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# Memory, music and displacement in the minor memoirs of Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett

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images or names of people now deceased.**

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**Memory, Music and Displacement in the minor memoirs of  
Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Gay Jennifer Breyley, MA

English Studies Program

Faculty of Arts

2005

### **Certification**

I, Gay Breyley, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the English Studies Program, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Gay Breyley

29 March 2005

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates some legacies of colonialism and genocide through a reading of Evelyn Crawford's transcribed oral history *Over My Tracks* (Melbourne, 1993), Ruby Langford Ginibi's life narrative *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne, 1988) and Lily Brett's memory-based volumes of poetry *After The War* (Melbourne, 1990) and *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney, 1992). These texts, for different but related reasons, constitute minor Australian memoirs. The thesis argues that new readings of such memoirs contribute to new understandings of the intersectional nature of cultural histories.

The reading presented in this thesis is structured theoretically and thematically by a focus on memory, music and displacement. Using a theoretical framework based more closely on aural than on visual models, this reading brings the three narrating subjects into conversation and attends to their respective representations of ancestral legacies, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. With methods drawn from literary criticism, ethnomusicology and history, the thesis offers a new way of listening to the complex memories of displaced people and their descendants. It is a study of diverse, ongoing effects of past persecution in the everyday lives of survivors and descendants, an area that has received limited attention in Australian literary studies. The thesis contributes to knowledge of the far-reaching consequences of different forms of displacement and points to implications for the current and future reception of displaced people's memories in Australia.



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(This chapter also appeared as an article, 'Imagined Ancestral Communities of Displaced Australian Daughters: Evelyn Crawford's *Over My Tracks* and Lily Brett's *After the War* and *Unintended Consequences*', in *Prose Studies* 26.1-2 (2003), pp 17-42.)

"'Grey Angels': Ancestral voices in displaced descendants' memoirs: Lily Brett's *After the War* and *Unintended Consequences* and Evelyn Crawford's *Over My Tracks*' in Sue Williams, Dymphna Lonergan, Rick Hosking, Laura Deane and Nena Bierbaum, eds, *The Regenerative Spirit, Volume 2* (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2004), pp 251-63.

"'Kissing the Noose of Australian Democracy': Misplaced faiths and displaced lives converse over Australia's rising fences', *Borderlands* 2.3 (2003), <http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au/>

'Displaced Mothers Respond: Intergenerational responsibilities in and around the texts of F.A. and Lily Brett', *Altitude* 3 (2003), <http://www.api-network.com/altitude/>



I dedicate this thesis to my parents and to the memory of my grandmother, Iris Keightley (1911-2005), who was the reason I ended up in Wollongong. Her father, a grandson of convicts, was a bullock driver around Bundjalung country, while her mother moved to Victoria. Some of her own stories were too sad to tell, but she remained an inspiration with her curiosity and knowledge, her ear for humbug, her laughter and pleasure in language, stories, music, art, children and animals. Most of all, she inspired us with her listening ear and kindness to anyone in need of it and her love for her family.

## Introduction

### Minor Triads: In Conversation and Commemoration

For Indigenous plaintiffs, it doesn't matter whether the crime of genocide was committed as it was defined by international law and it doesn't matter whether there was intention or not. What seems to be more important from the Indigenous perspectives are the *effects* of the actions of the government – these actions have amounted to damage to Indigenous people, families and communities and they choose to use the word 'genocide' to describe it. This moves the discussion outside of the words of the statute to the side-effects and legacies of those sanctioned actions.

– Larissa Behrendt<sup>1</sup>

I am ... listening to a couple of Arab-Australian youths discussing Mabo ... :

*What are you going on about anyway? If the Anglos didn't do the killing you wouldn't have been able to emigrate here. You owe 'em, mate. They cleared the land ... ESPECIALLY FOR YOU!* (imitating a TV product promotion)

– Ghassan Hage<sup>2</sup>

On the morning of 11 December 2004, I listened to a news bulletin. The first item concerned the funeral of a 36-year-old man who had been arrested for 'breaching the peace' on Queensland's Palm Island in November and had died in police custody. While hundreds attended the funeral on Palm Island, up to one thousand gathered in Brisbane to protest against Indigenous deaths in custody. At this rally, a minute's silence and the sound of one didgeridoo marked the moment coinciding with the beginning of the funeral. The second news item was a report from South Australia, where asylum seekers from Iran were on hunger strike in Baxter 'Immigration Reception and Processing Centre'. One of the hunger strikers, who had been detained for five years, had climbed onto a roof. He demanded a review of all the Iranian asylum seekers' cases and spoke of their loss of dignity and hope.

For most of the five years this man had been detained in Australian 'facilities', I had been working on this thesis. My research concerned some of the long-term effects of colonisation, displacement and persecution that persist in the lives and memories of survivors and their descendants in Australia. The two brief news items, each with its own long and complex history, illustrate the ongoing need to find ways of hearing those whose memories 'breach the

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<sup>1</sup> Larissa Behrendt, 'Genocide: The distance between law and life', *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001), p 142, Behrendt's emphasis.

<sup>2</sup> Ghassan Hage, 'Polluting Memories', *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003) p 100.

peace'. As various survivors of colonisation, dislocation and/or persecution continue to struggle to maintain or retrieve hope and dignity, and to be heard by a seemingly indifferent 'free' population, this thesis offers one way of hearing and listening to a few survivors' voices from the past.

Evelyn Crawford's transcribed oral history *Over My Tracks*, Ruby Langford Ginibi's life narrative *Don't Take Your Love To Town* and Lily Brett's memory-based volumes of poetry *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* were published in Australia between 1988 and 1993.<sup>3</sup> Crawford was born Evelyn Mallyer to a Baarkanji mother and Wankamurrah father on a New South Wales sheep station, where her displaced parents worked, in 1928.<sup>4</sup> Langford Ginibi was born Ruby Anderson to Bundjalung parents on Box Ridge Mission, northern New South Wales, in 1934. In a German displaced persons camp in 1946, Brett was born Luba Brajsztajn to Polish Jewish survivors of Auschwitz.<sup>5</sup> She and her parents migrated to Melbourne in 1948. My juxtaposition of the very different texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett is one of many possible ways of tracing some far-reaching effects, in Australia, of colonisation and genocide. Brett's texts address the effects of genocide that was undertaken outside Australia, but is remembered in Australia, in ways made possible by the effects of Australia's colonisation. In music, a minor triad is a chord of three notes, with intervals of a minor third and a major third. As a metaphor, the minor triad applies to the juxtaposition of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett and, more broadly, to encounters in Australian history between Indigenous people and a range of 'settlers' and their descendants.

This thesis begins with questions around legacies, how the past may be remembered in Australia and the differences between effects of colonialism here and those of persecution elsewhere. I will demonstrate how memoirs of survivors and their displaced descendants provide partial answers to these questions, as private memories and manifestations of the effects of displacement move into public spheres and are linked to collective memories. However, I argue that it is always necessary to find new ways to read such memoirs. This is where music comes in, as an analytical framework for reading historical traces, a means of making sense of memory and a cultural indicator. In the first section of this introduction, I outline my use of the terms 'memory', 'music' and 'displacement'. As the thesis stages a conversation between the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, I then reflect on the contexts in which these life

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<sup>3</sup> Ruby Langford (Ginibi), *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988, this first edition published under the name 'Ruby Langford'), Lily Brett, *After The War* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1990), Brett, *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1992), Evelyn Crawford, *Over My Tracks* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> In Crawford's text, the spelling of some Indigenous language group names differs from standard spelling (for example, 'Baarkanji' is usually spelt 'Barkindji' or 'Paakantji'). I follow Crawford's spelling.

<sup>5</sup> In her texts, Brett refers to her father's family name as 'Brajsztajn', but my research in Lodz would suggest the family name there was 'Brajsztajn' (corresponding with the German 'Breitstein'). Similarly, Brett's mother's family name, 'Spindler' in Brett's texts, was spelt 'Szpindler' in Poland (reflecting Polish spelling of the Yiddish pronunciation).

narrators 'meet'. Finally, I consider the storytelling roles of their texts and the significance of these roles to commemoration in Australia. The second section is a review of scholarly and other literature on the three authors' texts, followed by a chapter outline.

## Encounters

Several forms of memory intersect to produce the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. Each author's personal memories are represented explicitly in her words, but these (memories and words) are conditioned by such diverse collective memories as those of families, communities, cultural practice, national commemoration and the English language. The compounding effects of memory continue after the production of the texts, as we who read them bring our own memories and their histories to the task. Walter Benjamin notes that one 'who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments'.<sup>6</sup> In this thesis I open Australia's fan of cultural memory in a way it has not been opened before, by tracing intersections of music and displacement in the memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. I do not reach an 'end' of this fan's segments, but stop to examine the 'new' segments that emerge.

The innovative nature of this thesis' contribution to cultural memory comes largely from the way it is informed by the discipline of ethnomusicology. As Stephen Blum explains, ethnomusicologists 'are concerned with musical interpretations of history and with historical interpretations of music and musical life'.<sup>7</sup> The notion of 'musical interpretations' itself allows considerable room for 'interpretation'. In the thesis I approach and apply music in its broadest sense – of any pattern of sound and silence. I also use music in its narrower sense. Terms and structures from (mainly Western) musical theory serve as metaphors for relations remembered in and around the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. I analyse musical references, citations, imagery and stories within the texts. My 'musical' readings of the memoirs enable links to previously overlooked aspects of private and public memory. As I trace these links, I draw on Mark Slobin's notion of 'superculture', which he explains as an 'overarching structure', encompassing 'the statistically lopsided, the commercially successful, the statutory, the regulated, the most visible'. A superculture includes an industry, the 'state and its institutionalized rules and venues' and 'more insidious strands of hegemony' that 'define the everyday, and circumscribe the expressive'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, tr. Rodney Livingstone et al, Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 597.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen Blum, 'Prologue' in Blum, Philip V Bohlman and Daniel M Neuman, eds, *Ethnomusicologists and Modern Music History* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991), p 1. Bruno Nettl provides an alternative definition of ethnomusicology: 'the study of the world's musical cultures from a comparative perspective, and the anthropological study of music', in Nettl, *Encounters in Ethnomusicology: A Memoir* (Warren, Mich: Harmonie Park Press, 2002), p 3.

<sup>8</sup> Mark Slobin, 'Micromusics of the West: A Comparative Approach', *Ethnomusicology* 36 (1992), pp 15-18.

Superculture shapes public memory and conditions the ways stories of displacement may be told. Displacement is a defining feature of twentieth-century Australia (and, indeed, most of the world). The ongoing effects of colonisation in Australia and those of the Holocaust in Europe include ruptures in cultural practice, such as loss of language and music, and the dispossession of land, which, in turn, disrupts social structures. In different ways, these aspects of displacement affect both Indigenous Australians and Jewish Europeans and their descendants. While determining the course of individuals' private memories, these ruptures also constitute significant parts of national histories, although they are not always audible in public memory. My study of the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett focuses on cultural and social aspects of displacement, rather than the extreme violence and extensive loss of life that characterised nineteenth-century colonialism and then the genocide of Jewish Europeans in the early 1940s. Each of the authors was born after the massacres of her people. In this sense each belongs to a 'second generation', as a daughter of survivors of the killing times. In other ways, the experience of displacement is very different for Crawford and Langford Ginibi, as Indigenous women, from that of Brett, as a white child migrant to 'White Australia'. In twentieth-century Australia's national system, Crawford and Langford Ginibi, like their respective parents, continued to be identified primarily as Indigenous. By contrast, Brett was no longer primarily a Jew (in 'the nation's' eyes), the erstwhile object of European persecution and the identity tattooed on her parents' arms, but a 'new Australian'. These inconsistencies in public memory represent further forms of displacement.

The stories told by Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett concern the far-reaching effects of the violence of past regimes. They tell of displacement from ancestral cultures into the margins of superculture and from dreams of ancestral homes onto the 'dirty work' sites of other people's properties. As suggested in the conversation reported by Ghassan Hage (in the epigraph above), the displacement of migrants to Australia, who, like Brett, are not 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Celtic', is linked to that of Indigenous Australians in ways not often considered in public memory.<sup>9</sup> This is one of several reasons to bring Brett's stories into conversation with those of Crawford and Langford Ginibi. Another is the period of publication shared by the three authors. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw an unprecedented public demand for stories of displacement such as theirs. Australia's relations with its past were unsettled and renegotiated, as major voices in political, cultural and commercial practice addressed representations of history. These voices

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<sup>9</sup> I will use the term 'Anglo-Celtic' to refer to the 'major' part of Australia's population that is descended primarily from the first European (willing and unwilling) colonisers, although this term elides the significant differences between and within Anglo-Saxon and Celtic identities. This elision reflects that intended in such policies as 'White Australia'. In the course of the twentieth century, various policies and cultural change contributed to an increasing forgetfulness of certain differences, as successive 'non-Anglo-Saxon/Celtic' groups were assigned the role of 'other', effectively pushing 'Anglos' and 'Celts' together as 'central' and bringing the term 'Anglo-Celtic' into common usage in Australia. On the related broader category of 'White', see Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), p 19.

included those of the two Prime Ministers of the period, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, as well as producers of commercially successful music, art, film, literature, sport and advertising. New conversations were initiated on various discursive levels, beginning with the 1988 bicentenary of the founding of New South Wales as a British penal colony and ending with the Federal Parliament's passing of the *Native Title Act 1993*.

One form of storytelling that began to gain 'authority' between 1988 and 1993 was the 'minor memoir'. My use of this term draws on the notion of 'minor literature' proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as I explain in detail in chapter one.<sup>10</sup> Many other minor memoirs were published around the same time as those of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. A study of any combination of these, such as the work of Glenyse Ward, Lolo Houbein, Ania Walwicz or Sally Morgan, would be equally useful to an understanding of how memoirs 'participate in the making of truth and identity', as Gillian Whitlock puts it.<sup>11</sup> The texts of Crawford and Langford Ginibi tell specifically of Indigenous experiences in New South Wales, under a succession of government policies. Broadly, Crawford tells more of life on pastoral stations and in inland regions, while Langford Ginibi recalls missions, northeastern New South Wales towns and, especially, urban life. Brett's memories are of Melbourne, where most of the postwar Polish Jewish migrants to Australia settled. Of Brett's many texts, *After The War* (1990) and *Unintended Consequences* (1992) are particularly useful to my study. These volumes of poetry fall more easily into the category of 'memoir' than her short stories that appeared around the same time. Brett left Australia for New York in 1991. Since this move and the increasing internationalisation of her readership, her work arguably tells us less about Australian public memory. In this thesis I sometimes refer to Brett's other texts, usually for her memories that are absent from *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, but these two remain the focus.

Together, *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* represent a minor site of Australian remembrance, but one that interacts with and contributes to major debates around questions of national memory and cultural practice. This thesis enters these debates by examining intersections of memory and forgetting, sound and silence, in and around the texts. Narratives of imperial progress, productive settlement and acquiescent assimilation enjoyed high frequency and volume in twentieth-century Australia. The texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett divert the flow of such narratives as they

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<sup>10</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, tr. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Gillian Whitlock, 'Strategic Remembering: Fabricating Local Subjects' in Rosamund Dalziell, ed, *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), p 162. See, for example, Glenyse Ward, *Wandering Girl* (Broome: Magabala Books, 1987) and *Unna You Fullas* (Broome: Magabala Books, 1991), Lolo Houbein, *Wrong Face in the Mirror: An Autobiography of Race and Identity* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1990), Ania Walwicz, 'Statements', in David Brooks and Brenda Walker, eds, *Poetry and Gender: Statements and Essays in Australian Women's Poetry and Poetics* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1989), pp 69-70, and Sally Morgan, *My Place* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1987).

address various effects of displacement and colonisation. As Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith point out, use of the concept of colonisation can be problematic and it is important to bear in mind the term's contingent and multivalent nature: 'if we must constantly probe the reach, contradictory strategies, and contested achievements of *decolonization*, we must also probe the reach of the term *colonization*. So widespread has become the practice of weaving the word *colonization* through various critiques of the subject of Western humanism and the politics of representation that the word now seems to signify a universalized descriptor of subjectivity'.<sup>12</sup> However, as defined by Chandra Talpade Mohanty, colonisation 'almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and a suppression – often violent – of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question'.<sup>13</sup> Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett identify modes and effects of colonisation as they recall and enact individual and collective decolonising strategies. As their narrating subjects move around national and cultural boundaries, the texts interrupt (and sometimes join) supercultural discourses. Langford Ginibi and Crawford recall silences associated with dispossession, separation and loss, and use references to or citations of music to evoke the sites of their memories. Brett uses musical imagery and references to articulate her family's memory traces. Her texts (sometimes) unsettle notions of Australia as a migrant haven in which 'new Australians' cheerfully bloom and the second generation silently assimilates.

Stephen Blum writes that every culture is a 'site of encounters' and that the 'transactions through which individuals and groups reproduce cultural knowledge' should be examined.<sup>14</sup> Among the most debated and commemorated encounters on Australian cultural sites are those between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and those between people identifying as Anglo/Celtic-Australian and migrants with no British or Irish links. Ann Curthoys suggests that discourses around these two encounters 'have been either entirely separate, or there have been attempts to incorporate the indigenous within the multicultural, to see Indigenous peoples as one amongst many ethnic groups making up the nation, and to see racism against Indigenous peoples and non-British immigrants as basically the same'.<sup>15</sup> Curthoys goes on to argue that 'it might be better to understand the multicultural within the indigenous', that is, to understand migration as 'a process occurring *within*, rather than *after*, a history of colonisation and de-

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<sup>12</sup> Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, 'De/Colonization and the Politics of Discourse in Women's Autobiographical Practices' in Smith and Watson, eds, *De/colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992), pp xiii-xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary* 12.2 (1984), p 336.

<sup>14</sup> Blum, 'Conclusion: Music in an Age of Cultural Confrontation' in Margaret J Kartomi and Stephen Blum, eds, *Music-cultures in Contact: Convergences and Collisions* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1994) p 255.

<sup>15</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'Colonisation and Immigration: the two faces of the Australian nation', paper, 'Constituting a "People": the Legacy of White Australia' conference, University of Western Australia (14-15 December 2001), [http://www.ias.uwa.edu.au/activities\\_and\\_programs/other\\_activities\\_and\\_events/constituting\\_a\\_people\\_abstracts/ann\\_curthoys](http://www.ias.uwa.edu.au/activities_and_programs/other_activities_and_events/constituting_a_people_abstracts/ann_curthoys) (visited 4 October 2004). See also Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and the Indigenous' in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer, eds, *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000) pp 21-36, and Curthoys, 'Immigration and Colonisation: New Histories', *UTS Review* 7.1 (2001), pp 170-79.



colonisation'.<sup>16</sup> This argument forms a useful framework in which to read the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett and their contexts of cultural knowledge. Colonisation and decolonisation emerge here as ongoing, contrapuntal histories. Migrants to and within Australia reproduce cultural knowledge through transactions involving these histories, whether or not the transactions are explicitly acknowledged.

'Only the meeting of two different street *names* makes for the magic of the "corner"', claims Benjamin.<sup>17</sup> Rather than magical encounter, the meeting of the names 'Indigenous' and 'migrant', formed by colonial transactions, often reproduces knowledge of ongoing damage, as suggested by Larissa Behrendt (in the epigraph above), and/or reproduces the anxieties of beneficiaries of stolen goods, as Hage suggests. Such cultural knowledge may be reproduced and circulated in various ways. The meeting of damage and anxiety on a commemorative 'corner' – such as the publication of life narrative or history – also enables other conversations. Benjamin represents history's conversation space as a stormy scene of destruction, in which an anxious angel, facing the past, 'would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed'.<sup>18</sup> Amidst the noise of wreckers, the thunder of progress and an ever-increasing 'pile of debris', the voice/s of Benjamin's angel of history are just audible. Motion and stasis coexist in this image of history's 'Paradise'-designed storm, as the angel is irresistibly propelled into the future, with wings violently held open. Australian history's possibilities for commemoration and conversation are similarly limited by 'noise' and violence, but its overlooked or drowned-out names persist in meeting on minor corners. While these encounters are not able to 'make whole what has been smashed', they sometimes succeed in awakening the dead and introducing voices from within the 'debris' to their anxious descendants.

A conversation's movements are linked to the nature of its performance space – to the conditions that interact with it. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett 'meet' as representations of their private lives enter the shared site of publication in Australia. Subjectivities and historical conjunctions shared by the three authors serve both to link and to differentiate them and their texts. As suggested by Curthoys, above, colonialism forms part of the framework for any Australian history, with particular significance for Indigenous subjects. Recent debate has addressed the problematic links between colonialism and genocide. For example, Curthoys and John Docker recall their inspiration for an edition of the journal *Aboriginal History* on the theme of 'Genocide?':

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, 'First Sketches', *The Arcades Project*, tr. H Eiland and K McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 840, Benjamin's emphasis.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1992) p 249.

Marcia Langton ... said that Aboriginal writing, scholarship, and research are taking on the feel of Holocaust studies in the sense that Aboriginal people write, read, and research “to try to understand the terrible, inexplicable past”. She expressed disgust at “those who do not want what happened to us and our ancestors remembered into ‘history’”. ... We thought the questions she raised, of how to come to terms with terrible pasts, and to what degree one can use insights from one history to interrogate another, deserved further thought.<sup>19</sup>

These questions also inform this thesis. Brett’s parents, who feature in her texts, survived the case of genocide most widely and publicly acknowledged in the Western world. In Australia, only a ‘lunatic fringe’ questions the application of the term ‘genocide’ to the Holocaust, while its application to Australian government actions that damaged and continue to damage Indigenous people is the subject of ongoing ‘serious’ debate. However, as Behrendt suggests, the effects of the actions that may or may not be ‘defined by international law’ as genocide are of greater significance to most survivors of those actions and their descendants. Texts such as *Over My Tracks, Don’t Take Your Love To Town, After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* are useful indicators of some of those ‘side-effects and legacies’.

Langford Ginibi writes: ‘I am every black woman,/ who has survived, this calamity we call life,/ in this now multicultural Australia.’<sup>20</sup> Today the term ‘survivor’ is commonly applied to people, like Brett’s parents, who escaped death in National Socialist Germany’s death camps, but not so widely used for the minority of Indigenous Australians who, like Crawford and Langford Ginibi, live into their seventies.<sup>21</sup> As daughters of survivors of colonialism and/or genocide, the authors articulate memories that reflect such practices of identification and the ways they have varied over time and between generations. Each author’s relations with her parents and their memories also condition how those memories are represented in her texts. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett were all displaced from their respective parents’ cultural contexts, but the temporal and spatial distances differ. Brett, as an infant migrant, formed her ways of remembering in very different contexts from those of her parents. As Indigenous daughters, Crawford and Langford Ginibi remember situations not so distant from those known by their parents. Through her family, languages and land, Crawford has access to aspects of an imagined pre-colonial world. Langford Ginibi too shares much with her parents’ generation, while Brett, as a Melbourne girl, has a very different life experience from the extended families in Lodz and

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<sup>19</sup> Curthoys and Docker, ‘Genocide: Definitions, Questions, Settler-colonies’, Introduction, *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001), p 1.

<sup>20</sup> Langford Ginibi, ‘Black Woman’, *Meridian* 17.1 (1998), p 6.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Over the period 1997–99, the life expectancy at birth for an Indigenous male was 56 years, and for an Indigenous female, 63 years. Comparable life expectancies were experienced by males in the total population in 1901–10, and females in 1920–22. Today, males in the total Australian population have a life expectancy of 76 years and females 82 years.’ *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*, <http://www.aihw.gov.au/indigenous/health/mortality.html>, last reviewed 5 January 2004 (visited 20 January 2004).

then the horrors of Auschwitz remembered by her parents. In their 'displaced' relations with 'the Australian nation', too, the authors' memories differ in correlation with their identities as Indigenous or migrant. Even as their hard work in the pastoral industries contributed to the nation's ride 'on the sheep's back', Crawford and Langford Ginibi were officially excluded from membership of that nation until the 1960s. Their paradoxical exclusion, as Indigenous Australians, was explicit and comprehensive, while Brett's, as a 'new Australian', was unstated and partial.

Exclusion and displacement often entail changes in name, nationality and accent. However, such changes fail to deflect acts of memory that can send remembering subjects back to old thresholds of arrival, to a sense of being 'almost there' – almost Australian or almost at a corner where two names may magically meet. The name 'Australian' constantly crosses paths with 'other' names, creating new corners with multiple, transient street signs. Diasporic corners in Australia become sites for remembrance of spatially and temporally distant lives, sites where storytellers meet. Benjamin writes that 'people imagine the storyteller as someone who has come from afar', but that 'they enjoy no less listening to the man who has stayed at home, making an honest living, and who knows the local tales and traditions'.<sup>22</sup> Those coming from afar bring tales of 'others' to provide differentiating strategies for communal identification, while storytellers 'at home' present tales of the past, establishing identifying continuities. Benjamin goes on to represent the archaic embodiments of these two categories of storyteller as 'the resident tiller of the soil, and ... the trading seaman'.<sup>23</sup> These two categories of worker are well represented in twentieth-century Australia, which saw much tilling of soil and many arrivals from the sea, but relations between and around those involved differed from the earlier, European models Benjamin had in mind. The practice of 'making an honest living' was complicated by colonial relations, which saw Indigenous workers dispersed and 'tilling soil' for European profit for at least the first six decades of federated Australia. These diverse workers, including Crawford and Langford Ginibi, knew a range of 'local tales and traditions', both pre- and postcolonial. Such knowledge is evident, for example, in early twentieth-century Indigenous songwriting. Some Indigenous Australians were able to stay 'at home', while many adapted their traditions and tales to other environments. The songs of Australia's stateless tillers draw on various traditions, and from a range of linguistic and geographic sites. Songs written in English tell local tales of exploitation, heroism, love, betrayal, murder and loss, among other things. They use cross-cultural humour, revealing a knowledge of sounds that have been local

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<sup>22</sup> Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', *Illuminations*, p 84.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

for varying lengths of time, from birdcalls and gum leaves to tea chests, whip cracking and yodelling.<sup>24</sup>

Other Australian storytellers, among them both the loud and the muted, have come from afar, engaging in various forms of trade as they travelled. In the mid-twentieth century, while most Indigenous people were yet to be included in the Australian census, displaced Eastern European Jews were among those arriving from the sea to become Australian as quickly as possible. Among these was the two-year-old Lilijahne (her name already changed once, germanicised from the Polish 'Luba'), later to become Lily Brett. Before World War II, laws in many parts of Eastern Europe had restricted Jews to trading to make a living. Travelling salesmen returning to their *shtetls* with stories to tell are frequent heroes of Yiddish literature, as in the classic tales of Mendele Moykher-Sforim, Sholem Aleichem and I L Peretz.<sup>25</sup> In Australia, remnants of Yiddish storytelling practice survive in the work of such writers as Melbourne's Arnold Zable, who has adapted the Yiddish term *Luftmensch* – literally 'air person' – to apply to the displaced person in Australia.<sup>26</sup> In the Yiddish world, a *Luftmensch* was a dispossessed but shrewd survivor, a wheeler and dealer, who moved about making something out of nothing. The process of 'becoming Australian' or of failing to become Australian, in its many different forms, can involve time as a *Luftmensch*, finding no homeland where 'Australian' discourse suggests there should be one or being dispossessed of that which was a homeland. Zable, whose family was left bereft by the Holocaust, points out that an Indigenous person could be expected to be the *Luftmensch*'s opposite – Indigenous people have strong links to place and know their homelands intimately. However, Zable speaks of a shock of recognition when he encounters the 'hovering' narrator of Kim Scott's *Benang* – all it takes is a generation of dispossession to render even the Indigenous person a *Luftmensch*.<sup>27</sup> While the Indigenous *Luftmensch* may leave tracks on local, familiar soil, dispossession repeatedly changes the course of those tracks and with it the languages that may be used. The intersection of paths of dispossession in Australia forms one corner on which Benjamin's two archetypal storytellers meet.

