipon's narratives, this male figure is not represented (in Warner) as a benevolent creator.

creative hand at work, such as the use of his favourite phrase ("animals, birds and reptiles"), as well as his deification of characters such as the Sun Goddess and the One Great Father:

Now the Great Father Spirit had the power of being able to be in every place at the same time. He thought he would endow the works of creation with some greater intelligence in order to assist them in ruling over and caring for the weaker animals, birds, reptiles and fishes.... The reason why the Father of All Spirits did not give this small part of himself [beyond his intelligence] to the dwellers on the earth was that it would develop, and would thereby reveal him to the creation, and this would affect his greatness and his holiness and his dignity; and he had been advised by the Goddess of Birth not to do so.

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:31-32)

In this third creation narrative, we see Unaipon present an alternative view to the Father of All Spirits being the wise and all-powerful deity that is manifest in the Christian father-figure of God. This is because after the Father of All endowed some creatures with intelligence, they began to fight and quarrel, which upset the Sun Goddess:

She summoned the Father of All Spirits into her presence, and said to him, 'Have I not endowed thee with all creative power and given thee power over the works of my creation?.... And now I behold the results of the plan that you adopted of giving a part of your intelligence to every creature. Tell me why you did this?

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:34)

For this, the Father Spirit becomes very apologetic (using Shakespearean prose): "...my thoughts are not my thoughts alone, but are bound up in thine. Thou knowest that I shall not endeavour to produce a form and figure that will represent thee" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:34). He proceeds to explain his reasoning for endowing intelligence, so that one day a greater form [ie. humans] would emerge, and "He would be able to aspire to higher things, even unto thee, O goddess of Birth" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:35). This pleased the goddess, because she responded:

From this day onward through all the ages thou shalt be the designer, for I have found that thou hast thought rightly, and hast governed wisely all the works of my creation. Thou art supreme ruler of all living forms. Even man shall seek thee, and shall acknowledge thee to be god over all.

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:35)

### 7.5.3 Discussion of the trilogy

Both "The story of creation" and "The coming of mankind" provide some very interesting insights into Unaipon's attempts to incorporate both a benevolent father figure, from Christian mythology, and a creationary mother figure, from Aboriginal Dreaming narratives, into his own hybrid narratives. We know from the missionary Meyer that Ngarrindjeri mythology has a female sun narrative.<sup>59</sup> Meyer writes of the neighbouring Ramindjeri clan:

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<sup>59</sup> The sun is female in narratives across much of northern Australia (personal communication, M. Clendon, October 1999).

As the mythology and traditions of other heathen nations are more or less immoral and obscure, so it is with these people.

The sun they consider to be female, who when she sets, passes the dwelling-places of the dead. As she approaches, the men assemble and divide into two bodies, leaving a road for her to pass between them! they [sic] invite her to stay with them, which she can only do for a short time, as she must be ready for her journey of the next day. For favors granted to some one among them she receives a present of a red kangaroo skin; and therefore, in the morning, when she rises, appears in a red dress. The moon is also a woman, and not particularly chaste. She stays a long time with the men, and from the effects of her intercourse with them, she becomes very thin. [sic] and wastes away to a mere skeleton...

(Meyer, 1846:11)

I argue that in re-writing these creation narratives Unaipon was trying to construct the beliefs of his forebears as a little less 'obscure', and much less 'immoral', for his white Christian friends and readers. He strove to be explicit about the parallels he perceived between his own people's beliefs and those of the Christian church. It is predictable that Unaipon chooses the Father Spirit to become the dominant force in the third narrative. This is in line with the dominance of a male God, or father-figure, that has until recently been unquestioned by the Judeo-Christian tradition since its birth in the mythology of the Iron Age (Baring & Cashford, 1991:283). However in writing his creation trilogy, I contend Unaipon was influenced by more than his Christian up-bringing and his own Ngarrindjeri beliefs. He also had a keen interest in Egyptian mythology, and was a reader of Greek literature. Unaipon had an agenda of demonstrating that his own people had a mythology that shared the same richness and intellectual integrity of Greek and Egyptian mythology, that had earned the admiration of contemporary scholars. It is for this reason, I believe, that Unaipon chose to represent the sun as a Goddess in his creation narratives. He was a keen visitor to the S.A. Museum and its ancient Egyptian collection, and probably read of the sun god "Ra", who held great prominence in the Egyptian pantheon, in Lewis Spence's (1915) classic *The myths of Ancient Egypt*. Spence had a fascination with "the universality of myth" and drew on the comparative work of fellow anthropologist James Frazer. In his 1914 work *The golden bough*, Frazer compares the goddesses and myths of Egypt with those of ancient Greece and Rome (see Putnam in Spence, 1966:16-17). By writing Aboriginal myths as exotic narratives containing numerous goddesses analogous to those featuring in the 'high' culture of ancient civilisations, Unaipon hoped to elevate his own people's mythology, and to earn it the same respect given others of the late "Neolithic Age" (to use his term from "Totemism").

The quotation that begins this chapter is a passage taken from Pah Kowie, which is an unusually short text for Unaipon.<sup>60</sup> It is here that we are first introduced to "our mysterious Pah Kowie", who is the "Mother of Our Mother, the creative cell of Life and Intelligence". She

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<sup>60</sup> The entire text "Pah Kowie - the creature cell of life and intelligence" appeared in Unaipon (1929) *Native Legends* as just a single page. It is reproduced in full in my Appendix 7.1.

is the mother of the creation goddess, discussed above, who thus "endowed her Infant Female Child with the faculties and powers to conceive just what the human race is today" (Unaipon, 1929:6). Although Unaipon mentions the Nullarbor Plains in his creation narratives, and presumably was inspired by the Dreaming narratives relating to the sun from this area when he travelled there, the linguistic evidence indicates that his own language was the source of the vernacular terms adopted in the Pah Kowie narrative. Even though Unaipon has chosen to anglicise his spelling of the vernacular terms used in this text, the terms are in fact Ngarrindjeri words. I'm fairly convinced there would have been many more vernacular terms (possibly Ngarrindjeri, but not necessarily) in the original manuscript of both "The story of creation" and "The coming of mankind", but Ramsay Smith deleted a considerable number of vernacular terms during the editing process before publication (see my discussion on this issue in Chapter Eight).

The term adopted by Unaipon for the title of the Pah Kowie text is a little confusing<sup>61</sup>. The term 'Pah Kowie' contrasts with the Ngarrindjeri terms 'Pakkanno' and 'Bakkano', which are listed for 'grandmother' or 'mother's mother', in Meyer (1843:90) and Taplin (1879b:131) respectively. The closest term listed by Meyer is 'Pêkeri' for 'dream' (see Meyer, 1843:91), while Taplin (1879b:125) lists 'Prak-our', meaning 'arise'. Maybe Unaipon used a little literary license in his choice of vernacular terms in his texts.

The second vernacular term : "Koondang (Milky Way)" is, to some extent, also problematic (at least for me, if not for Unaipon) in that I cannot find any definite cognates in the available Ngarrindjeri wordlists. The closest terms (in the Meyer wordlist, 1843:73) is 'Kundêlin' for 'moving', and (possibly) the derivation 'Kandewattuwattire' meaning 'waterfall'. Unaipon refers to the 'Koondang' as having "trailing streams of light" and being a "sunlit Ether Ocean", which is not far, metaphorically, from a waterfall. The final two vernacular terms are straightforward. The term 'Nawanthee', which is the home of Pah Kowie, is listed in Taplin (1879b:132) as 'Ngawande' meaning 'native house'; while 'Thildarie', which provides "eternal... Invisible Rays of Light", is listed by Taplin (1879b:136) as 'Tyelyerar' meaning 'rays of light'. I therefore conclude, within reasonable doubt, that the vernacular terms adopted by Unaipon for this narrative were most probably from his own people.

The prose style of Unaipon's creation narratives are undoubtedly inspired by his favourite British poet Milton; but so too are some aspects of his story-line. Unaipon (1951:12) tells us he "memorised passages from 'Paradise Lost' for recitation purposes", but Milton's influence went much further. As Unaipon writes in Pah Kowie, so does Milton write in his classic

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<sup>61</sup> The publication of Pah Kowie in 1929 seems to have a typographical error in the title. Within the text, Unaipon writes of Pah Kowie as "the creative cell of Life and Intelligence", while the sub-title is "the creature [versus 'creative'] cell of Life and Intelligence".



*Paradise Lost* of the theme of the wonders of the heavens. It is these wonders that continue to inspire people to explore and explain 'God's creation':

...To ask or search I blame thee not, for heaven  
Is as the book of God before thee set,  
Wherein to read his wondrous works, and learn  
His seasons, hours, or days, or months, or years...

(John Milton, Book 8: The argument:123)

Unaipon writes in Pah Kowie of a "Greater Orb", which "shines supreme" and "is the source that supplies eternal Thildarie". So too does Milton often write, within his celestial themes, of orbs:

...Such proportions, with superfluous hand  
So many nobler bodies to create,  
Greater, so manifold, to this one use,  
For aught appears, and on their orbs impose  
Such restless revolution day by day...

(John Milton, Book 8: The argument:122)

But without doubt, the most influential text that drives the theme and focus of all of Unaipon's creation texts, as well as his influencing his prose style, is the King James Bible. Not only are these narratives riddled with Biblical-like events, and archaic Biblical language, along with encumbent phrases reminiscent of the Book of Genesis, they also incorporate Biblical characters such as a father-figure deity and his messenger prophets. Even when Unaipon's characters are not Biblically inspired, such as the Sun Goddess, he endows her with the role and speech reminiscent of a Biblical God. In "The story of creation", for example, at the end of her creative work the Sun Goddess: "beheld her work, and saw that it was good" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:25). So too does she face the same "stillness and darkness" on earth, reminiscent of Genesis, before she was called by the "Great Father Spirit" to "give life to the universe" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:23). However, Unaipon also sees fit to incorporate an evolutionary theme into his creation text, which occurs as the Sun Goddess rests from her labours: "She continued resting in order that the insects might adapt themselves to the new conditions of living" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:25). Unaipon then returns, however, to the Biblical theme of giving the creatures of the Sun Goddess's creation free will, just as it was bestowed by God on 'man' in the Genesis tradition. This results in the animals, birds and insects changing their goddess-given forms, thus explaining why Australian fauna currently take their present unique forms. Of this "heterogeneous creation" Unaipon characteristically moralises that it "shows what can be brought about by discontent and foolish desire" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:30).

Unaipon's moralising continues in the next creation narrative, when the animals begin "attacking and killing and devouring one another" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:33). Then fear is set into them as the Great Spirit sends a big flood (reminiscent of the judgement sent by God in Genesis), as a precursor to the creation of humans by the Sun Goddess, to "rule the earth and

all that remained on the earth and sea" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:40).<sup>62</sup> Unaipon's version of the creation of the first creatures of higher intelligence, in the form of 'man', is done with all the spectacle of a Hollywood movie, set on the top of the highest mountain, in full view of all the creatures of the earth :

Then a thunderbolt shot out of the clear sky down into the centre of the spout, causing a flame of fire. Within this flame of fire there became visible the perfect form of a man as he is to-day. The flame gradually faded away, and left the figure standing in all its perfection, crowned with the glory of intelligence.

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:40)

It is unfortunate that we are only left with Ramsay Smith's edited versions of Unaipon's creation trilogy for analysis. A comparison of the unedited narratives in the Mitchell Ms. with Ramsay Smith's published versions reveals some apparent deletions. Take, for example, the ethnographic text "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit", which appears as the third text in the Mitchell Ms., and in an almost cannibalised form as the first text of the chapter entitled "Religion" in Ramsay Smith (1930:173-174). One can only imagine how much Ramsay Smith mutilated "The story of creation" and "The coming of mankind", as neither are held in the Mitchell Ms.

Of the three and a half typed pages that comprise the "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit" in the Mitchell Ms., all of page one and three have been deleted<sup>63</sup>, and every single vernacular term has been excluded. This is unfortunate in two respects: first because these terms identify the text as being of Ngarrindjeri origins, and second, the replacement English terms are, by necessity, culturally European. This particular ethnographic text by Unaipon is important, because it articulates (in the first person). Unaipon's own personal understanding of the relationship between the Great Spirit and his own Ngarrindjeri Ancestral Heroes. But much of this is lost in Ramsay Smith's editing. Compare, for example, the following unedited segment of Unaipon's, with the latter edited version by Ramsay Smith (with the first two paragraphs completely deleted):

The belief in a Supreme Being and the religious instruction, as well as religious ceremonies and worship, are not the experiences of the Jew and Mohammedan alone. Neither did it belong to one particular age or place, but it is universal and belongs to every age. This wonderful experience of a longing for something beautiful and noble, something spiritually Divine, lives within the bosom of the nations of the past as it does to-day.

Wonderful is the soul of man. A capacity for the Great Spirit of the Eternal God. Go back into those ancient civilisations and review the wonders....

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<sup>62</sup> The Wawilak myth also tells of a great flood, which is brought forth by an angry "Yurlunggur", or "Big Father" snake, after the Wawilak sisters contaminate his sacred water hole (see Warner, 1969:242).

<sup>63</sup> A small portion of page three has been included (in an edited form) in the first text of Ramsay Smith (1930:19-21) entitled "The customs and traditions of Aborigines". Ramsay Smith also changed the title of the text to: "The belief in a Great Spirit" (1930:173-174).

As it was in the past so is it today. People in every clime still bowing and worshipping their gods, material gods hewn and fashioned in rock and clay and wood. God's animals, birds and reptiles, these they believe possess the spirit of the Deity.

Not so with the aboriginals of Australia. We build no place of worship, neither do we erect altars for the offering of sacrifice, but, notwithstanding this lack of religious ceremonies, we believe in a Great Spirit and the Son of the Great Spirit. There arose among the aboriginals a great teacher Narrundari; he was an elect of the Great Spirit. And he spoke to our forefathers thus:

'Children, there is a Great Spirit above whose dwelling place is Wyerriwarr. It is His will that you should know Him as Hyarrinunumb; I am the whole Spirit and ye are part of the whole, I am your Provider and Protector. It has been my pleasure to give you the privilege to sojourn awhile in the flesh state to fulfill my great plan.

Remember (Porun) children (Nukone Illawin) your life is like unto a day, and during this short period on earth you are to educate yourself by your conduct to yourself as part of Myself and your conduct to others, with the knowledge that they are part of myself. Live as children of your Great Father.

Nol-kal-undutch-me-wee control your appetities and desires.... never allow your mind to suffer pain or fear; lest you become selfish.... Selfishness is not of the Great Spirit. Cultivate everything good,... develop a healthy state of mind and body... governed by good and pure morals with kindness for others, remembering that they are a part of that Great Spirit from whence you came.

(Unaipon, 1924-25 Mitchell Ms., Text 2:1-2)

Below is Ramsay Smith's shorter rendition (with terminology changes highlighted by me):

The aboriginals of Australia build no place of worship, nor do they erect altars for the offering of sacrifice. Notwithstanding this lack of ceremonial religion, they believe in a Great Spirit, and the son of this Great Spirit.

There arose among the aboriginals a great teacher Nurunderi. He was a chosen one of the Great Spirit. He spoke to the people thus:

'Children, there is a Great Spirit above whose dwelling place is heaven. It is his will that you should know him as the whole spirit of whom you are parts. He is your provider and protector. It has been my pleasure to give you the privilege to sojourn awhile in a bodily state to fulfill my great plan. Remember, children, your life is like a day, and during this short period you are on earth you are to educate yourselves by self control, and to realize that all of you are parts of me.

Live as children of your Great Father.[large deletion] Control your appetites and desires.... never allow your mind to suffer pain or fear; lest you become selfish.... Selfishness is not of the Great Spirit. Cultivate everything good,... develop a healthy state of mind and body... Be guided by pure morals with kindness for others, remembering that they are a part of that Great Spirit from whence you came.'

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:173)

#### 7.5.4 Conclusion to the creation trilogy

The texts comprising Unaipon's creation trilogy could be described as the most exotic and fictionalised narratives constructed by this creative writer, and therefore not representative of his entire corpus. But because they appear as the second and third texts in Ramsay Smith (1930), after his introductory "Aboriginal customs and traditions", they set the tone for the remainder of the book. The reader can't help getting the immediate impression that whatever follows, Aboriginal mythology has little to do with the land, and much to do with a Great Father Spirit, and a Mother Sun Goddess, who together created all upon the earth. Such an

impression was left on the reviewer Tony Swain, who was unaware of Unaipon's contribution, when he wrote of Ramsay Smith's (1930) publication:

There is no sensitivity to geographic variations or social contexts of myths, nor references to sources. Imbalanced, inauthentic and confused, the book is only saved by some reasonable monochrome photographs and some hilariously inappropriate colour paintings. Comic relief only.

(Swain, 1991:91)

Swain was aware of Unaipon's status as author of the booklet *Native legends*, but chooses to question his actual contribution, and is no less severe in his review:

We are not told what editing was involved, but the language suggests a shadow writer may have taken considerable editorial licence. The stories... are horribly fairytale-like, and the value of the book is largely as an instance of either cultural transformation or editorial vandalism.

(Swain, 1991:271)

I argue that Swain's suggestion of 'vandalism' is more appropriate for Ramsay Smith's role in the 1930 publication, particularly for those narratives relating to the creation story. On the other hand, Unaipon's contribution to the 1930 book has been to 'culturally transform' his own Narrindjeri belief system to parallel (even if in a spurious fashion) that of the Christian tradition. Any evidence that relates the narrative back to its Ngarrindjeri origins, particularly in the form of vernacular terms, or by the narrator adopting the first person, have been successfully extracted from the original text by Ramsay Smith.

Unaipon was not the first to introduce a God-like figure into Aboriginal mythology. Identifying a figure analogous to God, within Aboriginal people's beliefs systems, was one of the very first issues on the minds of a number of the very early missionaries working among Aboriginal people, including Taplin. Nor was Unaipon the first Indigenous writer to refer to a God-like figure amongst his own people's beliefs. This honour lies with the Ngarrindjeri man Jacob Harris (see Jacob Harris letters, Mortlock Library D6510 (L)). But a large proportion of Unaipon's texts are pervaded with a Great Father Spirit, thus offering an alternative interpretation of Aboriginal mythology.

Despite the reservations of religious historians such as Carey (in regard to the "soft primitivism" of the Baiame complex), Indigenous Australians are currently constructing a similar theology that incorporates a God-like creator spirit. George Rosendale, the spiritual elder of the Indigenous group constructing "Rainbow Spirit theology" writes with his colleagues:

1. In the very beginning, the earth was formless and empty of life. The Creator Spirit, in the form of the Rainbow Spirit, shaped the land, its mountains, seas, rivers and trees....

2. From the beginning, the Rainbow Spirit has been and still is present deep within the land....

3. This Creator Spirit is known to Aboriginal Australians by many names, including Yiirmbal, Biame, Rainbow Spirit, Paayamu, Biiral, Wandjina and, in Christian times, Father God.... Behind all of these forms, however, we Christian Aboriginal people believe there is one Creator Spirit, who, in the Old Testament, is variously depicted as the Canaanite Creator, El Elyon, and as the Israelite Redeemer God, YHWH.

(Rosendale et. al. 1997:29-31)

These Rainbow Spirit elders say that:

This God of the Scriptures is known to Aboriginal people as the Creator Spirit, who speaks to us through the land. The land is like the Scriptures - sacred stories and signs are inscribed on the landscape, and readily available for those who can read them.

(Rosendale et. al. 1997:20)

As with Unaipon's writings, the syncretic constructions of these elders, and their Biblical analogies, go beyond a Creator Spirit to also include a divine son. They say: "The risen Christ is the risen Son; Jesus Christ is our new life, our new dawn. Christ is our morning star" (Rosendale et.al. 1997:22). Unaipon was a pioneer in introducing into Aboriginal mythology (even if in an ambiguous way) the Christian concept of a divine son, who was sent to earth to watch over all creation. I say ambiguous, because the actual manifestation of this divine son, by Unaipon, varies from text to text. In "The story of creation", Unaipon writes of the Mother Sun making the offering of a son in the form of the morning star, Bajjara: "I have given to you a son of the Spirit World, but he shall be one of you" (Ramsay Smith, 1930:30). Alternatively, in his ethnographic text "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit", Unaipon writes: "we believe in a Great Spirit and the Son of the Great Spirit". He then proceeds to discuss the "great teacher Narrundari", as if he is the son (Unaipon, Mitchell Ms. Vol.I, Text 3:2). However, in his introduction to the Mitchell Ms., entitled "Aboriginal folklore", Unaipon describes "Nar-ran-darrie" as more akin to a Moses figure: "a law-giver" and a leader who "gave aboriginals their tribal laws and customs". Similarly, in his 1963 interview with Cath Ellis, Unaipon describes him as a "prophet", and adds that different parts of Australia had different prophets, including Baiame to the east, and Buthera to the west.

Such analogies, together with Unaipon's many contradictions, particularly in his creationary texts, have the potential to serve as stimuli to debates currently being held amongst Aboriginal Christian theologians, as they attempt to construct a uniquely Australian Indigenous theology. Because Unaipon was brave (or some may say foolish) enough to construct his own syncretic version of Aboriginal mythology, incorporating elements of not only Christian belief and principles, but also elements of other ancient cultures besides his own, we have a ready springboard from which more contemporary ideas and understandings can be bounced.

## 7.6 "KINIE GER" and "THE SELFISH OWL"

In this section I discuss two further narratives by Unaipon, and contrast them with several other texts which I attribute to Unaipon, although they were never published in his name, and are not part of the Mitchell Ms. All of these texts appeared in Ramsay Smith's (1930) publication. As with the creation trilogy, this comparative analysis aims to support my claim that Unaipon produced the entire Ramsay Smith collection. These texts demonstrate Unaipon's intention of 'weaving literature' from the oral narratives he collected from a variety of sources outside his own community, with little concern for authenticity. Initially I discuss the two texts: "Kinie Ger - the native cat" (from *Aboriginal legend No. 1*, 1927b & Ramsay Smith, 1930:101-105) and "Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl" (Text 24 in the Mitchell Ms. & "The selfish owl" in Ramsay Smith 1930:94-99). I then contrast these texts with "How Spencer's Gulf came into existence", "Bulpallungga" and "Buthera and the Bat" (none of which are in the Mitchell Ms. but all feature in Ramsay Smith, 1930:168-172; 301-317 & 341-342 respectively).

### 7.6.1 "Kinie Ger - the native cat"

"Kinie Ger - the native cat" (henceforth Kinie Ger) is an interesting text, not only because it helps unravel the mystery of who wrote the additional texts under question in *Myths and Legends*, but also because its hybridity reveals a great deal about Unaipon's position as a writer. Kinie Ger was first published in 1927 under Unaipon's own name in his pamphlet *Aboriginal legend No. 1*, through funding provided to Unaipon by the Aborigines' Department. It seems Ramsay Smith was unaware of this intended publication, because he included the same narrative in his own *Myths and legends*, which appeared three years later.

Etymologically, it is unclear what the exact source was for Unaipon's evil character "Kinie Ger". Australia had no indigenous cats of the feline genus prior to the introduction of domestic cats by the early colonists.<sup>64</sup> There are, however, native cat Dreaming narratives throughout much of Australia, invariably relating to the indigenous marsupial mammal, the quoll (of the *Dasyurus* genus).<sup>65</sup> More importantly, according to Hercus, the district around Port Augusta in S.A. is actually the beginning point of the much "celebrated" Dreaming narrative that forms the "longest known continuous song-line" ("The Urumbula") in Indigenous Australia. This

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<sup>64</sup> It wasn't long before these domestic cats became feral, adapting remarkably well to Australian conditions. The size of many feral cats in Central Australia today far surpasses that of their domestic cousins in the cities, and they are known to be 'good tucker' by Aboriginal people. When eaten they generate heat within one's body, and are said to be very good for those suffering from colds and flu.

<sup>65</sup> The occasional Indigenous wordlist glosses different Bandicoot species as 'native cats' (eg. Berndt & Berndt, 1993:554)

song-line tells of the travels of the "ancestral Cats (*Dasyurus geoffroyi*)"<sup>66</sup>, and stretches as far as the Gulf of Carpentaria in Queensland (Hercus, 1992:13). However, the travels of the native cat within this song-line do not go as far as Adelaide or Point McLeay, and his adventures during his travels are certainly not villainous.<sup>67</sup> So who was the oral source and inspiration for this perplexing narrative of Unaipon's, and what was the etymological source for his character Kinie Ger?

I have searched extensively through a number of wordlists from different parts of S.A. to find a cognate term for Kinie Ger.<sup>68</sup> According to the Meyer wordlist (1843:67), the root word "Kain-" in Ngarrindjeri relates to 'puberty', with "Kainingge" meaning 'fringe made of string, worn by the girls and young women previous to child-bearing'. The related word "Kainyani" means 'young man arrived at the age of puberty, at which age they are painted red, and the beard first plucked out'. In Berndt & Berndt (1993:561) there is the tantalising listing "Kenigeri-on", but this is glossed as 'a large grey bird that whistles'. This bird is said to herald the beginning of summer when it arrives in the Murray region from further inland, however the Berndts don't specify the bird species. I suspect a contributing factor for Unaipon's choice of the name 'Kinie Ger' for his main character was its poetic and literary potential, particularly at the ends of lines and major text breaks. 'Ger' could be read to rhyme with the word 'spear'; thus we find Unaipon ending two paragraphs: "the mark of Kinie Ger's spear" and "a victim to the spear of Kinie Ger" (Unaipon, 1927b:2).

In his Kinie Ger narrative, as in "Totemism", we see Unaipon begin with an evolutionary theme: "In the dim and distant past slowly dawned the power of Reason and of Thought, when man beheld through misty age myriad shapes of grotesque beings" (Unaipon, 1927b:1). He then introduces one of these "grotesque beings" as Kinie Ger, the villain of his narrative, but not without also introducing another of his favourite themes: the battle of Good against Evil. The evil side of creation is epitomised in his narrative by the character Kinie Ger - the native cat:

Some were good, and proved a blessing to Mankind, and some were bad, so that to this day Mankind's an heir to cruelties and evil passions born. Such ruthless, murderous deed committing as were wrought by Kinie Ger, the Native Cat.  
(Unaipon, 1927b:1)

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<sup>66</sup> This particular species of Spotted Cat or Western Quoll inhabits Central Australia, and contrasts with other quoll species from eastern Australia: the Eastern Native Cat (*Dasyurus Viverrinus*) and the Tiger Cat (*Dasyurus Maculatus*).

<sup>67</sup> Missionary Schürmann (1879:239) wrote of a hero, who turned into a native cat, after killing the dreaded man eater "Kupirri" in the vicinity of Port Lincoln (see my Appendix 3.2).

<sup>68</sup> The character in Unaipon's narrative was a deceiver and a "dreaded foe" (Unaipon, 1927:1), but even that word provides no clues. The Ngarrindjeri word "Gélpul-amalde" is glossed 'deceiver. One who promises and does not perform' (Meyer, 1846:60).

In Unaipon's narrative (which is reproduced in full in Appendix 7.5) Kinie Ger is cast as a murderous villain, who slays all those he encounters. Various brave animals come forth to offer their services to kill the dreaded Kinie Ger, but alas, even "conceited, youthful kangaroo" and "noble-hearted emu" are slain by "this cruel enemy". As Kinie Ger continues to show "no pity", as "he wrought his cruel vengeance upon animals and birds alike", the narrative reaches its climax. Kinie Ger strikes his final victims by ripping the hearts from the "darling babes" of both Owl and Crow as they sleep in their "cots" (Unaipon, 1927b:2). With the battle cry reminiscent of a Greek warrior, father Owl threatens to avenge the wicked deeds of Kinie Ger:

For this bloody deed, two innocent infants, victims of the bloodier Kinie Ger. Forget not. Oh, hands to wield the trusty spear. Forget not, O spear, thy noble mission to rid us of so vile and wicked foe. From thy sharpened point and jagged edge shall drip the life-blood of Kinie Ger.

(Unaipon, 1927b:2)

The narrative concludes with Kinie Ger being slain by the spears of Owl and Crow: "The spear with lightening [sic] speed obeyed the hunter's will, stuck fast into a vital part of Kinie Ger.... there flowed the life-blood of Kinie Ger" (Unaipon, 1927b:2-3). Finally the body of Kinie Ger is "committed ... to the flames" by Owl and Crow. But that night, just one spark from the fire "larger than the rest rose into the darkened sky", where it joined the "Koondange Sacred Groups... (Milky Way)" (Unaipon, 1927b:3).<sup>69</sup> It is this single point that is shared with The Urumbula song-line, because the Ancestral Cat of the song-line actually travels to Port Augusta to remove a "great ceremonial pole" from the ground, which not only "held up the sky", but also "continued up into the sky as the Milky Way".<sup>70</sup>

Further clues to the origin of Kinie Ger lie in the semblance this narrative bears to other narratives told by a Ngadjuri man, Barney Warrior, to the anthropologists Tindale and Berndt.<sup>71</sup> Unaipon was an acquaintance of Warrior's, and probably visited him when collecting stories for Ramsay Smith. Unaipon told Ramsay Smith, in October 1924, that he intended visiting Point Pearce on his way to the Nullarbor Plains, which is where Warrior usually resided (letter dated November 5, 1925, Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205). The murderous theme of Unaipon's Kinie Ger is shared by Warrior's two Dreaming narratives: "The Old Woman and her two Dingoes" and "The Curlew and Owl legend". All three

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<sup>69</sup> This constellation also features in Unaipon's "Pah Kowie" narrative: Deep "Amidst the glowing Koondang (Milky Way)" lies the home of the "Mother of our Mother... Pah Kowie" (Unaipon, 1929:6). Note the two differing vernacular spellings used by Unaipon for the Milky Way.

<sup>70</sup> The exploits of the Ancestral Cat "Malbunga", in this song-line (according to Hercus, 1992:13-14), involve him travelling from the Musgrave Ranges down to Port Augusta, where he removes the beautiful ceremonial pole from the ground. He then embarks on an epic journey, accompanied by his chosen people, to take the pole in a huge bag all the way to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Malbunga is not portrayed as a villain in this epic.

<sup>71</sup> These narratives were published in Tindale (1937) and Berndt (1940). Warrior was alternatively known as 'Waria' (see Tindale 1937:149), or Nadjli'buna (see Berndt, 1940:456). He was of the Ngadjuri group from the Mid North area in S.A., whose country stretches from Gawler to Orroroo, but he lived at Point Pearce reserve or in Adelaide. He is the grandfather of Auntie Josie Agius (see Agius, 1994) and was the 'informant' on several occasions for the two anthropologists Tindale and R. Berndt.



narratives tell of the villainous slaying of children, and then the revengeful killing of the villain by the cunning of two distraught fathers. In "The Old Woman and her two Dingoes" (Tindale, 1937:149-150), it is the old woman and her two dingoes who are the villains, rather than a native cat. Her dingo dogs go on a rampage killing and eating all the humans they encounter, until two men (Jew Lizard and his brother) "make a stand" and undertake to kill them. They use cunning means similar to that used by Unaipon's two heroes in Kinie Ger. In "The Curlew and Owl legend" (Berndt, 1940a:458-459), it is Owl and his two dogs that are the villains, as they go on a rampage and kill the children of the curlew. In this narrative, the father curlew is the hero, as it is he who kills the two dogs by cunning means.

The eventual fate of the old woman in the one narrative, and Owl in the other, also bear some resemblances to the fate of Kinie Ger in Unaipon's narrative. Warrior has the old woman killed and burnt by the two heroes, Jew Lizard and his brother, just as Unaipon has Kinie Ger speared and burnt by his heroes Owl and Crow. However, Unaipon links his narrative to The Urumbula by having Kinie Ger rising as a spark to form a star within the Milky Way. But there is another interesting twist in the finale of Warrior's Old Woman narrative that further connects it with Unaipon's writings. Here Warrior has the sun permanently setting in the west, as the old woman is burnt, leaving all the animals in darkness as they desperately try to bring on the rising of the sun. This plot forms the basis of yet another narrative of Unaipon's: "The selfish owl".

### 7.6.2 "The selfish owl"

"The selfish owl" is a narrative that typifies that sub-genre of stories that children have now come to expect of Dreaming 'stories'. It features talking animals who squabble, and the popularised theme of competition for supremacy between different animal and bird species. The aim of Unaipon's competition is to prove who is the superior species within the whole animal kingdom, and typically it concludes with the predictable How-so coda, that explains why the owl, bat and lizard have the features or mannerisms they still possess today. This is not the only narrative of Unaipon's to represent this sub-genre. In fact, Ramsay Smith places a series of these together in one section, with the sub-title "Animal Myths".

Another narrative included in this section is "How Spencer's Gulf came into existence", which deals with more squabbles between different birds and animals. However, unlike other narratives of this mould, which tend not to make any reference to place, this particular narrative does maintain a strong sense of place. This is because it represents a further sub-genre that aims to explain the aetiological origin of a particular geographical feature: in this case, Spencer's Gulf in S.A. It is therefore a variation of the How-so sub-genre of narratives. It could be argued that Unaipon was a seminal writer in the establishment of this genre of

Dreaming narratives, which now form a significant proportion of Australia's literary tradition aimed at children. But who was the first to establish this genre within this tradition? And was Unaipon influenced by others before him?

Katie Langloh Parker was, of course, the first to publish a collection of Dreaming narratives, most of which related to animals and their exploits (see Langloh Parker 1896 & 1898).<sup>72</sup> Over two decades later, Unaipon chose to write, just as Langloh Parker did, of the different animals species as "tribes". He also chose to emulate her depiction of animal gatherings as ceremonies, at which bitter squabbles developed and subsequent agreements were made. Langloh Parker's narrative "The Borah of Byamee" bears similarities to Unaipon's Selfish Owl narrative, and also elements of "How Spencer's Gulf came into existence" and "Bulpallungga":

Word has been passed from tribe to tribe, telling, how the season was good, there must be a great gathering of the tribes. And the place fixed for the gathering Googoorewon. The old men whispered that it would be the occasion for a borah, but this the women must not know. Old Byamee, who was a great Wirreenun, said he would take his two sons, Ghindahindahmoe and Boomahoomahnowee, to the gathering of the tribes...  
(Langloh Parker, 1896:79)

But animal gatherings still feature in oral narratives across Australia, so can't only be attributed to Langloh Parker's influence. It seems, however, that Unaipon's tendency to set many of his How-so narratives in the distant past was something he adopted from the well established fairy-tale tradition of the western world, rather than Langloh Parker. Unaipon begins his Selfish Owl narrative as follows (but note other similarities with "The Borah of Byamee" narrative of Langloh Parker's):

Long, long ago, before there were any human beings, there were birds, animals and reptiles. Once a year, in the spring-time, these different tribes met and held a great festival for story-telling, dancing, and feasting.... The cockatoo, who was always a very cheeky fellow, went to the eagle-hawk, the chief of the feathered tribe, and said, "O Father Eagle-hawk, are not we of the feathered tribe greater than the kangaroo, the carpet-snake, the goanna, and all the others?" The eagle-hawk answered, "O my son, cockatoo, of course we are superior to all the other tribes."  
(Unaipon, 1924-25, Text 24:1)

For those narratives by Unaipon, for which we have no original manuscript copy, there is no way of knowing whether they were further decontextualised by the editing hand of Ramsay Smith. However, my comparative analysis in Chapter Eight of the Mitchell Ms. and Ramsay Smith versions of "Narroondarie's wives" reveals that some reference to place was edited out. Such decontextualisation causes the reader to consider Dreaming narratives primarily as entertainment value, rather than as a source of cultural and social information.

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<sup>72</sup> Although Langloh Parker's early works gave some reference to country, her later works became progressively less grounded in country (Carey, 1997).

However, there is cultural information retained in Unaipon's Selfish Owl text that bears some commonalities with Warrior's Old Woman text. Unaipon writes of the awakening of the sun, after its disappearance and a long period of darkness, by a boomerang:

Then he [bat] took the boomerang, and with mighty force he hurled it toward the north, and it travelled around the earth, and returned from the south. Again the boomerang was sent on a mission toward the west, and it travelled around the earth and came back from the east. Just as the bat was about to throw the boomerang again the laughing jack said, "Wait a moment, O bat. We do not want an exhibition of boomerang-throwing - we require the light."

"Yes," said the bat, "I know that you are all anxious to have the sunlight, but I am dividing the great darkness. I am going to give you light, and I shall keep the darkness to myself." So again, and with greater force, he hurled the boomerang, this time toward the west, and it travelled around the earth and came back from the east, and while it was still hovering about his head the bat shouted, "Look to the east! The light is coming!...." and as soon as the boomerang touched the earth the sun rose.

(Unaipon, 1924-25, Text 24:3-4)

Warrior narrates a similar incident:

One serious result of the killing of the two dogs, and of the old woman, was that the sun, which had never previously set, went down in the west. Then the frightened tribes people began crying and wailing. Their efforts to make the sun rise again were unavailing. Kudnu [the Jew Lizard] was asleep while they were trying to make the sun rise. Tired with their attempts to make the sun come up again, the people fell asleep. While they slept Kudnu wakened and threw a returning boomerang towards the north; it flew around in a circle without achieving his intention. He threw another towards the west, all without result. He then threw a third to the south. He heard it going around, and finally settle upon the ground. Then he threw a fourth boomerang towards the east. He heard it going around in a circle, and as it came down towards him, from the east, he could see that the sky was lighting up, and that day was breaking. He shouted to his tribesfolk, "Come! Get up and see the sun rise again."

(in Tindale, 1937:150)

### 7.6.3 Further twists to the tale

"Buthera and the bat" is one further text from *Myths and legends* for which Barney Warrior was possibly also the original oral source. This text is one of the additional 21 texts that were never a part of the original Mitchell Ms., but for which Unaipon was most probably the intermediary for Ramsay Smith. This narrative contrasts sharply with other much longer narratives, such as "Bullpallungga", which are better described as hybrid constructions by Unaipon. "Buthera and the bat" is brief, concise and clearly located in the country to which it relates. It describes the travels and violent encounters of an important Ancestral Hero of the area, Buthera, and concludes by identifying an important landmark that remains today to remind people of their hero. I argue that the precise detail provided by the original narrator of this narrative would not have necessitated Unaipon to indulge in the elaborate literary reconstruction he felt compelled to produce in some of his other narratives, for which he had less detail.

"Buthera and the bat" is located in the country in the "southern part of Yorke's Peninsula", and tells of "a great chief called Buthera", who travels down the peninsula to Marion Bay. During his travels, he has hostile encounters with two other "chiefs", including "Mudichera, the chief of the Bat tribe" and "Larna". First he encounters Mudichera<sup>73</sup> at Corny Point, whom he fights violently, resulting in Buthera slicing Mudichera in two, explaining the present thin appearance of all bats today. Buthera then travels on to Marion Bay, where he fights "Larna", but this time Buthera is the weaker of the two, and is killed. Unaipon claims that the landmark "Rhino Head", which is a large rock in the shape of a man, is the body of Larna, who was turned this way by Mudichera as a punishment, after Mudichera took sympathy on Buthera (see Ramsay Smith, 1930:341-342).

Archival documents and correspondence indicate that Unaipon travelled widely throughout South Australia collecting narratives from Indigenous people, even after he had submitted his manuscript to the Sydney-based publishers. According to Ramsay Smith's correspondence to Robertson, Unaipon offered on October 2, 1924, to collect further 'legends' for Ramsay Smith, which he did not intend to publish himself, or send to Angus and Robertson. Unaipon told Ramsay Smith that during his trip to the Nullarbor Plains he intended visiting Point Pearce (see Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205, letter dated November 5, 1925).<sup>74</sup> I suggest that "Buthera and the bat" and "How Spencer's Gulf came into existence" were collected during this trip to Point Pearce. Similarly, other materials collected on the west coast of S.A., during this same trip, contributed to the 17 additional texts eventually offered to Ramsay Smith.

Unaipon continued to collect narratives even after he submitted his last 'legends' to Ramsay Smith, remembering that *Myths and legends* Ms. was finally sent off to the London publishers, Harrap, in September 1927. By this stage, Unaipon had started to reap the benefits offered by being a self-publisher of two pamphlets, which he was selling himself from door-to-door. According to correspondence to Sexton of the A.F.A. dated May 12, 1928, Unaipon says he had "collected Mythologies [sic] from one of the elder [sic] of the Tribe representing the last of the Nookanow [or Nukunu]", and was "on my [his] way to Point Pearce" (Mortlock Library SRG 139/1/115-117). In a hand-written un-dated note, Unaipon later writes:

I shall be at Point Pearce awaiting your reply, don't forget send me bill for my last account and have some more pamphlet [sic] publish [sic] and latter [sic] I shall send you or when I return to city to submit to you my manuscript of a few more stories.  
David

(Mortlock Library SRG 139/1/115-117)

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<sup>73</sup> Tindale (1936:63) lists the Narrangga word *Madjitju* as 'name of supernatural being who takes form of a bat... also applied to bats in general'.

<sup>74</sup> Unaipon visited Ramsay Smith twelve months later asking for assistance to have the manuscript he had since produced typed (Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205, also in letter dated November 5, 1925).

Presumably this manuscript was to become *Native legends*, but the identity of the Nukunu elder is unclear. Maybe it was Barney Warrior, or possibly an elderly woman named Louisa of the Waria group, of the Narangga people,<sup>75</sup> or perhaps even someone else altogether. In Louisa's version of the Buthera narrative, told to Tindale in 1935, Larna becomes "Ngarna" - "a big, powerful man", who gets turned into a sleepy lizard, while the bat man becomes "Madjitju" - "a small person" who turns into a bat to avoid being killed. Buthera is spelt "Badara", and is killed by Ngarna with a large club. His body is then dragged to become the stones in the middle of Salt Lagoon. As in the Ramsay Smith version, Ngarna becomes Rhino Head (see Tindale, 1936:58-59).

Warrior continued to be sought after well beyond Unaipon's visits, particularly by Tindale and Berndt. It is generally recognised that the Mount Lofty Ranges formed not only a geographical divide, but also a cultural divide between the Ngarrindjeri nation and other Indigenous groups to the north. Linguistically, the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains hold more in common with the Nukunu, Ngadjuri and Narangga people of the Mid North and Yorke Peninsula region, than they do with the Ngarrindjeri people of the Murray and Coorong region. There also seem to be more common ties between the Dreaming narratives of the Nukunu, Ngadjuri and Narangga,<sup>76</sup> than with the Ngarrindjeri, as exemplified by the area traversed by The Urumbula of the Ancestral Cats (referred to in Hercus, 1992). Even so, Ramsay Smith was willing to accept Unaipon's liberal interpretation of all the Dreaming narratives he collected from numerous regions within South Australia, and even further abroad.

#### 7.6.4 Conclusion to "Kinie Ger" and related texts

The aim of this section has been to discuss three further texts ("Kinie Ger - the native cat", "The selfish owl" and "Buthera and the bat"), which I propose were all written by Unaipon, but have their roots in Nukunu and Narangga country to the north of Unaipon's territory. All three texts feature in Ramsay Smith (1930), yet only one (the second with the different title: "Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl") appeared as part of the Mitchell Ms. I argue that they demonstrate Unaipon's intention of 'weaving literature', from oral narratives he collected from outside his own community, with little concern for authenticity. However, when his source material was precise and detailed (as in "Buthera and the bat"), he was happy to represent his text with fewer embellishments and thus indulge in less literary creativity. But Unaipon's chosen manner of representation not only drew criticism from anthropologists, such

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<sup>75</sup> Louisa was Tindale's "informant" when he conducted research on "legends" from the southern region of Yorke Peninsula in 1935 (see Tindale, 1936). She was also Howard Johnson's informant between 1898 and 1900. Tindale said of her in 1936 that she has "now grown to a great age" (Tindale, 1936:55).

<sup>76</sup> Berndt (1940:459) states that Warrior was a source of both Narangga and Ngadjuri Dreaming narratives because he had "totemic" ties with the Narangga: "Both the curlew and the owl were totem animals of the Narunga and Ngadjuri".

as Tindale and Berndt, who aimed for 'authentic' representations, but also reservations from literary critics. Beston (1979:33), for example, suggests that his "Kinie Ger" narrative has some "awkwardness in its style", indicating his literary creativity and chosen style was not always deemed successful.

In Berndt's (1940a) discussion of the 'legend' he collected from Barney Warrior, called "The Owl and Curlew", he also makes mention of the narrative "Bulpallungga" (which I also propose was written by Unaipon and appeared in Ramsay Smith, 1930:301-310).<sup>77</sup> He notes in particular the narrative's "Anglicised" interpretation, but draws attention to it because it features the transformation of a wailing mother into a curlew, after losing her boy Bulpallungga. According to the story, this bird can still be heard at night, wailing for her beloved son (see Berndt, 1940a:460). Further hints in Berndt (1940a:459) indicate that Warrior could have also been an inspiration (if not the oral source) for this narrative written by Unaipon, because Berndt mentions that Warrior was "a curlew totem man" of the "Gararu moiety" (compared to the "Karraru" person mentioned by Ramsay Smith, 1930:23).

Because of Berndt's misgivings about Unaipon, he had little to do with him. However Tindale, who was an employee of the S.A. Museum, did see Unaipon as a reliable source for some matters. In his 1939 journal, for example, Tindale indicates that he turned to Unaipon for confirmation on certain linguistic details relating to the names of Indigenous groups to the north of Adelaide. His entry dated December 21, 1939, reads:

Notes from Barney Warrior

His tribe is 'Ngadjuri' [written with an initial velar nasal] (not Ngadluri as written by Elkin). This pronunciation is checked in presence of two other informants Mark Wilson & David Unaipon...

(Tindale's Adelaide Journal 1939:159)

How will Unaipon's prolific literary works be received in the future, now that they are becoming more and more recognised and more publically available? Will it be with scepticism and scorn? Or will it be with fascination and possible admiration? The literary critics Muecke and Shoemaker, and the Melbourne University Press, obviously feel his work is worthy of publication and wider dissemination.

## 7.7 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to come to some understanding of Unaipon the writer and 'weaver of literature'. This has been done though an analysis of key texts he wrote during the mid 1920s. I have revisited narratives within his 1929 publication *Native legends*, and for

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<sup>77</sup> In the Bulpallungga narrative, the spirit of a grieving mother (who does of heart ache) turns into a curlew. The mournful cries of the mother can be still be heard each night as she grieves for her lost son Bulpallungga.

some of its texts (particularly "Totemism and Hungarrda") offered alternative interpretations to those offered in past critiques. Texts from *Myths and legends* suggest a creation trilogy, written by Unaipon, that offers an alternative view of creation. His trilogy incorporates both a Christian-inspired male creator spirit (in the form of the Great Spirit) and an Indigenous-inspired female creator spirit (in the form of the Sun Goddess). I attribute to Unaipon three further texts emanating from the mid-north region of S.A., despite only one appearing in the Mitchell Ms. I demonstrate that Unaipon chose to embellish and reconstruct hybrid texts from the original oral narratives he collected from the region, possibly from Barney Warrior. Likely sources contributing to such representations were Langloh Parker, Milton and the King James Bible. However, Unaipon also chose to represent the occasional narrative, such as "Buthera and the bat", in a relatively unembellished form, probably because his source material was more detailed and precise.

Did David Unaipon write the entire 1930 book "*Myths and legends*" ? The contention of this chapter is that he was the sole and original writer of all 48 texts that comprise Ramsay Smith's publication, even though he was not the sole source of the oral narratives that inspired them. This is also now the view of Adam Shoemaker and Stephen Muecke (personal communication, November, 1999), although they have not yet published on this exact issue. By comparing the 27 texts that appear in both the Mitchell Ms. and *Myths and legends*, it becomes clear that Ramsay Smith was quite ruthless in his task as the collection's editor. He extracted numerous vernacular terms and expressions, replacing them with English equivalents, and removing many specific references to place and 'country'. He also persisted in changing the voice of the narrator to the third person, thus deceiving the readers into believing that the identity of the collection's writer was not an Indigenous Australian.

However, Ramsay Smith failed to cover his tracks completely. There are numerous tell-tale signs to be found within the 17 texts with doubtful origins, all of which point to Unaipon as their creator. To go through these texts, one by one, within the body of this chapter would be an arduous task. Instead I have chosen to collate my evidence within Appendix 7.6, where I list archival evidence, literary clues (such as familiar phrases) and other features (such as shared characters and revisited favourite themes) for each of the 17 extra texts that appear in *Myths and legends*. I also list four other texts that were not included in the Mitchell Ms., but can be traced back to Unaipon through archival evidence. This exercise reveals that there are further literary and anthropological connections between certain narratives, just as I demonstrated with the creation trilogy and then the Kinie Ger related texts. I propose that there is another quintet of narratives that was probably inspired by Unaipon's trip to the Nullarbor Plains and beyond in October 1924. Included in this set are: "Palpinkalare", "Thardid Jimbo", "Kirkin and Wyju", "Keen Keeng", "Cheeroonear" and possibly also "Mr and Mrs Newal and their dog" and "Bulpallungga". Each is set in the West (in "Woonboona" or "Ge Rill Ghillie"

country) , and invariably makes mention of the characters: “the Winjarning brothers” and a “Wonboona man”.

I conclude that there should be little doubt regarding the identity of the creator of the entire 48 texts that comprise *Myths and legends*. But what is in doubt is the identity of each of the original narrators from whom Unaipon drew his inspiration to ‘weave’ such syncretic texts. It is only by locating the original manuscript, containing the 17 extra texts commissioned by Ramsay Smith, that we will be able to further unravel the mystery surrounding David Unaipon, and his role in the construction of *Myths and legends*.



## CHAPTER 8

### "NARROONDARIE'S WIVES": A CASE STUDY

#### 8.0 INTRODUCTION

Because of the relative familiarity many South Australians, and interstate visitors, now have with the Dreaming Ancestor Ngurunderi, I have chosen to focus in this chapter, as a case-study, on published narratives relating to Ngurunderi. Such narratives tell of Ngurunderi's creative travels and earthly exploits over a wide area, some beginning where the Darling River meets the Murray River, then along the Lower Murray and Coorong region, and around popular tourist destinations such as Victor Harbor and Kangaroo Island, south of Adelaide. The familiarity people have with Ngurunderi's exploits is largely due to the efforts of the South Australian Museum, and the exposure they have provided him in the form of a long-running display (1988-1999) entitled "Ngurunderi: an Aboriginal Dreaming". This display was accompanied by a short film "Ngurunderi: a Ngarrindjeri Dreaming" which was co-operatively produced by the museum, and is readily available to schools and the wider community. Many school students have also been exposed to Ngurunderi through the compulsory Aboriginal Studies curriculum offered at all levels in South Australian schools (particularly in *The Ngarrindjeri People* Aboriginal Studies 8-12, Unit 5).

The main purpose of this chapter is to conduct a comparative analysis of David Unaipon's (1924-25) representation of the Ngurunderi Dreaming with three other published representations of the Ngurunderi narrative. These include the version of Unaipon's text that was edited and then published under the name of Ramsay Smith (1930:317-331), the version published by the anthropologist R.M. Berndt (1940b:170-182), and finally the more recent version, adapted from the S.A. Museum film, by the Education Department of S.A. in their Aboriginal Studies curriculum materials (1990:50-53).

Others have written for different purposes about the various versions of narratives that tell of the Ancestral Hero Ngurunderi. In his overview of the S.A. Museum's involvement in the making of the video on Ngurunderi, Hemming (1988) accounts for the differences between versions of the same narrative on the grounds of regional variation, and the inevitable loss of detail through cultural breakdown:

During research for the main exhibition and the film, I worked with a number of Ngarrindjeri people who were at least partly familiar with the Dreaming of Ngurunderi. All knew only fragments of the detailed Dreaming story that must have once existed.

(Hemming, 1988:192)

Clarke (1995) has also written in detail on the various narratives published on Ngurunderi, and argues that:

the diversity of these beliefs, many in opposition to others, can be explained in terms of the dynamic relationship people have with the landscape. Local knowledge generates alternative sites where certain events were perceived to have taken place, therefore producing distinct versions.

(Clarke, 1995:147)

Although the knowledge and background of the original story narrators is a crucial factor in explaining content variation in any narrative, my intention in this chapter is not so much to explain or justify this variation. Instead I focus on the way this narrative has been represented in print by the subsequent 'authors'. I look specifically at the audience these 'authors' had in mind, and what purposes they had when they first put pen to paper to write their contrasting representations of the Ngurunderi narrative. It is important to bear in mind that there were only two primary oral sources for these four written versions: Albert Karloan and David Unaipon. My contention is that these two Ngarrindjeri men had very similar knowledge of Ngurunderi and his exploits. But the way their knowledge has been represented in print has been strongly influenced, during the publication process, by those who claim authorship.

## 8.1 THE FOUR PUBLICATIONS

Of the four published texts under consideration, the first 'author' to be published was Ramsay Smith, in 1930, with his own version of "Narroondarie's Wives".<sup>1</sup> This text was originally written by David Unaipon, and is in his Mitchell Library manuscript.<sup>2</sup> It is the sixteenth text in Volume I (beginning at Frame 117 on microfilm), and appears in the form of 12 hand-written pages. It has a hand-written note saying "Paid 30/6/25" on top of page one. The same text in Volume II is typed, and comprises 23 pages. It contains the odd typographical error, along with some punctuation edits.<sup>3</sup> It is this version that was sold to Ramsay Smith. In comparing the original Unaipon text with Ramsay Smith's published version there are further considerable editorial changes, including the deletion of almost all vernacular terms and expressions (except main character names and some fish names). He

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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned earlier, this 1930 publication has since been re-published on several occasions, one of the most recent being in 1996 by Senate, an imprint of Random House, U.K. This particular imprint has been given a new title: *Aborigine*, but apart from the new cover is an exact replica of the 1930 edition, excepting the glossy colour plates which are reproduced in black and white. Again no mention is made of David Unaipon as the source of any of the narratives. Ironically, copies of this reprint (which are 'unwittingly illegal' according to Shoemaker, personal communication, 1999) were on sale at the S.A. Museum bookshop at its re-opening (after major renovations involving the dismantling of the Ngurunderi exhibition) during the 2000 Adelaide Festival of Arts.

<sup>2</sup> Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms. is predominantly hand-written by Unaipon, and within this volume the narrative is titled: "Narroondarie Wives" (just as it is listed in the Contents page of both Volume I & II.) The typed rendition in Volume II titles the narrative in the possessive case: "Narroondarie's Wives", as does Ramsay Smith (1930).

<sup>3</sup> Such edits include the lowering of case for words such as "Aborigines" and typographical errors, particularly of vernacular terms and expressions, such as Ngurunderi's command on page one being changed from "Young Hund. Ar" to "Young Hund,".

also shortens the narrative by cutting out some of the cultural detail (such as the Ngarrindjeri method of cooking fish), as well as specific references to particular place names and landmarks. I will discuss this editorial intervention further in a later section.

Unaipon's narrative was eventually published much later, under his own name, in an anthology of Indigenous writings: *Paperbark* (see Davis et al, 1990:19-32). The editors reproduced the text exactly as it appears in Volume II of the Mitchell Library manuscript, complete with all its vernacular terms and expressions, including the direct speech of both "Narroondarie" and the evil one "Parrimparrie".<sup>4</sup> In all there are 55 different vernacular terms and expressions used by Unaipon in this narrative. Despite its relatively recent publication, the editors of *Paperbark* have opted to reproduce these terms and expressions exactly as Unaipon spelt them, in their fully anglicised form, rather than using more contemporary linguistic conventions. Similarly, the repatriation project being co-ordinated by Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker, that will see the entire Mitchell Ms. republished in Unaipon's name in the year 2001, will retain Unaipon's anglicised spelling (personal communication, Adam Shoemaker, November 1999). I have been told by Ngarrindjeri people that Unaipon chose to pronounce Ngarrindjeri words in an unusual way, by "putting his own accent on them", which contrasted sharply with the way other Ngarrindjeri people pronounced things. He not only put stress on different syllables (by placing primary stress on the second or third syllables rather than the first), but also used to roll all his r's as if he were a Scotsman. It is said he did this to impress his white audiences with his exotic way of speaking (personal communication, Doug Wilson, February 2000).<sup>5</sup>

The third published account of the Ngurunderi narrative to be discussed is that of the anthropologist Berndt (1940b), who relied heavily on Albert Karloan as his source.<sup>6</sup> Karloan was assisted by Mark Wilson, both of whom Berndt describes as of the "Jaralde tribe".<sup>7</sup> Of all the accounts available on Ngurunderi, Hemming (1988:191) claims: "Professor Ronald Berndt's version (1940) is the most detailed published account and it is upon this that the Museum's film is mainly based." In turn, the Education Department of South Australia's (1990) version of the Ngurunderi Dreaming was predominantly taken from the narration of

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<sup>4</sup> In late 1999, the Indigenous actor Rachel Maza was employed by the Talking Book Society to read the texts within this collection, including Unaipon's two texts, onto an audio-tape for their society's audio collection (personal communication, Rachel Maza, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Ngarrindjeri, like all other Indigenous languages of Australia, regularly places primary stress on the first syllable of words. Again like most Australian Indigenous languages, there is more than one rhotic or "r" sound, including a rolled or trilled "r" sound. However, Unaipon tended to roll all his "r"s in a prolonged way. This phenomenon has been referred to in literature and art as "Mannerism", and is defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* as: "the self-conscious cultivation of peculiarities of style - usually elaborate, ingenious, and ornate - in literary works of any period" (Baldick, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> Berndt reproduced this same narrative in 1964, in a shortened form, within his collaborative publication with Catherine Berndt: *The world of the first Australians*. This book has been reprinted on several occasions, and was republished in a revised form in 1988 (see Berndt & Berndt, 1988:245-246).

<sup>7</sup> Note that Unaipon says this was the language of his mother, who was from the the lakes region.

the S.A. Museum's film.<sup>8</sup> It is this published narrative that is the fourth text to be discussed below.

Since the mounting of the Museum exhibition, a further version of the Ngurunderi epic, which was recorded by Ronald Berndt, has been published posthumously in a collaboration between his wife Catherine Berndt and John Stanton (the curator of the extensive Berndt collection held at the University of Western Australia). This later version appears in the comprehensive 1993 publication: *A World That Was: the Yaraldi of the Murray River and the Lakes, South Australia*. It is a compilation of the commentaries and field notes produced by the Berndts during their later field trip in 1942, when they both spent time with Albert Karloan and Pinkie Mack at Murray Bridge.<sup>9</sup> In the Appendices a vernacular account of the Ngurunderi epic is featured in the Yaraldi language, along with interlinear glosses in English (see Berndt et.al., 1993:433-441). This same text is paraphrased in English in the main body of the book under the subheading "Ngurunderi and Nepeli" (Berndt et.al., 1993:22-227). Despite the available technology in the early 1940s, the Berndts only used pencil and paper to record this epic. They made no sound recordings of the Yaraldi re-telling. Therefore, when it comes to consistency and 'accuracy' of their written recordings, we are completely reliant on the linguistic abilities, in 1942, of these two relatively raw anthropologists.<sup>10</sup> The two English versions of this epic published by Berndt (1940b) and Berndt & Berndt (1993) are similar in content, but the earlier 1940 publication is actually more detailed as well as more dramatic, because it includes all the direct speech segments in Yaraldi. Both include Yaraldi and English terms for each site or location mentioned throughout Ngurunderi's travels, but the later version includes a number of changes (or alternatives) to the Yaraldi spelling of words. It also includes corrections of some English words (e.g. the "pligment bush" becomes the "lignum bush", 1993:224). Because the 1940 version of Berndt's retelling is more detailed, it is this text to which I shall mainly refer in comparison with Unaipon's.

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<sup>8</sup> When Ronald Berndt published this paper in *Oceania* he was just at the beginning stages of his career in anthropology, and his time spent with Albert Karloan at Murray Bridge was in fact his first field work, hence he was not a Professor. Note the relative inexperience of the Berndts in 1939-40 amongst the "Jaralde" (now spelt "Yaralde") people of S.A. was not seen as an issue when their work (which was published much later, see Berndt & Berndt, 1993), was viewed as the authoritative anthropological corpus of Ngarrindjeri culture at the Royal Commission, held in Adelaide in 1997, regarding the so-called "secret women's business" in the Hindmarsh Island Affair (see also Hemming, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> Since Ronald Berndt's first field trip, Mark Wilson had passed away (see Berndt et. al. 1993:3).

<sup>10</sup> Although it is acknowledged by many (see Harris, 1981 & 1990) that there is no single correct means of recording a language, particularly its sound system, I am implying here that we can only hope that the Berndts' ears were attuned to the 'foreign' sounds and syllables of Karloan's language, which were quite different to any they had heard before. It is acknowledged even today that Ngarrindjeri has a sound system and phonotactic structure quite aberrant to its neighbouring Indigenous languages (with its five vowels and word initial consonant clusters).

## 8.2 WHO IS NGURUNDERI?

Ngurunderi<sup>11</sup> is an important Ancestral Hero for the Ngarrindjeri people of South Australia. Unaipon features Ngurunderi in many of his narratives, but does not restrict him to his Ngarrindjeri 'legends'. Ngurunderi also features in Unaipon's more ethnographic texts that describe the beliefs and customs of Aboriginal people in general. In his introduction to the Mitchell Library manuscript, which he titles "Aboriginal Folklore", Unaipon likens "Nar-ran-darrie" to Moses:

Like the Isralites [sic], the Aboriginals seem to have had a Moses, a law-giver, a leader, who guided them in their Exodus from Lemuria.<sup>12</sup> His name is Nar-ran-darrie. This mythological being, who now lives in the heavens, gave the Aboriginals their tribal laws and customs.

(Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol. I Mitchell Ms.Intro.:1)

Unaipon then proceeds in his first (ethnographic) text, entitled "Aboriginals: their traditions and customs. Where did they come from?", to proclaim "Nar-ran-darrie" the great leader of the (entire) Aboriginal "race":

Every race has had its great traditional leader and law-giver, who has given the race its first moral training, as well as its social and tribal customs. Nar-ran-darrie was our great traditional leader. The laws of Nar-ran-darrie are taught to the children in their infancy. The hunting grounds were given out to the different families and tribes by Nar-ran-darrie.

(Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol. I Mitchell Ms. Text1:1)

Alternatively, Ngurunderi is referred to, at different times by Unaipon, as the "servant" of the Great Spirit (see "The voice of the Great Spirit" Vol. I, Mitchell Ms. Text 21: 1 & Ramsay Smith, 1930:183), while at other times he is referred to as a "prophet" (see 1963 interview with Cath Ellis).<sup>13</sup> But it is in Unaipon's texts: "Narroondarie wives" and "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit", that the Biblical analogy of a Jesus figure becomes apparent in the character of Ngurunderi, particularly in the way Unaipon portrays him as the Great

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<sup>11</sup> Numerous spellings have been used over the years by different writers for this Ancestral Hero. Unaipon himself uses various spellings, including: "Nar-ran-darrie", "Nar-run-daree", "Nar-rundari" and "Narroondarie". Ramsay Smith (1930) spelt it consistently as "Nurunderi". More recently the spelling convention adopted by the SA Museum, in consultation with the Ngarrindjeri community, is "Ngurunderi" (with an initial nasal velar Ng). Throughout this section, I will use this more contemporary spelling, unless I am quoting some earlier source.

<sup>12</sup> Unaipon refers earlier, in the same text, to "the ancient continent of Lemuria" as probably "a land in the Nor-West" from where the Aboriginal people of Australia migrated. In an article in *The Daily Herald* of Adelaide (June 1, 1911) the reporter writes of meeting "this remarkable specimen of the human family at Dr. Herbert Basedow's rooms". He goes on to report of Basedow's theory of Lemuria, whom he quotes: "Ethnological and scientific investigations all point to the fact that in former times there existed in the north-west of Australia a large continent, which zoologists call Lemuria.... that continent was the home of the first man. All lines of migration are traceable from that portion of the earth."

<sup>13</sup> Note that in the ethnographic text "Fishing", Unaipon also refers to "Nepelle" as "the Great Prophet" (see Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol. I Mitchell Ms. Text 5:2).

Spirit's messenger to earth, and the emphasis he places on the grief and suffering Ngurunderi endures during his earthly sojourn because of the sins committed by his two wives.

In "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit", Unaipon writes:

...we believe in a Great Spirit and the Son of the Great Spirit. There arose among the Aborigines a great teacher Narrundari; he was an elect of the Great Spirit. And he spoke to our forefathers thus:

Children, there is a Great Spirit above whose dwelling place is Wyerriwarr. It is His will that you would know Him as Hyarrinunumb; I am the Whole Spirit and ye are part of the whole. I am your Provider and Protector. It has been my pleasure to give you the privilege to sojourn awhile in the flesh state to fulfill my great plan.

(Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol.I Mitchell Ms.Text 3:2).

The narrative in which Unaipon explains in most detail Ngurunderi's earthly exploits is "Narroondarie Wives", which is the focus of this chapter. In this text, Unaipon refers to Ngurunderi as "one of the many Good Men", "a Sacred Man who is endowed or guided by the will of the Great Spirit", a "Messenger and teacher" (Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol. I Mitchell Ms. Text 16:1). But Unaipon was not the first to write about Ngurunderi.