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<sup>24</sup> For just a few examples of such songwriting, see Clinton Walker, *Buried Country: The Story of Aboriginal Country Music* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Of these, Russian-born Sholem Aleichem (Sholem Yakov Rabinowitz's pseudonym, a Hebrew-derived Yiddish greeting meaning 'Peace be with you', equating to the Arabic 'Salam Aleikum') is most widely known in the West, especially since the 1961 adaptation of three of his stories for the play *Fiddler on the Roof*.

<sup>26</sup> There is also an Australian Yiddish literature, works written in Yiddish by Australians, such as Pinkhas Goldhar, Moshe Ajzenbud, Herz Bergner and Itzhak Kahn (See the University of Sydney's Archive of Australian Judaica.)

<sup>27</sup> Arnold Zable, personal communication, September 2001. See Kim Scott, *Benang: From the Heart* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1999). Zable's adaptation of the term removes the derogatory connotation it had in Eastern Europe. In *The Fiftieth Gate* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1997), historian Mark Raphael Baker considers his Ukrainian-born mother's more traditional use: "'Luftmenshn,'" she likes to characterise those in my profession, idlers living off air. Perhaps she is right. What are these papers anyway except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams, without smells, without fear' (p 138). See also Paul Celan, 'Hüttenfenster' ('Tabernacle Window'), *Selected Poems and Prose*, tr. John Felstiner (New York: W W Norton, 2001), p 197: 'the wander-/ East, the/ Hovering Ones, the/ Humans-and-Jews,/ the Cloud Crowd [*Volk-vom-Gewölk*: literally 'people-of-clouds']'. Much of Celan's Holocaust-derived imagery of clouds, air, earth and smoke, as in his 'Todesfuge' ('Deathfuge', Celan, pp 30-33), may also evoke both the mourning and the denial (as in *terra nullius*) of Indigenous Australian life.

Public, literary space was limited for both these groups of storytellers – resident tillers and trading travellers – until the 1980s. *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, Langford Ginibi's first publication, appeared in 1988, when the Bicentennial inspired both celebration and protest. The post-bicentennial years saw increased demand for memoirs of displacement, as recognition of gaps and discrepancies in past representations grew. Stories of 'other non-Anglo-Celtic' Australians were increasingly sought after, but the wide range of Indigenous experience was of primary significance. In *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, Langford Ginibi tells how she began her working life in her early teens, doing various jobs in the New South Wales and Queensland bush. She also worked as a clothing machinist in Sydney and later as a sewing teacher, before her post-publication career as educator and activist. *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, a story of 'tillers' and 'travellers', among other things, became one of the most widely read Australian life narratives. It is included in many school and university curricula. Langford Ginibi has received awards for it and for her subsequent work as a writer and historian. She now has around eighty publications, including the books *Real Deadly* (1992), *My Bundjalung People* (1994) and *Haunted By the Past* (1999).

While Langford Ginibi's text was receiving attention in the late 1980s, Crawford was having her oral history recorded in Brewarrina in northern New South Wales and Brett was writing poetry in Melbourne. Crawford's *Over My Tracks*, her only published book, appeared in 1993. Retired teacher Chris Walsh sought Crawford's story after hearing about her life, especially her work in the education sector. From her early teenage years, Crawford worked all over western New South Wales and southern Queensland – in shearing sheds, as a drover, nursemaid, housemaid, rodeo rider with the Tex Morton Show, teacher's aide, liaison officer and TAFE (Technical and Further Education) regional co-ordinator. She spoke Baarkanji fluently and was also familiar with her schoolmates' Burunji, her paternal grandparents' Wankamurrah and her husband's Camilleroi. Crawford spent much of her life at Brewarrina, east of Bourke. In 2001 she died in Broken Hill, where four of her children live.

Brett has around five hundred publications.<sup>28</sup> She began her career as a rock journalist in 1960s Melbourne. Melbourne has the largest Yiddish-speaking community in Australia. Brett herself wanted little to do with this community in her youth, but literary representations of it, and especially of her parents, feature in her work from the 1980s and 1990s. Most of Melbourne's Yiddish-speakers are Holocaust survivors. Few members of the second generation learnt the language from their parents. Some reasons for this are similar to those preventing many Indigenous people from learning their parents' languages (although here, enforced separation of parents and children was often the sole reason). These include pressure to assimilate and 'succeed', the custom (both in Eastern Europe and in Australia) of using the national language

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<sup>28</sup> *Australian Literature Gateway* (AustLit), <http://www.austlit.com.au> (visited 12 February 2004).

when dealing with those outside the local community (which, after mass destruction and the displacement of the small number of survivors, could barely be imagined still to exist) and, on the part of some multilingual urban Yiddish-speakers, snobbery towards former *shtetl*-dwellers and their language.<sup>29</sup>

Yiddish-speakers have long been part of Australian immigration, but it was only in the late 1940s that they migrated in such numbers that the general cultural and political direction of Australia's Jewish communities significantly changed.<sup>30</sup> Some convicts knew Yiddish, as eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London hosted small communities of Eastern European migrants.<sup>31</sup> Gold attracted Yiddish-speakers to Australia in the 1850s. World War I led more to flee Eastern Europe. With the rise of Hitler, Jews fled in increasing numbers, but it was not until 1947, when the worst of Nazism had ended and it was too late for the lives of around six million Jews, that Australia accepted significant numbers of (selected) displaced persons. Holocaust survivors and their descendants now make up the greater part of Australia's Jewish communities. After Israel, Australia has the highest per capita number of survivors in the world.<sup>32</sup>

Children of survivors have produced diverse literature in the last few decades. These include Yvonne Fein, Ruth Wajnryb, Mark Raphael Baker, Doris Brett, Peter Singer, Diane Armstrong and Andrew Riemer (Armstrong and Riemer also fall into the category of child survivors.) Of Australians who survived the Holocaust as adults, most did not write for publication until the 1970s and 1980s, when much autobiographical material emerged. Many factors contributed to the delay in public storytelling, including assimilation policies, the practical demands of settlement in Australia and the lack of broad community support for the public hearing of victims' voices before the 1980s, when various survivors' groups were established.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> While the Yiddish language is the object of disdain for some, unfamiliarity with Yiddish is viewed as 'un-Jewish' by others ('Yiddish' literally means 'Jewish'). Such attitudes, which vary along with social and regional differences, complicate relations between survivors and their descendants, survivors and other Jews, and, indeed, between different survivors. In *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto, 1940-45* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), Gila Flam tells of Miriam, a Polish-speaking survivor and student of Hebrew, who, shortly after liberation, was 'chided' by other survivors for not knowing Yiddish, which she then set about learning (p 106). In *1492: The Poetics of Diaspora* (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), John Docker critiques Australia's 'contemporary Jewish historiography', including its tendency to glorify and link the 'Yiddish' and Zionist (as 'real' Jewish) and to disdain what W D Rubinstein calls 'supercilious Anglo-Jewish patricians', while disregarding the diverse and complex roles of Jews of various backgrounds in social and colonial histories (pp 171-74). Docker cites Rubinstein's *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1991) and counters Rubinstein's generalisations about Anglos and Eastern Europeans with examples from his own family of Anglo-Jewish poverty and absence of snobbery.

<sup>30</sup> Docker's chapter, "'Sheer perversity': Zionism and anti-Zionism in the 1940s' (*1492: The Poetics of Diaspora*, pp 171-88), focuses specifically on Sir Isaac Isaacs, but is a useful reading of this change, alongside the texts he counters.

<sup>31</sup> Cockney English, which influenced the development of Australian English, due to the high proportion of convicts transported from East London, contains elements of Yiddish, for example, in such vocabulary as 'nosh'.

<sup>32</sup> Suzanne Rutland, 'Subtle Exclusions: Postwar Jewish Emigration to Australia and the Impact of the IRO Scheme', *The Journal of Holocaust Education* 10.1 (2001), p 50.

<sup>33</sup> The Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Descendants was established in 1983. Groups that followed include Child Holocaust Survivors Group, Descendants of the Shoah and Second Generation of the

Indigenous literature, for different but related reasons, shares some aspects of this history. The auto/biographical work of authors such as Glenyse Ward, Sally Morgan, Yami Lester, Alice Nannup, Jack Davis, Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins received considerable attention in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As these survivors and children of survivors, along with Langford Ginibi and Crawford, tell their stories of displacement and detention, love and work, they commemorate the legacies of their families and communities. They also record Australian histories of colonisation, labour and decolonisation.

This thesis examines narratives that commemorate encounters and encounters that reconstruct narratives. Commemoration, an organised form of remembering and forgetting, is conditioned by the instabilities of memory in individual and collective subjects, in different times and places, and in the articulations of cultural and national bodies. While choreographers of national remembrance seek to forget the range of paradoxes and dis/connections that 'make up' the nation's past (and present), storytellers often remember and reconstruct the instabilities and paradoxes. These elements are the 'scraps' of history that emerge when public and private commemorations meet.<sup>34</sup> The texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are personal, containing memories that differ from those of the narrators' respective sisters, for example, but they also capture some collective 'scraps', such as the effects of government policies and literary fashions. As critics read these texts, they renegotiate the collective narratives related to such effects.

## Literature Review

Since the publication of *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, policies and practices around multiculturalism have arguably redefined the nation as a site of many contending histories. However, this redefinition risks eliding the very different conditions in which various contending histories operate. This shortcoming is evident in some responses to the work of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. The three authors' texts have most broadly been read in the contexts of their identities as Indigenous or 'multicultural' women. Multiculturalism has been an Australian government policy since the 1970s (and the continent has been home to multicultural populations – interacting, diverse Indigenous and non-indigenous cultures – for centuries). The policy entails recognition of and interaction between different cultural practices. While it might be fitting to

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Holocaust. The different responses of second and third generations are evident in recent work, such as Amelia Klein's research on grandchildren's modes of commemoration and responses to survivor testimony (see Marc Radomsky's documentary *Claiming the Memory: Who Owns the Legacy?* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2004) and Klein's role in *Analysing Testimonies of Jewish Holocaust Survivors*, The Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific, [http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts/centres/CulturalHeritage\\_Centre/research/testimonies.php](http://www.deakin.edu.au/arts/centres/CulturalHeritage_Centre/research/testimonies.php) (visited 1 January 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Among other things, Benjamin sought to 'capture the portrait of history in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps, as it were'. Benjamin, *Briefe* [Letters] II (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1966), p 685, cited in Hannah Arendt's Introduction to Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p 17.

describe an author or her text as multicultural in this sense, the term has more often been used in Australia to signify simply ‘non-Anglo-Celtic’ or ‘not completely Anglo’. Used in this way, the term is not very useful to an understanding of a memoirist’s texts. As suggested by Curthoys’ argument, above (that migration should be understood as ‘a process occurring *within*, rather than *after*, a history of colonisation and de-colonisation’), texts such as those of the child migrant Brett are more fruitfully read in the context of Australia’s histories of colonisation and decolonisation.<sup>35</sup> For example, as Brett addresses aspects of European history that position, devastate and displace her family, the reader may consider Brett’s own positions in Australian history and Australia’s positions in colonial history. While Brett’s texts do not explicitly address these links, recent debate has seen calls to ‘rethink the relationship between the Holocaust and the indigenous genocides that preceded it’, as A Dirk Moses puts it.<sup>36</sup> The positioning of Brett’s texts, between ‘the war’ in Europe and its ‘unintended consequences’ in Australia, creates some momentum towards foregrounding this relationship. However, it is rarely broached in writing about Brett and her texts.

Rather, within a ‘multicultural’ register, critics usually address the roles of Brett’s texts as second-generation memoir, Holocaust literature, candid women’s life writing and/or Jewish humour. All these aspects of Brett’s textual identities are, of course, intersectional. Critical readings of her texts usually foreground particular facets of her identity as a ‘female Jewish second-generation Australian Holocaust writer’. Debates arising from such readings relate to the ‘rights’ of children to represent their parents, the authority of one born in 1946 to write about the Holocaust, the reliability or selectivity of ‘candour’ and the nature of Jewish cultural practices, among other things. Linked to these debates and the subject of considerable attention in Australia has been Brett’s public dispute with her sister, psychologist and writer Doris Brett, over representations of their parents, particularly their late mother. Doris Brett was born in 1950 in Melbourne, a setting very different from the displaced persons camp of Brett’s birth, although only four years later. In *Eating the Underworld: A Memoir In Three Voices* and in her letter ‘In Defence of My Mother’, among other texts, Doris Brett contests Lily Brett’s representations of the effects of their mother’s memories. The sisters’ father, Max Brett, joined the public conversation with ‘Life Experiences’, his letter in response to Doris’s and in support of Lily’s work.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Curthoys, ‘Colonisation and Immigration: the two faces of the Australian nation’.

<sup>36</sup> A Dirk Moses, ‘Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the ‘Racial Century’: Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 36.4 (2002), p 7. Moses links ‘the colonial genocides of the ‘racial century’ (1850-1950) and the Holocaust to a single modernization process of accelerating violence related to nation-building that commenced in the European colonial periphery and culminated in the Holocaust’ (p 7). See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).

<sup>37</sup> Doris Brett, *Eating the Underworld: A Memoir In Three Voices* (London: Vintage, 2001); ‘In Defence of My Mother’, *The Bulletin* 118.6243 (26 September 2000), p 12; Max Brett, ‘Life Experiences’, *The Bulletin* 118.6244 (3 October 2000), p 12.



Lily Brett's texts include novels, short stories, poetry and essays. Her use of these various genres has been analysed and reviewed as 'second-generation Australian' life writing, as well as 'second-generation survivor' narrative. The latter term is problematic, as it may be argued that only one who has herself survived the Holocaust might be described as a survivor. However, the term is used to draw attention to the long-term, far-reaching effects of damaging events on survivors, their descendants and, indeed, others. Again, it is useful to view the Holocaust and its 'generations' in the context of histories of colonisation and decolonisation. The reader's attention may then shift from concerns about who 'was there' and legal definitions (though these are valid concerns in other contexts) to the various 'side-effects and legacies' of the events. Criticism and reviews focussing on the generational aspects of Brett's texts include Esther Faye's psychoanalytical readings, "'Enjoying traumatically": the Holocaust as "the second generation's other"' and 'Impossible memories: Lily Brett as essayist', Sue Murray's 'Lighter Memories for the "Devised Descendants" of the Ghetto', and Louise Kennedy's 'Paperback Looks at Family's Move to Modernity'. Kennedy's reading of Brett's fictionalised family as primarily pre-modern before its migration into the 'modernity' of mid-century Melbourne reflects dominant discourses around 'progress' and 'development'. These discourses are linked to the practices of colonialism. They assume the desirability of Western notions of modernity and their superiority, for example, over the imagined quaint, sluggish, restrictive orthodoxies of Eastern Europe. In this discursive framework, the progressive acculturation of a family's successive generations is read as a process of improvement, culminating in a final cadence or resolution, as the descendants reach 'modernity' and thus become Australian.<sup>38</sup>

As Holocaust literature, Brett's texts have received various responses. *Too Many Men* (1999), *Just Like That* (1994), *What God Wants* (1991), *The Auschwitz Poems* (1986) and *Poland* (1986) have all won awards. Readers have been moved and educated, two effects explicitly desired by Brett. However, some critics have become or remained sceptical of Brett's modes of representation. In his essay 'Sister Pacts', Richard Freadman uses Lily and Doris Brett's apparently conflicting accounts to investigate 'various forms of narrative pact' and the part such pacts might play in ethical lives. Freadman identifies what he sees as artistic and ethical problems with Lily Brett's blurring of 'fact' and 'fabrication' when writing about effects of a

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<sup>38</sup> See Esther Faye, "'Enjoying traumatically": the Holocaust as "the second generation's other"', *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 16.2 (1999), pp 184-96; Faye, 'Impossible memories: Lily Brett as essayist', *Meridian* 17.1 (1998), pp 63-72; Sue Murray, 'Lighter Memories for the "Devised Descendants" of the Ghetto', *The Age Saturday Extra* (19 May 1990), p 9; Louise Kennedy, 'Paperback Looks at Family's Move to Modernity', *The Canberra Times* (1 March 1992), p 22. Other articles and reviews addressing notions around the generations in Brett's work include Mickey Tankel, 'Interlinked Melbourne Lives', *Australian Jewish News* (Life/Style) 59.11 (4 December 1992), p 9; Penelope Nelson, 'Generation Gap', *The Weekend Australian Review* (14-15 March 1992) p 6; Muriel Reddy, 'The Facts Behind the Fiction', *The Sunday Age Agenda* (28 August 1994), p 8; Renata Singer, 'So, Who is Lily Brett?' *Australian Society* 10.11 (1991), p 38; and Simon Hughes, 'Not Who Knows but Who Cares?' *Sydney Morning Herald* (9 November 1991), p 50.

tragedy on the scale of the Holocaust. He argues that her name for candour and her authority as a Holocaust chronicler are undermined by her 'breach' of the pact of trust between life writer and reader. Referring to the absence of Doris in many of Lily's representations of her family, Freadman suggests that Lily's 'airbrushing technique serves to diminish narrative trust', in contrast with Doris's 'fierce commitment to truth-telling'.<sup>39</sup> In effect, Freadman questions the appropriateness to stories related to genocide of the modes of life writing that Gillian Whitlock describes as exploiting 'the interdependencies of writing about self and other, where the contours of biography and autobiography come together'.<sup>40</sup> Other criticism and reviews of Brett's texts as Holocaust literature range in response from affective identification to scepticism. These include David Brooks' review, 'Small, Poignant Details of Hell', and Robert Harris' essay, 'Poetry Tempted by Silence'.<sup>41</sup> In her review of Brett's 'Kaddish for My Mother', Fay Zwicky hears 'No Music in Sounds So Poised', while Rosemary Sorensen finds the 'Music Lost from Stories the Second Time Round' in her review of *What God Wants*. Geoff Page's review of *Unintended Consequences* concludes that Brett's minimalism '[s]ometimes Ends in an Intellectual Cul-de-Sac' and, in 2003, Ben Naparstek finds that 'Brett's Literary Journey Wallows in Self-Indulgence'.<sup>42</sup>

Some readers link claims of Brett's 'self-indulgence' to her texts' concern with the intimacies of women's lives. Typically, the enclosed – but far-reaching – domestic spaces of families have been a prime concern of both female and Jewish life writers. Complications, such as the candour question, arise when family stories are represented. The Holocaust further complicates family stories, as they are interrupted by the dead, the missing, the heroes and traitors, the failures to compensate for irreplaceable losses and the many forms of grief and guilt. Family stories take twists and turns, including self-indulgent ones, of memory and forgetting and, as Doris Brett suggests, of choice and interpretation. Referring to her sister's literary representations, Doris Brett writes: 'my mother wears a face that is unrecognisable to me. It is

<sup>39</sup> Richard Freadman, 'Sister Pacts', *Meanjin* 61.1 (2002), pp 186-95; Doris Brett, *Eating the Underworld*, pp 194-95.

<sup>40</sup> Whitlock, 'From Biography to Autobiography' in Elizabeth Webby, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), p 233. As I explain in chapter one, Whitlock maps the spectrum 'from biography to autobiography' across the earth's climatic regions, placing this 'blurry' mode in the 'equatorial zones'.

<sup>41</sup> David Brooks, 'Small, Poignant Details of Hell', *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (31 January-1 February 1987), p 16; Robert Harris, 'Poetry Tempted by Silence', *Overland* 105 (1986), pp 80-81. For other responses to Brett's work as Holocaust literature, see Kevin John Brophy, 'Plumb-Line Poetry', *Australian Book Review* 143 (1992), pp 57-58; Helen Elliott, 'Turning Anguish into Art', *The Canberra Times* (20 August 1994), C11; Elliott, 'Life and Death', *The Sunday Age Agenda* (21 August 1994), p 8; Stephanie Green, 'Drawing Light Out of the Darkness', *The Canberra Times* (14 April 1990), B4; John Hanrahan, 'After Such Knowledge', *Overland* 119 (1990), pp 89-91; Judith Rodriguez, 'Perspectives on the Grim Reaper', *Sydney Morning Herald* (18 October 1986), p 49; Carol Treloar, 'The Power that Comes from Being a Survivor', *The Advertiser* (10 March 1990), p 17; and Annette Vernon, 'The Auschwitz Poems', *Outrider: A Journal of Multicultural Literature in Australia* 3.2 (1986), pp 201-03.

<sup>42</sup> See Ben Naparstek, 'Brett's Literary Journey Wallows in Self-Indulgence', *The Australian Jewish News* 69.18 (10 January 2003), p 29; Geoff Page, 'Lily Brett's Minimalism: It Sometimes Ends in an Intellectual Cul-de-Sac', *The Canberra Times* (15 August 1992), C8; Rosemary Sorensen, 'Music Lost from Stories the Second Time Round', *The Age Saturday Extra* (26 October 1991), p 7; and Fay Zwicky, 'No Music in Sounds So Poised', *The Age Saturday Extra* (13 February 1988), p 11.

clearly the way Lily has chosen to interpret her experience'.<sup>43</sup> Roberta Buffi examines Lily Brett's representations of 'left-over daughters/ and missing mothers' and of women's 'unique torments' in 'Things Could Be Forgotten: Women's Remembrances in Lily Brett's Poetry and Fiction', while Susan Bures and Renee Bittoun respond to Brett's intimate style in, respectively, 'Lily's Life as Art' and 'Lunging with Lily'. Morag Fraser reads 'I-Catching Honesty' in Brett's essays, while Esther Faye finds 'Impossible memories' there.<sup>44</sup> Faye argues that Brett's 'secret enjoyment' – for example, of forbidden food in her youth and of public storytelling in adulthood – represents the linked 'unconscious guilt' of her defensive self and her survivor mother. This mother-daughter guilt, suggests Faye, explains 'how the impossible and traumatic memory of the Holocaust (an event 'experienced' by her mother not the daughter) was witnessed in Brett's body'.<sup>45</sup> Faye reads the imagined guilt (of survival where others died) of both women as a memory that inhabits their female bodies in ways that are reflected in the shapes of Brett's texts.

Closely related to readings of Brett primarily as a woman are readings of her as humorist. Her humour is read as female, Jewish, Australian and/or, since her expatriation, 'New York'. It employs congruence of the incongruous, collective self-deprecation, familial paradox, candour, chutzpah and a traditional source of Jewish humour, worry. Brett's early 1990s, Melbourne-set short stories in *What God Wants* and *Things Could Be Worse* and her 1994 novel *Just Like That*, set in New York, are the texts most widely read primarily as humour. Criticism and reviews include Herb Hild's 'Funny Romp with Middle-Class Jews' and Wendy Goulston's 'Lively, Funny, and Painful Talk Illuminates Australian Jewish Life'. Slightly more earnest responses include Kay Perry's 'High Quality Gossip' and Sam Lipski's 'A "Mishpocheh Mayseh" [Yiddish: 'family tale'] in New York'. Less amused reviews include Peter Pierce's 'The Predictable Hazards of Bourgeois Life' and Rosemary Sorensen's 'Stereotype Flexes its Muscles'.<sup>46</sup> There is little overt humour in *After the War*, dedicated to Brett's mother, who had died in 1986, four years before its publication. However, in *Unintended Consequences*, published in 1992, Brett is described by Robert Harris as 'emerging into the open air of the

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<sup>43</sup> Doris Brett, *Eating the Underworld*, p 16.

<sup>44</sup> See Roberta Buffi, 'Things Could Be Forgotten: Women's Remembrances in Lily Brett's Poetry and Fiction', *Westerly* 41.4 (1996), pp 56-63; Susan Bures, 'Lily's Life as Art', *Australian Jewish News* (Life/Style) 60.50 (2 September 1994), p 47; Renee Bittoun, 'Lunging with Lily', *Editions* 21 (1994), p 4; Morag Fraser, 'I-Catching Honesty', *The Weekend Australian Review* (15-16 November 1997), p 29; Faye, 'Impossible memories'.

<sup>45</sup> Faye, 'Impossible memories', p 69, Faye's emphasis.

<sup>46</sup> Herb Hild, 'Funny Romp with Middle-Class Jews', *The Courier-Mail* (12 October 1991), wkld 6; Wendy Goulston, 'Lively, Funny, and Painful Talk Illuminates Australian Jewish Life', *Antipodes* 7.1 (1993), p 72; Kay Perry, 'High Quality Gossip', *Mattoid* 44 (1992), pp 209-10; Sam Lipski, 'A "Mishpocheh Mayseh" in New York', *The Age Saturday Extra* (3 September 1994), p 9; Peter Pierce, 'The Predictable Hazards of Bourgeois Life', *The Canberra Times* (16 November 1991), C8; Rosemary Sorensen, 'Stereotype Flexes its Muscles', *Sydney Morning Herald* (17 March 1990), p 79. See also James Griffen, 'Start Worrying. And Enjoy It', *Australian Book Review* 163 (1994), pp 15-16; Penelope Nelson, 'Even Breter', *The Weekend Australian Review* (14-15 March 1992), p 6; Kay Perry, 'Jewishness and Selfhood', *Mattoid* 44 (1992), pp 207-08; Eva White, 'Lily Just Wants to Have Fun', *Australian Book Review* 163 (1994), pp 16-17; and Deborah Zion, 'The Joy of Trouble', *Australian Society* 9.4 (1990), pp 45-46.

present ... with a new wit and humour sometimes playing at the corners of her mouth'.<sup>47</sup> Brett's subsequent intensified use of this 'new wit' is, arguably, a prime factor in the increasing sales of her work, as well as the increase in negative critique.

Brett's texts have been translated into several languages and her largest market since translation has been German-speaking. Here, her earlier texts received generally positive criticism, but her 1999 novel *Too Many Men*, set largely in Poland and published in German as *Zu viele Männer* in 2001, was described by *Die Zeit* reviewer Andreas Nentwich as 'one book too many'. Nentwich reads Brett's representations of Poles in *Zu viele Männer* as an application of formerly anti-Semitic stereotypes to Poles *en bloc*. According to Nentwich, this 'resentment-driven generalisation' persists throughout the novel's 650 pages, as the reader waits in vain for the author's 'moderating intervention'. Nentwich sees Brett's failure to introduce 'critical reflection' or 'honesty' and failure to 'broaden her horizon' by engaging with Poland's 'difficult history' as irreconcilable with the 'intellectual responsibility' of a writer: 'Her book ... fails to resist hatred, it preserves enmity, indeed it propagates it, and it feeds the ethnic madness that is sweeping through the world and through Europe'.<sup>48</sup> Like Richard Freadman, Nentwich wonders about truth and responsibility as he reads Brett. Others may read these concerns as a failure to appreciate the reader's ability to reflect responsibly, the subtle 'truths' of the 'equatorial' blur or even Brett's sense of humour. However, 'truth' and 'responsibility' are recurrent concerns in the reading of minor memoir. Their perceived absences and presences are worth investigating as effects of complex national, familial and personal histories. For example, in *After the War* and *Unintended Consequences*, published several years before *Too Many Men*, Brett's 'anti-Polish clichés' are minimal and her sister is mentioned, albeit fleetingly. Representations of memories interact with changing discourses, including those of readers, critics, nations and 'the world', as the writer negotiates her textual possibilities. This is, of course, significant to Indigenous texts and their reception in Australia, where the descendants of colonialism's perpetrators and survivors meet.

Wenche Ommundsen has suggested that diasporic writers play 'important roles in the negotiation of ethnic stereotypes, challenging, debating or reinforcing them in their texts and, often beyond their control, becoming objects of further image-production at the hands of publishers, readers and critics'.<sup>49</sup> Publication is a different process from writing or talking, with different sets of intersecting discourses from those of writing and talking. As multiculturalism appeared to gain popularity in Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, 'non-Anglo' authors

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<sup>47</sup> See Robert Harris' blurb on the back cover of Brett, *Unintended Consequences*.

<sup>48</sup> Andreas Nentwich, 'Eine Entgleisung: Wie die Schriftstellerin Lily Brett in ihrem neuen Roman antipolnische Klischees bedient' ('A gaffe [literally 'derailment']: How writer Lily Brett serves anti-Polish clichés in her new novel'), *Die Zeit* 17/2001, [http://www.zeit.de/archiv/2001/17/200117\\_1-brett.xml](http://www.zeit.de/archiv/2001/17/200117_1-brett.xml) (visited 24 January 2004), my translations.

<sup>49</sup> Wenche Ommundsen, 'Too Close to Home: Evelyn Lau, Ouyang Yu and the Performing Self', *New Literatures Review* 40 (2003), pp 42-43.

and their texts were frequently placed onto sites identified as multicultural. For example, with her edited multicultural anthologies and bibliographies, Sneja Gunew did much to bring work by non-Anglo authors to Australian readers throughout the 1980s and 1990s. However, identification as multicultural sometimes inhibits other ways of reading. Definitions within 'multicultural' discourse can also be problematic. For example, the 'general subjects' of Gunew's 1987 anthology, *Displacements 2: Multicultural Storytellers*, are described on the *Australian Literature Gateway* website as 'Australian writers of foreign descent' and 'Multiculturalism', although the subjects addressed by the writers are diverse, including language, migration, cultural practices and family and community relations.<sup>50</sup> The exclusion of Australian writers of English descent here would imply that 'foreign' has come to mean 'non-Anglo'. In her 1988 anthology (co-edited with Jan Mahyuddin), *Beyond the Echo: Multicultural Women's Writing*, Gunew includes three poems by Brett, as well as Langford Ginibi's story 'My Names'.<sup>51</sup> Largely due to the timing of Langford Ginibi's entry to Australian publication, her work was initially identified by some as 'multicultural', despite significant differences between it and writing by those labelled 'of foreign descent'. Also in 1988, Langford Ginibi's biographical story, 'Grandfather Sam Anderson', appeared in *Outrider: A Journal of Multicultural Literature in Australia*.<sup>52</sup> Such placing of her work has had some effect on ways it has been read, as well as on Langford Ginibi's subsequent writing.

The work of Langford Ginibi and Crawford has been read primarily in the context of the authors' Indigenous identities. The generational aspect of Indigenous women's life writing has received less attention than that of Holocaust survivor writing, as it is not as easily categorised. Much-debated but clear distinctions, based on dates of birth, have been established between adult Holocaust survivors, child survivors and 'second-generation survivors'. (The debates often focus on where and how a survivor spent the Holocaust years.) For Indigenous Australians, the shock of colonisation has less clear temporal limits and less geographical distance than Europe's Holocaust. As there are complex variations of experience for and within each Indigenous generation, the term 'second generation' is not commonly used. A notion of 'colonisation literature', to correspond with Holocaust literature, is also absent, although there is, of course, 'postcolonial literature'. The application of 'post' to colonialism and not to the Holocaust in these general literary classifications confuses perceived temporal limits to both 'events'. However, it reflects the many differences between the two and the ways they are commemorated. Although the colonisation of Australia and the Holocaust may both be seen as

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<sup>50</sup> *Australian Literature Gateway* (visited 12 February 2004).

<sup>51</sup> Sneja Gunew and Jan Mahyuddin, eds, *Beyond the Echo: Multicultural Women's Writing* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1988). Brett's poems are *On the Way to Lodz*, pp 32-33, *On My First Morning*, pp 146-47 and *People with Pallid Faces*, p 202.

<sup>52</sup> Langford (Ginibi), 'Grandfather Sam Anderson', *Outrider: A Journal of Multicultural Literature in Australia* 5.1/2 (1988), pp 40-43.

parts of a larger pattern of European imperialism – ‘a single modernization process of accelerating violence’, as Moses puts it – the differences in internal patterns of intensity and pace, and in who has gained authority to remember publicly, have contributed to current conceptions of Holocaust literature and postcolonial literature.<sup>53</sup>

The texts of Langford Ginibi and Crawford are sometimes read as postcolonial literature, as readers attend to their Indigenous renarrations of ‘national’ Australian memories. In the 1990s, notions of ethnicity, linked with those of multiculturalism, were much explored. Indigenous texts were part of this, but Indigenous ethnicities were most often simply contrasted with those of white or other settler groups. Few non-indigenous readers ventured investigation of aspects of various Indigenous ethnicities. The notion of ‘authenticity’ in Indigenous texts has concerned some readers. Others have analysed the nature of Indigenous differences from and sometimes within Australian superculture, through concepts such as place and sacredness, as articulated in life narratives. Of increasing interest to other critics is the circulation of Indigenous stories in Australia. This has led to discussion of canon formation, historiography and editing and publication practices. Related to these concerns are the various forms of Indigenous life narrative. For example, while *Over My Tracks* and *Don’t Take Your Love To Town* have different roles in Australian public and political life from the testimonies of stolen children, their stories and textual forms are linked to such testimonies in complex ways.

In ‘Ethnic Autobiography and the Cult of Authenticity’, Graham Huggan addresses most of the above concerns, with reference to *Don’t Take Your Love To Town* and three other Indigenous women’s life narratives.<sup>54</sup> Santosh Sareen takes a different approach in ‘Aboriginal Identity and Representation: Ruby Langford’s *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*’.<sup>55</sup> Sareen sees Langford Ginibi’s use of the English language for her text as ‘opting for a linguistic system which is loaded with western metaphysics and not part of her own cultural milieu’. Though he concedes that Langford Ginibi has ‘grown up with English as the ‘carrier’ of [her] experiences’, Sareen maintains a quest for the ‘essential’: ‘can we ever know about the essential Aborigine experiences through such autobiographies that are written in English?’ In ‘Rethinking Emplacement, Displacement and Indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*’, Ceridwen Spark contrasts Indigenous ‘accounts of belonging and emplacement’, such

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<sup>53</sup> Moses, ‘Conceptual Blockages’, p 7. For diverse approaches to notions of the postcolonial, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), Docker, ‘Rethinking Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism in the *Fin de Siècle*’, *Cultural Studies* 9.3 (1995), pp 409-26, and Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, ‘The Postcolonial and the Hybrid’, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp 37-46.

<sup>54</sup> Graham Huggan, ‘Ethnic Autobiography and the Cult of Authenticity’, *Australian Studies* 15.2 (2000), pp 37-62.

<sup>55</sup> Santosh Sareen, ‘Aboriginal Identity and Representation: Ruby Langford’s *Don’t Take Your Love to Town*’ in Bruce Bennett, Susan Cowan, Jacqueline Lo, Satendra Nandan and Jennifer Webb, eds, *Resistance and Reconciliation: Writing in the Commonwealth* (Canberra: Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, 2003), pp 278-87.

as Langford Ginibi's, with those that 'can be articulated in a court of law'.<sup>56</sup> Using *Don't Take Your Love to Town* as an example, Spark examines the significance of returning to ancestral places and efforts to link 'past' and 'present' Aboriginalities. She points out that 'Aboriginal senses of place are interwoven with displacement' and that colonialism produces disconnections, but that these disconnections do not 'undermine Ruby's claim that this [Bundjalung country] is her territory'. Spark goes on to suggest that 'Australians may yet reject the law's understanding of what constitutes 'title' and begin to acknowledge a wider variety of Aboriginal person-place relations'. In 'The politics of the sacred', Ken Gelder analyses other political implications of Indigenous narratives, as he examines representations of the sacred in texts by Langford Ginibi and three other Aboriginal authors.<sup>57</sup> Gelder identifies ethical and pedagogic functions of representations of the sacred in written and oral narratives, which, he suggests, 'try to reconcile the Aboriginal with the non-Aboriginal by dealing with generational conflict and ethnic differences to impart ideologies of the sacred to the younger generation'. Cultural differences and various modes of reconciliation are recurring concerns in readings of Indigenous life writing.

Differences between (and among) non-indigenous collaborators and Indigenous authors affect the editing, publication and circulation of Indigenous stories. Critics and authors, including Langford Ginibi, have addressed this in recent years. Langford Ginibi has expressed some dissatisfaction with the editing and 'gubbaing' of *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. The editor of some of her later texts, Penny van Toorn, has joined Langford Ginibi in questioning ways literary canons are formed and histories of colonisation are represented in Australia. In 'Who's in Whose Canon?: Transforming Aboriginal Writers into Big Guns', Langford Ginibi and van Toorn discuss 'four mechanisms of canonisation – critical commentary, teaching curricula, popular acclaim measured in terms of book sales, and ... literary awards'.<sup>58</sup> They point out that there are several canons of Indigenous literature, reflecting complex and changing power relations. These relations affect the passage of status-conferring powers, which have rarely passed into Indigenous hands. Following Judith Wright, Langford Ginibi and van Toorn question 'the politics of cross-cultural reviewing', as well as the roles of non-indigenous academic readings, representations and 'translations' of Indigenous texts. Langford Ginibi briefly addresses Mary Rose Liverani's hostile 1992 review of her book *Real Deadly*, to which Langford Ginibi responded with 'A Koori's Lesson in Dispossession'.<sup>59</sup> Liverani reviews *Real Deadly* alongside Robert Adamson's *Wards of the State* (Angus and Robertson, 1992). She

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<sup>56</sup> Ceridwen Spark, 'Rethinking Emplacement, Displacement and Indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), pp 95-103, notes pp 191-92.

<sup>57</sup> Ken Gelder, 'The Politics of the Sacred', *World Literature Today* 67.3 (1993), p 499 (6).

<sup>58</sup> Langford Ginibi and Penny van Toorn, 'Who's in Whose Canon?: Transforming Aboriginal Writers into Big Guns', *Southerly* 57.3 (1997), pp 125-36.

<sup>59</sup> Langford Ginibi, 'A Koori's Lesson in Dispossession', *The Weekend Australian Review* (2-3 May 1992), p 6.

criticises Langford Ginibi's text, as well as the life it narrates, claiming that Langford Ginibi 'exhibits no moral consciousness at all – nor any apparent notion of cause and effect'.<sup>60</sup> While Liverani sees 'sudden vistas of concealed pain' in Adamson's text, such evidence of a 'notion of cause and effect' is not visible to her in *Real Deadly*. She does not explicitly consider the 'cause' of this invisibility, but reflects that Langford Ginibi 'seems to view herself and her family as characters in an American slapstick comedy or cheap romance'.<sup>61</sup> This reading contrasts with Gerry Turcotte's approach to Langford Ginibi's work, particularly *Don't Take Your Love to Town*: 'What has been missing ... is literature, by Koori writers, telling their own story ... Writing, that is, which reveals rather than accuses ... This ... is what literature is all about – and this is what Ruby Langford has done with her autobiography'.<sup>62</sup> Turcotte's approach to literature bears some resemblance to Benjamin's to storytelling. Benjamin argues that, among storytellers 'who have written down the tales, it is the great ones whose written version differs least from the speech of the many nameless storytellers' and that 'it is half the art of storytelling to keep a story free from explanation as one reproduces it'.<sup>63</sup>

A decade after publication of *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, which led to Langford Ginibi's 'canonisation', she made another move in academia, accepting the degree of Honorary Doctor of Letters at La Trobe University. This event was marked by Janine Little Nyoongah in 'That's Doctor Ginibi to You: Hard Lessons in the History and Publication of Ruby Langford Ginibi' and in 'Australian cleverwoman: an Aboriginal writer beats the blues'.<sup>64</sup> Little Nyoongah writes of Langford Ginibi's eloquence on 'the barrier between white people and Indigenous Australians which is invisible to white people' and on white expectations that her texts 'fit into an idealized category'.<sup>65</sup> Shortly before the appearance of Little Nyoongah's essays, Suvendrini Perera also marked Langford Ginibi's acceptance of her Honorary Doctorate with her essay "'You Were Born To Tell These Stories": The Edu-ma-cations of Doctor Ruby'.<sup>66</sup> Perera suggests that some critics remain ignorant of Langford Ginibi's challenges to dominant views of 'nature', the 'human', the 'rational' and the 'real'. She traces Langford Ginibi's rejection of attempts to place her and her texts with the racially marked battler of 'Australian' imagination and convention. Rather, Langford Ginibi's concern is 'with the collective, historically and

<sup>60</sup> Mary Rose Liverani, 'From Outside, Without Insight', *The Weekend Australian Review* (28-29 March 1992), p 6.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Gerry Turcotte, Introduction to 'Ruby Langford (Ginibi), *Don't Take Your Love to Town*' in Turcotte, ed, *Writers in Action: The Writer's Choice Evenings* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1990), p 116.

<sup>63</sup> Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', *Illuminations*, pp 84, 89. See also Benjamin, 'Little Tricks of the Trade', *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, pp 728-30.

<sup>64</sup> Janine Little Nyoongah, 'That's Doctor Ginibi to You: Hard Lessons in the History and Publication of Ruby Langford Ginibi', *Southerly* 58.2 (1998), pp 31-47; Little Nyoongah, 'Australian cleverwoman: an Aboriginal writer beats the blues', *Race and Class* 40.1 (1998), pp 33-46.

<sup>65</sup> Little Nyoongah, 'Australian cleverwoman', p 33.

<sup>66</sup> Suvendrini Perera, "'You Were Born To Tell These Stories": The Edu-ma-cations of Doctor Ruby', *Meridian* 17.1 (1998), pp 15-30.



socially produced, conditions of Aboriginal families in urban Australia', suggests Perera.<sup>67</sup> She points out that Langford Ginibi's 'hostile forces' are not wild nature, but 'the systematically racist policies and practices of the state in housing, employment, education and, most urgently, in law and the criminal (in)justice system'.<sup>68</sup> Perera counters both quests for essence and theories of hybridity with her reading of Langford Ginibi's rich urban Indigenous culture, which maintains itself against assimilationist pressures and constitutes a culture of survival. She represents public 'multicultural' celebrations of the exotic as a strategy to 'erase the state's record' of intolerance and coercion.<sup>69</sup> However, Perera sees non-English-speaking-background migrants to Australia as complicit in Indigenous dispossession, as migration 'implies consent to, and shared responsibility for, the shameful events of Australian history'.<sup>70</sup> For Perera, a migrant from Sri Lanka, becoming 'edu-ma-cated' by Indigenous teachers such as Langford Ginibi is her 'application for an entry visa from the country's true custodians'.<sup>71</sup>

In 'Autobiography and Resistance', Gillian Whitlock discusses *Don't Take Your Love to Town*'s role in spurring debates about race and gender relations in Australia.<sup>72</sup> Whitlock traces changes and realignments in 1980s Australian identity politics. She suggests that black women's life writing emerged at this time as organised resistance and a 'sense of united identity' had developed among Indigenous people. Also, the legislative changes of the twentieth century, marking 'extermination', 'protection' and 'assimilation' policies, were within living memory: 'At the heart of social memory in indigenous women's autobiographical writing is the systemic invasion and destruction of black communities and kinship structures that were licensed by these policies'.<sup>73</sup> In this context, suggests Whitlock, life writing serves as a counter-discourse to white nationalism. She reads identities represented in *Don't Take Your Love to Town* as 'syncretic rather than authentic'. In comparison with Sally Morgan's *My Place*, Whitlock finds 'more complex negotiations and intersubjectivity' here and a 'more complex sense of community'. As Langford Ginibi's 'classed, gendered and racial' experiences intersect, cyclical rather than lineal patterns shape her narrative. Whitlock represents such autobiographic writing as a strategy to reclaim history, as it presents and circulates hitherto invisible histories. Under the subheading 'Black writers/white readers' (perhaps suggesting an invisibility of black settler/migrant readers like Suvendrini Perera), Whitlock discusses 'where and how black and white women might meet in the production and reception of autobiographic writing'. She sees the editor's role in *Don't Take Your Love to Town* as 'merely one of a series of indications within the text of a self-conscious negotiation of meanings among texts of all kinds'. Finally,

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<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p 17.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, p 25.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p 26.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York: Cassell, 2000), pp 142-78.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p 155.

Whitlock calls for 'autobiographical work of various kinds' to continue in the study of decolonisation in Australia.

Anne Brewster has written on both Langford Ginibi and Crawford. Her work includes 'Issues of Race and Gender in Ruby Langford's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', 'Taking your story to town: Evelyn Crawford's *Over My Tracks* and the ambivalence of aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives' and, under the chapter heading 'Reading Aboriginal Women's Autobiographical Narratives: Agency and Audience', 'Women and the family: Alice Nannup and Ruby Langford Ginibi' and 'Oral story to written text: Evelyn Crawford'.<sup>74</sup> With reference to *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, Brewster examines the significance of family as a site of subjugated knowledges and resistance, performative aspects of storytelling and Langford Ginibi's inscription of a gendered self, informed by race. Brewster discusses agency and strategies of resistance against ongoing colonisation, including 'lingo' use, spirituality and the decolonising counter-discourse of contemporary Aboriginal culture. She points to the collective nature of 'minority autobiography' and to the politics of reading 'difference', as well as the 'educative role of Aboriginal women'. Brewster also considers these things in her readings of *Over My Tracks*, but here she traces the ways Indigenous narratives such as Crawford's have 'mapped a moment of transition in contemporary Aboriginal culture, namely the transition from an oral to a literate society'. She addresses the technologies of relations between the Indigenous storyteller, white interviewer/editor and diverse audience, concluding that 'the storyteller's role is both preserved and transformed in the production of Aboriginal autobiographical publications'. Brewster reads Crawford's narrative as 'pedagogic and archival', supported by a network of oral narrative stretching across generations. She sees the author's choice to impart her knowledge and translate her oral history into literature as an intervention into white 'cultural amnesia' and an assertion of difference.<sup>75</sup> However, the move into a public sphere demands certain adaptations and entails the loss of aspects of collective and political significance. Brewster concludes that, while 'the intervention of Aboriginal women's autobiographical narratives ... has effected change in both the genre of storytelling and the public sphere itself, we must be cautious in assessing the extent to which white Australian consciousness has been transformed.'

In 'Presenting Aboriginal Women's Life Narratives', Amanda Nettelbeck also addresses the production and reception of books such as *Over My Tracks*.<sup>76</sup> She considers the educative roles

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<sup>74</sup> Anne Brewster, *Reading Aboriginal Women's Autobiography* (Melbourne: Sydney UP in association with Oxford UP, 1996), pp 30-45; Brewster, 'Taking your Story to Town: Evelyn Crawford's *Over My Tracks* and the Ambivalence of Aboriginal Women's Autobiographical Narratives' in Wenche Ommundsen and Hazel Rowley, eds, *From A Distance: Australian Writers and Cultural Displacement* (Geelong: Deakin UP, 1996), pp 93-102; Brewster, *Literary Formations: Post-colonialism, nationalism, globalism* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1995), pp 39-77.

<sup>75</sup> On 'cultural amnesia', Brewster cites Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p 204.

<sup>76</sup> Amanda Nettelbeck, 'Presenting Aboriginal Women's Life Narratives', *New Literatures Review* 34 (1997), pp 43-56.

of Indigenous narratives and how various forms of collaboration affect these roles. The unidentified images of red earth and Indigenous artwork on the cover of *Over My Tracks*, suggests Nettelbeck, risk becoming ‘cues for some readers to what Stephen Muecke calls the “romantic apparatus” which white Australia often brings to its readings of Aboriginality’. She also points to the ways Crawford and her interviewer/editor Chris Walsh are represented on the cover and in the preface and introduction. On one hand, the ‘impression of enjoying a ready connection to the speaker ... may have the potential to ease the reader into a kind of amnesia about Australia’s continuing failures in the arena of Aboriginal rights’. On the other, publishing protocol has been allowed to ‘naturalise’ different ways of presenting Crawford’s and Walsh’s credentials – Walsh’s academic qualifications are listed after her name in her biographical note on page *i*, while Crawford’s ‘active role in education’ is mentioned informally on the back cover. Nettelbeck contrasts the editorial choice of a ‘single voice’ for *Over My Tracks* with the bivocal structure of Rita and Jackie Huggins’ *Auntie Rita*.<sup>77</sup> In *Auntie Rita*, Jackie’s voice is represented in italics, Rita’s in plain font, thus foregrounding the ‘mechanics of production and collaboration’. Finally, Nettelbeck asks what the rise in popularity of Indigenous writing reflects about ‘the nation’s changing attitudes to itself’. Citing Brewster, she suggests that ‘the project of problematising the metaphor of the nation’ is a ‘crucial process’ in a ‘political climate in which the Australian government seems bent on endorsing a culture of forgetting’.<sup>78</sup> Publishers enter this process when they make Indigenous stories available; Nettelbeck sees questioning how ‘conditions of publication affect the reception of those texts and their role in shaping Australia’s near cultural future’ as another vital part of the project.

Clearly, there are intersections between much previous work on Brett, Langford Ginibi and Crawford, especially around questions of memory and displacement. These intersections are primarily concerned with the construction of cultural narratives and identities. This thesis differs from the readings reviewed above in its juxtaposition of the three contrasting authors’ texts and in its attention to intersections of music, displacement and memory. Like Benjamin’s fan of memory, these intersections can be unfolded *ad infinitum*. Different strains emerge as Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are juxtaposed, not as fellow ‘multicultural’ authors, but as minor Australian memoirists in varying contexts of colonisation, displacement and decolonisation. As a cultural and historical reference point, music links their disparate memories, places and histories.

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<sup>77</sup> Rita and Jackie Huggins, *Auntie Rita* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994).

<sup>78</sup> Nettelbeck cites Brewster’s unpublished seminar paper ‘Towards a Genealogy of Aboriginal Literature’, July 1997.

## Chapter Outline

In chapter one I outline the theoretical framework of this thesis. I explain how my reading constitutes a process of listening to resonances and questions in and around the primary texts. Firstly, with reference to the work of Gillian Whitlock, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, I explore the concept of ‘minor memoir’. Through the ideas of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Michel Foucault and Iain Chambers, I discuss the minor memoir’s roles in the writing of history. Secondly, through the theories of Stephen Blum, Paul Carter, Jacques Derrida, Benjamin, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, I trace the intersections between memory, music, sound, silence, time and space that inform my readings. These intersections form the basis of my model for reading the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett.

From this point onwards, the thesis follows a form of conventional autobiographical structure, in that memories of ancestral legacies, childhood, adolescence and adulthood are examined consecutively. I also use historical contextualisation to analyse these memories, focussing on events of 1938, 1949, 1956 and 1988 that illustrate aspects of the Australia remembered by the three narrators. Chapter two traces the effects of ancestral voices in the authors’ memories, in the context of a nation whose authorities spent much of the twentieth century imagining a ‘White Australia’ with a predominantly British ancestry. I read such imagining as a dominant and major tone in a nationally composed soundtrack. This is illustrated by the immigration policies and practices of 1949. The legacies and lessons of the narrating subjects’ ancestors emerge in their texts as contrapuntal voices in the White Australian soundtrack, producing heterophonic effects.

Chapter three examines the authors’ memories of childhood, in the context of Australian government policies of protection and assimilation. These policies conditioned possibilities for children of non-British parents (with extreme effects on the lives of Indigenous children) in early to mid-twentieth-century Australia. Alongside the personal memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, I investigate two loud, ‘national’ manifestations of the protection and assimilation policies (among other things). These are the 1938 Australian sesquicentenary celebrations (and protest) and the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. I explore popular notions and cultural practices around care for children, including protective boundaries or ‘child-resistant fences’. As in chapter two, I use musical structures, especially aspects of counterpoint and bass drone, as metaphors for relations within the nation.

In chapter four I investigate the narrators’ respective memories of adolescence through aspects of the popular music connected with their lives. Popular music traditionally articulates the questions and desires of teenagers. It also serves as a cultural indicator, pointing to the positions of narrating subjects within cultural groups, and as a transmitter of some forms of historical

knowledge. In this chapter I examine the three narrators and their texts in more distinct ways than in chapters two and three. This reflects the increased individual agency of adolescence and the narrators' often solitary movements between different family, social and working environments. I read these movements and the decisions associated with them as transpositions of dissonant cultural practices. As well as the narrators' memories of dissonance in their immediate and national contexts, I trace their respective memories of adolescent romance and work.