### 8.3 WHO ELSE HAS PUBLISHED ABOUT NGURUNDERI?

The first published version of the Ngurunderi Dreaming narrative appeared not long after South Australia's colonisation, in an Adelaide newspaper in 1842 (SA Museum, 1989:4). The following year R.Penney published an account in the *South Australian Magazine*, referring to the Great Spirit as "Ooroondooil". Then other accounts appeared in the colony's newspaper, the *Register*, provided by missionary George Taplin in 1862 and later by his son Frederick in 1889.<sup>14</sup> A brief account of Ngurunderi was also given by the ethnographic observer Cawthorne, who wrote in the mid 1840s of this "first great spirit", whom he referred to as "Ooroondovil", but he wasn't published until much later in 1926 (Hemming, 1988:192).

Further early missionary accounts of the exploits of this Ancestral Hero were provided by Meyer (who had less trouble hearing the initial nasal sound), who referred to him as "Nurunduri" in his published 1846 account of the beliefs of the "Raminjerar tribe", living in Encounter Bay (see Chapter Three of this thesis). Then in 1879, Taplin published another very brief account of "Nurunderi", whom he refers to as "the great god of the Narrinyeri" (see Taplin, 1879b:38-39; also my Chapter Three). Taplin's account is similar in content to Meyer's version, but with just a few additional details as related to him by the Ngarrindjeri of Point MacLeay.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Clarke's (1995) paper for further details and bibliographic references for these and other early accounts of the Ngurunderi narrative.

<sup>15</sup> The differences in each of these accounts are summarised in Berndt (1940).

Twenty years later, another version of the Ngurunderi narrative was published in 1898 in Katie Langloh Parker's second collection of 'Legendary Tales' (also mentioned in an earlier chapter).<sup>16</sup> It was provided to her by her uncle, Simpsom Newland, author of *Paving the way*, and she gives it the title "The legend of Nar-oong-owie, the sacred island". Langloh Parker begins her one and a half page narrative:

Ngroondoorie, the giver of laws, customs, and a religion to the Southern tribes of aboriginals in South Australia, became to them as a God, and his promise was ever believed, that, if they followed the laws he had given them, after death their spirits should follow his footsteps over the island of Nar-oong-owie, and thence be translated, as he was, to his home in the skies. The tradition was that his departure took place somewhat as follows. His two wives ran away from him. In going after him he crossed what is now called lake Albert...

(Langloh Parker, 1978:181)<sup>17</sup>

As in the other accounts discussed in this chapter, in Langloh Parker's version, the two wives try to flee to Kangaroo Island, but are drowned when Ngurunderi causes the seas to rise. Eventually Ngurunderi lays down under a giant she-oak tree on the island, but is unable to rest because of the sound of his wives wailing as the wind blows through the tree-tops. The narrative ends with Langloh Parker explaining how Kangaroo Island is "held as sacred to him [Ngurunderi] and the spirits of the dead by the Southern tribes of South Australia" (Langloh Parker, 1978:182).

As far as I am aware, Unaipon's account of the Ngurunderi Dreaming, which appeared in an edited form in Ramsay Smith (1930), was the next version to appear in print. Ten years later, in 1940, the anthropologist R.M. Berndt published his rather detailed thirteen page account, which he sub-titled: "Ngurunderi". Although his account is given in English, he includes numerous vernacular terms and place names, including two pages of maps. Unlike Ramsay Smith, Berndt acknowledges his oral source, Albert Karloan, or "Tara'mindjerup", as well as his assistant "Thralrum (Mark Wilson)". Wilson was a contemporary of Unaipon's. Unlike Karloan, neither Wilson nor Unaipon were initiated men. Berndt describes his two "informants", as "the last survivors of their respective clans" within the "Jaralde tribe" (1940b:165). Despite Ramsay Smith's version being fifteen pages long, with considerable detail of events not dissimilar to those described in Berndt's published account, Berndt makes the following barbed comment in his introduction: "Since Taplin only one reference has been made to this legend, though Ramsay Smith has contributed an inaccurate and extremely anglicized account" (Berndt, 1940b:170). Berndt would have been aware that

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<sup>16</sup> This particular version by Langloh Parker is the first time we see Ngurunderi's name spelt with an initial velar nasal sound "Ng". Earlier recorders, (who heard the initial nasal sound) wrote it as an alveolar nasal "N". Berndt was probably the first to spell this Ancestral Hero's name "Ngurunderi", as it is generally spelt today.

<sup>17</sup> This quotation is taken from the 1978 reprint that combines her original 1896 *Legendary tales* and 1898 *More legendary tales*.

Ramsay Smith had worked with Unaipon in procuring his material for publication, so it seems this criticism is directed at both men.

It is a pity Berndt did not manage to see Unaipon's original manuscript, "Narroondarie wives", because in this version there is considerable reference to specific features of the physical environment, which Ramsay Smith chose to delete. But, as my analysis below will show, Unaipon does choose to introduce additional themes which are not present in Karloan's account. These additions include Biblical themes such as those of bondage, captivity and escape, from the Old Testament, as well as themes of sin, guilt, love and eternal life, which are more familiar in the New Testament. It is my contention that Unaipon and Berndt were at cross purposes in their reasons for committing such narratives to print, and hence in the way they chose to represent them to their audiences as published texts. Typically, Unaipon's intention was to create a syncretic text that not only reveres Aboriginal belief and customs, but also highlights the similarities they have with the teachings of the Christian church. Berndt, on the other hand, was an anthropologist who aimed for authenticity in his representation, and strived to highlight any exotic differences he perceived between Aboriginal people and the western world.

The most familiar version of the Ngurunderi Dreaming narrative is that featured in the S.A. Museum's film: "Ngurunderi: a Ngarrindjeri Dreaming" which accompanied the Ngurunderi exhibition.<sup>18</sup> The exhibition included a series of display cabinets that depicted the passage of Ngurunderi's creationary journey and exploits on earth. Because of this exhibition, the Ngurunderi Dreaming narrative is not only becoming known amongst many non-Indigenous South Australians, but among tourists from all over the world. A "shortened version" (of half a page) of the narrative was made available in a pamphlet produced by the museum for visitors to the exhibition, which was again reproduced within their longer ethnographic publication of the same name: *Ngurunderi: an Aboriginal Dreaming* (S.A. Museum, 1989:4). The film version is that used by the Department of Education in their Aboriginal Studies materials, hence it reaches many school children throughout the state.

#### **8.4 ANNOTATED SUMMARY OF UNAIPON'S "NARROONDARIE WIVES".**

Below I provide an annotated summary of Unaipon's epic version of the Ngurunderi Dreaming. This will be followed by a more detailed comparative analysis of the way Unaipon has represented this important narrative, and how his account contrasts with that published by Ramsay Smith, Berndt and the Education Department of S.A. To avoid accusations of mis-representation, I have also reproduced Unaipon's very long narrative in full in Appendix

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<sup>18</sup> This exhibition, "Ngurunderi: an Aboriginal Dreaming", was dismantled in 1999 when the SA Museum underwent extensive renovations.



8.3. It is taken from *Paperbark*, and is a verbatim reproduction of "Narroondarie wives" as it appears in Volume II of the (1924-25) Mitchell Ms.<sup>19</sup>

Unaipon introduces "Narroondarie's wives" in the same voice as a number of his more ethnographic texts, using that of a third person. He begins by explaining the significance to Aboriginal people of his main character, "Narroondarie":

Narroondarie is the name of one of the many good men that were sent among the various tribes of the Australian Aborigines. Now the name Narroondarie is better known among the Narrinyini [sic] tribes of the Lower Murray, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and the Encounter Bay, South Australia.

(Unaipon, 1990:19)

Unaipon explains that Ngurunderi was a "Sacred Man", known elsewhere as "Boonah", and that he was "guided by the will of the Great Spirit, the Nhyanhund or Byamee, the Our Father of All". It is significant that Unaipon acknowledges and names a greater Supreme Being in his narrative, because the existence of a Byamee figure, or Father of All, was becoming well established in popular literature about Aboriginal people by the mid 1920s (see Carey, 1998). It is equally significant, however, that Unaipon does not equate Ngurunderi with a Father of All figure (cf. Mudrooroo's 1994 claims), but as the one "guided by" him.<sup>20</sup>

According to Unaipon Ngurunderi was a "messenger and teacher", who dwelt amongst the Ngarrindjeri<sup>21</sup> after moving down from the northern parts of Australia, and then New South Wales and Victoria. According to Unaipon, "the tribes that remain this day around Lake Alexandrina" are those who were brave enough to respond to his calls. The fearful ones were transformed into birds. (Unaipon, 1990:19) This claim of Unaipon's about the Ngarrindjeri people being migrants from the north-east, as well as the stronger (or less fearful) survivors of an earlier group of Indigenous inhabitants is also significant. Unaipon was a keen reader of evolutionary theory, and would visit Herbert Basedow's rooms to discuss his theories on the migration of early man from Lemuria (see *The Daily Herald*, June 1, 1911). I contend that just as Basedow saw Caucasians as representatives of a later stage in the evolutionary

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<sup>19</sup> Unaipon's text appears in two forms in the Mitchell Ms., one hand-written, the other typed. Both are available on Microfilm from the Mitchell Library, on two reels (one for each volume) and with each page constituting a single frame. This narrative (Text 16) begins on Frame 117 in Volume I, and on Frame 116 in Volume II. Unfortunately, the *Paperbark* reproduction has included all the typographical errors that appear in Volume II. When I quote from this text, I will use the *Paperbark* page numbers because this is currently the most publically accessible reprint.

<sup>20</sup> In the "Narroondarie wives" narrative Unaipon equates Byamee with the Father of All, whereas in a much later interview with Cath Ellis (in June 1963) he equates Ngurunderi as the Lower Murray equivalent to the Byamee figure of the eastern states.

<sup>21</sup> The spelling adopted by Taplin, and increasingly by others during the early 1900s was "Narrinyeri", in contrast to today's accepted spelling: "Ngarrindjeri".

development of humans, so did Unaipon see his own Ngarrindjeri people as the superior survivors of evolutionary selection among earlier Indigenous Australians from the upper reaches of the Murray River.

In this particular narrative, Unaipon chooses not to include two major creationary events, that feature in the Karloan retelling of the same epic. The first is the widening of the Murray River, resulting from the travels downstream of a giant Murray cod (Ponde), which is pursued by Ngurunderi. The other is the creation of other species of freshwater fish by the cutting into pieces of the giant cod, after he is speared by Ngurunderi's brother-in-law. This deletion is probably because Unaipon chooses to include his account of these creationary feats elsewhere in his Mitchell Ms., namely in his more ethnographic text entitled "Fishing"<sup>22</sup>:

According to a legend; There was a great earth shock or earth tremors at the source of the murray. This continued for day [sic] and suddenly the earth was rent right along where the murray now flow's [sic] but there was only a small amount of water just strickly [sic]; winding way to the southern ocean, Presently another earth tremor more sever [sic] than the first when suddenly something [of] the earth burst forth from the depth of the earth a huge fish a Pondi and so it came out of the earth followed by a great flow of water the cod struggling along this narrow stream acting like those great steam shovel's [sic], digging with its head; making the river deep and swinging powerful tail causing all the bend's [sic] in the river untill [sic] it reached what known the [sic] now the Lake Alexandrina. Then Nabulee, the great prophet, caught it and cut it in in [sic] pieces; and throwing the small fragment cut from the cod in the river and naming them Tcherie, Thookeri, Pummerie. Pil lul kie, Ploongie, Which are the fishes caught in the Murray and it tributaries; the Fresh water fishes are more easily obtained than those that live in the sea.

(Unaipon, 1924-25, Vol. I Mitchell Ms. Text 5:1-2)

Returning to Unaipon's original epic, Ngurunderi decides to choose two bald hills overlooking the lakes as his "last home on earth" before being called by the Great Spirit to "take his place in heaven among the other Great Company" (Unaipon, 1990:19-20). But presently he is distracted by the "pitiful cry" of two "cunning" young maidens, held captive in the tall slender stems of the Grass Tree, having taken delight in captivating "all the great men". Apparently they had taken different forms in the past, sometimes as butterflies "with beautiful colours", and sometimes as "the flower tops of reeds", but always as prisoners in a "subconscious state" with no human bodily form. (Unaipon, 1990:20) The Old Testament themes of 'bondage' and 'captivity' are features of a number of Unaipon's other narratives (eg. "Hungarra" and "Release of the dragon flies"). These Biblical themes continue in this narrative, as do the inevitable moralising conclusions. A further Biblical parallel can be seen in women being portrayed as sinners, just as Eve was the first to be guilty of original sin in the Garden of Eden narrative. However, Unaipon was not the author of this happy

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<sup>22</sup> The following text is reproduced with the punctuation, capitalisation and spelling of that used by Unaipon in his handwritten version of "Fishing", which is Text 5 within Volume I of the Mitchell Ms.

coincidence. The two wives are depicted as first breaking the taboo of eating forbidden food in other Ngarrindjeri accounts of this same epic.

Unaipon tells us that Ngurunderi, as a Sacred Man, was actually forbidden to associate with women, but he eventually succumbs to their pitiful cries. He began to think how nice it would be to just look upon the human form of these captive spirits, so "in the twinkling of an eye" they are released. Immediately the Great Man falls "victim to their charm" and their "perfect form", and asks them to become his wives. Together they return to his home, where he begins to instruct them in the "various laws and customs that he gave to the people". One of these laws is that "under penalty of death" no woman is allowed to eat the Tookerrie, an extremely bony silver-scaled fish. (Unaipon, 1990:21)

One day, while Ngurunderi is out in his canoe, the two wives catch "three beautiful white Tookerrie" (Unaipon, 1990:22). In their excitement they send Ngurunderi off to "Rowhokkun", the home of "Nebullie", who had sent a message by smoke requesting Ngurunderi's company. The women quickly set about cooking their fish in the traditional manner, which Unaipon outlines in detail.<sup>23</sup> As the fish cooks, the women joke about how men think they are clever in forbidding women from eating the nicest of foods, and how they too have been clever in their deceit. But after their meal, their merriment turns to fear, as they realise that the smell of the oily Tookerrie has been retained in the surrounding vegetation. So they "awoke to their sense of guilt", and quickly flee in the opposite direction to their "lord and master" who, as punishment, may return them to their captive state, maybe even "into something more dreadful" (Unaipon, 1990:23-24). They quickly bind together a bundle of grass tree sticks and make a raft, then paddle across the western side of Lake Albert.

Although Ngurunderi loved his wives, on reaching his "mia mia" and smelling the fish, he laments, "those silly and frivolous maidens have eaten the forbidden fish and now they must be punished" (Unaipon, 1990:24). The next morning he sets off with his "plonggee" in pursuit of his wives. He follows them across the Coorong, and then 70 miles along the "sand hummocks", but loses their tracks. Narroondarie rests for the evening only to be awoken the next morning by the voice of "Puckknowie, the Grandmother Spirit", warning him of imminent danger.<sup>24</sup> This danger takes the form of a "very cruel man" of the "Punbbaalee tribe", who is a "disciple" of the crow, but took on the disguise of a wombat. Ngurunderi spears the wombat, releasing "the Evil One" through the blood of the wombat, which then takes on the form of a man (Unaipon, 1990:24-25). Parrimparrie claims he is Ngurunderi's brother-in-law, and wants to kill Ngurunderi before he reaches heaven, or "Wyerriwarr".

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<sup>23</sup> Unaipon also provides detail of the method used to catch the fish in the narrative. Ramsay Smith, in his published version of this same narrative, includes this detail in a footnote; while he completely deletes the detailed explanation on how the fish is cooked.

<sup>24</sup> This narrative is not the first of Unaipon's to feature a female Supreme Being who watches over the plight of those on earth (see e.g. "Pah-Kowie" in *Native legends*).

According to Unaipon, "all Great Men have been given the privilege to go to heaven without death" (Unaipon, 1990:27). Later in the epic, Unaipon writes of Ngurunderi being in charge of his own departure from earth, just as all "Great Men" are.

Meanwhile, a battle ensues between Ngurunderi and Parrimparrie, and eventually the evil-one is speared through the heart. But as Ngurunderi attempts to continue his journey in search of his wives, he fails to make progress, because Parrimparrie still has a hold on him. He makes a big fire to burn the slain body, but still he makes no progress.<sup>25</sup> Finally he burns Parrimparrie's congealed blood, and only then is able to travel on. He pursues his wives further to where the Murray flows into the Southern Ocean. In order to cross, Ngurunderi asks for help from the Great Spirit, who subsequently makes a land bridge for him. Eventually Ngurunderi comes across another camp of his wives, where he sees evidence that they have eaten yet another forbidden food - "Tarrarrie" - the fat of the "Mullowie" fish. This discovery profoundly effects Ngurunderi:

he was so greatly grieved and sorrowful in heart that he sat down beside the camp and wept bitterly for the sins of his two wives. He spent the night there weeping, because he loved these maidens very much. To think it was he who delivered unto the people the word of the Great Spirit, that those who broke these laws would receive the full penalty - Death! And that he who had brought them out of bondage and given them the full living of a human life would now bring about their destruction.... He prayed for their forgiveness but the answer came: as a person chooses to live, so shall he die.

(Unaipon, 1990:29)

Again we see some striking Biblical analogies in Unaipon's narrative, in this case with the New Testament. Here Unaipon portrays Ngurunderi as a Jesus-like figure, who has come to love his earthly wives, but suffers greatly because of their sins and the ultimate price of death that they must pay. But Unaipon does not go so far as to directly substitute Ngurunderi for Christ - by having Ngurunderi pay the penalty of death himself. Instead he portrays Ngurunderi as having Christ-like emotions and compassion for his sinful wives. He also introduces the concept of 'prayer' into the narrative, with Ngurunderi praying to the Great Spirit to ask for the sins of his earthly loved-ones to be forgiven. This is followed, however, by the Biblical dictum that the penalty of sin is "Death!" (Unaipon, 1990:29).

Grief stricken, Ngurunderi continues his journey to Port Elliot, but on discovering his wives next camp he again allows his tears to flow. His grief is so great and his tears so profuse that a soakage is formed and, according to Unaipon, is still present at Port Elliot where "some of the old folk will point out that place" (Unaipon, 1990:29). Eventually Ngurunderi arrives at The Bluff at Victor Harbour<sup>26</sup>, where again he weeps as he sees a vision of the impending

<sup>25</sup> This same difficulty is featured in Karloans telling of the narrative.

<sup>26</sup> This popular tourist destination 80 kms. south of South Australia's capital Adelaide was originally spelt "Victor Harbour" with a "u". However, in more recent years, following the spelling tradition of the Ports & Harbor Authority, the preferred spelling has become "Victor Harbor". Unless quoting a text, I use the former spelling which was used by both Berndt and Unaipon.

death of his wives "before they reached the Spirit Land, Kangaroo Island" (Unaipon, 1990:30). When the two maidens arrive opposite the island, which is connected "at the time of the story" to the mainland, by a strip of land, they go hunting for honey. Before they cross they have to seek the permission of the "keeper" of the strip - "Knowwallie, the Blue Crane"<sup>27</sup>, which they receive the next morning (Unaipon, 1990:31).

Meanwhile, "Kroolthumie" (the Owl) passes on the message to Ngurunderi, explaining how he is to punish his wives. He is told to chant the "Wind Song" so that once his wives begin to cross, the fury of the waters will overtake the maidens, causing them to drown. This he does, but still he weeps "bitterly" for his wives as they struggle to save themselves, even though he knows that "these two maidens [had] to pay the penalty of their sins" (Unaipon, 1990:31). Ngurunderi is then told by the voice of the Great Spirit that he must turn the maidens into rocks "to stand out as a warning to all women not to eat of the forbidden food". Unaipon tells us that these "Two Sisters", or "Rhunjullung", can be seen by passing vessels today, as well as from the mainland (Unaipon, 1990:32).

After commanding that the waters recede, Ngurunderi crosses to the island, and eventually plunges into the sea on the western side, where he rescues the spirits of his wives. He then flies with them upwards to the heavens ("the Land of Wyerriwarr") where he joins: "that bright and happy group Nabulli, Whyoungarrie, Geeveelang [and] Manyungie" (Unaipon, 1990:32). Unaipon's moralising conclusion tells the reader that Ngurunderi now looks down "to cheer and comfort and encourage the Komnukalda [people] to press on to fight all the evil desires that are within, remembering always to obey the will of the Great Spirit" (Unaipon, 1990:32). This conclusion also reiterates the message that Unaipon stresses in much of his writing, which is: long before the establishment of Christian missions among his people, the Great Spirit has guided all Aboriginal people to adopt and follow a strong moral code. This code is taught through messengers such as "the Great Teacher" Ngurunderi, who now lives in the sky to remind his people of his teachings.

## 8.5 A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF "NARROONDARIE'S WIVES"

In comparing Unaipon's Ngurunderi narrative with that published by Ramsay Smith (1930), Berndt (1940b) and finally in 1990 by the Education Dept. of S.A., one has to consider the motives of each writer. Before discussing the longer and more detailed accounts of Unaipon, Ramsay Smith and Berndt, I will briefly comment on the more recent publication by the Education Dept. of S.A. This relatively short account (of three pages) is drawn predominantly from the S.A. Museum's film, so comments I make regarding this particular

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<sup>27</sup> In another narrative (not held in the Mitchell Library Ms.) but also written by Unaipon, and eventually published in Ramsay Smith (1930), the Blue Crane is called "Chirr-bookie". This same narrative is important to the Kaurna people today, who consider "Tjilbruke" to be an Ibis Man (see Education Department of S.A., 1989 & Amery, 1998)

published account also apply to the (1989) film. My reading of this account is that its overriding purpose is to stress the importance of the Ancestral Hero 'Ngurunderi', to the Ngarrindjeri people, and the role he played in the creation of well-known landmarks on the Fleurieu Peninsula. It begins:

In the Dreaming of the Ngarrindjeri people, Ngurunderi is the shaper of the land, laws and creatures. He could travel through time and space along rivers and hills... across lakes and seas... His mind and spirit sometimes took human shape and he travelled as a man.

(Education Dept. of S.A., 1990:50)

The narrative then continues to outline all the creative acts that Ngurunderi performed during his creationary travels along the Lower Murray and throughout the southern coastal region of the Fleurieu Peninsula in South Australia. It is Ngurunderi alone, and not "Nepele", who possesses the power to create: the Murray River (by chasing the giant cod), Long Island, all the different varieties of both fresh and saltwater fish, two hills (from his hut), the Milky Way (from his canoe), granite boulders, weeds in a sea channel, Pullen Island, more boulders on Granite Island, The Bluff, the Pages Islands, and eventually "a bright star in the Milky Way" from himself. He is even claimed to have "magical forces" which he draws on in his fight with "Parampi", the "evil sorcerer" (1990:52). Although the Museum drew their information largely from Berndt (1940b), for their film, they did include some extra details from oral accounts provided to them by Ngarrindjeri people such as George Trevorrow and Henry Rankine. Trevorrow has a Coorong background, and provided the information on saltwater fish, such as the Mulloway, also being created by Ngurunderi (Hemming, 1988:191). By contrast, Unaipon gives Nepeli the status of being a "great Prophet", and it is he alone who kills Ponde, and hence creates all the other freshwater fish varieties. In the Education Dept. account it is Ngurunderi who "gave the power" to Nepeli to spear the fish. Together they cut the fish up into pieces, but Ngurunderi is the one who commands each piece to become another fish variety (Education Dept. of S.A., 1990:51).

It is quite clear that the original written source for the Education Dept. of S.A. in reproducing the direct speech of Ngurunderi was Berndt (1940b). Unfortunately Berndt himself was relatively inexperienced with linguistic transcription work at this stage, and further errors have been introduced by the Education Dept. of S.A. Two examples of the introduced errors are: "Pul'dju'wurl'ul'urun", meaning 'You will turn into birds' (in Ed. Dept., 1990:52), compared to Berndt (1940b:172) "pul'djur'wurl'ul'ungurn"; and "Eund'aunun'nuken'-napanu", meaning 'Have you seen my two wives walking?' (in Ed. Dept., 1990:52), compared to "Eund 'angun 'nukeng 'napangu?" (in Berndt, 1940b:174).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In the Appendices of the Berndt & Berndt publication (1993:433-441) the vernacular version of the Ngurunderi epic renders these two utterances with revised spelling: "puldjuweralangungun" = 'turned into small birds' and "I-indanggun ngakung ('Did you see') anggun ('those two') napanggun an? ('wives of?')".

By consulting Taplin's (1878) grammar and (1879) wordlist, I find the following words that relate to the first utterance by Ngurunderi:

Pulyeri 'small bird'

-wallin 'to become' (the INCHOATIVE suffix on verbs)

-ung'une 'all you' (the 2nd person plural bound pronoun -future tense)

Strung together they produce the alternative utterance: "Pulyeri-wallin ung'une" meaning 'All you will become small birds'. However, there is a need for more detailed linguistic work to decipher much of Berndt's transcription of Karloan's original words, especially for the second utterance above.<sup>29</sup>

The first aim of the Aboriginal Studies courses (R-7) written by the Education Department of S.A. is:

to develop an awareness and appreciation of Australian Aboriginal culture through studying Aboriginal Dreaming, environment, language, lifestyle, music, dance and visual art.

(Education Department of S.A., 1988b:7)

The version of the Ngurunderi epic presented by the Education Department, and the suggested associated learning activities, were written to help meet the above overall aim. Despite the minor errors mentioned above, their version of the Ngurunderi narrative closely follows the narration of the S.A. Museum film on Ngurunderi. Although it lacks quite a bit of the detail (particularly specific place names) published in the Berndt rendition, elsewhere in the same Education Department publication a detailed map of the Fleurieu Peninsula is included. I therefore conclude that the Department's version of the Ngurunderi epic fulfills their aim of educating the public about the spiritual ties that local Ngarrindjeri people have with their land. In particular it demonstrates that the significant landmarks at the popular tourist destinations on the Fleurieu Peninsula (such as Goolwa and Victor Harbour) held considerable spiritual significance to the Ngarrindjeri people well before tourists took them over as their own.

When Berndt first undertook his research with Ngarrindjeri people, he was a young anthropologist who had never conducted fieldwork with Aboriginal people before, and thus aspired to emulate the works of his respected teacher Professor Elkin of Sydney University. He was the first anthropologist to work intensively with the people of the Lower Murray, and it was through this introductory work that he hoped to forge himself a career in anthropology. His work was not ethnographic, because he was recording what his "informants" could remember of their early cultural life and spiritual beliefs. By the time he was to gather his data in the late 1930s there was considerable cultural breakdown among the

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<sup>29</sup> The second utterance is more difficult to decipher, but possibly contains the following words, also taken from Taplin: Nape 'wife'; Ngune 'you' (2nd person singular pronoun); Ngo 'going'.

Ngarrindjeri people. Initiation ceremonies had ceased about 60 years prior (in the 1880s), and the people were either living under the continuing influences of the Christian mission established at Point McLeay in 1859, or on the fringes of nearby towns. Even within their later 1993 publication, the recordings are those collected by the young Berndts back in 1942. It comprises what they call a "memory culture" (Berndt et. al, 1993:10), which is a reconstruction of "a world that was", according to the two Yaraldi informants: Albert Karloan and Pinkie Mack (see Berndt et. al., 1993:2-4).

Prior to the Berndt's work, Radcliffe-Brown (a British anthropologist) had previously written briefly on the social organisation of the people of the Lower Murray region (see Radcliffe-Brown, 1930-31). Alternatively, in Ronald Berndt's first foray into this region, he chose to emphasise the strong relationship these people had with their land. This is something that becomes apparent in Berndt's recording of Albert Karloan's account of the Ngurunderi narrative. It makes continual reference to the different locations where particular events occur, which is why Berndt chooses to accompany the narrative with several detailed maps. He also names throughout the text the different "tribal country" through which Ngurunderi travels. He introduces his 1940 paper by stating that: "Legends of the Jaralde and neighbouring tribes are intimately linked with the physical features of the countryside, the origin and significance of which they attempt to explain" (Berndt, 1940b:165). In fact, it could be argued that the main thrust of this early paper is that Aboriginal mythology is, to a large extent, determined by the geography of the area to which it relates. Of the "Ngurunderi legend", or this "great Jaralde epic" (as referred to by Berndt), he says:

Each outstanding physical feature worthy of attention along the coast of the Coorong and Encounter Bay is brought into the telling of the tale.... The whole legend is determined, to a certain extent, by the geography of the Lower Murray, the Lakes District, the Coorong, Encounter Bay coast, and the Fleurieu Peninsula.

(Berndt, 1940b:166)

I actually read Unaipon's account of the Ngurunderi epic long before I read Karloan's account, as outlined in Berndt (1940b & 1993). What struck me on my first reading of Unaipon's rendition was that there seemed to be a considerable number of Biblical parallels and themes throughout the narrative. However, on closer scrutiny, when comparing Unaipon's version with Karloan's rendition it seems a number of Biblical parallels feature in both versions, and should therefore not be considered the sole creation of Unaipon. In fact Berndt includes an additional narrative from Karloan (in his 1940 paper and his 1993 book), which has one element that seems decidedly Biblically inspired, but is not featured in Unaipon's writings. In the very brief narrative "The Legend of Matamai (Ngurunderi's Son)", Karloan tells of Ngurunderi instilling the rituals associated with death and the desiccation of corpses, involving Ngurunderi erecting a platform for the body of his deceased son. But before commencing the rituals associated with death, he waits for three days "to see



if his son would recover". Unlike Christ, however, he did not. Therefore Ngurunderi continues with the mourning and desiccation process.

A further Biblical parallel in the finale of Karloan's account of the Ngurunderi epic, not within Unaipon's account, is Karloan's message that has an uncanny similarity to those found in the Gospels:

Before Ngurunderi went to the 'spirit world,' he told the Jaralde that the spirits of their deceased would always follow along the tracks he made to Kangaroo Island... and eventually, after cleansing themselves in 'western waters' as he had done, would go up to Waieruwar and reside with him. Ngurunderi said to the peoples... Nupau'ngukur (I-am-(or me)-going first) ngurn'urndu (you-people-come) weijun (after-me).

(Berndt, 1940b:182)

There are at least two New Testament verses that come to mind as I read Karloan's words: "Jesus said: I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6); and the prophecy of Isaiah: "Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee" (in Matthew 11:10).

There are even elements in Karloan's version of the Ngurunderi epic that bear resemblances with the mythology of the Egyptians. The important Egyptian God of the Sun "Ra" was, to the aristocracy of Egypt, the creator and father of the Gods, and hence the creator of the mighty Nile River. His son Osiris gave the Egyptians "a code of laws... and showed them the proper rites for worshipping the Gods" (Spence, 1996:77). Karloan (but not Unaipon) attributes the creation of the Murray River to Ngurunderi, however, I assume that any similarities both Ra and Osiris share with Ngurunderi, in Karloan's epic, is purely coincidental. The same cannot be said, in my view, for Unaipon's epics. They seem not only Biblically inspired, but also have similarities with classic Greek epics, as well as the mythology of the Egyptians. It is my contention that "as a weaver of literature", Unaipon fully intended to emulate the epic tales of classical Greek literature, as well as draw on what he knew of Egyptian mythology. Both Ra and Osiris share creative acts and deeds with Unaipon's Ngurunderi, while the sky-goddess Nut, was possibly the inspiration for "Puckknowie, the Grand Mother Spirit," who acts as a "Guardian Angel" over Ngurunderi during his early exploits (see Unaipon, 1990:25).<sup>30</sup> It is the Goddess Nut, the wife of Ra, whose bright blue body is painted across the upper wall of the Egyptian room in the S.A. Museum (where Unaipon spent much of his time doing research) as if a guardian over all the earth that lies beneath her.

In his narrative, Unaipon renders the heroic Ngurunderi with characteristics often reserved for a great Greek warrior, but with the paradoxical compassion of a Christ figure. When

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<sup>30</sup> This same character features as "Pah-Kowie" in a number of Unaipon's creation narratives, which were discussed earlier in the previous chapter.

Unaipon writes of Ngurunderi being embattled with the evil "Parrimparrie", he has him raise his spear well above his shoulders and: "like all warriors, uttered a prayer". Ngurunderi asks his spear to do his job well, as if victory is his destiny. But this is not the only incident in the epic, where Unaipon has his hero praying for help from one mightier than he. After spearing the evil-one, Ngurunderi prays to "the Great Spirit" for a means to cross the mouth of the Murray River: "His prayer was answered; the ground came up and formed a bridge across the river" (Unaipon, 1990:29).

Unaipon introduces the concept of a Supreme Being (the "Great Spirit" to whom Ngurunderi prays) at the beginning of his narrative. It takes the form of an all-powerful male figure-head, which he also refers to as: "Nhyanhund" or "Byamee", or the "Father of All". Berndt avoids any mention of such a figure head (and we can only assume Karloan mentioned none), although Berndt does acknowledge a belief in such a being in his later work:

Some of the tribes of south-eastern Australia, for instance, are reported to have believed in a supreme being, a male god. Howitt (1904:488-508) went so far as to speak of an 'All Father', and suggested that Nurrundere (Ngurunderi), Nurelli (Nepele), Bunjil, Mungan-ngaua, Daramulun, and Baiame (Baaiami) 'all represented the same being under different names. Not enough is known about the mythology and ritual associated with them.... Such a fragmentary outline could very well have been influenced by alien contact.

(Berndt & Berndt (1964), 1988:244)

Berndt also prefers to refer to Ngurunderi as a "creative hero", rather than using the more Biblical referents adopted by Unaipon (such as teacher, prophet, law-giver, servant etc.), particularly when he is highlighting Ngurunderi's more compassionate, Christ-like character.

Unaipon's retelling of Ngurunderi's epic actually begins on the shores of Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert (where he transforms the fearful people into birds). However Unaipon does first make mention of Ngurunderi originally coming "from the northern part of Australia down into various parts of New South Wales and Victoria" (Unaipon, 1990:19). The first mentioned site in the region is the "two Bald hills", where Ngurunderi was to take up residence. Karloan's epic begins with Ngurunderi moving down the upper reaches of the Murray River in a canoe<sup>31</sup>, in pursuit of the giant Murray cod. During the chase, the cod carves out the shape of the mighty river as it "swished the water with its tail" (Berndt, 1940b:170). The first appearance of both the evil "Param'pari" and the two wives, in Karloan's narrative, are in the human form, with no previous transformations taking place. In contrast, the Education Department of S.A.'s publication begins its re-telling of the Ngurunderi narrative by locating the beginning of Ngurunderi's creationary journey at the junction of the Murray River and the Darling River. They also introduce the two wives at this early stage in the epic, stating "Ngurunderi was looking for his wives who had run away

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<sup>31</sup> In the 1940 publication, Berndt claims Ngurunderi was "paddling" his canoe. In the 1993 publication, produced from later fieldwork with Karloan, he is "poling" his canoe in pursuit of the giant cod.

after a quarrel” (Education Department of S.A.1990:50). Neither Unaipon nor Karloan make mention of the two wives until Ngurunderi is living at Mount Misery or “Larlangangel” (see Berndt, 1940b), which Unaipon calls “two Bald hills”. It is from here that Ngurunderi first smells the cooking of the bony bream fish, which is taboo to women, and hence from here that they begin their fearful flight (because of their breaking of the law).

It is not uncommon within Dreaming narratives, from across much of Australia, for people to be transformed into animals, often bearing some distinguishing characteristic that portrays the reasons for their transformation. In Karloan’s account of the Ngurunderi epic, the people who feared Ngurunderi, and chose to hide in the reeds, were changed by him into little blue birds (Wetjungali) , and thus still live among the reeds today.<sup>32</sup> Unaipon also has the same fearful people being transformed into birds on the command of Ngurunderi. However, he develops the theme further by suggesting that his own people (“the tribes that remain this day around Lake Alexandrina”) were the brave ones “who summoned sufficient courage and came at his [Ngurunderis] call” (Unaipon, 1990:19). As mentioned earlier, this is yet another case of Unaipon applying his theory of evolution among Indigenous Australians to his own narratives.

But Unaipon then goes further in this narrative to adopt another of his favourite themes; that of imprisonment. He not only has Ngurunderi’s wives being entrapped within a grass tree, but also the body of the evil "Parrimparrie" being imprisoned within the body of a wombat, before he is transformed into a man. In both cases it is Ngurunderi who releases them from their entrapment. This theme invariably involves his entrapped characters existing at different levels of consciousness, because their spirits are embodied in non-human forms within different plants or animals. In the case of the “two maidens”, they are imprisoned in a grass tree in a "sub-conscious state". Thus they complain pitifully that their "flesh with its sense of taste, smell, hearing and touch is dead". But they eventually manage to trick Ngurunderi into releasing them into their bodily forms of two beautiful women. (Unaipon, 1990:20-21)

Unaipon's embodiment of the evil one, Parrimparrie, "within the life blood of an animal" is said to be unusual (by Unaipon), which justifies the mistake of his release by the usually wise Ngurunderi. Once Parrimparrie is released and becomes a man, through the spearing of the wombat, he sets out to kill the good man Ngurunderi. In Unaipon's epic, good always overcomes evil, through the power of the Great Spirit, hence Parrimparrie does not succeed. But nor does Ngurunderi succeed in saving his much loved wives from certain death. Hence, Unaipon's epic has all the elements of a great Greek tragedy, as he writes of Ngurunderi's lament, and the torture he endures as "his bosom raged a great conflict" from within. But, alas, this "Great Leader" knows he must fulfill "the Will of the Great Father of All", and

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<sup>32</sup> This Watji (or Wetji) Bird is the same bird that features in the Dreaming narrative told to my children by Veronica Brodie, which I mentioned in Chapter 1.

cause his wives to drown as they try to escape to the Spirit Land of Kangaroo Island (Unaipon, 1990:30).

Throughout the entire text, both Unaipon and Karloan retain a strong sense of Place as Ngurunderi pursues his wives, and occasionally loses them, in the lakes and coastal regions of southern S.A. They both name specific locations where he rests or creates some significant feature of the landscape. Ramsay Smith, however, within his version of the narrative, deletes much of this detail. He deletes, for example, the name of the home of "Nebullie", referred to by Unaipon as: "Rowhokkun Point Macleay Mission Station now" (see Unaipon, 1990:22 cf. Smith, 1930:320). He also deletes Unaipon's reference to the specific place where the maidens rested on the lake, which Unaipon refers to as: "the point near the estate of the late T.R. Bowman" (1990:24). Although Ramsay Smith names the Coorong, Lake Alexandrina, Lake Albert and the Murray River (in English) he deletes any reference to The Bluff, Victor Harbour, Encounter Bay, Port Elliot and Kangaroo Island. Instead he simply refers to the first and the last of these as non-specific landmarks, using lower case lettering: "the bluff, and "the island" (see Ramsay Smith, 1930:328). Ironically Ramsay Smith contradicts his intention of removing any strong sense of Place from his book by choosing to include a photograph of the rocks that are known as "The Two Sisters", however he does not tell of their specific location. His narrative merely mentions the rocks as being between the mainland and the island. Ramsay Smith states that this particular photo is reproduced by him with permission from the photographer. It is also ironic that the sources of all the photographs and coloured drawings that are reproduced in his 1930 publication, are named and fully acknowledged. Yet Unaipon, as the major source of all the narratives, does not rate even a mention.

Regarding a sense of Place, Berndt's intention, in publishing Karloan's account of the Ngurunderi narrative, is at direct odds with Ramsay Smith's intention. Berndt wished to demonstrate how the mythology of the Ngarrindjeri is (in his view) shaped by the geography of the landscape. He therefore includes both the English and Ngarrindjeri name for every place and site along the trail of Ngurunderi's epic creationary journey. Berndt's aim, in working with Karloan, was to help preserve the remaining knowledge of the cultural beliefs and practices of the Ngarrindjeri people. His plan was to record every last detail that Karloan, Pinkie Mack and Mark Wilson were willing to divulge. He initially conducted his field work in English, but on his return in 1942 and "as his knowledge of Yarlalde improved, he began to write down what Karloan told him in the vernacular" (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:10). It would seem that Berndt put a great deal of effort into extracting both the English and Yarlalde name for every place mentioned by his informants, which has since proved to be of considerable value in reconstructing the Ngurunderi Dreaming for contemporary purposes, such as the long-running museum display.

Unaipon, I argue, was also intent on demonstrating that the Ngurunderi epic relates specifically to the land in the Lower Murray and coastal regions of Fleurieu Peninsula. He goes to some effort to explain the formation of many important sites and land marks in the area, including the formation of a soakage near the sea at Port Elliot where Ngurunderi “wept bitterly for his two wayward wives” (Unaipon, 1990:29). However, with his English-speaking public in mind, he was happy to just present the names of these sites in English. He does provide a couple of exceptions, in naming Point Macleay mission as “Rowhokkun”, and the “Two Sisters” rocks as “Rhunjullang” (see Unaipon, 1990:22&32).<sup>33</sup> By contrast, in extracting most specific place names, Ramsay Smith has chosen to represent this creationary epic as a narrative that tells a ‘tale’ that simply occurred along Australia’s southern coastline. Although he does mention both Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina, as well as the Coorong, he chooses to delete more specific references made by Unaipon. But it should be said that, unlike Berndt, Unaipon’s main intention was not the authentic recording of a Ngarrindjeri Dreaming epic, nor the accurate recording of specific events that occurred in specifically named places. I argue, Unaipon’s main intention was to recreate a tragic narrative of epic proportions that portrayed his people as morally guided, law abiding people. Furthermore, he saw himself as a gifted scholar and orator whose responsibility it was to weave a narrative, of classical grandeur, from the vestiges of what remained in the memories and minds of his people.

## 8.6 LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF VERNACULAR TERMS

Thus far, in this analysis, I have only dealt superficially with the vernacular (or non-English) terms that appear in the numerous renditions of the Ngurunderi epic. In Appendices 7A.1 I outline in detail all the occurrences of different vernacular terms that appear in Unaipon’s telling of the epic, as they appear in Text 16 of the Mitchell Library Ms. Volume II. The page referents are those for the Mitchell Ms. After each of Unaipon’s vernacular terms, I indicate (with a zero or “ø” symbol in brackets) those terms that are deleted by Ramsay Smith, along with the alternative English term adopted by him, if any.

A close analysis of Ramsay Smith’s version of this epic reveals that he has removed a huge number of vernacular terms from Unaipon’s original text. My calculation is that there are 56 different vernacular terms, phrases and longer expressions in Unaipon’s account of the Ngurunderi epic, which includes at least 77 different vernacular words. A number of these words occur several times, particularly the names of characters in the epic, but also the terms used for the four winds by Unaipon. Some of the expressions, particularly the speech acts of Ngurunderi, are quite long and include up to 16 separate vernacular words or segments. But

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<sup>33</sup> The importance to Aboriginal people in locating their narratives in ‘country’, and in naming the various places relating to their narrative, cannot be over emphasised. In a paper (see Gale, 1995) I discuss the importance of specifying ‘place’ in a range of oral and written texts by both younger and older Warlpiri storytellers from the N.T.

because of Unaipon's idiosyncratic way of spelling and punctuating vernacular terms, it is difficult to know exactly what comprises a word or just a syllable break, without further linguistic analysis.<sup>34</sup> One example of a longer speech act, which I have counted as a single vernacular expression, is the command of Ngurunderi's for the winds to make the seas rough and hence drown his fugitive wives, which Unaipon calls the "Wind Song":

Pink ell lowarr. Mia yound Tee, wee warr, La rund, Tolkamai a, ren who cun, Tinkalla". 'Fall down from above. oh thou mighty wind; swiftly run and display thy fleetness! Come thou down from the Northern sky, oh water of the deep! Come up in a mighty swell!

(Unaipon, 1990:31)

Ramsay Smith (1930:330) just deletes the vernacular component of this command completely, but is reasonably faithful in his rendition of the English version of the song. One change he does make is from "Northern sky" to "Western sky", which is interesting because Unaipon actually uses the vernacular term "Tolkamai", which he says elsewhere means 'west' not 'north', which may have confused Ramsay Smith. I argue, however, that Unaipon intended "Northern sky", and the term "Tolkamai" is rendered as "mighty wind" in his verbose and flourishing English translation.

In all, Ramsay Smith chooses not to include 47 of the vernacular terms used by Unaipon in his narrative. Considering Unaipon uses 56 different terms and expressions, this is equivalent to a deletion rate of eighty five percent. Of these, there are 24 complete deletions of vernacular terms, with not even an alternative English term being provided. This deletion occurs particularly for any direct speech uttered by Unaipon's characters as they call out to others, or offer prayers or curses (such as the Wind Song). A further example appears on the first page, when Ngurunderi becomes angry at the people who live on the shores of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert:

and when he saw that the people fled from him he would call Young Hund [sic] and they would remain silent and he became annoyed at the people's attitude. He would say to them "Well, children, if you will not answer me: Pooljarra Wallul, this is a command and a curse. Now you shall all become birds and shall remain thus for ever."<sup>35</sup>

(Unaipon, 1990:19)

Ramsay Smith renders the same extract as:

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<sup>34</sup> The 56 different vernacular terms and expressions are probably better called 'types' (cf. 'tokens'). Although it is hard to distinguish how many individual words occur within these types, in both volumes of the Mitchell Ms. Unaipon seems to start each vernacular word with a capital letter. Using this as a guide, I calculate there are at least 77 separate vernacular words in "Naroondarie's wives" (counting root words with differing inflections as two different words). However, there are exceptions to this guide, eg. the single word for 'willy-wagtail' (spelt today as 'Ritjaruki') is cited as "Richer Rookitty" in Vol. II and as "Rich er Rook itty" in Vo. I.

<sup>35</sup> The command "Pooljarra Wallul" could be analysed as: "Pulyeri-wallin" (small birds-INCH) 'to become small birds' (using Taplin's wordlist).

When he saw that the people fled from him he would call, "Where art thou?" But they would remain silent. He became annoyed with the attitude of the people, and he would say to them "Well, children, if you will not answer me I shall curse you. You shall all become birds and shall remain so for ever."

(Ramsay Smith, 1930:317)

The above alternative versions, of this brief extract, also demonstrates how Ramsay Smith has made minor grammatical changes in the wording and punctuation of Unaipon's writings. To Ramsay Smith's credit, he does provide the English translation of some of the direct speech and vernacular terms used by Unaipon in his text, for which Unaipon occasionally provided no meaning. When I was working through Unaipon's manuscript, there were a couple of terms for which I could not decipher a meaning, and it was through consulting Ramsay Smith's book that the meaning became clear to me; such words included: "Rarrarburr" ('waddy'), and "Mookumbulli" ('wiseman'). I can only assume Ramsay Smith would have also had some difficulty working through the manuscript, which leads me to the conclusion that he would have consulted Unaipon himself to clarify some of the vernacular expressions. This is quite plausible, if one accepts that the extra texts, that appear in Ramsay Smith (1930), were also collected and written by Unaipon, hence requiring further collaboration between the two men.

Also to his credit, Ramsay Smith has made an effort to spell the vernacular terms, that he does choose to include, with some linguistic regularity. In contrast, Unaipon, who assumes his chosen spelling assists his English-speaking audience, uses the irregular (and hence unreliable) spelling system of English. One can assume that Ramsay Smith consulted the early linguistic work of the two missionaries to the Ngarrindjeri people: Meyer (1843) and Taplin (1879b). Their wordlists would have assisted Ramsay Smith because, unlike Unaipon, they also saw the advantages of using the linguistic conventions being developed by philologists attempting to record languages that had no standardised orthography.

In the table below, I list the few examples of vernacular terms that do appear in Ramsay Smith's rendition, along with his chosen spelling, as well as the anglicised (and at times exotic) spelling used by Unaipon. Ramsay Smith uses similar conventions to Taplin in his representation of vowels, but also uses symbols that are easily reproduced on a typewriter, such as an "ng" for the velar nasal sound. In his use of a geminates (double consonants), I assume he is following the conventions of Taplin, for which there seems no clear linguistic explanation.

Word & Meaning	Ramsay Smith's spelling	Unaipon's spelling
Characters:		
Ngurunderi	Nurunderi (as in Meyer)	Narroondarie
Nepeli	Nepelle	Nebullie & Nabulle
Wyungare	Wyungare	Whyoungarrie
Grandmother spirit	Puckowe	Puckknowie
Name of a 'tribe'	Pumbala tribe	Punbbaalee tribe
Bony bream	Tukkeri (as in Taplin)	Tookerie & Thoolerrie
Wooden club	Plongge (as in Taplin)	Plonggee

To finalise my comparative analysis of Unaipon's Ngurunderi text, I would like to comment specifically on Unaipon's vernacular terms and expressions in relation to the language work of Meyer and Taplin. In Appendix 7A.2 I have listed all of Unaipon's vernacular terms that appear in "Narroondarie's wives", with comparative terms that appear in both Taplin (1979) and Meyer (1843), some being cognate, others not. Taplin (who died when Unaipon was a boy of nine years) did much of his language work with Unaipon's father at Point McLeay, while Meyer worked with the Ramindjeri/Raminyeri people of Encounter Bay. If I have been able to find a term with the same meaning, from either of the missionary wordlists, I have listed them in square brackets after Unaipon's term. There are some words that do not seem cognate, which is probably due to dialectal variation. One possible example is the word "Rarrarburr" meaning 'waddy' (a type of wooden club), which Taplin lists as "Puri", however, Unaipon's tendency to speak Ngarrindjeri in a flourishing and exotic way (called 'Mannerism' in the Western literary tradition) could also explain this difference.

A close run through the many vernacular terms in Appendix 7A.2 reveals considerable disparity between Unaipon's terms and those recorded by both Taplin and Meyer. Not only does Unaipon's anglicised and irregular spelling cause this disparity, but further differences are the result (in my opinion) of Unaipon's tendency towards mannerism. The exotic manner in which Unaipon chose to pronounce his vernacular terms, with the rolling of his 'r's and his stress on second and third syllables (rather than the first) has resulted in him spelling words quite differently to Meyer and Taplin. This is particularly so with the medial and final vowels, which invariably become lengthened. Examples of this lengthening include: "Plonggee" 'club'; Punbbaalee 'a tribe'; and "Rich er Rookitty" 'willy wag tail'.

One area which exemplifies Unaipon's idiosyncratic way of speaking (and spelling) Ngarrindjeri terms are the cardinal directions and the names he gives for the four winds. Not only does Unaipon metathesise the vowels (and sometimes inconsistently), but he also seems



to gloss some terms with meanings different to both Taplin and Meyer. The terms (with their variant spellings) that appear in the table below are taken from the original Mitchell Ms. Vol. I prepared by Unaipon.

Unaipon (1924-25)	Taplin (1979)	Meyer (1943)
Wolkindamia 'north' Wolkundmia 'north/north wind'	Walkando maiye 'north wind'	Walkande 'east'
Tolkamia 'west' & Tolkamai 'mighty wind'	Tholka maiye 'east wind'	cf. Tull-un 'howling as the wind'
Kolkamia 'south/south wind' & Kolkamai 'south wind'	Kulgarnie 'hot wind' Rikkara maiye 'south wind', Rikkara 'south'	Kulk-un 'burning, scorching' Rikkara-maiye- 'south'
Karramia 'east'	Gurra maiye 'shivering south west wind'	Kara-maiye 'south' (maiye = wind)

In this brief critique of Unaipon's use of vernacular terms, I do not intend implying that the missionaries got it right and Unaipon got it wrong.<sup>36</sup> In fact, a closer examination of all the available sources on Ngarrindjeri language terms (including the Berndts' 1993 publication, and materials in the Tindale collection now held at the S.A.Museum) may reveal more variability. Some of this difference will be due to inadequate recording by researchers, while others will be due to dialectal variation. But at the same time it may reveal some common ground. Such linguistic work is well beyond the scope of this thesis, but I believe it is important work that could help explain some of the confusing disparities that exist in the relatively large corpus of Ngarrindjeri language materials. Unfortunately the amount of linguistic work required to decipher and understand the longer expressions used by Unaipon, in his Ngurunderi epic, is also well beyond the aims of this thesis. However, it remains a job worth tackling in the future if the impending republication of his Mitchell Library manuscript is to become a resource for future Indigenous writers.

<sup>36</sup> While writing this chapter, Writers Week was running (which is a part of the Adelaide Festival 2000). I managed to attend all the sessions featuring Indigenous writers, and after listening to the pronunciation of their names, by the non-Indigenous people who were introducing them, I came to appreciate the spelling dilemma that faced Unaipon. For those people who have no understanding of the vowels that commonly occur in Australia's Indigenous languages, they inevitably confuse the "a" and "u" vowels. Hence, John Muk Muk Burke was introduced with the Indigenous name "Muck Muck". If he had spelt his name using Unaipon's anglicised spelling, it would be "Mook Mook". Then, at least, the introducer would have come a little closer to the correct pronunciation.

## 8.7 CONCLUSION

The main argument of this chapter is that different 'authors' of Dreaming narratives choose to represent their own versions of their written Dreaming texts in ways that emphasise their purposes for writing. This chapter aimed to demonstrate this view through a case-study of different published versions of the Ngurunderi Dreaming. My chosen case-study involved comparing four different printed representations of this relatively well-known Dreaming epic.

The narrative produced by the Education Department of S.A. emphasises the importance of Ngurunderi and the many creationary acts he undertook while on earth. This contrasts with Berndt's text, which goes into great detail in naming (in both English & Yarlalde) every site and place that Ngurunderi encounters in his travels, as well as naming the different "tribal country" through which he passes. Berndt's intention was to produce an 'authentic' record of Yarlalde beliefs, and to demonstrate that Aboriginal mythology is inextricably tied to the geography of the land. Ramsay Smith, on the other hand, in the Preface of his 1930 reproduction of Unaipon's narratives, admits that his intention was not "to give any scientific exposition, general description, abstract, or epitome of Australian aboriginal mythology". His stated intent was to present to his international audience "a collection of narratives as told by pure-blooded aboriginals of various tribes who have been conversant with the subject from childhood". But in so doing, Ramsay Smith has extracted the identity of his "pure-blooded" narrator, as well as the detail that links his Ngurunderi narrative with any particular "tribe" or Place.

Unaipon, of course, was that "pure-blooded aboriginal" who wrote down that Ngurunderi epic (indirectly) for Ramsay Smith. But he too had a white audience in mind when he constructed his epic with strong Biblical parallels, and with elements of a classical Greek tragedy. Both the message and the language of the Bible were inspirations in Unaipon's writing, as was his reading and research of both Greek and Egyptian mythology. He incorporates continual analogies to Biblical scenes and New Testament teachings into this epic, for example when Ngurunderi commands the parting of the rough seas, towards the end of his earthly travels when he decides to cross from the mainland to Kangaroo Island, just as Moses led the Israelites to cross the Red Sea in flight from their Egyptian captors (Unaipon, 1990:32).<sup>37</sup> He also writes of the strip of land that once joined this island to the mainland, where "pilgrims" would cross (Unaipon, 1990:30), and then reminds the reader twice that the two wives are to be drowned "to pay the penalty of their sins" (Unaipon, 1990:31). But we also see the Christ-like emotions of love in Unaipon's Ngurunderi character, as he continually "wept bitterly" over the sins of his wives, and their impending death, because "he loved those youthful maidens with all their faults and errors" (Unaipon,

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<sup>37</sup> Berndt's 1940 account says that the means of crossing by Ngurunderi was not mentioned by Karloan, nor was a means mentioned by Karloan in his later (1993) publication.

1990:32). The two sisters were eventually turned into rocks, as a reminder to women not to eat of the “forbidden food”, and Unaipon says that “Many were the pilgrimages taken by the Aborigines in days gone by to see these stones and view and contemplate the way of the Great Teacher, Narroondarie” (Unaipon, 1990:32).

As a climax to his epic, again we find Ngurunderi weeping at the fate of his wives, so Unaipon has him dive into the sea to rescue the lost spirits of his loved ones. After some time he finds them, then flies “upwards and upwards until he comes to the Land of Wyerriwarr” (which Ramsay Smith calls “the Land of Heaven”), where he joins the other stars. From there Ngurunderi looks down to “cheer and comfort” all men, but also to warn them “to fight all the desires that are within, remembering always to obey the will of the Great Spirit” (Unaipon, 1990:32). And so we have the expected moralising coda from Unaipon, that attempts to elevate Aboriginal people in the eyes of his audience, by stressing the fact that they have their own strict moral codes, which existed long before the advent of Christian missions. He also makes the point that Aboriginal people already had the knowledge of a Supreme Being, whom he calls “the Great Spirit”, that guided them to live moral and lawful lives. But through his writing, Unaipon is also determined to demonstrate to his white audience that Aboriginal people also had a very rich and dramatic oral tradition that included epics that could arouse the emotions as well as any well-loved Greek tragedy. This may be true, but Unaipon’s means of demonstrating this fact tended to only draw criticism from anthropologists, such as the Berndts, whose quest was a search for “a world that was”.



## CHAPTER 9

### DREAMING NARRATIVES AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

*In the early 1960s, I saw bulldozers rip through our Gumatj country in north-east Arnhem Land. I watched my father stand in front of them to stop them clearing sacred trees and saw him chase away the drivers with an axe. I watched him cry when our sacred water hole was bulldozed. It was one of our Dreamings and a source of our water.*

*I saw a township wreck our beautiful homeland forever. I saw my father suffering physically when this happened. I can never forget that.*

*This land is something that is always yours; it doesn't matter what nature or politics do to change it. We believe the land is all life. So it comes to us that we are part of the land and the land is part of us. It cannot be separated by anything or anybody.*

(Yunupingu, 1997:2-3)

#### 9.0 INTRODUCTION

The above sentiments were written by the chairman of the Northern Land Council, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, regarding the Gumatj land that now lies under the mining township of Nhulunbuy, on the Gove Peninsula of north east Arnhem Land. It expresses the intimate feeling that Indigenous people have for their land, and the stories associated with their land. These same sentiments are shared by Indigenous people living in central Australia. For the Warlpiri, their land is also intimately connected to their life, their culture and to their stories:

narratives... which describe the travels of ancestral figures from place to place also describe actions which caused the natural features of the land, particularly water, rock formations and trees, to come into being. The ancestral figures are often also food, either vegetable or meat. The narrative is simultaneously an account of the creation of the places in the story, an account of the mythical and human behaviour of the ancestral figures, and a mnemonic map of the country with its important, life-giving features for the purpose of instructing a younger listener. These elements make up Warlpiri Jukurrpa, commonly translated as the Dreaming. The Jukurrpa or Dreaming is Warlpiri culture and law.

(Rockman & Cataldi, 1994:xvii)

Thus far in this thesis, I have reviewed the many and varied ways in which Indigenous Dreaming narratives have been represented - not as oral life-giving narratives for younger Aboriginal people, but how they have been represented in print for a commercial non-Indigenous market. The majority have been compiled by non-Indigenous writers, who almost always endow themselves with copyright over the text, whether or not they acknowledge the original Indigenous sources of their narratives. In fact, a good indicator on whether a book has been produced in happy co-operation with the Indigenous story-tellers is to look at who holds copyright over the text. According to the *Australian Copyright Act 1986*, non-Indigenous compilers of published texts are quite within their rights to assume copyright over such texts, because they are considered by law the creators of the text. As I have detailed in the previous three chapters, regarding the writings of David Unaipon, he was never afforded

copyright or public acknowledgement for the majority of his writings, even though he was their creator. This oversight was waived in lieu of the payment he received from the publishers Angus and Robertson for his work. He wrote, of course, well before the current Act was passed.

One would hope that such a situation would not occur in contemporary Australia, but unfortunately Dreaming narratives are still being written and published, quite legally, by non-Indigenous Australians, with little consultation or consent from Indigenous story owners. Once narratives are in the public domain in the form of published books, under the authorship of others, they are available for exploitation. This is one of the reasons why calls were recently made, and a report commissioned, by the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, to look into the status of Indigenous intellectual property rights under current Australian laws. The result was a report prepared by Terri Janke called *Our culture: our future: report on Australian Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights*, which was published in 1998.

Rockman and Cataldi (1994:xvii) remind us that: "for Australian Aboriginal people religious beliefs are inseparable from the land to which the different language groups, families and individuals belong". In this chapter I explore the traditional custodial rights Indigenous people have over their stories, songs, paintings and dances that are associated with their land; particularly customary rights amongst Yolngu in north east Arnhem Land. Following this exploration, I discuss the legal rights Indigenous people have over their intellectual property, according to Australian law, drawing in part from a recently commissioned report on Indigenous intellectual property rights. I conclude by giving the last word to Indigenous Australians.

## 9.1 RIGHTS AMONG THE YOLNGU OF ARNHEM LAND

According to Howard Amery (personal communication, November 1999), in order to discuss Yolngu rights, regarding their religious or spiritual beliefs, it is very important to first have an understanding of the fundamental concept of *Ringgitj*. *Ringgitj* are formal alliances between different Yolngu clans<sup>1</sup>. They are ritual alliances that have both social and political ramifications for everyday life, which is particularly so for the *Ringgitj* which gives clan members a common base in land ownership (see A.R.D.S. Paper No.5, 1998 and Williams, 1986:88-89) as well as "rights of access" to land (see Williams 1986:171-173). These

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<sup>1</sup> The anthropological term 'clan' is unavoidable when discussing the kin system of relatively densely populated Arnhem Land, where many different groups of Yolngu live together speaking different language varieties, and follow a strict exogamous marriage system. The same term is not generally used when discussing the kin system of the more sparsely populated desert regions of Australia. Morphy (1991:45-48) discusses the difficulty of finding an exact equivalent term for 'clan' in Yolngu Matha, with perhaps the closest being *bäpurru*.

alliances revolve around particular themes, whether they be: a colour, a design, an animal, or a plant 'motif' (to use H. Amery's term). It is that symbol or motif that binds this strong inter-clan relationship. Ringgitj relationships always involve clans from the same moiety, therefore for Yolngu they are either all Dhuwa clans or all Yirritja clans in a single Ringgitj. The importance of a Ringgitj relationship can be seen in the book *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku* published by Yirrkala school (discussed earlier in Chapter Five). Dhunggala Marika begins this book by naming other Dhuwa clans that are bound with his own Rirratjingu clan by the 'Djarrak' or Seagull motif, including the Djambarrpuyngu and Gamalangga clans. The book is Marika's version of 'The song of Yirrkala', that tells of the activities of Djarrak, and the formation of the sacred Merri string, which binds and has great importance to certain Dhuwa clans. Throughout the song, he continually mentions these clan names with which the Djarrak is associated.

*Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku*, demonstrates several crucial points on the representation of Dreaming narratives in the written and published form. It demonstrates that Yolngu Dreaming narratives cannot be divorced from the land with which they are associated, nor can they be written without reference to particular land-owning clans. Furthermore, they are not narratives that just tell of some long distant creationary past. Rather, they explain the on-going clan relationships that people have with the land, and with each other. These points are confirmed by H. Amery (personal communication, November 1999):

Yolngu society is a very wholistic society which encompasses the full gamut of economic, political, legal, social, religious and philosophical spheres of existence. It's not dualistic like Balanda [non-Indigenous people] society, or like the Greeks, who separate the spiritual world from the physical world. Therefore it is a nonsense to place the so-called Dreaming into a separate category as if it does not have great meaning, significance or ultimate relevance for the economic, social and political realities of life. Equally it's a nonsense to place these stories in antiquity and pretend they have no relevance for the here and now.

Just as you can't divorce so-called Dreaming narratives from the present, nor can you divorce them from the political, social and legal realities of ownership of land, resources, song and all the components to which the story refers.

This same point is made, regarding the contemporality of the Dreaming, by Rockman & Cataldi in reference to the Warlpiri: "The Jukurrpa or Dreaming.... is the time of the creation of the world which continues to exist as an eternal present embodied in songs, stories, dances and places. It is always there, although people may forget or abandon it" (Rockman & Cataldi, 1994:xvii).

Like the Yolngu, the Warlpiri also have a system that aims at ensuring the Jukurrpa continues. As documented in Meggitt (1962) and Bell (1993), this system designates rights and responsibilities to the Kirda (the owners of the different Warlpiri Jukurrpa) and the Kurdungurlu (the managers of the Jukurrpa). For the Yolngu, the owners of different Yolngu Dreamings are called the *Watangu*, while the managers are called the *Djunggaya*. The system

is very complex, and ownership is not seen in terms of individual ownership or managerial rights, but more in terms of corporate rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, these rights and responsibilities are determined on the basis of *Ringgitj*, and the relationships that Yolngu have both within and across different clan groups.

There are also different degrees of ownership for particular Dreamings by the various types of *Watangu*. H. Amery (personal communication, November 1999) cites the following order among the various *Watangu*, with the degree of say one has, theoretically, descending down the line.