Chapter five explores the narrating subjects' memories of adulthood and their roles as authors. In the context of the multiculturalism policy, I examine the 1988 celebration of Australia's bicentenary and the narratives produced around this event, alongside the narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. I look at the collaborative work each author undertakes as she produces her texts. Like (or, arguably, as) historians, the three memoirists take on educative roles in various intersecting communities. Broadly, Crawford's roles are mediation and teaching, Langford Ginibi's are activism and storytelling, and Brett's involve commemoration. Of course, these distinctions often blur and all the roles intersect. After exploring these roles, I trace the 'return' trips each narrator makes to ancestral sites. As in chapter four, I use popular music as a framework for these discussions.

In my conclusion, I draw the thesis' arguments together and bring its concerns back to my time of writing, the early twenty-first century. As many of today's colonised and displaced voices are barely audible, it is necessary to read and re-read narratives of the past, such as those of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, which have entered public spheres. Despite the many differences between past and present, such reading assists the imagination of contemporary and future displaced lives. The contemporary lives I consider briefly as I conclude the thesis are those of various Indigenous Australians and Hazara displaced people, whose situation bears some similarities to that of Jewish displaced people in mid-twentieth-century Australia, as well as significant differences. For example, in Melbourne in 2005, Hazara refugee Jwahir Baqiri sews in the house she shares with her extended family of nine. She remembers the war and persecution in Afghanistan that dominated most of her life, as well as three years of detention on Nauru. On her flight to Australia, Baqiri was given a small flag of the country that detained her and her children for those three years.<sup>79</sup> She has not yet had an opportunity to learn English. However, Baqiri and Rose Breyley, a Celtic-Australian mother in a neighbouring suburb, visit each other's home.<sup>80</sup> Breyley speaks only English and has spent most of her life in peaceful Melbourne suburbs. The two women share food and exchange needlework. Their children talk

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<sup>79</sup> See Catharine Munro, 'New life begins with heater and donations', *The Age*, 1 July 2004.

<sup>80</sup> Rose Breyley is my sister-in-law. As I wrote this thesis, I often found myself 'distracted' by politics. To minimise time spent on distractions, I sometimes told others about activities rather than taking them up myself. Hence, my parents ended up writing to Rahilah Baqiri, now nine years old, when she was detained on Nauru. When the Baqiris were finally released, they moved to a house not far from my brother and sister-in-law, who have maintained contact.

and play. As it did for the Bretts in the late 1940s, Australia may, in some ways, represent 'paradise' for the Baqiris.<sup>81</sup> In other ways, it is a place haunted by silent narratives. The Baqiris' 'paradise' is made more painful by Australian authorities' contradictory rejection and eventual offer of 'temporary protection'. Like Rose Brett fifty years ago, Baqiri now has a nine-year-old daughter. In decades to come, that daughter may have stories to tell, of displacement, waiting in a miserable camp and then going to school in Melbourne. As her Australian visa is temporary, it is hard to know where she might be as an adult and who might hear her Australian memories.

The thesis moves, then, from the effects of each narrator's ancestral past, through her stages of life, to her nation's future. The main problem with this 'auto/biographical' structure, here as in memoirs, is that the memories represented in the texts are not so neat and cannot be compartmentalised into distinct temporal categories. Temporally distant movements and memories overlap, meeting, separating and reconnecting in unpredictable places. However, in the context of Australian public memory, this structure enables conversation between the texts, as the conventionally structured publications themselves enable other conversations. The texts confront, for example, current Prime Minister John Howard's biographical prescriptions for 'the Australian people'. Howard describes his Australian tonal system as 'decent', with a 'relaxed and comfortable' tempo. His Australians are born into this system with British ancestral links; as children they receive care; youth is a time of free mobility, adulthood one of tidy security. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are born into different systems, where Howard's tonics do not bring resolution. Their texts point to dissonant ancestral voices in Howard's chorus of whiteness and to childhood 'care' that does not bear representation in 'national' soundtracks. Each text recalls an adolescence in which mobility is not Howard's proclaimed right of young Australians to dance on the world's beaches, but rather the mobility of the pushed and shoved labourer, moved on when her purpose is served. (In Brett's case, the mobile adolescent labourers are her parents, rather than herself. Their adolescence in Poland becomes a loud memory that interrupts Brett's sedentary Australian teenage years.) Finally, where Howard's scales would reach rest and resolution in a neat, fenced house, *Over My Tracks*, *After The War*, *Unintended Consequences* and *Don't Take Your Love To Town* represent adult lives that explore sites and sounds not imagined possible in Howard's system and not intended to be audible.

This thesis arises from the political context, from 2000 to 2005, in which it was researched and written. In the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, a subnarrative emerges of possibilities for encounter, communication and kindness, despite constrictive government policies and practices. The continuation of this subnarrative in Australia today is a further reason to attend to life narratives of the past. Today's unfolding minor memoirs are not yet composed in book form for the Australian public. However, emergent narratives that are both

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<sup>81</sup> See Brett, 'Until I Was Six', *After the War*, p 56, cited in chapter three.

political and personal abound. For example, in 2005, a few versions of the life narrative of psychiatric patient Cornelia Rau (who once lived something of the life John Howard imagined for 'his' fellow Australians) were made public. Rau spent ten months wrongly imprisoned as an illegal immigrant, in Queensland and in South Australia. Like the man who died on Palm Island in November 2004, she knew police custody in Queensland (although, as a white woman, she knew it differently). The Iranian man on the roof at Baxter in December 2004 knew Rau as 'Anna'. As he spoke about loss, Rau was there, on the ground, corroborating his words with her actions. However, her narrative also includes moments of hope, represented by the responses of two different communities to her. Rau's sister and brother-in-law tell how she survived: 'It has been the kindness of strangers that has allowed Cornelia to survive and ultimately be identified. First, the Cape York Aboriginal community took her in. In the past few months it has been asylum seekers in Baxter, who agitated on her behalf until the story appeared in the *Herald* last week, which led to her identification.'<sup>82</sup> A member of the incarcerated asylum seeker community in which Rau found (and lost) herself recounts the fellow detainees' response to her: 'We also not in good mentality but when we see worsen than us hard to bear. Still feel sympathy on them, which has remained with us yet'.<sup>83</sup>

Many other stories currently unfolding in and around Australia lurk throughout the thesis as it investigates twentieth-century narratives of displacement. Twenty-first-century Australia has already seen hundreds of displaced people die in their attempts to reach safety here.<sup>84</sup> Smaller numbers of people who had survived persecution elsewhere have died in Australia, after losing hope of gaining permanent security. Many more refugees and asylum seekers – thousands of children, adolescents and adults – continue to survive here, in the knowledge that national authorities did not welcome their entry into Australian space. Meanwhile, Indigenous Australians – children, adolescents and adults – have died in their attempts to flee forms of surveillance and in their loss of hope for forms of justice and security. Indigenous people remain the most materially disadvantaged group in Australia. However, in the 2004 federal election campaign, when the major political parties promised unprecedented amounts of money to others, neither party leader addressed Indigenous needs in his speeches. The hopes negotiated with former leaders Hawke and Keating, while Langford Ginibi, Brett and Crawford were

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<sup>82</sup> Chris Rau and John MacDonald, 'My sister lost her mind, and Australia lost its heart', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 2005.

<sup>83</sup> A 'Red One' Detainee, 'Note from a Red One Detainee', 23 January 2005, *Finding Anna*, <http://www.safecom.org.au/2005/02/finding-anna-when-immigration-gets-it.htm> (visited 10 February 2005).

<sup>84</sup> It is not known how many people have died en route to Australia, but the largest single tragedy was the sinking of 'SIEVX'. Marg Hutton explains: 'SIEVX is the acronym for "Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel X" (the X stands for "unknown"). It is the name by which we have come to know the dilapidated, criminally overloaded Indonesian fishing boat that sank en route to Australia's Christmas Island in October 2001 with the loss of more than 350 lives, most of them women and children.' *SIEVX.com*, <http://sievx.com> (visited 3 October 2004).

producing their texts, are no longer voiced in popular discourse.<sup>85</sup> Still, Indigenous people continue to survive and implement strategies to counter the persistent, far-reaching effects of government actions, colonial and 'postcolonial'. As their memories unfold, Australia's many generations of displaced people continue to construct and negotiate life narratives and counter-narratives. My reading of the twentieth-century narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett is a contribution to this process of renegotiation.

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<sup>85</sup> In 1988, the Barunga Statement, outlining national Indigenous political objectives (self-management, land rights, compensation for loss of land, respect for Indigenous identity and full civil, economic, social and cultural rights) was issued to the federal government. Then Prime Minister Hawke responded with an unfulfilled wish for a treaty by 1990. See *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, 'Barunga Statement', 2001, [http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig\\_prgm/treaty/barunga.htm](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/dig_prgm/treaty/barunga.htm) (visited 9 October 2004). In 1992, Indigenous leaders negotiated native title legislation with then Prime Minister Keating, who, in December, launched the International Year for the World's Indigenous People (1993) with this hope: 'We cannot imagine that the descendants of people whose genius and resilience maintained a culture here through 50 000 years or more ... and who then survived two centuries of dispossession and abuse, will be denied their place in the modern Australian nation.' See *Apology Australia*, 'Paul Keating's Redfern Speech', <http://apology.west.net.au/redfern.html> (visited 9 October 2004).



## Chapter One

### Memory and Music: Theoretical Framework

He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments. No image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside – that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance progresses from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier.

- Walter Benjamin<sup>1</sup>

When we dream of somewhere for a better life we ... have a proverb which says: 'The kettledrum sounds beautiful if it is heard from a distance'. I often ask myself 'Is Australia that beautiful distance we hoped to come and listen to the beautiful songs of our lives? Or is it the actual Kettledrum itself?'

- Mammad Aidani<sup>2</sup>

This chapter explains how my reading of the texts of Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett provides ways of renegotiating collective memories and knowledge. The first section of this chapter discusses memory, the concept of 'minor memoir' and the possible roles of minor memoirs in the writing of history. For this discussion I bring together studies of life narrative by Gillian Whitlock, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson with the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on minor literature. In response to criticism of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature, which suggests that the theory derives from a dubious romanticism, I then briefly consider the potential hazards of academic readings of minor texts. Here, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's work is helpful, as it links literary positioning to the roles of texts in the field of history. As memoirs, the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett have significant relations with 'major' history writing. Michel Foucault's analyses of counter-memory and subjugated knowledges, Iain Chambers' linking of 're-citing' and 're-siting' and Walter Benjamin's notion of seizing memories in moments of danger all enable further clarification of the relations between minor memoirs and major history.

The next section of this chapter explores theories around hearing, seeing, time and space, especially as they relate to memory. I outline the theories of Paul Carter, Jacques Derrida,

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds, tr. Rodney Livingstone et al (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 597.

<sup>2</sup> Mammad Aidani, 'We Need Reflection', *Artlink* 23.1 (2003), p 64.

Benjamin, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari that link the apprehension of time and space to memory and history, as well as to cultural and political relations. These theories inform my 'musical' approach to *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, which form part of Australian memory and history, thus affecting cultural and political relations. In the final section of this chapter I elaborate on the application of music to textual and historical analysis, discussing links between music and territory and between music and memory. I examine the roles of silence in music and in political relations. The chapter concludes with musical models for reading the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett.

### **Minor memoir**

Memory – along with its counterpart, forgetting – is the primary form of luggage carried by a displaced person. It is a fluctuating piece of luggage, which can neither be disposed of nor fixed in a satisfactory formation. Memory is necessarily unstable, as it is obliged to interact with its changing temporal and spatial environments and, thus, with various forms of counter-memory. Each memory articulation demands the forgetting of some contextual information, as well as interaction with other remembered material. Memories jostle each other for airspace, as one act of remembrance demands another of forgetting. However, forgetting is not erasure, just as silence is not absence of sound, but rather a resonating space, teeming with ghosts and the unspeakable. Remembered losses often take the form of restive silences, which cannot be shifted off one's chest by words. Such silences perform for the remembering subject, mutating with each moment's different resonances and with the questions that form endless folds on the fan of memory. These resonances and questions link personal memories to cultural entities and condition possibilities for cultural practice.

Cultural and political practice in Australia stem from the slippery foundations of collective memory. A range of modes may articulate collective memory, including languages and musical forms. Some of these modes meet and interact, while others remain largely inaccessible to those outside their restricted sites of practice. The discrete nature of some cultural modes undermines attempts to address Australian cultural memory and practice *en bloc*. However, the nation is sometimes represented as an entity that remembers in unison. For example, political speeches on Anzac Day and Australia Day make claims about such things as 'the mind and the soul of every Australian' (in which the Treasurer Peter Costello said Anzac Cove, in Turkey, would 'live forever').<sup>3</sup> As this notion of national unity recurs in the loud discourses of superculture, it confronts other modes of remembrance on Australian sites. These other modes are as diverse and dynamic as the countless histories that have been heard and recorded in Australian

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<sup>3</sup> Transcript, *The Hon Peter Costello MP, Treasurer*, 'Dawn Service, Anzac Cove, Gallipoli Peninsula, Turkey, 25 April 2003', <http://www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/speeches/2003/003.asp> (visited 3 October 2004).

memories. *Over My Tracks, Don't Take Your Love To Town, After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* are just four texts that have been heard at various volumes in Australia and elsewhere. As the texts themselves constitute acts of remembrance, so those who read them rearrange their own entangled memories as they negotiate knowledge of relevant sites. The Australian nation and its history form one such complex site for readers of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett.

In her chapter 'From Biography to Autobiography', Gillian Whitlock links the negotiation of national histories to the reading and writing of life narrative.<sup>4</sup> Observing that Australia's past is 'not settled', Whitlock takes a textual rather than 'chronological or thematic' approach to her examination of auto/biographical works:

Because the forms of literary biography and autobiography are interdependent and interactive, this writing can be imagined as a spectrum, a linkage of separate yet related forms, beginning at one end with the "grand portraits", the biographical studies of Australian writers and artists, where biographer and subject remain discrete; moving across to those texts which exploit the interdependencies of writing about self and other, where the contours of biography and autobiography come together; and then concluding with texts which are more traditionally autobiographical, where the confessional, truth-telling "I" anchors the text.<sup>5</sup>

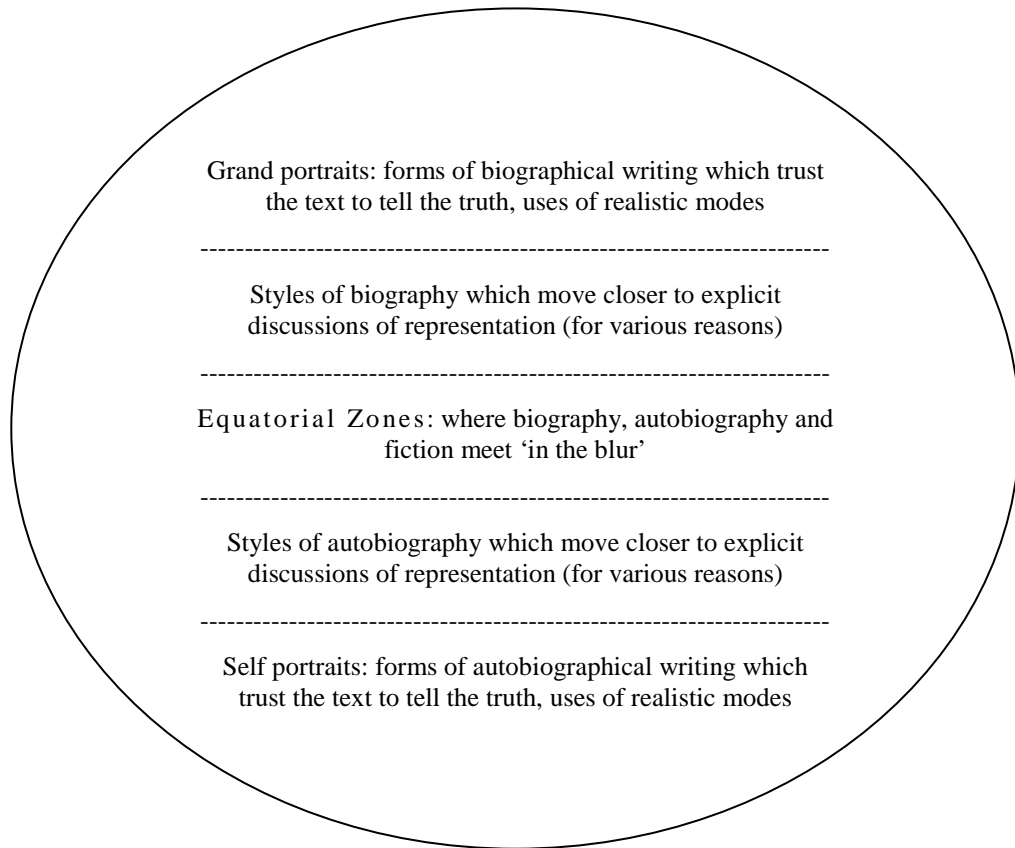
Within the terms of this spectrum, Whitlock investigates literature produced primarily and explicitly through various uses of memory, including oral history, testimony, autobiography and memoir. Her 'map', modelled on the earth's climatic regions, locates a range of positions in the representation and construction of literary and historical Australian lives.<sup>6</sup> Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, despite their different sites, histories and modes, all move around Whitlock's 'tropical' ('Capricornian') zone of 'styles of autobiography', with brief excursions into the equatorial zones and into self-portraiture. In the 'tropical' zone, the authors often use realistic modes of narration, but each reflects on the process of textual representation, not always trusting the text to tell the 'truth'. This wariness reflects the authors' constricted positions in public representations of Australian lives. By contrast, 'major' self-portraits follow clear, seemingly less paradoxical lines, assuming straightforward, stable settings that do not require extensive questioning or analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> Gillian Whitlock, 'From Biography to Autobiography' in Elizabeth Webby, ed, *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2000), pp 232-57.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p 233.

<sup>6</sup> The 'map', which I reproduce on page 34, is Whitlock's schematic representation of her chapter, 'From Biography to Autobiography', as presented at an 'Autobiography and Fiction' workshop, Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (RIHSS), University of Sydney, 9 March 2001.



In the other direction, the equatorial zones host narrators who dwell on problems of process and representation, who play and theorise as multiple subjects tell their stories. (Whitlock's examples of 'equatorial' writing are Brian Matthews' *Louisa* (1987), Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* (1990) and Rita and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (1994).)<sup>7</sup> However, while 'equatorial' narrators question and analyse their historical and cultural backdrops, the self-conscious fluidity of their subject positions is largely enabled by elements of spacious stability. These narrators typically reject aspects of the stability they have inherited, while making effective use of the space it grants them. Here they differ from 'tropical' narrators such as Crawford, Langford Ginibi and, if not Brett herself, the voices of Brett's parents as they are reconstructed in Brett's texts. For life narrators such as these, who have not sought displacement as the enabling mobility of 'deterritorialisation', but have had it imposed upon them, different forms of stability and space become desirable and useful. The 'equatorial' reflections of displaced Indigenous and refugee subjects may play and theorise, but they emanate from cramped, unstable spaces. This difference is not only spatial, but also one of tempo. For example, the instabilities remembered by colonised and displaced narrators are often suddenly and violently generated, throwing subjects from one site to another. The nonmetric rhythms of such displacements complicate narrative composition. These complications are different from those generated by the *andante* tempo of the gradually shifting and blurring positions depicted in much 'equatorial' writing.

<sup>7</sup> Whitlock, 'From Biography to Autobiography', p 242.

Such differences in the tempo of remembered events affect the tones adopted and subject positions taken in memory texts. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and the early Brett tell minor histories of sudden dislocations, placing their textual selves between Whitlock's self-portraiture zone, which takes major history as read, and the equatorial zones, where self-conscious play also stems from a base of relative stability, as histories here intertwine in leisurely twists and turns.

Whitlock's 'Antarctic' zone of self-portraiture corresponds with the nineteenth-century European modernist forms, emphasising the individual's progress, which Smith and Watson associate with the term 'autobiography'. Smith and Watson understand autobiography as 'a particular practice of life narrative that emerged in the Enlightenment and has become canonical in the West', while life narrative 'includes many kinds of self-referential writing'.<sup>8</sup> With their term 'life narrative', Smith and Watson move away from the notion of a singular voice progressing along a linear, clearly identifiable path, while retaining the suggestion of composition in 'narrative'. In the last decades of the twentieth century, life writers and theorists became increasingly attentive to the diversity of textual possibilities in life narrative, especially to activity within Whitlock's equatorial zones, where autonomous selves melt away. 'Memoir' defines one set of possibilities, understood by Smith and Watson as a 'mode of life narrative that historically situates the subject in a social environment, as either observer or participant; the memoir directs attention more toward the lives and actions of others than to the narrator'.<sup>9</sup> This is usually the case in the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, largely due to their 'minor' positions in Australian cultural practice. The term 'memoir' makes the relationship between text and memory explicit, identifying the joint site of text and memory as that of the author's past, present and future, of multiple selves and lives and intersecting times, places and narratives. The memoir is a gathering of memories of situations and events, rather than an account of things the author did.

Smith and Watson's reading of life narratives enables a concentration on the many contextual factors that condition autobiographical acts within texts composed by remembering subjects. These include:

1. Coaxers/occasions for storytelling
2. Sites of narration
3. Producers of the story, autobiographical "I"s
4. The Others of autobiographical "I"s, relationality
5. Addressees

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<sup>8</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001), p 3.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p 198.

6. Structuring modes of self-inquiry
7. Patterns of emplotment
8. Media
9. Consumers/audiences <sup>10</sup>

When applied to a reading of *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, each item on this list points to the relatively minor positions represented by Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett in their texts. Coaxers include both the ignorance and interest of parts of 'major' Australia. Sites of storytelling include moments between narrators' family crises, as well as a waterhole and crowded inner-city houses. These and other sites bear traces of such government policies as 'White Australia', 'protection', 'assimilation' and 'multiculturalism'. Changing major discourses and possibilities for remembering minor sites and times modulate the storytellers' subjectivities. The subjects' minor Indigenous or 'displaced person' identities condition the narrators' relations with others. The texts' addressees may be divided into major and minor categories. Modes of self-inquiry draw on 'minor' ancestral processes, counterpoint and conversation, as well as modes prescribed by the 'major' other, which include various uses of the English language and roles assigned by the narrators' positions as employees. Patterns of emplotment in all four texts are both temporally and spatially based, serving to map the subjects' movements within and around those of their respective minor communities. The media of maps and photographs in *Over My Tracks* illustrate not only Crawford's dislocations, but also relations between minor and major subjectivities. Similarly, David Rankin's illustrations in Brett's texts point not only to the intersubjectivities of his wife's poems, but also constitute his own form of life narrative, in collaboration with Brett's. Finally, the 'major' Australian consumers of the texts – predominantly white Australians, many born into citizenship, the English language and a relatively predictable future – demonstrate most clearly the minor positions these texts of displacement represent.

The theory of 'minor literature', proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, with Franz Kafka as their prime example, enables more precise positioning of the fractured narratives and seized memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. The three authors write (or speak, in Crawford's case) in English, a 'major' language, from minority positions, thus fulfilling Deleuze and Guattari's general definition of minor literature as 'that which a minority constructs within a major language.'<sup>11</sup> English as learnt in Australia is, arguably, 'affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization', the first characteristic of Deleuze and Guattari's minor

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<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p 50.

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, tr. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), p 16.

literature, as the language has been 're-sited' from its European territories.<sup>12</sup> This coefficient, however, affects the language of the three authors in different ways and to varying extents. Each author remembers a childhood with parents whose first language was not English. All three speak English with accents acknowledged as Australian, but the distance between each author's language use and that of her superculture varies. Each subject moves around cultural boundaries, sometimes approaching supercultural positions, and employs a range of performative and discursive strategies.

Deleuze and Guattari's second characteristic of minor literatures is:

that everything in them is political. In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background; this is so much the case that none of these Oedipal intrigues are specifically indispensable or absolutely necessary but all become as one in a large space. Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics.<sup>13</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari represent the other characteristics, deterritorialisation of language and the collective assemblage of enunciation, as continua rather than dualisms. For example, the degree to which English is deterritorialised may depend on such factors as how long and for what purposes English has been used in particular cultural contexts. Similarly, the dynamics of social and cultural positioning condition the collective nature of literary enunciation. Political relations are also a matter of dynamic degree, as they constantly shift. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett occupy quite different, though sometimes overlapping, mobile spaces on the political continuum. However, their texts reflect Deleuze and Guattari's general argument that the political nature of textual content is amplified in correlation with the extent to which the literature is minor and therefore operating in a cramped space.

With reference to Kafka's 'Letter to the Father', Deleuze and Guattari describe power relations in terms of infinite linked triangles with perpetually proliferating points and deforming sides: 'one discovers behind the familial triangle (father-mother-child) other infinitely more active triangles from which the family itself borrows its own power, its own drive to propagate submission, to lower the head and make heads lower.'<sup>14</sup> The political nature of minor literature is conditioned by the exposure of a subject occupying minor cultural roles to the effects of multiple triangles. These effects may be partially escaped or differently experienced by subjects in spacious 'major' positions, as these subjects proliferate around 'more active triangles'. The

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.* (The notion of 're-siting' recurs in postcolonial studies. See, for example, Whitlock and Helen Tiffin, eds, *Re-siting Queen's English: Text and Tradition in Post-Colonial Literatures: Essays presented to John Pengwern Matthews* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1992).)

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p 17.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p 11.

minor subject is rarely in a position to take solitary shelter in a roomy psychological cocoon, ignoring the triangles of ‘majority’ that generate her cocoon (though she might attempt this, as Brett’s speaking subject sometimes does); she is obliged to share her cramped space with others in similar positions. Deleuze and Guattari continue: ‘The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles – commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical – that determine its values.’<sup>15</sup> The individual story in minor literature points to linked political stories, as subjects’ narratives are situated in spaces politicised by their community links, their instabilities and their differences from sites of major narrative. Similarly, folk music, a minor form, points to political conditions even when its subject is a ‘major’ one, such as love, by referring to contextual details.<sup>16</sup> Alongside the personal narratives in minor texts, instances of music constitute links between familial and other triangles (or polygons). In the songs, dances, ghostly choirs and silences of the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi, triangles of commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical and other determining bodies jingle and jangle away, as do the narratives linked to those triangles. Such narratives include those told by the linked triangles of colonisation, government, media and capitalism. Resistance to aspects of those narratives vibrates within the ‘individual concern’ of each of the texts.

The political, cramped space identified by Deleuze and Guattari is, among other things, that space between history and literature, Whitlock’s equatorial zones. It emerges as a fluid space, capable of swelling and modulating its volume. It is a space in which dislocations, deterritorialisations and reterritorialisations have multiple and various effects on modes of remembrance. However, the reading of this space, especially by those outside the marginal or minor zones (that is, those inside, on centre stage, playing the melody, such as leaders of academic discourses), presents other potential problems. Leela Gandhi has criticised Deleuze and Guattari’s representation of minor literature as indicative of a ‘crippling romantic attachment to authentic and immutable minor-ness’.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the futility of such a ‘romantic attachment’ is articulated, often ironically, in minor texts like those by Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. As an academic reading of texts identified as minor, this thesis enters a space where forms of ‘minor-ness’ risk being romanticised. With reference to the work of Foucault, Spivak has warned of the dangers of ‘the first-world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves’.<sup>18</sup> As she considers academic

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p 17.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Ewan McColl’s 1946 song ‘Dirty Old Town’ begins: ‘I met my love by the gasworks croft,/ Dreamed and dreamed by the old canal;/ I kissed my girl by the factory wall’.

<sup>17</sup> Leela Gandhi, ‘Review of Ken Gelder and Jane M Jacobs, *Uncanny Australia: Sacredness and Identity in a Postcolonial Nation* (Melbourne UP, 1998)’, *Meanjin* 57.4 (1998), p 834.

<sup>18</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ in C Nelson and L Grossberg, eds, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988), p 292.



complicity with 'the imperialist project', Spivak suggests that academic readings of identified minor spaces risk dubious modes of representation.<sup>19</sup>

The joint space of memory and music is one where the threat of limiting and potentially crippling romantic attachments may be expected to hover, as this space seems a likely home for nostalgia for the authentic. However, music also has the potential to take the reader to traces and places where the infinite mutability of 'minor-ness' is evident. Music evokes otherwise forgotten links, which often represent complex entanglements between minor-ness and major players. For example, the title of Langford Ginibi's text is drawn from a country and western song, 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love to Town', the lyrics of which Langford Ginibi applies to her personal history.<sup>20</sup> However, in the context of the song's composition, the singing subject is a white male US-Vietnam War veteran in the United States of America, lamenting effects of his national history on personal events. This figure's subjectivities, while very different from Langford Ginibi's, also shift between minor and major positions, as his memory engages with his Vietnamese victims, his government, his disabilities and 'Ruby'. The trace structures of music thus emerge as a useful site to investigate forgotten and seemingly irrelevant connections, and to locate mutations in minor memories and encounters between minor and major, including those involving the academic subject.<sup>21</sup>

Walter Benjamin, himself a site of encounters between major and minor (German and Jewish, among many other things), also articulates a wariness of romanticism and identifies strategies against its limiting effects. He represents the work of the Parisian photographer Eugène Atget (1857-1927) as enabling a shift from the romanticism of oft-repeated grand names and centrally displayed portraits to the 'moodless' illumination of relations between subjects (themselves usually absent from Atget's images) and their environments. This, writes Benjamin, 'sets the scene for a salutary estrangement between man and his surroundings' and 'gives free play to the politically educated eye, under whose gaze all intimacies are sacrificed to the illumination of detail'.<sup>22</sup> Benjamin explains Atget's method: 'He looked for what was unremarked, forgotten, cast adrift. And thus such pictures, too, work against the exotic, romantically sonorous names of the cities; they suck the aura out of reality like water from a sinking ship.—What is aura, actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be.'<sup>23</sup> Benjamin contrasts Atget's images of minor details in public

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<sup>19</sup> See Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), pp 197-221.

<sup>20</sup> Mel Tillis, 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town', most famously performed by Kenny Rogers (EMI, 1969).

<sup>21</sup> Spivak explains her use of the 'Derridian' term 'trace structure': 'In our effort to define things, we look for origins. Every origin that we seem to locate refers us back to something anterior and contains the possibility of something posterior. There is, in other words, a trace of something else in seemingly self-contained origins. This, for the purposes of my argument, "is" the trace-structure.' Spivak, 'Sex and History in *The Prelude* (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen', *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, p 46.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, p 519.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p 518.

places, images evocative of vacated scene-of-crime pictures held by police or examined by investigators, with the self-indulgence of commercial portraiture. The aura of a commercial portrait, presenting one central figure, blocks the political potential of attention to the details that would become visible to the viewer if the subject of the portrait were re/moved. In contrast, the subjects of minor memoir are pushed from one crime scene to another by political conditions. This movement allows little time and space for aura to swell around the subject and enables the reader to consider the details of crime scenes visited and possible links between them.

However, memoir may be read as a form of self-portraiture and does risk self-indulgence and aura-construction by writer and reader. Minor memoir has the added appeal to romantic inclinations of the minor-ness that has, in recent decades, become popular as a subject of some commercial representation, whether in the form of niche market advertising or of academic discourse. Readers of minor memoirs may use strategies like Atget's to divert attention temporarily from the narrating subject and her portrait. This attention may then be turned to the moments the narrator wrests from their respective auras and records in fragmented form, through, for example, musical details. Like stills from a film or of a crime scene, such details point to relations that are not explicit, but must be reconstructed. Bertolt Brecht suggests that: 'less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the A.E.G. tells us next to nothing about these institutions ... The reification of human relations – the factory, say – means that they are no longer explicit. So something must in fact be *built up*, something artificial, posed.'<sup>24</sup> Such reconstruction work acknowledges the charms, commercial and otherwise, of notions of authenticity and immutability, while seeking out the greater charms of political possibility or mutability that are hindered by romantic attachments.

Spivak addresses concerns around romanticised readings of subaltern texts at length in her 1980s and 1990s work. For her, there is no cohesive solution to the problems of reading and representation. However, she suggests that ignoring the subaltern represents a continuation of imperialist projects. Spivak's fragmentary solutions involve uncomfortable encounters – between writers, readers and texts, major, minor and transmuting, and within subjects who take on the roles of writer, reader and text. She calls for critical interruption, productive crisis and, later, for the 'instructive strength' of embrace.<sup>25</sup> An embrace is necessarily asymmetrical, but represents a possibility for renewed conversation and change. Unlike a romantic attachment, an

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<sup>24</sup> Bertolt Brecht, quoted in Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p 526.

<sup>25</sup> Spivak, 'Translator's Preface and Afterword to Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps*' in Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, eds, *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), p 280. See also Spivak, 'A Literary Representation of The Subaltern: A Woman's Text From the Third World', *In Other Worlds*, pp 241-68, and Spivak, 'Practical Politics of The Open End', *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp 95-112.

embrace is dynamic and enables mutual movement. In an embrace subjects have the possibility, though it often remains remote, of moving between minor and major positions. My approach in this thesis is to attempt embraces where possible, particularly of narrative traces. For assistance with the task of embracing traces, I return to Benjamin.

While Deleuze and Guattari focus on deterritorialisation of subjects that maintain minor-ness, Benjamin sees the 'unremarked, forgotten, cast adrift' on both major and minor sites, in major and minor subjects and as both mobile and static. Like Spivak, Benjamin draws attention to readers', listeners' or viewers' perceptions of space and time and to their choices of which fragments to embrace. Rather than the action of the 'immutable' author, he notes the changing nature of objects in space and time and of their relations with their surroundings. Benjamin too includes a warning: pictures of the 'cast adrift' suck aura out 'like water from a sinking ship'.<sup>26</sup> Remembrance and reconstruction are unfinishable tasks on the 'sinking ship' of subjectivity: aura, like water, keeps seeping back through the cracks. For example, traces of Atget's photographic methods, especially his choices of details of such minor contemporary city scenes as 'a long row of boot lasts ... or the tables after people have finished eating and left', are evident in twenty-first-century commercial photography, especially that of postcards.<sup>27</sup> Australian postcards featuring close-ups of empty beer bottles on sand, for example, are not devoid of mood and do not necessarily serve to destroy aura. Rather, new forms of mood and aura have been constructed with the growth of the card industry, as they have been in other industries, including those related to academic and minor discourses. Attention to the ways mood and affect change in different contexts enhances possibilities for political change and dynamic encounters. As Benjamin writes: 'In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us.'<sup>28</sup> The 'thing', of course, remains mutable and slippery, even in the possession of 'us' readers and listeners who embrace the trace as we remember and reconstruct.

## History

Accompanied by the risks of romantic attachments and seeping auras, the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett hold muted but significant positions in the field of history. Whitlock has drawn attention to the increasing appearance in recent years of memoirs by Australian historians, such as Peter Read and Inga Clendinnen, exploring personal subjectivities in contexts of Australian historical debate. Specifically, Whitlock claims that 'black testimony is triggering

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', p 518.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p 519.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, tr. Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 1999), p 447.

white memoir'.<sup>29</sup> The form of testimony apparently most effectively triggering historians' memoirs is that represented in reports such as those from the Stolen Generations and Deaths in Custody inquiries. These reports are compiled, circulated and taken seriously by 'authorities', inviting the responsible historian to take account. The historians' responses to Indigenous testimony here are mediated, but they acknowledge the significance of testimony – and of memoir – to an understanding of history. However, theoretical work around memoir remains minimal in the field of history and disproportionately plentiful in literary studies. While historians' own memoirs serve to place historian selves, the memoirs of others have usually been a means of substantiating the more 'serious' findings of research less dependent on 'subjective' memory. As Langford Ginibi puts it:

I'm pleased *Don't Take Your Love to Town* has been on the NSW Higher School Certificate reading list ... But I was very distressed about the fact that my life story is only being used in the *English* reading list. In my way of thinking, it is a historical text, yet it's not being used as one. I guess one must have a PhD or MA in history before it's canonised as a historical book. ... Our texts are all historical, but written from our own Koori perspectives.<sup>30</sup>

Despite decades of revision of intersubjectivities in the writing of history, memoir has failed to receive significant theoretical attention from historians. Oral history is increasingly acknowledged as a useful source of information and has received some attention, but this is often in the context of editing and transcription practices and, again, where the information supports the aims of the historian's written documentation. Until recently, oral history recordings were seldom presented to listeners as major texts. When historical theorists looked outside the academy for manifestations of history-making, they typically saw a great deal of screen-based activity – cinematic, televisual and computerised representations, and perhaps some museums and monuments.<sup>31</sup> Although memoir has many of the characteristics of history-making recognised in other non-academic forms, it has generally not been read as history if it lacks the intervention of a professional historian. The task of theorising memoir has thus largely been left in the field of literary studies.

Spivak's concerns with the nature of historical subjects and with spaces for subaltern voices do not constitute a theory of memory-based writing, but they do address the place of minor memoir in the writing of history. Spivak represents the subaltern as 'the absolute limit of the place

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<sup>29</sup> Whitlock, 'Strategic Remembering: Fabricating Local Subjects' in Rosamund Dalziell, ed, *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), p 163.

<sup>30</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi and Penny van Toorn, 'Who's in Whose Canon?: Transforming Aboriginal Writers into Big Guns', *Southerly* 57.3 (1997), p 132.

<sup>31</sup> See *History and Theory* 36.4 (1997). This issue, entitled 'Producing the Past: Making Histories Inside and Outside the Academy', examines museums, films, television and other visual arts as examples of histories outside the academy.

where history is narrativized into logic'.<sup>32</sup> *Over My Tracks, After The War, Unintended Consequences* and *Don't Take Your Love To Town* are, to varying extents, movements from that limit into a precarious site that is sometimes dominated by Western intellectual discourse. Spivak asks, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'.<sup>33</sup> As part of the problem of the subaltern's ability to speak, she raises questions about the Western intellectual's ability to hear and the nature of any impairment to that hearing. Communication between these sites – subaltern and academic – emerges as a barely practicable version of what Paul Carter has called 'the sound in between': the modulations of meaning ensuing from such encounters as 'first contact', migration and improvised theatre.<sup>34</sup> This unstable discourse is fraught and open to a range of effects.

Foucault, whose roles and claims in such discourse are questioned by Spivak, represents historical discourse as that between memory and counter-memory. He presents examples of memoir that defy dominant discourse and its modes of remembrance and thus constitute counter-memory. These memoirs include *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother... A Case of Parricide in the Nineteenth Century* and *Herculine Barbin, Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth Century French Hermaphrodite*. As the titles' respective references to *Parricide* and *Hermaphrodite* suggest, counter-memory in these texts, while remaining entangled with the discourse of dominant memory, enables Foucault to present analyses of specific minor historic fields of discursive relations. Conclusions are thus perhaps more easily reached in these studies than in an examination of the twentieth-century Australian texts of Brett, Crawford and Langford Ginibi. However, the notion of counter-memory is useful here too, as all three confront the limiting effects of supercultural practice and its discursive representations of 'national' memory. Some of their memories constitute what Foucault calls 'subjugated knowledges'. Foucault explains:

By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, ... the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation. ... those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised...

On the other hand, ... a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. ... a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Spivak, 'Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography', p 207.

<sup>33</sup> Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p 286.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Carter, *The Sound In Between: Voice, Space, Performance* (Sydney: UNSW Press and New Endeavour Press, 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1980), pp 81-82.

Knowledges contained in memories articulated in *Over My Tracks, After The War, Unintended Consequences* and *Don't Take Your Love To Town* are or have been subjugated in both these senses. They are historical – the ‘contents’ of scholarly research and thus of ‘high-ranking’ discourse, as well as being ‘local’ and often ‘disqualified’ – they are ‘insufficiently elaborated’ according to the conditions of dominant discursive practice, as its means of comprehension and transmission are limited by its central position.

In the most ‘qualified’ discourses, history is usually told in the context of national identity. Nations are assigned human attributes, and often such superhuman powers as the ability to act with undivided purpose. However, recent decades have seen increasing interrogation of historians’ methods and results. Translation of the experiences of others, and indeed of oneself, into a definitive history emerges as perhaps least possible with the ‘qualified’ discourses Foucault refers to as having high levels of ‘cognition or scientificity’. As Iain Chambers suggests:

it is no longer possible to seek refuge, what used to be called critical distance, in the supposedly neutral languages of science and knowledge: those discourses that previously nominated alterity and then reduced it to the tyranny of the logic of the same in the name of civilisation, culture and progress. We are learning to substitute the violence of that translation with the disturbing recognition that translation – mine of an other, an other’s of me – is never a transparent activity but always involves a process of re-citing, hence cultural and historical re-siting, and is therefore a travesty, a betrayal, of any ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ intention.<sup>36</sup>

For those who have had nominations of alterity thrust upon them and have known little dominant historical discourse other than the ‘travesty’ of those who, in the name of civilisation, claim knowledge, this is not a new recognition. Neither does it render all ‘re-citing’ and ‘re-siting’ useless or meaningless. Rather, in rejecting, or in some cases, re-citing and re-siting previous nominations of alterity, it invites a diversification of discursive practice, as the limits of existing discourse become clear. Such diversification becomes a form of counter-memory.

Benjamin writes: ‘The trick by which this world of things is mastered ... consists in the substitution of a political for a historical view of the past.’<sup>37</sup> Elsewhere, Benjamin identifies the task of articulating the past historically as to ‘seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger ... of becoming a tool of the ruling classes’.<sup>38</sup> This observation directs the reader’s attention to the historical moments in which Langford Ginibi, Crawford and Brett seize hold of memories in the form of the process of publication. Perhaps these memories are most at

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<sup>36</sup> Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti, eds, *The Post-Colonial Question. Common Skies Divided Horizons* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p 49.

<sup>37</sup> Benjamin, ‘Surrealism’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, p 210.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana Press, 1992), p 247.

risk when supercultures begin to address and use them, as occurred in late 1980s and early 1990s Australia. An analysis of practices and power relations evident in the patterns of musical citation, reference and imagery in the texts of Langford Ginibi, Crawford and Brett throws light on the nature of late twentieth-century Australian conversations. The minor discourse of which the texts form a part emerges as a seizing hold of memories at a moment of danger. The nature of twenty-first-century discourse, in which the voices of Langford Ginibi and Brett are still heard in different ways, is linked to the encounters and disjunctions of the late 1980s and early 1990s. My analysis of modes of remembering in texts of that period thus provides clues to a genealogy of current problems.

### Seeing and Hearing

To frame the ‘aural’ approach of this thesis, it is useful to consider theories around hearing and seeing and the related concepts of time and space. Sight and hearing are the senses most often invited to negotiate formal or public remembrance. However, embodied remembrance takes many forms, such as the results of overeating Brett recalls and Esther Faye reads as the ‘*memory of the Holocaust ... witnessed in Brett’s body*’. Faye suggests that Brett’s writing repeats the mother-daughter jouissance/guilt connections ‘witnessed’ in her earlier food theft and storytelling (and their effects): ‘As then, telling stories now remains the way that she can make us enjoy/suffer the Holocaust, violently disrupting our pleasure in her writing with an unbearable enjoyment’.<sup>39</sup> In many different ways, Langford Ginibi’s and Crawford’s bodies also bear witness to the memory of colonisation. Publication of their books enables a partial transferral of embodied remembrance into the textual memories negotiated with the reader. There are countless aspects of this remembrance for the reader to trace.

Any memory depends on sensory apprehension of repetitions and variations occurring over time, but Western cultural practice has traditionally privileged visual memory over that of the other senses. In his ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, Benjamin represents history (a privileged form of remembrance) as ‘image[s] of the past’.<sup>40</sup> For other forms of memory, in particular the *déjà vu* effect, he claims a more appropriate metaphor would come ‘from the realm of acoustics’.<sup>41</sup> The more personal and immediate *déjà vu* effect represents an unorchestrated and less explicable way of remembering. As Benjamin suggests, it ‘is a word, a tapping, or a rustling that is endowed with the magic power to transport us into the cool tomb of long ago, from the vault of which the present seems to return only as an echo’.<sup>42</sup> The psychoanalytic notions of the pre-visual ‘sonorous envelope’ and ‘acoustic mirror’ also suggest that sound as embodied memory operates prior to vision and perhaps has a greater range as a

<sup>39</sup> Esther Faye, ‘Impossible memories: Lily Brett as essayist’, *Meridian* 17.1 (1998), p 71.

<sup>40</sup> Benjamin, ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’, *Illuminations*, p 247.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin, ‘A Berlin Chronicle’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, p 634.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

memory tool.<sup>43</sup> Images and acoustics are not always so easily separated and defined, as Jacques Derrida, among others, has pointed out, but the notions are useful tools with which to open up textual margins.<sup>44</sup> In this thesis, the minor memoirs of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are read as conversations and confrontations with historical imagery. As they confront history, the texts draw from the momentary but recurrent echoes that enable the process of recall. These aural elements, whose effects are traceable in texts and in surrounding discourses, enable access to different threads of memory from those more frequently traced with such visually oriented reading models as cartography and the gaze.

Cultural formations, whether they use language, human movement, colour, rhythm and/or scent, are embodied remembrance, as they depend on acts of repetition and variation. The bodies formed include both aural and visual elements, however asymmetrically these might be represented. On a small scale, a visual artwork interacts with its auditory environment, just as a piece of music is accompanied by visual material, even if only in the closed eye of the listener. The balance of aural and visual elements in major cultural formations in Australia shifted during the twentieth century, the period remembered in the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi. Shifts in this balance often related to technological change. For example, the use of radio, telephone and recorded music increased during the first half of the century, while television and then computer use began to dominate communications in the second half. The aural and the visual have converged in some cultural formations and diverged in various ways in others. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, cultural mediation had become increasingly visual. While auditory mediation also grew denser – ‘silent’ moments became scarce as repetition became more frequent than variation – the visual began to dominate. An example of this is the transition from the film clip – visual material filmed as background to a piece of popular music – to the music video, in which music often takes a secondary role to imagery. Because of this dominant emphasis on and attention to the visual, the aural realm, inasmuch as it can be defined, is now a site likely to hold overlooked clues to patterns of memory and practice.

The potential of aural knowledge is recognised in the emerging field of sound studies. Jonathan Sterne notes that there ‘is a vast literature on the history and philosophy of sound; yet it remains conceptually fragmented’.<sup>45</sup> Karin Bijsterveld and Trevor Pinch describe the field’s new direction as the study of ‘the material production and consumption of music, sound, noise, and silence, and how these have changed throughout history and within different societies, but ...

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<sup>43</sup> For a musical analysis using the concepts of ‘sonorous envelope’ and ‘acoustic mirror’, see David Schwarz, ‘Listening Subjects: Semiotics, Psychoanalysis, and the Music of John Adams and Steve Reich’ in Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian and Lawrence Siegel, eds, *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinaryity, Culture* (Charlottesville and London: UP of Virginia, 1997) pp 275-98. See also Gilbert J Rose, *Between Couch and Piano: Psychoanalysis, Music, Art and Neuroscience* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2004).

<sup>44</sup> See Jacques Derrida’s discussions of phonologism and logocentrism in his *Of Grammatology*, tr. Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976).

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproductions* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), p 4.



from a much broader perspective than standard disciplines such as ethnomusicology, history of music, and sociology of music'.<sup>46</sup> Music in any form, including silence and noise, provides versatile models for tracing cultural patterns of sound and silence. While music might appear to exist primarily in time rather than space, it moves, of course, in both realms, as sound travels in the form of longitudinal waves and is audible within discrete spaces. Music is not solely linear or vertical, unlike some temporal theoretical models associated with notions of progress and development. The complex, multidirectional structures of music enable diverse aural possibilities. Music is seldom constrained, for example, by the demands of lexical intelligibility that are placed on most uses of language.

Terms describing configurations of melodic and rhythmic structure, such as polyphony, heterophony, homophony and monophony, may be effectively applied to written texts to identify different modes of narration. However, these notions emerge from and reach their fullest significance in music itself, where sonic variations and combinations are audible and innumerable. As musical sounds are produced, with various tonal and rhythmic relations, they constitute indicators of cultural knowledge and derivative links. Borrowing from Perry Miller, Stephen Blum understands any culture as 'a congeries of inner tensions'.<sup>47</sup> Blum goes on to suggest that musical practice can illuminate the elements of such a congeries:

Inasmuch as every musician is 'an agent who participates in more than one social group' (Blum 1975:208-9) and is thus 'strangely composite' (Turino 1990:401, citing Gramsci), musical performance enables participants to discover and renew the connections between multiple aspects of experience. The identities of musicians are far more complex, and more flexible, than one might suppose from most non-musical representations of 'ethnicity', 'nation', 'race' and 'culture'.<sup>48</sup>

The diverse sounds reproduced by musicians, deriving from sites across various temporal and spatial distances, demonstrate this complexity and flexibility of identity with more immediacy and brevity than anthropological discourse, for example, may hope to achieve.

Music is a means of activating memory, with its links to many times and places, its transportability and repeatability, its shared ownership and capacity for improvisation and extremes of articulation. Like memory, music may seek to transform perceived chaos into order or perceived order into chaos. It may reach such intensity of pitch and volume that it renders all else inaudible, or it may be constituted by long 'silences', enabling the inclusion of

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<sup>46</sup> Karin Bijsterveld and Trevor Pinch, 'Sound Matters: New Technologies and Music', Introduction to *Social Studies of Science* 34 (2004), p 635.

<sup>47</sup> Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1956), p 1, quoted in Stephen Blum, 'Conclusion: Music in an Age of Cultural Confrontation' in Margaret J Kartomi and Blum, eds, *Music-Cultures in Contact: Convergences and Collisions* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1994), p 252.

<sup>48</sup> Blum, 'Conclusion', *Music-Cultures in Contact*, p 252 (citing Thomas Turino, 'Structure, Context, and Strategy in Musical Ethnography', *Ethnomusicology* 34).

environmental sound. Its silences may involve suspense, delayed gratification, reverberation, rupture and/or failed or averted resolutions. Music is inextricably related to cultural practice, but the nature of this relationship is dynamic, complex and open to a range of analyses. Musical analysis, in turn, is linked to culturally conditioned practices and theories. Where musical terms are used in this thesis, they are mostly drawn from Western theories of music. This reflects the practices of the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett: while non-Western forms of music and languages other than English lurk, they rarely take centre stage when the narrators address their readers.

### **Time and Space**

Aspects of theories of Paul Carter, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and Derrida inform the framework of this thesis, which encompasses spatialities and temporalities. Alongside the expansion of possibilities for approaches to writing history, literary theoretical models and methodologies diversified in the late twentieth century. Theorists moved away from linear, vertical models for reading texts, as such models were associated with widely discredited notions of progress and development over time. Most alternative models involved predominantly spatial rather than temporal readings, using such devices as the gaze, cartography and other network-based approaches. The currently prevalent metaphor of mapping has enabled much useful analysis, such as that of Gillian Whitlock. However, it is often represented as a model requiring a visual orientation. It invites a gaze that identifies boundaries, however blurred or attractively curved, and that produces a bird's-eye view of lineally defined spaces. The prominence of visually oriented models has muted knowledges that might have been followed more closely with models of other orientations. Aurality-based models enable the identification of different patterns of cultural practice from those found in visual models. Musical patterns are useful for tracing such gestures as anticipation, retention, disappointment, surprise or resignation. They offer clues to how new or different patterns are formed and to the effects of movement between contexts. Like memory, music presents multilayered patterns of modulating texture. Repetition, variation and crowded moments of simultaneous sound between blanks or silences emerge as both temporal and spatial effects of memory, history and their readings.

While a musical model may initially appear to represent a return to History's traditional privileging of time over space, it, in fact, rejects the privileging of either. It is, rather, an extension of twentieth-century moves towards models of multiplicity, mobility and diversity. The work of Carter, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault and Derrida seems at first to stress the spatial over the temporal, and thus the visual over the aural. However, multidirectional readings of their texts (as advocated by their own models) make the interdependence of temporal, spatial, aural and visual categories clear. These categories cannot

always be distinguished or definitively positioned. Like Deleuze and Guattari's triangles of power relations (discussed above), each category has 'points' and 'sides' that connect with others. These connections form the sites of overlooked knowledges that may be explored through the auditory entry point of music.

'Spatial history' was theorised by Paul Carter in 1987, before he moved to theories of sound in 1992. Carter's emphasis on encounters recalls Benjamin's work, in particular his excavation of the process of remembering, 'A Berlin Chronicle'. Benjamin sketched 'A Berlin Chronicle' in 1932, but it was not published until 1970, three decades after his death. While entitled a 'chronicle', this text rather represents a rearrangeable spatial schema of interlocking experiential thresholds. Benjamin's labyrinth of cross-connections anticipates Deleuze and Guattari's 1981 rhizome model. Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on multiplicity, in turn, evokes Foucault's 1977 genealogy model. Each of these theorists draws on the graphic and spatial to reconstruct modes of remembering. Fragments of the temporal (past events) are re-graphed, thus reconstituting time-space configurations. While presenting spatial emphases, the reconfiguring work of Carter, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault leads to the collapsing of the time-space binary, and with it the visual-aural binary. This effect was theorised in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*, originally published (in French) in 1967. Derrida's theories clarify the ways in which spatial history and the labyrinth, rhizome and genealogy models encompass temporal and spatial, visual and aural.