- Wānga-watangu* = the legal owners of the country, story or other associated entity  
*Ngamini-watangu* = the persons for whom that country belongs to their mother's people  
*Wayirri-watangu* = for whom the country belongs to their mother's mother's people  
*Waku-watangu* = for whom the country belongs to their mother's mother's mother's people  
*Yapa-watangu* = for whom the country belongs to their mother's mother's mother's mother's people  
*Barrki-watangu* = person whose spouse is a primary owner for that country or story

The *Wānga-watangu* (literally 'land-owners') have the most say over an issue relating to the land and its associated Dreamings. Their ownership is corporate and inalienable, and inherited through their father. The *Ngamini-watangu* (literally 'mother-owners') are also the *Djunggaya*, or managers, for that country or Dreaming, and inherit their rights through their mother. This relationship explains the important Yolngu concept *Yothu Yindi*, whereby *Yindi* (literally 'big') refers to one's mother, while *Yothu* (literally 'child') refers to one's child, who is of the opposite moiety to the mother. Although the managers (or *Yothu*) are of a different clan (or *bāpurru*), and a different *Ringgitj*, to the owners (*Yindi*), they share the responsibility of looking after the land, and all that is associated with it, just as a child should care for their elderly mother. The *Yothu* and *Yindi* work together in the management of the clan's business affairs and the implementation of its law - both must be present before any new agreement or business arrangements can be entered into (see A.R.D.S. Paper No. 5, 1998:5).

According to H. Amery (personal communication, November 1999), when it comes to ownership of land, song, ceremony, and the narratives associated with them, the *bāpurru* (clan/nation) as *watangu* (owners) are recognised as the legal owners.<sup>2</sup> But they also have moral and customary responsibilities to other *bāpurru* who have ownership rights over the narrative through their mother, and their mother's mother etc. For a *wayirri watangu* person,

<sup>2</sup> Yolngu have a patrilineal system, meaning a person's *bāpurru*, or clan identity, is inherited through his or her father. One becomes a corporate *wānga-watangu* (literally: 'land-owner') through one's father, or through one's *bāpurru*.



for example, to paint or tell a narrative associated with a particular tract of land (and to a particular clan) they have a moral responsibility to first consult with the legal owners, the *wānga watangu* and their *djunggaya* (managers). When an issue arises within Yolngu society regarding an individual's right to tell a Dreaming narrative, for example, or to paint a design associated with a particular clan, the resolution is not straightforward. The right of an individual is determined primarily by their clan identity, but this right is a corporate right and any individual rights must be endorsed by others within that clan. Furthermore, clans have different degrees of rights over land, and its associated Dreamings and motifs, which are determined by their clan relationship to other clans. Authority to retell a particular narrative can only be given to someone down the line (e.g. a *wayirri watangu* or *waku watangu*) if it is with the approval of the owner (*Wānga-watangu*) or other authorised manager/solicitor (*djunggaya*). And such authority cannot be given by single individuals, because such rights are corporate group rights, not individual rights. Again according to H. Amery:

To say that such and such a person has rights to tell (and have published) a particular 'Dreaming' narrative is a complex process, ultimately mediated by traditional law. It is complicated by the fact that ownership is corporate and is not vested in the individual.

(personal communication, Howard Amery, 1999)

This issue of corporate and individual rights arose amongst the Warlpiri narrators who cooperated with the project that Rockman and Cataldi embarked upon to collect Warlpiri Dreaming narratives, resulting in their book Warlpiri Dreamings and history. A dispute arose between two women on whether one had the rights to tell a particular story:

Nangala had this fantastic story, and it would have been in the book, except for the fact that... Nampijinpa, she's very bossy... she stood up and said 'You can't tell that story.' And then Nangala said 'Of course I can.'... Nangala had been telling the story in Warlpiri, I mean it's the most wonderful story, [whereby] someone turns into someone else near a pond.... So she says 'No, no you can't.' And she says 'Yes, yes I can.' So Nangala sat down and continued to tell the story, but she switched to Anmatyerre....

[But] Nampijinpa said it belonged to someone who had died, and the appropriate rituals hadn't been done to release it.... I mean, she's a big stickler, and she got very cranky.... [But] Nangala said, 'No, no I have the right to tell it, I don't need that.'

.... If [the story] had been told in the one language that would have been stunning. We would have definitely published that. [But] we couldn't even transcribe it..... Peggy and I sat down to try and transcribe it later and of course, we'd known she'd switched to Anmatyerre, and... we couldn't do anything with it. Because neither of us understand it. We were hoping that we had the guts of it [in Warlpiri] but we didn't.

(Lee Cataldi, Interview June 25, 1998)

## 9.2 PUBLIC VERSUS SECRET KNOWLEDGE

Another important factor that is too often ignored by those who have taken it on themselves to represent Aboriginal cultures and Dreaming narratives, is the issue of 'Secrecy'. This whole issue about what knowledge is available to the public sphere, and what is not, is a complex one, and has been discussed by many anthropologists working with a range of different

Aboriginal groups. The secrecy issue among Yolngu people has been discussed by numerous writers (including Rudder, 1980; Williams 1986; Keen, 1993; Morphy, 1991 and Magowan, 1994 ). Morphy explains the complexity of secrecy over knowledge as follows:

According to Yolngu ideology, restrictions operate in a relatively straightforward way on the basis of age and sex. The ideology is that women and uninitiated men are allowed access to knowledge that is generally available to all people, that is, to public knowledge. A man, as he progresses through life, gains increasing access to restricted knowledge until eventually he learns all he can of those aspects of sacred law that he has rights in.

(Morphy, 1991:75)

From my own observations at Yirrkala in Arnhem Land, where I worked alongside a number of outstanding and very knowledgeable women in the school, Morphy's explanation does not always ring true. On his own admission, he states that "in reality" such an explanation is "an oversimplification"; hence he goes on to say that:

There is no set and agreed body of public or secret knowledge. Certainly in specific cases, general agreement can be reached over whether something officially belongs to the public or restricted domain. Over time, however, the content of the categories changes: what was once restricted becomes public and what was once public becomes restricted.... Women in particular gain increasing access to restricted knowledge according to their age, status, and the interest they show in the ritual matters.

(Morphy, 1991:76)

Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj is a good example of a Yolngu woman who has gained increasing access to restricted knowledge over the years. She worked with great enthusiasm with her father's brother to get *Ngayi Balngana Mawurrku: The song of Yirrkala* published.<sup>3</sup> She talked about the way she has grown in knowledge of her culture, and gained a deeper understanding of the meanings of Yolngu beliefs and rituals, in the Wentworth Lecture she gave in Canberra in 1998:

In 1976 I went to work at the school, typing stories that the old people had made, and translating them. I was exposed to a high level of Yolngu knowledge, but I didn't know it at that time. My language was Dhuwaya, a new language that had been developed by children at the mission as their lingua franca. I was a woman with a child but I was still immature.... I was ignorant of the fact that here was my own knowledge tradition, so rich, though I did not realise it was so powerful until the 1980s. It was not until I spoke in my own language, Rirratjingu, that my own view of the Yolngu world would become more meaningful. It was formal Yolngu education. I was learning to understand the hard language, the esoteric language I was working on at the school. This level of language is similar to the use of Old Latin in English.

The most significant book I worked on at this time was called *[Ngayi] Balngana Mawurrku*, with one of my *bäapa* [sic], my father, Dhunggala Marika. This book gave me a new understanding about my place, my *wänga*. It gave me a fresh new understanding of the world from a Yolngu perspective. It was more like a formal Yolngu education through attending ceremonies, *manikay* [songs]. Attending these ceremonies and listening to the language of *manikay*, to songlines, helped me to grow in my own thinking about the complexities of the content and the context of the Yolngu world view. I found that this can happen through demonstrating yourself in the public in front of a critical audience. I see it all the time with my brothers and my

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<sup>3</sup> This is one of the books discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

family. These events are part of continuing learning stages that Yolngu go through. Yolngu have to demonstrate that we have continued to hold to our values, otherwise we lose ourselves in this ever-changing world and are accused of being a Balanda.

(Marika-Mununggiritj, 1999:4)

Peggy Rockman is another example of a woman who has gained a large amount of knowledge through her enthusiasm. According to Cataldi:

she's not particularly old.... people who are energetic and clever learn things fast.... It's really interesting in terms of her status, because she heard everything. You know, not just her own Jukurrpa but everyone else's. And you know, Warlpiri memories are so attentive, so she just now knows - But it would have to be someone of the right status. And she already had that status. She's the youngest of her sisters, but she's by far the most energetic, and is of great status.

(Interview with Lee Cataldi, June 25, 1998)

My reasons for outlining this important issue here, in the context of discussing published Dreaming narratives, is because it is essential that books published for the public domain only contain information and knowledge that is considered, by the Aboriginal owners and guardians of that knowledge, to be from the category of 'public knowledge'. Unfortunately this has not always been the case, and there is material out in the public domain, still today, that Indigenous elders would not have approved for publication, had they been consulted years ago. But consultation was not on the agenda of many early non-Indigenous researchers. Often the most guilty are anthropologists who, despite their awareness of the sensitivity of their published material, apparently thought they could get away with it. Take for example the 'confession' in T.G.H. Strehlow's *Aranda traditions*, where he off-handedly states in the Preface that the reason for publishing thirteen years after he first wrote the contents of his 1947 book is because "the information" was "obtained from old informants under a promise of secrecy during their lifetime" (Strehlow, 1947:Preface). Before I arrived to teach in Warlpiri country in 1980, I diligently purchased and started to read Meggitt's (1962) classic *Desert people*. However, on my arrival at Willowra, I was advised by fellow non-Aboriginal teachers not to read certain sections of the book, because there were things I should not know about. Similar cautions are given to teachers appointed to work in Pitjantjatjara schools regarding some of Mountford's publications. Such books are always kept out of sight by teachers when they have Aboriginal visitors to their homes, out of respect, and through fear of accusations of breaking secrecy codes.

But there is no excuse today for non-Indigenous researchers and collaborators releasing secret or sacred material into the public domain, particularly without prior consultation with Indigenous people. When Rockman and Cataldi first began collecting narratives in 1990 from different Warlpiri story-tellers, they explained very clearly to the narrators that their stories would be recorded and transcribed, and then copied and made available to children in Warlpiri schools. They were told that the target audience was both boys and girls aged 13 and older, so narrators knew what level of detail and knowledge they could reveal in their

Jukurpa. Then when an offer of publication was made, a few years later, Rockman and Cataldi consulted once again with the 15 narrators whose narratives were selected for publication. They explained to these (generally non-literate older Warlpiri people) that “when we got published in a book, it would be open slather. So we had to go around and explain very carefully” (Lee Cataldi, Interview, June 25, 1998). Henry Cook’s “The two kangaroos” is an example of a narrative in the resultant publication, *Warlpiri Dreamings*, that was told in a way by its narrator to suit a much younger and very public audience. According to Cataldi, this narrative “is a men’s story”, dealing with male initiation, and cannot be told to women at all:

Henry Cook’s narration of the two kangaroos, which I think is very cute, is not the full bore, because that’s a men’s story. That’s just... the kid’s version.... he did it very nicely.... The real version you’d never publish anywhere.... because women can’t listen to it. Peggy and I couldn’t. I mean that’s the big men’s... initiation Dreaming.

(Lee Cataldi, Interview, June 25, 1998)

Despite their isolation from bookshops and universities, Aboriginal people living in remote communities are becoming increasingly aware of the high volumes of anthropological works being published about them (particularly the younger generations who have the English literacy skills required to read them). Many Yolngu have thought the secrecy issue through, and are open to discussions about problematic texts currently available in bookshops. They are wary of the detail included in Warner’s (1969) *A Black civilisation*, and are incredulous, and at times greatly amused, at the pornographic detail included in R. Berndt’s relatively recent (1976) *Love songs of Arnhem Land*. Berndt was never subtle enough to wait for his ‘old informants’ to pass away before he wrote of their often very sacred and secret knowledge. It is still amazing how much restricted knowledge and practices are discussed in detail in contemporary anthropological texts (such as Rudder, 1980; and Keen, 1977 & 1993). Even though these texts are set as compulsory reading for anthropology students in universities in southern cities today, I doubt whether their authors have been game to circulate their publications amongst Yolngu.

One of the most recent books to cause concern and controversy amongst Yolngu is John Cawte’s book *The universe of the Warramirri: art, medicine and religion in Arnhem Land*, published in 1993 by the University of N.S.W. Dr. Cawte first began visiting Galiwin’ku (Elcho Island) in the 1970s to “offer medical and psychiatric help” to Yolngu, but he says his role soon expanded “to becoming their friend” (Cawte, 1993:ix). In particular he befriended Burrumarra, a clan leader of the Warramirri clan, who became Cawte’s “leading informant” (Cawte, 1993:xi). Burrumarra has since passed away. The book comprises nine chapters of prose, in which Cawte discusses Warramirri belief systems, followed by 20 annotated colour plates of bark paintings and carvings. These ‘artworks’ are now housed at the University of

New South Wales. The bark paintings are largely the works of Liwukang<sup>4</sup>, the younger brother of Burrumarra. Cawte acknowledges in his Preface, regarding the secret information that is contained in his book, that:

The desire of the Warramirri to let their knowledge survive was a radical and dramatic one. The owners had met to discuss their 'right to teach', and thus overturned traditional taboos and secrecy that generally concealed the 'inside stories' of Aboriginal elders. Aboriginal paintings are commonly admired for their decorative design, but this book offers much more: an understanding of the inner message, provided by the decision of the owners. I feel that this intentional 'decoding' adds immeasurably to the excitement of the offering.

(Cawte, 1993:ix)

I have no intention of discussing the contents of Cawte's book here, which I have avoided buying and reading due to Yolngu concerns (conveyed to me by numerous friends).<sup>5</sup> But I shall discuss briefly some of the circumstances of this book's publication, particularly because it serves to highlight the ethical and moral dilemmas that all people must face when collaborating with Indigenous people on book publications. Cawte claims he gained the permission of numerous clan leaders, to reveal what he does in his book, at three meetings held at Galiwin'ku in early 1976 (Cawte, 1993:3). In December 1991, when the manuscript was much closer to publication, Cawte travelled with his publisher to Galiwin'ku: "to apprise Burrumarra and the Galiwin'ku Council of the progress with *The Universe of the Warramirri* as we were sensitive to the fact that the original approval had been given over 15 years ago" (Cawte, 1993:109). The final page of Cawte's book, "Deletion of Dhuwa content", candidly reveals the anguish that was felt about the contents of the forthcoming book by Burrumarra's family members. It reveals that his eldest son asked for all the material concerning the Dhuwa moiety be removed (Dhuwa being the opposite moiety to Warramirri, which is Yirritja). His brother also requested that "the book was not to be available to Yolngu women and children in the N.T.". The publishers obviously assume they have both appeased the family, and met with their demands, because a revised manuscript was published and launched two years later in Sydney. The family were flown down for the occasion, and I note on the credits page: "All royalties from this publication will be paid to the Warramirri Contributors", even though Cawte retains copyright. My understanding, however, is that "some members of the family are unhappy with the resulting final publication, and the revelations of inside information" that appear within the book (personal communication Michael Cooke, October 2000).

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<sup>4</sup> Cawte's book is riddled with spelling errors, one being the failure to spell Liwukang's name with a final velar nasal. A standard orthography, along with official spelling rules, were developed and adopted for all Yolngu Matha clan languages long before Cawte began his research at Galiwin'ku (which he refers to by its old name "Elcho Island"). He especially adopts incorrect vowels in words, and incorrect nasals e.g. "Mielk" rather than "miyalk" for 'woman'; "Lepa lepa" rather than "lipalipa" for 'canoe'; "Bapa" rather than "Bäpa" for 'father' and "Nyandi" rather than "Ngändi" for 'mother' (see Cawte, 1993:104-106).

<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this discussion I have borrowed a copy of the book from the Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University, in which there are several copies. The controversy surrounding this book has not affected its availability and distribution outside Arnhem Land.

One further unfortunate aspect of anthropologists and other interested parties publishing material that is restricted is that contemporary would-be authors, or appropriators, of Dreaming narratives are now able to access restricted material that should never have been published. The more recent publications of James Cowan's (1989 & 1994) are a case in point. Cowan, in his (1994) *Myths of the Dreaming*, reproduces in great detail the 'myth' of "The Wauwalak sisters", which he says he acquired from: "a combination of material derived from R.M. Berndt's *Kunapipi* and Roland Robinson's *Aboriginal myths and legends* " (Cowan, 1994:176). Berndt's version of this same narrative, like Warner's (1969), includes much detail of blood and sexual references that most definitely place it within the restricted category of Yolngu knowledge. The same term 'Kunapipi' is also a "very strong restricted word" in the Victoria River District (personal communication Patrick McConvell, May 2001).

According to H. Amery (personal communication, November 1999), put simply, the only Yolngu knowledge and rituals that are open to the public are the *makarr garma* (literally 'thigh/root sacred ceremony'). Such public rituals include: funerals or *bäpurru* ('clan') ceremonies; some aspects of initiations or *moda* or *dhapi* ceremonies (what H. Amery calls 'citizenship ceremonies'); cleansing or *buku-lup* ceremonies; and the smoking or *dadaw* ceremonies. Theoretically it is only versions of Dreaming narratives that include information from this *makarr garma* category that can be shared openly with the public. Generally, any segments of a narrative, or ceremony, that deals with blood or other bodily fluids is restricted, and does not belong in the public domain. For example, some aspects of the *moda* ceremony are restricted for women, just as some components of funerals are restricted for other Yolngu (especially when the men are dealing with the corpse within a make-shift shelter). Ceremonies that are generally restricted, whereby involvement is by invitation only, are categorised by Yolngu as *dhuni* or *djungguwan* ceremonies (literally 'small ceremonial shelter'). The most 'holy of holies' of ceremonies that are closed to the public and have a very high level of restriction are categorised as *ngärra'* ceremonies.

Many Dreaming narratives revealed to non-Indigenous collaborators over the years have been simplified in their telling, by Aboriginal story-tellers (just as Henry Cook chose to), out of fear of revealing knowledge and information that they deem inappropriate for the public domain. Those who reveal restricted knowledge to non-Aboriginal people could find themselves in a great deal of trouble. Obviously Strehlow's 'informants' knew the severity of them being found out as the revealers of certain details, hence swore their confidant to secrecy in their lifetime. However, some 'informants' would have had little understanding of the reasons and ultimate purpose of the many questions asked of them by these 'nosy', and often pushy, white researchers. No doubt some would be mortified (literally) if they knew that the information they revealed, under the strictest of confidence, was to be printed and mass-produced for wide public consumption. Similarly, I was most surprised to discover that a prestigious international literary journal, which is still running and has been running since

1979, adopted the title '*Kunapipi*'.<sup>6</sup> This particular term *Kunapipi* is a Yolngu term for a fertility ceremony that is from the restricted domain of Yolngu ritual and life. Maybe the editors adopted the term from R.M. Berndt's (1951) book of the same title. The magazine states (on the credits pages) that: "*Kunapipi* refers to the Australian aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol both of creativity and regeneration.... from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory."

A considerable number of Yolngu Dreaming narratives have been published in English, over the years, for sale in bookshops. They are by both anthropologists (such as Warner, 1969; R.M. Berndt, 1951 & 52; Cowan 1994; Berndt & Berndt, 1988 ), as well as by missionaries such as Wells (1973a,b&c). These were discussed earlier in Chapter Three, as were some of the narratives that have been published in Yolngu Matha for use in the bilingual program at schools such as Yirrkala, discussed in Chapters Four and Five. However Yolngu, thus far, have not made any significant efforts to have their own Dreaming narratives published in English with commercial publishers in order to make them more readily available to a wider audience. By contrast, this reluctance is not evident when it comes to making their clan designs (in the form of art) and their clan songs more accessible. The popular rock band 'Yothu Yindi' is increasingly including 'traditional' song cycles on their CD's and albums, while Yolngu bark paintings depicting different clan designs and motifs have been a commodity readily offered for sale since the late 1960s (see Morphy, 1987). Because the art industry is now well established as a viable industry throughout Arnhem Land, and for that matter throughout much of Aboriginal Australia, a system has had to develop that formalises rights and responsibilities of artists regarding their art production.<sup>7</sup> I contest that this formalised system has much to offer our understanding of the potential rights and obligations of Yolngu story-tellers and writers regarding the recording and publishing of Yolngu Dreaming narratives. It also has much to teach us regarding the lack of rights that any non-Yolngu have regards the potential publication of Yolngu narratives. Morphy (1991) devotes two chapters within his book to: "the rights to paint" and the Yolngu system of "inside and outside" knowledge, from which we can learn a great deal.

Although I have chosen to elaborate on the Yolngu system of rights over cultural knowledge, I should reiterate that there are no universal rules across Aboriginal Australia regarding customary rights. Looking at the Yolngu system just serves to explain the complexity of the issue for each Indigenous group. There are also no common rules or understandings for particular narratives or Dreamings that may seem ubiquitous across Aboriginal Australia. I discussed the misunderstanding that some non-Indigenous people have regarding the secrecy

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<sup>6</sup> *Kunapipi* is published by the Department of English at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. It is particularly devoted to "new literatures written in English".

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that the Aboriginal art industry does not have its share of problems with artists, and dealers, corrupting the system and not abiding with their rights and responsibilities (see ABC TV program Four Corners aired nationally on May 31, 1999, entitled: "Dot for Dollar").

of the Seven Sisters Dreaming earlier in Chapters Three and Four. Just because different versions of this narrative are told openly by some Indigenous groups does not infer that other groups can also publically reveal their versions. The Seven Sisters Dreaming is restricted among the Warlpiri, as well as among the Ngarrindjeri, yet it appears quite openly in the book of Kukatja narratives *Tjarany/Roughtail* (discussed in Chapter Four). I have also heard versions of this narrative being told openly by Pitjantjatjara women to non-Indigenous children aged between seven and eight years. And so this chapter serves to demonstrate the complexity of an issue that cannot, and should not, be taken lightly by non-Indigenous collaborators and publishers. In the next section I address the legal rights that Indigenous people currently have over their cultural and intellectual property.

### 9.3 WHAT LEGAL RIGHTS DO INDIGENOUS PEOPLE HAVE?

In 1982 a Working Group was formed by the United Nations to prepare a Draft Declaration on the Rights of the World's Indigenous Peoples, which states in Article 12 that Indigenous peoples have:

the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature, as well as the right to the restitution of cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.<sup>8</sup>

Article 29 of the Draft Declaration deals with the rights of Indigenous people to full ownership, control and protection of their cultural property. Should this Declaration be adopted by the United Nations, it is seen as "minimum standards" for Indigenous rights, and puts "the obligation on nation States to adopt national legislation that gives full effect to the Declaration" (Janke, 1998:107).

Within Australia, under the commonwealth government's *Copyright Act 1968*, copyright is granted automatically to "the creators of literary, dramatic, artistic or musical works and the makers of sound recordings, film and audio recorders" as soon as a work is created or recorded. Copyright affords authors rights of ownership and control over their works, and does not need to be registered. It lasts for 50 years after the death of the author of a piece of work, and generally 50 years after a recording is made. Although the author of a work is generally the copyright holder, there can be exceptions, such as when an employee produces a work in the course of their employment, whereby their employer may assume copyright. Similarly, Aboriginal people can be funded by government departments, such as the

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<sup>8</sup> The Draft Declaration of the Rights of the World's Indigenous Peoples was agreed upon by the Working Group in 1991, and is now making its way through the United Nations system (see Janke, 1998:107).



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (A.T.S.I.C.), to produce significant works, which can complicate copyright ownership issues (see Janke, 1998:51-53).

The A.T.S.I.C. funded report *Our culture: our future*, prepared by the Indigenous researcher Janke (1998), reveals that the Australian situation regarding copyright can leave Indigenous people unprotected and vulnerable to exploitation. The report is disappointing in its lack of attention afforded Dreaming narratives in particular, presumably because most legal attention has been concentrated thus far on Indigenous artworks and other tangible cultural property. However, there is some discussion on the issue of recording "oral tradition", in the form of "stories" (Janke, 1998:31), and rights over "literary" works (Janke, 1998:115). More than anything, the report reveals that the concept of "author" is a problematic one for Indigenous cultures when it comes to copyright issues. This is particularly so for Indigenous Australians who continue to maintain much of their cultural knowledge in an unwritten form. The Australian *Copyright Act* was designed to protect the rights of people functioning in a literate Western society, not those operating within an oral culture under threat in a neo-colonial situation. Customary ownership of Dreaming narratives is not recognised under the Act. It is only when the narratives are committed to print that any form of ownership is recognised: "the person who first reduces an oral tradition to material form is recognised as the author of the ensuing work and can exercise the exclusive rights granted to authors under the *Copyright Act* to reproduce the work in material form or to broadcast the work" (Janke, 1998:53). The Act therefore does not recognise prior ownership of the oral narrative, under Indigenous customary law. It is only once a person records these narratives in a "material form", either as a written transcript or as on an audio tape-recording, that anyone is recognised under the Act as the copyright owner, whether they are Indigenous or not (see Janke, 1998:54).

The Act also does not recognise any moral obligations that recorders of such narratives may have towards Indigenous owners and narrators of Dreaming narratives. However, the *Copyright Amendment Bill 1997* proposes to introduce moral rights to Indigenous owners of cultural and intellectual property. At the time of writing, this Bill is yet to pass through the Senate. This amendment will give Indigenous story-tellers and performers, who currently hold no moral rights under the Act, the right to be attributed as the creators or performers of their works. It will also give them rights preventing their works being distorted in any way (see Janke, 1998:114). But the proposed amendments are not radical. Brown (1998) actually cautions against the "radical expansion of intellectual property laws to encompass every aspect of native cultures" (Brown, 1998:205). He sees the legal minefield of trying to "protect all forms of intangible cultural property" as being both impractical and unachievable. He argues that the legal battles that would ensue against large "corporations that seek to appropriate indigenous knowledge for commercial purposes", would be viewed by these corporations as just a "routine cost", and would not necessarily be won by Indigenous people (Brown, 1998:205).

Brown does, however, strongly support "efforts to create basic mechanisms for the compensation of native peoples for commercial use of their scientific knowledge, musical performances, and artistic creations. Equally necessary are clear guidelines for the collection of culturally sensitive ethnographic data..." (Brown, 1998:204). But rather than seek legal protection against exploitation over non-tangible intellectual property, he suggests that ethical codes of practice be established and endorsed by professional societies.<sup>9</sup> Brown also suggests that by Indigenous people developing "widespread public sympathy" they can both influence and pressure corporations into "complying with basic ethical standards" (Brown, 1998:205).

Brown writes from his American experience, but unfortunately in the Australian context there are many potential exploiters who are not necessarily influenced by public opinion, and can only be controlled by legal means. In 1998 a Yolngu artist, John Bulun Bulun, won his Federal court case against a T-Shirt company who breached copyright ownership of his bark painting. Justice John von Doussa<sup>10</sup> found that the company had illegally reproduced Bulun Bulun's bark painting of "Magpie geese and waterlilies at waterhole" onto T-shirts in 1988, which they then offered for sale. Bulun Bulun told the court: "Interference with the painting... is like causing harm to the spirit found in the land, and causes sorrow and hardship" (*The Australian*, September 4, 1998:2). This particular case also served to broaden the notion of 'copyright' to encompass the rights of whole clans, rather than just those of individual authors or creators of works, as it does under Western law. Bulun Bulun is a member of the Ganalbingu clan of Arnhem Land, and the judge found that:

If the copyright owner of an artistic work which embodies ritual knowledge of an Aboriginal clan is being used inappropriately, and the copyright owner fails or refuses to take appropriate action to enforce the copyright, the Australian legal system will permit remedial action through the courts by the clan.

(*The Australian*, September 4, 1998:2)

Both the above decision, and Janke's report, demonstrate the complexity of differences that exist between Aboriginal customary law and Australian law, and the difficulties of trying to cater for these differences by mere amendments to current acts. Because legislation is one of the viable options of ensuring Indigenous people maintain their rights over their Dreamings (whether they be narratives, paintings or in the form of dance), it is important that they have the goodwill and support of the Australian government.

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<sup>9</sup> Such codes have already been established by the Australian Linguistics Society, with a code of ethics being endorsed at the annual general meeting in 1984 (see the Australian Linguistics Society Newsletters, 1985; also Wilkins, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Justice John von Doussa is the presiding judge over the continuing Federal court case currently being held in Adelaide re litigation over the Hindmarsh Island issue.

I conclude this section by making reference to a declaration of rights that was prepared by the Noongar people of south western Western Australia, in consultation with other Indigenous people of W.A. It was originally prepared as part of a campaign against the controversial book *Mutant message down under*, by Marlo Morgan.<sup>11</sup> This heartfelt declaration is titled "JANGGA MEENYA BOMUNGGUR: The smell of the whiteman is killing us", and was prepared as part of their continued struggle "Against the Continued Spiritual Colonisation of our People and Noongar Culture". It was eventually incorporated into the National Arts Policy Paper prepared for the Federal Government Minister for the Arts (Eggington, 1996:14). I reproduce the declaration in full in Appendix 9.1

#### 9.4 CONCLUSION

The long-standing chairman of the Northern Land Council, Galarrwuy Yunupingu, recently wrote about Indigenous rights in a publication that commemorates 20 years of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*. His comments refer to land rights in particular, but are also intended as a general plea for Indigenous rights in contemporary Australia:

The last 20 years have taught us some important lessons. They also hold some important lessons for governments which are prepared to listen. All political leaders who have attempted to respect the rights of Aboriginal people and honour commitments of social justice have faced severe opposition both from within and outside their parties.

Former Prime Ministers Whitlam, Fraser and Hawke and Keating have all been subjected to strong opposition when dealing with Australia's indigenous people. It is clear that new Prime Minister John Howard is also under pressure from these same quarters.

It is a true mark of leadership to resist these pressures and deny the attempts to push us back to the past and suppress our rights....

What is needed is strong leadership, both black and white. We need leaders who know what is right; what is just; and will lead through and overcome opposition to Aboriginal rights....

Policies on Aboriginal rights cannot be allowed to rise and fall like the stock market.  
(Yunupingu, G. 1997:15)

For a system that is fair, just and moral, the government of the day just cannot allow its decisions on Indigenous rights to be determined by economic and market forces. One can only hope those in the Senate debating the proposed amendments to the *Copyright Act* will be fair. Otherwise the appropriation and exploitation of the past, as exemplified in so many past representations of Dreaming narratives by non-Indigenous people, will continue.

My final quote comes from Mary Magulagi Yarmirr, an executive member of the Northern Land Council, who writes in the same publication as Yunupingu:

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<sup>11</sup> A delegation of Aboriginal elders successfully waged a campaign against the American author, Marlo Morgan, and her best selling novel, which recounted her supposed experiences of travelling on foot into the central heart of Australia, accompanied by Indigenous Australians. Morgan eventually admitted the novel was pure fiction.

Traditionally, Aboriginal people had their own land rights law.... That law was reflected in our names, kinship ties, ceremonies, stories and dance. Both men and women had special responsibilities, and both men and women accepted these roles and carried out them in accordance with the law....

Some of us are [now] in land councils and we are landowners, fighting alongside our men for land rights and social justice for Aboriginal people. The national anthem paints a very big picture of Australia and its people, living and sharing together, working together. Out of this song three words stand out: 'Advance Australia Fair'. These three words promote Australia to the world.

In reality which Australia is advancing? Is this sense of fairness being shown for the indigenous people of this country? Where is our social justice and our birthright in our own country?

We believe that when our place as the first people and our culture and law is accepted by the wider community then we shall say and sing: 'Yes, advance Australia fair.'

(Magulagi, 1997:80-83)

## CHAPTER 10

### CONCLUSION

*...we arrive in the Great Ocean where we are baffled and tossed by the angry waves. Onward and onward. For three score years and ten. Then we are cast forlorn and shipwrecked upon the shore of a strange land.*

(from "Narrinyeri saying" Unaipon, 1929:15)

*...ways of understanding and knowing us are made discontinuous with our own order for understanding the world, our own history, and where understanding of who and what we were is grafted onto another system for thinking and understanding the world. In this process, the ways in which Islanders can be known and understood and ultimately the ways in which Islanders come to know themselves through the system of education, are severed and cast adrift from their own historical ways of knowing and understanding themselves.*

(Nakata, 1998:7)

### 10.0 INTRODUCTION

The metaphor of being "cast adrift" between two cultures onto an angry ocean, and eventually being "cast forlorn and shipwrecked" onto a "strange land", is one that has appealed to Indigenous writers across the ages, including Unaipon in 1929, and more recently Martin Nakata of the Torres Strait Islands. As Nakata (1998:7) elaborates, this "space" between two cultures can be "rich" and "full of identifiable custom and practice, a place of constant negotiation of meaning", but it can also be "a source of endless confusion and contradiction". This thesis has demonstrated that published representations of Indigenous Dreaming narratives, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers, occupy a negotiated space between two cultures. A result has been confusion on the part of the readers, as well as contradiction on the part of the writers.

Tiffin (1995:95) tells us that: "pre-colonial cultural purity can never be fully recovered.... Post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridised, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity." In this thesis I ask who have the non-Indigenous 'authors' and compilers of Indigenous Dreaming narratives really been identifying with over the past 200 years. And have the relatively fewer Indigenous writers and story-tellers been able to express their own unique identities through their representations. I also ask whether Indigenous people have been able to privilege their own languages in their narratives. Or has there been interference by non-Indigenous collaborators or editors wanting to put their stamp on the final product and demand the last word on the meaning or significance of narratives. Who are acknowledged as the rightful owners of texts once they appear in a written and published form? For whom are the books primarily intended - for young Indigenous people whose stories are under threat, or for everybody else? These are the questions that needed to be asked in my critique of published Dreaming stories.

My analysis reveals that inevitably every Dreaming text that reaches the publication stage is influenced, and indeed moulded, by the circumstances under which it is produced. It would be naive to suggest otherwise. Whether produced by non-Indigenous writers or, under rare circumstances, solely by Indigenous people, there are always political and other socio-cultural factors that ultimately influence the adopted mode and means of representation. Dreaming narratives contain knowledge, and all knowledge systems (whether Indigenous or not) are influenced by circumstance, as Attwood explains, drawing on the works of Michel Foucault:

In the first place, knowledge is interpretive, that is, knowledge is not natural or already *there*, but is an artifice, an entity constructed or invented by human beings. Things or objects exist in the world, but knowledge establishes all the meanings they have....

Second, all knowledge is contingent, that is, knowledge is neither timeless nor universal, but relative to circumstances.... Knowledge is always situational - it is sought and acquired by individuals for some purpose or another.... Third, all knowledge is political, that is, it is constructed by relationships of power - of domination and subordination - and is inseparable from these.

(Attwood, 1992:i-ii)

This thesis demonstrates that the very early non-Indigenous representations of Dreaming narratives were influenced by the blind prejudices that people held against the 'natives' of this new and foreign land. Later representations by missionaries were perhaps a little more compassionate, but just as condemning of Indigenous belief systems, reflecting their writers' convictions of the great need for them to Christianise these 'black heathens.' Later representations by humanitarian women sought to entertain the mother country with quaint 'legends' and child-like tales from their 'black friends', but at the same time started to provide Australia, through a slowly emerging body of postcolonial literature, an identity of difference from the mother country. And so new reasons and justifications arose for non-Indigenous people to continue to exploit and appropriate Indigenous people, and to extract what they could of their Dreaming narratives. As interest in things Indigenous waxed and waned in the mother country, and on our own shores, so did the ways and means of appropriating and representing Indigenous knowledge. By the time opportunities arose for Indigenous people to represent themselves, they were already influenced by 'popularised' and non-personalised published versions of their narratives, and so the trends continued. Inevitably narratives written by Indigenous writers were shaped to appeal to mass audiences, and invariably lacked the very elements that located them indisputably in their culture. The names of country and the names of people were removed, and the 'legends' were set way back in the 'Dreamtime', as if they had absolutely no relevance or significance to the here and now.

However, with the establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board in 1973, and the subsequent availability of funding for Aboriginal writers and artists to start expressing themselves in their

own ways and in their own styles, new and exciting things started to happen (see Shoemaker, 1989:11). It has taken some time, but slowly the hegemony of accepted discursive practices has been challenged, and alternative representations have emerged. Interestingly the most challenging of these have been produced in close collaboration with non-Indigenous people (eg. Roe & Muecke plus Rockman & Cataldi). Unlike past collaborations, these more recent works have honoured the moral and ethical obligations that non-Indigenous people have to recognise the prior ownership that Indigenous people have over their oral narratives, even though current legislation fails them. So the stage is now set for further challenges.

One of the main purposes of this thesis, therefore, has been to invite new and daring representations that seek to defy the popularised status quo. It challenges publishers to be a little more adventurous, and allow printed Dreaming narratives to retain the oral flavour and style in which they were originally told. It celebrates the pride that Indigenous writers and story-tellers demonstrate when they begin their narratives with authenticating prologues that declare their rights to relate their narratives to others. It also supports the way narrators choose to connect their narratives to specific tracts of land, despite the trends of past representations to locate stories anywhere within Australia with no sense of Place of belonging. It also endorses the efforts of Indigenous story-tellers to bring their narratives back into the present, and to declare that their beliefs and Dreamings continue on into the 21st century, and do not belong way back in the 'Dreamtime'. Such discursive elements are intrinsic to oral Dreaming narratives, so why not also in their written representations?

## 10.1 SUMMING UP

In my introductory chapter I clarify my research topic and outline my main research questions. I also define the term 'Dreaming', and set the boundaries of my research area (of published Dreaming narratives). In choosing the genre of Dreaming narratives, I incorporate texts that are often labelled: 'myth', 'legend', 'folk-lore', 'fable' and 'tale', which includes 'stories' aimed at both children and adults. This chapter also identifies some important elements of oral Dreaming narratives that serve as a reference point for analysing Dreaming narratives in print. The chapter concludes by briefly reviewing the very earliest published accounts of Aboriginal belief systems, or perceived lack of them, by men of 'high esteem' in the new colony. Their candid accounts serve to demonstrate the underlying bias and prejudice that existed amongst white writers, about Indigenous peoples and their beliefs, in those very early years of Australian colonisation, and thus set the literary scene for those representers of Dreaming narratives who followed.

My second chapter outlines my research methodology. My method has been primarily library and archival research, but I also draw on my own experiences of being involved in

collaborative book production with Aboriginal people. I worked for some years in the Northern Territory, where I was responsible for overseeing the production of vernacular reading materials in two bilingual schools in the 1980's. I have also worked in more recent years, on a voluntary basis, with Aboriginal writers who are trying to get their own writing published. I discuss in this chapter the academic and ethical issues of being a non-Indigenous researcher of Indigenous literature in a postcolonial and postmodern age.

Chapter Three is a long and foundational chapter that selectively reviews the published Dreaming literature 'authored' by non-Indigenous writers. It aims to contextualise the literary climate in which Indigenous story tellers and writers found themselves when they eventually did manage to get their own works published. The non-Indigenous representers are discussed in chronological order, beginning with the very early recordings of Dreaming texts by Aboriginal Protectors, and missionaries such as Meyer (1846) and Taplin (1879). It also reviews the significant work of anthropologists such as T.G.H. Strehlow, A.P. Elkin, N.B. Tindale, R.M. Berndt, C.H. Berndt and others. An exposé is provided on the champion appropriator of Dreaming texts, A.W. Reed, who unashamedly appropriated other people's texts (no doubt with considerable financial rewards) with no respect for, or acknowledgement of, the original Aboriginal narrators. He does, however, in a general way acknowledge his published sources. A.W. Reed's books have been of great concern to many people over the years, including Indigenous people, who have hoped in vain that by ignoring them they will go away. As with Pauline Hanson, the influence of his work and assumptions has permeated the dominant culture and become part of it: naturalised rather than perceived as alien, dangerous or insensitive. Hence my decision to discuss his work in this study.

I also discuss appropriation by other white writers, particularly the recent proliferation of texts aimed at children, many of which had their origins in the published collections of both Katie Langloh Parker and David Unaipon. An example of such publications are the S.R.A. series, which presumably prompted Hodge and Mishra (1990:77) to complain of "short and pointless narratives" that comprise "Aboriginal myths in English". The significant works of Roland Robinson, Ann Wells, Bill Harney and Jane Mathews, all of whom wrote for adults, are also discussed, as are the seminal writings of Katie Langloh Parker. Her books are important, not just because Langloh Parker's first two publications *Australian Legendary Tales* (1896) and *More Legendary Tales* (1898) were the first large collections of Aboriginal mythology published, but also because they have provided the source material for so many children's books in this genre ever since. The consequence of this, I argue, has been for Langloh Parker's work to influence the content, style and structure of many books published for children in this genre, especially with her de-emphasis on Place; use of 'Noongahburrah' language names for animal characters (such as 'Galah', 'Brälgah' and 'Cookooburrah'); and her adoption of a moralising tone in her obligatory coda explaining the unique features of Australian birds and animals today. The evidence indicates that these texts were written down



by Langloh Parker in 'Station' or 'Pidgin English', and then re-written by her in Standard English, although her biographer, Marcie Muir, and her publisher would have us believe the stories were told and collected in the Noongahburrah language.

Chapter Four reviews published Dreaming literature written by Indigenous writers. It reveals that Aboriginal writers do not necessarily adopt modes of representation different from their non-Indigenous contemporaries. Some Indigenous writers choose to set their Dreaming narratives in the long distant past, and occasionally to delete any strong sense of Place or Person from their published narratives. One should not be surprised that such literary elements have been imbued and adopted by some Indigenous writers, particularly when such representations have dominated children's books of this genre for so many years. Some Indigenous writers, who have been deprived of the rich cultural experiences of Auntie Veronica and Janet Nakamarra, have not had the opportunities of hearing oral Dreaming narratives told to them by their parents and grandparents. This deprivation is one of the many regrets of the 'stolen generation', and others brought up on missions and in institutions where assimilation policies were enforced and the use of traditional languages were forbidden.

Together Chapter Three and Chapter Four set the scene for Chapter Five, which celebrates the collaborative efforts of Indigenous story tellers and writers who have been able to work closely with non-Indigenous linguists, editors and publishers in having their Dreaming narratives published in forms that challenge the status quo. I argue that the books discussed in this particular chapter stand out as examples of what is possible in the realm of published Dreaming narratives, particularly because they retain the important elements of oral narratives, including: a strong sense of Person, or ownership and authority over the Dreaming story; a strong sense of Place and connection to the land; an instructional element; stylistic features such as repetition and amplification; and a sense of relevance to the here and now and not some remote 'Dreamtime' of the past. These books discussed include the works of Muecke and Roe (1983), Rockman and Cataldi (1994) Elsie Jones and other Paakantji people (1989) and Raymattja Marika-Mununggiritj and her family (1989). Their publications formally acknowledge all Indigenous sources of their narratives and give their owners full copyrights over their texts - a right not afforded many Indigenous story-tellers of the past. The relatively fewer books discussed in Chapter Five are particularly noteworthy for their Aboriginal voices. They not only demonstrate that (cf. Spivak, 1988) the Subaltern can speak, but that it is possible for Aboriginal story-tellers to be heard in a language that is not Standard English. This chapter celebrates the possibilities for publishing in this 'most sensitive genre' of Dreaming narratives. It also demonstrates that there has been a gradual movement in the publishing industry for the original owners and narrators of Aboriginal Dreaming texts to retain their rights over their texts. This has been accompanied by a gradual liberation of Indigenous writers and story-tellers to represent their stories in ways that meet

their own purposes, rather than having to meet the expectations of their non-Indigenous audiences, or the demands of white publishers.

The focus of my thesis changes in Chapters Six and Seven, when I concentrate in detail on the writings of David Unaipon. This Ngarrindjeri man is significant not only because he was the first published Australian Indigenous writer of the Dreaming genre, but because his syncretic texts reveal much more than the mere sagas of his "legends". They also reveal a 'mission discourse' which encompasses Christian mythology and the Christian teachings of his mission upbringing. Unaipon was a scholar of the King James Bible and other Christian literature, but his texts also show the influences of the colonial writings of Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* and works of Milton. In 1930 the book *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines* was published in London under the name of W. Ramsay Smith. There is no doubt that the majority of these narratives were written by Unaipon. We know this by contrasting Ramsay Smith's book with Unaipon's manuscript, "Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines", held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. However, archival evidence, and further analysis of the Ramsay Smith book, indicates that Unaipon was the likely source of the entire Ramsay Smith publication. Tindale, for example, states in his journal that Unaipon had an arrangement with Ramsay Smith, who paid him ten shillings a story. I assume from such evidence that Ramsay Smith commissioned Unaipon to collect 17 further stories from different Aboriginal people in South Australia, to add to the original 30 narratives he purchased from Angus and Robertson. There are also remarkable similarities between these additional narratives and Unaipon's narratives published in his name in *Native legends*. I continue in Chapter Eight with further comparative analyses of Unaipon's work, by contrasting his "Naroondarie's wives" narrative with other published forms of the same narrative, particularly that of the anthropologist R.M. Berndt (1940), using linguistic tools of analysis.

My thesis concludes with a chapter that discusses Indigenous rights over knowledge, looking in particular at the system of rights that operates amongst Yolngu people of Arnhem Land. This discussion serves to demonstrate the complexity of just one Indigenous system, and therefore why those intending to represent Dreaming narratives in print have certain obligations to Indigenous holders and owners of Dreaming narratives. I also summarise the legal situation under Australian law, and the lack of rights Indigenous people currently hold under this system. Because the proposed amendments to current legislation, which will provide moral rights to Indigenous people, are yet to be passed in Federal parliament, Indigenous people are still open to exploitation. And so is their knowledge open to appropriation. Chapter Nine therefore seeks to inform and explain the current legal situation regarding Indigenous knowledge, and the moral obligation non-Indigenous people have towards Indigenous people in the light of Indigenous rights under the different systems of traditional Aboriginal law.

## 10.2 A FINAL COMMENT

For all those Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, who wish to become involved in some way in the task of publishing Aboriginal Dreaming texts, my thesis advises caution. It suggests the task be approached with a clear understanding of the issues involved. The rights of Indigenous story-tellers must be respected by Indigenous and non-Indigenous producers of text, and collaborators must respect the integrity of Dreaming narratives originating in an oral form. The intention in writing down and publishing Dreaming narratives should be clearly established, as should the readership for whom the final products are intended. Is the exercise intended to benefit Indigenous people and the future survival of their narratives, or is it intended to benefit the non-Indigenous? Or is it possible for both to benefit, particularly as non-Indigenous Australians strive to understand and reconcile ourselves with Indigenous Australians? No matter what our primary intentions are, and who our primary audience is, in the name of moral justice and fairness, any form of representation of Dreaming narratives should be approached with the interests of the original Indigenous story-tellers and owners uppermost in the minds of all concerned, including the publishers.

In keeping with the spirit of this thesis, I give the final word to an Indigenous man, Ken Hampton, who wrote back in 1979 for the First World Black Conference held in Nigeria<sup>1</sup>:

Almost without exception, all books written on the subject [of Aborigines] have been written by white people for white people. Consequently, reality and truth, as it might appear to an Aborigine, have seldom been considered necessary, either by writer or reader. For the most part, novels written by whites about us have been racist, or paternalistic, condescending or distorted. All too frequently they have been all four. From an Aboriginal viewpoint, virtually everything that has been written about us by whites is just another form of exploitation. Writers, whether of scientific works or pieces of fiction, intentionally or not, exploit Aboriginal resources every time they go out to gather material. They move across the country, speaking to us, asking us questions and making notes. Then they interpret what we have said, according to their own white attitudes and experiences. Whether it is deliberate or not, they write in terms of their own thinking and the result is a degraded image of all Aborigines, living or dead.

(Hampton quoted in Mattingley, 1988:133)

Fortunately, twenty years later, the situation as described by Hampton, has improved just a little. However, A.W. Reed's books continue to sell, despite the fact that they contain appropriated 'myths' and 'legends', with no acknowledgement or proceeds going towards his Indigenous sources. The book *Aborigine* is still available in bookshops under the name of Ramsay Smith. This thesis challenges all who read it to help make a difference. Certain books should be boycotted, but it is also important to help stem the tide by encouraging others to alleviate the appropriation and misrepresentation - particularly the misrepresentation of Dreaming narratives - of one of the oldest and richest Indigenous cultures on this earth.

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<sup>1</sup> The late Ken Hampton, a South Australian Nunga, was the co-author of *Survival in our own land*. His 1979 paper is entitled "The Aborigine in Australian literature".



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**POOR BUGGER WHITEFELLA GOT NO DREAMING:**

**The representation & appropriation of published Dreaming narratives with special reference to David Unaipon's writings**

**APPENDICES**

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## APPENDIX 1.1 Definition of 'The Dreaming'

According to Rose. In: Rose, Deborah Bird (1994) Ned Kelly died for our sins. *Oceania*. 65,2:179.

In the beginning, Yarralin people say, the earth was covered with salt water. The waters pulled back and the earth was exposed. Out of the earth, out of holes in the ground, emerged all the life we now know. Plants, of course, grew directly from the earth, and all the animals and other beings, including the sun, the moon, the rainbow, and so on, came out of the earth and started walking around. They walked in human shape; flying foxes were human in shape, the Moon was a male human being. Men and women walked separately; they carried ceremonies, negotiated laws, created the system by which life now continues to exist. In their travels they demarcated country, speaking different languages, doing things differently in different places, naming places, creating places, and carrying out ceremonies. These original beings, who are now called Dreamings, established the moral principles and laws through which the cosmos can be sustained as a living system .... Through their actions, Dreamings demarcated a spatially identified moral universe.

At some point, most Dreamings became mobilised, both in place and in shape. The males and the females, for example, who later became flying foxes, are now referred to as Flying Foxes. Their travels are demarcated in real geographical space. They started at the western edge of Ngarinman country, travelled from named place to named place, and finished at the eastern edge of Ngarinman country. All along their tracks there are Dreaming sites: where they walked, where they stopped to perform certain actions, where they finished. All of these flying fox Dreaming sites are now important places, because the original life which became flying foxes, and the law initiated by flying foxes are localised there.

## APPENDIX 2.1 An account of the telling of a Dreaming narrative by Strehlow

From: Strehlow, T.G.H. (1947) *Aranda traditions*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press.:1-5.

Aranda myths are rarely elaborate in form.... They are handed down through word of mouth by the older leaders of a group to the younger generation of initiated men, usually on the occasion of a visit to the local sacred cave where the *tjurunga* sticks and stones are kept. A brief description of such a visit may throw some light on the importance of this totemic ceremonial centre in helping to preserve the original myth in its traditional form through the passing centuries.

Let us suppose the scene of such a visit to be the sacred cave of Ulamba, an isolated mountain formation several miles north-east of the highest peaks in the Western MacDonnell system. A party of men is ready to set off for the cave. Spears and all other chattels are left behind at a small soak near the edge of the plain and the men move off in silence towards the steep peak on whose slopes the cave is situated. There is only one correct track by which it may be approached, a track which through long disuse has become almost invisible; hence the oldest and most experienced man of the totemic group leads the way, while the remainder follow in single file. All are silent; for the cave must be approached with awe and reverence. From time to time the leader halts, points out rocks and trees which figure in the legend of the Ulamba ancestor, and neatly explains their significance by means of sign-language. No questions may be asked, the young men must be content with such explanatory remarks as the leader is prepared to give them. If these are insufficient for a complete grasp of the myth, the young men must wait respectfully until another of these rare opportunities presents itself. After half an hour's steep climbing the leader stops. He points towards a huge boulder which is resting on a smooth ledge of rock above them. The boulder has an opening in it; and the leader signals that it was from this rock and through this very opening that the Ulamba ancestor first burst into life. Still higher up another rock represents the body of a bird-totem ancestor who used to hide there, afraid lest the Ulamba chief should kill him. A little further on the party comes upon a confused heap of rocks which marks one of the night camps of the Ulamba ancestor: the fallen rocks are the bodies of his human victims whom he had killed with his spears in order to make a meal of their 'sweet' flesh. A magnificent view can be gained from here of Mt. Hay, whose blue mass dominates the dark sea of mulga in the east; of Mt. Sonder and Mt. Zeil, the two highest peaks in Central Australia, which raise their pale blue summits on the western horizon; and of the long line of massed parallel ranges to the south which constitute the Western MacDonnells. The leader explains that, in the beginning, the Ulamba ancestor often used to stand here on cold mornings, and scan the horizon around with keen eyes for human victims. Finally he had set out over the low pass in the first range to the south towards the territory now held by the Western Aranda; but before plunging down to the basin of the Upper Ormiston on the other side, he had passed on the saddle of the mountain for a brief moment and looked back regretfully towards his native Ulamba. Finally, the leader directs the gaze of his followers to a prominent conical hill just below the narrow pass: this represents the body of the ancestor when he returned to his home from his last trail. The party is now close to the cave. At a signal from the leader every man stoops down and picks up a handful of sticks, stones or pine needles. They turn around a sharp corner; the cave suddenly bursts into view; stones and sticks and pine needles are flung towards it: the spirits of the ancestors must be warned of the approach of human visitors, for to disturb them rudely means to court their displeasure, and this may result in a sudden death in the near future.

The cave itself consists of two huge boulders piled high upon each other. The dark bottom mass is the body of the Ulamba ancestor himself: thus had he stretched himself out for his final sleep when he returned home from his last venture. Mortally wounded by his victim, he had struggled back to his own home; nowhere else would he close his death-dim eyes. His father had awaited him here and had cast himself down in grief over the prostrate body of his son. They had changed into great rocks, filled with the seeds of life.

The party halts. In the narrow cleft between the two boulders rest the sacred *tjurunga*. At a signal from the leader, the party sits down in a half-circle on a convenient ledge of rock at the base of the cave. Two hundred feet below them, at the bottom of a steep ravine, several

slender white-barked gums are to be seen pointing upwards towards the cave: they represent spears which the Ulamba ancestor had once hurled at his victims.

The leader raises himself to the level of the cave by climbing up on the three little stone steps in the lower of the two great boulders. He removes the stones with which the narrow opening has been skilfully blocked up to keep out rain-storms from the south, and also to prevent animals from entering the cave. These stones, it should be added, also serve the purpose of hiding the cave from the eyes of strangers and robbers. He takes out several bundles of *tjurunga*, closely wrapped around with hair-string, and hands them to the men waiting below, who place them on a bed of grass and leaves so that they shall not touch the ground.

Then the leader steps down, takes up each bundle in turn, unwinds the hair-string, and chants the song which relates the wanderings of the Ulamba ancestor. Gradually the party takes up the verses of the chant; and in low, hushed voices their song bursts upon the silence that has enfolded the cave up to this moment. The *tjurunga* have now been unwrapped. They are spread out side by side; each represents the ancestor at a different stage of his career, and hence has a special verse of the chant assigned to it. The leader takes up each *tjurunga* in turn, chants the words appropriate to it, and hands it around for inspection. Each man presses the *tjurunga* affectionately to his body, and then passes it on to his neighbour.

All the while the traditional song re-echoes from the steep mountain wall. It requires much explanation. It contains a great number of obsolete and obscure words, which, furthermore, have been dismembered and had component parts re-grouped in the chant-verses for metrical purposes. This re-grouping of the dismembered parts effectively prevents the uninitiated from being able to understand any portion whatever of the chant when it is being sung. Yet it is upon this old traditional chant, the words of which are jealously guarded by the old men of the group, that the whole Ulamba myth is based. Accordingly, the leader, while teaching the younger men the sacred chant in its traditional form, has to spend much time in explaining each verse of the song after it has been memorized. Again, no questions must be asked. The leader explains the general meaning of each verse, mainly by means of sign language. If anything remains unclear, the listeners have to wait for another opportunity for getting further information unasked from their teacher. This chance is usually afforded to them during the elaborate decorations which follow that evening, decorations for the sacred ceremonies in honour of the Ulamba ancestor.

But the afternoon is waning rapidly. The last *tjurunga* has been rubbed clean of dust, and the last verse has been chanted. No man must be here at nightfall. The leader wraps up the sacred objects with hair-string, replaces them in the cave, blocks up the opening with stones as before and the party returns to the camp near the soakage below.

The shadows of Ulamba lengthen out across the mulga plain, the sun sinks behind the western peaks. Fires begin to gleam brightly; and the men of the party share at a leisurely meal the meat which they had obtained by hunting earlier in the day. Then they gather around the old leader once more, and begin to decorate themselves under his guidance for a ceremony in remembrance of the Ulamba ancestor, whose life-story they have heard this afternoon. The ceremony which is now enacted is intimately connected with the chant and the myth: it is, in short, the dramatic representation of one of the many memorable events in the myth centring around the person of the ancestor. The actors wear a traditional ceremonial pattern in conformity with the scene of the dramatized incident; for the Ulamba chief is stated to have worn a different decorative pattern at each of the many places which he visited on his travels.

## APPENDIX 3.1 The writings of H.E.A. Meyer

### Appendix 3.1A - A narrative paraphrased by Meyer.

From: Meyer, H.E.A. (1846) *Manners and customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay tribe; South Australia*. Adelaide, George Dehane.:11-12.

... The stars were formerly men, and leave their huts in the evening, to go through the same employments which they did while on earth. Some are remarkable amongst them, as Pungngane, Waijungngari, and their Ningarope. The first was born naturally, and the others were made as follows:- Ningarope having retired upon a natural occasion, was highly pleased with the red colour of her excrement, which she began to mould into the form of a man, and tickling it, it showed signs of life and began to laugh. He was thus a Kainjani at once from his colour, and his mother took him into the bush and remained with him. Pungngane, his brother, had two wives, and lived near the sea. Once when he remained out a long time, his two wives left the hut and went and found Waijungngari. As they approached he was asleep, and the two women placing themselves on each side of the hut, began making the noise of an emu. The noise awoke him, and he took his spear to kill them; but as soon as he ran out, the two women embraced him, and requested him to be their husband. His mother, enraged at the conduct of the women, went to Pungngane, and told him what had happened. Very much enraged, he left his hut to seek that of his brother, which he soon found; but there was no one there, as his wives and brother were out seeking for food. Very much vexed, he put some fire upon the hut, saying "*kundajan*," meaning - let it remain but not burn immediately. Waijungngari and the two women arrived in the evening, and lying down to sleep, the fire began to burn, and presently to fall upon the skins with which they were covered. Awakened with fright, they threw away the skins and ran to the sea. Out of danger, and recovered a little from his fright, Waijungare [sic] began to think how he could escape the wrath of his brother, and threw a spear up to the sky, which touched it and came down again. He they [sic] took a barbed spear, and throwing it upwards with all his force, it remained sticking in the sky. By this he climbed up, and the two women after him. Pungngane [sic] seeing his brother and wives in the sky, followed, with his mother, where they have remained ever since. To Pungngane and Waijungari [sic] the natives attribute the abundance of kangaroo and the fish called ponde. Pungngane caught a ponde, and dividing it into small pieces and throwing them into the sea, each became a ponde. Waijungare [sic] multiplied kangaroos in the same manner. They have many similar histories of the stars. The milky-way, they say, is a row of huts, amongst which they point out the heaps of ashes and the smoke ascending.

### Appendix 3.1B - Narratives paraphrased by Meyer

From: Meyer, H.E.A. (1846) *Manners and customs of the Aborigines of the Encounter Bay tribe; South Australia*. Adelaide, George Dehane:13-14 & 14-15.

... It is upon an occasion like this that they represent their ancestors to have been assembled at Mootabaringar. Having no fire this dance was held in the daytime, and the weather being very hot, the perspiration flowed copiously from them and formed the large ponds; and the beating of their feet upon the ground produced the irregularities of surface in the form of the hills and vallies [sic]. They sent messengers, Kuratje and Kanmari, towards the east, to Kondole, to invite him to the feast, as they knew that he possessed fire. Kondole, who was a large and powerful man, came, but hid his fire, on account of which alone he had been invited. The men, displeased at this, determined to obtain the fire by force; but no one ventured to approach him. At length one named Rilballe determined to wound him with a spear, and then take the fire from him. He threw the spear and wounded him in the neck. This caused a great laughing and shouting, and nearly all were transformed into different animals. Kondole ran to the sea, and became a whale, and ever after blew the water out of the wound which he had received in his neck. Kuratje and Kanmari became small fish. The latter was dressed in a good kangaroo skin, and the former only a mat made of seaweed, which is the reason, they say, that the kanmari contains a great deal of oil under the skin, while the kuratje is dry and without fat. Others became opossums, and went upon trees. The young men, who were ornamented with tufts of feathers, became cockatoos, the tuft of feathers being the crest. Rilballe took Kondole's fire and placed it in the grass-tree, where it still remains, and can be brought out by rubbing...

...All this happened before the time of Nurunduri, with whose departure from the earth the power of transforming themselves, and making rivers, hills, &c., ceased. As, with Nurunduri, a new epoch commenced, as much of his history as can be told with decency here follows:-

He was a tall and powerful man, and lived in the East with two wives, and had several children. Upon one occasion his two wives ran away from him, and he went in search of them. Wherever he arrived he speared terror amongst the people, who were dwarfs compared with him. Continuing his pursuit, he arrived at Freeman's Nob, and there made water, from which circumstance the place is called Kainjenuald (kainjamin, to make water). Disappointed at not finding his wives, he threw two small nets, called witti, into the sea, and immediately two small rocky islands arose, which ever since have been called Wittungenggul. He went on to Ramong, where, by stamping with his feet he created Kungkengguwar (Rosetta Head). From hence he threw spears in different directions, and wherever they fell, small rocky islands arose. At length he found his two wives at Toppong. After beating them they endeavoured again to escape. Now tired of pursuing them, he ordered the sea to flow and drown them. They were transformed into rock, and are still to be seen at low water. Discontented and unhappy, he removed with his children to a great distance towards the West, where he still lives, a very old man, scarcely able to move. When he went away one of his children was asleep, and in consequence, left behind. Nurunduri, when arrived at the place where he intended to remain, missed him, and making fast one end of a string to his maralengk, he threw the other end towards where he supposed his son to be, who, catching hold of it, helped himself along to his father. This line is still the guide by which the dead find their way to Nurunduri. When a man dies, Nurunduri's son, who first found the way to his father by means of the line, throws it to the dead man, who catching hold of it, is conducted in like manner. When he comes near, the old man, feeling the motion of the line, asks his son who is coming. If it is a man, the son calls all the men together, who, by a great shouting, arouse the half-stupified man. When come to himself, he silently and sadly approaches Nurunduri, who points out to him where he is to reside. If he belongs to the Encounter Bay tribe, or one of the Goolwa tribes, he is allowed to live in Nurunduri's hut; but if of one of the more distant tribes, at a distance off. Before he goes away to the place pointed out to him, Nurunduri carefully observes his eyes. If tears are flowing from one eye only, it is a sign that he has left only one wife; if from both, two; if they cease to flow from one eye while they continue to flow from the other, he has left three wives; and according to the number that he has left, Nurunduri provides him with others. Old people become young, and the infirm sound in the company of Nurunduri. This is what the poor uninstructed people believe; therefore no fears about the future, or concerning punishments and rewards, are entertained by them.

## APPENDIX 3.2 - Dreaming narratives paraphrased by Clamor W. Schürmann

From: Schürmann, C.W. (1879) *The Aboriginal tribes of Port Lincoln in South Australia, their mode of life, manners, customs, etc.* in Woods (ed.) *The native tribes of South Australia*. Adelaide, E.S. Wiggs & Son.:239-241.

II. The large red species of kangaroo is not to be found at Port Lincoln, although it is said to be plentiful in the north; and, from the following legend, it would appear that one of the species had found its way to the south of the district:- Kupirri was the name of this animal, which is said to have been of a stupendous size, and to have devoured all those who attempted to spear it. Its very appearance inspired the natives of old with overwhelming terror, so that they lost all presence of mind, flinging away the wooden lever (midla) with the spear, which was thereby, of course, prevented from taking effect. At last, however, a match was found for the monster kangaroo in two renowned hunters, named Pilla and Idnya, who, falling upon its track near Port Lincoln, on the range stretching to the north followed and overtook it on Mount Nilarro, situated about thirty miles from that place. Finding it asleep, they at once attacked it, but before they could quite kill it their spears became blunt; a disappointment that must have soured their tempers a good deal, as it caused a violent quarrel between them, in which Pilla stabbed his antagonist with one of the blunt spears in many places, while he himself received a severe blow over his nose with a midla: becoming reconciled, the friends again attacked and killed the Kupirri, and, on opening it, found to their utter astonishment the dead bodies of their comrades previously devoured by this monster kangaroo. But being no less skilled in the medical art than in hunting, they succeeded in reviving and healing these unfortunate men, and they all immediately betook themselves to roasting and devouring the Kupirri in return. The feast over, and their bodies comfortably greased with the fat of the animal, they proceeded in search of their mourning wives and families, to acquaint them with the happy termination of their disastrous adventures. The two heroes were afterwards metamorphosed into, and gave origin to two species of animals, the opossum and native cat, retaining as such not only their names, but also the scars of the wounds that they had inflicted on each other in the shape and furrow down the former's nose, and of a number of white dots sprinkled over the latter.