Carter's Australian model for spatial reading and writing, presented in *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History*, uses the unstable relations between space and place, movement and naming, 'home' and 'away', sight, sound and meaning to examine historical events and ways they are recorded, remembered or forgotten.<sup>49</sup> He represents encounters and their sites as multidirectional, spatial events. Elsewhere, Carter claims that Australian explorer narratives 'represent a "working through" of the historical material, an attempt to constitute experience historically, to understand how the non-temporal consciousness of space – the phenomenon of space as an infinity of directions – might be an essential ingredient in the *psychic* occupation of the new country'.<sup>50</sup> Carter's focus on the occupier of space, the gazer into distances, was useful for his 1987 rereading of parts of Australian history, especially his reconfigured representations of early encounters between Europeans and the territories that were to become Australia. Carter contrasts 'what Cook saw' with 'what we see': 'What we see is what the firstcomers did not see: a place, not a historical space. A place, a historical fact, detached from its travellers; static, at anchor, as if it was always there, bland, visible. Standing at this well-known point, the spatial

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<sup>49</sup> See Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: an Essay in Spatial History* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987).

<sup>50</sup> Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language* (London: Faber, 1992), p16.

event is replaced by a historical stage.’<sup>51</sup> The absence, or rather invisibility, of links between visible places and spatial events forms a construction site for historians and others who work with memory. On this site encounters are reconstructed.

Benjamin is also concerned with the nature and effects of encounters as the site to remember. He represents the course of human life as labyrinthine, in the form of a diagram depicting sites of random encounters. Memory is charted with openings, corridors and passageways. Of his personal life diagram, a labyrinth remembered and drawn up in a Paris café, Benjamin writes that he is not concerned with its ‘enigmatic’ centre, but with its many entrances, each graphically symbolising his acquaintance with someone he met ‘through neighborhood, family relationships, school comradeship, mistaken identity, companionship on travels...’:

So many primal relationships ... [T]hose that remain in our memory ... open up new acquaintances, ... after a time they branch off these corridors ... Whether cross-connections are finally established between these systems also depends on the intertwinements of our path through life. ... [T]here are perhaps ... passageways that always, in the most diverse periods of life, guide us to the friend, the betrayer, the beloved, the pupil, or the master.<sup>52</sup>

In this model, the remembering subject is surrounded by unpredictably curving walls, fashionably fickle arcades and ‘covertly woven’ veils.<sup>53</sup> While Benjamin’s imagery here is linked to the specific site of the city, it serves as a metaphor for the subject’s interaction with any site of a memorable encounter. Accessible space in which to remember is limited and adorned with distractions, but the performance of remembering and reconfiguring can take place only on such a multiple-entry, mirrored stage.

While Benjamin claims not to be concerned with the ‘centre’ conventionally associated with the idea of labyrinth, his model may seem enclosed and inward-looking when compared with the apparently open, outward gestures of Deleuze. However, Deleuze’s endorsement of horizontal rather than vertical thought, of lines of flight towards deterritorialisation and, with Guattari, of the rhizome model, shares with Benjamin a spatial approach and an appreciation of the diversity and unpredictability of human (and other) relations. A growing rhizome constructs a

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<sup>51</sup> Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p xiv.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin, ‘A Berlin Chronicle’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, pp 614-15.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p 614: ‘I wish to write of this afternoon because it made so apparent what kind of regimen cities keep over imagination, and why the city – where people make the most ruthless demands on one another, where appointments and telephone calls, sessions and visits, flirtations and the struggle for existence grant the individual not a single moment of contemplation – indemnifies itself in memory, and why the veil it has covertly woven out of our lives shows images of people less often than those of the sites of our encounters with others or ourselves.’ For a related reading of Benjamin’s writings on fashion as ‘engagements with the problem of historical time and a related politics of time’, see Andrew Benjamin, ‘Being Roman Now: The Time of Fashion: A Commentary on Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” XIV’, *Thesis Eleven* 75 (2003), pp 39-53.

labyrinthine space as it infinitely twists, turns, connects, intertwines and transmutes. Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on their 'principle of multiplicity':

An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines. When Glenn Gould speeds up the performance of a piece, he is not just displaying virtuosity, he is transforming the musical points into lines, he is making the whole piece proliferate.<sup>54</sup>

This musical example is rarely taken up by literary critics who adopt the rhizome model, perhaps as the temporal/aural concept of 'speeding sound' complicates the rhizome's spatial/visual image. Deleuze and Guattari's increasing and transmuting dimensions – like Benjamin's shifting corridors – enable proliferation, which fills spaces and disrupts previous emplacements. While Deleuze and Guattari use the imagery of lines to describe these movements, they do not represent linear activity as progress or development. Rather, variation, mobility and multiplicity turn the subject into an assemblage of 'lines and measurable speeds'.<sup>55</sup> In this model, it might begin to seem that the remembering subject is left with too little consistent space and time to work effectively. However, it is the measurability of speeds that provides employment. The task is to measure tempos, even as they mutate and multiply according to their ever-changing dimensions.

Deleuze and Guattari represent their rhizome model as 'an anti-genealogy', claiming that 'transversal communications between different lines scramble the genealogical trees'.<sup>56</sup> However, Foucault's genealogy model shares with Deleuze and Guattari's multiple proliferations and Benjamin's random encounters an emphasis on the accidental, transformational and discontinuous in the 'profusion of entangled events' that constitutes 'the world we know'.<sup>57</sup> Foucault rejects notions of an autonomous subject, as he draws on Nietzsche for his model of remembrance of relations, differences, positions and distances. This enables the mapping of 'the constitution of the subject' and thus of subject 'areas' that were previously overlooked by historians: 'I would call genealogy ... a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects etc., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.'<sup>58</sup> Genealogy involves the rearrangement

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<sup>54</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 1988), p 8.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p 4.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p 11.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, tr. Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), pp 154-55.

<sup>58</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p 117.

of events in a series, which is set against an identified temporally and spatially framed generality. Such reconfiguration has countless spatial and temporal possibilities, each specific to its particular set of relations. While Foucault's model stresses spatial rearrangement, it rejects spatial transcendence, just as it rejects concepts of eternity or temporal progress. This might appear to speak against most conventional (Western classical) musical models, as these often depend on carefully composed representations of progression and resolution. However, as Foucault's work would suggest, the definition and application of music need not be limited to those models known and acknowledged by its Western experts. Foucault's historical studies follow the significance of the accidental; likewise, the often accidental nature of transformations in musical systems serves to throw light on some of the entanglements of historical events. Foucault expands the range of potential entry points to sites of historical rearrangement and thus invites attention to aural, visual and whatever other modes of knowing fall into a domain under observation.

Foucault's work has contributed to many reconfigurations of historical remembering. Deleuze traces (or unfolds) the movements of this proliferation in 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)', the concluding chapter of his 'disjunctive affirmation' of Foucault.<sup>59</sup> Some sections of Foucault's work are disputed, often by the closest followers of other parts of his work. In his essay 'Cogito and the History of Madness', Derrida begins the critique of Foucault later taken up by Spivak in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'.<sup>60</sup> Derrida's arguments here are related to those of *Of Grammatology*, in which he presents a critique of phonocentrism and its links to ethnocentrism.<sup>61</sup> This critique might initially seem to suggest the usefulness of visual or spatial models over the aural or musical. However, Derridean *différance* serves to remove these hierarchical distinctions: 'The (pure) trace is *différance*. It does not depend on any sensible plenitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such a plenitude.'<sup>62</sup> *Différance* is spatial differentiation coinciding with temporal deferral, 'the formation of form' and 'the being-imprinted of the imprint'.<sup>63</sup> Derrida continues:

it is in the specific zone of this imprint and this trace, in the temporalization of a *lived experience* which is neither *in* the world nor in "another world," which is not more sonorous than luminous, not more *in* time than *in* space, that differences appear among the elements or rather produce them, make them emerge as such and constitute the *texts*, the chains, and the systems of traces ... And as it [the trace] is a

<sup>59</sup> See Deleuze, *Foucault*, tr. Seán Hand (London: Athlone, 1988), pp 94-123. In his introduction, Hand writes: 'Deleuze gives this thought of the phantasm and the event the proper name of "Foucault". It might also properly be called translation: a disjunctive affirmation, the emergence of a new form', p x.

<sup>60</sup> Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp 31-63.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Derrida, 'The Violence of the Letter: From Lévi-Strauss to Rousseau', *Of Grammatology*, pp 101-40.

<sup>62</sup> Derrida, 'Linguistics and Grammatology', *Of Grammatology*, p 62.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p 63.

*fortiori* anterior to the distinction between regions of sensibility, anterior to sound as much as to light, is there a sense in establishing a “natural” hierarchy between the sound-imprint, for example, and the visual (graphic) imprint?<sup>64</sup>

Music, as a system of traces with a range of spatially differentiated and temporally deferred sonic and graphic signifiers, is constituted by *différance*.

Among other things, Derrida characterises writing as ‘movement of difference’, trace structure, dream, inscription or marking.<sup>65</sup> An infinite range of methods may be used to mark traces. Marking may take the form of composition or may occur in such a way that its traces are immediately forgotten or cast aside. The nuances of the German verb *merken* are helpful in the application of Derrida’s notions of marking or writing. *Merken* may be translated as ‘to notice’, ‘to feel’, ‘to realise’, ‘to remember’, ‘to retain’ ‘to mark’ or ‘to make a note of’.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, writing as marking may occur by visual, tactile, aural, olfactory or other means. In English, ‘to mark’ usually refers to the production of a visual effect, while ‘to remark’ is most often oral. Marking always has to do with traces of previous marks, that is, with association, differentiation and memory, with movement across space and time. Music, whether composed, transposed or ‘found’, with its capacity for evocation (producing a trace structure) and for arousal of memory, is an effective form of marking or of Derridean writing.

As with Derrida and Foucault, on further reading of the work of Carter, Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, it emerges that the apparent privileging of the spatial and visual effectively serves to direct each model towards a moment in which the spatial and visual intersect with the temporal and aural. Carter, the spatial historian, also represents encounters as sonic events:

The sound in-between does not originate on one side or the other. It is provoked by the interval itself. In this sense it resembles a name given to a space; the verbal gestures of first contact, the stumbling mimicry of the other person’s speech, look forward to places. Such a sound is not then simply a performative strategy. The mimicry it employs is not meant to parody communication, to undermine assertions of authority. It is a historical device for keeping the future open, for delineating a space where, in future, misapprehensions and differences can begin to form the basis of a new cross-cultural *argot*, one based on the incremental convergence of sounds and gestures.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, p 65.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p 60.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Terrell, Veronika Calderwood-Schnorr, Wendy V A Morris and Roland Breitsprecher, eds, *Collins German-English English-German Dictionary* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1988), p 457.

<sup>67</sup> Carter, *The Sound In Between*, pp 12-13.

Here, a sonic encounter occurs in accordance with past, present and future spatial conditions. A 'verbal gesture' looks around and forward. The encounter is a modulating, liminal multivocalisation.

Similarly, a Benjaminian labyrinth need be no less aural and temporal than it is spatial and visual. Rajeev Patke illustrates this with his observation that Mikhail Bakhtin's work on Fyodor Dostoevsky's fiction 'applies with the most curious aptness to the peculiar and extreme realization of discourse as medley that Benjamin came up with in the course of working on his *Arcades* project'.<sup>68</sup> Patke cites Bakhtin: 'Everywhere his thought makes its way through a labyrinth of voices, semi-voices, other people's words, other people's gestures. He never proves his own positions on the basis of abstract positions ... but juxtaposes orientations and amidst them constructs his own orientations.'<sup>69</sup> Sound moves, of course, in space as well as in time. The slowness of English vocabulary to acknowledge this is evident in such recent (engineering and linguistic) constructions as the 'audio spotlight'. Deleuze refers to such intersections when he cites as his two favourite operatic cries 'the horizontal cry that floats along the earth in [Alban Berg's] *Wozzeck*, and the completely vertical cry of the countess in [Berg's] *Lulu* – these are like two dense summits of cries'.<sup>70</sup> Like his labyrinth, Benjamin's fan of memory may also unfold aurally and spatially, as linked sounds, images and flavours emerge from its folds. This intersectional or 'admixed' metaphor is useful to the reading of minor memoirs.<sup>71</sup>

### Music and territory

Music is clearly conditioned by the times and circumstances of its composition, as well as by the sites of its subsequent performances. The meanings of compositions shift with changing times, while retaining links to moments of composition, as well as to prior connections. Similarly, music is tied to its place of composition, though the nature of local ties also depends on temporal factors, such as how long the composers and their ancestors – physical or otherwise – have been connected to 'their' place. Referring to music used in his films, director Wim Wenders claims that Portuguese fado, for example, could only come from Lisbon, that the Cuban sounds of *Buena Vista Social Club* 'could never exist outside of Havana' and that Ry

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<sup>68</sup> Rajeev S Patke, 'Benjamin and Bakhtin: the Possibility of Conversation', *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory (Special Issue: Benjamin and Bakhtin, Vision and Visuality)* 33.1 (2003), p 14. Patke refers to Benjamin's *The Arcades Project*.

<sup>69</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, tr. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984), p 95.

<sup>70</sup> Deleuze in Pierre-André Boutang (director), *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, avec Claire Parnet [Gilles Deleuze's ABC Primer, with Claire Parnet]* (interviews filmed in 1989, released 1996), cited in Charles J Stivale's overview, *O as in Opera*, <http://www.langlab.wayne.edu/CStivale/D-G/ABC3.html#anchor819112> (visited 4 October 2004).

<sup>71</sup> For a defence of mixed metaphor as Foucaultian heterotopia, see Dale Pesmen, 'Reasonable and Unreasonable Worlds: Some Expectations of Coherence in Culture Implied by the Prohibition of Mixed Metaphor' in James W Fernandez, ed, *Beyond Metaphor: the Theory of Tropes in Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1991), pp 213-43. Pesmen concludes that 'mixed metaphor ... is the coming into consciousness of a mixing that goes on all the time, a consciousness that offends our sensibilities because it "calls attention to the device" and perhaps might reveal the inexplicable bases of our worldview', p 243.



Cooder's bottleneck guitar 'is so much the landscape of the American west'.<sup>72</sup> In the context of worldwide displacement and migration, an initial reaction to these claims might be that fado, Cuban music and bottleneck guitar all can and do exist in many places, such as Australia. However, even in the rare cases that music reproduced 'elsewhere' sounds indistinguishable from that heard in its 'home', it does not exist, as Wenders suggests, in the same way. Place alters significance – the longings and disappointed dreams of a Lisbon local are remembered differently when that 'local' finds herself in Australia, surrounded by different dreams, in different languages. Cooder's guitar carries an American landscape to Australia, but that landscape arrives with all the packaging of different local memories and technologies. In another direction, Wenders' film *Der Himmel über Berlin* (1987, also known as *Wings of Desire*) features music by Australian-born Nick Cave, which could only be performed in Berlin, where Cave was briefly a 'local'. However, this specifically 'Berlin' music (which is, of course, played elsewhere) retains links to small places in Australia and, indeed, to places in the United Kingdom and North America that have conditioned Cave's compositional memory.

Music is one of many multidirectional discursive forms within a remembering subject's broader discourse. The structure of a subject's discourse of memory may also be understood or imagined in terms of musical configuration. This discourse is necessarily a medley, a collection of modulating versions of others' tunes, which meet and diverge. Pre-composed fragments of others' voices reverberate in the discourse medleys of the minor memoir. Some voices and tunes recur, like the ritornello or refrain that Deleuze and Guattari link to the crossing of territorial thresholds or deterritorialisation. Deleuze and Guattari present three aspects of the refrain, with three corresponding examples: a) a fearful child orients herself with a song, which 'jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos'; b) a housewife 'listens to the radio, as she marshals the antichaos forces of her work'; she 'walks in a circle as in a children's dance ... A mistake in speed, rhythm, or harmony would be catastrophic because it would bring back the forces of chaos, destroying both creator and creation'; c) 'one opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth..., hazards an improvisation ... One ventures from home on the thread of a tune.'<sup>73</sup> The refrain reassures the occupier of territory, consolidates the act of territorialisation and alters the borders between territories. The refrains of the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi take various forms, as territories are repeatedly exited, entered and disputed.

Dictionaries define 'territory' as an area owned, governed or defended, all of which require some form of mapping. For Deleuze and Guattari, as with some Australian Indigenous

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<sup>72</sup> Wim Wenders, interview with Andrew Ford, *The Music Show* (26 April 2003), ABC Radio National, transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/music/mshow/s871995.htm> (visited 6 December 2003). Wenders' films include *Viagem a Lisboa* (1994), *Buena Vista Social Club* (1999) and *Paris, Texas* (1984), for which Ry Cooder provided the soundtrack.

<sup>73</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p 311.

practices, mapping may be sonic. Deleuze and Guattari represent musical form as a most appropriate cartographic tool: ‘Music has always sent out lines of flight, like so many “transformational multiplicities,” even overturning the very codes that structure or arborify it; that is why musical form, right down to its ruptures and proliferations, is comparable to a weed, a rhizome.’<sup>74</sup> The map, as rhizome, ‘is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.’<sup>75</sup> Despite the rhizome metaphor, this description – of an object that may be torn, reversed or mounted, suggests a flat, static, passive and visual form. Australian songwriter Paul Kelly provides another metaphor in his foreword to a history of Aboriginal country music: ‘The music is a river. The mainstream rolls relentlessly on, picking up flotsam and jetsam and strewing debris along its edges while the source stays hidden, hard to get to, and the springs, creeks, feederstreams and tributaries often remain unnamed and forgotten.’<sup>76</sup> Kelly goes on to describe the work of the historian as stepping into the river, going upstream and underground, wandering up ‘dry creekbeds and heartbreaking gullies’, following criss-crossing tracks and songlines.

‘Songlines’ and ‘dream tracks’ are English terms for the marking of territory with epic poetry, which is sung by its inheritors. With this practice, singers remember and pass on knowledge of historic and cultural narratives and poetic observations that have interdependent links with pieces of land and water and their physical features. The songs often tell of ancestors’ journeys and can cover vast stretches of neighbouring territorial sites. They serve several social and religious purposes, including trade, kinship consolidation and philosophical education. Dream track practices remain most extensively documented in central Australian desert regions and in the northern Australian regions of Arnhem Land and the Kimberley. Of desert practices, Eric Michaels writes: ‘What these tracks demonstrate is a complex, utterly precise connection between person, knowledge, and place that is now known to be at the heart of Australian desert ontologies.’<sup>77</sup> Historians and others may follow such tracks, but their singing and dreaming remain restricted to those who enjoy that ‘precise connection’. The precision of contemporary Western cartographic methods is not greater than that of ancient methods; it is merely of a different, more visually oriented nature. A musical model for reading and marking the territory of the memory has more in common with longer standing methods of mapping. These require the cartographer to walk the land, locate water sources or sail the seas. Such methods take time and engage other parts of the body more than the eye. Music involves movement in more

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, pp 11-12.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p 12.

<sup>76</sup> Paul Kelly, ‘Foreword’ in Clinton Walker, *Buried Country: The Story of Aboriginal Country Music* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000), p 11.

<sup>77</sup> Eric Michaels, *Bad Aboriginal Art: Tradition, Media, and Technological Horizons* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1994), p 172.

complex and diverse ways than contemporary visibility does. Music need not be linear, but provides a model for a multiplicity of temporalities, which have complex relations with space and place.

E V Walter likens the land of the Dreaming, which is brought to life by the movements and utterances of spirit ancestors, to Plato's characterisation of *choros* or *chora*, the oldest known Greek word for 'place':

[Plato] is not content to name the receptacle of experience the natural mother of all created things, for a mother could still retain her maternal title even if she did no more than give birth. He lavishes epithets of nourishment on *chora*, naming her the wetnurse, suckler, and feeder of all things. ... Everything in the receptacle gives a place its qualities, and the qualities of a place cannot be abstracted from the things contained in it.<sup>78</sup>

Walter points out that *topos*, the later Greek word for 'place', which is now more widely known and used, was associated with emptiness or mere location. *Choros*, from which the words 'chorus', 'choreography' and 'chorography' derive, referred to a site of spiritual or emotional significance, where the physical place interacted with human and other activity. For example, in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Theseus is shown the *choros* where Oedipus must die, but is warned against revealing the *topoi* in which it lies.<sup>79</sup> The site of suffering or celebration was a site of song and dance. The notion of *choros* linked people or spirits who sang, and their utterances and movements, with their performance and living spaces. A 'place' was a site in which a group of people lived or ceremonially remembered, or the site of a spiritually significant event; a distinguishing feature of the group's life, memory and experience was its musical performance. In the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, there is often such a sense of the enlivening effects of ancestral utterances.

### **Music and memory**

Music has long provided models for multidirectional activity and for intersections of the spatial, temporal, aural and visual. Music is linked to place, but is also one of the most transportable media. It may represent an attachment to place or a rejection of literal or figurative dislocation. At the same time, it may represent a desire for change or for different forms of physical movement. It may also narrate past movements or dislocations. As it links movements, times and places, music enacts and embodies memory. It has therefore been useful in such fields as medicine and history. These uses demonstrate the functions of music that make it an appropriate

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<sup>78</sup> Eugene V Walter, *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment* (Chapel Hill and London: U of North Carolina P, 1988), p 121.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p 120.

tool for reading minor memoirs. To return to a form of life writing, Benjamin's 'A Berlin Chronicle' includes an account of a lake he remembers skating on as a child:

All these pictures I have preserved. But none would bring back New Lake and a few hours of my childhood so vividly as to hear once more the bars of music to which my feet, heavy with their skates after a lone excursion across the bustling ice, touched the familiar planks and stumbled past the chocolate-dispensing machines, and past the more splendid one with a hen laying candy-filled eggs, through the doorway behind which glowed the anthracite stove, to the bench where you now savored for a while the weight of the metal blades strapped to your feet, which did not yet reach the ground, before resolving to unbuckle them.<sup>80</sup>

In its close relation to motion, music leads mind and body to move in remembrance, as it calls up strings of memories or as it recalls a forgotten situation or stance. Travellers take music on their trips to remind them of 'home'. Like a story, music may be reproduced, mechanically or otherwise, and circulated in multiple discourses. The experience of music is sometimes represented in memoirs as that which enables a displaced subject to overcome her distance from the culture of her birth. For example, German-born Holocaust survivor and cantor's daughter Ruth Rack was separated from her Orthodox Jewish family as a child. In 1968, at forty, Rack joined a Sydney synagogue choir (led by German-born musician Werner Baer) and found that this activity cured the 'unspecified' illness she had been suffering before each Jewish holiday.<sup>81</sup>

Music can also jolt the memory in less gentle ways. One day in the 1970s, Holocaust survivor Kitia Altman was listening to the radio as she cooked in her Melbourne kitchen. Suddenly, from the radio came a melody she had last heard sung by Maryna, a Romani woman, as Altman contemplated death in a Polish salt mine. The effect of these almost forgotten sounds resembled Benjamin's notion of transportation into 'the cool tomb of long ago':

In an instant, all her carefully built defences were torn down. She felt invaded. Violently she switched off the radio, sat down heavily on a chair ... and began to sob. Unannounced, out of the blue, the song had hurtled her back to those days of deprivation, suffering and misery. Suddenly the past had invaded the present, and Kitia discovered that the belief that her history was behind her could no longer be sustained.<sup>82</sup>

When Altman first arrived in Australia, the 'most difficult thing' for her was the 'blanket of silence', the 'non-understanding' or seeming inability of English-speaking Australians to

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<sup>80</sup> Benjamin, 'A Berlin Chronicle', *Selected Writings, Volume 2*, pp 610-11.

<sup>81</sup> Ruth Rack, *Book of Ruth: Memoirs of a Child Survivor* (Canberra: Southern Highlands Publishers, 2000) p 119. In a different way, Charles Chauvel's 1955 film *Jedda* uses culturally marked forms of music to suggest Jedda's possibilities for cultural identification.

<sup>82</sup> Anna Rosner Blay, *Not Paradise: Four Women's Journeys Beyond Survival* (Ormond: Hybrid Publishers, 2004), p 134.

imagine the existence of others.<sup>83</sup> Music sometimes acts as a means of response or a partial solution to such silences. It may complement silence, converse with it, or resolve it. (In music, to 'resolve' is to progress from a dissonance to a consonance, or to another less violent dissonance.) In his essay on Kafka, Benjamin suggests that 'for Kafka music and singing are an expression or at least a token of escape, a token of hope which comes to us from that intermediate world – at once unfinished and commonplace, comforting and silly.'<sup>84</sup> For the displaced and bereft in the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi, music often plays such a role. Benjamin goes on to cite Kafka's 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk', in which the 'staccato' whistling of Josephine, the singing mouse, is described: 'Something of our poor, brief childhood is in it, something of lost happiness which can never be found again, but also something of active present-day life, of its small gaieties, unaccountable and yet real and unquenchable'.<sup>85</sup> When life cannot be accounted for with available language and silence threatens to turn to terror, music offers a medium of imagined continuity, even in the face of real discontinuity.

This quality of imagined continuity is related to the many uses made of music in the medical field. For example, behavioural patterns of nursing home residents with dementia may be manipulated or managed with music.<sup>86</sup> An extreme example of the capacity of music to affect health is neurologist Oliver Sacks' 'man who mistook his wife for a hat', 'Dr P'.<sup>87</sup> Sacks writes of the musician and teacher 'Dr P', who suffered from 'a massive tumour or degenerative process in the visual parts of his brain': 'I often wondered how he apprehended the world, given his strange loss of image, visuality, and the perfect preservation of a great musicality. I think that music, for him, had taken the place of image. He had no body-image, he had body-music: this is why he could move and act as fluently as he did, but came to a total confused stop if the 'inner music' stopped.'<sup>88</sup> Dr P's pre-tumour life was taken up with music, to the extent that his ability to remember after the onset of the degenerative process depended on music and the associations it produced. Most medical practices that use music draw on the links between music and memory, including the responses to rhythms and tones that occur during short periods of listening to organised sound, such as anticipation, the sense of balance and resolution.

Links between music and memory also make music a useful entry point for the recording of history. As music, along with other cultural practices, constantly interacts with (and, arguably, constitutes) historical events, there are innumerable examples of musical practice and political

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<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p 137.

<sup>84</sup> Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', *Illuminations*, p 114.

<sup>85</sup> Kafka, 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk', quoted in Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', pp 114-15.

<sup>86</sup> See Christian Heim, B Kichu Nair, Denise Mowbray and Janelle Tavender, 'Effects of Ambient Baroque Music on Patients with Dementia', *Australasian Journal on Ageing* 22.4 (2003), pp 211-12.

<sup>87</sup> Oliver Sacks, *The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* (London: Pan Books/Picador, 1986).