III. Between Coffin's and Sleaford Bays there is a line of bare, white sandhills, erroneously laid down in Flinders' map as white cliffs. These masses of drifting sand have most probably been piled up by the westerly gales, which often now alter their shape and position; but, according to a tradition of the natives, they were raised by Marnpi and Tatta, two of their ancestors. A great fire, coming from the ocean, spread far and wide on the sea-coast, and seemed likely to envelop the whole country in its flames. Deliberating how to prevent such a calamity, it occurred to the abovementioned personages, that the best method of quenching the fire would be to bury it; they accordingly betook themselves to the task, and, in executing it, threw up those sandhills which testify to this day the vastness of the undertaking.

IV. Renowned as a fierce warrior and immoderate lover is Welu, who, being foiled in his amours [sic] by the Nauo people, determined to exterminate the whole tribe. He succeeded in spearing all the men except Karantantya and Yangkunu, two young men, who flew for shelter into the top of a tree. Welu climbed after them with the intent to murder them also; but they had the cunning to break the branch on which he was standing, when, tumbling headlong to the ground, a tamed native dog seized and killed him. He has since been changed into the bird that now bears his name, and which in English is called the curlew, while the memory and names of the two young men who escaped his fury are perpetuated by two species of hawk.

V. A small kind of lizard, the male of which is called Ibirri, and the female Waka, is said to have divided the sexes in the human species; an event that would appear not to be much approved by the natives, since either sex has a mortal hatred against the opposite sex of these little animals, the men always destroying the waka and the women the ibirri.



### APPENDIX 3.3 - Works of Christina Smith

From: Smith, Mrs. James (1880) *The Booandik tribe of South Australian Aborigines: a sketch of their habits, customs, legends, and language*. Adelaide, E. Spiller.: 19-21

#### HOW FIRE WAS OBTAINED

A long time ago, long before my informant's father came into existence (and he was a man tottering, apparently, under the weight of 60 years), the black people lived without fire to prepare their food with, and their knowledge of its practical benefits was limited to a belief that a man called Mar (cockatoo), who lived far away in the east, had it, and that he selfishly monopolised it. Being a powerful man he was able to guard his secret possession from any force that might be brought to bear on him. It was the current belief that Mar kept his fire concealed under the tuft of feathers which he wore on his head. However, what could not be obtained by force was obtained by craft. There arose some dispute between several of the neighbouring tribes that required immediate arrangement, and to do so a great "murapena," as the blacks called it, or corroboree, was decided on. Messengers were sent in all directions to announce the day on which the meeting would take place. Mar was among those who came. At the hunt which preceded the corroboree a kangaroo was killed. Marsupials were, it would seem, not so plentiful at that distant time as they are now; and native customs fully bear out this surmise. A kangaroo was killed; and, in order that many might partake of it, it was severed into small joints. As a mark of respect to Mar, he was asked to accept of a very choice bit, but he declined it, as he did many others, till asked if he would have the skin. That was just what he wanted, and he carried it away with evident pleasure to his camp, which he had fixed some distance apart. "What can he be going to do with the skin? It will not be good eating," they said, "unless he prepares it with his fire." The question was, who would go to watch him and try to learn something about the fire they had heard about. Several talkative natives stood up and saying they were ready to undertake this service; but after submitting their plans for general approval, they were not considered fit - owing in some measure, to being too much given to talk to themselves. At last an active little fellow called Prite gave proof that he was equal to the undertaking, by sneaking through the grass around their camp without being seen. He was sent, and soon reached the place where Mar was camping. After watching patiently for some time, he saw Mar look around, as if to satisfy himself he was not watched, then yawning and putting his hand to his head as if to scratch it, he took the fire from its place of concealment, and Prite had the satisfaction of seeing the mysterious fire glowing brightly before Mar. Prite returned and told all he saw, whereupon one called Tatkanna undertook to go to learn something for them. He managed to get close to the fire and felt its heat. Then he returned to report, and to show how the heat had singed his breast to a reddish color. Another then went up, taking with him a grasstree stick. He saw Mar singeing the hair off the kangaroo skin, and managed, unobserved, to thrust his stick into the fire. Upon withdrawing it, the grass took fire. Mar sprang up alarmed, and strove, but in vain, to beat out the flames with his half-roasted skin. The fire spread rapidly over the long rank grass, and dry underwood. Mar, grasping his waddies, rushed over to where the others were camped. He was in a great rage. He suspected some of them had been trying to steal his fire. He caught sight of Tatkanna, whose breast gave evidence of his having had something to do in the matter. Tatkanna, being a little fellow, began to cry; whereupon Quartang stepped up, telling Mar if he wanted to fight he was ready, and was more his match than little Tatkanna. The rest of the blacks were not long idle spectators; all found something to fight about. It is so long since I heard this that I have forgotten the names of most of those who distinguish themselves on this very eventful day. This is to be regretted, as their names were necessary to the full understanding of the story. However, Quartang soon had enough. A hit with the point of that bootjack-like waddy called "buamba", finished him. He leaped up off the ground into a tree, and was transformed into that bird now known as the laughing-jackass, and is said still to bear the mark of Mar's bootjack under his wing. Tatkanna became a robin red-breast. Prite also became a bird, but I can not give its name in English. It is to be found among the undergrowth along the sea-coast. A big fat fellow called Kounterbull received a deep spear wound in the back of his neck. He rushed away into the sea, and was often afterwards seen spouting water out of the spear wound. His name in English is "whale". Mar himself, uninjured, flew up into a tree,

and still raging and scolding became a cockatoo; and a bare spot is pointed out on cocky's head, under his crest, where, it is said, the fire was kept secreted.

Since that eventful day, if the natives by chance let their fire go out, they can readily get a light out of the grass tree by procuring two pieces of it, placing one horizontally on the ground and inserting in a notch made in the end of the other, and then twirling the latter rapidly between the palms of the hands. In a short time the sticks will ignite, showing that it is still as capable of setting the bush in a blaze as in the day of Mar.

### APPENDIX 3.4 - The works of Daisy Bates as retold by Ker Wilson

From: Ker Wilson, Barbara (1972) *Tales Told to Kabbarli: Aboriginal legends collected by Daisy Bates*. Melbourne, Angus & Robertson.:12-14.

#### THE MULGARGUTTUK AND MARDYET

The Sorcerer and the Moon's youngest daughter

The daughters of Meeka the Moon and Ngangaru the Sun lived on moolaitch, ants' eggs, which their mother gathered for them. Each day, Ngangaru would climb out of the cave where they lived with the aid of her wanna, her digging-stick, and go about seeking the food which her daughters loved. When she returned to Meeka Darrbi, her daughters would sift and sift and sift the moolaitch, making a sound of *tik-tik-tik* and *yow-yow-yow*.

Now in those long-ago times there lived among the yoongar, the men and women of the earth, a powerful sorcerer, a Mulgarguttuk. He used to hear the *tik-tik-tik* and *yow-yow-yow* as Ngangaru's daughters sifted and sifted and sifted the moolaitch, and he was curious to know what the sound was. One day he changed himself into an eaglehawk, and flew into a tall tree, where he could look into the sky at all the daughters busy sifting. He watched them for a while, and listened to them as they sifted, and then he said to himself, "I will have the one they call Mardyet."

Mardyet was the second daughter of Meeka and Ngangaru, and she was very beautiful.

The Mulgarguttuk spread his eaglehawk wings and flew into the midst of the daughters as they sifted the moolaitch, and when he was amongst them he changed into a man again, and caught hold of Mardyet, and took her away to his mia, the shelter he had built of boughs. He put mulgar, loud thunder magic, into Mardyet's ears and head and over her whole body, and he sucked all the blood out of her heart and got water and poured it into her heart to make new, clean blood. Then he made a great smoke and put Mardyet into the middle of the smoke, until it had driven all the bad smell from her, and after this was done he said to Mardyet: "Now you are my korda - my wife - and I will keep you always."

Mardyet was lonely for her mother and father and her sisters and brothers, and at first she did not like the Mulgarguttuk, this powerful sorcerer who had taken her away to live with him in the land of the yoongar, the men and women of the earth. She wanted to return to Meeka Darrbi. But the Mulgarguttuk watched her all the time, so that she could not run away from him. When she slept he put the mulgar, the thunder magic, all around her so that she could not move. When she woke up, he took the mulgar away so that she could walk about, but he would not let her go back to Meeka Darrbi.

Now Ngangaru wanted her daughter back again. "Mardyet burrong korda," she said to Meeka. "Husband, bring back my second-eldest daughter." But Meeka was a great coward and did not dare fight Mulgarguttuk the powerful sorcerer.

Then Ngangaru came to visit Mardyet in the maia of Mulgarguttuk her husband, and when she saw how fat and clean Mardyet was, she realized that the Mulgarguttuk was looking after her daughter well, and giving her plenty of food. Then Ngangaru said to Mulgarguttuk, "You are now the husband of my daughter Mardyet, and she is your wife, and you are in your own country. I am glad you are together."

And in time Mardyet was happy to live with the Mulgarguttuk and no longer tried to run away from him.

## APPENDIX 3.5 - The works Katie Langloh Parker

### Appendix 3.5A - DINEWAN THE EMU, AND GOOMBLEGUBBON THE BUSTARD

From: Langloh Parker, Mrs. K. (1896) *Australian legendary tales: folklore of the Noongahburrahs as told to the piccaninnies*. London, David Nutt; and in Melbourne, Melville, Mullen & Slade.:17-20.

Dinewan the emu, being the largest bird, was acknowledged as king by the other birds. The Goomblegubbons, the bustards, were jealous of the Dinewans. Particularly was Goomblegubbon, the mother, jealous of the Dinewan mother. She would watch with envy the high flight of the Dinewans, and their swift running. And she always fancied that the Dinewan mother flaunted her superiority in her face, for whenever Dinewan alighted near Goomblegubbon, after a long, high flight, she would flap her big wings and begin booing in her pride, not the loud booing of the male bird, but a little, triumphant, satisfied booing noise of her own, which never failed to irritate Goomblegubbon when she heard.

Goomblegubbon used to wonder how she could put an end to Dinewan's supremacy. She decided that she would only be able to do so by injuring her wings and checking her power of flight. But the question that troubled her was how to effect this end. She knew she would gain nothing by having a quarrel with Dinewan and fighting her, for no Goomblegubbons would stand any chance against a Dinewan. There was evidently nothing to be gained by an open fight. She would have to effect her end by cunning.

One day, when Goomblegubbon saw in the distance Dinewan coming towards her, she squatted down and doubled in her wings in such a way as to look as if she had none. After Dinewan had been talking to her for some time, Goomblegubbons said: 'Why do you not imitate me and do without wings? Every bird flies. The Dinewans, to be the king of birds, should do without wings. When all the birds see that I can do without wings, they will think I am the cleverest bird and they will make a Goomblegubbon king.'

'But you have wings,' said Dinewan.

'No, I have no wings.' And indeed she looked as if her words were true, so well were her wings hidden, as she squatted in the grass. Dinewan went away after a while, and thought much of what she had heard. She talked it over with her mate, who was as disturbed as she was. They made up their minds that it would never do to let the Goomblegubbons reign in their stead, even if they had to lose their wings to save their kingship.

At length they decided on the sacrifice of their wings. Dinewan mother showed the example by persuading her mate to cut off hers with a combo or stone tomahawk, and then she did the same to his. As soon as the operations were over, the Dinewan mother lost no time in letting Goomblegubbon know what they had done. She ran swiftly down to the plain on which she had left Goomblegubbons, and, finding her still squatting there, she said: 'See, I have followed your example. I have now no wings. They are cut off.'

'Ha! ha! ha!' laughed Goomblegubbon, jumping up and dancing round with joy at the success of her plot. As she danced round, she spread out her wings, flapped them, and said: 'I have taken you in, old stumpy wings. I have my wings yet. You are fine birds, you Dinewans, to be chosen kings, when you are so easily taken in. Ha! ha! ha!' And, laughing derisively, Goomblegubbon flapped her wings right in front of Dinewan, who rushed towards her to chastise her treachery. But Goomblegubbon flew away, and, alas, the now wingless Dinewan could not follow her.

Brooding over her wrongs, Dinewan walked away, vowing she would be revenged. But how? That was the question which she and her mate failed to answer for some time. At length Dinewan mother thought of a plan and prepared at once to execute it. She hid all her young Dinewans but two, under a big salt bush. Then she walked off to Goomblegubbons' plain with the two young ones following her. As she walked off the Morilla ridge, where her home was, on the plain, she saw Goomblegubbon out feeding with her twelve young ones.

After exchanging a few remarks in a friendly manner with Goomblegubbon, she said to her, 'Why do you not imitate me and only have two children? Twelve are too many to feed. If you keep so many they will never grow big birds like the Dinewans. The food that would make big birds of two would only starve twelve.' Goomblegubbon said nothing, but she thought it might be so. It was impossible to deny that the young Dinewans were much bigger than the young Goomblegubbons, and, discontentedly, Goomblegubbon walked away, wondering whether the smallness of her young ones was owing to the number of them being so much greater than that of the Dinewans. It would be grand, she thought, to grow as big as the Dinewans. But she remembered the trick she had played on Dinewan, and she thought that perhaps she was being fooled in her turn. She looked back to where the Dinewans fed, and she saw how much bigger the two young ones were than any of hers, once more mad envy of Dinewan possessed her. She determined she would not be outdone. Rather would she kill all her young ones but two. She said, 'The Dinewans shall not be the king birds of the plains. The Goomblegubbons shall replace them. They shall grow as big as the Dinewans, and shall keep their wings and fly, which now the Dinewans cannot do.' And straightaway Goomblegubbon killed all her young ones but two. Then back she came to where the Dinewans were still feeding. When Dinewan saw her coming and noticed she had only two young ones with her, she called out: 'Where are all your young ones?'

Goomblegubbon answered, 'I have killed them, and only have two left. Those will have plenty to eat now, and will soon grow as big as your young ones.'

'You cruel mother to kill your children. You greedy mother. Why, I have twelve children and I find food for them all, I would not kill one for anything, not even if by doing so I could get back my wings. There is plenty for all. Look at the emu bush how it covers itself with berries to feed my big family. See how the grasshoppers come hopping round, so that we can catch them and fatten on them.'

'But you have only two children.'

'I have twelve. I will go and bring them and show you.' Dinewan ran off to her salt bush where she had hidden her ten young ones. Soon she was to be coming back. Running with her neck stretched forward, her head thrown back with pride, and her feathers of her boobootella swinging as she ran, booming out the while her queer throat noise, the Dinewan song of joy, the pretty, soft-looking little ones with their zebra striped skins, running beside her whistling their baby Dinewan note. When Dinewan reached the place where Goomblegubbon was, she stopped her booing and said in a solemn tone, 'Now you see my words are true, I have twelve young ones as I said. You can gaze at my loved ones and think of your poor murdered children. And while you do so I will tell you the fate of your descendants for ever. By trickery and deceit you lost the Dinewans their wings, and now for evermore, as long as a Dinewan has no wings, so long shall a Goomblegubbon lay only two eggs and have only two young ones. We are quits now. You have your wings and I my children.'

And ever since that time a Dinewan, or emu, has had no wings, and a Goomblegubbon, or bustard of the plains, has laid only two eggs in a season.

**Appendix 3.5B - Narratives that appear in Langloh Parker's early works**

From: Langloh Parker, K. (1896) *Australian legendary tales: folklore of the Noongahburrahs as told to the piccaninnies*. London, David Nutt; and in Melbourne, Melville, Mullen & Slade.

- 1 Dinewan the Emu, and Goomblegubbon the Bustard
- 2 The Galah, and Oolah the Lizard
- 3 Bahloo the Moon, and the Daens
- 4 The Origin of the Narran Lake
- 5 Goloo the Magpie, and the Wahroogah
- 6 The Weeoombeens and the Piggiebillah
- 7 Bootoolgah the Crane and Goonur the Kangaroo Rat
- 8 Weedah the Mocking Bird
- 9 The Gwineboos the Redbreasts
- 10 Meamei the Seven Sisters
- 11 The Cookooburrahs and the Goolahgool
- 12 The Mayamah
- 13 The Bunbundooolooeys
- 14 Oongnairwah and Guinarey
- 15 Narahdarn the Bat
- 16 Mullyangah the Morning Star
- 17 Goomblegubbon, Beeargah, and Ouyan
- 18 Mooregoo the Mopoke, and Bahloo the Moon
- 19 Ouyan the Curlew
- 20 Dinewan the Emu, and Wahn the Crows
- 21 Goolahwilleel the Topknot Pigeons
- 22 Goonur, the Woman-Doctor
- 23 Deereeree the Wagtail, and the Rainbow
- 24 Mooregoo the Mopoke, and Mooninguggahgul the Mosquito Bird
- 25 Bougoodoogahdah the Rain Bird
- 26 The Borah of Byamee
- 27 Bunnyyarl the Flies and Wurrunnunnah the Bees
- 28 Deegeenboyah the Soldier-bird
- 29 Mayrah, the Wind that Blows the Winter Away
- 30 Wayambah the Turtle
- 31 Wirreenun the Rainmaker

From: Langloh Parker, K. (1898) *More Australian legendary tales*. London, David Nutt; and in Melbourne, Melville, Mullen & Slade.

- 32 The Crane and the Crow
- 33 Beereun the Mirage Maker
- 34 Bohrah the Kangaroo and Dinewan the Emu
- 35 Gheeger Gheeger the Cold West Wind
- 36 Bilber and Mayrah
- 37 Brälgah the Dancing Bird
- 38 How the Sun was Made
- 39 Sturt's Desert Pea, the Blood Flower
- 40 Piggiebillah the Pocupine
- 41 Gayardaree the Platypus
- 42 How Mungghee, or Mussels, were Brought to the Creek
- 43 Wurrunnah's Trip to Sea
- 44 Walloobahl the Bark Lizard
- 45 Golayyahlee the Pelican
- 46 Mungoongarlee the Iguana and Ouyouboolooy
- 47 Wayanbeh the Turtle and Woggoon the Turkey
- 48 Where the Frost Comes From
- 49 Bubbur the Giant Brown and Yellow Snake
- 50 The Youayah Mayamah, or Stone Frogs
- 51 A Legend of the Flowers
- 52 The Frog Heralds of the Flood
- 53 Eerin, the Small Grey Owl
- 54 The Legend of Nar-oong-owie, the Sacred Island

## APPENDIX 3.6 - Works of R.H. Mathews

### Appendix 3.6A - ARRIVAL OF THE THURRAWAL TRIBE IN AUSTRALIA

From: Mathews, R.H. (1899) *Folklore of the Australian Aborigines*. Sydney, Hennesey, Harper, Co.:7-10.

In the remote past all the animals that are now in Australia lived in another land beyond the sea. They were at that time human creatures, and resolved to leave that country in a canoe, and come to the hunting-grounds in which they are at present. The whale was much larger than any of the rest, and had a canoe of great dimensions; but he would not lend it to any of his fellows, who had small canoes, which were unfit for use from the land. The other people, therefore, watched in the hope that an opportunity might present itself of the whale leaving the boat, so that they could get it, and start away on their journey; but he always kept a strict guard over it.

The most intimate friend of the whale was the starfish, and he conspired with the other people to take the attention of the whale away from the canoe, and so give them a chance to steal it, and start away across the ocean. So, one day, the starfish said to the whale: "You have a great many lice in your head; let me catch them and kill them for you." The whale, who had been very much pestered with the parasites, readily agreed to his friend's kind offer, and tied up his canoe alongside a rock, on which they then went and sat down. The starfish immediately gave the signal to some of his co-conspirators, who soon assembled in readiness to go quietly into the canoe as soon as the whale's attention was taken off it.

The starfish then commenced his work of removing the vermin from the whale's head, which he held in his lap, while the other people all got quickly into the canoe and rowed off. Every now and again the whale would say, "Is my canoe all right?" The starfish, who had provided himself with a piece of bark to have ready by his side, answered: "Yes, this is it which I am tapping with my hand," at the same time hitting the bark, which gave the same sound as the bark of the canoe. He then resumed his occupation, scratching vigorously about the whale's ears, so that he could not hear the splashing of the oars in the water. The cleaning of the whale's head and the assurances of the safety of the canoe went on with much garrulity on the part of the starfish, until the people had rowed off a considerable distance from the shore, and were nearly out of sight. Then the patience of the whale becoming exhausted, he insisted on having a look at his canoe to make quite sure that everything was right. When he discovered that it was gone, and saw all the people rowing away in it as fast as they could go, he became very angry, and vented his fury on the starfish, who he beat unmercifully, and tore him almost to pieces. Jumping into the water, the whale then swam away after his canoe, and the starfish, mutilated as he was, rolled off the rock, on which they had been sitting, into the water, and lay on the sand at the bottom till he recovered. It was this terrible attack of the whale which gave the starfish his present ragged and torn appearance; and his forced seclusion on the sand under the water gave him the habit of keeping near the bottom always afterwards.

The whale pursued the fugitives, and in his fury spurted the water into the air through a wound in the head received during his fight with the starfish, a practice which he has retained ever since. When the people in the canoe saw him coming after them, the weaker ones were very much afraid, and said: "He is gaining upon us, and will surely overtake us, and drown us every one." But the native bear, who was in charge of the oars, said, "Look at my strong arm (a). I am able to pull the canoe fast enough to make good escape!" and he demonstrated his prowess by making additional efforts to move more rapidly through the water.

This voyage lasted several days and nights, until at length land was sighted on ahead, and a straight line was made for it. On getting alongside the shore, all the people landed from the canoe sat down to rest themselves. But the native companion, who has always been a great fellow for dancing and jumping about, danced upon the bottom of the canoe until he made a hole in it with his feet, after which he himself got out of it, and shoved it a little way from the shore, where it settled down in the water, and became the small island now known as Gan-man-gang, near the entrance of lake Illawarra into the ocean.

When the whale arrived shortly afterwards, and saw the canoe sunk close to the shore, he turned back along the coast, where he and his descendants have remained ever since.

(a) The native bear has very large & strong forelegs, in proportion to the rest of his body.

### Appendix 3.6B - DESTRUCTION OF MULLION THE EAGLEHAWK

From: Mathews, R.H. (1899) *Folklore of the Australian Aborigines*. Sydney, Hennessey, Harper, Co.

Long ago an eaglehawk, Mullion, had his nest in a very large, high tree, which grew on the Barwon River, near Girra (b). The eaglehawk used to go out and catch blackfellow, and carry him away to his nest to feed the young eaglets and their mother. This was continued for a long time, and the blacks were unable to help themselves, because the tree was of enormous girth at the base, and reached almost to the sky. It was composed of several different trees all amalgamated into one. There was first a gum tree, a box tree next, then a coolabah, then a belar, and lastly a pine tree, making a united height of five trees, one in continuation of the other - all of them being of unusual and marvellous size. In the top of the pine tree was the large nest, or eyry, of the eaglehawk. If a blackfellow went hunting alone, Mullion would swoop down upon him, and carry him away in his talons to the nest. The bones were thrown out, and were scattered about for some distance around the base of the tree. Two of the head men, Murriwunda and Koomba (c), who were very clever doctors, went to the foot of the tree and held a consultation as to the best thing to be done to prevent the further ravages of Mullion. They determined to try and climb up the tree, carrying a piece of burning stick with them, and set the nest on fire. Koomba was the first to make the attempt. He climbed up a long way, until he was unable to go any further, so he came down again, and fell prostrate to the ground from exhaustion. After he revived, he said to Murriwunda, "I went up a great distance, but could not even see the top from where I was. You are lighter than I am, and may be able to reach the nest." Murriwunda then took the burning bark, and fastened it on top of his head, and started away up the tree, going around and around the trunk in a spiral fashion as he ascended. He got to the top of the gum tree, and went onto the box tree, next the coolabah, then the belar, until he reached the pine tree. This climbing occupied most of the afternoon, and Koomba saw small pieces of bark from the several kinds of trees falling to the ground, by which he knew that his friend was going right up to the nest.

When Murriwunda reached the top of the pine tree, he took the fireband, which he carried in his forehead-band, and secretly inserted it in the underside of the eaglehawk's nest, which was of great dimensions. He told the fire not to burn the nest until he got down again to the ground. The work of descending the tree was tiresome, but was accomplished in much less time than the ascent. On reaching the base Murriwunda was so completely exhausted that he lay down upon the ground to rest. Having in a short time recovered his strength, he and Koomba started away towards their own camp, but he did not tell his comrade the result of his climbing. When they got away some distance they caught an iguana, which they cooked and ate, and sat for a while to rest themselves beside a small waterhole. Murriwunda then said, "I could not reach Mullion's nest; I don't know what we can do to get rid of his incursions." Then he gave the usual laugh that blackfellows indulge in when they say the opposite to anything that is the opposite of the truth. Shortly he added, "You watch towards the sky in the direction of the tree." Koomba turned his eyes in the direction indicated, and as the shades of the evening were by this time beginning to fall, he could see a bright blaze in the distance like a large star, which kept increasing in size with great rapidity. Both of them were very glad, and commenced to sing some of their tribal incantations and beat their boomerangs together.

As before stated, Murriwunda had told the fire not to burn until he had time to get out of danger. It then commenced to smoulder, and the young eaglets who were in the nest feeling the unusual heat under them, began to move restlessly under their mother's wings. They said they would feel cooler if they came out and sat on the edge of the nest. When they got out they commenced playing, and shoved against one of their father's spears, which was sticking into the side of the nest. He was sitting on a branch close by, and seeing his spear bent over, went and caught hold of it, and feeling angry at his children for disturbing it, he said, "I'll stick the spear so firmly into the nest that you can't move it," and so saying, he caught hold of the spear, and gave it a strong shove downwards. The moment he did this the fire which was smouldering underneath burst through the opening made by the spear in a torrent of flame, and burnt them all to death. The fire continued to burn downwards,



consuming the branches and the barrel of the tree all the way to the ground, and continued along the roots in all directions. Some of the large roots, which were only a few feet below the grass, were completely consumed, leaving a cavity all along their course, into which the top soil fell, forming sinuous depressions in the surface of the ground like small watercourses. Some of these hollows can be traced as far as Kuddi, several miles from Girra, where the great tree stood (d).

(b) The Rev. W. Ridley briefly mentions this legend in his "Kamilaroi and other Australian Languages" 1875:136.

(c) The Wiradjuri men at Trangie on the Macquarie River told me that in their version of this story the names of the two clever men were Tinban and Alloo.

(d) The Natives point out what they believe to be the site of the mystic tree. There is a natural depression in the ground, with a few small watercourses running into it from the different directions, in which water flows in time of flood. The central hole is supposed to be where the tree stood, and the channels represent the roots which were burnt.

### **Appendix 3.6C - THE WAREENGGARY AND KARAMBAL**

From: Mathews, R.H. (1899) *Folklore of the Australian Aborigines*. Sydney, Hennessey, Harper, Co.:26-29.

On the Clarence River there once lived seven young women who were sisters, named Wareenggary; they were members of the Bunjellung tribe, and belonged to the Wirrakan division. They were very clever and had yamsticks, in the ends of which were inserted charms, which protected the girls from their enemies. Every day they went out hunting for carpet snakes, and always carried their yamsticks with them on these occasions. A young fellow named Karambal, of the same tribe, and of the division Womboong became enamoured of one of these young women, and followed within sight of them every day, but they did not favour his suit. He watched for an opportunity, and at length came suddenly upon one of the sisters who had strayed a little way from the rest, and had not her yamstick with her, and carried her off, taking her to his own camp. Her companions became very angry, and held a consultation as to what was best to be done to release their sister from Karambal, who was of the wrong division for her to marry, being, in fact, her tribal brother.

The eldest sister proposed sending a fierce storm of wind to blow up the trees by the roots, and tumble them upon Karambal and kill him. The other girls were afraid that their sister might also lose her life by the falling trees, and one of them made another proposal, that they should all go away to the west, where they knew the Winter lived, and bring the frost and chilly winds, and in this manner punish Karambal for what he had done. Accordingly, they went away and brought the Winter, and on the place where Karambal was camped with their sister they made the cold so exceptionally severe that he was almost perished with the frost. The girl whom he had captured did not feel this terrible cold, because her sisters had managed to send her by a secret messenger the charmed yamstick she formerly carried when out hunting with them. In a short time Karambal was glad enough to let Wareenggary return to her own people, who were very much rejoiced to get her back again amongst them. They then consulted among themselves, and determined to go away towards the east in quest of the Summer, so as to melt the frost and ice. They did not wish to impose any further hardship upon their tribe than was necessary, their only object being to rescue their sister from her captor.

After this trouble the Wareenggary resolved to leave the earth altogether, but before doing so they went into the mountains, and made springs at the heads of all the rivers, so that their people might always have plenty of water throughout their hunting grounds. The seven sisters then went up into the sky where the constellation known as the Pleiades still represents their camp. They come into view every Summer, bringing pleasant warm weather for the benefit of their tribe, after which they go away gradually towards the west, where they disappear. They then send the Winter to warn the kinsmen not to carry off women of the wrong totemic division, but to select their wives in accordance with the tribal laws.

Soon after the departure of the Wareenggary from the earth the young man, Karambal, looked about for another sweetheart, and this time he was determined to comply with the

marriage rules of his people. After a while he was smitten by the charms of a young woman who belonged to the Kooran division, being that from which he could lawfully select a wife. She was, unfortunately, already united to another man, named Bullabogabun, a great warrior. Karambal succeeded in inducing her to leave her husband, and go away with him. When Bullabogabun discovered that his wife had eloped, he followed her tracks to the camp of Karambal. The latter, in order to escape the wrath of Bullabogabun, climbed up into a very large and tall pine tree growing near his camp but his pursuer observed him hidden among the topmost branches. Bullabogabun then gathered all the wood he could find for some distance around, and piled it into an immense heap against the butt of the tree, and set fire to it. The fire raged with great fury, burning the pine tree into cinders. The flame reached high into the air, carrying Karambal with it, and deposited him in a part of the sky near the Warenggary, where he became the star Aldebara (Alpha Tauri), in order that he might follow the sisters continually, the same as he had done in his youth.

### APPENDIX 3.7 - A narrative rewritten by Roland Robinson

From: Robinson, Roland (1966) *Aboriginal myths and legends*. Melbourne, Sun Books.:91-93.

YOOLA AND THE SEVEN SISTERS.  
related by Minyanderri, Pitjantjara tribe.

*This Central Australian narrative, with its obvious similarity to the Greek myth of Orion's amorous pursuit of the seven virgins, is a considerably condensed version of a long creation journey. On this journey, both Yoola and the sisters establish ritual rites. Yoola, as he pursues the sisters, creates both with his spear and with ritual singing, features of the landscape.*

*The 'spear' which Yoola carries is obviously, of ritual, phallic significance. The metamorphoses of Yoola's 'spear' at various places on the journey would be sites of fertility. As in the Greek myth, the sisters, in order to escape Yoola, fly through the air. This means that they assume their totemic forms of birds.*

*Similarly, the sisters, after drowning in the water-hole surrounded by the high cliffs which Yoola has caused to rise through ritual, magico-religious, songs, become the star group of the Pleiades. Yoola, still pursuing them, becomes the star Orion.*

The old-man Yoola was always wanting women. He was always chasing them through the bush. One day he saw seven women who were seven sisters. Yoola chased after them but he could not catch them. When he got close to them the seven sisters became frightened. They flew up into the sky. The sisters travelled through the sky and came down at the rock-hole Karraloo, close to the Petermann Range.

Yoola started walking after the sisters. They were sitting down at the rock-hole when they turned round and saw him coming. The sisters got up and ran away to the water-hole Puntanbanya. The old-man Yoola went all round this place to surround the sisters. Steep cliffs rose up all round the sisters so that they could not run away. They looked back and saw the old-man Yoola coming through a pass in the cliffs. "Ai! Ai!" they shrieked, "our only road is blocked." Together the sisters rushed at Yoola. They ran and swerved past him on every side. Yoola did not know which sister to try and catch. He did not catch one of them.

When the sisters escaped Yoola sat down and made the corroboree Puntanbanya. The sisters ran away into the desert. At Untjeeworrango, where there is no water, the sisters sat down and made the men's corroboree of knocking out a front tooth. Yoola got up from his place and followed after the sisters. The women looked back from where they were making the corroboree. They saw Yoola coming after them. They got up and ran on into the desert.

In the desert Yoola became tired. He walked along dragging his spear behind him. Where he dragged his spear he made a valley and a sandhill. Yoola camped in the desert Pilanka. Where he camped, a big gum-tree, a dreaming, stands up. Yoola travelled on to the desert. He was still tired and he dragged his spear behind him. Again he made a valley and a sandhill as he walked on. Sometimes Yoola felt good and he carried his spear. All the way he travelled like that.

The sisters looked back and saw Yoola coming. They ran on but Yoola went round them out of sight. The sisters found that they were running up a creek with a range on either side of them. Yoola sat on top of a red uprearing rock-face and sang his corroboree. The sisters rested at Wattapulka soak. They looked back and saw Yoola coming close behind them. Yoola chased them but the sisters split up and ran away in different directions. When they had left Yoola behind, the sisters came together again.

Yoola still followed after the sisters. As he travelled he left behind himself the mountain range, the dreaming Wankareenga. He camped and laid down his spear. He left behind him in that place the long stone, like a spear, Titjeengunga. Yoola travelled on. He camped and stood his spear up in the ground and left a big gum-tree dreaming standing up into the sky. Still Yoola travelled on from rock-hole to rock-hole, sometimes dragging his spear, sometimes carrying it and thinking all the time about those women he was chasing.

At Karrawalkarnatja he sat down. He looked out and saw smoke from the fire of the seven sisters. Yoola travelled up quickly towards the smoke. He sneaked up and saw the sisters sitting down by the big water-hole, Wankarrennga, in a creek. Yoola did not show himself. He went back and sneaked around the sisters. He pulled off and threw down his loin-string

in the place Tjani. He was still watching the sisters. As he went round them from place to place he sang many coroborees which belong to one big one.

Yoola had sung up high cliffs all round the sisters. From the water-hole the sisters looked up and knew they were trapped. They saw Yoola coming. They looked and the high cliffs were all round them. There was no way out. As Yoola ran up, the seven sisters jumped into the water-hole. Yoola came running up and jumped in after them. They all went down into the water and Yoola drowned the sisters, swimming down after them in the water-hole.

The spirits of the sisters, Koongarrennga, went up into the sky. They are the stars, the seven sisters. The old-man Yoola went up into the sky still chasing them. He is the big star, close up to the cluster of the seven little stars who are frightened and running away from him.

## APPENDIX 3.8 - Narrative from Science Research Associates (S.R.A.)

From: Adams, L & G (1979) *The tale of the platypus*. Sydney, S.R.A. (adapted from Langloh Parker's collection).

### THE TALE OF THE PLATYPUS

Far beyond the great mountains which divide the seas from the plains, there flows a beautiful river.

Down in the plains it runs slow and wide. Up in the foothills, near the start of the river, it runs cool and clear and swift.

It was here in the hills, where the river banks are lined with lush ferns and rich green grass, that a tribe of platypus lived.

All day long the young ones splashed and played happily in the river. But whenever they swam too far from the safety of their home - the hole in the river bank - their mothers would warn them: "Don't swim too far down the river, or Mooroo will get you!"

The young ones were not exactly sure who Mooroo was, but the very mention of his name was enough to make them shiver with fright.

Now it happened that one day the skies grew black, and a big storm struck the hills. Very soon the river was turned into a raging torrent - racing along so fast that it swept away everything in its path.

Little Mokka, the youngest platypus, had been playing in the river when the storm struck. And now the bubbling, swirling waters caught him by surprise and quickly carried him down the river - far away from his warm and safe hole-in-the-bank.

On and on the racing river carried poor little Mokka, throwing him against passing logs and ducking him under as he tried to breathe. Then, as the raging waters swirled him around a big bend in the river, he was suddenly caught by the tangled branches of a large, overhanging tree. And there he stayed until the storm blew away and the river grew calm.

"I must swim back to my tribe," he told himself. "Or Mooroo will catch me."

Mokka was untangling himself from the branches when he saw someone swimming towards him.

"It's Mooroo," thought Mokka, "Mooroo!" The stranger swam closer.

"Keep away from me Mooroo," said Mokka rather nervously.

"Mooroo?" said the stranger. "I'm not Mooroo. I'm one of the duck tribe. But I know who you are. You're one of the platypus tribe."

"You're not Mooroo?" said little Mokka with relief. "Does Mooroo live near here?"

"Mooroo lives a little further down the river," said the old duck. "And you should not be here for fear he kills you!"

"Why would he want to kill me?" asked Mokka.

"Because he hasn't forgiven your ancestor for tricking him," said the wise old duck. "Come closer, and I will tell you how it happened."

Mokka swam over to the duck, who looked very old and very wise.

"For many years now," began the wise old duck. "For far more years than I can remember, our tribe has lived here at the bend in the river. Our days were always peaceful - as long as we never ventured down the river where a water devil might catch us.

And we never ventured up the river, for there the water runs too fast. Even a duck may easily tire from swimming against the current and drown.

We were happy enough living at the bend-in-the-river. But one day a duck called Dana foolishly swam down the river in search of food. Soon she found a green, grassy bank.

'Oh!' she thought. 'There must be some wonderful, big, juicy grubs to eat here.'

So she forgot all the warnings about straying too far from bend-in-the-river. And she waddled off along the edge of the bank - happily eating the biggest and juiciest grubs she had ever seen.

Dana was so busy finding grubs, that she almost fell into a big black hole. She was about to move on when she saw two tiny orange lights shining deep down in the darkness.

'What can those lights be?' she thought.

As she watched, the lights began to grow larger and wider apart. She peered deeper into the hole. Suddenly she found herself staring right into the face of a big, ugly water-rat.

The water-rat quickly sprang from the hole and grabbed Dana. Before she could even call out, he tied her feet together.

Dana screamed and yelled. But it was no use, for she was too far away from bend-in-the-river to be heard.

Down, down, down into the hole he dragged her until at last they came to a great big room. This was the water-rat's home. It was dark and damp. The only furniture was a straw bed in one corner.

'Now my beautiful little duck, I have you!' said the water-rat.

'Oh, please let me go,' Dana cried. 'Please let me go back to my tribe.'

'Never!' said the water-rat. 'Now that I have you, I am going to make you my wife.'

On hearing this, Dana began to cry. So time went by, and day after day Dana was kept a prisoner of the water-rat, whose name was Mooroo.

At first Dana did nothing but cry. But as time passed, she realized that crying would never help her escape. 'I must work out a plan if I am to escape,' she told herself.

So Dana sat down in the corner and began to think hard.

When Mooroo woke up the next morning, he was very surprised to find Dana happily preparing his breakfast. He was even more surprised when she said: 'Good morning, husband, I hope you slept well.'

'Slept well?' said Mooroo with surprise. 'Wife, until today you have done nothing but cry. But this morning you seem happy. Why is this?'

Dana answered: 'Mooroo, you have taken me from my tribe. At first that made me very sad. But now that I know you are a great hunter and a kind husband, I am happy to stay with you.'

Mooroo, of course, was pleased to hear this.

At first Mooroo was a little suspicious. But as time went on, he began to allow Dana more and more freedom. However, she was still not allowed to leave the hole. For whenever Mooroo went off to hunt, he always blocked the entrance with a huge stone - far too heavy for Dana to move.

'I will lull Mooroo to sleep,' Dana thought, 'then he will forget to place the stone against the entrance.'

So when Mooroo returned tired and hungry from his next hunting trip, Dana placed before him a plate piled high with juicy grubs and yams and sweet berries.

It was all Mooroo could do to force them down. Soon he had eaten so much that his stomach bulged.

The heavy meal made Mooroo very tired. Within minutes his head was nodding. He fell asleep so quickly, he forgot to place the stone over the entrance.

This was just what Dana had hoped would happen.

Very quietly she tip-toed past the sleeping Mooroo.

When she reached the entrance, she began to run as fast as her little legs could carry her - not even daring to look back in case she saw Mooroo close behind her.

But the greedy Mooroo had eaten far too much to be able to catch her.

You can imagine how happy the duck tribe was to see Dana back at bend-in-the-river. 'We thought you must have been killed!' they cried out.

All the ducks gathered around Dana as she told them of her adventures and how she had escaped from Mooroo. That night there was a special party held in Dana's honour - a corroboree.

Dana had been away for a whole year. It was spring again. And all the mother ducks were preparing nests to lay their eggs.

Dana also built herself a comfortable nest and proudly laid two beautiful big eggs.

How excited everyone was as all the eggs began to hatch. All, that is, except Dana's. 'Hurry up and hatch your eggs, Dana,' the other ducks cried. 'We cannot see your ducklings.'

Then it happened. Dana jumped off the eggs, expecting to see two fluffy yellow ducklings.

Instead, they saw two of the funniest looking animals you could ever imagine. Instead of fluffy, yellow feathers, they had a light sprinkling of fur covering their pink little bodies. Instead of two legs, they had four.

They had Dana's bill, and their feet were webbed just like hers. But their fur and four legs were just like those of their father - Mooroo.

Now when the other ducks saw these strange looking creatures, they were horrified.

'Take them away!' they screamed. 'They will frighten our babies!'

Then a wise old drake came up to Dana and said: 'You must take your children away from bend-in-the-river, for they are not of the duck tribe.'

'But where will I go?' cried Dana.

'You must go up the river,' said the drake. 'If you go down the river Mooroo will kill your children, for they are not of the water-rat tribe either.'

So Dana called her children and took them far up the river. She was sad. But her children followed her happily.

Finally they reached the foothills where the river ran cool and clear and swift. And here they made their new home. They called themselves the platypus tribe.

Soon they were happy once again. And the beautiful river in the hills became their tribal ground."

"You must be of that tribe," said the wise old duck to Mokka. "Look at you. Although you have a duck's bill and webbed feet, you have four legs and fur - just like the water-rat. That is why you must not go further down the river, or Mooroo will catch you."

The mention of Mooroo's name made Mokka shiver. Suddenly he remembered his mother and his own tribe back at the hole-in-the-bank.

Quickly saying goodbye to the wise old duck, Mokka swam off towards his home as fast as he could.

He swam for hours and hours until he thought he could go no further. But none of the river banks looked familiar.

"Maybe I'm lost," he thought. Then as he rounded a bend, he suddenly saw a big old log.

"I've seen that log before," he thought. And there, just beyond it, was his very own hole-in-the-bank.

How excited all the platypus tribe were to see him.

"we thought Mooroo had caught you," said the tearful mother as she kissed him and stroked his fur.

"I did not see Mooroo," said Mokka, who was overjoyed to be back home. "But I did see the wise old duck who lives at bend-in-the-river."

Then all the happy platypus tribe gathered around Mokka to hear about his great adventure.

### APPENDIX 3.9 - Narrative from the Pan Macmillan series

From: Egan, Cecilia (1996) *The magic colours*. Sydney, Pancake Press. (a Pan Macmillan imprint - "adapted to be read and understood by children").

#### THE MAGIC COLOURS

Long ago, so the Koori storytellers say, all birds were the same colour - black. The rosellas and lorikeets, the galahs and cockatoos, the lyrebirds and wrens - all were black as burnt wood.

One evening a little black dove was flying around looking for food. He landed on a log to rest, but his foot was pricked by a sharp splinter.

The wound was so painful that he fell on his back calling for help. The other birds flocked around, anxious to assist him. Some brought beakfuls of water for him to drink.

Some washed the wound and tried to bandage it with leaves.

Only the crow did not help. In fact, he was cross because all this fluttering and chattering had disturbed his peace and quiet. He tried to frighten the other birds away!

The birds would not leave their friend the dove, who was becoming more ill by the minute. His foot was now swollen to three times its normal size, but the birds didn't know what they could do to fix it.

Suddenly a galah had an idea. There might be yucky stuff in the foot and if it came out the dove might get better. She flew down and pecked at the dove's swollen foot. The dove cried out in pain but then a strange thing happened!

A great fountain of beautiful colours came flowing out of the wound and splashed onto the birds. She squawked with joy!

Red, green, purple, yellow, white and blue came spurting out and covered the other birds, who began to dance with delight. The lorikeets looked like rainbows! Only the crow missed out because he had not stayed close to the dove to help him.

The dove was feeling much better now - all the pain had gone. He was even happier when he found that he was now snow-white all over!

From that day, the birds have kept their lovely colours.



## APPENDIX 3.10 - Narratives rewritten by A.E. Wells

From: Wells, Ann E. (1973) *Stars in the sky*. (Legend of Arnhem Land 3) Adelaide, Rigby.:52-60.

### THE MORNING STAR

Bainambirr was one of the loveliest of the spirit-women who lived far beyond the eastern rim of the earth world. She seemed to glow with an inner light, as the lustre of a pearl seems to reveal a beauty within itself. Everyone loved her, for she was as kind and gentle as she was lovely to see.

It was her kindness that led her to befriend the earth people when their spirits arrived in the country of Baralku.

The spirits from earth seemed so lost and bewildered and often very afraid when they found themselves in the strange country that Bainambirr tried to find a way to help them.

"What makes you so unhappy?" she asked the newcomers.

Most of them shook their heads at her question, being reluctant to give an answer that might offend the spirit-people. However, at last she found one who had been a leader on earth and who was not so fearful.

"We are worried for those we have left behind us," was his answer. Then he added, "From earth this place seems such a long way away, and the earth people do not know where the canoe, the Larrpan, will take their spirits when their earth bodies do not breathe any more. The ones who are left behind mourn for a very long time, because they do not know whether we will ever meet each other again. This we know, because we too have sorrowed for those who were our friends and have come here before us. There is nothing to show which way the Larrpan goes, and our people think that perhaps their spirits could get lost in the far spaces of the sky."

Bainambirr listened carefully and when the man had finished speaking, she thought for a few minutes before answering him.

"Would it make you happy if someone gave the earth people a sign from this country?" she asked at last.

The man nodded and looked more cheerful at this idea.

"Yes," he said. Then he became sad again. "But that is not all, wise woman," he went on. "One other thing that makes my people unhappy in this place is that we have nothing to hunt, as we have been accustomed to doing. There are no fish to catch, no turtle, or dugong to harpoon, no emu, or kangaroo to spear, and no yams for the women to dig."

Bainambirr shook her head. "But you are fed and none go hungry," she said.

"Yes," he agreed. "We are fed on the spirit-food here, but it is not food we need; it is the joy of hunting which we miss."

"Aa-ah," said Bainambirr and walked away thinking deeply.

At last she had an idea and so called together her friends and told them of her decision.

"I have decided to give a sign to the earth people," she said. "Every morning, in the right season, at the end of the night, I will rise in the sky just before Walu, the sun, makes the sky glow with her light. When they waken at the call of the dawn birds, the people will see my light in the sky, and will see the pathway of light across the sea towards this place. Then perhaps they will not worry and be sad any more. That is what I think."

Her friends argued among themselves for and against Bainambirr's doing such a thing, but she refused to change her mind. At length some of her friends decided among themselves what they could do to prevent her from coming to any harm or from straying too far away from home in the lonely reaches of the night.

"We will weave a large net for you to sit in," they said. "Then we can hold you by a string to this place so that you cannot stray along the far pathways, or become caught in the fast flowing currents of Milnguya, the sky river, or come to harm among the lonely space between the stars. Otherwise we will not let you do this thing."

Bainambirr agreed, and so it was arranged.

Some spirit people visited earth to tell the wise men what the new star shining in the east meant for them, and the earth people called that star the Morning Star, singing many songs to show how glad they were for the message of hope she had brought to them. And they were glad when they saw her shining like a pearl in the eastern sky just before sunrise.

While Bainambirr sat in her net in the sky each morning, she enjoyed the peace and beauty of the passing night and the coming of the day. Soon she began remembering the other trouble of the earth men - how they missed their joy of hunting in the bush.

One day she saw the earth people getting ready for a special hunting trip. Before they left their camp, they held a short ceremony of dancing, so that this would be a specially good hunting day and their spears would fly straight and true. In the singing she heard her own name, for just before the sun began to paint the east with colour they sang the song.

See Bainambirr, the morning star shining,  
Looking towards the place where the people live,  
And waking the people for the good hunting,  
Calling the people while the dawn birds are singing,  
Until Walu, the sun, fills the earth with her daylight.

"I know what I can do to help the earth people," she said to herself as she saw the first rosy tip of sunlight rising above the eastern horizon. "I will make them a ceremony and a new dance, with a song for each thing that the earth men hunt. Then they can sing for the spirits of birds, and animals, and fish, and plants to come to our spirit-world. Maybe then they will feel at home in that place."

Bainambirr could hardly wait while her friends pulled her down to their company in her shining net and set her free. She told them of her idea and they called an assembly of all their song-makers and ceremonial leaders. This pleased them all, for they loved making new song cycles and special dances more than anything else. At last they had ceremony ready that was the loveliest any of them had ever seen.

"But how are we to tell the earth people when and where to gather together ready for us to show them this dance?" the other spirits wanted to know.

But one wise one who had visited the earth people several times in the past spoke. "Guwark, the blackbird who was once a great leader of the people and is now their messenger between earth and this place, will carry the message quickly across the country. His call is loud and strong and their wise men can read his word when he speaks from the tree tops of spirit matters. Let us call Guwark to help us."

So they called up Guwark, the small blackbird with bright red eyes and a very strong voice. He willingly took the message to earth where he moved from the east coast to the west, pausing to call the people to hear him in every place where the wise ones were camping. He cried loudly from the tops of the tall eucalypts and his voice carried far and fast, telling them all to gather at a certain place when the moon was nearly full, in order to learn a new and special ceremony.

Group by group the people gathered at the ceremonial ground until a great company were camping around the open dancing area. Each one had its own camp-fires for cooking. The glowing coals and leaping flames of the fires helped to create a friendly feeling among all the people.

After everyone had assembled, the spirit leaders chose one dancer from each of the language groups, so that everyone was represented in the final dance. Each evening for several days, while the moon was shining silvery clear over the land, the dancers and song-leaders learnt the songs for each animal and bird, reptile and fish, vine and tree of that country. The bees and the shellfish, and the eggs of the emu and turtle were not forgotten, for honey and crabs and many sea creatures were all part of the food pattern of that country, and eggs and seeds were also a part of that pattern.

In the meantime the artists, and the old men who were skilled in making ceremonial things were busy making a beautiful decorated pole for the final ceremony. It was almost twice the height of a man.

Under the guidance of the spirit-people these artists made lengths of fine string from a fibrous bark, and in the twining of the string their clever fingers wove soft possum fur and tiny white feathers from the breast of the white ibis, so that the whole string was silvery to look at and soft to touch. They were shown how to bind plumes of white feathers in circular bands on to the pole, using this string. At the very top of the pole they bound a crown of feathers that looked like a big white lily, or a star radiating light. This represented Bainambirr, the Morning Star, for they named the ceremony in her honour.

From the feathery crown, long strings floated down towards the dancers, one string for each kinship group, and these they held during part of the dance.

The people of that place watched the final dance with wondering eyes. Even the smallest child lay quietly in his mother's arms or curled in the sand beside her, as the sun moved from morning to evening in the clear sky of that day. Never had that great gathering of people seen such dancing. The men took into their retentive memories every movement of each part of the dancing, so that in the future they could repeat it and make no mistakes.

The spirits mimed everything that helped to sustain the life of the earth folk, each dance moving through the golden sunlight like a brief and vivid picture of that animal and plant, plainly showing to the silent watchers under their tree shades the dance that was being given to them for their own future peace of mind.

One thing that puzzled the people was the pale green figure of Birrknu, the giant praying mantis, near the top of the pole. Birrknu stood there, swaying in time to the rhythmic music, her wings folded against her abdomen. At the end of the ceremony, just as the sun was going down, Birrknu opened her gauzy wings and flew up and up towards the gleaming sky, looking like a blur of palest green light.

"Birrknu is taking word of the dance to those who are far from earth, but who are now living in the spirit place," explained the leading dancer among the visitors, when he saw the puzzled faces looking after the vanishing mantis. "This she will do always, so that word of your dancing this ceremony will go quickly to those who are waiting it. Once she has danced this message for them they will have the spirits of living earth creatures to give them joy in hunting, and the spirits from earth will also know their friends have not forgotten them or ceased to remember them with love."

The dance of the Morning Star, Bainambirr, is still sometimes performed in honour of someone important who has died. It is a happy occasion in memory of someone they have known and still remember with love.

### APPENDIX 3.11 - Works by Ainslie Roberts and Charles Mountford

From: Roberts, Ainslie & Mountford, Charles P (1971) *The first sunrise*. Adelaide, Rigby.:34-35.

#### NURUNDERI AND THE COD

The aborigines who once lived on the shores of Lake Alexandrina, at the mouth of the River Murray, left behind a number of interesting stories about the exploits and adventures of the man Nurunderi, who created the fish in its waters and many of the natural features along its banks.

Nurunderi was a tall, powerful man, who once had a riverbank camp on the upper Murray. From this camp his wives deserted him, taking their children with them.

One day, when Nurunderi saw a huge cod swimming down stream, he followed it in his bark canoe. In those days the River Murray was only a small stream, but as the cod swam away from Nurunderi its great body burst through the land and enlarged the river to its present size.

By the time Nurunderi had followed the cod as far as lake Alexandrina, he had almost given up hope of capturing so large a fish. Then he remembered that his brother-in-law, Nepele, lived further down the lake, and might be able to spear it. So Nurunderi signalled Nepele that a large cod was swimming towards him, and Nepele managed to spear the fish as it passed near the camp.

The two men then created all the fish in lake Alexandrina and the Murray by cutting the cod into many pieces which they threw into the water. As they did so, they decreed that one piece would become the perch, another the callop, another the mullock, and so on, until all present day fish were named. A large part of the cod still remained, so Nurunderi threw that into the water, saying, "You continue to be Murray cod."

Having completed his task of peopling Lake Alexandrina and the river with fish, and being unable to find his wives and children, Nurunderi made his camp with Nepele on the shores of Lake Alexandrina.

## APPENDIX 4.1 A narrative by Uncle Willie Mackenzie

From: Cairns, Sylvia (1967) *Uncle Willie Mackenzie's legends of the Goundirs*. Brisbane, Jacaranda Press. Illustrated by Fred Cobbo.:11-14.

### THE FIRST PLATYPUS

The elders were busy sorting out the young men. They were to be trained in the way of the tribe. Everyone was picked according to his capabilities: tree climbers to supply the honey, hunters the game, swimmers the fish. Then there were to be guides, domestic police, warriors, mailmen, interpreters, Goundirs, storytellers, corroboree makers and so on. These were important positions. As there were no text books to refer to the Old Men would constantly say, 'Listen to the words.' This was good advice. After all, their lives depended on memory. It was no mean feat for a man to learn thirteen different languages as well as the laws and customs associated with them.

Jengary edged his way to the back of the group and then over to the left where he could see and hear everything without having to look up. He was of slight build, very short and painfully aware of it. His thoughts were far away when he was quickly brought back to his surroundings by hearing his name called. He was to be their main swimmer. As he walked forward he looked for a sign from the old ones but his eyes told him nothing.

'They know, I just know that they know,' he thought uneasily. 'That's why they gave me this honour. Shall I speak up now and tell them?' Then an inner voice spoke, 'How can they know? Tell no one what you have discovered.' And so he kept quiet.

But the Old Men knew everything concerning everyone in the tribe. They had observed him every day practising his swimming, diving and staying under water longer than anyone else until he himself began to take on a different look in the water. When ever they went fishing it was always Jengary that caught the most. The young ones called it luck, but the old ones knew that he had learnt the call of the fish and would call the fish to him and catch them with cruel little hooks that he carried for that purpose. The years that followed were good years for all the young men who were gathered that day, and they all developed in spirit and power.

Complete happiness came to Jengary the day he took himself a wife. She also was a small person, when she stood at her full height the top of her head just touched her husband's shoulder.

The first time the tribe went on walkabout after the wedding was a happy time for all. When they reached the Brisbane River, Jengary and his wife were enchanted. They asked for and received permission to stay there. They said goodbye to everyone and went to live at the mouth of the river.

They were very fond of fish and were always fishing. The husband would dive down deep while his wife waited anxiously on the bank for the bubbles (which were his signal to her) to appear then she would dive down and help him bring the fish to the bank. They would camp from time to time at every bend in the river and they gave every bend a name.

Gradually the fish swam farther and farther up the river with Jengary and his wife following them. One day he dived and caught a family of fish, father, mother and son. The father and mother were killed but the son escaped and set out determined to warn the other fish that Jengary was coming and not to answer when he called.

The fish that wouldn't listen were soon caught and killed. The others joined the flight upstream. Soon the salt water came to an end and the fresh water flowed but still they continued on until finally they came to the last waterhole, where the spring waters bubble through. This place was called Mimburry.

Quickly the fish called a meeting. 'We must do something. We can't travel any further so we will have to make a trap for Jengary and his wife. Quickly now, gather all the moss and reeds and make a net. When he dives we shall catch and hold him. His wife will get worried when he fails to appear and will come looking for him. Then we shall catch her too.'

When the fish caught them they didn't know what to do with them, so they sent a message to the old and wise ones saying that they would hold the prisoners pending their arrival. Not wanting to kill them, the old ones decided to punish them by turning them into something queer-looking that everyone would see and know.

And that is how it happened. They called him Marewaare. We call him the platypus and he still has the little hooks, the spurs on his back legs.

## APPENDIX 4.2 A narrative By Trezise and Roughsey

From: Trezise, Percy & Roughsey, Dick (1984) *Gidja*. Sydney, Collins Australia.

### GIDJA

Far off in Dreamtime when the world was still being made, Gidja the Moon lived by the Yangool River, in Cape York peninsula, with the rest of the Bullanji people. Gidja was unhappy as people made fun of him because he had a round fat face, fat body and thin legs and arms.

Gidja loved Yalma, the Evening Star girl, and wanted to marry her but she also laughed at him and ran away. Gidja decided to make some magic songs to sing to Yalma while she lay asleep, hoping she would dream of him and come to like him.

Away off in the bush he made a magic circle of white stones and decorated it with painted and feathered poles to represent himself and the Evening Star girl. He sat in the circle in the evening light and commenced singing the first song.

"Gura Binda Binda, Guraday Lardima Goora [sic] Binda Binda."

'Dream of me and think sweet of me in your dreaming.'

He made and sang many songs so that Yalma could not stop looking at him or thinking about him. Those gossips, the willywag tail birds, watched Gidja and passed word to Yalma that Gidja was 'singing' her.

Every night Gidja sat in the magic circle singing his love songs, and as time passed Yalma stopped laughing at Gidja and one day made him very happy by agreeing to be his wife.

They built their bark shelter on the edge of the village. All the Bullanji people held a big corroboree dance to celebrate for them.

When Yalma had a baby daughter they called her Lilga, the Morning Star. Gidja loved little Lilga and as she grew bigger always took her with him when he went hunting.

One sad day, when all the lovely wattles and wildflowers were in bloom, Gidja was climbing a tree to cut honey from a beehive, when a large limb broke off the tree, fell on Lilga, and she died.

It was the first time that any of the first people on Earth had died. All the people thought they were immortal and would live forever.

Poor Gidja cried over his dead daughter, but the people were frightened and angry; they didn't want to die at all. They blamed Gidja and began to threaten him with spears.

Gidja made a bark coffin for little Morning Star, and decided to bury her on the other side of the river, at the edge of the beautiful rainforest. There was a vine bridge across the river to keep people safe from crocodiles.

While Gidja was crossing the bridge some men ran up and cut the vine with stone axes. Gidja, with the bark coffin on his shoulder, fell into the fast-flowing river.

The swift current carried Gidja away, the bark coffin floating after him. Gidja called out to the people, 'Help me, I can't swim and will soon drown.'

No one would help him; some called out, 'Serves you right for letting your little daughter die. We hope the crocodiles get you.'

They stood and watched as Gidja was swept towards the sea. Gidja puffed his fat body up so he would float. He saw that the current was bringing him closer to the bank where tall grass was growing. The pelicans were astonished.

Some of the grass was leaning out over the water as though offering friendly hands of help to the struggling Gidja. He stretched and caught hold of the grass and pulled himself out of the water, just before big crocodiles caught up with him.

The coffin of Lilga, the Morning Star, drifted out to sea and sank, where it can still be seen today at low tide, near Cape Tribulation.

Night was coming as Gidja was walking back along the river bank. He made firesticks and lit a fire to make light as he knew it would be very dark when the sun was gone. The moon had not yet been made.

Kookaburras sat in the trees and laughed at Gidja; the willy wagtails gossiped about him, but the butcher-birds sang sweet songs for little Morning Star.

Gidja carried a burning piece of wood from the fire to light his way through the dark forest. The people saw the light winking among the trees and wondered who was coming.

When they saw it was Gidja they were angry again. They thought they had got rid of him in the river.

All the men ran for their spears, then hurled them at Gidja. The spears just bounced off him as though he was made of stone.

Gidja laughed and said, 'You people cannot kill me, I am going to live forever.' His big round body shook with laughter at the people trying to kill him.

When the people saw they could not kill Gidja they became angrier. They said, 'We must get him out of our country. We will throw him up into the sky.' Some of the strongest men caught hold of him and hurled him straight up into the night sky.

As he rose upward Gidja shouted down to the people, 'From now on all people will die and they will remain dead. I will also die, but you will see me come back to life again. The grass that saved me will die, but you will see it come back to new life.'

Now we see Gidja the Moon wax and grow fat and round, before fading away again until he looks like a frail, stooped man, withered like grass, just above the dawn horizon, on his last day.

Not far away is his bright little daughter, Lilga, the Morning Star. Kookaburras laugh and dingoes howl when they see the last of poor old Gidja, but the butcher-birds still sing sweetly to Lilga.

Gidja is not long dead. On the evening of the third day after he disappears from the sky, Gidja can be seen just above the sunset, floating there like a baby's cradle, beginning a new cycle of life.

Not far away is his wife Yalma, the Evening Star. And as the seasons' cycle, the grass withers and dies, only to be brought back to lush life when the rains come again - and Gidja the Moon lights up the night sky for all the world.

### APPENDIX 4.3 A narrative by Oodgeroo

From: Noonuccal, Oodgeroo (1993) *Stradbroke Dreamtime*. London, Angus & Robertson.:61-62.

#### THE BEGINNING OF LIFE

In the Dreamtime, all the earth lay sleeping. Nothing grew. Nothing moved. Everything was quiet and still. The animals, birds and reptiles lay sleeping under the earth's crust.

Then one day the Rainbow Serpent awoke from her slumber and pushed her way through the earth's crust, moving the stones that lay in her way. When she emerged, she looked around 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 to the place where she had first appeared and called to the frogs, "Come out!"

The frogs were very slow to come from below the earth's crust, for their bellies were heavy with water which they had stored in their sleep. The Rainbow Serpent tickled their stomachs, and when the frogs laughed, the water ran all over the earth to fill the tracks of the Rainbow Serpent's wanderings - and that is how the lakes and rivers were formed.

Then the grass began to grow, and the trees sprang up, and so life began on earth.

All the animals, birds and reptiles awoke and followed the Rainbow Serpent, the Mother of Life, across the land. They were happy on earth, and each lived and hunted for food with his own tribe. The kangaroo, wallaby, emu tribes lived on the plains. The reptile tribes lived among the rocks and stones, and the bird tribes flew through the air and lived in the trees.

The Rainbow Serpent made laws that all were asked to obey, but some grew quarrelsome and were troublemakers. The Rainbow Serpent scolded them, saying, "Those who keep the laws I shall reward well. I shall give them a human form. They and their children and their children's children shall roam this earth forever. This shall be their land. Those who break my laws I shall punish. They shall be turned to stone, never to walk the earth again."

So the law-breakers were turned to stone, and became mountains and hills, to stand for ever and watch over the tribes hunting for food at their feet.

But those who kept her laws she turned into human form, and gave each of them his own totem of the animal, bird or reptile whence they came. So the tribes knew themselves by their own totems: the kangaroo, the emu, the carpet snake, and many, many more. And in order that none should starve, she ordered that no man should eat of his totems. In this way there was food for all.

So the tribes lived together in the land given to them by the Mother of Life, the Rainbow Serpent; and they knew that the land would always be theirs, and that no one should ever take it from them.



#### APPENDIX 4.4 A narrative from *Djugurba*

From: Bunug (1974) Inganarr the Giant Serpent. In: *Djugurba: tales from the spirit time*. Canberra, A.N.U. Press.:31-32.

##### INGANARR, THE GIANT SERPENT

Long, long ago, Inganarr the Great Serpent began a journey across Arnhem Land. He moved slowly across the country, from west to east, and whenever he saw people, he ate them. He ate so many people on his long journey that when ever people saw him coming they tried to run away and hide.

When Inganarr reached North Goulburn Island the people tried to escape, but they could not get off the island. Inganarr had them trapped. So the people decided to feed Inganarr. First they fed him their food, and when that was gone, they fed him their weapons and their tools, but soon these were all gone. When there was nothing left to feed Inganarr, he ate the people until they were all gone. Then he moved further eastwards and returned to the mainland. Here he rested.

One day two young boys were playing with their spears quite close to where Inganarr was resting. They could not see him in the bush but they noticed that whenever they threw their spears in a certain direction - Inganarr's direction - the spears came back. They moved closer to see what was causing this. Then they saw Inganarr. As fast as they could run the two boys ran for their camp. They told their father of the great serpent they had seen and soon the news spread through the tribe. Everyone quickly prepared and soon were ready to fight the serpent.

Surrounding Inganarr, the tribe threw spears and rocks at him, but nothing they threw touched the great serpent and their spears and rocks turned back at them. Seeing they could no hurt Inganarr with their weapons, the tribe tried to escape. But Inganarr was too fast and he swallowed people - men, women and children - until the whole tribe lay inside his enormous stomach.

Inganarr continued on his journey eastwards until finally he arrived in Eastern Arnhem Land. the great serpent was tired after his long journey and suddenly he felt very sick. He had eaten too many people. He opened his huge mouth and out poured the people he had swallowed, released from his enormous stomach. They carried the tools and weapons he had swallowed with them and they ran to many parts of the country to make their camps.

The people stayed in Eastern Arnhem Land and did not return to the west. They were the first people ever to live in this part of the country and this is why, today, there are more people in Eastern Arnhem Land than the western part. It is also why no people live on North Goulburn Island today, for Inganarr swallowed them all and took them to the east where they still live.

## APPENDIX 4.5 A narrative from Gulpilil

From: Gulpilil, David (1983) *Birirrk: our ancestors of the Dreaming*. Cheltenham, L.&S. Publishing.

### BIRIRRK: OUR ANCESTORS OF THE DREAMING

Long long time before our Dreaming, the earth at our feet had no shape, it had no colour, there was no light, and nothing walked across it. There were no emu tracks and no kangaroo tracks. It was dust without water, no river flowed, the earth was empty.

Into the darkness came the Birirrk. They came from far away and made their tracks on the ground. The Birirrk were our great spirit ancestors. Their tracks across the earth made the Dreaming paths and painted it with light and shadows.

The Birirrk could enter the rock. They blew in its face and the rocks opened to let them inside. This was how they came out and returned when their was danger. When the wind blew strongly the Birirrk ran back to the rocks for safety. Their thin bodies would break in the strong wind.

Out of the dust they shaped our mountains and over the land they made the great rivers. When that was done, the Birirrk made the shapes of the animals to live in them. With the water, came grass and trees, and the animals to eat the grass, to shelter beneath the trees and to drink at the river.

They showed their children, our ancestors, the spirit in the water. They taught us how to drink the spirit of the earth, our Mother. 'Drink the water,' said the Birirrk, 'it is the spirit.'

We entered the rivers and they were all around us. The water played with us. The Birirrk told us, 'Listen to its story. It is a Dreaming story.' We listened and knew it was a Dreaming place. We kept its story.

The Birirrk made the shapes of water lilies and the yams. They showed their children, our people, how to find and eat yams and said, 'These are yams. Yams are also men.'

In the face of the waters are the plants that also drink it. The water is in the canoe trees and in the lily bulbs we eat. It is the spirit of the Birirrk. It is also in the fish that are in it.

The Birirrk walked across the earth, and made the great Dreaming tracks. Here they made waterholes where our people drink. There they made the rocks where our people shelter when they are hunting. They came to rest and put themselves on rock. 'This will be a Dreaming place,' they said.

When all this was done, the great ancestors taught their children, our people, about the shape of the kangaroo. They taught us where the water slept beneath the earth and how to know the Dreaming places.

The Birirrk were great hunters. They used the wind to hide their coming from the kangaroo. In the shadows of the trees our ancestors were like shadows. They made the boomerang and the spear and said, 'These will kill the kangaroo. Kangaroo are also men.'

As the light filled the sky, the Birirrk made the shapes of the birds and taught them how to fly. 'These are also men,' they told us.

On the earth, the Birirrk said, 'Look at the colours.' They showed us the red that came from the blood of their fighting and hunting, the sacred white pipe clay that is kept by a giant kangaroo, the yellow that marks the cliffs of our land and is the sacred colour of the Yirritja, and the black that they made with the great fire they used to shape us. They showed us the charcoal from the fires of the great Dreaming tracks and told us, 'With these colours you can keep the Dreaming.'

The Birirrk told us, 'Put the Dreaming on rocks and there will be food and children. These will be Dreaming places. In these places you can sing and the spirit will hear you. You can dance and the spirit will see you. You can tell the story to your young men and they will know the Dreaming.'

The Birirrk told our women how to have their children. The children play the games they taught them. They sometimes pretend to sneak up and kill a man or a kangaroo. The boys go out to learn how to spear fish and the girls go out to bring home bush food. They play at being grown men and women. They make bark houses the same as their parents, and the girls lie beside the boys as husband and wife. Then they are embarrassed. They laugh and run away.

'We will leave soon, but we will return at the Dreaming places through your songs and dances, your painting and your telling. You will know us as we come from the rocks and the earth at these times.'

To make fire, the Birirrk took the stick between their hands and rubbed quickly. The smoke rose towards the sky. They put some grass in their hands and made it smoke. Then they gently blew on it and put the fire in the grass. They showed us how to cook the kangaroo, our food, and said, 'You will always need fire. Keep it in these sticks.'

The Birirrk vanished. They became the waterholes, the hills, the rivers and the rocks of the earth, our Mother. They left us the stories of how to hunt the emu, kangaroo and goanna.

They left stories of making the canoe and of teaching our children. These stories are in the earth. They are the laws that are ours to keep and to keep us.

The Birirrk, our ancestors, are in the earth, our Mother. They are in us and in our children at the Dreaming places. The earth, our Mother, is in us from these places. These rocks and hills, these rivers and waterholes, are our great ancestors. They are the Birirrk, our spirit.

## APPENDIX 4.6 A narrative told by Eddie Bennell

From: Bennell, Eddie (1981) *Aboriginal legends from the Bibulmun tribe*. Adelaide, Rigby.  
Illustrated by Anne Thomas.:21-24

### THE MAGPIE AND THE CURLEW

One of the most fascinating but curious birds in Aboriginal folklore is the weerrlow bird or the curlew. In Aboriginal legend the weerrlow bird is an omen of good for some, but for many he represents everything that is evil.

This particular incident took place many years ago on the outskirts of a town in the Great Southern area of Western Australia, approximately 250 kilometres from Perth.

There was at this time a group of Aborigines camping at a large farm where they were shearing sheep. In most Aboriginal families there are many children, and this particular group was no exception. But there was one child who was more curious and adventurous than the others. One day this little boy had been in the shearing shed with his father and uncles all morning, and he arrived home at lunch-time to ask his mother's permission to return to the shed and watch the shearing for the rest of the day.

When the child was returning to the shearing shed with the men he noticed a group of a dozen or so weerrlow birds. At first the child had no reason to fear the weerrlows, because the old people had never explained to the younger children that the weerrlow bird, given an opportunity, would try to lure small children away from the campsite and their parents. One of the weerrlow bird's chief methods of enticing children away was to circle the child calling out. 'Weerrlow! Weerrlow!' The child would be unaware that the weerrlow bird was increasing the size of the circle until he found himself a long way from the campsite.

When this boy returned to his parents at sunset that night he told them a very strange story. That morning he had noticed a flock of weerrlows, and in particular one that was bolder than the rest. Whereas the other birds circled the boy at a short distance, the boldest weerrlow approached the child and kept nodding his head in a manner that seemed to the boy to be beckoning him.

Exactly how it happened he did not know, but after some time he realised that he had been led in a trance-like state to a high rocky dead-end canyon. The first thing he became aware of was a group of coolbardis or magpies standing in a semicircle around the canyon. In the centre of the clearing were two of the most magnificent birds he had ever seen. On the left was Coorrla, mighty warrior of the coolbardis. On the right stood Wirrla, great chief of all the weerrlow tribes within a thousand kilometres.

It soon became evident to the boy that he had been chosen to witness a very important event. He was firmly led to one side of a hill and placed on a large boulder which gave him a ringside view of all that was happening.

The chief Mubarrn man, who was the powerful healer of all the associated tribes, explained that Coorrla had challenged Wirrla to battle because he had raped Coorrla's wife, and because she was now pregnant the council elders had banished her in shame, which meant that she would have to stay away from every tribe forever.

When his explanation ended, the chief Mubarrn man called out to the Mummaries, small, hairy, human-like creatures who are the initial givers of the Mubarrn or magic powers, to come forth. On his command, literally thousands of Mummaries appeared as if from nowhere.

Then Coorrla and Wirrla stepped into the centre of the circle, each carrying his warnuk or totem stick to do battle in the form of men, being the great and mighty war chiefs that they were. A great shout of applause rumbled throughout the entire canyon from the Mummaries, who had already chosen which of the participants would be the victor!

As the roar of the crowd faded into the background the two mighty warriors began stalking each other, waiting to see who would make the first fatal mistake. Coorrla knew that although Wirrla was a mighty warrior who had been tested in many contests of this nature, he himself had also been through the same rituals of mortal combat.

While Coorrla circled Wirrla, looking for an opportunity to attack his opponent and batter him to the ground, the same and shameful events of the past several months flashed through his mind. No matter how hard he tried, Coorrla could not erase from his mind the day when his dearly beloved wife, Craala, had been brought to him by the elders of the council from the place where she had hidden in shame from himself and all the other members of the tribe.

He could see her now, her head bowed in shame, her beautiful body bloodied and torn. And all this had been brought about by the selfish and thoughtless act of Wirrla.

Coorrla's mind became even more bitter and angry towards Wirrla and, unable to contain himself any longer, he leaped high into the air and pounced vengefully upon Wirrla. Though he was on guard, the vicious, brutal attack caught Wirrla by surprise and he was pounded into dust.

As he rose, trying to gather his wits, Coorrla moved swiftly and unleashed a number of powerful blows to Wirrla's forearms, shoulders, and neck, causing his whole upper body to grow numb. As Wirrla crumpled back into the dust, Coorrla, with his warnuk stick raised high above his head, paused, and in that split second Wirrla recovered his senses and ducked and weaved out of immediate danger. The silence of the onlookers all around was intense.

Wirrla, on the defensive, knew that he would have to call on all the remaining energy he had for one mighty onslaught if he was going to win this contest. Coorrla, sensing victory, moved in warily but surely for the final assault. Feinting, then stepping back, Coorrla raised his warnuk stick and brought it crashing down on Wirrla's skull. Wirrla again crumpled to the ground, his head pounding in pain from the blow inflicted by Coorrla.

Then Coorrla knew that victory was his. Without mercy he rained blow after blow upon his defenceless foe, until through sheer exhaustion he fell to his knees beside the battered and bloody body of Wirrla.

After several minutes Coorrla rose to his feet and surveyed the onlookers through tired bloodshot eyes, then, with a nod of his head towards the group of Mubarrn men, he lowered himself on to the nearest rock.

There was deafening silence as the Mubarrn men of both tribes gathered around Coorrla and conceded that he was now champion warrior of all the south-western tribes.

Then they commanded Craala to come forward to stand beside Coorrla. The Mubarrn men explained that because of Coorrla's great victory, Craala's shameful and degrading experience at the hands of Wirrla was now forgiven and she would in future take her rightful place within the tribe as Coorrla's wife.

## APPENDIX 4.7 A Warlukurlangu narrative

From: Darby Jampijinpa (1987) Bush Turkey and Emu. In: Warlukurlangu artists. *Yuendumu doors*. Canberra, A.I.A.T.S.I.S.:39

### BUSH TURKEY AND EMU

I am telling the story of Turkey who lived at Parirri rock hole and gathered for himself a big pile of yakajirri berries. Jangalas and Jampijinpas lived there and now it is their country - I have it now. Where Turkey was living at Parirri, in the Dreamtime, he used to pick berries and make them into big fruit balls. He would gather them and make them into really good, best berries. Emu was living at Walangkamirri, on the west side, and Turkey lived to the east. They used to go gathering fruits around Ngarliyikirlangu. One day Turkey caught sight of Emu and he thought to himself, 'Yes, indeed, it looks as though there are some people over there'. He went and hid in some of the bushes. 'They might find me and rob me of my fruits.' So he hid the berries. He dug a hole and buried them. Later he got the dried-up fruits and mashed them and made many fruit balls, really big ones. After that he went off again. 'Oh! I think I'll be able to get some good berries for myself, I should always go fruit gathering around here.'

It was that Dreaming who first travelled around in that country. He went a little way south gathering berries into various wooden dishes. 'That's it now. These dishes are full to the top.' Turkey mashed them all and made them into fruit balls. Just to the west of where Turkey was, Emu was gathering berries and making them into fruit balls. He was putting them into many piles. When he straightened up he caught sight of Turkey on the other side of the tree. He felt very angry. 'I can see him from here all right. He can't see me though. He's not looking this way.' Indeed, Turkey was bent over with his eyes fixed on the ground, too busy picking those big, ripe, juicy berries - carefully choosing the best ones for himself. 'Ah! This looks like a juicy one.' He went on gathering berries and making them into big balls; then he hid them away deep down in the ground. He was acting as though those berries were his, but in fact they belonged to Emu. Emu saw Turkey's fruit balls and thought to himself: 'Well. He's the one who is eating all the best and juiciest berries around here.' He became very angry with Turkey. 'Here he is walking around in my place. I'll beat him up. He's going to rob me of all my berries. How can I eat these ones that he's left? He has taken all the good fruit; only the sour ones are left for me. He comes around here to eat all the nice juicy berries.' So Emu set off to the east to have it out with Turkey. 'I'll give him a good beating right now.' They started shouting at, and insulting each other. Then Emu ran and snatched the berries from Turkey and started smashing them to pieces. In his anger he split them into many pieces with his feet and his digging stick. Pieces of smashed fruit balls fell all over the countryside. These fruit balls which Emu smashed into pieces in the Dreamtime turned into big round boulders you can see in that country today. After he had smashed all Turkey's fruit balls, Emu went away to another place. Turkey started crying over what Emu had done to all his delicious fruit balls. He felt very sorry for himself, and so he set off west to go and find Emu. 'Why did he want to squash all my fruit balls? Why did he want to ruin all my fruits? Well I'll go after him and beat him up right now.' When he found Emu, they both started fighting. They flew at each other. Emu grabbed hold of Turkey and filled his eyes with dirt. Unable to see, Turkey flew away, blindly, north across the sky, leaving behind berries, wooden dishes and shield. Now the fruit balls stand there as rocks - rocky hills and boulders spread over the ground at that place. This story is a true Dreamtime story which the old people used to tell, the old Aboriginal people who have gone before us.

## APPENDIX 4.8 An Adnyamathanha narrative

From: Coulthard, Terrence; Coulthard, Cliff and McKenzie, Buck (1987) *Moon man*.  
Sydney, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

### MOON MAN

In the Dreamtime there lived an old Aboriginal man and his young nephew. As the years went by the old man taught his nephew all the rules about living the traditional Aboriginal way. The old man said to his nephew, 'You must always share food with other people because sharing is one of the most important rules of our people.'

The old man was a very clever hunter and would say to his nephew. 'There are some rules for hunting which you must learn, to enable you to become as good as me. You must learn to recognise the tracks and develop the skills of tracking', the old man would say to his nephew as they sat around the campfire. The nephew would sit by the campfire pretending to be listening to his uncle, but he really was daydreaming about swimming in the creek and just having fun.

One day the old man went out hunting. He went along a big creek, over a hill and onto a flat tableland and Black Oak Hills where the kangaroos rested from the heat of the hot summer sun...

...Suddenly, with a swift movement, the old man threw the spear. It flashed through the air so quickly that before the kangaroos could escape, one of them lay dead with the old man's spear quivering in its body...

...His nephew could tell by the smell that the kangaroo was ready to be eaten. It smelt so good that he decided to have it all to himself....

... 'I've stolen your kangaroo and I am having a good feed of it,'...

...The fat, shiny young nephew just laughed at the old man. So the old man cut down the tree and left his round, fat nephew up in the sky.

'There!' said the old man to his shiny, round, fat nephew. 'Stay up there in the form of a moon and share your light with the whole world forever'.

## APPENDIX 4.9 Djalalingba's Yolngu narrative

From: Yunupingu, Djalalingba et. al. (1988) *Ganbulapula: the story of the land around the old Dhupuma College*. Yirrkala, Literature Production Centre.

### GANBULAPULA

Dhuwalanydja wänga garma, dhiyala walala yukurrana giritjinanydja. Ga...ga...ga...ga, ngunhanydja Datjalanguna. Dhuwalanydja diltji marrtji ngorra, ga ngurruna ngunhi, bala batjiwarr yukurra dhunarrana, wiripu mak nhuma marnggimirri nguriki batjiwarrwu...

This place (where Dhupuma College was) used to be a ceremonial ground. This is where they danced. From here..... to Datjala [sic], through the bush, to the point where the track goes down the escarpment, perhaps you know that track. It belongs to the spirit man called Ganbulapula, also known as Yängunitji, and Murayana. Through this land he travelled, looking upwards, following the stringy bark flowers looking for native honey. This land is ceremonial ground.

Over there, a shark was wounded, he [Ganbulapula] speared it with a harpoon. Then the culprit took off into the bush. He had wounded the shark at a place called Garrata. And the shark took off, wounded to Wandawuy. There she formed the landscape with her head (just like in the dance the Dhuwal'mirri people do). And she gave birth to her children there. And that's where the wounded shark now remains, at Dhuruputjpi, at Wangarrngu, at Barrnggulwarrnggul. So that is where she has made her home, buried inside the fresh water.

He had speared it with a harpoon, and ran off!: 'Come on, you can't catch me, I'm the travelling man!' that's what he said, and ran off. And he ran up this way until he arrived here (where the Dhupuma College used to be). Where is Ganbulapula actually from? He's from over there, a Gupapuyngu man, because the shark was wounded at Garrata. And Ganbulapula ran off saying 'Come on, come here and chase me to the open plains at Ngulpan and Ganamiyayu. I'm the travelling man himself!', like that. And the wounded shark ended up at Dhuruputji.

In this particular area, Ganbulapula is from Gumatj and Lamami clans; since this land belongs to Gumatj and Lamami and Wangurri. And you other Yirritja clan groups have links to this land, we all sing to this land together.

Why do we all sing this land? Because the singing of Ganbulapula is from all of us: Gumatj, Dhalwangu, Manggalili, Madarrpa, Liyalanmirri, Ritharrngu, Lamami, Wangurri, Warramiri, and Gupapuyngu. And the saltwater Gumatj, and the fresh water Gumatj, this is the way we cooperate and make decisions, that's the way our law stands.

The tip of the point is called Datjala [sic]. The sacred string exists through there where the possum and the night jar made the track. At that place the night jar sang and cried, and it will cry and mourn again to let us know whenever a new death occurs. Over there he cried at Datjala. On that point (where the road goes down the escarpment), it will fly up into a tree, and stretch out the string, ready for the journey. (The spirits of the dead travel along the path of the sacred string.) It takes a journey through the track dreaming to Twin Eagles (Murupa, commonly known as Gayngada). Some of you might know of this track dreaming and some of you may not know.

And the dog track dreaming exists through Yukuwarra, from Balkuwuy he made his journey. The dog, called Balku, being of Wangurri clan, changed to a Lamami dog (called Ngamaliya or Wäwuluma) when she reached Cape Arnhem.

The cry of the night jar echoed in all the little patches of the rain forest - Djinimbilil, Galkuran, Bandharrinya, these are the names of the places. Also Yirririnya, Marathuway, Gulpilnga, Madanhuwilinya, Duynguwuy, Matharra, and Bultjam'murru.

At the rainforest called Duynguwuy, there lives the green tree python snake dreaming (Wunhangu or Bidimbida). This is his land. From here, also called Bandalmi, he spits up the rain clouds. This is a different sort of snake (different from the lightning snake) which lives in the rain forest; that is where he lives.



But the area of land deep inside the rainforest is very sacred. So I am only telling you youngsters about it, for later on. It's for both Yirritja and Dhuwa people, but especially for how many of us who are Yirritja. So we become united together and agree together, and that's the way it is for our culture.

But this land is already titled, and it belongs to Ganbulapula. This side is called Barraya and the other side is called Wirringunga. The area where the billabong full of lily roots is, is called Rerrwuy. It is also known as Balkuwuy. These areas are Yirritja and they all belong to Ganbulapula.

The didgeridoo sounded and the echo drifted across to Rocky Point (Yarrapay) to where those Dhuwa spirits called the Dhanbuls, also called Nyedil, perform their ceremonies.

'Do-o-o-rp!', that's what it sounded like as it drifted across to Rocky Point. And also over there, to the mouth of the Giddy's, they signal by the sound of the didgeridoo to other Dhuwa spirits who were also performing. These spirits were Dhuwa, who danced with sheaths of tall spear grass held up vertically from their foreheads. (You can still see them dancing in the Dhuwa ceremonies.) Only the sound of the didgeridoo echoed, signalling back and forth.

And the Yirritja land exists from the Airport [sic], right up to Gulkula. And it cuts off at Giddy's River crossing. There the Dhuwa shark made its journey from the little streams at the mouth of the Giddy's (Yängunbi) across to the mouth of the Wongga Creek (Gayirrpungala). There at Wongga Creek the shark remained. That area belongs to the shark dreaming. There it cuts off at Giddy's River where we cross over to the other side. And this side of the land about half way to the Giddy River crossing from Dhupuma, belongs to us Yirritja.

The spirits from our clan performed their ceremony right here at Dhupuma (Gulkuḷa). And Ganbulapula's land also covers the area from the airport across where they are mining, and right up to old Dhupuma College. They danced here, the spirits from the Yirritja clans. And they, the Dhuwa spirits, danced at the mouth of the Giddy's (Dhâyulkul) and at Rocky Point (Yarrapay). There the morning star rose up to the sky, at this place, dhuwa [sic] land.

The Yirritja land covers the area from Djalpurkitj (where the Telecom repeater dishes stand near the speedway), until it reaches this area (Dhupuma). Yarrapay is Dhuwa. The Dhanbul spirits occupied that land, and that's where the nuts called Munbi were collected.

## APPENDIX 4.10 A Tiwi narrative

From: Puantulura, Aloysius (Tupwanikini) (1990) *Ngirramini ngini Nyingawi*. Nguuu, Nguuu Ngingingawila Literature Production Centre.

### NGIRRAMINI NGINI NYINGAWI

Parlingarri Ngingawi pitirikipimi kurlama kapi Tumarripi. Ngingingaji wutawa pitirikipimi kurlama ngawauroyaka, kiyi ayipa pirima. Pirrimantuluwi ngarra arikulani awarra. Awuta Nyingawi kurlama pitirikuruwala:

'Jipalangipirikitawurra-m-m Puwuranjiniwunjirakinga-m-m. Ngya-mirani awurrini awunjirrangimila-m-m.'

Wayawungani pitirikurwalamini:

'Angiwala ampirikitaawurra tuwarrawujanawu.'...

### NYINGAWI - THE LITTLE SPIRIT PEOPLE

(This is the story of how the Tiwi people learnt to sing the kurlama)

Long time ago the little spirit people had kurlama at Tumarripi. All of them took turn to sing in the kurlama. Pirrimantuluwi was the eldest of them all. So he and all the little spirit people sang. This is what they sang:

*I'm saying this word. The tree broke up. My son was sleeping.*

And all the women sang after their husbands:

*He's just saying that word.*

Then Tipungwuti brought his spears. He crept with his spears behind a tree and stood just like a tree, looking out from behind. Meanwhile Pirrimantuluwi, the leader of the little spirit people, continued to sing his song:

*The white cockatoo are all up in the top of the trees.*

Then Tipungwuti cast his eyes around, searching. Then he got up. Then he prepared to throw his spear, then aimed it at that little spirit man and speared him. Just as we cry out in pain, so he cried out in pain. After that Tipungwuti ran and grabbed the kurlama yams. He placed them in a bark basket, then he went. Then they all started to run.

The spirit people started again to sing the yam ceremony at Tiritiringa. This is what Pirrimantuluwi and his friends sang:

*I'm saying this word. The tree broke up. My son was sleeping.*

And all the women sang after their husbands:

*He was sleeping, your son, he was sleeping.*

Pirrimantuluwi continued to sing:

*White cockatoo are all up in the top of the trees.*

Then Tipungwuti painted himself, just as the Tipungwuti paint themselves today. Then he sang the kurlama just as the Nyingawi had.

(One day we'll take the children to that place and teach them about that land at Tumarripi.)

Over at that island where the big bloodwood trees surrounded the land and the island, there the Nyingawi dug a well for water. The the sea washed in over the water and the trees. Then it became just like other land.

It was a good place that other side of Yuwulpi. Those Nyingawi are everywhere in that area and you hear them calling out to their wives. They speak Tiwi just like us, but have brown skin like half-caste people. They crack cycad nuts and eat whelks. The food they like best are the whelks. They call themselves Tumarrimpila, Tirringuwula and Yuwulipi. Over there at Yuwulipi lived Piyantungwayu and Tungatalum. They lived on the other side of Tiritiringa.

## APPENDIX 4.11 Another Tiwi narrative

From: Tungutalum, Gerardine et al. (1991) *Ngirramini ngini tini Yirrikipayi yima: Legend of Yirrikipayi: the man who became the crocodile*. Nguiu, Nguiu Nginingawila Literature Production Centre.:11

### LEGEND OF YIRRIKIPAYI: THE MAN WHO BECAME THE CROCODILE

A long time ago I was told a story by my grandmother, my father's mother. Also my husband told me the story. My father's brothers Purtipuwiyi and Nokota were teenagers when they were told this story.

Long ago in the dreamtime, a man called Yirrikipayi was sitting by himself all alone at Wiyapurali, a place near Cape Fourcroy.

Yirrikipayi's mother had four names given to her. They were Pawunga, Yakingiya, Payampuma and Kwarraringa. She had borne her son and he had made his home along the coast of Cape Fourcroy near Wiyapurali.

One day, he had gathered his spears and was working on them to make them straight and sharp. Then some people of the Jikilawula tribe went there and other people from around the country went to see what Yirrikipayi was doing.

'Hey, this man is making spears,' said the people. Those Muntipula people wanted to kill him because they found him living near Tangiyawu but he wouldn't share any part of the country with others, nor would he allow them to live in the same place as himself. 'What shall we do to him?' they asked one another. 'Let's kill him,' they all shouted. So they went and found him.

Then they spoke to Yirrikipayi, 'Hey! What are you doing?' they asked him. 'I'm making spears,' he replied. 'Oh yes!' the people said. 'Where are your wives?' they asked. 'I have no women,' replied Yirrikipayi.

Yirrikipayi was all alone. They threw two spears at him, while he was trying to stand up. He was speared in his side near his ribs and he was speared in his back and lower back. Then Yirrikipayi ran and jumped. Hanging from his back were the spears that the people had thrown at him. Then he crawled along the beach cried out in pain and dived into the sea. After diving into the sea, he then surfaced for air far out in the deep water.

Then all the people came to watch him. 'You are now the crocodile,' they all shouted. 'Your name will be crocodile,' they said. So that is what we call him. His mother, Pawunga, cried for her son. Then she was transformed into the pied heron.

Pawunga sang this song for her son:

*He was speared in the back so he ran into the sea at Wiyapurali. Then they called him 'crocodile'.*

This song was sung by Beatrice Kerinaiaua.

Another song about the crocodile is as follows:

*They speared him in the back and he was running with those spears in his back towards the sea, diving into it at Wiyapurali. They called him 'crocodile'. The barbs of those spears are what we see standing up on his back.*

## APPENDIX 4.12 Daisy Utemorra's Owl narrative

From: Utemorra, Daisy (1998) DUMBI: the owl. In: Utemorra, Daisy *Worrorra Lalai: Worrorra Dreamtime stories*. Halls Creek, Kimberley Language Resource Centre.: 5-12. (Edited by Mark Clendon.)

### DUMBI: THE OWL

They were living in the bush, and they told their children, 'When you see that barn owl, don't torment it or kill it. We're going over that way to go hunting for kangaroos and to look for honey,' their mothers and fathers told them.

'Alright,' said the children, 'if we find him, we mustn't hurt him.'

'That's right.'

Then they went down to play by the river. But one of the boys looked up into a tree and saw the owl sitting up there, and called out: 'There he is! There he is! There's the owl! Let's kill him!'

'No,' said the others, 'we mustn't kill him.'

'Our mothers and fathers aren't here, there's no-one watching us.' And he climbed into the tree, grabbed the owl, pulled out the feathers and threw him down to the others. They laughed at him and stabbed spinifex needles into him and threw him up into the air. When he fell down they threw him up again, and he fell down again. Then they threw him up again and he went sailing away through the air and fell down by the Wondjina. He fell down right at his feet. The Wondjina looked at him.

'What happened to you?' he asked, 'Who did this to you? Who's been making fun of you?'

'Those children have been making fun of me, they stabbed spinifex needles into me and threw me up in the air again and again, until the last time they threw me up, when I fell down here by you. I wanted you to see me.' The Wondjina was angry.

'Well now, what can I do to those children?' the Wondjina thought to himself. 'I know, I'll get rain.'

So he called out to the dragon lizard: 'Ahoy! Come here!' he called. And the dragon lizard came.

'What did you call me for?' he asked.

'Go out onto the plain,' said the Wondjina, 'and stand up there and wave your arms to summon up the clouds.'

'Alright,' said the lizard. So the dragon lizard went and stood out on the plain. He waved his arms and gathered all the clouds together, drawing them in towards him until they formed a huge thunderhead. Then he looked at it and said, 'Now it's done; I'd better call the Wondjina.' So the dragon lizard went over and said, 'There, that's done now, I've gathered them all together.'

'Good,' said the Wondjina, then rain poured down and lightning flashed all around. Then those children were afraid.

'What's making it rain?' they asked, 'What's going on? And why is there lightning striking down all around us?' they asked each other. They were frightened.

Then their mothers and fathers came back. 'What's this rain doing?' they asked each other, 'the children must have killed the little owl, and the Wondjina has sent the rain.' They had to run back to their children. The children ran out to meet their fathers and mothers, 'Why is all this rain falling?' they asked them.

'We were playing with the owl,' they replied.

'We we told you and told you, when you see the owl you mustn't hurt it. But you just wouldn't believe us.'

The rain kept falling. The rain fell and lightning flashed all around them. They swam about in the flood waters, trying desperately to climb up into the highest hills. But the flood rose up higher and they all perished.

But there were two children standing on the hill, a boy and a girl. And a kangaroo came hopping along towards them. 'Let's climb onto the kangaroo,' they said to each other. So when the kangaroo got close they climbed up onto it, and it carried them off to another country when the Wondjina destroyed all the other people. They all drowned and the land was left empty. And when those two had gone on the kangaroo, they told this story.

And to this day we still tell this story just as they told it to us; the same story about how they killed the owl long ago. That's the way the story is told by the Worora, Wunambal and Ngarinyin people. They all know this story.

From: Utemorraah & Lofts (1993) *Dunbi the owl*. Gosford, Ashton Scholastic.

## DUNBI THE OWL

In the time before time began, a tribe of people lived on their land near the coast.  
Every day, the children would play beside the river. 'Look what I've found!' called a boy from high up in a tree.  
It was Dunbi, the first owl.  
The boy tossed the owl out of the tree.  
The children grabbed Dunbi and bounced him into the air.  
They pulled out his feathers. They bounced him up again.  
Then they stuck sharp blades of spinifex grass into him.  
They threw him up once more. 'Go on, use your new wings. Let's see you fly now, Owl.'  
Higher and higher went Dunbi, till he disappeared over the clouds.  
The children waited. Then they heard a roar.  
Wanalirri the great Wandjina, saw what they had done to Dunbi, his son.  
Wanalirri shook with rage.  
He commanded the lizard to paint himself... and dance about the plains and gather up all the clouds.  
The angry Wandjina blew a great wind, and thunder rolled around the clouds, and lightning split the sky.  
It rained and rained and rained....  
and the flood reached all the people below. They tried to escape, but it was too late. They all drowned in the swirling water.  
All, that is, except for one man and one woman, who grabbed the tail of a kangaroo.  
They clung to the kangaroo as it swam, till it reached high ground.  
There, they climbed to safety. And the man and the woman became the first of the new tribe...  
so that we were born... so we go on being born.  
And still today, we are forbidden to harm owls, because we remember what happened in that long-ago time.

### APPENDIX 4.13 Utemorra's poems

From: Utemorra, Daisy (1990) *Do not go around the edges*. Broome, Magabala Books.:7, 16 & 25

#### BURUN BURUN THE KINGFISHER

'I am the kingfisher, Burun Burun they call me.  
On a bright and sunny day I took my dog  
named Ganganaw Lornya.  
As I climbed on the hills  
she found a kangaroo and chased it!  
And she was so long  
I started to call out, bair-bair  
Ganganaw Lornya!

'Still she was missing  
the more I called out, bair-bair...  
At last she returned and came running up -  
I was so angry I hit her across the nose  
and she fell to the ground.

'That was the end of her,  
Ganganaw Lornya  
turned into the evening star.'  
Burun Burun the kingfisher  
was sad because he lost his dog.

#### WANDJINAS

These are the three that taught us the rules  
and with that they gave us land.  
Each tribe its own country,  
that's why the three are remembered  
from the Dreamtime until today,  
NGARMARALI WANDALIE WANARBRI

#### A DOG'S TALE

Once in a Dreamtime the dogs had a meeting:  
'But before we sit down on the ground  
we must pull our tails off!' So they did  
and put them on a log...

When the enemy arrived they all rushed out  
and forgot about their tails.  
Three or two remembered and gave a shout  
'Our tails!' - and they all ran back and put their tails on.

But it was one another's tails they put on!

## APPENDIX 4.14 May O'Brien's narrative

From: O'Brien, May (1992) *How the crows became black*. Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

### HOW THE CROWS BECAME BLACK

Long long ago, on a hot and stormy night, a flock of crows flew into the Eastern Goldfields of Western Australia. It seemed as if they had been blown in by the storm. No one had seen them in these parts before. They were not like the crows of today. Those crows of long ago were silver-grey and they travelled in large flocks. However, like the crows we see today, the silver-grey crows perched in the tall trees where they built their nests on the highest branches. From these high perches, their sharp eyes could see everything below.

Each morning, when the sun rose in the east, the crows soared lazily, high high in the sky. They flapped their wings occasionally, while they waited for the strong gusts of wind. These gusts took them gliding over the hills and plains below. As they flew, the sun touched their feathers making them sparkle and glitter. From below, the crows looked like twinkling stars or something from outer space, moving in and out of the low and wispy clouds.

The crows loved the bushland and soon knew every tree, hill, creek and valley. They loved the freedom to fly over all they could see. Only one thing about their home spoilt their happiness. The other birds didn't like the silver-grey crows at all. They were jealous of the way the crows' feathers glistened and sparkled in the bright sunlight. They never missed an opportunity to make nasty remarks about the crows as they passed them in the bush. 'Look at old shiny feathers,' they would jeer as the crows flew by. This teasing upset the crows.

The animals didn't like the crows either. They were frightened by the glinting of the crow's dazzling feathers. The kangaroos and wallabies moved to the plains and far-off hills, where they could eat without being disturbed. The lizards scurried to the trees. They buried themselves under leaves and dead branches and waited until it was safe to come out. The snakes too became restless. They grew tired of staying in stuffy holes and logs whenever the crows were near.

The crows annoyed the Wongutha people as well. Every day the men hunted for food and every day they came home empty-handed. They searched over the plains and in the nearby hills, but the animals had gone. The people became angrier and angrier.

'**Ngaliba gugagu manu, bardu garngalu ngurluthunu**' (When we go hunting, those crows flash by and frighten everything), they growled. '**Marlu birni ngabathi mungarra mabithangu.**' (Now the animals have gone right away.) '**Gugu balunha wiyarringu ngalibagu.**' (We will never get meat for our families.) No one wanted the crows near them. Each time they flew by, the people raised their fists in the air. '**Wandigadi ngalibanha.**' (Keep away from us.) '**Nhurra yunthugarranu, thanalgudu mabitha.**' (Go somewhere, where you will not annoy anyone), they yelled at the top of their voices. The crows were upset by the people's anger and talked about it. 'Gark! Gark! Why is everyone angry with us?' they squawked.

'All the bush creatures are angry with us', said a wise old crow. 'The lizards and insects hide under leaves and dead branches and the snakes stay hidden in their holes when we're near. The cheeky birds chase us whenever we pass by. We haven't any friends at all.' The other crows looked at each other and nodded. 'What can we do to make everyone happy again? Why don't other creatures like us?' croaked the old crow as big tears began to trickle down his silver-grey face.

The crows, seeing the tears on the old one's face, all started to cry and the trees shook with the noise of their loneliness. 'Gar-ark, Gar-ark,' they cried. 'Gar-ark, Gar-ark.' The wailing of the unhappy crows floated through the bush and gullies. The other birds and animals were surprised and wondered what was wrong. Day after day, day after day, the crows went on and on. Their tears flowed down their faces and onto the ground. There, the tears formed

creeks and made salt lakes on the plains. The animals wondered if the crows would ever stop.

After a long time, when the crows could cry no more, they turned to the old crow for advice. 'What can we do? How can we change, so that we can make friends?' they asked. The old crow thought for a while. 'It's our silver-grey colour that gets us into trouble. We must change to blend in with the bushland,' he said. The young crows thought that this was a good idea. 'The Wongutha people have dark skin. We should be like them,' said one. 'But how can we become black?' asked another. 'Sometimes, the Wongutha men paint white ochre on their bodies. We can do the same with the black ochre,' replied the old crow.

The next day the crows flew off to look for black ochre. They searched in dry creek beds and looked in caves. They flew over plains and over the salt lakes. But they couldn't find any black ochre. The crows flew to some red sandhills and started to scratch in the sand, but all they found was fine red sand. Some of the crows searched among the trees. All they found here was some sticky gum. They found no black ochre.

The tired crows sat in the trees and watched the women below. They were cooking their meat on the open fires. The meat was red when they put it into the flames and black when they took it out. That's what we must do!' exclaimed one of the crows. 'We must go into the cooking fires to become black.' 'No, we don't have to do that,' said the wise old crow. 'We can wait until the men burn the bush. Then the flames make a wide path.'

A few weeks later the Wongutha men started to burn off the bush. They did this to make it fresh and green again. The old crow saw the men start the fires and called the others together. He told them what to do. 'Stand still,' he said. 'Wait for the fire. Don't move until I say.' The crows trembled as they waited for the fire to come. Their sharp, beady eyes darted here and there as they watched. Nervously, they ruffled their feathers as they stood still.

They didn't have long to wait. The crackling fire raced towards them. It burned through the spinifex, dry grass and dead leaves in its path. Every now and then, flames shot high over bushes and small trees. The fire roared and crackled and spat out red, fiery cinders. Closer and closer came the leaping flames. Soon the fire swept over and around the trembling crows as they stood in its path. How brave they were! Then, everything was silent and still.

The old crow stirred, opened his eyes and looked around. 'It's all over!' he shouted. 'It's all over!' Slowly at first, the other crows opened their eyes too. They looked around. The bush looked bare and black. They shivered as they turned and looked at each other. How horrible they looked in only their wrinkly skin. Their beautiful silver-grey feathers were gone. The young crows silently gathered around the old crow and waited for him to speak again. 'You have been very brave,' he said. 'Our feathers will soon grow again. Then we will be proud of ourselves.'

They shivered as they turned and looked at each other. How horrible they looked in only their wrinkly skin. Their beautiful grey feathers were all gone...

For what seemed a long time, the crows hid themselves while their feathers grew. They were worried. Would the new feathers still be silver-grey? At last they came out of their hiding places. How handsome they looked. Their new feathers were shiny black. Proudly, the crows strutted about. Their white eyes gleamed happily as everyone looked at them. 'Are they new birds?' asked the animals. 'No! They are the crows,' replied the birds sharply. 'They have beautiful new feathers,' exclaimed the animals. The old crow turned, smiled and winked at the others. 'Now, the animals and birds can move about in the bush without running away from us,' he said proudly. 'Our new feathers make us more like them. We must also try to live apart and never fly in big flocks.'

Today we can still see the salt lakes made by the tears of the silver-grey crows of long ago, and also the salt bushes that soaked up their salty tears. The black crows are now an important part of our Australian bush. They are not the same as those silver-grey ones of long ago. Crows no longer travel in large flocks and they keep apart from everyone. They never make good friends with other bush creatures and small birds still chase them away.



## APPENDIX 4.15 A Kukatja narrative

From: Greene, G.; Tramacchi, J.; & Gill, L. (1992) *Tjarany / Roughtail: The dreaming of the roughtail lizard and other stories told by the Kukatja*. Broome, Magabala Books.:2-4

### THE ROUGHTAIL LIZARD DREAMING

A long time ago in the Dreamtime, there lived a Roughtail Lizard man who had a lot of Dreaming and songs he kept to himself. One day he was sitting by a waterhole called Ngamarlu, when some men, who were staying by the water, heard him singing.

Night after night those men got up to listen to that Roughtail man singing his songs as he sat by the fire. Every day when the men passed his camp they heard him singing. All the old people came together and they sat around, talking among themselves. They decided to send someone to meet him. 'Go and ask that Roughtail man to sing us a song,' they said. That person went over and asked him, 'Show us how to sing one of your songs.'

The Roughtail answered, 'Certainly! I'll give you my songs to learn.' Then he called them all together and made them sit down and he gave to each man a song. He was putting white ochre on their chests, and saying to them, 'I'll give you white ochre to put on your chests. All these songs are to be sung with ochre.'

One by one he gave each man a different song. Over and over he put the white ochre on them, telling them, 'This day I'm giving all these songs to the men. When I put this stuff on your chests, you may start to sing.'

Then he began singing for them and as he sang he showed them dances. When he had finished he said, 'I give these songs to the men to keep, each one in his own camp, a different song each.'

And so from north to south, from east to west, each has his song from the Dreamtime. Today if you go over there to Wirrumanu [Balgo] you can see this waterhole called Ngamarlu.

## APPENDIX 4.16 Lionel Fogarty's narrative poem

From: Fogarty, Lionel (1993) *Booyooburra*. South Melbourne, Hyland House. (Illustrated by Sharon Hodgson)

### BOOYOOBURRA: A STORY OF THE WAKKA MURRI

This is the story about a fishing dat your people dem Wakka Murri done long ago in our land.

Well big lot got fish line made of vines and spear  
and went from camp up not far to big rock,  
right near where you get the water for home.

About ten young and old sat both sides, throw the lines in.

One said catch some big eels and someone said we catch turtle, might be.

Well it was getting later.

The sun went down slowly, the water was clean and air, no wind or rain; it was good.

So Old Possum made a burri (fire), by this time no-one catch anything.

When came this loud call sound singing out sound the people look around

then it got louder calling Booyu-u-u-Booyu-u-u, Booyubill-Booyubill-bill-billa.

Up up the Wakka Murri looked and there on the big rock was a dark man singing out.

But you see all the man was try to find was his home and did not worry about who people camp here or there.

Now Wakka Murri did not know who this man was, for he just made a funny singing, Booyu-u-u. Then one of them Wakka Murri said, he is laughing at us making fun of us fella fishing.

So (children) the Wakka Murri get wild mad.

Cos the man on the rock would not stop singing out they get angrily.

Both sides of the big rock at Barambah Creek, the Wakka Murri picked up their spears and pulled back at the same time and let go hitting the singing out man in the sides.

Another voice came loud over everyone.

'Look you do not make laugh when we fish and you laugh on our rock

'So now sue sue du du turn into a bird!'

The old man sang a song no-one knows today.

The Booyooburra man change into a bird a stone plover first, then making a curlew appear with long legs like spears,

then it went flying away and the Wakka people call the rock

Mundjingair yo Di-min-gin-gaiah (laughing rock).

After that everyone went back to camp telling all.

The stone plover is Bujurair. The curlew is Booyooburra and a man laughing at us now no more he mundjingair (laugh).

So you see all the man was try to find was his home and did not worry about who people camp here or there

so if you go up there to fish listen to the dark man singing out Booyu-u-u Booyubilla.

Ha Ha! now him a bird for not talking to the Wakka Wakka people.

Hey Murri! watch who you laugh at, you might change to be a bird!

*(You know the big rocks and the big waterhole in Cherbourg old yard where the reservoir hill that feeds the settlement with water is? That's where this story comes from.)*

## APPENDIX 4.17 Sally Morgan's 'Australian stories'

From: Morgan, Sally (1997) *The flying emu and other Australian stories*. Ringwood, Puffin Books.:1-9 (First published in 1992 by Viking).

### THE FLYING EMU

Emu was once the most colourful bird in Australia. His head feathers were brilliant blue, his huge wings were shades of pink and purple, his body was like spun gold, and his big feet were bright red with lime-green claws. While some of the other birds thought Emu was a bit much, Emu loved himself.

'I'm so handsome!' he sighed as he gazed at his reflection in the still waters of the billabong. He leant down closer to the surface and burst into song:

I love my rainbow feathers,  
I love my great, big wings,  
I love the way my eyes shine,  
I'm a wonderful handsome thing!

Then he pursed his beak and made a long drawn-out kissing sound. Frog surfaced suddenly in the middle of Emu's reflection and croaked, 'Emu old buddy, how are you today?' Frog was a great admirer of Emu and had been trying to make friends with him for a long time.

'Buzz off, Froggy', Emu hissed. 'You're spoiling my view! Frog felt quite hurt at that. Don't you want any friends?' he asked. Emu laughed nastily. 'Why should I want friends when I have myself?' he sneered. This made Frog feel very sad so he dived back under the water.

Now Kookaburra, a bird known for his mocking laugh, was watching from a nearby tree. He was very jealous of Emu and had been planning a way to get rid of him for a long time. Now is the perfect moment to put my little plan into action', he muttered to himself. He called out loudly, 'You're quite right, Emu - Frog is as dull as mud. Whereas your brilliance can only be compared to the shining noonday sun!'

Emu kept staring at his own reflection, but just for a moment he smiled encouragingly at Kookaburra. Emu loved compliments. 'Your wings are like twin rainbows', continued Kookaburra. 'Your head is a sparkling sapphire and your feet are radiant rubies.' Emu nodded proudly. It was all true. 'I'm so dull', Kookaburra sighed sadly. 'When I sing everyone thinks I'm laughing at them.'

Emu nodded in agreement. He didn't think much of Kookaburra either. He smiled contentedly at his own reflection again and once more burst into song:

What a wonderful bird I am!  
What a wonderful bird I am!  
Forget the rest 'cause I'm the best!  
Yes, I'm the handsomest.

Kookaburra felt sickened by Emu's vanity, but he managed to say smoothly, 'What a tune, what a voice'. Emu chuckled smugly. Really, there was no end to his talents. 'I'll never be as glorious as you', sighed Kookaburra sadly. 'Thank heaven I can fly fast and high, otherwise I'd have nothing at all to boast about.' Emu tilted his head and asked curiously, 'Are you saying I can't fly fast and high?' 'Of course not!' replied Kookaburra. 'It's just that I'm so small compared to you. I don't have a giant body or giant feet to weigh me down.' Emu looked at his feet. They were big. But then, he reasoned, a magnificent body needed magnificent feet and legs to carry it.

While Emu continued to gaze adoringly at his feet, Kookaburra squashed a laugh. His plan was working well and didn't want to spoil it by laughing out of turn. 'Feet aren't really important', he said as he interrupted Emu's thoughts. 'Wings are the main thing.' Emu nodded and puffed out his chest. Then, in a moment of great pride, he spread out his glorious wings to their full span. 'Oh marvellous, marvellous!' admired Kookaburra. 'What an honour to see such a sight.' He spread out his own small brown and white wings, but Emu laughed nastily and said, 'I wouldn't bother if I were you'. Kookaburra quickly pulled his wings in and said, 'I know my wings aren't twin rainbows, but I can fly fast and high. I could even fly to the sun if I wanted to'.

'Fly to the sun', Emu scoffed. You're not only dull but stupid too!' 'You can insult me as much as you like', taunted Kookaburra, 'but that won't change the fact that while my wings are small and light, yours are big and heavy. It's only logical that I must be able to fly faster and higher than you'.

Emu was outraged. What a nasty, horrible little bird Kookaburra was. 'You haven't got a brain in your head!' hissed Emu angrily. 'That may be so', said Kookaburra, 'but that still doesn't mean you can fly to the sun. You're just too big and fat!' 'I am not!' screeched Emu. 'I can beat you at anything, any day, any time. I challenge you to a flying contest tomorrow at dawn.' Kookaburra shook his head. 'No good', he said. 'I will only accept your challenge if we fly at noon. That way everyone can see me win. And I want to go first!' 'Oh no you're not!' objected Emu. 'It's my challenge so I'll go first. Noon it is!'

Kookaburra was so excited that Emu had fallen so easily into his trap that he couldn't help emitting a small, mocking laugh, 'Haa, haa...' 'What was that?' asked Emu suspiciously. 'Aah, aah... nothing. I was just clearing my throat.' Emu sent him a withering glance and then returned to looking at himself in the billabong. Kookaburra, feeling very pleased with himself, flew off to find a resting place for the night. The sun was beginning to set, and he wanted to have a good sleep so he could enjoy the next day. 'Oh yes', he chuckled to himself, 'the sun is not only brightest at noonday, but hottest too. I am going to have fun with Emu.'

Towards noon the next day all the bush creatures gathered at the billabong to see who would win this unusual challenge. Emu hadn't had such a large audience for ages. he pranced, preened and strutted through the crowd. Now and then he spread out his extraordinary wings for show. And in moments of silence he burst into song about himself. 'Poor Kookaburra', sighed Kangaroo, who was the official starter. 'He hasn't got a chance. I almost wish he could win, just to teach Emu a lesson.'

When the sun stood directly over the tallest tree on a nearby hill, Emu knew it was time to begin. He turned to Kookaburra and said unpleasantly, 'If I were you I'd never fly again after I'm done!' 'After you're done...' retorted Kookaburra, but his voice trailed away. He wanted to say, 'You'll be done all right - well done!' But he didn't. Instead he hung and feigned sadness. Just ignore him, Kookaburra', said Wombat, who was a friendly creature. Emu raised one big foot over Wombat, who quickly scurried away.

'Are you ready, Emu?' asked Kangaroo. 'Of course I am!' 'Right, stand back everyone', commanded Kangaroo. Emu strutted to the starting line. 'On your mark.' Emu dug in his claws and leant forward. 'Get ready.' Emu breathed deeply and puffed out his chest. 'Go!' Emu was off, taking great strides down past the billabong and into the clearing. His huge wings spread out, his feet and legs disappeared under him, and he was away. Soon he was no more than a small, dark speck on the wide horizon. A speck that gradually grew smaller and smaller as it moved towards the sun. It wasn't long before he'd disappeared completely. 'Ooh!' they all gasped when a small, bright red ball suddenly exploded and shot out from the surface of the sun.

'What's happening?' asked Wombat. No one bothered to reply. They were all too busy running for cover as the flaming crimson ball grew larger and larger and plummeted to earth. The whistling sound the ball made grew louder and louder until suddenly there was a huge splash. The ball had landed in the billabong. Steam hissed and billowed everywhere. Once the bush creatures had stopped coughing they all began to creep out from behind their separate hiding places.

Kangaroo bravely led the way back to the billabong. 'Argh!' they all screamed in horror when a strange-looking head on a long thin neck popped up out of the water. 'Is...is...is that you, Emu?' asked Wombat nervously. Then he began to chuckle at what he thought was his foolishness. Of course it wasn't Emu. Emu didn't look anything like that. But Kookaburra, realising what had happened, began to laugh and laugh. The mud-coloured monster with the strange head and long neck stood up, shook himself and walked from the water. He glared disgustedly at Kookaburra, who was practically hysterical, and said, 'Yes, it is me. I am Emu'.

There was stunned silence. 'But where are your beautiful feathers?' croaked Frog. 'Burnt', choked Emu. 'What about your wings?' 'They exploded when I reached the sun. All I have left now are these small, brown stumps. I don't think I will be able to fly any more. It looks like you've got the last laugh after all, Kookaburra,' finished Emu tearfully.

Everyone looked accusingly at Kookaburra. Emu had been terribly vain, but he didn't deserve this. Kookaburra didn't feel the tiniest bit guilty. He congratulated himself on having the last laugh as he flew off into the bush cackling, 'Kook, kook, koo, kaa, kaa, haa, haa...'

When the water in the billabong finally settled and Emu was able to have a good look at his new appearance, he was so embarrassed that he ran away as fast as his legs would carry him. For days and days he ran. For weeks and weeks he ran. He ran so much that he became very very good at it. Soon he was the fastest running bird in Australia. And it wasn't long before he was singing a new song:

I love my great big feet!  
I love my strong, fast legs!  
I run so fast, you eat my dust,  
I'm the fastest bird around!

## APPENDIX 5.1 Paddy Roe's narrative

From: Roe, Paddy (1983) *Gularabulu: stories from the West Kimberley*. Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press. Edited by Stephen Muecke.:31-33.

### WORAWORA WOMAN

Well this man proper man had two woman in camp -  
an' he's a strong man that fella well I mean he can feed that two woman -  
that's why he's strong you know he, he can get lotta food -  
walkin' you know -

well he used to kill goanna -  
everything -  
bring pleenty o' meat you know plenty everything tucker for these two women -

so one day come -  
that old fella paint himself with everything -  
he want to find this woman if it true -  
it's true all right he come out in 'im -  
so he got this woman too an' he got 'nother two over there proper womans in his  
camp you know -  
all right -  
oh this woman foller 'im round he got this, thing too, to carry -  
everything what that man kill you know (Stephen: Yeah) -  
tucker for them two women too -  
all right -  
oh he got 'nuf dis -  
coolamon is full now you know with the tucker goanna everything -  
"Oh well that 'nuf" -  
all right he -  
he stop in one, tree -  
they siddown -  
"All right you take this one" -  
he tell that woman -  
"An' I'll take this one back to my 'nother two woman in camp" -  
"No" he say -  
"No you not takin' anything back it's all mine" -

(Laughs) he come back -  
come back in his two woman -  
so that woman disappeared with his tucker an' everything it's gone -  
this man goback of he's too tired now can't get nomore -  
everything enough to goback home he's hungry -  
he had two woman waiting for him -  
see -  
only with spear hunting stick tommyhawk in his belt -  
"Ooh what wrong?" they tell-im -  
"No not got nothing" he say "I been everywhere can't find anything" -  
he didn't want to tell, these two woman -

ah -  
he's bin doin' this for aaaall the time -  
so this man off dis way -  
but that woman is there too -  
he kill eeverything what he can get he pull everything out of his belt -  
that man you know put-im in his little, that thing -  
he must carry all them things -  
he bin doin' this for ooh ---

(Speaks to Butcher Joe in Nyigina)

smoke -

all right? -

no I means -

he just asked me if -

that smoke all right, eh -

it's not -- (Stephen: Oh that's all right) aah (Stephen: He wants to move? no he's all right too --

aah so oine day come - "Ah well you bin little bit too long comin' back with these things" he tell-im "No tucker" -

these two women tell-im --

"You must be got somebody" --

tell

## APPENDIX 5.2 Jimmy Jungarrayi's narrative

From: Jungarrayi, Jimmy (1994) Patilirrikirli / About Patilirri. In: *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories: Yimikirli*. Peggy Rockman & Lee Cataldi (eds.) San Francisco, Harper Collins.:93-103.

### PATILIRRIKIRLI / ABOUT PATILIRRI

*Ngayirnanngu ngarrirni kuruwarri nyampu. Yali karnangku wangka - yali Ngatijirripurda ngulangurlu ngula yanurnu. Kuja puwaly-ngunaja. Well wiri yaliji ka ngunami, wiri ka nguna nyanayiji Patilirriji ngalipanyanguju. Wiri ka nguna Patilirri. Yalumpungurlunypala yanu yangkaji yalikirra. Kuja yimpijirri wirrinykuru yalirlilki purda-nyanyi, yalirralu yingajili....*

Well, I will now describe this section of our Law. I have the right to tell this story, and I can tell it truthfully. The budgerigars belonging to the dreaming came from that place. There were so many they covered the area bright green. Well, Patilirri, our place, is a very, very important place. Patilirri is a very important place.

Two men came towards that place, from some distance away. Please follow what I say closely so that when you tell the story later others can learn from you. The two men set out from over there, the two men in the dreaming. We call them 'the two men'.

The two men set out from that place there. They went up into the sky. They returned to the ground. Then they came this way. They went towards the south, past Yurlpawarnu. Past Yurlpawarnu they travelled. I am not going to follow their story any further in that direction.

While they were in the north they had collected food, jatpiji, a kind of yam. This is the story as it has been demonstrated to me. At the place where there are many jatpiji, they collected them. In this way they travelled, past Yurlpawarnu. They had seen the place, that was one of the places they had seen.

One of them went by himself to hunt in the west. He prepared himself to go alone into the west. This is how those two young men travelled, the young men from Wawarlja. Later they saw each other again. The two of them travelled together this way to a place just over there. Then they arrived.

What were they thinking about? Were they missing their own country? They were becoming homesick for Jarra-jarra, for their own country. They flew up into the sky and went to Jarra-jarra. They came down right at Jarra-jarra. Then, later, they left Jarra-jarra, they left Jarra-jarra and came to Patilirri.

What happened then?

Now I will tell you what happened at Patilirri. From Patilirri they came towards here. I know this story well. They went to a sacred place. I am going to continue revealing this law to you. All this time they had been thinking, thinking.

Where did they go after that?

One person had been considering where the two young men should go and what they should see next. He went east, this older person. This Jangala took the two men to Warlangarra. I cannot say any more about this. They ran to Warlangarra. The two men went there. However, because it is a matter of shame, I cannot tell you about the journey to Ngarnka.

Later the two men, the two initiated men, came back in this direction. Over there they speared an emu. They had been following it as it came towards here. All the other people ate the emu. They ate the lot. They left nothing. Then, at this point, the two men came across a whole flock of budgerigars. The budgerigars, the budgerigars of the dreaming, had come south from Ngarnaja in the west. You can also travel that way yourself. We got to Pulupu, where there is a ramp gate. This all lies on the way to Patilirri in the west.

From Patilirri, the budgerigars flew away spreading out towards Jurntu, towards Yinapaka and Warlangarra and Karntawarranyungu and Murlinjarri. Coming from Murlinjarri they ate, but coming from Ngayirrirnti they did not eat. From Ngayirrirnti they went straight to Kumpurlawurru. Kumpurlaurru is the place we also call Kartawaljanyungu, beside Pussy Cat Bore, in the east. I will tell you this dreaming as it goes over there. All this country lies in the country belonging to us, the people of the budgerigars, and we the owners always live in the country that belongs to us.

Then the budgerigars went across, towards the east, to Yamuru. The budgerigars went towards the east. Then they went along the south side toward Pujupa, expecting to see the



hill. They went to Yukurranji. From one single place, that one just over there, they had spread out everywhere. They went everywhere, and we follow in their tracks. Then the white cockatoo saw them. The cockatoo, the one who lives in hollow trees, got ready. We call this cockatoo warlkirri, purluwanti or winingarri. It has many names. He approached. He saw them.

At this point another dreaming, a yam, came rolling along. The cockatoo grabbed the yam in his claws, like a thief. Then he began to dance with the yam, playing with it. At that place, he stole the yam and kept it. At Yinapaka, the cockatoo looked around, he sang. Then he took the yam from there. If you had been here yesterday, you would have heard the ceremony. This next part at Yinapaka is very sacred.

In the west, the budgerigars were standing in the smoke.

While he was singing the cockatoo was looking around. He sat down. In that place he created many children. Then he came back from there to Ngarnaja. From Ngarnaja he went to Murlinjarri, to the place in the south where the dreamings met together.

I am telling you the truth about these events when all these dreamings met up together. They met together, they went their separate ways. They met again.

From Murlinjarri and from Karntawarranyungu, they ate on their way back to Ngarnaja. From Ngarnaja, the budgerigars went back again to Yinapaka. From Yinapaka, they came directly to Patilirri. There were so many, they covered Patilirri, they travelled to the hills that stand along Yammarnpatu, near Yuendumu. There they stand.

There they ate. Then they travelled all the way to Jurntu. From Warlangarra, other budgerigars looked toward the west, watching them land at Jurntu, turning the whole area green. They went all the way to Docker River where they stopped because they were tired, over there, a long, long, long way.

I know the whole of this dreaming, the songs, and also I have walked around the whole of this country. I have followed the tracks of the budgerigars. I have followed their travels to the east. I have followed them everywhere they went. I can relate this law.

Then the one which is mine came back this way. At that place, the two men came, following the emu.

Since I am telling you about this dreaming, perhaps my brother might like to listen to it, the other one who is not well, and who wears glasses, the other one who is no longer very well. I can tell you all about this law, and also the country that belongs to it.

Well, the budgerigars that belong to us lay down and slept there just in the south, at the place whose name is Patilirri. From that place, from Patilirri, the two young men walked around visiting different places near the Granites. The budgerigars spread everywhere and multiplied, all coming from the one place. Because of this, we people who live in the west, the south, along the north side, are all from one family.

The other one, the thief, the one who lives in a hollow tree, the one also called purluwanti, still walks around in this country as well. He goes around stealing things. He has stolen many things. For example, when that other dreaming came into the south, the one who came from Pawu, well, while the thief was walking about he saw it: 'I say, look at this thing bouncing along! That one over there seems to get along by bouncing.'

Having flown around it and examined it, he picked it up, after he had circled it a few times. he looked at it. He picked it up and held it in front of his eyes. He picked it up and stole it. Then he played with it. Out on the flat country to the east, he played with it. Then he came across other people sleeping. From them he stole a sacred object and flew away, leaving them still asleep.

He went. He went to Kuwangkarni!, to Kuwangkarni. 'You can all stay here. I am off to Kuwangkarni!' He went. From there, he went to Murlinjarri. He travelled about stealing things.

There are many sacred stories here. I am telling you all this correctly, so that you will be able to pass this on. We also belong to the country just along the north side, which is the wind dreaming, which came this way from Watiyajirri. The dreaming which we find here, the wind dreaming, has its home just in the south and it came here from Wangkapurlawarnu. Yes. If you had been here yesterday you would have heard some of this one. It really belongs to the Warrumungu and Warnmanpa people.

The songs that belong to the Warrumungu and Warnmanpa side are ones that we sing loudly and quickly, not like the jardiwanpa songs. As owners we also follow the tracks of these Warrumungu and Warnmanpa dreamings to the north and back again. We are sitting here in a

place which is also one of their places. Later we will be able to go to all the places that belong to them. That one has come along to this place which is one of the places which belongs to it. Kunangunjungunju, that is the name of the dwelling, Kunangunjungunju. The two young men followed the emu there. Do you see them as they come towards here?

## APPENDIX 6.1

### A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF DAVID UNAIPON

*But the age-long problem of perpetual motion dominated my mind through the years, and I made various models with which I experimented from time to time. I am still pursuing the subject, always travelling but never reaching the goal.*

(Unaipon, 1951:12)

#### INTRODUCTION

Unaipon's life was indeed a long journey. In the last years of his life he was still seeking assistance to solve 'the problem of perpetual motion'. At the age of 91 he implored the anthropologist, Professor T.G.H. Strehlow, to help him have a small part machined for his perpetual motion model:

You get that [done for me] Mr Strehlow, and you'd be doing a service to your country and to me. I'm proving that a weight falling one eighth will go back and accelerate itself.... Yes. Gets faster and faster, until it reaches its limit. Everything has a limit in motion. You know that.

(Cath Ellis Interview, June 1963)

To solve the mystery of perpetual motion, and to demonstrate his findings with his specially machined model, was the coveted destination of David Unaipon's life's journey. But, like motion, there were limits on what Unaipon was able to achieve in life, and these limitations were imposed upon him by both his own and white society. He was born an Aboriginal man, and no matter how clever, or how well-read, or how ambitious he was, he was born in an era that placed severe limits on what an Indigenous person could achieve. He died in February 1967, just a few months before Aboriginal people won themselves status as citizens of Australia, through a national referendum held on May 27.

David Unaipon was an ambitious man, and for much of his life he craved the things that the white man's world had to offer. But they would only let him take so much. He was able to invent things, and to patent his inventions, but it was up to him to finance their further development. He was also able to write, but in order to have his works published in his own name, again he had to finance them himself. Unfortunately for him, finding the money for such self gratifying 'indulgences' was well beyond the means of any Aboriginal person in the pre-depression years of the 1920s. Even offers of payment for his writing had to be sent via an agent to circumvent the restrictions of current laws regarding the direct payment of money to Aboriginal people.<sup>1</sup>

It cannot be denied, however, that Unaipon did achieve many remarkable things throughout his long life. One of them, of course, was to become the first Indigenous person to publish in the genre of Dreaming narratives. Another was to become the most well-known Indigenous Australian of his time, largely through his public speaking, lay preaching and his regular appearances in the daily newspapers. A third was to become the most prolific inventor among his people, eventually taking out 10 different patents for various mechanical devices (Jones, 1989). For such achievements he earned himself two medals, including a Coronation Medal in 1953, and the posthumous honour in 1996 of having his portrait feature on the new Australian \$50 note.