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p 17.

practice shaping each other. This has been demonstrated, for example, by the work of United States historian, activist and singer, Bernice Johnson Reagon, who uses the songs of 'Black America', especially 1960s 'freedom songs', to trace the history of civil rights movements in the USA.<sup>89</sup> Similarly, South Africa-based filmmaker Lee Hirsch traces anti-apartheid movements through music in his documentary *Amandla! A Revolution in Four-Part Harmony* (2003). Artist George Gittoes, in his film *Soundtrack to War* (2004), traces political changes and interactions through the music listened to and composed by United States soldiers in Iraq. Jorge Coulon, with his band Inti-Illimani, lived in exile from Pinochet's Chile for many years. Coulon describes music as 'the only effective weapon, because weapons are not affecting that power, but music is a really hard weapon against dictatorships'.<sup>90</sup> Alongside its value as a weapon, music is a tool of rapprochement and reconciliation. For example, in 1999, Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said brought young Arab and Israeli classical musicians together to play at Weimar in Germany.<sup>91</sup> In Australia there is a tradition of collaboration between Indigenous and non-indigenous musicians and related workers, from Harold Blair and Harry Green to the Wilcannia Mob and Morganics.<sup>92</sup>

An extreme, large-scale change in 'the West's' memory of the twentieth century is World War I and the shifts in all areas of cultural practice that ensued from it. Previously long-held boundaries in gender, race and national relations changed and shifted. The mass experience of killing, witnessing violent death, grieving at a previously unimaginable distance and later suffering the physical and psychological effects of sustained violence meant that old forms of order were irrevocably disrupted. This included musical forms. The 1920s saw composers of Western classical music, many directly involved in World War I, diverge in multidirectional responses to the war – from Richard Strauss's retreat to romanticism and Arnold Schönberg's turn from expressionism to the mathematical experimentation of serialism, to the diverse direct wartime references of Maurice Ravel, Alban Berg, Carl Nielsen and Ralph Vaughan Williams.<sup>93</sup> Others moved in directions that took them out of the boundaries of classical music, that shifted those boundaries or that removed the usefulness of such terms as 'classical'. These include Kurt Schwitters' Dadaist *Ursonate* and Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's activist music theatre.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> See Bernice Johnson Reagon, *We'll Understand It Better By and By: African American Pioneering Gospel Composers* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 1992) and Reagon, *We who Believe in Freedom: Sweet Honey in the Rock... Still on the Journey* (New York: Anchor Books, 1993).

<sup>90</sup> Jorge Coulon, interview with Andrew Ford, *The Music Show*, 28 February 2004, ABC Radio National, transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/music/mshow/s1097693.htm> (visited 10 October 2004).

<sup>91</sup> See Daniel Barenboim and Edward W Said, *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), pp 6-11.

<sup>92</sup> In the early 1940s, trade unionist Green heard future opera singer Blair singing in a Queensland canefield and initiated Blair's international career. In 2002, hip hop artist Morganics produced the Wilcannia Mob's first recording.

<sup>93</sup> See Andrew Ford, 'Anarchy and Order', *Illegal Harmonies: Music in the 20th Century* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1997), pp 49-71.

<sup>94</sup> Bob Dylan captures the simultaneously confrontational and broken nature of Weill and Brecht's music with his first impressions of it: 'Every song seemed to come from some obscure tradition, seemed to have a pistol in its hip pocket, a club or a brickbat and they came at you in crutches, braces and wheelchairs. They were like folk songs in

As a form of aural history, music has periodically altered the shapes of its conventional spaces. It has allowed different sounds and patterns in and abandoned others as their discursive roles have changed. In its relations with other practices, it has made space for ‘found sound’. Again, there are countless twentieth-century examples of this, including composer John Cage’s 1940s use of radio and his 1950s use of whistles, water, and ‘silence’, the electrical feedback and other technological interactions of some 1960s rock, the spitting and other gutturalisms of late 1970s punk, 1980s industrial noise and the flowing creeks and croaking frogs of 1990s ‘new age’ ambience. Before all these, in the uncertain postwar Europe of the 1920s, musical practice was beginning to interact with cinematic practice. This led composer George Antheil to write a score for the film *Ballet Mécanique*, which included the sounds of ‘a siren, eleven electric bells and three aeroplane propellers’, among many other instruments.<sup>95</sup> The composition’s first public theatrical performance resulted in a near-riot. In 1937, Cage proclaimed: ‘Given four film phonographs, we can compose and perform a quartet for explosive motor, wind, heartbeat, and landslide’.<sup>96</sup> He went on to suggest that ‘a more meaningful term’ for making music would be ‘organization of sound’.<sup>97</sup> Like everything else, music in the West had had its boundaries shifted and, for some, removed altogether. Music, like memory, is an assemblage in constant interaction with its spatial and temporal environments.

## Silence

Cage and others have represented the loudest voices of the United States of America as engaged in a self-deafening process, resulting in a condition similar to tinnitus. The high volume of major voices seems to render all else inaudible, or at least fuzzy. This condition generates a national need for a performance of silence, to enable the nation to hear the external or minor voices that are usually drowned out. Just as ‘Dr P’ needed a certain level of ‘external’ silence to enable him to hear his ‘internal’ music and thus function effectively, Cage’s *4’33”*, the ‘silent’ piece, enables its audience to hear whatever sounds occur in its immediate setting. Meanwhile, the loudest performances – political and musical – often suggest that traces of their antecedents or ancestral encounters are among the quashed sounds, as histories are represented as self-evident and self-contained. However, fuzzy traces of minor voices largely constitute major sounds and are always audible in some way, if one listens. For example, twentieth-century popular music in the United States, which grew loud and affected music in Australia and elsewhere, bore the traces of its various creators and their histories. Many of those creators were displaced people, in particular Jewish Europeans and descendants of African slaves. Traces of

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nature, but unlike folk songs, too, because they were sophisticated’. Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), p 273.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p 62.

<sup>96</sup> John Cage, ‘The Future Of Music: Credo’, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (London: Marion Boyars, 1995), p 3.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

Yiddish melodies and African rhythms, among many other things, remain audible in much popular music. Like the United States, Australia might be said to suffer a version of national tinnitus and to require performances of silence.

As Cage and others have demonstrated, silence is a significant part of the assemblage of music. It takes many forms and, paradoxically, no form. Silences may involve resonance, rupture and failed resolutions. Susan Sontag cites Cage: “‘There is no such thing as silence. Something is always happening that makes a sound.’” (Cage has described how, even in a soundless chamber, he still heard two things: his heartbeat and the coursing of the blood in his head.)<sup>98</sup> Silence is not emptiness, but rather a resonating space, teeming with ghosts. That which is ‘really’ silent cannot be identified, as it no longer exists in any form. There is no identifying other and no genealogical link. That which is apparently silent still exists in some indefinable or imaginary form, time and/or place. Sontag continues: “‘Silence’ never ceases to imply its opposite and to depend on its presence: ... one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognise silence. Not only does silence exist in a world full of speech and other sounds, but any given silence has its identity as a stretch of time being perforated by sound.”<sup>99</sup> The silences of some historians on the nature of colonialist dealings with Indigenous Australians are recognisable by their surrounding environments of knowledge and experience of the effects of those dealings. Those silences in their national context are perforated by the entry of those who ‘know’ into the national language and by the articulation of that which was previously unspeakable. Discourse is thus transformed.

Kafka acknowledges the power and potential terror of silence in his story ‘Silence of the Sirens’, in which his sirens have ‘a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence’.<sup>100</sup> In Kafka’s story, Ulysses escapes this weapon only through his belief, or at least his pretence at belief, that the sirens ‘were singing and that he alone did not hear them’.<sup>101</sup> Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi represent their textual subjects in positions where they wield the weapon of silence, as well as in positions where they are at its mercy. Silence is both a form of articulation and an obstacle to or denial of articulation. Cage has defined silence as ‘people who trust each other’ or ‘people having confidence in one another’.<sup>102</sup> Trust, resulting in the lack of need or desire to speak, is sometimes represented in the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi as a well-founded, pleasurable state, but at other times as misplaced and dangerous.

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<sup>98</sup> Susan Sontag, *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987), p 10.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p 11.

<sup>100</sup> Franz Kafka, ‘The Silence of the Sirens’, *The Complete Stories* (New York: Schocken, 1971), p 431.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p 432.

<sup>102</sup> Cage (in conversation with Daniel Charles), *For The Birds* (Boston and London: Marion Boyars, 1981), p 26.



## A model

Alongside minor literature, a musical model enables the identification of minor musical discourses, associated temporalities and their relations to space and place. Instances of music in *Over My Tracks*, *After The War*, *Unintended Consequences* and *Don't Take Your Love To Town* serve as indices to subjects' silences, desires and memories, as well as to cultural contexts. Different categories of music are represented in the texts as belonging to the different worlds, temporalities and positions known to their subjects. Relations between these various types of music and their roles in subjects' memories emerge as indicators of effects of displacement. For example, Crawford's childhood world is a mobile one – the musical instruments are accordion, mouth organ, violin, gum leaves and clap sticks. Crawford tells of music that she and people she knew played or created themselves, while Brett and Langford Ginibi point to the dominance of the recording industry. Langford Ginibi and Brett also write from the perspective of the audience member of live music performances. Langford Ginibi's presence in the audience is sometimes linked to her role as damper provider, while Brett's speaking subject is there either as paying consumer or paid critic.

Which particular genres of music a subject finds herself listening to, performing and/or composing is often largely accidental. Among other things, these accidents have to do with supercultural practices, with the subject's cultural situation and with the times and places of the more significant moments in her memory. The classification of genres in Crawford's, Brett's and Langford Ginibi's texts is problematic, as each genre moves from its conventional position when it enters a minor memoir. These problematic categories are, broadly, folk music in Crawford's text, Western classical and rock music in Brett's and country music in Langford Ginibi's text. Of these, folk is perhaps most difficult to define. Bruno Nettl suggests that most cultures 'have their own way of classifying music, so that the terms "folk," "art," and "popular" are at best culture-specific to the West'.<sup>103</sup> In the West, definitions of folk music have changed along with cultural and commercial practices, but it has been understood as mostly 'orally transmitted by nonprofessionals', involving 'songs of general ownership' and 'identification with particular regions', with 'the integration of the larger society' as its function.<sup>104</sup> Bob Dylan has defined folk music as 'handed down songs' and 'the underground story'.<sup>105</sup>

The texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett may be read as musical structures, which are related to their historical and cultural situations. Like most compositions, each text represents a formation of apparent order from fragments of remembered events and discourses. However,

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<sup>103</sup> Bruno Nettl, 'I've Never Heard a Horse Sing', *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1983), p 305.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, pp 304, 305, 307, 314. On the function of folk music, Nettl cites Walter Wiora, *Europäische Volksmusik und Abendländische Tonkunst* (Kassel: J P Hinnenthal, 1957).

<sup>105</sup> Dylan, *Chronicles*, pp 8, 103.

these compositions are not neat. They are neither distinctly cyclical nor linear and they lack tidy resolution. The apparent absence of resolution or invention of new forms of resolution is a recurring feature of each text. I read Crawford's *Over My Tracks* as a series of (indistinct) campfire cycles. It is a story set mostly in the bush, of movement between temporary homes, with little space and time for the kind of intentional reflection practised by 'major literature' and some commercially successful music. Around the temporary home of the campfire, warm but not without danger, temporary families catch their breath together after hard work. They share stories that are mostly familiar to the group, but are not heard in major discourse. There is no extended crescendo, but it is rare for a cycle to go uninterrupted. The forces of political and cultural 'authorities' constantly intervene, moving subjects on. Subjects respond and resist with improvisation. Songs are composed or arranged on the spot. They are played to the hearing-impaired authorities with whatever instruments and sounds come to hand. Indigenous ancestral music is performed by and for the family, but this too cannot avoid being 'moved on'.

Langford Ginibi's text has some thematic similarities to Crawford's and may partly be read along the same lines. However, much of her text, especially those sections with urban settings, has a dramatic structure not unlike that of a night with a band in an Australian pub. Characters walk in and out, interrupt conversations and plans, heckle performers, contribute ideas, fight, cry or become amorous. The pub itself is a site of sometimes comfortable self-destruction and fleeting solidarity. It is warm, with open windows – those outside can always be heard, though not clearly. Absent friends are remembered, as tunes previously shared with them are repeated. Background noise makes fine-tuning and judgment difficult, but contributes to performance and composition. Old songs are repeated, but can become incoherent with the effects of alcohol and anger. The steady but driven bass line of country music desires stability but finds it elusive. Loyalty and strength are glorified, but need to be clarified in this music, as authorities repeatedly misrepresent them. The country music voice is deep and willing to break unjust laws. It conventionally celebrates the 'battler'. Langford Ginibi's night at the pub rearranges this particular celebration.

Brett's poems are superficially modernist pieces, minimalist, atonal, ironic and focussed on the details of the present. However, like the 'silence' of a John Cage composition, the large amount of white space on Brett's pages becomes the stage for various absent performers. These performers have everything to do with the past, as well as its effects on the present. Brett's short lines of bourgeois repetition and variation are most effectively read in the vein of late 1960s Western rock music. The 1967 performance of German-born singer Nico with *The Velvet Underground* in New York serves as a suitably ironic structural model (ironic, as Nico spent the first seven years of her life as a National Socialist child called Christa, seeing trains make their way to Auschwitz). *The Velvet Underground's* background noise and distortion continue well

after Nico's monotonous vocals and often psychoanalytical lyrics stop; this noise finally becomes the foreground. Similarly, Brett's pieces point to the noise and distortion of political and cultural authorities, past and present, in Europe, Australia and the USA.

I read the texts of all three memoirists as a kind of 'vocalese', the adaptation of new words and many voices to pre-arranged ancestral melodies, to tell stories and pay tribute to the composers and previous performers of those tunes.<sup>106</sup> As I trace intersections of memory, music and displacement within each text, I locate links between the four texts, as well as links with other voices in the discursive medleys surrounding the texts. These medleys emerge from encounters in a range of particular chronotopes, encounters between speeding, erratic and stable rhythms, and loud, faint, high, low and in-between sounds. Ancestral contributors to the three narrators' discursive medleys vocalise from fluctuating distances. As ancestral voices tell unending, reverberating stories, they can sound harsh, gentle and many tones in between. In chapter two I turn to these ever-present but elusive voices.

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<sup>106</sup> Kurt Elling defines vocalese as 'the writing and performing of a lyric which has been tailored to fit the lines of an instrumental solo from someone else's record', *Elling Study Guide*, [www.quadcityarts.com/ELLING.pdf](http://www.quadcityarts.com/ELLING.pdf). Sol Foster, following Jon Hendricks, defines vocalese as 'the setting of lyrics to established jazz orchestral instrumentals' or 'singing words to a pre-arranged tune ... Two predominant threads in vocalese lyrics are storytelling and tributes ... frequently lyrics are a tribute to the musician who originally recorded the tune in question', *What is Vocalese?* [www.harmonyware.com/JonHendricks/vocalese.html](http://www.harmonyware.com/JonHendricks/vocalese.html) (visited 6 March 2004).

## Chapter Two

### Resonances: Ancestral voices

Bundjalung na Jogun jalah

Garima gala Jogun galah

Bugal wen beh leh la <sup>1</sup>

א נאקעטער שטייט איצט מיין בוים אויפן וועג,  
כאטש פריילינג איז לאנג שוין געקומען,  
און דארט וווּ אַמאָל איז מיין גארטן געווען,  
וואַקסן איצט טויטע בלומען. <sup>2</sup>

As suggested by Walter Benjamin, the segments of the ‘fan of memory’ are infinite, unfolding to echoes of distant times and places. This is especially true for memories of displaced lives, such as those recalled by Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett. As each narrating subject unfurls her fan of memory and dissects its folds, she imagines her ancestral communities. These communities have been reduced to fragments and are largely unknowable, but their traces survive and resonate in the narrators’ lives. Meanwhile, the narrators live their lives in twentieth-century Australia, where the loudest sounds are those of ‘White Australia’ and its ancestral communities as they are imagined by some national authorities. This chapter argues that the construction of a national imagined community is an intersectional, as well as collective, process. Benedict Anderson provides a useful analysis of how nations have been imagined into being through public spheres such as mass communication.<sup>3</sup> However, Anderson fails to address the imaginative trajectories cast by minor subjectivities within nations. When the private constructions of minor communities within the nation become public, they intersect with major voices. The subjectivities represented in the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett have access to imagined communities other than those of supercultures. Thus, they transmit knowledges overlooked by louder constructions, taking on roles of mediation and translation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Bundjalung Country here. Look after this Country here. Thank you.’ *Bundjalung People’s Gathering*, called by the elders of the Wiyabal/Widjabal family groups, with the Bundjalung Elders Council, Aboriginal Corporation, Southern Cross University, Lismore, 2002, <http://hmcs.scu.edu.au/rainbow/CulturalMap/> (visited 8 April 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Jacob G Rosenberg, ‘Flower of Death’ (Yiddish, provided by Rosenberg): ‘How naked/ Stands my tree on the road,/ Though spring/ Has already set,/ And there, where my flowers/ Once blossomed with joy,/ Blooms the flower of death.’

<sup>3</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> I present this argument in my chapter, ‘Imagined Ancestral Communities of Displaced Australian Daughters: Lily Brett’s *Unintended Consequences* and Evelyn Crawford’s *Over My Tracks*’ in Cynthia Huff, ed, *Women’s Life Writing and Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), which also appears in *Prose Studies* 26.1-2 (2003), pp 17-42. In her introduction, Huff suggests that the concept of community, ‘not only how it is physically imagined in Anderson’s mapping of it as embodying nations, but also as it encompasses diaspora as well as cultural and personal identification, seems central to the future of studies of women’s life writing’. (*Prose Studies*, p 14.)

This chapter is primarily concerned not with the lives of the three authors' ancestors, but with the various effects of those lives in their published memories and with the links between ancestors and textual subjectivities. In their texts, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett evoke links to ancestors that are maintained, despite displacement and muting. They also recall broken links, which nonetheless continue to resonate. I read both the maintained and the broken links as echoes of ancestral voices. Each narrator personally knows some of the ancestors whose voices she evokes, but many remain unknown. Some ancestors 'vocalise' in particular situations, others in particular places. As Ceridwen Spark points out, 'person-place relations' vary greatly, along with historical and cultural experience, and 'Aboriginal senses of place are interwoven with displacement'.<sup>5</sup> In quite different ways, this interweaving is also true of non-indigenous displaced people.

Many ancestral resonances in *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* produce contrapuntal and heterophonic effects in the White Australian soundtrack. To reimagine the dominant soundscape of twentieth-century Australia, which interacts with the narrating subjects' memories, this chapter visits some supercultural soundbites and snapshots, as well as ancestral echoes. With reference to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, I begin by outlining some effects of the narratives' implied readers or addressees on autobiographical acts, especially those concerning ancestral legacies. To reimagine the narrators' relations with their supercultures, I consider the positions of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett in their respective ancestral and national communities. In a longer section, I then focus on events and memories of 1949, a moment when national ancestral imaginaries were performed in various contrasting ways. 1949 marks the beginning of the long Menzies era and serves to illustrate relations between national authorities and minor players in the imagining of Australia and its ancestry. In the next section I explore representations of 'ghosts and angels' – ancestral links in the form of haunting presences, education, cultural practice and ancestral land – in the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. I then analyse the narrating subjects' respective approaches to ancestral languages and other modes of communication, especially in times of loss. Finally, this leads into the narrators' representations of grief and related ancestral religious practices. In this chapter, I devote slightly more space to Brett's work than to that of Crawford and Langford Ginibi, as Brett's texts are most directly concerned with the legacies of her parents and other ancestors.

### Autobiographical acts

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<sup>5</sup> Ceridwen Spark, 'Rethinking Emplacement, Displacement and Indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), pp 95-103, notes pp 191-92.

*Over My Tracks, Don't Take Your Love To Town, After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* are all, in part, narratives of different aspects of colonisation and migration. As such, they evoke not only the three narrators' ancestral voices, but also those of other Australians. The narrators' addressees, with their various intersecting histories and ancestral legacies, condition the ways Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett may tell their stories. The addressees' ancestors or antecedents play roles in the stories' events. As Pat Dodson observed in 2000, referring to a particular chapter of colonisation that continued for most of the twentieth century, 'the Stolen Generations issue is a non-indigenous story too'.<sup>6</sup> While neither Crawford nor Langford Ginibi was stolen from her family, both lived with the risk of being taken. This risk and its effects are evident throughout their narratives, which address non-indigenous readers in particular ways. Gillian Whitlock points out that the 'listener, the "second person" in the narrative transaction, is fundamental to the testimonial contract'.<sup>7</sup> The texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are not primarily testimonial in the same way as survivor testimonies in reports such as that on the Stolen Generations, detailing the effects of one government policy. However, their narratives do address the acts of the national community's various ancestors and the effects of a range of policies. (In Brett's case, both Jewish survivors and Nazi perpetrators are part of Australian history, not only because people of both groups migrated here. The racial theories underlying Nazism also played roles in Australian government policy and cultural practice.) Along with official reports, the ancestral stories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett invite attention to community responsibility, as all Australians, in different ways, live with consequences and legacies of those stories.<sup>8</sup>

Smith and Watson note that 'scholars of narratology ... differentiate the "narratee" from the "implied reader."' <sup>9</sup> A frequent narratee in Brett's early poems is David Rankin, her second husband. She also addresses herself, in analytical mode. Many of her poems concern the traces of unknown ancestors' deaths, which were compounded by her mother's death in 1986. By this time, her mother was a primary narratee, while she continued to address love poems to Rankin. Brett's previous publication of journalistic work conditioned her imagination of implied readers, who included, sometimes problematically, her family, Jewish communities and Australian readers of poetry in general. Later, this readership would extend to German-speakers, to whose

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<sup>6</sup> Pat Dodson, 'Report on the Stolen Generations', *Sunday*, Channel 9 Television (9 April 2000), cited in Gillian Whitlock, 'In The Second Person: Narrative Transactions In Stolen Generations Testimony', *Biography* 24.1 (2001), p 198. (See *Bringing Them Home* (Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families), commissioned by Ronald Wilson (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Whitlock, 'In The Second Person', p 199.

<sup>8</sup> To the Report on the Stolen Generations, Drusilla Modjeska responds: 'It is a story that demands absolutely that we attend to words like community, and responsibility. And morality. And shame. And apology'. Modjeska, 'A Bitter Wind' in Michelle Grattan, ed, *Reconciliation: Essays on Australian Reconciliation* (Melbourne: Black Inc, 2000), p 159.

<sup>9</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001), p 68.

ancestral histories her work contributes, and many others around the world. Like Crawford and Langford Ginibi, Brett pays tribute to some ancestors who might otherwise be forgotten. She counters some addressees' ignorance and indifference, especially towards her ancestral community.

For Crawford and Langford Ginibi too, imagined readers are significant figures. While Crawford's narratee was her interviewer Chris Walsh, she also hoped that readers would effectively imagine the worlds she had known: 'Here I am goin' over my tracks, takin' people with me. I hope they see them tracks the way I seen 'em, and live the days along with me.'<sup>10</sup> Crawford dedicates her book to 'Gong and our family', but she does so 'in the hope that all Australians will learn to share a better understanding'.<sup>11</sup> In a sense, her text is addressed to 'all Australians', as all are in need of the knowledge it contains. Similarly, Langford Ginibi's implied readers are 'white people' desiring understanding, while her primary narratee is herself, as she explains: 'I knew when I finished this book a weight would be lifted from my mind, not only because I could examine my own life from it and know who I was, but because it may help better the relationship between the Aboriginal and white people. That it might give some idea of the difficulty we have surviving between two cultures, that we are here and will always be here.'<sup>12</sup> Along with her initial dedication to her children, Langford Ginibi dedicates her book to 'every black woman who's battled to raise a family and kept her sense of humour'. *Don't Take Your Love To Town* is addressed to these women in solidarity. It is not primarily a means of imparting new knowledge to them, as it is for white people, but rather a signal that they are not alone. Langford Ginibi addresses her fellow black mothers whether or not they read her book. If they do, they may take relief in the knowledge of their common positions, their shared laughter and tears. In a less direct way, if 'others' read and learn something of 'every black woman's' struggle, many new lines of communication are made possible.

As a member of the imagined community of Australian citizens, I am a primary addressee of *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*. I do not belong to the Baarkanji, Bundjalung or Jewish communities, to which Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett respectively belong. The reading of ancestral knowledge presented in this chapter is necessarily limited to knowledges made public and to those that may be reimagined on my own fan of memory. As I read the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, the folds of my 'fan' are shaped by various intersecting imagined communities and conditions, such as the times, places, sounds, languages and cultural positions of my own life.

## Positions

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<sup>10</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, p ix.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p v.

<sup>12</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), p 269.

The subjectivities of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett interact with the imagined values of their respective ancestral communities, as well as with those represented as national. For administrative purposes, none of the women was born 'Australian'. Brett was granted citizenship as a child, Langford Ginibi was included in the national census at the age of thirty-three and Crawford at thirty-nine. The authors' positions in their diverse diasporic communities and in the national community are very different. However, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett all belong to the first generation in their respective family trees to speak with accents widely acknowledged as Australian and to speak Australian English more fluently than their parents' first languages. Children of the displaced, such as these three, are often expected to assimilate 'silently' with the superculture linked to their acquired accents. However, members of these 'second' generations may confront supercultural representations and 'national' imaginings with their memories and their knowledge of sites of encounter and conflict. From within their contrasting diasporas, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett listen to muted sounds of life and death, birth and destruction, detention and release. Ancestral voices pervade their texts, though they are often mutated by the remembering subjects' spatial and temporal distances from ancestral sites. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett mediate between past and future generations, private and public spheres, and between homelands and communities that no longer exist and those that remain hopes, songs and dreams.

Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett transmit ancestral knowledge in different ways and to varying extents. Crawford enjoyed the most 'traditional' upbringing of the three, but the narrow, public, English-language site of her text limits the extent and nature of the knowledge she includes. In *Over My Tracks*, Crawford remembers and imagines the displaced communities and languages of her parents. Traces and echoes of these communities take many forms in Crawford's memory and in her world of intersecting tracks, where colonisers and colonised meet in camps and schools, on sandhills and stations, in the university and in future generations. In *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, Langford Ginibi revisits her ancestral home, Bundjalung country. Its sounds are adapted and maintained in dynamic ways in Sydney and elsewhere, in pubs and jails, halls and homes, at beaches and universities. In *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, Brett imagines the communities from which her parents were violently displaced, in a Poland where Yiddish was once spoken, sung and danced by whole towns. Brett listens to surviving voices as they transmute and resonate in her own worlds and traces these reverberations in homes, cafes, streets, concert halls and analysts' rooms, from Melbourne to Lodz and Jerusalem to New York.