However, this all came at a cost. To win favour with his white supporters, he had to take care with what he said and who he criticised, knowing full well there was much to complain about regarding the plight of his people. Because of his fame, Aboriginal people looked towards him as their spokesperson, assuming his loyalties would always lie with them. But sometimes Unaipon's gentlemanly manner, florid speech, and extravagant style of dressing

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<sup>1</sup> See Ronald Briggs interview on the program "Between The Lines" A.B.C. Television, November 19, 1997. Unaipon nominated as his agent the Adelaide booksellers E.S. Wigg and Son (see Mitchell Library papers MSS 314/85).

betrayed his true loyalties, and revealed his own strong personal ambitions in life. His eloquence of speech found him sought after by the media, and other white institutions, for his opinions on critical political decisions regarding the ever-present 'problem of the Aborigines'. As his financial needs grew over the years, and his burning ambition to solve the 'more pressing problem' of perpetual motion persisted, Unaipon began to take more care about speaking out.

At times Unaipon's own behaviour attracted criticism from those white people he considered his 'friends'. His pretensions and, at times, 'devious' fund raising activities also drew criticism from his own people. At Point McLeay mission station, in South Australia, his own people learnt to take care in what they told him, knowing he was soon to head back to the city where he would sell their stories to 'the white man'. Then in the late 1930s, as Unaipon vacillated from one side of the political fence to the other on a couple of key Aboriginal issues, he earned himself the reputation as a traitor to the Aboriginal cause.

His own people, however, will be the first to acknowledge that Unaipon had an amazing and inquiring mind that never seemed to stop. He considered life to be a quest for learning, and took great effort to avail himself of the same books, journals and museum visits on offer to any well-educated white gentleman. His life was consumed by a long and passionate scientific journey of discovery, and he could not help but ask the questions that others didn't think to ask. He always had to try an alternative means of doing something, and had little fear of failure or ridicule. He seemed compelled to be different from his Black brothers, and to strive to try things that had never been tried before. Even when he went fishing on the shores of Lake Alexandrina, Unaipon experimented with different baits that no other Ngarrindjeri would think of using. For years they had successfully used worms or mussels, or other well tried baits that were known to catch the biggest of freshwater fish. But Unaipon had to try cheese! For this his people didn't ridicule him; they simply shook their heads at their so-called 'Black genius' and went away with their big catch, laughing behind his back (personal communication: Doug Wilson, February 2000).

But the political issues confronting Aboriginal people in the middle of the depression in the 1930s were no laughing matter. The more militant Aboriginal leaders, who were emerging from newly formed Aboriginal organisations in the eastern states, had had enough of inequality. In October 1937, the New South Wales-based Australian Aborigines' League "Petitioned the King" regarding their grievances on numerous Aboriginal issues. They called for Aboriginal representation in parliament, and for the King to help: "prevent the extinction of the aboriginal race and give better conditions for all" (Mortlock Library SRG 139/1/379/2). This did not please John H. Sexton, the secretary of the South Australian-based A.F.A., who seemed to have a financial hold on Unaipon.<sup>2</sup> Sexton publicly scorned the Petition in a newspaper article, contesting that "the signatories to the petition are mainly people of mixed blood and are not content like the old aborigines to accept their fate in the old uncomplaining spirit" (*The Advertiser* October 27, 1937; also Mortlock SRG 139/1/379/2).

It could be argued that Unaipon became Sexton's 'full-blooded' puppet in the late 1930s, as he became more and more dependent on the A.F.A. for financial support, in order to fulfill his dreams as a successful inventor. In January 1938, Unaipon wrote a letter to the Department of the Interior (addressed from Sexton's office in Adelaide) deploring the proposed Day of Mourning, which was to coincide with Australia's sesqui-centenary celebrations of the country's 'foundation'. It was to be held thirteen days later on Australia Day, January 26, 1938. Unaipon's letter was released publicly, and stated:

This day of mourning is a huge mistake for it is of a political character. The movement is largely an emotional one sponsored by sympathetic white people and half castes in order to call attention to native grievances. But the fifty thousand full

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<sup>2</sup> Sexton had had a long running feud with Colonel Chas Genders, who had prepared a Manifesto in the mid 1920s proposing a separate 'Model Aboriginal State'. Unaipon was the only Aboriginal signatory, and spent many hours collecting further signatures for a petition on the proposal, which was presented to Federal Parliament in October 1927. However, Unaipon eventually succumbed to Sexton's wishes and retracted his earlier convictions for a separate Black State (see Mortlock, SRG 139/1/65)

blooded aboriginals will have very little part in this matter, these will stoically and silently await the coming of a new day.

(A.F.A. Records, Mortlock SRG 139/1/379/2)

Unaipon's letter did not earn him any Black friends. It immediately elicited an angry response from W. Cooper of the Australian Aborigines' League, who responded with another public letter.

Inevitably it was Unaipon's stance on important issues such as the Day of Mourning that earned him the reputation of being white man's 'puppet'. Unaipon grew used to such criticism. He also reneged on the issue of the proposed separate Model Aboriginal State, which he had championed in the mid 1920s. Sexton, and therefore the A.F.A., were strongly opposed to such a proposal. Hence, Unaipon also retracted his earlier commitment in the same 1938 letter: "The time is past to talk of segregation. Let my people come more fully into the national family." (cf. Unaipon in *The Herald* November 22, 1930: magazine section). It is ironic that, with this particular point, Cooper would probably have agreed.

Twenty five years earlier, at the 1913 Royal Commission, regarding the current plight of Aboriginal people, rather than supporting the A.F.A., Unaipon had openly criticised them for their treatment of his people. He actually requested that the Government take over the running of the Point McLeay Mission Station.<sup>3</sup> It seems, however, Unaipon was later to regret his faith in the government, because by 1926 there were calls for yet another enquiry, to be held at Point McLeay, where Unaipon was a key player in presenting a petition that called for less power being vested in the government position of Chief Protector of Aborigines. He also called for an Aboriginal person to be appointed as "a sub-protector of the natives", and for the appointment of a board who would be "sympathetic towards them". Such radical demands did not go down well with the white superintendant at Point McLeay, who later had Unaipon arrested on paltry charges, and subsequently gaoled at Meningie (A.F.A. Records, Mortlock SRG139/1/92).

This idea of appointing a board was later seized upon by Sexton, who also wrote a letter to the Minister of the Interior, five days after Unaipon's infamous 1938 letter. He was very much against Aboriginal representation in parliament, but suggested an alternative: "the appointment of an Advisory Board for a term of three years, on which there should be two full blooded native representatives".<sup>4</sup> Of course, Sexton's recommendation was that "one might be David Unaipon", but he quickly continued to reassure the Minister that this "need not be expensive, there need be no fees paid except for the natives, who must, be decently clothed and their necessities provided for" (A.F.A. Records, Mortlock 139/1/379/2).

Paradoxically, such confronting and contradictory revelations on Unaipon's political stand seemed to have just furthered his reputation as the "Best Known Aborigine" (see *The Advertiser* February 8, 1967:3). When one considers the span of Unaipon's life, by the time he was supposedly betraying his people he was a man in his late 60s. His life's passion was still science, and he was yet to solve his enigmatic problem of perpetual motion. Nor had he secured the finances to see any of his patents developed into viable commercial concerns. He had written earlier of life as a journey "into the stream of time", where one is eventually "tossed by the angry waves. Onward and onward" (see "Narrinyeri saying" Unaipon, 1927 & 1929). It seems Unaipon slowly came to the realisation that if he were ever to reach his destiny, he would be forced to weather life's storms within the strong hull of the A.F.A. boat, under the particular navigation of its general secretary Rev. J.H. Sexton.

As Unaipon's journey progressed, and his chosen destiny became even more distant, it seems Unaipon became more disillusioned, even with his Christian faith. Unaipon was

<sup>3</sup> To be fair to Unaipon, the Mission was undergoing severe unrest at the time, with the local people finding themselves in conflict with a string of unsuitable superintendants (see Jenkin, 1979:171-242). As a result of this commission, control of Point McLeay mission was taken over by the state government in 1916.

<sup>4</sup> The following year, in 1939, The Aborigines Act 1934 was amended in S.A.. This amendment involved the complete abolition of the position of Chief Protector, and its replacement with the Aborigines Protection Board. This board did not comprise any Aboriginal representation.

invited to preach in many Christian churches throughout south eastern Australia for much of his life, yet he said in an interview at the age of 90, "I don't believe in Jesus Christ ... No, Ngayaringunand is what is bore in us - the Great Spirit. Not Jesus Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary. It's an insult to say that... And saved by the Holy Ghost. That's blasphemy, is it?"<sup>5</sup> Such a revelation reveals that in the later stages of his life Unaipon was not only a disillusioned man, but also a confused soul. Like motion, it seems Unaipon too had his limits.

Throughout the following essay, I iron out some of the confusion and contradiction that surrounds the contemporary mythology on David Unaipon's life. I also reflect on the turbulent political times in which Unaipon lived, and the severity of the storms he had to weather during his 94 years of life. Throughout this time, Unaipon was continually confronted with racist white attitudes that placed Aboriginal people at the bottom of a social pecking order - even by his white Christian 'friends'. My analysis of Unaipon's writing, a major focus within the main body of my thesis, will reveal that Unaipon was forever fighting, counter-arguing, or at times trying to rationalise scientifically the racist white attitudes that he and his people were forced to endure on the rough seas of life. The purpose of this essay is to summarise various aspects of Unaipon's life which inevitably influenced his writings on Aboriginal issues and topics, and of course the way he chose to represent his Dreaming narratives in print.

## UNAIPON THE MAN<sup>6</sup>

David Unaipon was born on September 28, 1872 on Ngarrindjeri land in the Lower Murray and Lakes region of South Australia.<sup>7</sup> Seventy nine years later (at the Annual Meeting of the A.F.A. in 1951) he tells us: "I made my advent into this world in a native wurley along the banks of the River Murray at Taillem Bend". However, in the interview conducted in 1963 at Point McLeay, Unaipon, at the age of 91 years, contradicts his earlier claim and says he was born on Point McLeay mission in his father's stone cottage, which was built with funds provided to his father by a Mrs. Smith of Dunesk in Scotland.

Unaipon's parents were Ngarrindjeri people of South Australia: "My father and mother were full-blood aborigines belonging to the Lower Murray Tribes, and we lived according to the customs of a primitive race" (Unaipon, 1951:10). His father was James Ngunaitponi, a member of a clan from the Wellington region of the Lower Murray River.<sup>8</sup> Unaipon says he was a Warrawaldi man ("that's the Unaipon tribe") and that his language was "Potawolin" (Cath Ellis interview, June 1963).<sup>9</sup> Unaipon's mother was Nymbulda, and Unaipon himself

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<sup>5</sup> This interview with David Unaipon was conducted at Raukkan (then Point McLeay) by the ethnomusicologist Dr. Cath Ellis in February 1963. Ellis conducted two interviews in 1963, one at Raukkan in February, and another in Adelaide in June. It seems the June interview was conducted in the presence of the anthropologist Professor Strehlow. The original tapes are now held at AIATSIS in Canberra. Copies of two tapes of Unaipon are held in Adelaide at the Flinders University, Copy Tapes 10 & 11.

<sup>6</sup> Because the explicit intent of this thesis is to privilege the voices and opinions of Indigenous Australians, much of the information below about David Unaipon's early life is quoted directly from him, either from reprints of two autobiographical talks given in the 1950s, or from two interviews conducted with Unaipon in the early 1960s by non-Indigenous researchers.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the articles and newspaper reports on David Unaipon vary regarding his age and date of birth. According to the official register of "Births Deaths and Marriages" from Point McLeay, now held in the Mortlock Library (SRG 698/1/1) he was born on September 28, 1872. He died on February 7, 1967, at the age of 94 years (cf. the 96 years reported in *The Advertiser* Feb 8, 1967:3)

<sup>8</sup> Unaipon's father, James Ngunaitponi, probably took the Christian name "James" on being converted to Christianity. His Indigenous name "Ngunaitponi" was spelt by Taplin in both the anglicised form "Unaipon", and its phonemic form "Ngunaitponi". David Unaipon himself stated in an article in the *Daily Herald* (June 1, 1914) that his family name should be spelt with the initial Ng (velar nasal) sound, but then proceeded to sign his name in the anglicised form (see Jenkin, 1979:21). Throughout this thesis I use the anglicised form "David Unaipon", because it is this form with which most people today are familiar, and it is with this spelling that Unaipon signed his manuscripts.

<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to know how to spell this term for David Unaipon's language group. Unaipon himself pronounces it 'Palthawarrin' (with an interdental stop 'th' and a trilled rhotic 'r'). Jenkin (1979:21) spells it

tells us she was from Tatiara, which is on the eastern side of Lake Albert on the way to Meningie.<sup>10</sup> He says the language she spoke was Yaraldikald.<sup>11</sup> He also says that his mother's father migrated from the Wimmera, and settled at Tatiara, at the Granite rocks on the eastern shores of Lake Albert. He mentions two camping grounds in that area: Kakandjurra and Kalawandjurran (Cath Ellis interview, Feb. 1963).

### Unravelling Unaipon's clan identity

David Unaipon's specific clan identity is confusing, and at times contradictory. For this reason, I wish to digress briefly, and investigate further the published literature regarding the linguistic groupings and social structure of the Lower Murray and Lakes people of South Australia. In more recent years these people have become collectively known as the "Ngarrindjeri nation", particularly since the 1979 publication of historian Graham Jenkin's book *Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri*. For his book, Jenkin drew heavily on the diaries and published ethnographic research of Rev. George Taplin, the founder of the Point McLeay mission. Taplin also referred to them as a "nation", which was divided into "tribes" or "clans", but he adopted an alternative spelling for the nation's name: "Narrinyeri" (Taplin, 1879b:1).<sup>12</sup> Paradoxically, much of the language and ethnographic material, as well as the Biblical translation work, published later by Taplin (1864a, 1864b, 1878, 1879a & 1879b) was only made possible because of the capable assistance of James Ngunaitponi, David Unaipon's father.

The land of the Ngarrindjeri nation, according to Jenkin (1979:11), is "a great triangle of land" extending from the western extremity of Cape Jervis on the tip of Fleurieu Peninsula, north to Swanport on the Murray River, and south around Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert and stretching further south along the Coorong to Kingston. Taplin (1879a:34) designates the north-eastern extremity as twenty miles above Wellington on the Murray River. The anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt, by contrast, are more generous with their boundaries. They place the northern boundary much higher on the Fleurieu Peninsula, going as far north as Port Noarlunga, well into land that even today is widely acknowledged as being Kaurna land (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993 cf. Education Department of S.A., 1989 & 1990).<sup>13</sup>

Berndt & Berndt, (1993:303-12) distinguish ten distinct groupings of the Ngarrindjeri, and for each of these they list many subgroups, or clan groups, with a total of 77 clan names. The three most commonly mentioned groups are: the Yaraldi of the Lakes district (with 37 clans), the Tangani of the Coorong (with 18 clans), and the Ramindjeri of Encounter Bay (with 14 clans). But they also list the: Malganduwa, Marunggulindjeri, Naberuwolin,

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as "Potauwallin", while Berndt & Berndt use the spelling "Potawolin" (1993:303&306) or "Porthaulun" (1993:2).

<sup>10</sup> The spelling I am using is the one used in the Point McLeay Births, Deaths and Marriages Register, and that used in newspaper articles about David Unaipon. However, in Bell (1998:230) her name is spelt "Nymbulindjeri". In her later years, David Unaipon's mother became affectionately known as Granny Unaipon, and lived to over 100 years of age (Bell, 1998:128).

<sup>11</sup> The suffix "-kald" is glossed with the meaning 'language' or 'tongue' in Meyer (1843), therefore "Yaraldikald" literally means 'the language of the Yaraldi'.

<sup>12</sup> It is only in more recent times, probably since Jenkin's (1979) publication, that the spelling of "Ngarrindjeri" has taken its present form, with a word initial velar nasal sound. The same phenomenon (of changing the initial alveolar nasal to a velar nasal, N -> Ng) has also occurred for the contemporary standardised spelling of the important Ancestral Hero "Ngurunderi" (discussed further in chapter eight). It is unclear, at this stage, why this has happened, and who initiated the change. Possibly it is a case of hypercorrection, or the unconscious divergence of Ngarrindjeri words away from the phonotactics of English.

<sup>13</sup> Ethnographic research was conducted by the Berndts predominantly at Murray Bridge between 1939 and 1942. They referred to this larger collective of people as the "Narrinyeri" or "Kukabrak". Their most comprehensive work from this region was published in 1993, after Ronald's death, as *A world that was: the Yaraldi of the Murray River and the Lakes, South Australia*. According to the Berndts, their main sources of information were "the memories" of Albert Karloan and Pinkie Mack, both of the Yaraldi clan, hence the title. Karloan was of the "Manangki clan of the Yaraldi", while Pinkie Mack's father was of the "Yaraldi Piltindjeri clan", who occupied land on the eastern shores of Lake Alexandrina near Wellington, the same district from which James Ngunaitponi came (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993:4-8).

Potawolin, Wakend, Walerumaldi and Wonyakaldi. According to the Berndts, each of these groups had their own distinct language, and each language had a number of distinct dialects spoken by the different clan groups. But many of these dialects had in fact "become extinct" by the time the Berndts conducted their field work (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993:6).

By contrast, Taplin's earlier (1879a:34 & 1879b) ethnographic work divides the Ngarrindjeri nation into just 18 clans or "Lakinyeri"<sup>14</sup>, which is replicated in Jenkin (1979:23) along with each clan's Totems, or "Ngaitye":

1. Ramindjeri - Encounter Bay - Wattle gum
2. Tanganarin - Goolwa - Pelican
3. Kondarlindjeri - Murray Mouth (west side) - Whale
4. Lungundi - Murray Mouth (east side) - Tern
5. Turarom - Mundoo Island - Coot
6. Pakindjeri - Lake Coorong - Butterfish
7. Kanmerarom - Lake Coorong - Mullet
8. Kaikalabindjeri - Lake Albert (south side) - Bull ant
9. Mungulindjeri - Lake Albert (east side) - Chocolate Sheldrake
10. Rangulindjeri - Lake Albert Passage - Wild dog, dark colour
11. Karatindjeri - Point Malcolm - Wild dog, light colour
12. Piltindjeri - Lake Alexandrina (east end) - Leeches, Catfish
13. Korowalie - Lake Alexandrina (north side) - Whipsnake
14. Punguratpular - Milang (Lake Alexandrina) - Musk duck
15. Welindjeri - River Murray - Black duck, Red belly black snake
16. Luthindjeri - River Murray - Black snake, Teal, Grey belly black snake
17. Wunyakulde - River Murray - Black duck
18. Ngrangatari - Lacedpede Bay - Kangaroo rat

The Ngarrindjeri marriage system was strictly exogamous, and individual clan identity was determined by patrilineal descent (see Taplin, 1879a:34-35). This means that one could only marry outside of one's own lakinyeri, with all children becoming members of their father's clan group. However, they also inherited custodial rights and responsibilities for their mother's clan. The subject of Jenkin's book is the colonisation of the Ngarrindjeri people, and the gradual breakdown of their culture, including the breakdown of the social order of the lakinyerar. Because of the rapidity of this breakdown, it is difficult to reconcile the contradictions in group and clan names between Unaipon's first-hand account, versus Berndt & Berndt, versus Taplin and Jenkin.<sup>15</sup>

The Berndts' reference to the "Potawolin" language (or "Porthaulun", see Berndt & Berndt, 1993:2-3,303), as quite distinct from the Yaraldi language, seems in accordance with David Unaipon's view. We are told by the Berndts (1993:2-3), and by Unaipon himself, that Potawolin was the language spoken by his father. Unaipon also makes a point of distinguishing his father's language from that of his mother's, which he called "Yaraldikald".<sup>16</sup> He promotes his father's language as being: "softer, more musical" (Cath Ellis interview, June 1963). Indeed, the Berndts (1993:303) mention that "David Unaipon told us that while Potawolin referred to the language spoken, the people referred to themselves as Waruwaldi". Because they had not previously heard this term, they went on to assume that Unaipon had confused it with another major clan group the "Walerumaldi".

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<sup>14</sup> The plural form for "lakinyeri", according to Taplin, is "lakinyerar".

<sup>15</sup> In more contemporary times, some of the traditional Ngarrindjeri clan names have become family names (see Clarke, 1994). For example, Kartinyeri is derived from the lakinyeri "Karatindjeri". Some of the resultant family names have become anglicised, such as Cameron, derived from the lakinyeri "Kanmerarom". Similarly, the names of past individuals have become family names, and inevitably anglicised. According to Berndt & Berndt (1993:7), Pinkie Mack's father was called "Yakapeni (a variation of Karpeny) or Talpini Kapeni", from which the contemporary Ngarrindjeri family name Karpany was derived. Doreen Kartinyeri (in Bell, 1998:230) tells us that the family name "Koolmatrie" comes from the Ngarrindjeri name of the grandmother of David Unaipon.

<sup>16</sup> As with all his rhotics, Unaipon pronounces this language name with a trilled or rolled 'r' in the interview.



We are told by Jenkin (1979:21,117) that James Ngunaitponi came from the Wellington district, which was occupied by the Piltindjeri, who spoke the "Potauwallin" language.<sup>17</sup> The Berndts (1993:307), however, classify the "Piltindjera" clan as a subgroup of the Yaraldi, and refer to the "Yaraldi Piltindjeri clan" in reference to the father of Pinkie Mack (1993:7). Why do they consider the Piltindjeri clan as part of the Yaraldi group? And why do they dismiss the "Warrawaldi" clan name<sup>18</sup>, spoken of by Unaipon himself and in reference to him in other written sources?<sup>19</sup> I can only assume that the social structure of the Ngarrindjeri was very complex, and neither the Berndts nor Taplin were able to document it accurately before it broke down.

The Berndts also seem to have been liberal in the drawing of their language boundaries, particularly of the Yaraldi group. Speaking to Nungas today it is accepted by many that Unaipon is of the Yaraldi clan group (eg. personal communication, Owen Love, 1998), despite Uniapon's relatively recent claims of Yaraldikald being his mother's language. I was actually corrected when I referred to David Unaipon as Ngarrindjeri, rather than as "a Yaraldi man". This also contrasts with the findings of researchers Elaine Treagus and Ken Patterson in about 1960, when they were conducting research on "traditional languages at Point McLeay" for Fay Gale of the University of Adelaide. They interviewed David Unaipon, then aged in his late 80s, on several occasions and he said that his language was different to "Jaraldikald" (the language of Mr. Edgar Lampard who was also being interviewed), as he himself came from the "'Murray River' tribe" (Treagus & Patterson Report, c.1960).

When Taplin published his first translation of extracts from the Bible *Tungarar Jehovald*, in 1864, he refers to the language as "Yarildewallin".<sup>20</sup> His grammar, published a little later (1878:5) is said, however, to be of the "Language of the 'Narrinyeri' tribe". James Ngunaitponi was one of Taplin's main language informants (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:2). So was James multilingual, and asked to provide Yaraldi texts for Taplin in his language work, despite his own language being Potawolin? And had Yaraldi already become a lingua franca at the mission (being on Yaraldi land) hence the chosen vernacular for translation work? Or did Taplin assume that the two languages (Potawolin and Yaraldi) were one and the same, or at the most, minor variants of each other. He does state in the introduction to his grammar that: "There are some trifling variations of dialect between the clans that compose the tribe, but I do not perceive such a difference as would be an impediment" (Taplin, 1878:5).<sup>21</sup> We

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<sup>17</sup> Taplin also mentions, in a footnote, the "Piltinyerar" clan as living near Wellington on the Lower Murray (1879b:3).

<sup>18</sup> Unaipon's term "Warrawaldi" for the name of his clan, could possibly have its roots in the following explanation: Taplin's grammar (1878:10) lists the suffix -amalde is an Agentive suffix, meaning it is placed on words to indicate agency. For example "pettamalde" = 'the thief', the one who steals, cf. pettin 'to steal'. The word Warrame = 'left hand', which could possibly be the root of the compound word Warrame + -amalde = Warrawaldi "Those occupying the left side (of the Murray River)". This analysis is purely supposition on my part.

<sup>19</sup> In an article in *The Advertiser* (December 10, 1937:32) Unaipon is referred to by the reporter as "a full-blood and chief of the Warrawaldi tribe".

<sup>20</sup> The Ngarrindjeri verbal suffixes, -warrin CAUSATIVE and -wallin INCHOATIVE, deserve some analysis here. Taplin's grammar (1878:19) lists them as -warrin 'making or causing', and -wallin 'being'. Hence, "Yarildewallin" would mean those who are Yaralde. Unaipon refers to his father's language as "Palthawarrin" (Cath Ellis interview, June 1963). Taplin's wordlist (1879) provides the word "Puthawing" meaning "arm or wing". One can only surmise by analogy, that the etymology of Unaipon's language group is Puthawing + -wallin, meaning "those of the arm of the river (Murray)". Note that it is very common in Australian languages for words for land formations to be synonymous with body parts.

<sup>21</sup> I am aware of the contemporary linguistic debate (see Roy Harris, 1981, Toolan, 1996) that questions the very concept of a "language", and of the supposed artificial boundaries linguists place around different language varieties when distinguishing them from other language varieties. My use of the terms 'language' and 'dialect' is in line with the more conservative structuralist approach to linguistic descriptions of different speech varieties.

now probably have no way of ever knowing the degree of differences that existed between the different clan languages.<sup>22</sup>

### Unaipon's early mission life

James Ngunaitponi's people, of the Potawolin language group, occupied the land around Wellington, where the mighty Murray River enters The Lakes on the north-eastern shores of Lake Alexandrina. Of those early days on the Murray, his son David later wrote:

Day by day efforts had to be made to obtain a supply of food, either by securing game or fish from the Murray waters. There were large numbers of natives in those days encamped along this lifegiving stream, from the bosom of which their chief supply of food came. For generations the aborigines paid their respects to old man Murray upon whose waters they sailed their frail bark boats, on adventurous voyages as far as Lake Alexandrina and sometimes the Murray mouth.

(Unaipon, 1951:10)

James was to become the first convert to Christianity by the Scottish missionary Rev. James Reid, who based himself in February 1861 at the government depot at Wellington. With financial backing from Mrs. Smith of Dunesk, Reid spent his time proselytising the people of The Lakes region, assisted by his "two masted open boat". However, he was drowned just over two years later during a storm on Lake Alexandrina in July 1863, despite the numerous warnings offered him regarding the unpredictability of the lake. Rather than heed the warnings of the Ngarrindjeri, Reid preferred to rely on the "Almighty" to protect him (Jenkin, 1979:104-5; Unaipon, 1953:6).

Reid often visited Taplin, who had arrived in 1859 to establish Point McLeay mission on the southern shores of Lake Alexandrina. Reid told this busy missionary of his outstanding convert in James Ngunaitponi and, on Reid's death, Taplin asked James to join him at the mission as an assistant missionary. To this request James Ngunaitponi consented (Jenkin, 1979:117). So with the steady encroachment of white people onto Aboriginal land, and with James and his family moving to the mission at Point Mcleay, life slowly began to change for the Ngunaitponi family. Again Unaipon later wrote:

I can vividly recall those days of my youth, for our home life and the homes of others were greatly disturbed by the advent of the white man into tribal lands.... Through the want of understanding each other, white and black came into conflict. Spears were thrown, and the white man's superior weapons were used upon the natives with deadly effect. All this came about because the blackfellow did not understand the white man's aims, and neither side had a grasp of the language necessary for a proper understanding between them.

(Unaipon, 1951:10)

The mission at Point McLeay (later named Reid Town by Taplin in honour of Rev. James Reid, but now known as Raukkan) was established on the banks of Lake Alexandrina with the support of the non-denominational A.F.A. Like his father before him, Unaipon was also a realist, and knew that being on friendly terms with the mission staff was in his best short term interests:

The aborigines greatly resented the incursion of the newcomer into their domains, and it was only when the Aborigines' Friends' Association sent Mr. Taplin among them

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<sup>22</sup> Bell's (1998) book *Ngarrindjeri wurruwarrin: a world that is, was, and will be* is a contemporary response to the Berndts' book, and a feminist anthropologist's plea for recognition of what remains today of a distinct Ngarrindjeri culture and belief system. It is a pastiche of transcripts of contemporary interviews with Ngarrindjeri people, some conducted by Bell herself, and others gathered from the archives; all recorded in the last half of this century since the advent of tape recorders. These transcripts are interspersed with Bell's interpretation of their significance. Bell mentions (1998:128) that Yaraldi speakers have trouble identifying "vocabulary items" provided by James Ngunaitponi to Taplin, but I suggest this may be because of language loss rather than language differences.

as a missionary that there began a better feeling between the black and white race. The natives soon recognized that the new missionary [sic] had not come to exploit them but to help them.

(Unaipon, 1951:10)

Unaipon's father was highly regarded by mission staff, particularly by Reverend George Taplin:

On his arrival he sought out the most intelligent natives, and established good relations with them, and through them made known to the tribes the nature of his mission. Among these leaders was my father, James Unaipon, who became closely associated with Mr. Taplin, and proved so helpful to the missionary that he appointed him the first native missionary to the Murray tribes.

(Unaipon, 1951:11)<sup>23</sup>

In 1866 James married Nymbulda, their union being the first listed in the mission register, "solemnized by the Rev. John Gardner" (Mortlock Library SRG 698/1). According to the register, the marriage was blessed with ten children, but not all were to survive. At least three Unaipon children were to die as infants, and Nymbulda's losses would have been all the harder to bear with James' continual absences as he pursued his busy missionary work. James Ngunaitponi:

travelled widely, often on foot, on one occasion 140 miles, to preach and pray with his people. In 1871 he was unanimously elected first Ngarinyeri [sic] deacon to the church of Raukkan, and in this capacity his duties included assisting in dispensing the sacraments to Grinkaris [white people] and Nungas alike.

(Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:186)

Taplin concentrated his evangelical and civilising efforts at Raukkan on the younger men, and for a brief period on James' second surviving son, David:

Mr. Taplin did not expect to change the lives of the older people, but centred his activities upon the younger generation. He established a school which I attended and there entered a new mental world. He associated with this a dormitory so that the boys and girls might be trained in civilized ways, and it was there I learned to use a knife and fork, say grace and adopt table manners.

(Unaipon, 1951:11)

As a young lad in school, David exhibited the same academic potential as his father James, who had been employed in his later years as a school teacher on the mission (Jenkin, 1979:185). In 1979, however, the founder of the mission George Taplin died prematurely, but not before earning the respect of the Ngarrindjeri people who chose to live on the mission. Unfortunately, the vacant superintendant position was taken up by Taplin's son Frederick, who was anything but respected by the Ngarrindjeri elders, having already been accused of sexual misconduct prior to his father's death (Jenkin, 1979:138,150).

It was under such difficult circumstances, in 1887, that C.B. Young first noticed the potential in young David and decided to nurture his education by taking him back to his home in Adelaide. According to Jenkin (1979:185), Young was "one of the oldest and most loyal" friends of the people of Raukkan. Young, who was the first secretary of the A.F.A., writes:

I brought away with me... a living proof of the excellent training of the children. I only wish the majority of white boys were as bright, intelligent, well-instructed and well-mannered, as this little fellow I am taking charge of. He is the son of our old friend, James Unaipon.

(quoted in Jenkin, 1979:185)

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<sup>23</sup> Taplin and James did, however, have their moments of conflict. In 1869 James was temporarily suspended from church membership by Taplin, for minor "misdemeanours" while independently ministering to Indigenous people further up the Murray (see Jenkin, 1979:146-147).

Unaipon reminisces, in his 1951 address, about those early years with Young:

For some time I was with Mr CB Young in his home at Walkerville and his country residence at Kanmantoo. Every morning after breakfast Mr Young would call me into his drawing room to attend morning prayer with the family. I have often thought of his prayers that I should be a good boy and grow to be a good man, and have ever since been influenced by them.

(Unaipon, 1951:11)

It was in the home of Young that Unaipon became surrounded by English literature, and developed a desire for other intellectual pursuits. However, the young Unaipon eventually grew restless, and decided to return to Point McLeay, perhaps because he was merely the "odd job" boy in the Young household. The Young family returned from an outing one day to find David had suddenly left, but not without leaving a note saying: "A man cannot serve two masters. Here I serve three" (quoted in Burden Ingoldby, 1980:24).

On Unaipon's return to the mission he, and other young Ngarrindjeri men, soon desired more:

As the young men grew up, there came a desire for mental improvement, and the Association founded a Mutual Improvement Society and endeavoured to ascertain the ability of the natives to acquire a knowledge of the fine arts. Teachers were provided to give lessons in music, shorthand, drawing and other subjects. Some of the aborigines became efficient in these studies.... I became so advanced in music that I was appointed the church organist at Point McLeay, and served in that capacity for a long time. Being ambitious, I desired to be able to play something more than the usual church tunes, so that I obtained copies of "The Messiah" and other more advanced music, which I endeavoured to master, and I gratefully acknowledge the encouragement I received from many white friends in carrying on this work.

In course of time, music became my recreation only, for my mind became obsessed in other directions as I read the books and journals sent to the Station, especially the scientific works which showed the inventions which were coming into the world....

In order to improve my mind I carefully read Huxley's Lay Sermons, but for years my favourite writer was professor Drummond.... I also memorized passages from 'Paradise Lost' for recitation purposes.

(Unaipon, 1951:11-12)

In January 1901, at the age of 28 years, Unaipon married the local "full-blood" woman Katherine Carter aged 17 years, who was also known as Cissy (see Register, Mortlock SRG 698/1). Like his father before him, Unaipon chose a Christian ceremony to be conducted at Point McLeay, by Frances Garnett.<sup>24</sup> Two years later on January 27 1903, they were blessed with the birth of their first and only child, whom Unaipon named Talmage De Witt, in memory of another of his favourite Christian writers, the popular American preacher Rev. Thomas De Witt Talmage, who had died just one year earlier.

### Unaipon ventures out into the world

Unaipon spent much of his early life frustrated by the lack of opportunities offered him at the mission. He said he had grown tired of making shoes in the "cobbler's shop" at the mission, and his "desire for a walkabout among the white race" persisted (Unaipon, 1953:8). After a stint as an assistant in the local mission store, he ventured out again into the white world in pursuit of his passions. However, he now had responsibilities in the form of a family to support at home, and the city didn't seem to offer him any form of secure or satisfying work. This is apparent in the A.F.A. Executive Committee records, from the turn

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<sup>24</sup> In the A.F.A. General Committee Minute Book, for the meeting held on October 10, 1892, there is an item recorded entitled "Marriage Ceremony". This is some eight years prior to Unaipon's marriage. It states: "the Superintendent reported that in some cases there was a desire to continue the performance of the marriage ceremony after the old native custom. Resolved that the legal ceremony be insisted on as far as possible." Mr. Blackwell was the superintendent at the time (A.F.A. records, Mortlock SRG139/2/3).

of the century, which feature continual requests from Unaipon for money, once he left Point McLeay. According to the minutes on November 9, 1900, Unaipon requested money for a "suit of clothes for Sunday wear", and on August 13, 1901, he requested more money to purchase furniture for his "residence in Adelaide". On June 23, 1905, he wrote requesting money for "chemicals" (A.F.A. records in the Mortlock SRG 139/3/1).

In 1907, Unaipon's father James died from influenza. The loss of such a strong leader of the people on the mission was great indeed.<sup>25</sup> The following year, David suffered a "rupture", which precluded him from pursuing work requiring heavy lifting (Jenkin, 1979:229). This condition also caused Unaipon further financial difficulties throughout his life, as he continually sought medical treatment and devices to control his hernia. In late January of 1908, Unaipon wrote again to the A.F.A. requesting money, this time for an "Electric belt to cost £5-5-0 which is alleged will cure rupture". Unfortunately for Unaipon the response was, as usual, negative: "whilst sympathising with David and fully appreciating the help he is rendering.... it would be mere pondering to quackery and of no assistance in curing David's rupture". According to the minutes, the following month a Dr. Giles recommended that he wear a truss, which he did for the remainder of his life. (A.F.A. records in the Mortlock SRG 139/3/1)

And so Unaipon found himself pursuing more genteel opportunities in the white world:

As time advanced I realized that I should do something practical to try and help my race by making their aspirations and wants known to the public by means of lectures and addresses, and for many years I have travelled throughout Australia...  
(Unaipon, 1951:11-12)

Despite the 'white world's' growing fascination with Unaipon, regarding his passion for 'high culture' and his eloquence of speech,<sup>26</sup> it wasn't easy for him or any other Aboriginal people to venture away from their missions and reserves. In 1911 South Australian Parliament passed an Aborigines Act, which was highly oppressive in the way it gave power to the Chief Protector to control the movement and lives of all Aboriginal people. It was designed more for protecting Indigenous peoples in remote areas, than improving the lives of those at Point McLeay (see Jenkin, 1997:243-247)<sup>27</sup>.

Meanwhile relationships had frayed between the Ngarrindjeri people and those appointed by the A.F.A. to run the mission at Point McLeay. In 1912, the new superintendent, David Roper, banned evangelical meetings because of their use by the Ngarrindjeri for voicing their concerns over the running of the mission (Jenkin, 1979:256). In early 1913, the state government called for a Royal Commission to look into the whole situation of Aboriginal affairs in South Australia. It was a long-running enquiry, and during the hearing held at Point McLeay, Unaipon stepped into the footsteps of his father and took on a leadership role, voicing his grave concerns over the treatment of his people.

A transcript of the evidence given by Unaipon, during the enquiry, reveals much about Unaipon's current state of health and sense of self worth. By this stage of his life, at the age of 41 years, he had already achieved public fame and recognition for his inventions, but was beginning to lose hope of ever securing sufficient financial support to develop his mechanical designs. During the hearing, he reflects on his past life and states to the chairman:

I went to G. & R. Wills [a boot factory in Pirie Street] and served about 12 months there. That was 10 or 12 years ago. I left because gas was burnt in front of the machinists most of the time, and that was against me. Being a child of nature gas did

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<sup>25</sup> James Ngunaiponi's health began to fail in 1885, following the death of his oldest daughter Jemima from consumption. In a newspaper article, years later in 1914, Unaipon's father is referred to as "a powerful man" who was "chief of the Narrinyeri tribe when the first missionaries arrived". The same article subsequently refers to his son David as a "native prince" (see *The Register* July 20, 1914:17).

<sup>26</sup> See *The Observer* newspaper (October 10, 1925:41 & March 19, 1927:63).

<sup>27</sup> Then in 1917 and 1919, additional legislation gave further powers to superintendants of reserves and missions (Jenkin, 1997:246-247).

not agree with me.... I have done nothing particular since then - just odds and ends about the mission station, nothing very important.... There is more labor here now than there is work for the labor.... The station is too small; there is no scope for us to find work. In regard to the young people here I would suggest that when the children leave school they should be taken in hand by some one [sic] and educated to some trade or other useful employment so that they can become independent and self-supporting.

(South Australian Government , 1913:32-33)

Unaipon was also questioned during the commission by the Hon. J. Lewis, who asks:

Do you find any difficulty in getting work outside the institution?

Unaipon: No. Some of my people can get work outside, but the training they have received here has unfitted them for it.

Lewis: Does that remark apply to you?

Unaipon: No; Not at all.

Lewis: Why do you not go outside and get work?

Unaipon: Because I am physically unfit.... If I were physically strong enough I could get work outside.... When I was painting for Mr Young 12 years ago, I received 2s. 6d. a day. I do not know what I could get outside now at painting work. I get 15s. a week here and half rations, namely, 1 lb. of sugar and four loaves of bread. I have to buy meat. I am not fit for farm work. I have never tried to milk.

(South Australian Government , 1913:33-34)

Unaipon goes on to give further evidence, and consistently requests that the state government take over the running of the station from the A.F.A.:

I think that the government should have full control over the industrial part of the institution, because I think the Government will extend the land and give us more work.... The Association has no funds, and it is in the power of the Government to get more land.

Mr. Ritchie: Do you think that the Government would be more liberal to the people here than the Association is?

Unaipon: Yes; certainly... I think I would rather have it under the Government.

Chairman: Why?

Unaipon: Because of the way we have been trained. We have been trained [sic] by the Association in such a way that we have become parasites, and we live on charity.... Sometimes when we make a complaint to the Association they say, "We will not listen to native yarns".

(South Australian Government , 1913:34)

This unambiguous criticism thrown at the A.F.A. by Unaipon is significant, because it contrasts sharply with the consistently favourable public comments he makes about the same association later in his life. I contend that the change in Unaipon's attitude towards the A.F.A. was largely due to the relationship of dependency he developed with the Adelaide-based general secretary after the commission. As Jenkin suggests, the newly appointed "Missionary Secretary", Rev. John Henry Sexton, gradually developed a financial hold over Unaipon, especially from when he took over as general secretary in June 1913, a position he held for thirty years (Jenkin, 1976:255-6)<sup>28</sup>. In fact later, in October of that same year, Unaipon was appointed as a subscription collector for the A.F.A., retaining ten percent of his takings for himself (Jenkin, 1979:248). This involved him walking from door to door throughout the state selling subscriptions, but eventually his meagre takings proved to be too little, especially seeing he had a wife and a ten year old son to support back at the mission station.

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<sup>28</sup> Sexton was a Baptist minister who, according to Jenkin, had "a penchant for organising things - particularly other people", and on his appointment as secretary to the A.F.A. developed new regulations, giving him more control over the running of the mission at Point McLeay (even though it was to be run by the government from 1916). Sexton always operated from an Adelaide office, and in Jenkin's words his "secretaryship... was to develop into a classic case of the dog being wagged by its tail" (Jenkin, 1979:255).

Eventually, Unaipon decided to expand his horizons and to go on a preaching and lecture tour around the state: "it occurred to me that I might take up a course of lecturing on the aborigines, and while going round the country awaken interest in the aboriginal problem" (Unaipon, 1953:9). Thus, again following in the footsteps of his father James, who was elected the first deacon of the church at Raukkan (Jenkins, 1979:147), David Unaipon became a lay preacher, as well as a speaker on different Aboriginal issues. At first he memorised some of the published sermons of the prolific and much admired writer, Rev. De Witt Talmage, but later he wrote his own sermons (Hosking, 1995:90). Unaipon was soon invited to preach in churches all over his home state. Rev. K.M. Lindsay, as a teenager in Adelaide in the 1930s, recalls David Unaipon preaching in his home church, the Anglican St Bartholomew's in Norwood. Lindsay remembers it because "it was so unusual to have a Black man preaching. Our church was so Anglo" (personal communication Rev. K. M. Lindsay November, 1998).

Before long Unaipon was in much demand, and in 1921 was invited on his first lecture tour in Victoria by the Australian Board of Missions (A.B.M.; see GRG 52/1/22 1921). For this he was paid £2-10-0 per week plus expenses. However later that year, he found himself applying for a loan of £15-0-0 from the Aborigines' Department, to cover further expenses (GRG 52/1/58 1921).<sup>29</sup> He also found it necessary to supplement his income with the sale of some booklets:

I wrote up some legends for this purpose, and this [A.F.A.] Association bore the cost of printing them. Armed with these legends and some other literature provided by the Association, I travelled over most of Victoria and South Australia, and had the opportunity of speaking in the various churches and schools. In this way I have been able to meet my expenses, as the churches and people often gave me liberal donations towards my support.

(Unaipon, 1953:9)

Although Unaipon was welcomed back to Victoria in 1922, family problems caused him some difficulties on his second tour. His son Talmage had been threatened with expulsion from Point McLeay in 1920, for insubordination and "insulting language" (GRG 52/1/88 1920). Unaipon, therefore decided to take Talmage with him on his second trip to Victoria, only to have the A.B.M. also complain to the South Australian Aborigines Department about Unaipon junior's behaviour (GRG 52/1/22 1922).<sup>30</sup> However, David himself was still in demand, and was soon invited to tour other eastern states beyond Victoria, and was invited on two occasions to preach in Saint Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, and at Saint David's Cathedral in Hobart. Overall he preached over a period of 25 years, spanning between 1914 and 1940 (Cath Ellis interview, June 1963). He did, however, occasionally come out of retirement to preach after this period, and was still "tramping the streets of Adelaide suburbs selling his pamphlets" in 1959, at the age of 86 years (*The News* July, 22, 1959:10).

Because Unaipon spent much of his life living away from Point McLeay, either in Adelaide and the nearby countryside, or travelling interstate, he befriended a number of white people. He either met them at his public meetings or when preaching, and was occasionally offered accommodation in their homes. One such home was probably that of Mrs. J.C. Shierlaw, of Adelaide, to whom Unaipon dedicated his 1929 booklet *Native legends* in "remembrance of her many kindnesses". Another welcoming family was that of the Bartletts, and Kath Ey (nee Bartlett) still has fond memories of the times David Unaipon spent in their Adelaide home (personal communication, Anne Bartlett, November 1998).

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<sup>29</sup> This original debt was to jeopardize Unaipon's applications for further money from the department for the next 15 years of his life. But in 1937 the Chief Protector, W.R. Penhall, took sympathy on Unaipon and approved a further loan for the printing of more pamphlets, because Unaipon was by this stage "an old man and unfit for ordinary station work", and he says in Victoria "he receives a good reception and finds a ready sale for his pamphlets" (Aborigines' Department records, GRG 52/1/55 1937).

<sup>30</sup> Aborigines' Department correspondence files indicate David Unaipon spent much time and effort getting his son Talmage out of trouble with the authorities.

Unaipon also became well known amongst the white population through his regular appearance in the daily newspapers, beginning in 1907 when his talents as an inventor were first mentioned (see *The Advertiser* April 12:4). He was labelled "ingenius", "an Aboriginal intellectual" and a "startling exception to the rule" by the popular media, and in one letter to the editor as "a university graduate" (*The Register* July 27, 1926:2). Articles on his achievements inevitably began: "David Unaipon, a full-blooded native of Point McLeay, who is probably the most gifted member of the black race in Australia" (*The Advertiser* July 27, 1918:6); or: "Among Australian aborigines no man stands higher intellectually and in every other way than David Unaipon" (*The Register* June 12, 1919:6). But Unaipon insisted that he was not an exception. To a reporter from *The Register* (October 3, 1925), Unaipon: "insists stoutly that he himself is by no means an isolated case of capacity for acquiring knowledge... 'many others have like powers'". In fact, for much of his life Unaipon was concerned about the judgements placed on his people regarding their status as human beings, and the comparisons made regarding their intelligence. He was also keen to promote the moral integrity of his people, which he claims (in his writings) was well established before the advent of Christian missions.

Unfortunately, however, some of Unaipon's personal exploits in the wider world did not help promote the respect he felt he and his people deserved. Maybe that is why he decided to accept the offer of employment made to him over the border in Victoria in 1921. Apparently Unaipon was considered by the local authorities to have shirked on his responsibilities to provide for his family whom he left on the mission while he was away. In December 1921, the Superintendent of Point McLeay, H.E. Read, wrote to the Chief Protector Mr. South, saying that Unaipon's wife Cissy "complains to me that...David has contributed nothing towards her support". Apparently Cissy was not eligible for rations, because "David is in receipt, I am given to understand, of a weekly wage". He goes on to say that Cissy is also caring for Creighton's (David's younger brother's) children, while Creighton was also away working.<sup>31</sup>

Unaipon was known to use his gentlemanly manners and dignified reputation to extract money from some of his white associates. Correspondence files in both the A.F.A. and Aborigines Department records reveal that during his travels, Unaipon was often running up accounts, which he had no means of paying, thus leaving a trail of rather irate debtors.<sup>32</sup> In the same 1921 letter to the Chief Protector, Read also raised a matter concerning a Mr. Duffield of Kanmantoo, an acquaintance of the Young's. Apparently he had lent Unaipon two pounds, on the condition it be repaid, but was never to see Mr. Unaipon or the money again. He wrote to Read in the hope that he could help him retrieve his money:

Some months ago your Mr David Unaipon was here working on a model and he wished to go home for a certain wheel, which he required and he telegraphed home for some money for his journey and it did not come in time for him so he asked me to lend him £2:0:0 and he would return it to me on the following monday [sic]; I did not hesitate to lend him the money as his conducted [sic] had inspired such confidence, but I am sorry to say that I have neither seen him nor heard from him since.... I thought I [sic] would write to you to see if you could assist me as I cannot afford to give him £2:0:0.

(Aborigines' Department records GRG 52/1/102)

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<sup>31</sup> Earlier that same year, Unaipon was on a lecture tour in Victoria, on a weekly wage, but was granted a loan of £15-0-0 from The Department for expenses. On his return in August he wrote from Adelaide for a further loan of £200-0-0 "for my personal use". He claimed in his letter that "if granted this amount I will undertake to keep my wife and son and myself without any further assistance from the Department". He said he wished to "remain at Point McLeay and have use of the garden so that I may cultivate it and produce vegetables." Unaipon was advised to withdraw his request for the money, and he subsequently returned to Victoria. (Aborigines' Department records GRG 52/1/67 1921)

<sup>32</sup> In April 1928 the A.F.A. were asked to cover an unpaid bill of £1-18-6 for the board and lodgings of David Unaipon, by an irate Mrs. E. McDonald, who claims he had left the Burra Hotel without paying his account (A.F.A. records, Mortlock SRG 139/1/115-7).



Nungas who were brought up on Raukkan report that Unaipon would also take money from his own people, with false promises of quick repayment or plans to invest their money for lucrative returns. The words I have heard used to describe him include "schemer" and "a con man".<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically, it seems Unaipon placed no limits on himself in his passionate pursuit to solve the problem of perpetual motion!

In 1926 Unaipon appeared before another Royal Commission to look into "the treatment of Aborigines" (Jones, 1990:304). As part of the enquiry, evidence was taken at Point McLeay, by Hon. W.H. Harvey and Rev. J.H. Sexton, with Unaipon calling the witnesses. During the enquiry, Unaipon presented a petition demanding better representation of Aboriginal people at the administrative level of Aboriginal affairs (A.F.A. records, Mortlock 139/1/92). At the time, Sexton of the A.F.A. suggested that "in lieu of a Royal Commission", as a part solution, an "Advisory Council to the Commonwealth Government" be formed. He didn't, however, stipulate any Aboriginal involvement.

The following year, in 1927, Unaipon became a member of the otherwise all-white committee proposing the establishment of the "model Aboriginal state" in central Australia. This proposal was very much against the wishes of Sexton, who was feuding with one of the main instigators, Colonel Chas Genders.<sup>34</sup> In *The Register* (February 22, 1927:8), the public were invited to visit a stand in Bowman's Arcade (within the city of Adelaide) to sign a petition, advocating a Model State. The article says that the petition was being circulated by the Aborigines Protection League, who were hoping to get 16,000 signatures from South Australia alone, before sending it to Federal Parliament. David Unaipon and the Rev. James Noble<sup>35</sup> are named as two "full-blooded aborigines competent to assist in founding the proposed state". The following month a journalist from the local Adelaide paper, *The Observer*, writing under the pen name "Qui Vive" in his gossip column "Around the city", reported on the recent presence in Bowman's Arcade of:

that interesting and learned aborigine David Unaipon, whose knowledge of native folk lore is probably not surpassed in Australia. It is an education to hear Unaipon speak - a gentle voice, almost ladylike in its fastidious articulation. Occasionally, after a little chat and explanatory words from Col. Genders and this distinguished black, somebody would sign the paper.

(*The Observer*, March 19, 1927:63)

By the late 1920s Unaipon had also befriended "Rufus", a reporter from another local newspaper *The Register*. For several years, beginning in May 1929, Rufus regularly reported, in his column "Out among the people", on the achievements and whereabouts of this "clever full-blooded aborigine from the Murray Lakes". (e.g. *The Register* May 16, 1929:6 & July 4, 1929:6).<sup>36</sup> By this stage, Unaipon had become the most well-known Aboriginal person among white people, and was accepted by the government as a spokesperson for all Aboriginal people. His gradual disappearance from the daily newspapers, and his concurrent growing reputation as a traitor to his people, was not to develop until the late 1930s.

Meanwhile, Unaipon's much publicised work in the outside world was to earn him further recognition in 1928, when he was awarded a gold medal by the Australian Society of Patriots. He explained later to a newspaper that the medal was for "my work as a preacher and for assistance I had given anthropological research" (*The News* June 13, 1953:11). In

<sup>33</sup> For obvious reasons, the source of these comments will remain anonymous.

<sup>34</sup> Colonel Genders eventually left the A.F.A. to form the shortlived Aborigines Protection League. Sexton, in 1927, wrote of Genders' promotion of a Model Aboriginal State as a means of "vainly attempting to get a following" (see *Daylight* paper December 31, 1927, in A.F.A. records Mortlock SRG 139/1/65).

<sup>35</sup> James Noble was the first Aboriginal person to be ordained to the church. He was born in the Normantown district of Queensland, but was taken at the age of eight to be brought up by a family in New South Wales. He was ordained as a Deacon in 1925 in St. George's Cathedral, Perth, but later returned to Queensland to work with his people (see Rowe, c.1956:9).

<sup>36</sup> Rufus's gossip column "Out among the People" continued under the same name even when his paper *The Register* merged to form *The Advertiser and Register* in 1931.

1930 Unaipon was given the opportunity to write a half page article on Aboriginal issues in the "magazine section" of *The Herald*. Here he chose to discuss further the issue of establishing a separate and independent Aboriginal state. He writes:

the remaining primitive man [should be given] a portion of country where he may live in peace and happiness, and follow the traditions and customs of his ancestors free from the intrusion of the white man. And the only outside influence that should be permitted is the civilised and Christian aborigine.

(*The Herald*, November 22, 1930)

Earlier in 1928, Unaipon was sought out to assist with the Commonwealth's Bleakley enquiry into the welfare of "aboriginals and half-castes in Central Australia and Northern Australia (A.F.A. Records, Mortlock SRG 139/1/51 & Jones, 1990:304).<sup>37</sup> His opinions were similarly sought by journalists writing on different Aboriginal issues (see *The Advertiser and Register* June 15, 1931:6, June 16 1931:8; *The Advertiser* October 3, 1934:20). On another occasion, in 1936, Unaipon was given the opportunity to write another article in an Adelaide paper, entitled "The Aborigine's point-of-view". The paper's editor prefaced Unaipon's brief column with the following legitimising comment: "The Advertiser has invited Mr. David Unaipon, himself a full-blooded aborigine, to express his views in an article that appears below" (*The Advertiser* November 23, 1936:18).

Two weeks earlier, a photograph appeared in *The Advertiser* of Unaipon and Mark Wilson, with a caption stating that this pair of "full-blooded aborigines... will attend Parliament House today to hear the debate on the Aborigines Bill" (*The Advertiser* November 10, 1936:24). Unaipon and Wilson were opposed to the Aborigines Act Amendment Bill currently being lodged in state parliament, which sought to give power to a permanent Chief Protector, appointed by the government, to oversee a proposed board of five, who would control the affairs of Aborigines in the state. In his later article, Unaipon relates the fact that the Amendment Bill was "dropped" in parliament, but went on to say that "some members fought hard to have it improved. I am grateful to them and I am happy to think that there are men in South Australia's Parliament who have the native so much at heart" (*The Advertiser* November 23, 1936:18). Unaipon had obviously discussed this issue with Sexton, who was undoubtedly keen to be appointed to a Protection Board, should such legislation ever be passed. Unaipon goes on to suggest in his column that the members of the A.F.A. could certainly contribute to such a board:

In the members of the Aborigines' Friends' Association we have men whose knowledge, sympathy, understanding, and experience are unrivalled in the Commonwealth.... A committee of men imbued with these ideals could do so much for my people.

(*The Advertiser* November 23, 1936:18)

It seems the 'back-scratching' relationship between Sexton and Unaipon was becoming mutually beneficial by this stage in Unaipon's life. The following year, in 1937, Sexton seems to have taken some of Unaipon's demands of the 1926 enquiry to heart, and decided to convene a small conference in Adelaide, comprising himself and the three Ngarrindjeri men: David Unaipon, Mark Wilson and George Rankine. The conference attracted newspaper coverage, and publicity for Sexton, with headlines of: "Unique Conference Held in Adelaide: Future Of Race". However, the resolutions of this obviously staged meeting were surprisingly compatible with the steady movement of government policies towards assimilation, and makes one wonder whose back was actually being scratched at the conference:

The speakers, said Mr. Sexton, were most emphatic in urging that dormitories be established at Point McLeay and Point Pearce, for, they asserted, the natives there

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<sup>37</sup> Mr. J.W. Bleakley was Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland, and was asked by the Commonwealth to conduct yet another enquiry into the 'Aboriginal problem' of the day. In mid 1928 he sought out representatives of the A.F.A., while visiting Adelaide, and particularly asked to meet with David Unaipon (A.F.A. Records, Mortlock SRG 139/1/51)

had been brought up in dormitories, which had had a life long influence on them... The conference agreed with the plan of the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Mr. M.T. McLean) to settle young married natives in localities in close proximity to whites, so that their children might become assimilated into the community.

(*The Advertiser* Friday, December 10, 1937)

The three Indigenous conference participants agreed with Sexton's proposal that the Commonwealth take "control [of] the race" (see *The Advertiser* Friday, December 10, 1937). It seems Sexton had aspirations beyond the state level, and to achieve such aspirations had a firm hold on the strings of more than one Black puppet at the peak of the depression years.

### Unaipon's twilight years

By the late 1930s, when Unaipon was well into his 60s, his days as an active advocate for his people were waning. He had learnt by then where his financial support was to come from if he were ever to realise his ambitions as an inventor. Over the years he had written tirelessly to both the A.F.A. and the government Aborigines' Department for money, some of which was forthcoming, at other times not (see A.F.A. Records, Mortlock SRG/3/1; SRG 139/1/115-7 & Aborigines' Dept. Records GRG 52/1/58, GRG 52/1/67). But as Unaipon further advanced in age, and became less and less critical of the treatment dealt out to his people by white institutions, both these organisations became more generous in their financial support of him. And so Unaipon's criticism of them slowly turned to public praise. This is reflected in the tone of Unaipon's autobiographical address, made to the A.F.A. at their annual meeting in 1951, and again in another two years later in 1953. He thanks the two non-Indigenous bodies who had supported him throughout his life's work:

I owe much, too, to the Aborigines' Friends' Association and the Aborigines' Department. From the Association I have received assistance in ways beyond counting, for it has been my refuge in every time of trouble, and from the Aborigines' Department I have always received sympathetic consideration, and help in the furtherance of my work. To both these bodies I express my warmest thanks.

(Unaipon, 1951:13)

I think.... I have both directly and indirectly assisted in bringing about better conditions for the aborigines throughout Australia. I would gratefully pay tribute to the wonderful help I have received from this Association, and to the Government Aborigines' Department for the assistance given me through many years, and to a generous public.

(Unaipon, 1953:9)

Despite the generosity of the public, throughout most of his life Unaipon continued to experience financial difficulties. Not only did he have trouble repaying his many debts, which he incurred to finance his inventions and his extensive travel, he also had difficulty in meeting his own personal needs. An Adelaide school teacher, Pam Lindsay (personal communication, November, 1998), has vivid memories of Mr Unaipon, in the mid to late 1950s, coming into the Adelaide office of the Australian Board of Missions run by the Anglican church. She (then known as Pam Jaques) was working in the office at the time, and Mr. Unaipon came to them requesting money:

....I was just a teenager when he came in. If it was 1955, I was fifteen. He told us that he was destitute.... He told us that he needed money for a truss, because he had a bad hernia... and he couldn't afford an operation. He was very apologetic.... There wasn't, I think, any assistance for Aboriginal people about then.

He introduced himself. And I was terribly impressed with him.... I think he wanted to establish some kind of credibility. He didn't want us to think that he was some down-and-out, so he told us who he was and said he had preached in many churches and cathedrals....

I can't remember all the details because I was so young, but... he seemed very intelligent, and he was terribly knowledgeable about all kinds of things. And he told us about his inventions and work over the years, and that sort of thing.... I was

totally fascinated. He talked philosophically about life generally. He made quite an impression on my young mind.... I was struck by his 'presence', his gentlemanly manner. He spoke very well.... He spoke very eloquently and knowledgeably.... He seemed a very eloquent sort of fellow. He seemed to use words very well and very authoritatively. He was certainly destitute, but he dressed like a gentleman, like an Englishman really.

He was probably with us about half an hour before the State Secretary [Father Alf Bott] came.... He took him into his little office, you know, the inner sanctum.... [but] I really don't know whether he was given the money for a truss.

So it seems Unaipon knew no boundaries when it came to asking for help from his white friends. If the A.F.A. or the government could not help, he would turn to the Anglicans, or any other denomination or person for financial help. This incident took place around 1955, over ten years before Aboriginal people were granted citizenship rights. David Unaipon would have been in his early 80s then, and being an Aboriginal person, he would not have been eligible for the old age pension. Being an exempted person from The Act, he would not have been able to seek coupons or assistance from The Protection Board, and there was no free public health service at that time.

Unaipon's life was a paradox. On the one hand he felt an urgent need to express the concerns of his own people and the way they were treated by the white community, but his own personal life and financial predicament were at the mercy of the A.F.A., as well as his 'generous (white) public', who came to hear him speak or preach<sup>38</sup>. In his later publications on 'the Aboriginal problem', right up until the mid 1950s, he was happy to promote the work of missionaries (in newspapers, as well as in A.F.A. funded booklets, see Unaipon, 1930, c.1930s, 1951 & 1953) in their efforts to Christianise, 'civilise' and educate his people. A pragmatic person doesn't bite the hand that feeds it, unless one is willing to starve. Perhaps his financial situation also explains the cryptic messages to be found in some of his more subversive pieces of writing (discussed in Chapter Seven).

Throughout the twilight years of his life, Unaipon learnt to take more care in relation to who he criticised in his public lectures. He mellowed with age, but always remained a smooth talker. It is reported that during his 80s he was living in an Adelaide lodging house, and was still peddling his pamphlets from door to door in the white suburbs: "He was so neatly dressed and so gentle of manner that they invite him into their homes for a cup of tea. Barely does he go away without making a sale" (*The News* July 22, 1959). He had also learnt over the years that conciliation, rather than confrontation, was his preferred means of dealing with conflict with white authorities. In 1926, for example, in a newspaper article entitled "Complaints of Natives", the reporter writes of Unaipon's tactics regarding the 1926 government enquiry, mentioned earlier. He notes the conciliatory role played by Unaipon at a meeting called at Point McLeay to air the complaints of local Aboriginal people to visiting white authorities:

David Unaipon, with courtesy and tact, handled the case for the natives, and the commissioners were highly pleased with the spirit of the proceedings, which rose above personal feelings and centred in an impeachment of the present system of controlling the aborigines.

(*The Advertiser* Monday 25 October 1926:8)

But Unaipon's caution inevitably drew him criticism from other Aboriginal groups. When Unaipon chose to publicly criticise the more radical moves by younger Aboriginal people of New South Wales, regarding their proposed National Day of Mourning in January 1938, he was 65 years of age. He chose to boycott the meeting held in Sydney that day, where Aboriginal protesters spoke against white missionaries and the Aborigines' Protection Board (see Alexander, 1997:26). He also chose to sit "apart" as a "silent observer" at the first

<sup>38</sup> Even though the A.F.A. officially handed over the running of Point McLeay to the government on January 1 1916, David Unaipon continued his association with the A.F.A., and particularly with the secretary Rev. J.H. Sexton, throughout most of his life. Note the community of Raukkan didn't become self governing until 1974 (Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:187).

Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement, held in Adelaide in 1958 (see Horner, 1979:63). But why did he choose in 1910, as a much younger man, to accompany eleven other Point McLeay Aboriginal people and cooperate with white authorities, and sing in the re-enactment of Tasmanian colonisation? (see Jones, 1989:10-11; Bell, 1998:183). No doubt such decisions contributed to Unaipon being awarded a Coronation Medal in 1953 for his contributions to white society.<sup>39</sup>

The criticism Unaipon received, from his own people as well as his white 'friends', will be discussed further in a later section, but I shall end this section by quoting from a tribute to David Unaipon that appeared in *The Advertiser* at the time of his passing:

### **Best Known Aborigine**

SA's best known aborigine, Mr. David Unaipon, uncrowned "king" of the Unaipon tribe died in the Tailem Bend Hospital yesterday. He was 96. Mr. Unaipon was educated at the Point McLeay Mission where he preached and played the organ until the time of his death. In 1953 he went to England for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth to whom he was presented. He was taught by the late Mr. P.W. Francis, whose son Mr. B.M. Francis, 74 of Swanpoint, Murray Bridge, later taught Mr. Unaipon's son Chreighton [sic]<sup>40</sup> at the mission. Mr. Francis said yesterday: 'He was one of the finest men I knew. He was very well read and used to write his own religious books and pamphlets'. Mr. Francis said Mr. Unaipon had invented a 'perpetual motion machine' which he had been trying to have patented for many years.... The funeral will be held at the Point McLeay Mission at 1.30 p.m. on Friday.

(*The Advertiser* February 8, 1967: 3)

## **UNAIPON THE INVENTOR**

I contend that one of the main reasons why Unaipon felt he had to keep his white friends on-side, particularly in his twilight years, was because of the passion he developed from a very early age for science, and more specifically for physics. To keep his passion alive he needed financial support. He eventually became obsessed with the solving of scientific problems, and the making of mechanical devices:

...my mind became obsessed... as I read the books and journals sent to the Station, especially the scientific works which showed the new inventions which were coming into the world. These stimulated my mind and I decided to try and invent something too. I suffered a disadvantage in doing this for I lacked a training in mathematics, but I began by studying the machine used in sheep-shearing for an Adelaide firm with a view to bringing about an improvement in its working.

(Unaipon, 1951:11-12)

Unaipon did invent an improved handpiece for sheep-shearing, and it is this design that now appears on the Australian fifty dollar note. Although Unaipon took out a provisional patent application for his design in 1909, and then ratified it in the following year<sup>41</sup>, the patent eventually lapsed without him securing financial backing for its further development:

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<sup>39</sup> The original documentation that accompanied this medal is held in the Mortlock Library, which states the medal: "is to be worn in commemoration of Her Majesty's Coronation. 2nd June, 1953" (Mortlock SRG 139/10). However, despite the report in *The News* (Feb. 10 1967), Unaipon did not travel to London to be presented the medal (see Jones, 1989). In the same paper (on June 13, 1953) it is reported that Unaipon, at the age of 80 years, was the only Aboriginal person in South Australia to be awarded the silver medal, which was awarded to "leading citizens" in recognition of the coronation. The irony that Unaipon was not yet legally a "citizen" in 1953 was not picked up by the reporter.

<sup>40</sup> This is probably Unaipon's much younger brother, who was named Creighton, or possibly a nephew of Unaipon's named after his brother. However, Creighton's son was called Telford, but nick-named "Hooksy". Unaipon's only son was called Talmage, and he was nick-named "Tolly" (personal communication Maggie Jacobs, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> The patent application was No. 15 624, and was called "Mechanical Motion" (Jenkin, 1979:236).

...I obtained a patent for the same, but not being properly protected I lost financially any material gain arising from this discovery, as this was passed to others who made use of my invention without giving me compensation.

(Unaipon, 1951:12)

Nevertheless, Unaipon was not discouraged. As his obsession grew, he continued to read and experiment: "To increase my knowledge of mechanics I read the writings of Newton and endeavoured to apply the principles set forth in his works" (Unaipon, 1951:12). The more he read, the more his passion grew:

Some lecturers who visited the Mission and talked about the wonders of science captivated my attention, and I felt that I too would like to become a scientist for I had already been successful in securing a patent for an improved sheep shears.

From this I made up my mind to find out the secret of perpetual motion. The idea occupied my mind day and night and I conceived the idea of inventing a machine to demonstrate my theory.

(Unaipon, 1953:8-9)

In 1927, Unaipon applied for a loan of £50-0-0 to complete a model of a multi-radial wheel (see Aborigines' Department records GRG 52/1/41 1927). Because his ideas had been stolen in the past, Unaipon was not willing to have his work inspected; therefore his loan application was rejected (see Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:126). Despite such rejections, and his lack of financial support, Unaipon's mind was occupied for much of his life with the solving of the "scientific problem" of perpetual motion:

But the age-long problem of perpetual motion dominated my mind through the years, and I made various models with which I experimented from time to time. I am still pursuing the subject, always travelling but never reaching the goal.

(Unaipon, 1951:12)

Indeed, in a 1959 newspaper article about Unaipon, the headlines state that: "David's a man in a hurry" and that "he fears he will die without achieving an ambition he has cherished from boyhood". Unaipon was 86 years of age at the time, and the article is referring, of course, to his ambition to "solve the secret of perpetual motion, and so win world honor for his race". Unaipon proceeded to show the reporter his "most treasured possession" in the form of a "battered wooden box, about 2 ft. square", which contained the parts of his demonstration model, including a machine with brass rods and pulleys. Apparently it took Unaipon two hours to assemble the model. (*The News* July 22, 1959:10)

Four years later, during another interview, Unaipon was still obsessed with the problem of perpetual motion, and implored the anthropologist Strehlow to help him get a mechanical machinist to work on some part of his demonstration model, because it wasn't working properly. Unaipon claimed the mechanic who was asked to make a replacement for him at Mile End "made a blunder"<sup>42</sup>. It seems Strehlow was less than willing to help Unaipon, because he quickly moved on to other issues in the 1963 interview. Ellis herself, being a passionate ethnomusicologist, lamented in her introduction to the tape that "much of this talk centred around Mr Unaipon's invention, which is his main interest." But as Unaipon himself admitted, attracting an audience with one issue that interests them opens up the opportunity of drawing their attention to another issue:

While some people regarded my attempt to find out the secret of perpetual motion as a dream, the instrument I often took with me to illustrate my studies, appealed to many of the educated, and this enabled me also to interest them in the welfare of the aborigines.

(Unaipon, 1953:9)

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<sup>42</sup> Parts of this machine are apparently still held today in the garage of one of Unaipon's great nieces (personal communication, Elaine Kropinyeri, 1996).

At one stage, the A.F.A. complained that Unaipon was using their name at his public meetings on false pretences, and his main motive in drawing a crowd was to demonstrate his machine, and attract financial sponsorship for his scientific work. Perhaps that could explain why his model were 'stolen' on one occasion!

In all, according to Jones (1989), from the period between 1909 and 1944 Unaipon made ten separate patent applications for his various inventions. In addition to his modified hand-piece for shearing, and his multi-radial wheel, he also patented a centrifugal motor and a mechanical propulsion device. As well, he investigated the "flight pattern of the boomerang" and its potential in the field of aerodynamics and looked at the possible use of polarised light (see Briggs, 1996:6). Unfortunately for Unaipon, all his patents lapsed before he could secure finance for their commercial application.

One can only speculate on whether the motivation for Unaipon to write some Aboriginal 'legends' was primarily to fund his scientific obsession with perpetual motion. But like Unaipon's favourite author, Henry Drummond, in his book *The Ideal Life*, Unaipon seems to have viewed his scientific journey in life as just as important as the reaching of his ultimate destination. Unaipon himself said: "Even if I never arrive, I shall always recall with pleasure the hours I have spent and the experiments I have tried in endeavouring to solve a scientific problem" (Unaipon, 1951:12).

Even though Unaipon continually failed to secure financial backing to develop his patents, he did receive public fame and recognition for his scientific efforts. There was a steady flow of articles about his activities in both the local and interstate papers, beginning in 1907 and ending at the time of his death in 1967. The way Unaipon was represented by the newsprint media over this period, as an exceptional Aboriginal, is revealing.

The media continually make mention of him being a "full-blooded" Aboriginal person, rather than a "half-caste", which (in their eyes) made him even more exceptional. This obsession with his 'racial purity' reflects the social thinking at the turn of the century, when debate flourished regarding evolutionary theory and the social status of Aboriginal people. At that time academics wrote of the Australian Aborigines as if they were 'sub-human' and the 'missing link' between man and ape. Professor Huxley wrote of them as the "primordial anthropoid" and others such as Professor Hermann Klaatsch of the University of Heidelberg said: "No race which we can find shows so clear a relationship to the common ancestor - the man-like ape - as the Australian." (quoted by Rev. John Blacket in *The Register*, Adelaide, October 31, 1921).

One of the first articles to appear about David Unaipon was in 1907, when he was thirty four years of age. Under the title "An Ingenious Aboriginal", it begins:

Few people who have not made a special study of the native question are aware of the extent to which original talent is sometimes found among the aborigines. In a broad sense, it is no doubt true that the native mind is not apt to stray from the narrow and beaten paths that have been formed by generations of habit, but one sometimes comes across startling exceptions to the rule. One of these exceptions, Mr. David Unaipon, of the Point McLeay Mission Station, has lately been in Adelaide on a remarkable errand. He brought with him a neatly-drawn design of a piece of mechanism which, he claims, can be attached to machinery and facilitate the attainment of perpetual motion, which science had declared to be impossible....he had come to Adelaide to seek the assistance of the aborigines department in procuring certain mechanical parts in the shape of four bevelled wheels, a spindle, a tube and so on.... Mr. Unaipon, who speaks excellent English, and is 34 years of age, says that he has read some works on mechanics, and has a strong taste for the subject.... Unaipon's enterprise in coming to Adelaide to push his invention will not go unrewarded, Mr. J. Lob having undertaken to provide him with some wheels that will enable him to pursue his project. People who are inclined to deprecate all efforts to educate the natives as being unprofitable, will do well to remember that Unaipon is a full-blooded native. The instance may be an exceptional one, but it is evidence that there are possibilities of no mean order with regard to the intellectual development of the Australian natives.

(*The Advertiser* April 12, 1907:4)

Other articles soon followed, each mentioning Unaipon's mechanical inventions and inevitably, highlighting his exceptional intelligence. In 1909, an article reporting on the A.F.A.'s annual meeting, states:

David Unaipon, a son of James Unaipon, the first native missionary, has produced a new mechanical motion.... The fact that a full native has shown original talent is proof that the aborigines have latent brain power, which by judicious training may develop in unexpected ways.

(*The Advertiser* December 14, 1909:8)

The following year another article appeared, entitled "A Native Scientist", which began:

Probably one of the most interesting natives in Australia, and certainly the cleverest, is Mr. David Unaipon, a full-blooded aborigine, whose special hobby is research after that elusive wonder perpetual motion.... Mr. Unaipon has studied the writings of Newton carefully, and has sought diligently for the secret of perpetual motion ever since.

(*The Register* May 11, 1910:6)

A decade later, in an article entitled "A Remarkable Aborigine" the reporter writes: "Unaipon, who is a full-blooded blackfellow, is a man of superior attainments - a philosopher, inventor, and musician - who devotes his spare time to the study of evolution" (*The Register* May 28, 1920:6). Unaipon was familiar with Huxley's writings on evolution, and my analysis of Unaipon's own writings (particularly "Totemism", which is discussed in the next chapter) shows how Unaipon himself wrestled to gain acceptance as a scientific writer. If he were to adopt the discourse of 'scientific' writers of his time, he would have to either accommodate or challenge the accepted prejudices currently held against his 'race'.

A year later in 1921, Reverend Blacket wrote an article, "Our Aborigines", inspired by a lecture recently given by Dr. Herbert Basedow<sup>43</sup>, appealing to his readers to reassess their prejudices against the status of Indigenous Australians. He begins: "I want to speak of the Australian aborigine as a man, with precisely the same aptitudes as we ourselves possess." He then goes on to write of David Unaipon:

a full-blooded native, with singular ability - a good musician, playing the organ with considerable skill, a keen student, reading with interest philosophic and scientific literature, a fluent speaker on the platform, with a good command of English. Mechanics have strongly appealed to David, he has invented and patented a device for an improvement to the sheepshearing machine, of which experts have highly spoken.

(*The Register* August 31, 1921:8)

Unaipon originally derived his fame via the newspapers, largely owing to his achievements as an inventor. It was through this fame that he was eventually sought out, beginning with the 1913 Royal Commission, for his opinion on different Aboriginal issues. By the mid 1920s, he had become so well-known through his travels and public speaking, that articles began: "The well-known full-blooded Aborigine David Unaipon..." (see *The Advertiser* November 18, 1926:15). However, as Unaipon became more active in the outside world he was also to earn some critics - not only from his own people but from other quarters.

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<sup>43</sup> Dr. Basedow was a government geologist, one time Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, and later a member of state parliament. In his earlier academic studies in Germany, Basedow studied under the previously mentioned Professor Klaatsch. Although his early views on the status of Aboriginal people resembled those of Klaatsch, it seems his public rhetoric changed over the years, as he observed the negative effects they could have on public policies relating to their ultimate survival.



## CRITICISMS OF UNAIPON

*All I ask is that I should be allowed a chance to earn my own living,  
and generally o paddle my own canoe.*

(Unaipon in *The Advertiser and Register* June 16, 1931:6)

Although Unaipon has now become immortalised on our Australian currency, and was once heralded as "Australia's Leonardo Da Vinci" (see Mattingley & Hampton 1988:273), there were times in Unaipon's life when he fell victim to much less complimentary labels. In his early days as an agitator he was considered a trouble maker by the white authorities, while in his later more conciliatory years he was considered by some to be a traitor to his people. Ultimately he was trying to straddle two worlds, while striving to continue to 'paddle his own canoe'. But it wasn't long before storms threatened to erupt, even on the relatively sheltered waters of his home community. So when life threatened to swamp Unaipon, he chose to reach out to the safety offered by his white 'friends', particularly the safety of the A.F.A., captained by J.H. Sexton. But in order to understand Unaipon's choice of allegiances, it is first necessary to examine more closely the South Australian Government Aborigines Acts of 1911 and 1934, and their amendments.

Because The Aborigines Act 1911 was formulated more for the circumstances of isolated Indigenous people living in the Northern Territory (which ironically was handed over to Commonwealth control in that same year), it was of little help to the colonised people of Point McLeay. As legislation it was racist and ill-conceived, and proved to have devastating effects on those it was designed to protect. It gave the Chief Protector of Aborigines legal guardianship over "every Aboriginal and half-caste child" until they reached the age of twenty one. It also gave the Chief Protector rights to keep "any Aboriginal or half-caste" within the boundaries of a reserve or Aboriginal institution, as well as the right to remove them from such institutions (see Jenkin, 1979:245-246). Rights were also given to mission superintendants to:

inflict punishment by way of imprisonment, not exceeding fourteen days, upon Aborigines and half-castes living upon a reserve or within the district under his charge, who, in the judgement of such protector, are guilty of any crime, serious misconduct, neglect of duty, gross insubordination or wilfull breach of any regulation.

(quoted in Jenkin, 1979:246)

Of insubordination, the younger Unaipon and a number of other competent and outspoken Ngarrindjeri men were, on occasion, proudly guilty. At the 1913 Royal Commission, the racist tones of the questioners gave them little opportunity to make a case for the improvement of their lives or the financial situation of their crippled mission station. Unaipon's plea fell on deaf ears:

Twenty years ago it was easier for us to live. There was more work to be got. We used to work then and were paid for it, and lived as the result of our labour. Things have changed in that work is not now available.

(South Australian Government, 1913: 32)

Amendments to The Act over the years only served to further restrict the freedom of men like Unaipon, who wished to improve their situation in life. The powers of the superintendants were increased, so that Aboriginal people could be fined for "misdemeanours" as paltry as "being untidily dressed", or be gaoled for failing to obey an order (see Jenkin 1979:246). The powers of the Chief Protector were also absolute, despite the establishment in 1918 of the Advisory Council of the Aborigines, under The Aborigines Act 1911. The council members did not include any Aboriginal representation, but honorary whites, and functioned until 1939 (see Hall, 1977:12).

Unaipon, being an articulate speaker of English, had the ability and confidence to speak up regarding injustices to his own people, as well as injustices in his own personal circumstances. By 1916, he was living back at Point McLeay, and had gained a position in

the mission store, after working for a period in Adelaide at the factory of G.&R. Wills. He was in need of money to finance his inventions, so in September of 1919 he applied to W.G. South, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, for a salary increase. The superintendent at the mission, J.B. Steer was not impressed. He reported to South that Unaipon was paid 30 shillings per week plus benefits "worth at least 11s. per week", which included "house rent 2s.6d., wood 5s., medicines 2s.6d., milk 6d., railway passes 6d." Steer went on to state that Unaipon had been employed in the store for just on three years, and "out of that time he was away for twenty weeks and four days. This time he spent in Adelaide and elsewhere lecturing and working on his so-called inventions." Regarding Unaipon's request, South commented in a note to the Commissioner of Public Works:

I consider that he is well paid for the light duties he performs. He is quite useless for any other kind of work.... He is regarded as one of the most useless men on the Station and is always wanting trips away from it.

(quoted in Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:132)

Although Unaipon was refused the pay rise, non-Aboriginal employees on the mission received considerable pay increases five months later. Their rises were backdated to August 1919, and included increases for the superintendent and Herbert Read, the store and book keeper (see Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:132).<sup>44</sup>

In late 1926 David Unaipon was humiliated by being gaoled overnight at Meningie, on vagrancy charges, after being apprehended at Point McLeay by the superintendent. In fact the police were called in, so Unaipon protested, producing a "pile of type-written documents" as evidence of his current employment with the University of Adelaide, and his purpose for visiting the mission. He retorted (according to *The Advertiser* November 12, 1926): "An idle man does not produce work such as that". In a follow-up article Unaipon explained that he was "gathering information for articles and stories he was compiling" and that he was "in arrears with his work at the University" (*The Advertiser* November 18, 1926:15). According to Jones (1990:304), it is a possibility Unaipon was gaoled in retribution for his involvement in the Royal Commission, held earlier that year, and his role as an advocate and petitioner urging the federal government to establish a separate state in central Australia for Aboriginal people. So Unaipon learnt yet another hard lesson of the era, about the price one has to pay to be an agitator.

It is reasonable to conclude that the means by which David Unaipon chose to earn his living in the 1920s was one of the reasons he drew criticism from his own people. But I hasten to add that since the rupture of his hernia in 1908, Unaipon was forced to seek an income by more genteel means than heavy labouring (such as sheep shearing). His inventions were costing him money, rather than bringing in any financial rewards, therefore Unaipon had no choice but to seek other sources of income. Then in 1925, when the opportunity did present itself in the form of a genuine offer of payment, for the writing down of Aboriginal mythology, Unaipon grabbed the offer. He states in an article (in *The Register* October 3, 1925:8, and one week later in *The Observer*): "At present I am studying our Aboriginal folklore. I should probably never have thought of doing so but for an offer from Angus and Robertson".

Unaipon was paid £2-2-0, by the publishers, for every thousand words he wrote. The controversial details of its eventual publication are discussed in detail in the next section. Three days after the above article appeared, another article appeared reporting that Unaipon had since been approached by staff of the South Australian Museum and the University of Adelaide asking him to collect further material for them. A committee was immediately formed: "to control the author's activities and finance his travels". The Director of the Museum (Mr. Edgar R. Waite) told the paper that Unaipon's task was to:

go among the natives in South Australia and learn as much as possible from them regarding their early customs, superstitions and folklore. He would attempt to

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<sup>44</sup> J.B. Steer's salary increased from £208 to £240 per annum, while H.E. Read's increased from £156 to £180 per annum. In addition they received allowances of free quarters, food and fuel.

decipher more of their messages, such as are written on sticks and carried from place to place, and interpret their tribal totem signs.

(*The Register* October 6, 1925: 8)

I assume it was while pursuing this particular work for the University Unaipon was gaoled on vagrancy charges. But this did not completely silence Unaipon from speaking out for his people. As mentioned earlier, Unaipon wrote in *The Herald* (November 22, 1930:magazine section) on the issue of establishing an isolated reserve for those Aboriginal people living in more remote parts of central Australia (a suggestion that Dr. Charles Duguid was later to advocate for the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people). Unaipon also wrote on the same issue in a pamphlet published by the A.F.A.:

If some sort of reserve were possible, in which only the good influences of civilization were felt, a new civilized race could be built up. With a gradual process of introducing Christianity and all the best civilization can give, the aborigine would come up fully developed. It might take two generations, perhaps more, but eventually we would be able to take our stand among the civilized peoples.

(Unaipon, c.1930:1)

In 1939, one of the amendments to The Aborigines Act 1934 saw the adoption of an Exemption Policy, whereby Aboriginal people could be exempted from the provisions of The Act. Further amendments saw the Aborigines Protection Board replace the Chief Protector of Aborigines. Those to be exempted, and assimilated into white society, were Aboriginal people deemed suitable by The Board "by reason of his character and standard of intelligence and development" (see Mattingley & Hampton, 1988:46-49). The dilemma facing those exempted was that they were now forbidden to remain with their families on the missions and reserves, and indeed to even "consort" with any other Aboriginal person not exempted.

This policy caused a lot of ill-feeling and jealousy within Aboriginal communities, and no doubt contributed to the negative feelings expressed against Unaipon. It was also the manner in which Unaipon procured his "folklore" that lost him friends. According to the journals of the Adelaide-based anthropologist Norman Tindale, Unaipon had a financial arrangement with Dr Ramsay Smith to collect "stories" from various Aboriginal people, for which he was paid ten shillings each. Unaipon offered five shillings to any obliging informants, keeping the remaining five for himself. Tindale relates a particular incident, as told to him by Mason from Swan Reach:

'Some boys wanted to tell stories but did not know any'. They tried to get Mason to tell them tales. David got impatient. 'He put his money out on the ground in heaps'. The boys tried hard but could get nothing out of Mason. Finally they each made up a story of lies and told it to David. David wrote it down; 'then the boys got impatient. David lay on the ground with a book over his chest asleep. They tried to rush him to take his money. David was smart. He clipped them with his fist and challenged them and they got no money. He took the lies away with him'

(Tindale, Adelaide journal, 1953:39).

Unaipon did not restrict his research to collecting "stories". In *The Register* in 1930, Unaipon's "friend" Rufus reported in his gossip column that he knew "several blacks" (including David Unaipon) who were "thankful to civilisation and Christianity for brightening their minds". He also mentions that Unaipon:

is at present on the Murray collecting blackfellows' skulls, nardoo stones and other stone implements for Dr. Angas Johnson. Writing to Dr. Johnson from Mildura, Unaipon says:- 'I am forwarding one skull discovered near Wentworth, about four miles up the River Darling, by Dr. Chenery, who was so kind and gave it to me... I am going out in search of some more skulls next week. Give my regards to my friend Rufus'.

(*The Register News-Pictorial* July 30, 1930:6)

Knowing the abhorrence Indigenous people feel today about the disturbance of Aboriginal graves and burial grounds, I can only assume their attitudes were the same in 1930. The following year, at the age of 58 years, Unaipon was still collecting for Johnson. In an article in *The Advertiser and Register* (June 16, 1931:6) Unaipon stated that he was "assisting Dr. Angas Johnson in tribal research work". He went on to say: "All I ask is that I should be allowed a chance to earn my own living, and generally to paddle my own canoe".

Because of the potential financial benefits to be gained for his "tribal research" and writing in the 1920s and 1930s, Unaipon would have regretted the earlier passing of his father in 1907. With the passing of his fathers' generation, much of the detail and meaning of Ngarrindjeri mythological narratives were lost forever. But at the same time, this loss of detail gave Unaipon the opportunity to include other elements in his narratives that one could only call creative literary licence. By this I refer particularly to: the inclusion of a God-like father figure (eg. in the "Narroondarie" epic); the weaving in of threads of scientific rationalist thought (eg. "subjective consciousness" versus "spiritual consciousness" in *Hungarrda*); the insertion of subversive fairytale characters reminiscent of Charles Kingsley's work (eg. the queen of sunbeams in *Release of the dragon flies*); and the adoption of poetic language in his prose reminiscent of both Bunyan and Milton.

Veronica Brodie, a Nunga friend of mine brought up at Raukkan in the 1940-50s, says that Unaipon would be in trouble today if he was still alive for 'selling' so many Ngarrindjeri stories to white fellas. She was brought up to believe that certain cultural information should remain solely with the Ngarrindjeri people:

Like I say, there's things that are told to you that you can tell, and things that are told to you that you don't tell.... If you respect what was being said to you ... you don't tell it. You keep it there.... I wouldn't dare question them. You got flogged or chucked out. You just had to tight lip it and hope for the best.

(Interview, October 10, 1995)

Veronica recalls: "David Unaipon used to stay with a whiteman in Adelaide and get money from him for stories. Then other young fellas from Raukkan cottoned on to this and also went to Adelaide to sell their stories" (from Interview, March 3, 1995).

Veronica remembers David Unaipon coming up to their family home in top row at Raukkan, near the cemetery:

He used to come up and have a yarn with mum and dad. And he'd roll his r's and put his h's where they didn't belong. Then when he'd leave, my dad [Dan Wilson] would shake his head and say, 'I think we've got a black Scotsman there!'

(Interview, September 10, 1995)

People at Raukkan in those days believed that David Unaipon thought himself above his own people, especially in the way he dressed (with a suit and fob watch and chain), as well as in the way he spoke. They also felt exploited when he returned to the mission from Adelaide to collect oral stories from them. I gave Veronica a facsimile copy of David Unaipon's 1929 publication *Native legends*, as she had not seen any of Unaipon's published work. The next time I saw her she responded, laughing: "When I showed my brother that book, he said 'I wonder where he got half of these bloody stories from. Who he ripped off'" (Interview with Veronica Brodie, October 10, 1995). According to Veronica:

People used to say after he'd gone and done all his stories that he was ripping them off. 'Cause they were sure he used to come to Adelaide, he'd tell his stories, get paid for it and go back to Raukkan and wouldn't say a word. But he'd be gettin' the stories off the people on the mission. And he'd dress up, you know, to the knocker. Everytime he'd come home from Adelaide, he'd have a new accent. He'd roll his r's or he'd have this [accent] - heaven knows where he picked it up from. And they used to say to him 'Who do you think you are?' But he mixed a lot with old Scarborough, the Reverend Scarborough. He used to come from Glenelg I think....

He used to tell them [at Raukkan] who he was contacting in Adelaide and that.... But he didn't tell them that he was gettin' any money for it!.... He didn't say he got paid. But he had money to travel around... Old Scarborough, he was a real friend to him. It was like a blood brother.... And he often thought of old David Unaipon as a real friend... Old Scarborough of the Aborigines' Friends' Association; he ran that for a number of years.<sup>45</sup>

(Interview, October 10, 1995)

Nevertheless Veronica and other Nungas do not think completely ill of Unaipon and his achievements:

But that machine. He did invent that machine. I mean that's the rotor blade on the helicopter today, you know. And he never ever got compensated for that, never. Well in them days you didn't have anyone you could go to and, like legal, and say 'Look I made this perpetual motion machine'. I know a lot of people went down to Raukkan and looked at it, and he eventually brought it back into Adelaide, and it was worked on, and that 's how the first rotor for the helicopter was made. And nothing was ever given back to him, or any of his sons. The only one living is ... Melva. She's the only living descendent to David Unaipon... [but] Melva had a big family. There's about five or six.<sup>46</sup>

(Interview October 10, 1995)

The authenticity of Unaipon's published narratives was another issue that fuelled criticism of Unaipon, particularly from anthropologists, including the Berndts and Norman Tindale, who worked with Ngarrindjeri people. Strehlow was also rather dismissive of Unaipon during an interview, when Unaipon tried to bring up the subject of his writing "in a little pamphlet of mine down at the museum" (see Cath Ellis interview, June 1963).

Cath Ellis questioned some of the assertions made by Unaipon in his interview, and noted in her records that Unaipon was not liked by local Aboriginal people (Bell, 1998: 616). Diane Bell dismisses this criticism, and that of Tindale's, regarding the so-called "lies" Unaipon took away with him from Swan Reach. Bell says that it is not uncommon for those Aboriginal people who have lived away from their communities for extended periods to be distrusted. She claims that Unaipon's "knowledge" is respected today, because he is referred to as "Maiyanu", meaning 'grandfather' (Bell, 1998:616). My understanding is that Unaipon is respected by Nungas today for his early achievements as a social activist and an inventor, but very little is known of his published writings. It is difficult for anyone to access copies of any of his publications today (all being out of print, excepting the two narratives published in *Paperbark*), and very few copies of any of his writings are circulating in the Nunga community. It is only in the last few years that Nungas have become aware that Unaipon's work was published under the name of Ramsay Smith.

When the 1930 edition of *Myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines* was first published under Ramsay Smith's name, it met with some harsh literary criticism. The *Times Literary Supplement* criticised it for its "pretty pretty language", and its importation of a "whole Olympus of deities" (quoted in Bell, 1998:129). Bell also reports that Tindale was harsh in his criticism, which he directed at Ramsay Smith rather than Unaipon, saying that his work was "romantic rubbish", and that he used "highly improbable concepts entirely foreign to the real stories of an Australian prehistoric [sic] people" (quoted in Bell, 1998:129).

While conducting field work, Ronald Berndt in 1939, and then with Catherine in the early 1940s had little to do with David Unaipon. Their relationship was strained because of Unaipon's close ties with the Church and the A.F.A., with whom the Berndts were to find

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<sup>45</sup> In his 1966 publication, *Uncle Tom's wurlie*, the Rev. J.C. Scarborough makes a special mention of David Unaipon in his foreword.

<sup>46</sup> Melva is actually the illegitimate daughter of Telford Unaipon, who was a nephew of David Unaipon's - the son of David's younger brother Creighton. Talmage, the son of Unaipon, died in 1977, and has no descendants.

themselves in conflict (see Berndt & Berndt, 1993:4)<sup>47</sup>. Catherine Berndt also reports that "many of our Aboriginal friends considered David to be rather standoffish". The Berndts were also critical of his published 'legends' saying they were "far removed from typical Narrinyeri accounts". (Berndt & Berndt, 1993:9)

As mentioned earlier, when Unaipon was in his mid 60s, he drew criticism from the Aborigines' Progressive Association (A.P.A.) in Sydney for his betrayal regarding the declaration of Australia Day, on January 26 1938, as a National Day of Mourning. The response to the proposed day was swift, and included the public release of the letter written by Unaipon to Mr. McEwen, the Minister for the Interior, along with a cover letter from Sexton. Both letters were reproduced in *The Age* newspaper one week before the controversial day in question. Sexton writes:

David Unaipon a well-known native leader in Australia, a full-blooded aboriginal, and a prince of his tribe, has asked me to forward you the enclosed letter.... David is the author of a booklet on native legends, and is a good speaker, with an excellent English vocabulary, is very gentlemanly in bearing, and you will see by his message, a man of common sense. The wailing day will be availed of to criticise Governments and generally finding fault, instead of showing appreciation of the efforts being made to aid the aborigines.

(Sexton in *The Age* January 18, 1938, quoted in Markus, 1988:78)

Unaipon's own letter not only criticises the proposed protest, but also strives to reaffirm his status as a spokesperson for his people by distancing himself from the increasingly vocal Indigenous people in the eastern states:

The movement is largely an emotional one, sponsored by sympathetic white people and half-castes in order to call attention to native grievances. But the 50,000 full-blooded aboriginals will have very little part in this matter. These will stoically and silently await the coming of a new day.... The most effective way of bringing this about is not by traducing Australia and giving it a bad reputation abroad, but by expressing appreciation of what is being done and contemplated for the aborigines.

(Unaipon in *The Age* January 18, 1938, quoted in Markus, 1988:78-79)

There are two interesting aspects to Unaipon's personal response to this proposed protest day. First, he himself has chosen to adopt the discourse so prevalent in the popular media of the time, and highlight his difference (as a "full-blooded aborigine"), and therefore status as a spokesperson, compared to the less representative "half-castes". This is despite the fact that many of those Aboriginal people living in his own Point McLeay were not 'full-blood'. Second, Unaipon reveals that he has changed his mind completely regarding the "segregation" of Aboriginal people away from the influences of 'white civilisation', remembering that just eight years previously he collected signatures for a petition, and wrote an article in *The Herald*, supporting the establishment of an isolated reserve to segregate 'tribal' Aboriginal people. His letter in *The Age* continues (note my emphasis):

As a representative of the race, I would like to urge that the 150th anniversary of Australia should be celebrated by the inauguration of a new programme, by which all the privileges of the dominant race should be given to the blacks. The time is past to talk of segregation. Let my people come more fully into the national family. There have been enough scientific investigations already, and no new facts have been brought to light, and yet there is still a plea to segregate the natives, keeping them practically in bush museums for scientific purposes.

(Unaipon in *The Age* January 18, 1938, quoted in Markus, 1988:79)

Unaipon's letter was not well received by W. Cooper, the secretary of another vocal organisation, the Australian Aborigines League, who had organised the petition to the King in October 1937. He immediately wrote to the Minister for the Interior stating:

<sup>47</sup> The Berndts were actually "officially barred from a number of Aboriginal reserves, including Point Mcleay [sic]" because of their criticism of missionaries in the early 1940s (see R.M. Berndt, 1987:15).

We try to keep from personalities and replying in the same way as we are criticised but must say that David Unaipon never did and does not now occupy any place of leadership among the natives. We have felt that his great ability could have been used to help his people.... The day of mourning does have the support of aborigines who are advanced enough to understand it and Mr. Unaipon will not have enough company of antis to keep him warm.

(Cooper, quoted in Markus, 1988:80)

But it seems, despite Unaipon's loyalty to his so-called white friends and supporters, he even drew harsh criticism from them. Dr. W. Ramsay Smith, who had known Unaipon for at least twenty years prior to any dealings over Unaipon's writings, commented of Unaipon: "Though in some, if not in most ways he is a bad egg, he is 'good in parts', or rather there is corn among the chaff if one knows how to winnow' " (written in a letter to the publisher George Robertson, 1926, Mitchell Library MSS 314/76). Ramsay Smith obviously knew how to winnow, because he went on to exploit Unaipon for every kernel of corn he had on offer, in the form of at least 21 narratives, which were later to appear in Ramsay Smith's 1930 publication *Myths and legends*. It is this controversial acquisition of narratives, and the style in which Unaipon wrote these and his many other narratives, that are the focus of Chapter Six, Seven and Eight of my study.

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- (1930) What have you done for my people? *The Herald*. November 22, 1930:Magazine section.
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[Publication funded by the A.F.A. Reprinted as a facsimile edition in 1994]  
[This 15 page booklet includes: "Release of the dragon flies", "Totemism", "Pah Kowie: the creature cell of life and intelligence", "Youn Gona the cockatoo", "Hungarrda" and "Narrinyeri saying".]
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[Also lists the "Aims and Objectives" of the A.F.A. and Unaipon's article: "An Aboriginal pleads for his race". On the title page it states: "The photo blocks in this publication have been provided by the Aborigines' Friends' Association in order to assist David Unaipon in his work".]
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- (1955) Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl. In *Dawn* 4,4:16-17.
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- (1959b) The voice of the Great Spirit. In *Dawn* 8,7:19.
- (1959c) Love story of the two sisters. In *Dawn* 8,9:9.
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## APPENDIX 6.3

### ANNOTATED LISTING OF CONTENTS OF RAMSAY SMITH'S (1930) *Myths and legends of the Australian Aborigines.*

The following texts are listed in the order they appear in Ramsay Smith (1930). I also list where else the same texts, which were written by Unaipon, appear in manuscript form, or have been published under Unaipon's own name.

#### CHAPTER 1 ORIGINS

##### Page 17 **The customs and traditions of Aborigines**

- No.1 in Mitchell Ms. - "Aborigines - their traditions"
- Also published earlier in 1924 in *Daily Telegraph*. August 2, Sydney.

##### p23 **The story of creation**

- Written and sold to Angus & Robertson by Unaipon in 1925. Then sent in Jan. 1927 to Ramsay Smith from A&R, along with the first typed instalment of the Mitchell Ms.
- In a footnote, Ramsay Smith writes: "This story of the Creation was told by a Karraru woman of the west coast of South Australia. She is sixty-five years old, and speaks her language fluently." But there can be no doubt that this text was written by Unaipon.

##### p31 **The coming of mankind** - which has two sub-sections, listed immediately below:

##### p41 **The peewee's story**

##### p45 **The eagle hawk and the crow**

##### p59 **The birth of the butterflies**

- No.11 in Mitchell Ms. "Immortality"
- Was previously published in a newspaper prior to 1925. Not sure where, but this published version is the copy provided in Volume 1 of the Mitchell Ms.

##### p62 **The confusion of tongues**

- No.4 in Mitchell Ms.

##### 67 **The discovery and loss of the secret of fire**

- No.22 in Mitchell Ms. - "The water rat who discovered the secret of fire"

##### p69 **The moon**

- No.13 in Mitchell Ms. - "The Mar Kar Ree (Moon)"

##### p71 **The wonderful lizard**

##### p78 **The lazy goannas and what happened to them**

- No.7 in Mitchell Ms. - "The Gherawhar (Goanna)"

##### p84 **How the selfish goannas lost their wives**

##### p91 **What some Aboriginal carvings mean & Tribe totems**

- No.2 in Mitchell Ms. - "Some stories about my race - what Aboriginal carvings mean"

#### CHAPTER 2 ANIMAL MYTHS

##### Page 94 **The selfish owl**

- No.24 in Mitchell Ms. - "Why all the animals peck at the selfish owl"

##### p99 **Why frogs jump into the water**

- No.25 in Mitchell Ms.
- Also published in 1959 in *Dawn*.

##### p101 **Kinie Ger, the native cat**

- First published elsewhere by Unaipon in 1928

##### p105 **The porcupine and the mountain devil**

##### p111 **The green frog**

- No.8 in Mitchell Ms. - "Gool Lun, Naga (Green frog)"

##### p118 **How the tortoise got his shell**

- No.10 in Mitchell Ms.
- Also published in 1954 in *Dawn*.

##### p120 **The mischievous crow and the good he did**

- No.15 in Mitchell Ms.

##### p147 **Whowie**

- No.23 in Mitchell Ms.

- p151 **The flood and its results**  
- No.6 in Mitchell Ms. - "Berrweria tribe; flood and its results"  
p168 **How Spencer's Gulf came into existence**

### CHAPTER 3 RELIGION

- Page 173 **The belief in a Great Spirit**  
- No.3 in Mitchell Ms. - "Belief of the Aborigine in a Great Spirit"  
p174 **The land of perfection**  
p182 **The voice of the Great Spirit**  
- No.21 in Mitchell Ms.  
- Also published in 1959 in *Dawn* .  
p184 **Witchcraft**  
- No.26 in Mitchell Ms.

### CHAPTER 4 SOCIAL

- p209 **Marriage customs**  
- No.14 in Mitchell Ms. - "Marriage customs of the Australian Aboriginal"  
p214 **The spirit of help among Aborigines**  
- No.18 in Mitchell Ms. - "Pan Parl Lowa, spirit of help"  
p215 **Ngia Ngiampe**  
- No.17 in Mitchell Ms. - "Nhung e umpie"  
p219 **Hunting**  
- No.9 in Mitchell Ms.  
p228 **Fishing**  
- No.5 in Mitchell Ms.  
p236 **Sport**  
- No.19 in Mitchell Ms.

### CHAPTER 5 PERSONAL MYTHS

- Page 242 **Kirkin and Wyju**  
p249 **The love story of two sisters**  
- No.12 in Mitchell Ms. - "Love story of the Mar-Rallang"  
p259 **The Keen Keeng**  
p264 **Mr and Mrs Newal and their dog**  
p270 **Woo**  
p272 **Thardid Jimbo**  
p277 **Palpinkalare**  
p294 **Perendi and Harrimiah**  
- Written and sold to Angus & Robertson by Unaipon in 1925. Then sent in Jan. 1927 to Ramsay Smith from A&R, along with the first typed instalment of the Mitchell Ms.  
p301 **Bulpallungga**  
p317 **Nurunderis wives**  
- No.16 in Mitchell Ms. - "Narroondarie wives"  
- Later published as "Narroondarie's wives." In Jack Davis et al (eds.) *Paperbark*. St Lucia, UQP:19-32.  
p331 **Chirr-bookie, the blue crane**  
- Written and sold to Angus & Robertson by Unaipon in 1925. Then sent in Jan. 1927 to Ramsay Smith from A&R, along with the first typed instalment of the Mitchell Ms.  
p341 **Buthera and the bat**  
p342 **Yara-ma-yha-who**  
- No.29 in Mitchell Ms.  
p345 **The origin of the Pleiades**  
- No.20 in Mitchell Ms. - "Story of the Mungingee"  
- Published earlier in 1925 in *The Home*, Feb. pp42-43. Reprinted in Beston (1979:347-350).

NOTE: The following narratives are part of the Mitchell Ms., but were left out of Ramsay Smith's 1930 publication:

Text 27 Wondangar, Goon Na Ghun (Whale and starfish)

Text 28 A wonderful bub-ban-rung lizard

Text 30 How teddy lost his tail

## APPENDIX 7.1 A narrative by Unaipon

From: Unaipon (1929) *Native legends*. Adelaide, Hunkin, Ellis & King.:4-5.

### TOTEMISM: the companionship of earthly creatures

Totemism is one of the most ancient customs instituted by the Primitive Man. The practice of it among the Australian Aborigines and its adoption owes its origin to a Mythological conception during the Neolithic Age.

Evidence is to be found incised [sic] upon Churinga stones, also engravings within caves and upon the surface of horizontal and perpendicular rock boulders in mountainous country and rock-bound coast.

The function of Mythology is admitted by science to be an attempt of the Primitive Man to explain the physical and religious phenomena. There are several Mythologies which have given rise to Totemism. This is one.

At the beginning of Creation, Man was present in Spirit and with Spirit Vision beheld the wonderful transformation of Life coming out of the slimy water overshadowed with dense atmosphere and heat.

Spirit Man observed all through the ages of time that each creature conformed to their type and species.

After the duration of many periods he lived side by side with the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna and the Insect Life, making his dwelling place within the fibre and bark of the Gum Tree, when he made a startling discovery that all the living creatures both great and small, because they were both of the earth and the water thereof, were gifted with a keen instinct and capacity of foretelling the approach of elemental disturbance and would seek shelter and make provision against difficulties and discomfort that would naturally follow through the fury of storm, hail and flood, and when the appointed period arrived Spirit Man made the Great Decision and adventure to be clothed with earthly body of flesh and blood, his Spirit Consciousness [sic] experienced a great change, for he was overshadowed by another self, the Subjective Consciousness [sic], which entirely belongs to the Earth and not to the Sacred Realm of Spirit, Immortal dwelling place, just at the threshold of the Greater Spirit, the Father of all Mankind - Eternal Home. He began to realise that his Spirit Self was controlled by an earthly Subjective Consciousness which bound him to earth's environment with all its blessing, disappointment, discomfort and its pain and sorrow. Being a stranger in a strange land he found it most difficult to adapt himself to earth's environment. His Spirit Self began to fret and pine for its Heavenly Home. The Living Creatures of the Earth saw his plight and were moved with pity and sympathy.

They gathered around him, and by their knowledge and instinct taught man how to seek a shelter in a tree top or within a cave and warned him of approaching danger and of storm and hail and rain. And thus did Man [sic] Subjective Consciousness grow in wisdom and in knowledge from instruction of Earthly Creatures, the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna and the Insect Life, the Beetle, Spider and the Ant. Thus the Aborigines of Australia have from time immemorial, whether in Central Australia or along the Sea Coast, or living along the banks of the Moo Koolie, River Murray, all tribes have selected these living creatures for companions and guides.



## APPENDIX 7.2: A second narrative by Unaipon

From: Unaipon (1927) *Aboriginal legends*. Adelaide, Hunkin, Ellis & King.

### HUNGARRDA

Thus and thus spake Nha Teeyouwa (blackfellow). Nhan-Garra Doctor: Children, I have many strange stories to tell you. All came to me whilst I slumbered in deep sleep.

Enfolding itself from its appointed place my Spirit Self gently stepped outside my body frame with my earthly body subjective consciousness. And this is my experience.

First I stood outside my mortal frame undecided what to do, and my Spirit consciousness revealed to me that I was encased in a bubble substance and as frail. Now if my bubble frame did burst, I'd be still within that Spirit World.

Then a vapour enclosed me round about like a shroud. And I moved away from my body and the earth upon the wings of a gentle breeze, towards the deep blue sky, far beyond the distant clouds. Then my progress ceased, suspended for awhile. With my earthly mind which I still retained, I thought of my body, home and environment, with Spirit vision clear, far excelling the King of Birds.

I looked toward the earth, sought my body frame, and saw its heaving breast still breathing deep in sleep. Then I thought of loved ones, kindred and my tribes. The aged honourable Ah Yamba and my people Harrunda. The landscape west, south and east, a radius of two hundred miles from the Mountain Ah Yamba. In panoramic order lay Ellureecha, Kokacha, Hunmajarra, Deiree and Allu Wharra Tribes. All under the swaying influence and Laws of the Harrunda.

Then by some unseen, compelling force I was carried swiftly onward until the bright sunlight grew dim as I went through period after period of ten thousand, thousand years of ages past.

In the Early Dawn of Life, I stood upon the bounds and coastline of a slimy sea, and transparent. In wonderment I gazed into its depth, and saw a state of infinitesimal rippling. And yet the surface was undisturbed.

Suddenly out of the silent, slimy sea myriads of living creatures came pushing, jostling and struggling up the rugged incline, eager to reach the sunlight that shone with threadlike ray, twinkling in the distance through the misty age, beckoning them onward to the million years ahead to accomplish that life for which they were designed.

Up and up along the winding pathway of the Gulf of Time, like pilgrims this great mass moves o'er the earth in a living stream, until ten thousand years arrive, when some living species reach their appointed span and silently pass from the rank and file and die by the wayside. Embalmed and preserved by the kindly hand of Time, and buried in a tomb of strata for a thousand years.

Thus Life and the world moved on, with seasons ever changing all living forms and creatures adapting themselves to conditions and seasons and environment too.

As we approached to the realm of the Day-light, all the great living creatures passed into the Land of the Dead, and a new order of Creatures came to take possession of the Earth.

They were strange living forms, ridiculously shaped, some with human body, legs and arms, with head, eyes and mouth of birds, reptile and fish, some with body of fish and human head.

But what amazed me most, the intelligence they possessed was like the culture of our present day.

I was interested in one particular being. As I approached him I saw that he returned the interest, and came toward me, and when at about ten paces away he placed his right hand upon his belly, then closing the fingers, as if extracting something. Quickly extending his arm toward my stomach and opening his hand, a sign of offering of goodwill.

And then we sat upon a ledge of rock. He spake unto me in my tongue, Harruna, explaining the secret code of initiation. The origin and the adoption of Totemism and its laws that marriage custom must obey. And in parting said, Speak unto your neighbouring tribes the things I have told you. It is the word of Hungarrda. The great prophet who came out of the slimy sea, the Land of Mist.

In remembrance of our meeting take this stone; on it is inscribed the song I sang to the Kangaroo, Emu, Goanna, Snakes, and Insect Tribes.

## The Song of Hungarrda<sup>1</sup>

### Jew Lizard

Wuhl. Lou. Mee. Ingee. Too.  
Fire, Lightning. Asleep within. Stick. Burning. Brightly

Ma.

Blaze leap upward.

**Whul [sic] - Fire, Lightning.**

Bright, consuming Spirit. No power on earth so great as Thee,  
First-born child of the Goddess of Birth and Light,  
Thy habitation betwixt heaven and earth within a veil of clouds dark as night.

Accompanied by furious wind and lashing rain and hail.  
Riding majestically upon the storm,  
flashing at intervals, illuminating the abode of man.

Thine anger and thy power thou revealest to us.  
Sometimes in a streak of light, which leaps upon a great towering rock,  
which stood impregnable and unchallenged in its birth-place when the earth was formed,  
and hurls it in fragments down the mountain-side, striking terror into man and beast alike.

Lou. Mee.  
Asleep with [sic] a stick

Thus in wonder I am lost. No mortal mind can conceive.  
No mortal tongue express in language intelligible.  
Heaven-born Spark, I cannot see nor feel thee.  
Thou art concealed mysteriously wrapped within the fibre and bark of tree and bush and shrubs.

Why dost thou condescend to dwell within a piece of stick?  
As I roam from place to place for enjoyment or search of food,  
My soul is filled with gratitude and love for thee.  
And conscious, too, of thine all pervading spirit presence,

It seems so strange that thou wilt not hear or reveal thyself  
nor bestow a blessing unless I pray.  
But to plead is not enough to bring thee forth and cause thy glowing smile  
to flicker over my frame.

But must strive and wrestle with this piece of stick pressing and twirling  
into another stick with all the power I possess,  
to release the bonds that bind thee fast.

Then shall thy living spark leap forth in contact with grass and twig,  
Thy flame leaps upward like waves that press and roll.

Radiant sister of the Day, I cannot live without thee.  
For when at twilight and in the depth of midnight;  
before the morning dawns, the mist hangs over the valley like death's cold shroud,  
And dewdrops chill the atmosphere.

Ingee Too Ma.

Then like thy bright Mother shining from afar,  
Thy beaming smiles and glowing energy radiates into this frail body,  
Transfusing life, health, comfort, and happiness too.

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<sup>1</sup> I have laid out The Song as I believe Unaipon intended, as poetic verse.

### APPENDIX 7.3: A third narrative by Unaipon

From: Unaipon, David (1929) *Native Legends*. Adelaide, Hunkin, Ellis & King:6.

#### **Pah Kowie - the creature [sic] cell of life and intelligence.**

Amidst the glowing Koondang (Milky Way), sacred realm, beams of light project from a million planets, sun and star, and from ever-circling comets trailing streams of light along their way.

Within this sunlit Ether Ocean there is a place where no light seems to shine, but to our mental vision conveys a mind impression of a cavern where impenetrable darkness reigns for ever.

This darkness veils the Nawanthee (Home) of our mysterious Pah Kowie, the Mother of Our Mother, the creative cell of Life and Intelligence. She gave birth unto the first female life of flesh and blood, the mould and pattern for all the Mothers of the Earth.

She endowed her Infant Female Child with faculties and powers to conceive just what the human race is to-day.

Beyond this darkness wherein dwell our Pah Kowie, there is a pathway leading unto a region where there is a Greater Orb that rules and shines supreme. This is the source that supplies eternal Thildarie, Invisible Rays of Light, which sustain and maintain the Life and Intelligence of Mankind, distinguishable from all other creatures of the Earth. This Greater Orb too is the origin from whence existing comet, star, sun and planet and other celestial bodies receive their substance and shining robes.

Thus many of the ideas formulated by my ancient fathers may seem to an enlightened age fantastic and absurd, but to us these ideas are the foundation of a structure and edifice of knowledge under whose shadow we live to-day.

## APPENDIX 7.4 A narrative in Ramsay Smith

From: Ramsay Smith, William (1930) *Myths and legends of the Australian Aboriginals*.  
London, Harrap.:23-31.

### THE STORY OF CREATION

The voice of the Great Spirit spake unto Bajjara and Arna in a dream, and said, "Go forth and tell this story, for I have chosen you as my messengers." This is the story:

There was a great darkness which covered the space. This darkness was silent and still, and in it the earth dwelt cold and lifeless. Upon the surface of the earth were mountains and lofty peaks. There were also hills and valleys and plains, and deep caves and caverns. In these caves there were forms of life, but they were unconscious of their surroundings. There was no wind, not even a gentle breeze.

For a long, long time an awful, deathlike stillness pervaded everything. Within the darkness and stillness of the earth there slept a beautiful young goddess. One day the Great Father Spirit whispered gently to her, "You have slept and fulfilled my will. Now awake and go forth and give life to the universe and to everything therein. Do all as I command you. First awaken the grass, then the plants, and then the trees. After you have covered the face of the earth with grass, plants and trees you will bring forth insects and fish, reptiles and lizards, snakes, birds, and animals. Then rest until all things that you have created shall have developed so as to fulfil the purpose for which they have come on earth. Nothing shall come forth that is not for the benefit of other parts of the creation."

The Young Goddess took a breath that caused the still atmosphere to vibrate, and she said to the Great Father Spirit that she was ready to do his bidding. She opened her eyes, and her whole being appeared to be flooded with light. Darkness disappeared before her. She looked abroad on the earth, and saw how empty it was. She looked beneath the earth, and she saw a tiny speck. Then from out of the distance she came toward the earth, swifter than a meteor. She alighted very gently, as if she feared to disturb the many living things that were upon it and beneath it. She made her home the Nullarbor Plain, and soon her influence began to be felt upon the cold life of earth.

From her home on the plain she set out on a journey, and continued on a western course until she came back to her starting point in the east. As she walked the grass, the shrubs, and the trees sprang up in her footprints. Then she turned north, and walked straight on in that direction until she passed to the south and came back to her starting point. She repeated these journeys round the earth until it was completely covered with vegetation. Then she rested from her labours, and made herself a home on the Nullarbor Plain, and thus the Sun Goddess, the Mother, and the giant trees and vegetation all lived together in peace.

All at once the Sun Goddess heard a voice commanding her to go forth in the caverns of the earth and to bring forth life. She set out, taking warmth and brightness with her, into the dark, cold regions of the world. The spirits from beneath the earth cried out, "O Mother, why have you disturbed us? We have ruled over this part of the earth for millions of years." The Mother Sun Goddess stayed beneath the earth for one whole day, exploring all parts, and shedding her brightness on everything. Then there came forth from the earth swarms of beautiful insects. They were all colours and sizes, and shapes; and they began flitting from bush to bush and blending their colours with everything, and making the earth still more beautiful. Then the Mother Sun rested.

She continued resting in order that the insects might adapt themselves to the new conditions of living. Then she rode in her chariot of light, and visited the mountain-tops to behold the glory that covered the face of the earth. After this she rode upon a mighty wind that carried her to every part of the earth in an instant of time. Upon this same wind she returned to her home on the Plain of Nullarbor. She rested for a time that would be equal to two sunrises. But at this stage of creation there was no setting of the sun. She shone continually during an eternal day, and there was no darkness except within the bowels of the earth. After resting, the Sun Goddess visited another cave or abyss. She looked down into its depth, and her radiant face shone with love, and drove the darkness away with her presence. She stepped down to the dark, cold, lifeless bottom. The solid ice there melted before her presence. Then she came forth, and went back to her home in the Nullarbor Plain, from out of this abyss there came forth snakes and lizard forms without legs, which crept upon their bellies upon the surface of the earth. A river also came forth from out of the cavern, and

wended its way through a valley, and in the water of this river there were fish of all kinds, great and small.

Then the Sun Mother came and beheld her work, and saw that it was good. She commanded that the new life that she had created should be everywhere harmonious. The Sun Goddess again visited the mountain-top, and saw the trees, shrubs, grass, butterflies, beetles, snakes, and lizards, and the dry land and the water, and she was satisfied with her work. Again the wind came and bore her round on a visit to all corners of the earth, and brought her back to her home on the Plain of Nullarbor. There she rested for some time before resuming her work of creating.

When the Mother Goddess next went forth she was accompanied by insects, snakes, and lizards, who venerated her, and wished to see her create life from the next cavern. Once again the darkness of the cavern was driven out by her brightness as she descended to the bottom. All along the ledges and the bottom were the spirit forms of birds and animals. The Mother Goddess came out of the abyss, and the mighty wind again acted as a chariot, and took her back to her home on the Plain of Nullarbor. Some days after her visit to the cavern there came out of it birds in great numbers and colours. These came straight to the Mother Goddess and looked upon her glory. They went away contented, and glad to be alive. The Sun Goddess rested a while. She saw that the father of All Spirits was satisfied with all that she had created.

Then the Sun Mother commanded that the earth should be subject to short periods of seasonal changes. She ordained that first, for a certain length of time, there should be a hot period, and then that there should be a cold period; but there should not be any such extremes of heat and cold as would harm any of the creatures or the vegetation upon the earth. The Sun Mother said that the heat and cold should be felt throughout the various parts of the earth. From the very hottest parts the heat should gradually grow less and less until they became quite cold. Light and darkness were also to visit the earth, and were to succeed each other.

At the beginning of spring the Sun Mother called the insects, the reptiles, the birds, and the animals together, and a great multitude came from the north, the birthplace and the home of the north wind. Other great multitudes came from the south, the abode of the south wind; and from the west, the birthplace of the west wind. The greatest numbers came from the east, the royal palace, the cradle of the sunshine and sunbeams. When they all had assembled the Sun Mother spoke in a soft and gentle voice to the animals, the birds, the reptiles, and the insects. She said, "Listen, O children; I am your foster-mother. The Great Father Spirit has given me power to take you from the earth. My work on the earth is completed, and now I go to a higher sphere, where I shall be your light and life. When I go I shall give you another being who shall govern you. You shall be his servants, and he shall be your lord and ruler. You all in part shall be changed. Your bodies shall go back into the earth, and that life that I called forth and that the Great Father Spirit gave you shall no longer dwell in form on the earth. It shall be transferred into those regions near my abode, and shall shine and be a guide to those who come after you. Your abode will be in the Spirit Land. But this shall not be until you have lived and followed the desires of your own hearts, and have reached a condition in which you are prepared to meet this change. And now I leave you."

Suddenly the Sun Mother rose from the earth, and soared up and up into the heights. All the animals, the birds, the reptiles, and the lizards watched with fearful eyes the departure of the Goddess of Light and Life. As they stood gazing the face of the earth became dark, and they were all sore afraid of this strange happening. It filled them with fear and sadness, and when the darkness became greater they ceased their crying, thinking that the Mother Sun had forsaken them, and thus they remained until they saw the dawn in the east. Then they watched and were puzzled to see the gradual appearance of light behind them. They spoke among themselves, and said, "Did we not see the Mother Sun go to the west, and what is this that we see coming from the east?" They all stood facing the Sun Mother as she rose smiling upon them out of the eastern sky. They stood, rooted to the ground, watching the behaviour of their beloved Sun Goddess.

She did not remain still, but seemed to be continually moving on her journey toward the west. Suddenly it dawned upon them that this meant that the radiant smile of the Mother Sun Goddess would always be followed by a period of darkness, and that it was intended that the period of darkness should be time of rest. So they all ran hither and thither, seeking shelter in the dense forests by burrowing in the ground or resting on the boughs in trees. The flowers that had opened to the bright sun closed up and went to sleep. The wattle-blossoms still awake all through the silent night. They wished to preserve their form and colour in

darkness as in daylight. The water-spirit of the little streamlet loved the brightness of the sunshine so much that it rose and rose far beyond mortal vision. It wept and wept so bitterly in its efforts to reach the brightness that it became exhausted with grief, and it came back to earth and rested upon the trees, the bushes, and the grass in beautiful, sparkling dewdrops.

When dawn appeared in the eastern sky the birds were the first to behold the herald of the coming of the Mother Sun. They became so excited that some began to twitter and chirp, while others were so filled with joy that they laughed and laughed, and others sang a joyful song of praise. When the Mother Sun peeped up in the eastern sky the dewdrops rose up skyward, anxious to meet and accompany the Sun Mother. And this became the beginning of morning and night. All things living understood the plans of the Great Sun Mother.

After a great many years had gone by the animals and the birds began to weary. They were dissatisfied with their state of being. Some of the animals began to weep because they could not fly like the birds. The fish became dissatisfied because they lived too much in the water. They felt that they would like to have a share in the beautiful sunshine, so they wept and wept, and pined away because they could not be animals, birds, or reptiles. The insects shared in the discontent, and some of them too began to pine away, while others slept and slept, and refused to eat or to enjoy life.

Then the Sun Mother came back to the earth, and gathered the people together, and said, "O children of the earth, have I not brought you forth from the womb of the earth? Have I not shone upon your shapeless forms and breathed life into them? O dissatisfied beings, I have given you life and the right to choose for yourselves. Do as you think best, but you shall all repent of the choice you make."

All the animals, the birds, the reptiles, the insects, and the fishes chose as they severally desired. Oh, what funny creatures some of them were - the kangaroos, the frilled lizards, the bats of all types, the pelican with its big bill, the platypus, the flying-fox, the stupid-looking old wombat, and the frog that grew to maturity in such a strange fashion! First of all it came forth from the spawn, all belly and tail, then gradually it developed legs peeping out from where the body and the tail joined; after a while the tail shrank and the body became well developed, four legs appeared, and then the frog was complete.

The mouse family of the bats wished to be birds; so now the bat is able to fly, although it cannot grow feathers. The seal, not satisfied with being able to roam round the forests and hills, wished to live as it does today. The owl wept most bitterly for large and bright eyes, capable of seeing in the dark; it was given its wish, but it is unable to see in the daylight; so, during the day, it hides in a cave or in a hollow tree, because it cannot bear the glare and brightness. The owl is not able to look into the face of the Sun Mother. The koala thought it a shame to be in possession of a brush or tail, and he wished to be rid of the beautiful tail that was the envy and admiration of all the animals, so the tail died off, and now the poor koala looks shy when in the company of the dingo, who prides himself on his beautiful tail, and wags it proudly when he meets dogs or other animals. See, also, how some of the insect tribe have had their desires fulfilled. Some resemble bits of bark trees, or twigs, or dried sticks.

This heterogeneous creation shows what can be brought about by discontent and foolish desire. When the Sun Mother saw that such strange beings would cause a difference between her and the children of the earth she said, "I will send unto you a part of myself, O children of the earth. My hearts desire will come to you before I visit you tomorrow." So next morning, when the animals, the birds, the reptiles, and the insects arose, they saw the bright morning star rising out of the eastern sky and settling on the Nullarbor Plain. There the animals, the birds, and the reptiles congregated about him, but he did not speak to them. He sat with his eyes fixed on the east. When the Mother Sun rose she said, "I have given to you a son of the Spirit World, but he shall be one of you." Then she said to the bright morning star, "O my son, rule thou here, and I shall send you a friend. Watch, and when I dip beyond the western sky and darkness covers all the earth you will see a bright form coming out of the western sky. This is the Lady of the Night, who will help you to shine, and will share with you the joys of the light."

And so it came to pass that when the Goddess of Light, the Sun Mother, rode on her chariot of light across the sky, and passed over the west, and darkness drew her veil across the sky, the promised visitor came and shed her silvery light upon the earth. Thus was the moon born at the will of the Sun Goddess. The moon descended to the earth and became the wife of the morning star, and they brought forth children. These children dwelt and

multiplied in the form of the human race. When they died they passed on to take their place in the sky in the form of stars.

The aboriginals say that the stars are the children of the sons and daughters of the morning star and the lady moon, who were created by the Sun Goddess. Bajjara and Arna, the prophets of the Spirit World, said, "You, my children, shall remember to whom you owe your birth, and you shall not seek to change your state like the animals, the birds, the reptiles, the insects, and the fishes. Remember, also, that you are superior to the creatures, and that you and your children and your children's children will all return to the Great All Father, the Eternal Spirit."

## APPENDIX 7.5: A fourth narrative by Unaipon

From: Unaipon, David (1927) *Aboriginal legends* No. 1. Kinie Ger: The native cat.  
Adelaide, Hunkin, Ellis & King.

### KINIE GER - THE NATIVE CAT

In the dim and distant past slowly dawned the power of Reason and of Thought, when man beheld through misty age myriad shapes of grotesque beings. Some were good, and proved a blessing to Mankind, and some were bad, so that to this day Mankind's an heir to cruelties and evil passions born. Such ruthless, murderous deed committing as were wrought by Kinie Ger, the Native Cat. A conceited, youthful Kangaroo, with pride and boasted strength, heedless of entreaties, ventured forth, saying, "I to the Westward go agathering herbs and berries, and returning at the setting of the sun to join you one and all." With mighty leaps he bounded across the plain and soon disappeared. The sun its course did run, 'twas sinking fast in the western sky. Cold and lifeless lay the Kangaroo. A distinguished mark upon its body. Late that evening sitting around the camp fire someone whispered. "It was the mark of Kinie Ger's spear."

Kinie Ger no pity showed. To animals and birds alike his cruel vengeance wrought. The lizards and the Reptiles, too, were mercilessly slain. They all agreed in force combined to attack him, the Emu and the Kangaroo, the Goanna and the Carpet Snake. They talked and planned some means, to capture or to slay so cruel an enemy. The Emu volunteered with spear in hand to go forth and meet the dreaded foe. At twilight a messenger arrived full of sadness and of sorrow to tell the story how the noble-hearted Emu fought and fell a victim to the Spear of Kinie Ger.

With long, unbroken harmony, the Owl and Crow, who twin sisters wed, with wife and family lived in happiness. They heeded not when others wept, nor sought to heal a wounded heart, until one bright and glorious day the Mother Owl and Mother Crow each fondly peeped into a separate cot where slept her darling babe. The sight that met their gaze - each little baby breast revealed a gaping wound, from which two little innocent hearts were torn unmistakably, a cruel act of Kinie Ger. With heavy jeart and tearful eyes each Mother prayed, "Oh, husband mine, thou shalt not eat one morsel flesh, nor drink to quench thy thirst, nor shalt thou lay to rest they weary body until thou has slain the wicked Kinie Ger."

The Owl and Crow smoke-signalled far and wide, strictly guard all waterholes within two journeying days to the North and South and East, excepting a distant one, half a day toward the rising sun. No one beyond or within this space must camp, or hunt, or walk about; it was proclaimed forbidden ground. The Birds and the Reptiles and the Lizard tribes came with sorrowing hearts to express their sympathy. But the elders to pronounce a benediction. The Owl in grief and with indignation replied, "For this bloody deed, two innocent infants, victims of the bloodier Kinie Ger. Forget not. Oh, hands to wield the trusty spear. Forget not, O spear, thy noble mission to rid us of so vile and wicked foe. From thy sharpened point and jagged edge shall drip the life-blood of Kinie Ger." This speech stirred the crowd. They sang the war song of their fathers. The Crow and the Owl danced the war dance of revenge. Suddenly, with hurried strides, towards the East they ran. Their destination the unforbidden well. The Owl upon the Northern side, the Crow the Southern side did choose. Both with a hundred strides from the wall [sic], sitting down a while to think and plan, how best to act effectively to bring about the death of Kinie Ger.

With gesture and with sign both selected a bush forty strides from the well, within this bush a place dug out in which they stood waist deep. They waited patiently. The sun was half-way down the Western sky. Kinie Ger his thirst to slake approached the well; with wommera [sic] and spear in hand ready, should any dare, to attack him. He stooped to drink. The Owl and Crow, their spears already fixed upon the wommera, with muscles strained like springs of steel. The spear with lightning [sic] speed obeyed the hunter's will, stuck fast into a vital part of Kinie Ger. The Owl and the Crow from their concealment came, and from the body drew forth their spears. Thus from the sharpened point and jagged edge there flowed the life-blood of Kinie Ger. They struck their spears again and again into the lifeless body of Kinie



Ger, making many marks. And when the sun sunk in the West the Owl and Crow committed the body to the flames.

Late that evening, as they sat and watched it burn, one spark larger than the rest rose into the darkened sky. They saw it rise and join the Koondange Sacred Groups (Narburlen) (Milky Way). They both returned to their anxious wives and told the story of success.

The Animal and Bird, the Reptile and the Lizard tribe, then came to see the spot where the enemy was slain. They beheld the footprints of the same strange and tiny being; the anxious crowd followed the track until they saw a harmless creature and as shy as the Native Cat of to-day.

## APPENDIX 7.6

### EVIDENCE THAT SHOWS ALL NARRATIVES IN RAMSAY SMITH (1930) ARE WRITTEN BY DAVID UNAIPON.

NOTE: The narratives in the Mitchell Ms., definitely by Unaipon, are not included below. The common phrases, characters and themes listed below are also found in the Mitchell Ms. The page references cited below are those found in Ramsay Smith (1930).

#### **p23 The story of creation**

- One of three extra narratives by Unaipon sent to Ramsay Smith in 1927, along with first installment of Mitchell Ms. (as "The sun a goddess and a creation"; see Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205, letter dated January 15, 1927).
- Ramsay Smith's footnote says collected from Karraru woman of west coast, but probably inspired by her during Unaipon's trip to the Nullarbor Plains in October 1924.

#### **p31 The coming of mankind**

- One of narratives that make up the creation trilogy.
- Characters = Sun Goddess/Goddess of Birth; Father of All/One Great Father/Spirit of Mankind and Great Father Spirit.
- Phrase = "animals, birds, reptiles, and lizards."

#### **p41 The peewee's story**

- A subsection of 'The coming of mankind' narrative.
- Characters = Sun Goddess/Mother of All Living Things.

#### **p45 The eaglehawk and crow**

- Also a subsection of 'The coming of mankind' narrative.
- Characters = Sun Goddess/Goddess of Birth; Father of All Spirits.
- Theme of Intelligence e.g. p55 "before he had been endowed by the Father of All Spirits with intelligence"; "Then the Human Intelligence sat down to consider all he had been told".
- Theme of Evolution e.g. p55-56 "The years rolled by, and age after age brought various great and wonderful changes."; "All the species married into their own kind, thus returning to the custom originated by the Goddess of Birth."
- Phrases = "amid the animals, the birds, the reptiles, the lizards, and the fishes"; and p57 "it seemed to be the Queen, the Goddess of All Living Female Forms"; "the kangaroos, the opossums, the snakes, and the birds, and their companions and their young ones."

#### **p71 The wonderful lizard**

- A sequel to No.22 in Mitchell Ms. "The water rat who discovered the secret of fire". Note Ramsay Smith refers back to this text in a footnote.
- Phrase = p72 "Now the eagle-hawk and all the chiefs of the animals, the birds, the reptiles, and the insects..."; p75 "There was the magpie, the cockatoo, the butcher-bird, the laughing jack, the emu, the little wren, the willy-wagtail, and a great many others of the bird tribe."; and p78 "They (the snakes) also became the most dreaded enemies of the animal, bird, and lizard tribes."

#### **p84 How the selfish goannas lost their wives**

- A sequel to No.7 in Mitchell Ms. Again Ramsay Smith (1930:84) refers back to "the events that are recorded in the previous story" which is entitled "The Lazy Goannas and what happened to them" (but called "The Gherawhar (Goanna)" by Unaipon in Mitchell Ms.).
- Characters = "The Spirit of Good, the Spirit of Water, the Spirit of Food, the Spirit of Pleasure, the Spirit of Lightning and Thunder and Rainstorm, and the Spirit of Sunshine."
- Phrase = "all the animal, bird, reptile, and insect tribes."

#### **p101 Kinie Ger: the native cat**

- Published in pamphlet form under Unaipon's name in 1927 as *Aboriginal legends*. No.1.

### **p105 The porcupine and the mountain devil**

- Footnote by Ramsay Smith states (1930:105) "This story was told by a Cooper River tracker, a member of the Arunta tribe" - possibly Unaipon's friend Yampa.
- Phrase = "The marriages that took place between the animal, the bird, the reptile, the lizard, and the insect tribes..."

### **p168 How Spencer's Gulf came into existence**

- Note: Unaipon visited Point Pearce on Yorke Peninsula while collecting narratives for Ramsay Smith. This text begins p168-9: "The people of the Narrangga tribe who lived long, long ago on Yorke's Peninsula had a story that has been handed down through the ages. It is a tale of a strange and wonderful being who lived when there was no Spencer's Gulf..."
- Theme of Christian moralising with a subtle political message = p169 "There were no family or other boundaries until one day some one suggested rather foolishly that each kind of family should live alone and not associate with the other kind of families."...p170 "then began a great warfare between the birds and the animals, lizards, and reptiles.".... "said the emu, 'If something were done to deprive the selfish ones of their possessions I am sure that they would become more considerate and friendly.' "....p172 "Ever since that memorable time, when the kangaroo made Spencer's Gulf with the aid of his magic bone, birds have displayed no selfishness."

### **p174 The land of perfection**

- Note: Unaipon also made a trip to the west coast. This text begins p174: "On the Plain of the Nullarbor there existed a wonderful and beautiful country."....
- Characters = include Perendi & Harrimiah (who also feature in "Perendi & Harrimiah", which we know was Unaipon's because it was posted to Ramsay Smith by A & R publishers).
- Theme of life as a journey of the soul = This narrative is the journey of a "sick and stricken" man's soul ("the pilgrim") to the Land of Perfection (Heaven?), and includes Unaipon's popular elements of states of consciousness and unconsciousness (see p176).
- Moralising Christian tones = p174-5 "in the Land of Perfection there was no need for one creature to prey upon another in order to live.... So all lived in happiness and harmony.... The soul, being the one controlling power in man, seeks a resting-place, and so would lead the body onward into a land where all was peaceful harmony"
- Theme of Good versus Evil = p175 "Biggarroo, the wombat snake, and Goonnear, the carpet-snake. Biggarroo is the good snake, and Goonnear the evil snake. Biggarroo is a great physician. The Father Spirit entrusted him with healing virtue for the human race."
- Theme of Freedom through death = p177 "Then the soul whispered softly to its brother body, 'Turn to the right and flee into the open jaw of Biggarroo, and you shall gain your freedom, and through eternity your body and mind shall feel neither sickness nor pain'." p178 Then in this "inner world" of the snake the pilgrim sees "others of the human race" ... "they all spoke one language" and were friends. And p179-180 The pilgrim, with a third eye, sees into the past and the formation of the earth by the Mother Goddess. He prays to her: "'while I remain in my corrupt body, and tread this earthly sphere with all its pain and woe....my soul shall rise on wings to my everlasting home in thee'"
- Theme of Evolution = p180-1 Tells of a century passing and the pilgrim "regained his self-consciousness" and left the snake's body to find the Land of Perfection had become vegetated. Then centuries passed before his third eye and he saw giant creatures that then became extinct, such as Harrimiah ("the dark black goanna") Perendi ("the striped yellow and brown goanna") and Kendi ("the frilled lizard").
- How-so Coda = p182 "Then the Great Father Spirit gave ear to the request of the Goddess of Light and Life, and transferred the Land of Perfection to the Sacred Land, now known as the Milky Way."
- Characters = Great Father Spirit; Mother Goddess/Goddess of Love, Light, and Life.

### **p242 Kirkin and Wyju**

- Set in the West near Coolgardie (near Kalgoorlie). One of set of narratives collected during Unaipon's trip to Point Pearce and the West Coast.
- Phrase = "the whole animal, bird, reptile and lizard tribes"; "kangaroo, wallaby, emu, goanna, and carpet-snake people."

- Theme of Good overcoming Evil = The vain Kirkin has long golden hair, but becomes a "small and insignificant (little hawk) bird" cf. Plain but beloved Wyju who kills Kirkin in revenge.
- Christian values = p244 "Wyju won the admiration of all the fair maidens of Ge Rill Ghillie and Wonboona.... He was good, kind, sympathetic, and thought little of himself, but much of serving others."
- Very similar sub-plot to the Eagle & Crow narrative told by Unaipon's friend Barney Warrior (see Tindale, 1937:151-152). Sharp sticks are placed in nest of the "walliow" (kangaroo-rat) to pierce Wyju's feet. The blood from Wyju's feet consequently formed the red ochre valley.
- Characters = All Father Spirit; the Winjarning brothers (servants of the All Father).

### **p252 Cheeroonear**

- Another of the narratives collected and set in the west on the "Plain of Nullarbor".
- Characters = "the dreaded gigantic Cheeroonear", his wife and dogs, Winjarning brothers (medicine men), Great Father Spirit, God of Dewdrops.
- Theme of Good versus Evil = The Winjarning bros. successfully kill the evil Cheeroonear.
- Phrase = "The animals, birds, reptiles, lizards, and insects mutually agreed that they should herd in common."
- How-so Coda = Mentions footprints left in rocks at Ge Rill Ghillie.

### **p259 The Keen Keeng**

- One of the set of narratives inspired by Unaipon's trip to the west (set between Ge Rill Ghillie & W.A.). On p259 it is declared that the Keen Keeng beings were "more human-like than Thardid Jimbo and Cheeroonear, or even the proud, conceited Kirkin."; on p260 it mentions "Newal".
- Characters = a Fire and Flame God/God of Fire and Flame, a scout and priest and priestess.
- Other characters = the Winjarnings p260: "These two men were known to the whole of W.A. as Winjarnings, brother medicine men. They were respected and worshipped by all who came under their influence. Their object in life was to protect the human race from the cruelties of Thardid Jimbo, Cheeroonear, Kirkin, and other wicked beings."
- Touch of the exotica = With the making of sacrifices to Gods and beating of drums. e.g. p259 "the only way to appease the god's anger was to offer a living human being as sacrifice."
- Moralising Coda = p264 "In evil there is some good, and the good separates itself from the evil as a spark mounts upward in the sky."
- Footnote by Ramsay Smith states (1930:262): "the ceremonial rites of initiation of the young men" was learnt by the Winjarnings from the Keen Keeng cavern.

### **p264 Mr and Mrs Newal and their dog**

- Another narrative set in the West, is about the "Bajeeja tribe" of Wonboona country.
- Character = Father of All Spirits.
- Theme of Good versus Evil = p264 states Mr and Mrs Newal and their dog are "the most cruel characters that ever existed" cf. Buda Gooda ("saviours & friends of mankind").

### **p270 Woo**

- Set in the South East of S.A., p270: "the ancient Pumbala tribe that inhabited the south and south eastern parts". Mentions Naracoorte (and caves), Lucindale, Salt Creek, Warracknabeal, and Kingston.
- Theme of Good versus Evil = Woo "the strangest and most peculiar being"... "son of a great giantess", who was deformed; p271: "Woo was very cruel to men, but was exceedingly kind to reptiles, lizards, and insects."
- How-so Coda = His mother shed tears over her sons deformities, forming the lake, p272: "there is no spot so beautiful as Mount Gambier, the resting place of the mother of Woo."

### **p272 Thardid Jimbo**

- Another of the set of narratives set in the West. p272: "In the long, long ago, in a cave in the land of Ge Rill Ghillie".
- Characters = the Father of Spirits.

- Theme of Good versus Evil = the evil character "Thardid Jimbo, a great giant" cf. Mummulbery ("a very good man") and his "two girl-wives".

### **p277 Palpinkalare**

- Another of the set of narratives set in the West. On p277 it refers to "the Wonboona & Kookata tribes".
- Theme of Good versus Evil = Winjarning, the Evil One cf. "pure and true" animals of nature.
- Phrase = the animals, birds, reptiles, or insects.
- Old Testament moralising Coda = p293-4: "it is said that he [the Evil One] is to be seen at times in the form of wicked men.... [but] the Evil One cannot work mischief through any of the animals, birds, reptiles, or insects.... It is therefore said among the people that all nature is pure and true, and man alone is of evil disposition."

### **p294 Perindi and Harrimiah**

- One of three extra narratives by Unaipon sent to Ramsay Smith in 1927, along with first installment of Mitchell Ms. (see Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205, letter dated January 15, 1927).
- Set at Coopers Creek in north of S.A., possibly told to Unaipon by his friend Yamba.
- Tells of fight between two brother lizards: "All the members of the lizard and reptile families were greatly afraid of them."
- Christ-like moralising footnote on what this narrative teaches "aboriginal girls and boys", p294: "they should not become victims to flattery" but to "meekness and humility as expressed in the character of Harrimiah.... He would rather have died than have cultivated a revengeful spirit. For these qualities he was respected and honoured by all."
- Phrases = p295 "the bandicoot, the lyre-bird, the frilled lizard, and other members of the bird and lizard tribes."
- Biblical analogy = "The tribes made a great pilgrimage to Cooper's Creek..."
- Theme of forgiveness = p300: "If you desire to make me happy, try to forgive my brother, and tell him that I still love him!"

### **p301 Bulpallungga**

- States high moral virtue of Aboriginal society = Begins on p301: "This is a story that is often told by the elders of the different tribes in their various languages throughout Australia. It is told as an object lesson to boys, with a view to educating them by instilling into their young minds a knowledge of the disastrous results of living a life that is contrary to the rules of their social order and out of harmony with the community". It's only told in a whisper to initiates after they have: "fulfilled the ceremonial rites of the tribe."
- Characters = Goddess of Childbirth, Great Father Spirit.
- Other characters = a Wonboona man, Bulpallungga (uninitiated boy child).
- Biblical analogy = put in a footnote by Ramsay Smith (1930:311): "The aboriginal narrator said here: 'Bulpallungga led a life similar to that of Samson, David, and Solomon, or still more, a faster life, like the Prodigal of Holy Writ.'"
- Symbolic language = regarding sleep as "soft, white down of swan".
- Vernacular term is possibly Ngarrindjeri = footnote p311: "The medicine-man's spear is the *thingairipari*; it is used in battle to slay the chief warrior of the opposing side." (see Meyer, 1843:98 'Tingauul-' meaning to 'shake hand in derision').
- Miltonian style = see p309-310: "song of sorrow", much like Unaipon's "Song of Hungarra".
- How-so aetiological element = the mother's spirit enters the curlew bird as punishment for the "blunder" of refusing to give up child for initiation (see p305).
- Moralising Coda = p317: "Thus was Bulpallungga's life brought to an end, not by the strength of men, but by the cunning of maidens" [Note similarities to the cunning of "Naroondarie's wives"].

### **p331 Chirr-bookie, the blue crane**

- One of three extra narratives by Unaipon sent to Ramsay Smith in 1927, along with the first installment of Mitchell Ms. (see Mitchell Library MSS 314/76:151-205, letter dated January 15, 1927).

**p341 Buthera and the bat**

- Located on Yorke Peninsula, a place frequented by Unaipon, particularly Point Pearce.
- Begins p341: "In the southern part of Yorke's [sic] Peninsula there lives a great chief called Buthera. He was a very proud man, and ruled haughtily over his tribe. One day his mother asked him to go on a journey to the farther end of the peninsula, toward what is now called Marion Bay.... and by and by he came to Corny Point."
- Touch of exotica in the form of 'Magic' = p342: "When Buthera found out that the tribe knew all about the fight and what had happened he became very angry and decided to punish them. He took up his magic wand and waved it about."
- How-so Coda = p342: "He punished him by turning him [chief Larna] into a rock; and today one can see this rock. It looks like the figure of a man, and is named Rhino Head."

## APPENDIX 8.1

### List of vernacular terms used by Unaipon in his Mitchell Library Manuscript of "Narroondarie's Wives", Volume II.

[with comparison of their usage in Ramsay Smith, 1930]<sup>2</sup>

- p1, 17, 21 Narroondarie = "good man, Sacred Man... guided by the will of the Great Spirit", "the Greatest of Prophets among the Aborigines", "the Great teacher" [~ "Nurunderi" in Ramsay Smith]
- p1 Narrinyini = A 'tribe' [~ "Narrinyeri"]
- p1 Boonah = name Narroondarie known by in eastern states [~ ø not mentioned at all]
- p1 Nhyanhun / Byamee = "the Great Spirit" "Our Father of All" [~ ø "Father of All Spirits"]
- p1 Young Hund = what Narroondarie called out when people fled from him [~ ø "Where art thou?"]
- (cf. "Young Hund Ar" in Mitchell Ms. Vol. I)
- p1 Pooljarra Wallul = "a command and a curse" [~ ø]
- p2 Kolkamai = South Wind [~ ø]
- p3 Karldookie = flower-tops of reeds [~ ø]
- p3 Yaka Yakatumburra = "Oh I pity! Oh I pity you both!" [~ ø]
- p3 Mackcunda Ngool Purpe = "Why do you both so weep?" [~ ø]
- p3 Menpeel Nullum = or "What makes you weep?" [~ ø]  
(In Vol. I only: p2 Punerrie = "picture (of beauty)") [~ ø]
- p4 Peel langga = eyes [~ ø]
- p5 Pondi = Murray Cod [~ ø]
- p5 Tcherrie = fresh water bream [~ ø]
- p5 Tookerie = "a silver scaled fish and extremely bony" [~ "tukkeri"]
- p6 Pillulkie = a fish variety [~ ø]
- p6 Kumarrie = a fish variety [~ ø]
- p6 Nebullie = character [~ "Nepelle"]
- p6 Nawondie = home [~ ø]
- p6 Rowhokkun = "Point Macleay mission station now" [~ ø "the home of Nepelle"]
- p8 Mookumbulli = a man [~ "wiseman"]
- p9 Mia mia = camp [~ "home"]  
(also p19 Mia mia = shelter [~ "wurley"])
- p9 Young who? = "Where are you both?" [~ ø "Where are you two?"]  
(cf. Vol. I p9 Young Who Nhod = "Where are you both?")
- p9 Proolgie = "the Spirit Native Companion" [~ ø "the spirit of the native companion"]
- p9 Plonggee = a weapon [~ "plongge"]
- p10 Kindie = "raft" [~ ø]
- p11 Puckknowie = "the Grand Mother Spirit, the Guardian Angel of good people"  
[~ "Puckowe, the Grandmother Spirit, the guardian angel of good people"]
- p11 Punbbaalee tribe = a tribe [~ "Pumbala tribe"]
- p12 Yundi = "spears" [~ "spears"]
- p12 Wolkindamia = north; Tolkamia = west; Kolkamia = south; Karramia = east [~ ø]
- p13 Parrimparrie = "the arch enemy of the Good, the Evil One" [~ ø "the Evil One"]
- p13 Rarrarburr = type of weapon [~ ø "waddy"]  
(cf. p14 Rarraburr = type of weapon [~ ø "waddy"])
- p13 "Yar Raa Rongundd Ta Now ind Glan im un" = "Oh brother-in-law of mine do you not recognise me?" [~ ø "O brother-in-law of mine, do you not recognise me?"]
- p13 "Oh Roongundun" = "Oh brother-in-law?" [~ ø "O brother-in-law"]
- p13 Roongie = brother-in-law [~ ø]
- p13 "Nou, hie um rum un" = "No I will not tell you, oh mine enemy" [~ ø]

<sup>2</sup> The English meaning for each vernacular term used by Unaipon is provided by me (some paraphrased), or quoted in quote marks. If the vernacular term is deleted by Ramsay Smith, it is indicated by the "ø" symbol, in square brackets. If Ramsay Smith provided alternative English terms they are listed in quote marks. Those rare vernacular terms used by him are also listed in the square brackets, with his chosen spelling in quote marks.

- p13 Peenwingie & Proolgie = Hawke and Native Companion; "followers" of Narroondarie's  
[~ ø]
- p14 Wyerriwarr = heaven [~ ø]
- p14 "Mack kundun Yun Krook, Roongund" = "Then why did you call me: Oh brother-in-law of mine?" [~ ø phrase deleted altogether]
- p14 Kunthun itch Mewee = "Are you not pleased?" [~ ø]
- p14 Nup Ghie ell bing = "I leave you now" [~ ø]<sup>3</sup>
- p15 Ghyrulgie = "the throwing stick" [~ ø "the throwing stick"]
- p15 "Thow, tack" = "Oh, my trusted spear, art thou not my handiwork, have I not made thee for a purpose? Come, now, behave thyself favourably to thy master and do his bidding" [~ ø]
- p15 Richer Rookitty = "Willy Wagtail" [~ ø]
- p16 Tarrarrie = "a lump of fat inside a Mullowie" [~ ø "fat of a butter-fish"]
- p16 Mullowie = fish [~ ø "butterfish"]
- p18 Knowwallie = the Blue Crane, "keeper" of the strip of land between Kangaroo Island & mainland [~ ø "the blue crane"]
- p19 Kroolthumie = a messenger (owl) who "carried the instructions" [~ ø "Great All Father"]
- p19 Tolkamia = "West Wind" [~ ø "west wind"]
- p19 Kolkamia = "South Wind" [~ ø "south wind"]
- p19 & 20 Wolkundmia = "North Wind" [~ ø "north wind"]
- p20 Pinkell lowar Mia yound, Tee wee warr, La rund, Tolkamai a tren who cun, Tinkalla = the Wind Song: "Fall down from above, oh thou Mighty Wind; swiftly run and display thy fleetness! Come up in a mighty swell!" [~ ø]
- p21 Rhunjullang = Two Sisters [~ ø "Two Sisters"]
- p22 Land of Wyerriwarr = [~ ø "Land of Heaven"]
- p22 Nabulle, Whyoungarrie, Geereelang, Manyungie = "happy group" (in sky) [~ "bright and happy group Nepelle, Wyungare, and the Seven Sisters"]
- p22 Komnukalda = people on earth [~ ø "the people"]

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<sup>3</sup> This expression has a typographical error in Vol. II. It appears in Vol. I (and *Paperbark*, 1990) as Unaipon intended: "Nup Ghie ell lung" 'I leave you now'.



## APPENDIX 8.2

### Vernacular terms used by Unaipon, compared to equivalent terms in Meyer (1943) and Taplin (1979).<sup>4</sup>

- p1 Narroondarie = "good man, Sacred Man" [~ "Nurunduri" in Meyer, ~ "Nurunderi" in Taplin]  
p1 Narrinyini = the 'tribe' around The Lakes region [~ "Narrinyeri" in Taplin]  
p1 Boonah = name Narroondarie in eastern states  
p1 Nhyanhun / Byamee = "the Great Spirit" "the Our Father of All"  
p1 Young Hund (ar) = Narroondarie called this out to people fleeing [~ Ngúná 'You!' (pl.) in Meyer]  
p1 Pooljarra Wallul = "a curse" [Pulyeri 'small bird' -Wallin 'INCH' 'become birds' in Taplin]  
p2 Kolkamai = South Wind [~ Kulgarnie 'hot wind' & Rikkara maiye 'south wind' & Rikkara 'south' in Taplin; Rikkara -maiye- & Karra -maiye- 'south' in Meyer]  
(cf. also in Vol. II p12 Kolkamia = "south")  
(cf. also in Vol. II p19 Kolkamia = "South Wind")  
p3 Karldookie = flower-tops of reeds [~ Kalduke 'ornament worn on head' in Meyer]  
p3 Yaka Yakatumburra = "Oh I pity! Oh I pity you both!" [??]  
p3 Mackcunda Ngool Purpe = "Why do you both so weep?" [Mékimbe 'why?' Ngurle 'you two' in Meyer; Parpin 'crying' in Taplin]  
p3 Menpeel Nullum = "What makes you weep?" [Mengye 'with what?' Ngurle 'you two' in Meyer; Nyerin 'crying' in Taplin]  
( also in Volume I p2 Punerrie = picture (of beauty))  
p4 Peel langga = eyes [~ Piili 'eye'-engk 'DUAL' in Taplin]  
p5 Pondi = codfish [~ Ponde 'Murray Cod' in Taplin & Meyer]  
p5 Tcherrie = fresh water bream [~ ø]  
p5 Tookerie = "a silver scaled fish and extremely bony" [~ Tukkeri 'flat silvery fish' in Taplin]  
p6 Pillulkie = fish variety [~ Pilarki 'callop' in S.A. Educ Dept.]  
p6 Kumarrie = fish variety [~ Kanmeri 'mullet' in Taplin; Kunmuri 'mullet' in S.A. Educ Dept.]  
p6 Nebullie = character [Nepelle in Berndt]  
p6 Nawondie = home [~ Ngawande 'native house' in Taplin]  
p6 Rowhokkun = "Point Macleay mission station now" [~ 'Raukkan' of today]  
p8 Mookumbulli = man [~ Mókari porl- 'youth when the beard begins to grow' in Meyer]  
p9 Mia mia = camp [Indigenous term adopted into English]  
p9 Young who? = "Where are you both?" [Ngurle 'you two' in Meyer]  
(cf. "Young who Nhod" in Volume I)  
p9 & 13 Proolgie = "Native Companion (bird)" [~ Pulyeri 'small bird' in Taplin; Pról-un 'being red in Meyer]  
p9 Plonggee = weapon [~ Pullangge 'navel' in Meyer; Plongge 'club' in Taplin]  
p10 Kindie = "raft" [~ Kandi 'reed-raft' in Berndt]  
p11 Puckknowie = "Grand Mother Spirit" [~ Pekeri 'dream' in Meyer]  
p11 Punbbaalee tribe [~ ø]  
p12 "several Yundi spears" [~ Yande 'spear barbed with quartz' in Taplin. cf. Yande 'worn-out' & Yarnt 'spear' in Meyer]  
p12 Wolkindamia = north [~ Walkando maiye 'north wind' in Taplin]  
(cf. p19 & 20 Wolkundmia = "North Wind")  
p12 Tolkamia = west [~ Tholka maiye 'east wind' in Taplin]  
(cf. p19 Tolkamia = "West Wind")

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<sup>4</sup> Unaipon's terms are taken from his Mitchell Library Manuscript of "Narroondarie's Wives", Volume II. The comparative terms in square brackets, some of which are obviously not cognate terms, are taken from the two missionary wordlist H.E.A. Meyer (1943) and G. Taplin (1979). Other terms, not in these wordlists, are taken from Meyer (1846), R.M. Berndt (1940) and the S.A. Education Department publication (1990).

- p 12 Karamia = east [- Gurra maiye 'shivering south west wind' in Taplin; Kara-maiye 'south' & maiye 'wind' in Meyer]
- p13 Parrimparrie = "the Evil One" [- Pungngane in Meyer, 1846 ]
- p13 Rarrarburr = weapon/waddy [- Puri 'waddy' in Taplin]  
(cf. also Vol. II p14 Rarraburr = a weapon/waddy)
- p13 "Yar Raa Rongundd Ta Now ind Glan im un" = "Oh brother-in-law of mine do you not recognise me?" [- Nginte 'you' (2nd Pers. NOM.) Ngan 'me' (1st pers. ACCUS.) in Meyer]
- p13 "Oh Roongundun" = "Oh brother-in-law?" [- Ronggi 'brother-in-law' in Taplin]
- p13 Roongie = brother-in-law [- Ronggi 'brother-in-law' in Taplin]
- p13 "Nou, hie um rum un" = "No I will not tell you, oh mine enemy"
- p13 Peenwingie = Hawke and "follower" of Narroondarie's [- Pewinge 'swamp hawk' in Taplin]
- p14 Wyerriwarr = heaven [- Waiirri 'heaven', Waiirrar 'to heaven', Waiiriwar 'in heaven' in Taplin]
- p14 "Mack kundun Yun Krook, Roongund" = "Then why did you call me: Oh brother-in-law of mine?" [Mékimbe 'why' Nginte "you" (2nd Pers. NOM.) Ngan "me" (1st pers. ACCUS.) in Meyer]
- p14 Kunthun itch Mewee = "Are you not pleased?" [- Mewe 'inside bowels' in Taplin]
- p14 Nup Ghie ell bing [sic, "Nup Gie ell lung" in Vol. I] = "I leave you now" [- Ngape 'I', Ngum 'you' (2nd pers. ACCUS.) in Meyer; Naiukulun 'going away' in Taplin]
- p15 Ghyrulgie = "the throwing stick" [- Taralye in Taplin & Tarralye 'throwing stick' in Meyer]
- p15 "Thow, tack" = "Oh, my trusted spear, art thou not my handiwork, have I not made thee for a purpose? Come, now, behave thyself favourably to thy master and do his bidding"
- p15 Rich er Rookitty = "Willy Wagtail" [- Ritjaruki 'willy-wag-tail' well-known term today]
- p16 Tarrarrie = "a lump of fat inside a Mullowie" [- ø]
- p16 Mullowie = fish [- Mallowe 'large fish of Lower Murray' in Meyer; Mullowe 'Murray Mouth salmon' in Taplin]
- p18 Knowwallie = the Blue Crane the "keeper" of land between Kangaroo Island & mainland) [- ø]
- p19 Mia mia = wurly
- p19 Kroolthumie = the owl who "carried the instructions" [- Koruldambi 'white owl' in Taplin]
- p20 the Wind Song = "Pinkell lowar Mia yound, Tee wee warr, La rund, Tolkamai a tren who cun, Tinkalla" = "Fall down from above, oh thou Mighty Wind; swiftly run and display thy fleetness! Come up in a mighty swell!" [- Tholka maiye 'east wind' in Taplin]
- p21 Rhunjullang = Two Sisters [- Runde 'friend & -engk 'DUAL' in Meyer; "Meralang" in Berndt]
- p22 Land of Wyerriwarr = Land of Heaven [- Waiirri 'heaven', Waiirrar 'to heaven', Waiiriwar 'in heaven' in Taplin]
- p22 Nabulle, Whyoungarrie, Geereelang, Manyungie = "happy group" (in sky, including the seven sisters) [- Waijungngari in Meyer 1846]
- p22 Komnukalda = people [- Korne 'man' Kalde 'throat, language' in Meyer]

### APPENDIX 8.3 NARROONDARIE'S WIVES

From: Unaipon (1924-25) Narroondarie's wives. In Davis et.al. (1990) *Paperbark: a collection of Black Australian writing*. St. Lucia, University of Queensland Press. :19-32.

[In the Mitchell Library Manuscript this text is Number 16. In Volume I it is 12 pages long, and is hand-written, with the note on the top of page one: "Paid 30/6/25, 6181 words". Volume II is typed, and is 22 pages. The following text appears to be taken verbatim from Volume II.]

Narroondarie is the name of one of the many good men that were sent among the various tribes of the Australian Aborigines. Now the name Narroondarie is better known among the Narrinyini tribes of the Lower Murray, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and the Encounter Bay, South Australia. Before he came into South Australia he was known or called Boonah, hence the initiation ceremonies. Narroondarie and Boonah are names by which he is known as a good man, as a Sacred Man who is endowed or guided by the will of the Great Spirit, the Nhyanhund or Byamee, the Our Father of All, His messenger and teacher. After coming from the Northern part of Australia down into various parts of New South Wales and Victoria, he found his way into South Australia, dwelling mostly in and around the shores of Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and he would visit various camping grounds where the people lived permanently. Some of them would run into the water and hide among the reeds and water plants, and when he saw that the people fled from him he would call Young Hund and they would remain silent and he became annoyed at the people's attitude. He would say to them "Well, children, if you will not answer me: Pooljarra Wallul. This is a command and a curse. Now you shall all become birds and shall remain thus for ever." And they suddenly became birds at the command of Narroondarie. And while there were others who summoned sufficient courage and came at his call, these were or are the tribes that remain this day around Lake Alexandrina.

Now this should have been the completion of his mission, so he chose two bald hills, which were free from trees with only low shrubs and grass trees growing, as his last home on earth, the surrounding country being dense growth of Mallee and Honeysuckle and the Oak, and a few species of Gum-tree and other shrubs. He made the choice of these two hills because he was able to have a view of both lakes, and it was his intention to rest here until the Great Spirit should call him to take his place in the heaven among the other Great Company that had gone before him.

On one of his fishing expeditions he was passing on his way to Lake Albert when he saw in his path two grass trees, young and tender, swaying gracefully in the Kolkamai South Wind, and his attention was so arrested that he stood for a moment looking upon these two stems of grass trees, and then from the She Oak's bough came the weird note of song—not of pleasure or joy or happiness, but of sadness. The song was that of the -two bound up in the stem of the Grass Tree. The Selfish Spirit of the Grass kept these young maidens bound thus because they were so sweet and he delighted to invite the nature Bee and Ants and Honey-birds to come and dine with him. And his heart was moved by their pitiful cry. Now these two maidens have captivated many and many good men, who have fallen victims to their wonderful charms, on their way to the Spirit Land. These two maidens have been passed on from stage to stage, sometimes into the form of a butterfly with beautiful colours, sometimes found or imprisoned in the Karldookie, the flower-tops of reeds. Various trees, shrubs and plants have gone forth with the endeavour to keep these two maidens prisoner because their chief delight was to captivate all the great men. So it was at this time an effort of the Grass Tree to keep them bound up; it was the last of the Vegetable Kingdom and all were wondering whether it would succeed. So that is why when the Great Man Narroondarie stood looking at the Grass Tree's stem that the boughs of the She Oak began to wail as the wind was passing through the wiry leaves. Now the sounds seemed to come from the She Oak, but were coming from the Grass Trees. These cunning maidens knew that if they were at this moment to try to use their charm to win this Sacred Man they would fail. But to touch the cords of pity—surely this good man would pity them and release them. On this move they were sure he would set them free. They were conscious the Grass Tree was not a good medium through which they could send their message on the Narroondarie, so when the

Kolkamai South Wind breathed upon all nature they caused their sorrowful cry of distress as if some loved one had died and they were mourning. Then Narroondarie stood and being a Great Man heard the cry of the two maidens and said: "Yaka Yakatumburra. Oh, J pity! Oh, I pity you both! Mackcunda Ngool Purpe. Why do you both weep, or what makes you weep?"

"Menpeel Nullum. They have placed us into this Grass Tree and our flesh with its sense of taste, smell, hearing, and touch is dead, and it is only this subconscious state which is still alive makes us accept this prison home. Our bodily form and human flesh have become the form of vegetable flesh. Oh, Great One, take pity upon us and release us and we shall become your servants. And Narroondarie thought and thought. And these two maidens with the cunning of many and many years' experience began to use it upon this Sacred Man. And he listened and then he began to think within himself how nice it would be to see what would be the form of these two spirits enclosed in this Grass Tree. It will not be any harm for me to look upon them although I am forbidden to associate myself with women. I will assist them and cause them to come forth and thereafter look upon them for a while. So he bade the Grass Tree body to give the fair maidens their liberty. In the twinkling of an eye the maidens stepped Out of the Grass Tree a picture or Punerrie of beauty. Their perfect form and their wonderful Peel langga eyes so captivated the Great Man that he fell a victim to their charm. And he decided that he would make them both his wives. So he told the maidens that now he had given them their freedom he would ask them to. Instead of going a-fishing as he intended he returned to his home and asked them to be seated, and then he gave them something to eat. After they had enjoyed their meal he began to tell them of the various laws and customs that he gave to the people, and that some of the laws were very drastic, that is to say when broken would result in the death of the offender. For instance, in the making of the youth in men no woman is allowed to look upon them or to give or offer them food, or their portion of the flesh of a kangaroo and emu, or fish such as the Pondi (Codfish), Tcherrie, a fresh water bream, and especially the Tookerrie, a silver-scaled fish and extremely bony. No woman is allowed to eat this fish under penalty of death. Now this fish is much sought after by the aborigines.

As time went on they were passing through new experiences and the whole woman's tendencies began to exert themselves, and there began to arouse in the mind of Narroondarie some coming trouble. He would not allow them to remain at home by themselves, but would ask them to accompany him on his fishing expeditions. One day they were out fishing on the Lake Albert; he was in his canoe whilst the maidens were wading in the shallow water along the shore, with a net made from the rushes that grow on the bank of the lakes, made in a cone shape constructed after the fashion of the old style candle extinguishers only a great deal larger. They would place this at the opening of a dense growth of reed; one would go along the bank and enter the water and reeds at the other end and splash the water causing the fish that were between her and the one with the net to escape so that the fishes would swim toward the entrance and enter the net and be trapped. And they would take the net to the bank and empty the contents, and they would be fishes of different kinds—a Tcherrie, Pillulkie, or Kumarrie. Unfortunately on this occasion there were three beautiful white silver Thookerrie, and they looked around trembling with excitement. They covered the fishes with weeds and rushes and went on their way with the net, feigning fishing, but they were so overjoyed with their catch that they payed no attention to what they were doing. They could not stand the strain much longer and so decided to go home, and looking out into the lake their attention was attracted by a column of smoke that rose against the clear sky looking north-west. So they called their chief and husband, Narroondarie, and he came to them, and the elder of the maidens pointing towards the smoke said "Look! a message to be sent." So he sat down waiting for an impression. Suddenly he arose and told them that Nebullie sent a message asking that he would like him to come to his Nawondie, his home Rowhokkun Point Macleay Mission Station now, so he would leave at once and they should make themselves comfortable at home; so they parted. The young maidens said "We will stay here and watch you cross over to the other side of the lake and then we shall go to our home." So Narroondarie got into the canoe and paddled across the lake. When the maidens saw that he had landed safely and was on his way to Rowhokkun they turned around and went toward a heap of weed and rushes and removed from beneath the coveted prize and food and they sat looking and looking, turning the fishes over and over and after they had finished admiring them they rose and walked toward home; in fact they ran all the way until they reached the camp, and then began hurriedly to make a fire of She-oak tree bark.

When the wood had burned and nice red coals were left they placed the fishes beside the fire. First they place a layer of soft grass—a grass that retains the fat of animal bird or fish (no flesh food is cooked without it)—and then they take two thin dry, or sometimes green, sticks about a foot or sixteen inches long and about half an inch in diameter or less and place or take these two sticks between the thumb, first and second finger lying between the thumb and index finger on top, and by a trained manipulation of this thumb and two fingers take a coal of fire, as you would with tongs, and place upon the fish, then cover the fish with live coals and allow it to remain for a while, and then they remove the coals from the fish over the cooked side which they lie upon the grass in the first instance, and the fishes are repeatedly turned over several times, and when cooked thus the fat comes out and explodes like fat in a frying pan. And Narroondarie heard the fat of the Thookerrie sizzling and he said to Nebullie “Do you hear that sound as if some one, a woman or women, is cooking the forbidden fish? I shall not sleep here to-night but I shall leave you just before sunset.” After the fishes were cooked the maidens sat down on top of the hill so that they would have a vision of the surrounding country and should anyone be passing or come to their camp they would have plenty of time to hide the remaining portion of the fishes so that they should not be accused of having eaten a forbidden fish. They sat in the sunshine eating and chatting, expressing their delight of enjoying such sweet food, “Ah the men are clever! They know what are the nicest foods, and so they make laws to prevent and deprive us. But we have been too clever.” So they ate and laughed and made merry.

Now they had completed their meal and were reclining on the grass enjoying a rest, listening to the song of the birds in a valley not very far distant, but just as the sun was half way down the western sky they came to themselves, and rose to a sitting position, looking into each other's eyes enquiringly, then spoke: “Oh what have we done! We must not stay here any longer. It is very strange, do you not smell the oil of the Thookerrie? The grass shrub and tree have retained the smell. Come! We cannot stay here and be asked questions when our lord and master returns.” They awoke to their sense of guilt, so the elder said: “Come, let us flee.” “But,” said the younger, whither shall we fly? Let us stay and face the wrath Narroondarie. Stay and be placed back and embodied in a tree-shri plant lest when we are caught fleeing he may cause us to be intL something more dreadful than these.” “Come!” said the elder, “th is no time to discuss the matter; we may go into some strange and win the affection of Mookumbulli, become his wife, and no will dare to interfere with our liberty.”

So without another word they both gathered a great bundle of grass-tree sticks and carried them to the waterside and bound them together, forming a raft, and they shoved the raft into deep water and sat upon it and paddled across the western side of Lake Albert, and slept at the point near the estate of the late T. R. Bowman. Now this happened during the night, and it was late in the evening that Narroondarie arrived home. When he was about a hundred yards or more from his mia mia he was struck with the smell of the Thookerrie fat. “Ah!” said he, “those silly and frivolous maidens have eaten the forbidden fish and now they must be punished.” When he entered his mia mia there was no one about, then he called Young who Nhod “Where are you both?” No answer, only the screeching of the night owl, which was a sign that there was something wrong. The culprits had fled. So he lit a fire and sat down for a while pondering over the misdeed in his two young wives. He was thinking deeply what excuse he should make to the Great Spirit for releasing those maidens from the prison of the grass tree into which they had been placed by the last victim—the Proolgie, the Spirit Native Companion. He must have had an excuse. “Now to what form of punishment or prison shall I put them? Well, before I can decide I must capture them.”

So he lay down to sleep and before the sun rose he took his Plonggee, a weapon about eighteen inches long with a nob at one end the size and shape of the smallest child's football and a handle at the other end about a foot long and about an inch in thickness. Now this is a weapon for the bruising of the body of a person who transgresses a law, and it means a slow, painful death which will give them time to think and repent of the misdeed. He also took a boomerang and his Opossum skin bound around his shoulders, and set off walking slowly down to the shore of the lake, and then the sun rose and he began to walk faster, still casting his eyes upon the ground looking for footprints. When he got to the lake side he made for the place where they left their net, and saw that there were the scales of the Thookerrie upon it; and now he was satisfied of the reason of their absence from camp. He got into his canoe and paddled across the lake and landed at the same point, and saw the Kindie or raft made with a bundle of grass trees, and he walked around among the bushes that grew on the bank of the river and saw a fire and a place where they had slept. Then he

began to follow their tracks leading toward the Coorong—that is a strip of water between a strip of land hummock lying northwest and southeast in the Encounter Bay, South Australia—and he saw again where they had constructed another Kindie and had just gone across a few hours before his arrival. So he thought he would rest and make the attempt of fording the Coorong in the morning.

When the sun arose he crossed over the Coorong and began his search for further tracks of his wives. But in this he failed and stood wondering in which direction he should go. Never before was he baffled; and so he had to decide which way he should go, and he chose to go South-east, following the Coorong. He walked with great speed, covering about seventy miles, then rested awhile, thinking that he must have come before the maidens if they had come in this direction, but no one passed; so he built a small camp made of the boughs of shrubs and grass, and at midnight he went to sleep. He was so tired with the previous day's journey that he slept soundly long after the sun rose and would have slept on but he felt a touch and heard a voice calling: "Awake, sleeper! Beware! Thine enemy is near." So he rose and looked around, but saw no one.

But the visitor was Puckknowie, the Grand Mother Spirit, the Guardian Angel of good people, that is ever beside them and warns them of danger. So he broke his fast and made preparations to meet the unseen enemy. Then he began his search for his two wives. Now away among the Punbbaalee tribe there lived a very cruel man who had become a disciple of the Crow and like his chief caused a great deal of mischief; and he was transformed from a human being into a Wombat, and this Wombat wandered among the sand hummocks all alone and, as Narroondarie was walking along, he saw it and throwing his spear struck it in a vital spot—right into the heart. He withdrew the spear and allowed the blood to flow from the wound upon the white sand, then he picked up the Wombat and carried it to his mia mia and tied it upon a pole. And just as he was about to sit down he missed his spear, and remembering that he had left it where he had speared the Wombat, he returned, and behold, he saw that the blood of the Wombat was developing into a man, so he sat and watched it.

Presently there was a man lying upon the ground breathing as if in a deep sleep, so Narroondarie, instead of taking his spear left it, thinking perhaps it would become of use to this man. So he went away among the ti-trees and made several Yundi spears and returned a third time to his mia mia. And this time he pondered over the man that had developed from the blood of the Wombat. As a servant of the Great Spirit he was aware that there were spirits of good and bad men embodied in tree-shrubs and plants, but this discovery was something new. A spirit to be within the life blood of an animal! He began to experience an uneasy feeling, as if something unpleasant was about to take place, so he returned to see what the person was like—whether he was a friend and would assist him in the discovery of his two wives; and he began to cautiously wend his way until he came to the spot but the person had disappeared, so he looked around, hoping to see footprints which would lead to him, but there were no footprints and now he was convinced that the strange person was an enemy. A friend will always leave a footprint—this is the teaching of the aborigines. So he thought to himself, like all wise men do, that he would be always upon the alert; and during that day he was not seen.

On the second day of this event Narroondarie sat upon the peak of a high sand-hummock looking first Wolkundmia (north), then Tolkamia (west), Kolkamia (south), and Karramia (east). There was no one to be seen. Then he sat down and debated within himself as to which direction to take. Presently he heard the voice of someone laughing. It was not the laugh of joy or amusement, but a laugh of scorn, so he leapt to his feet and immediately his eyes caught a vision that almost froze the blood in his body, and cold chill ran down his back; for there before him stood the arch enemy of the Good Parrimparrie, the Evil One. So Narroondarie grasped his Rarrarburr, standing erect with the weapon held firmly in his hand ready to hurl it at the approaching figure. Parrimparrie stood about two hundred yards away from the base of the hill on which Narroondarie stood, and, calling, addressed him thus: "Yar Ran Rongundd Ta Now md Glan im un—Oh brother-in-law of mine do you not recognise me?" So when Narroondarie heard this friendly salutation he came down to where the deceiver sat, but about twenty paces away he stood and said: "Oh Roongundun, was it yourself that I released from the body of the Wombat?" "Yes," said the Deceiver. "Now, brother-in-law of mine," spoke Narroondarie, "do you claim to be my Roongie (brother-in-law)?" "Yes," replied the Deceiver. "Then perhaps you may be able to tell me the whereabouts of your two sisters. I am in search of them." "Nou, hie um run un. No I shall

not tell you, oh mine enemy. I have waited long and patiently but during your sojourn among the people in various parts of the country I was prevented by your followers, those who have gone above, the Peenwingie, Proolgie, Hawk and Native Companion. They have placed me into the body of the Wombat and you have released me, and now you shall die before you reach Wyerriwarr, heaven." Now all Great Men have been given the privilege to go to heaven without death. "Mack kundun Yun Krook, Roongund. Then why did you call me: oh brother-in-law of mine. Why have you deceived them now. Kunthun itch Me wee. Are you not pleased that I have been the means of your release? Were you not at my mercy? Do you realise that I could have slain you? I allowed you to take your present form. Come, let us not quarrel. Nup Ghie ell lung, I leave you now." And Narroondarie turned and was making in the direction from whence he came, Nor'west. Then the Deceiver began to laugh and sing a song.

And Narroondarie kept walking and, thinking that he had gone a certain distance, he stood and looked about, and still hearing his enemy singing thought that he was following, but he saw that he was in the same place and had not moved an inch. He looked round and saw the Parrimparrie was dancing and brandishing his spear in a threatening attitude, with spear raised and poised ready to send on its mission of death. Narroondarie stood awaiting results. Suddenly the spear was hurled with lightning speed and would have entered a vital spot had not Narroondarie seen it delivered in time. With a downstroke of his Rarraburr he quickly smote the spear and its point tore a flesh wound on his thigh. Then Parrimparrie began dancing and singing because he had drawn the first blood.

So Narroondarie took his spear and placed it into the Ghyrulgie (the throwing stick) and poised it well above his shoulder and, like all warriors, uttered a prayer, and speaking to the spear he said: "Thow, tack," which means, "Oh, my trusted spear, art thou not my handiwork; have I not made thee for my purpose. Come, now, behave thyself favourably to thy master and do his bidding." And with muscle and mind he hurled the spear with lightning speed, and it entered the body of Parrimparrie and pierced his heart. He fell lifeless to the ground with the life-blood trickling into the ground. So Narroondarie began, as he thought, his journey.

He walked and walked, taking no notice of the things around him until the presence of a Rich er Rookitty (Willy Wagtail) that seemed to be continually in his path drew his attention. He looked about and saw that he was still in the same place, so he said within himself "I have met a great and powerful enemy; although his life has left the body, he is influencing the conditions around that are preventing my escape." So he sat down to rest himself awhile before making another attempt to depart and as he sat he noticed that the bird or animal that came near the body was unable to go from it, so he came to the decision that the only way out of it was to burn the body. He rose and gathered a great heap of grass and twigs and piled log upon log until he had a heap twice his height and then he took the body of Parrimparrie and placed it upon the huge wood heap. Next he took two grass trees; in one he punctured a small hole and into this hole he put the point of the other, which he held between the palm of both hands and began rubbing and rubbing until a spark was produced, then he set fire to the wood and so burned the body of Parrimparrie. And once again he began his journey. He walked and walked, then looked to see how far he had come, but he was still in the same place. And he said to himself "I must see whether I have burned everything that belongs to him" and turning round he found the congealed blood of Parrimparrie upon the ground so he made another fire upon the blood and stirred the hot ashes until there was no sight of blood. Then he began his journey and this time he was able to pass on without any hindrance. He walked so fast that he covered about seventy to eighty miles in an hour. Now he found soon he was confronted by the Murray flowing into the Southern Ocean, so he spoke to the Great Spirit asking him to make it possible that he should be able to walk across. His prayer was answered; the ground came up and formed a bridge across the river. Now when he had crossed to the other side of the river he saw the footprints of his two wives that had been made three days ago and following their footprints he came to where they had camped for the night. He noticed that the cold ashes had the stained appearance of a Tarrarrie, that is a lump of fat inside a Mullowie or some call it King. Now this fat of the fish Mullowie a woman is strictly forbidden to eat, and when Narroondarie saw this evidence he was so greatly grieved and sorrowful in heart that he sat down beside the camp and wept bitterly for the sins of his two young wives. He spent the night there weeping, because he loved these maidens very much. To think that it was he who delivered unto the people, the word of the Great Spirit, that those who broke these laws would receive the full penalty—Death! and that

he who had brought them out of bondage and given them the feel of living a human life should now bring about their destruction. And this punishment must be greater than the first.

The thought weighed heavy upon his mind that he must punish them and set them up as an example that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that the coming generation would look upon these two as the well beloved wives of the Greatest of Prophets among the Aborigines. He prayed for their forgiveness but the answer came: as a person chooses to live, so shall he die. And now he set out to overtake them and mete out the punishment. He followed their tracks which led him to what is known as Port Elliot, S.A., and he came to where they had camped two days before him. He saw and examined the ashes and saw that they had cooked cockles and periwinkles and mullet (fish). Again he wept; this time beside a huge rock; and his tears trickled into the sea. He wept so much that to-day some of the old folk will point out the place and say "This is the spot where Narroondarie wept bitterly for his two wayward wives." It resembles a soakage of fresh water by the side of the sea, and that which was liquid of salt bitter tears and a narrowing heart comes as a sweet, cool and refreshing water to journeying souls to the land of the spirit. And when the Aborigines visit this spot you will see tears trickling down their cheeks, the result of their thoughts of their Great Leader, the Messenger and Teacher of the Will of the Great Father of All.

Now Narroondarie, after spending a restless night, rose early and walked rapidly until he arrived at the Bluff, Victor Harbour. He sat there with his eyes turned toward the West and he saw them in spirit, and again he wept because he saw in a vision what was to happen and that it would be he who should bring them to their timely end before they reached the Spirit Land, Kangaroo Island. So he hurried on once more, while in his bosom waged a great conflict. His lovable nature was willing that they should reach this island and be free for ever of all punishment for their wrong-doing. Now the maidens arrived in the afternoon opposite to Kangaroo Island. At the time of the story the Island was connected with the mainland but during a severe southerly storm the sea would cover the connecting strip of land and the maidens, instead of going across that afternoon, spent the time in collecting honey, with the intention of crossing on the morrow. And another reason: there~ was a keeper on this strip of land on the mainland side who was in charge, and he was known as the Khowwallie, the Blue Crane, and no one would attempt to cross without his permission. He was a very austere person and a very dangerous one with whom to dispute because he always had beside him on his person a very sharp-bladed spear that would cause a very nasty and severe Wound.

Now Narroondarie was just four or five miles behind or away from the maidens; he could see them standing on the cliff looking across to the Spirit Land, so he made a little mia mia and went into the bush and procured a Possum and roasted it, and allowed it to cool before eating; and the maidens did the same, they made a comfortable little mia mia and also a large fire whose blaze Narroondarie was able to see. Narroondarie was awaiting a message which would instruct him how to punish the disobedient girls, and at midnight the Kroolthumie carried the instructions that these maidens should be allowed to walk the strip of land that acts as a bridge to all pilgrims to the Spirit Land and when they should arrive half way across then should Narroondarie chant the Wind song. First he must chant the Tolkamia—the West Wind—and sing its Song of Fury to bring up the waters of the mystery land and let them roll with vengeance; then he must sing the song of Kolkamia—the South Wind—to blow and bring the water that comes from the unknown land; then they may wish to return to land; then he must sing the song of Wolkundmia—the North Wind, and the waters shall all come together and toss and toss them until they become exhausted; then he must command that they shall become rocks. So Narroondarie rose early in the morning and came near unto the maidens and sat upon the cliff to see them begin their journey of death. They came to the Knowallie and asked his permission to cross, which he willingly gave, and the maidens began laughing and chatting, anticipating the joy and pleasure and happiness that awaited them when they arrived upon the Spirit Land, but most of all they would be free from the Law from which they were trying to escape. Little did they realise that within a few moments they would meet the full penalty of their disobedience.

Now Narroondarie came a little nearer to the strip of land that led to Kangaroo Island and sat upon a vantage spot, watching and waiting until they were half way over the distance. When they reached that point Narroondarie began singing the Wind Song: "Pink ell lowarr. Mia yound Tee, wee warr, La rund, Tolkamai a, ren who cun, Tinkalla. Fall down from above, oh thou Mighty Wind; swiftly run and display thy fleetness! Come thou down from the Northern sky, oh water of the deep! Come up in a mighty swell!" and the Westerly wind



burst forth in all its fury and came screeching overhead, while the maidens were pressing forward struggling against the storm. Then presently the waters were churned and welled and rose just over the way. Then Narroondarie sang a song of the Wind, and the South Wind blew, and the waters from unknown land came tantalisingly on, raising themselves like miniature mountain peaks, and the waters closed upon them, lashing them and tossing them about like corks. They struggled first toward their goal, Kangaroo island, then it seemed as if the Spirit were against them and they turned themselves and began swimming toward the mainland. But the Wolkundmia, answering the call of Narroondarie, was willing to do its duty in bringing these two maidens to pay the penalty of their sins; as they sped on they called "We come, we come!" and the maidens sank with exhaustion and were drowned and sank to the bottom. And the Winds suddenly ceased and there was a calm. Narroondarie wept bitterly, although he hated everything that was displeasing to the Great Spirit, and he felt within his inmost consciousness that he loved those youthful maidens with all their faults and errors. And again a voice whispered to him: "Command that the maidens' bodies be turned into stone to stand out as a warning to all women not to eat of the forbidden food."

He spoke, and it came to pass as he was told. These two rocks can be seen from the mainland as well as on passing vessels and are known to-day as the "Two Sisters". Before the coming of the White Man these stones were called and still are to the few remaining aborigines "Rhunjullang"—two sisters. Many were the pilgrimages taken by the aborigines in days-gone by to see these stones and view and contemplate the way of the Great Teacher, Narroondarie. After this had happened, with tears still welling in his eyes and a broken heart, Narroondarie commanded that the waters should go back, to allow him to walk upon dry land to Kangaroo Island. And on the Eastern side of the Island was a huge Gum Tree and under its shade he rested until the sun sank into the western sky, the Land of the Spirits. He walked to the West of the island and plunged into the sea and sank into the deep, and was there a long while, seeking in the depths of the sea the spirits of his two wives, and he rescued them from the watery cold grave and arose with them clinging on both sides of the Great Teacher, and he flew upwards and upwards until he came to the Land of Wyerriwarr to join that bright and happy group Nabulle, Whyoungame, Jeeveelang, Munjungie, and to look down to cheer and comfort and encourage the Komnukalda to press on to fight all the evil desires that are within, remembering always to obey the will of the Great Spirit.

## APPENDIX 8.4: The Ngurunderi narrative (from the S.A. Education Dept.)

From: *The Ngarrindjeri People: Aboriginal People of the River Murray, Lakes and Coorong.*  
Aboriginal Studies 8-12, Education Department of South Australia: 50-53

### NGURUNDERI

In the Dreaming of the Ngarrindjeri people, Ngurunderi is the shaper of the land, laws and creatures. He could travel through time and space along rivers and hills... across lakes and seas... His mind and spirit sometimes took human shape and he travelled as a man.

The Ngurunderi Dreaming begins where the wide River Darling joins the River Murray. Ngurunderi was looking for his wives who had run away after a quarrel.

One day when he was fishing from his bark canoe, Ngurunderi saw Pondi, the giant Murray Cod. He tried to spear the huge fish, but Pondi quickly swam away downstream.

When Pondi reached the Murray, which was then just a small creek, he had nowhere to swim. So he went ploughing and crashing through the bush, making the creek into the mighty Murray River.

Ngurunderi chased Pondi south into the land of the Ngarrindjeri. On and on Pondi ploughed, making bends and cliffs with his mighty tail.

One day when near Murray Bridge, Ngurunderi threw his spear at him. He missed and the spear changed into Long Island.

Near Tailem Bend Ngurunderi speared Pondi, who raised his huge spines and crashed on so fast that he made a very long straight stretch in the river, until finally he escaped into Lake Alexandrina.

Ngurunderi rested near Wellington and sent a smoke signal to Raukkan where his brother-in-law, Nepele, lived. He gave Nepele the power to spear the fish, telling him to spear it as he went by.

From Raukkan Nepele saw Pondi at the place where the fresh and the salt water meet. He pushed his canoe there and killed Pondi with his spear.

Nepele put Pondi on a sandbar and waited for Ngurunderi. Ngurunderi met him there and they both cut Pondi up into pieces. Ngurunderi threw each piece into the water and told it to become a new fish.

'Nund Thukeri - you silver bream.'

'Nund Pilarki - you callop.'

'Nund Kunmuri - you mullet.'

'Nund Mulawi - you mulloway.'

Ngurunderi made all the fresh water and salt water fish of the Ngarrindjeri. To the last piece, he said: "Nund Pondi - you keep being the Murray cod."

Ngurunderi left Raukkan and took his canoe eastward around the lake. He left the lake and made two huts where Mount Misery is and rested in the camp. Ngurunderi went to the lake for food. One time he saw some people in the reeds there. They were afraid of him and tried to hide, rustling the reeds as they moved. Ngurunderi said: 'Pul'djur'wurl'ul'urun' and they changed into small birds who live in the reeds.

One night, he smelled Boney Bream cooking. This fish was forbidden to women and he knew it was from the camp of his wives, who had run away long ago. This made him angry and he prepared to leave camp and find them.

His two huts became the hills. Standing on them he placed his canoe into the dark night sky, where it became the Milky Way.

The women heard Ngurunderi coming and became very frightened. They quickly made a raft of reeds and grass trees and escaped across Lake Albert. When they landed, the raft changed back into living reeds and grass trees, and the women fled along the Coorong.

Ngurunderi followed them south along the Coorong, until he met a man called Parampari, close to Kingston. Ngurunderi asked: 'Eund'aunun'nuken'napanu' [sic] - have you seen my two wives walking?

But Parampari was an evil sorcerer, who started to quarrel and fight with him. He tried to kill Ngurunderi with his magic and weapons, but Ngurunderi just laughed.

The two powerful men fought with spears, clubs and magic forces. Ngurunderi finally killed Parampari with his club. Then he burnt the body to destroy its power, and it changed into huge granite boulders.

During the battle Ngurunderi's wives slipped past and fled back along the coast towards Encounter Bay. Ngurunderi followed their footprints north through the sandhills of the Coorong. He camped along the way, digging fresh water soaks into the sandhills to drink from.

Having lost the women's trail, he crossed the mouth of the Murray River and started to walk around Encounter Bay. At Middleton he threw a huge tree into the sea. He changed the tree into weeds so fish would be trapped in the channel.

At Port Elliot his fishing net became the stained rocks of Pullen Island. And at Victor Harbor he made islands by throwing spears into the sea.

Ngurunderi walked to Granite Island, where he made a shelter from boulders and rested. One day he heard a loud splashing and laughing from the direction of Kings Point, and he knew it was his wives.

Ngurunderi threw his club to the ground and chased after them. As the club hit the ground, it became the headland called The Bluff at Victor Harbor.

The women ran from the water and fled along the coast towards Cape Jervis. Ngurunderi called out to them to stop, but they ran on through the shallow water towards Kangaroo Island.

Standing high on the cliffs, he called out in a voice of thunder for the seas to rise. 'Pink'ul'un'urn'pranukurn'[sic].

The sea came in, wave upon wave, driving the women from their path. They fought the water until they could swim no more and drowned. Their bodies became the Pages Islands.

Ngurunderi crossed to Kangaroo Island, where he made a huge swamp oak tree to rest under. But the sound of the wind through the tree caused him to mourn his wives. He then knew it was time to leave the world.

He went to the far end of the island and dived deep into the sea to prepare his spirit. Then Ngurunderi left the water and entered into the spirit world.

He can be seen there today as a bright star in the Milky Way.

## APPENDIX 9.1: A Noongar Declaration

From: Eggington (1996) Intellectual property rights: the question of cultural ownership: A Noongar perspective. *Noongar Karnadjil*. August.:14.

### "JANGGA MEENYA BOMUNGGUR" (THE SMELL OF THE WHITEMAN IS KILLING US) SW Aborigines quoted in the late 1800's

#### A Declaration Against the Continued Spiritual Colonisation of our People and Noongar Culture

We as the Custodial Owners of Noongar Culture Respectfully representing our Traditional Elders, Spiritual Leaders, and Grass Roots Advocates of The Noongar People declare a Stand of Belligerent Confrontation on All People who for their own respective interests with no RESPECT, DIGNITY or INTEGRITY continually exploit Our Culture and Spirituality.

Whereason multiple fronts varying interests have Infiltrated the Sacredness of Our Culture for the purposes of Desecration and Control. These interests reflect Anthropological Studies, Scientific Research, White Consultants, Eco Tourism, Commercial purposes, Student Studies, Medical Interests, Herbalists, Alternative Religious Practitioners, Humanitarians, Self Proclaimed Healers, Spiritual and Psychological Refugees, New Age Shamans, Cultists and Their Followers, Whereasour Significant Sacred Objects that bore the Storylines of Our Origins of Existence have been stolen and stored in Collections around the world, Whereas various Animal life with Totemic Significance are now known to be extinct, many forms of Flora which for ceremonial Purposes have been destroyed, Whereas the Skull and Bones of our Proud Strong People have been dispersed throughout the World as grotesque souvenirs or have been taken into World Laboratories and Museums for supposed experimental purposes, Whereas Non-Aboriginal people 'Wadjulla' Academics, Intellectuals and Theorists have enforced their images based on Their Value Belief Systems creating distorted realisms of Our Traditional Values and Way of Life, Whereas Non-Aboriginal People 'Wadjulla' have assigned themselves make believe Aboriginal Names to facilitate wholesome expropriation and commercialisation of Our Noongar Traditions by Means of extortion, Whereas Media, Film Industry and Non-Aboriginal Art Expressionists continue to promote systematic Colonisation Grossly Distorting Noongar Spirituality and Culture which reinforces the Public's negative Stereotyping of Noongar people and gravely impairs The Self Esteem of Our People. Whereas Individuals and Groups involved in the New Age Movement, Women's Movements and Neo Pagan Cults and Sharmanism Workshops have all exploited the Spiritual abnd Cultural Traditions of Noongar People by imitation of Ceremonial Understanding and molten Meshing this with Non-Aboriginal Occult Practise [sic] in an oppressive manner,

This Breeds the implications of a false identity for future generations

So therefore we resolve as follows:

As a result of this continued assault and misrepresentation of Noongar Spiritual and Cultural traditions this requires immediate action to protect Our precious Spirituality from Further desecration, contamination and abuse.

1. We will by the Blood of Our Ancestors nurture and protect Our People, Traditions and Spiritual Practice by whatever means.
2. We will by way of Traditional Protocal inform all Aboriginal People to actively participate to oppose Cultural and Systematic genocide of Our traditions and Way of Life.
3. We call for the strength of Unity of All Aboriginal People living in Urban and Rural Areas to identify and resist all abuses and exploitation of Our Culture utilising what ever tactics are required in accordance with Aboriginal Protocol.

4. We condemn the Internationalisation by Our Own People who continue to profit from their own prostitution of Noongar Culture for their own gain and self acclaim with no regard to the well being of All Noongar People.

5. We Oppose Stridently any Non-Aboriginal Author with Accumulated Cultural Information who impress their own Imaginative Theories and Fabricated Ideologies claiming any Ownership or Rights to Speak or Act on behalf of the Noongar Community and Our Culture.

6. We Oppose Noongar Cultural Promotion being exploited and used to create a false illusion of Reconciliation as Part of Celebrating any activity regarding the Colonisation of Our People for Political Interests ie. Australia Day, Bicentennial and Centennial Celebrations etc. etc.

MAY OUR CAMPFIRES BURN FOREVER.