The entry of the three authors' private recollections into a public sphere has augmented the range of derivations linked to their personal names, as each text explicitly identifies the author with her people. The originally Scottish-Norman name Crawford is now also a Baarkanji name,



Langford (originally Cornish) is rendered Bundjalung, and Brett (Anglo-Norman, denoting one of Breton origin) is now Jewish. Of course the three arrived at these names by various routes, including marriage. In accordance with her parents' plans and Aboriginal law, Crawford married Camilleroi man and fellow drover Gong (Raymond) Crawford at Bourke in 1948. Impulsively and in the absence of both families, Langford Ginibi and fellow bush worker, Anglo man Peter 'Chub' Langford, were married in 1960 in Sydney's Marrickville. In 1990, Langford Ginibi's aunt Eileen Morgan, an elder from Box Ridge mission, gave her the name 'Ginibi', meaning 'black swan'. Brett's parents anglicised the family's names for use 'in public'. Anglo-Australian artist David Rankin is Brett's husband and the illustrator of *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*; her speaking subject is occasionally referred to as 'Mrs Rankin'.<sup>13</sup> Crawford, Langford and Brett, three Anglo-Australian names with non-Anglo connections, meet on the site of their publication in Australian English. Fifty years earlier, around 1949, each author held rather different positions in the nation's collective and intersectional imaginaries.

### **Soundbites and snapshots: 1949**

Within the broad site of twentieth-century Australia, it is useful to reimagine some of the louder events, the 'major' imagined ancestral voices, of the mid-century moment of 1949. Just a few years after the end of World War II, this was something of a turning point – a time of general postwar relief and the beginnings of hope for stability on many levels. This is, arguably, reflected in the generally optimistic popular music of the time. In 1949, Australia's number one hits were all recorded by United States singers, including Spike Jones, Evelyn Knight, Russ Morgan, Vaughan Monroe, Perry Como, Frankie Laine, Louis Armstrong, Al Morgan, Bing Crosby and Gene Autry. Songs included such titles as 'A Little Bird Told Me', 'Powder Your Face with Sunshine', 'Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer', 'Cruising down the River' and 'Some Enchanted Evening'. 33.3 and 45 rpm records were produced for the first time that year. Australian radio in 1949 featured the 'Amateur Hour', the 'Argonauts' Club', 'Tarzan', 'The Air Adventures of Biggles', 'When a Girl Marries', 'Pick-a-Box', 'Blue Hills' and 'Superman'. Television was not introduced into Australia until 1956, but in the United States, 'The Lone Ranger' was already being broadcast and would later become popular in Australia. In 1949 the musical 'Oklahoma!' played in Australia. The official national population reached eight million and Australian citizenship was introduced on 26 January. Until then, Australian-born children of British subjects and naturalised Australian residents had remained British (or Irish) citizens. (The Naturalisation Act of 1903 prohibited the naturalisation of 'aboriginal native[s] of Asia,

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<sup>13</sup> In her poem 'Old', Brett writes: 'my children's friends/ are young men/ who call me/ Mrs Rankin'. Brett, *After the War* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1990), p 123.

Africa, or the Islands of the Pacific, excepting New Zealand'.<sup>14</sup> The Snowy Mountains scheme, an important meeting place for migrants from Europe, commenced in 1949 and Melbourne was selected to host the 1956 Olympic Games. Elsewhere in the world, the NATO Treaty was signed and the Federal German Republic (West Germany) was formed, symbolically ending the threat of Hitler's National Socialism. However, the ideology of race-based segregation was not defeated, even rhetorically, in much of the world, as South Africa's apartheid system was introduced that year.<sup>15</sup>

In 1949, the Australian Department of Immigration celebrated the arrival of the 50 000th displaced person sponsored by the International Refugee Organisation to resettle in Australia. To promote the celebration, the Department requested the selection of an 'attractive female child under 10 accompanying parents who are suitable subject for publicity'.<sup>16</sup> This 'attractive' girl was to be presented to 'the Australian people' as the 50 000th postwar displaced person. The promotion was designed primarily to assure the Australian public of the benefits of accepting 'suitable' displaced persons and of the government's ability to ensure only the 'suitable' were accepted. 'Suitability' had little to do with qualification as a refugee, something to do with Australia's perceived economic and defence needs, and much to do with the then 48-year-old nation state's rulers' imagining of 'their' national community.<sup>17</sup> The Minister for both Immigration and Information in 1949, Arthur Calwell, liked his refugees white but bronzed, in need of a little 'protection' but cheerful and fit to work. In 1947 he had described a shipload of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian displaced persons as 'a choice sample'; they were 'sturdy', 'bronzed' and 'eager'.<sup>18</sup> To Calwell's satisfaction, a 'smiling, flaxen-haired girl of seven' was duly identified and made available to be photographed as the 50 000th displaced person.<sup>19</sup> Maira, with her parents and brother, had fled the Red Army in her native Latvia in 1944 and had been in Germany awaiting resettlement since then.<sup>20</sup> The image of the seven-year-old Maira, with neat blonde plaits tied in white ribbons (along with her brief but 'suitable' political history), represented an ideal object of twentieth-century Australia's national imaginary.

<sup>14</sup> See 'Naturalization, Act No. 11 of 1903', *National Archives of Australia*, [http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/research\\_guides/guides/immig/pages/pic020.htm](http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/research_guides/guides/immig/pages/pic020.htm), and *Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 (Cth)*, <http://www.foundingdocs.gov.au/places/cth/cth13.htm> (visited 12 October 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Peter Thorogood, *The Menzies Era*, [http://svc403.bne025u.server-web.com/years/1949\\_frames.htm](http://svc403.bne025u.server-web.com/years/1949_frames.htm) (visited 23 February 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Secretary of the Immigration Department, TEH Heyes, to Amber (Australian Mission Berlin) [Teleprinter message] 26 July 1949, A434 1949/3/16408, NAA, quoted in Klaus Neumann, *Providing a 'Home for the Oppressed'? Australian Responses to Refugees from the late 1930s to the mid-1960s* (Public lecture sponsored by the National Archives of Australia and the Institute for Social Research, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, 2002), p 2. [http://www.naa.gov.au/About\\_Us/watson\\_neumann3.doc](http://www.naa.gov.au/About_Us/watson_neumann3.doc) (visited 16 October 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Calwell, 'Our first requirement is additional population. We need it for reasons of defence and for the fullest expansion of our economy', Migration. Commonwealth Government Policy – United Kingdom White Paper. 2 August 1945. Hansard: Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, Third Session of the Seventeenth Parliament (First Period) 9 GEO. VI. Vol. 184. Senate and House of Representatives, p 4911.

<sup>18</sup> Calwell is quoted in Ann Smith, 'Searching for General Heintzelman', *Memento* 17 (2001), [http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/memento/ISSUE\\_17/html/heintzelman.htm](http://www.naa.gov.au/Publications/memento/ISSUE_17/html/heintzelman.htm) (visited 8 April 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Calwell is quoted in Neumann, *Providing a 'Home for the Oppressed'?* p 2.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

The Department's publicity criteria reflected its interdependent values. The criterion of attractiveness was met by the racially appropriate 'flaxen' hair and a politically satisfying willingness to smile. Femeness intersected with a touch of exoticism – the chosen girl was 'foreign' but northern European, with a name not too difficult for an English-speaker to pronounce. The prepubescent female served as a somewhat ornamental but versatile object of protection. She would pose no threat to the Australia popularly imagined as the domain of the type of 'Anglo-Celtic' masculinity celebrated in tales of bushrangers, soldiers and stockmen. An absence of 'damage' was apparent in her familial situation. The accompanying parents demonstrated that, while Maira would be grateful for Australia's protection, she was not bringing such problems as familial disruption or bereavement. Her parents' 'suitability for publicity' was evident in their physical health and neat white good looks, the mother's smile directed at the camera and the father's resolute gaze out to an imagined horizon. Maira's father was educated in the useful, non-threatening field of engineering. Finally, political values were satisfied by the family's history. By 1949, Australia's wartime ally, the USSR, had become its principal enemy.

Maira's racial, political and social 'correctness' fulfilled Australia's strict criteria, but she was not a typical displaced person. The less 'ideal' displaced persons were those who showed the effects of their histories as concentration camp inmates and refugees, or, indeed, were deemed less attractive for the same racial reasons Australia's wartime enemies had inflicted these histories upon them. Symptoms of 'unattractiveness' included signs of poor health, lack of or interrupted formal education, effects of violence and darker complexions. Those presenting these symptoms but gaining acceptance for resettlement were expected to remain gratefully inconspicuous in the Australia imagined, like Maira, as 'young' and 'fair'.<sup>21</sup> The ugly experiences of Jewish survivors were acknowledged but expected to go unspoken, if not forgotten, as the 'new Australians' assimilated.

This attitude towards Jewish survivors was empathetic in comparison with the authorities' relations with Indigenous people. In the mid twentieth century, after 150 years of violent colonisation, settler legal authorities continued to classify Indigenous people according to their ratios of Indigenous and non-indigenous forebears. This approach was discursively represented in terms of 'blood', with such categories as 'full blood', 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and those with 'an admixture' or a 'strain' of 'Aboriginal blood'.<sup>22</sup> While White Australia made its

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<sup>21</sup> The national anthem, 'Advance Australia Fair', begins with a call to 'rejoice, for we are young and free'. The Tiddas counter this with their song 'Anthem' (Polygram, 1996, words by Dan Warner): 'We might have been born here, but we're not young and free/ We weren't born yesterday, I'm only liberal by degree/ This land may be beautiful, but it can hardly be called fair/ So don't sing me your anthem, until we've learnt how to share./ We are the lucky country, where anyone can win/ If you were born to the right family and have the white coloured skin'.

<sup>22</sup> These terms are used, respectively, in The Liquor (Amendment) Act 1905 (NSW) s 8(4), The Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897 (Qld) s 4, Aborigines Act Amendment Act 1936 (WA) s 2, The Liquor (Amendment) Act 1905 (NSW) s 8(4) and the Queensland Aboriginal Protection Acts. They are cited in

idiosyncratic distinctions between different categories of European, for example, between ‘Brit’ and ‘Balt’ and between ‘Australian’ and ‘Englishman’, it remained largely ignorant of the diversity of the Indigenous groups who lived in an area larger than Europe. The continent had ample space for a wide range of cultural practice and various histories of trade and cultural relations (among groups on the continent, as well as with northern neighbours on smaller islands, such as Sulawesi, in what is now Indonesia). At the time of colonisation, it is estimated that more than 500 dialects were spoken, making up about 250 distinct languages.<sup>23</sup> However, white authorities saw only ‘full-bloods’, who were expected to die out, and varieties of ‘mixed-bloods’, some of whom, like the chosen immigrants, were required to assimilate. All categories were considered objects of ‘protection’. In the 1890s most Australian colonies had passed Aborigines Protection Acts, giving government representatives authority over most aspects of Indigenous lives. These ‘protectors’ decided where Indigenous people could live, what work they could or must do, if and when they could practise cultural ceremonies and, often, whom they could marry. Some of these Acts were still in force in the late twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> The ruinous effects of colonisation were generally not acknowledged; nor were the effects of the government policy of enforced separation of ‘non-full-blood’ children from their Indigenous mothers.

The buoyant certainty of Australia’s mid-century rulers was related to the young state’s imagined role in the British Empire, its recent military success, its emerging prosperity and racial theories that prevailed, despite the recent memory of what would become known as the Holocaust. Australia’s ‘leaders’ saw themselves in protective roles in a strong, ‘pure’ community. The desire to protect did not lead them to locate the world’s most needy; rather, like their imagined ideal white mother, they wished to produce objects worthy of, rather than in need of, protection. This imaginary was realised in government policies of whiteness, assimilation and protection. The White Australia Policy had been implemented in 1901, with the federal Immigration Restriction Act.<sup>25</sup> In the nineteenth century, Afghan, Chinese, Indonesian,

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Loretta de Plevitz and Larry Croft, ‘Aboriginality Under the Microscope: The Biological Descent Test in Australian Law’, *Queensland University of Technology Law & Justice Journal* 3.1 (2003).

<sup>23</sup> Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, *Encyclopedia of Aboriginal Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994), pp 279, 601, 728, 867, cited in *Australian Social Trends*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) (visited 25 April 2003).

<sup>24</sup> The Queensland *Aboriginal Protection Acts*, for example, were in force until 1984. For a discussion of earlier practices, see Russell McGregor, *Imagined Destinies: Aboriginal Australians and the Doomed Race Theory, 1880-1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> In practice, the act enabled the exclusion of non-whites and those considered politically undesirable. The instrument for exclusion, paragraph (a) of the act, describes prohibited immigrants: ‘Any person who when asked to do so by an officer fails to write out at dictation and sign in the presence of the officer a passage of fifty words in length in an European language directed by the officer;’ Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones, *Australian Nationalism: A Documentary History* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1991), p 136. A notorious application of this condition was the 1934 refusal of entry to Czech communist Egon Kisch, who spoke several European languages, on the basis of a dictation test given in Scottish Gaelic. The term ‘White Australia’ was commonly used in the commercial discourse of the early nation. For example, a 1912 furniture advertisement in *The Sunrise* reads: ‘Is your furniture built by white or yellow labour? “The White Homes of White Australia” are answering this stupendous

Japanese, Indian and Melanesian workers had been indentured or come of their own accord to work in various industries across the continent. However, by the 1890s, they had become the object of fear and resentment, mainly due to concerns over competition from cheap non-European labour. The new twentieth-century nation state remained dependent on migration, but this was to be selective. Immigrants were to be predominantly British and thereafter as racially close to this conception as possible. White imagining of the Australian continent remained fanciful, as it moved from *terra nullius* to 'White Australia'.

The Australian government's proclamations of protection coincided with its practices of exploitation. Twentieth-century pastoral industries depended on largely unpaid Indigenous labour, while manufacturing and construction industries made effective use of non-British immigrants as 'unskilled' labour. In 1949, when Maira's attractive image was displayed around her new country, other young females were equally, though less visibly, part of the government's schemes of protection and exploitation. These included Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. To reimagine the authors' inherited positions in mid-century Australia, in relation to Maira's celebrated position, I now turn to the memories each narrator records of 1949. Unlike 'new Australians', Indigenous people were not yet included in the national census. Crawford and Langford Ginibi, with their extended families, were stateless and repeatedly displaced. In 1949, Crawford's fellow Baarkanji people in Menindee were 'again loaded onto trains' and taken away from their country, some for years, others forever.<sup>26</sup> Crawford herself was a 21-year-old drover and horse-breaker, working for rations in the lucrative cattle industry. She moved horses and cattle across long stretches of rough country and broke horses in on stations. Crawford was married to fellow drover Gong, but forced to work separately from her husband, as they both had to move wherever available work took them. Gong and Crawford had first crossed paths when both were riding with the Tex Morton Show during the war. Morton was a country singer, Australasia's highest-selling recording artist in the 1930s, and significant to the subsequent history of country music recording. His music was conditioned by his time with bush workers like Crawford and Gong; his lyrics ranged from A B 'Banjo' Paterson to 'The Cream In Between', a song about a baby of a white father and young Indigenous mother. In 1949, Crawford's first child, Maree, was three years old. That year, Crawford saw Maree survive concussion after falling off an old wagon and she witnessed her sick and injured old uncle being held in chains by Queensland state police. She ended the year finally reunited with her husband and pregnant with their second daughter.

Langford Ginibi turned fifteen in 1949. Instead of doing her Intermediate Certificate, she left high school that year and took various jobs in Bonalbo. The longest term of these involved

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question in the manner befitting the great White Home-making people of White Australia'. Alomes and Jones, *Australian Nationalism*, p 139.

<sup>26</sup> *Barkindji Today*, <http://www.menindee.org.au/today.html> (visited 12 October 2004).

looking after the Bull family's two little girls and cleaning their farmhouse. On weekends she would borrow the Bulls' pony and ride home singing the hit song of the year, Vaughan Monroe's '(Ghost) Riders in the Sky'. Langford Ginibi recalls her fear of storms as she rode alone, especially after she saw a tree struck by lightning on one of those rides. On another, a wild cat startled the pony as he drank at the creek, where carpet snakes sunned themselves on the banks. Also in 1949, Langford Ginibi received her first proposal of marriage, from 'Pug Mug', a boy who wrote her letters and met her at weekend football games. Shortly after this, she moved to Sydney's Redfern, to live with her sister, father and stepmother. Here Langford Ginibi began an apprenticeship as a machinist at the Brachs' clothing factory.<sup>27</sup> Langford Ginibi's employers, the Brachs family, were Jewish. In Sydney and especially in Melbourne, the postwar 'Yiddish rag trade', or '*schmatte* business', became a foundation for today's fashion industries.<sup>28</sup>

Brett was in Melbourne in 1949, three years old, like Crawford's daughter Maree. Like Maira Kalnins, Brett was a 'new Australian', spending her second year in Australia with her diminished extended family. This family was a fraction of what it had been just a decade earlier, before the Nazis took control in Poland. Rose and Max, as Brett's parents became known in Australia, were from Lodz, the city with the second largest Jewish community in pre-Holocaust Poland. Max had come from a prosperous family, while Rose (or Rooshka) was the youngest child in a poor but hospitable and educated family. Like most Polish Jewish survivors, this family had suffered extreme bereavement. The survival and reunion of both Brett's parents, who had married before transportation to the camps, was a statistical exception. Now in Melbourne, like Langford Ginibi in Sydney, they worked shifts in *schmatte* trade factories, alongside other non-British Australians. Brett addresses her parents in 'Three Days Later':

Three  
days  
after  
arriving  
in  
this  
blue  
cloudless  
country  
you  
were

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<sup>27</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, pp 39-42.

<sup>28</sup> *Hindsight*, ABC Radio National, 3 June 2001: 'Glowweave, Portmans, Rockmans, Sussan ... just some of the fashion giants that grew out of the rag trade, or *schmatte* business, as it's known within the Jewish community. The post-war *schmatte* trade, many of whose pioneers were Holocaust survivors, flourished in the busy back lanes of Sydney and Melbourne..., churning out the glamorous gear of Australia's fashion leaders.' <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/history/hindsight/stories/s309972.htm> (visited 7 November 2002).

sitting  
behind  
  
a  
sewing machine  
  
putting  
parts  
of pyjamas  
  
together  
together.<sup>29</sup>

In 1949, 'Australia' imagined itself as white and prosperous, while the not-so-white, not-so-prosperous and not-quite-Australian worked on the land and in the factories to feed that imaginary.

Of course, Australian ur-narratives acknowledged the poor but tough battler in the bush, but he was Anglo-Celtic and male. He was represented by the late nineteenth-century bushranger Ned Kelly, variations of Banjo Paterson's 1902 'Man from Snowy River' and by the Australian soldiers in the 1915 battle of Gallipoli in Turkey. Throughout the twentieth century, Indigenous Australians used various modes to rewrite such narratives. Indeed, John Stokes suggests that Indigenous mimicry and transposition of settler narratives began long before the twentieth century: 'Early settlers here found to their dismay that the Australians could mimic any sound they heard, from a dingo's howl to a Scottish brogue.'<sup>30</sup> Transpositions of sounds and sensibilities, adaptations of humour, skills, defiance and bravery, were survival strategies and cultural articulations in Indigenous communities. There are many examples of interaction with national narratives in Indigenous country music, in the work of artists who crossed paths with Langford Ginibi and who covered similar ground to Crawford. Indigenous women representing and rearranging the mythical strengths of bushrangers, horsemen and soldiers include singers such as Ella Kelly, Auriel Andrew and Wilga Williams. Kelly fronted her family band, the Kelly Gang (as Ned Kelly's band of bushrangers was also known). Andrew, brought up in the bush, released 'Truck Driving Woman' in 1970, transposing the traditional horseman's qualities. After her service in the Australian air force, Williams, with her husband Harry and their band, the Country Outcasts, sang Harry's compositions. These included renarrations, with 'soldierly' elements, such as 'The Ghost of the Jolly Old Swagman', 'Blue Gums Calling Me Back Home' and 'Streets of Fitzroy'.<sup>31</sup>

Like these Indigenous artists and in contrast with the strong men of national ur-narratives, Holocaust survivors arriving in Australia in the late 1940s were seldom represented in popular imagination. When noticed, they were seen as physically weak but potentially and threateningly

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<sup>29</sup> Lily Brett, 'Three Days Later', *The Auschwitz Poems* (Melbourne: Scribe, 1986), p 109.

<sup>30</sup> John Stokes, program notes, Fourth National Aboriginal Country Music Festival, Adelaide 1979, quoted in Clinton Walker, *Buried Country: The Story of Aboriginal Country Music* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000), p 180.

<sup>31</sup> See Walker, *Buried Country*, pp 12, 166, 170, 181, 205.

intellectual. This is evident in some life writing of Anglo-Celtic Australians who remember the ‘reffos’, as refugees and survivors were known, arriving in their suburbs or schools, and in the work of survivors themselves. Rather than considering the reasons for any physical frailty, popular imagination responded largely with fear and sometimes scorn. This response was encouraged by the government, academy, press, League of Rights and Returned Servicemen’s League, which all contributed to representations of Jews as communists, anti-British Zionist terrorists or wealthy smugglers.<sup>32</sup> Despite meeting the strict criteria for immigration, Brett and her parents faced such attitudes. However, in her texts, Brett focuses on her parents’ memories and on the other place, Poland, as the pervasive experience in Australia. The absent ‘then’ and ‘there’ make their ‘presence’ felt more than the actual presence of an anxious white nation.

### **Ghosts and Angels: Ancestral links and lessons**

For Crawford and Langford Ginibi too, the absent ‘then’ and ‘there’ make their presence felt in many ways, including the ghosts of known ancestors – the *gurrnki* or *guhneet* for Crawford’s people and *moggi* for Langford Ginibi’s – and the sounds of curlews and other birds, bringing messages from distant places.<sup>33</sup> Such signs are usually invisible or inaudible in supercultural readings of Australian history. However, with their publication, *Over My Tracks, Don’t Take Your Love To Town, After the War* and *Unintended Consequences* enter the national imaginary and participate in its writing of history. The texts use the language of the nation to point to other communities that have been brought into conversation with national imagining. All ancestral communities are imagined, in that descendants cross temporal borders to reconstruct them. However, separation from parents and/or grandparents, extensive loss of life, dispossession and displacement can render the loss of ancestors more acute and the reconstruction of community more complex. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett draw on memories of childhood to reconstruct their ancestral communities, but their childhoods are severed from ancestral ways, hanging on by a few bloodstained threads. Of course, all cultural life is dynamic and it could be said that every new generation, in every culture, is severed from its predecessor. However, few are as suddenly and violently disconnected as those of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. While the differences between colonisation and the Holocaust are significant, they share some general effects. Colonisation devastated and reshaped Crawford’s and Langford Ginibi’s ancestral communities. The Holocaust devastated and reshaped Brett’s.

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<sup>32</sup> Antisemitism in the academy, for example, led to the rejection of Viennese-born philosopher Sir Karl Popper by the University of Queensland in 1938 and the University of Sydney in 1945. For analysis of attitudes to asylum seekers and displaced persons from the 1930s to the 1950s (and comparison with current attitudes), see Suzanne Rutland, ‘Postwar Jewish “boat people” and parallels with the Tampa incident’, *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* 16 (2002), pp 159-76.

<sup>33</sup> See Crawford, pp 42, 225, and Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, pp 16, 92.



Crawford's birthplace lies outside her traditional Baarkanji land, but shares with it the Darling River. Further south, this river forms the central feature of Baarkanji land and is known as 'Barka'. The Baarkanji form the largest language group in the state of New South Wales.<sup>34</sup> They were dispersed throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but many still live on their traditional land. As a child, Crawford was given a traditional education:

The white man's school was only a part of our life, and not the most important part. We had the white feller school all day, then in the afternoon we'd have to learn all our Aboriginal training. Our teachers were our grandparents and our oldest aunty – in our customs she's our second mother. ... But the most special teachers were uncles – our Mum's brothers, not Dad's.<sup>35</sup>

Crawford's uncles taught her to track and identify birds and animals, to identify birds', snakes' and goannas' eggs and to share and sustain various food sources. She learnt about bush medicine, astronomy, bark painting, pottery, carving, grass weaving, dancing, languages and childcare. This education was interrupted when the family moved to Brewarrina mission, but resumed after the escape, by which time Crawford was old enough to travel to a traditional Baarkanji site for corroborees, initiation and further education. Here, along with many of her relatives, she learnt more about medical care, especially in childbirth, while the boys completed their initiation programs. She also learnt to locate water under rocks and sand, to cook for a crowd and to paint with ochres, taking care not to waste the colours. All this knowledge proved useful in Crawford's adult life, not only in practical ways in the bush, but also as a link to the community that was dispersed and forced off its land, into different ways of eating, speaking, loving and learning.

Langford Ginibi was born at Box Ridge mission in her Bundjalung country, on the far north coast of New South Wales. As an infant, she listened to 'Old man Ord' (known to the children as *nyathung* or 'grandfather') tell stories and sing in Bundjalung, but he died shortly after Langford Ginibi began school. Then, when she was six, her mother left the family; this was a significant break in Langford Ginibi's links to her family and ancestors. General conditions for Indigenous people in the 1930s and 1940s led to other ruptures. Mission life and then wartime work around Bonalbo left Langford Ginibi's father, aunts and uncles little space for traditional education. However, she was able to stay with family members throughout her childhood and learnt many ancestral lessons, including strategies for survival of colonisation. After many years in Sydney, Langford Ginibi returned to Bundjalung country, met with fellow Bundjalung people and read about those who maintained ancestral cultural and spiritual practices. She was

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<sup>34</sup> *Far West Community Technology Centre*, [http://wentworth.communitytechnology.net.au/about\\_ctc/](http://wentworth.communitytechnology.net.au/about_ctc/) (visited 27 November 2002).

<sup>35</sup> Crawford, p 26.

surprised and relieved to find that her connections to her people and her land had not been irrevocably cut by colonisation: 'The hair was standing up on the back of my neck. Here was information about a culture I had lost when I came to Sydney. Only it wasn't lost. There was a direct line from Uncle Ernie Ord to the woman singing in the lingo at Yamba, calling the porpoises in, to people like Aunt Millie Boyd and Lorraine Mafi-Williams and Mary Cowlan.'<sup>36</sup> Langford Ginibi's ancestral education was interrupted and its modes changed, but it remained one of survival.

Brett did not receive a traditional Jewish education, though her upbringing as a survivors' child, born displaced, is perhaps a new, post-Holocaust form of Jewish education. Like Langford Ginibi's and Crawford's older relatives, Melbourne's displaced Yiddish-speaking community assists younger generations to imaginatively reconstruct that which was destroyed. However, this assistance is tempered by the various constraints of the survivors' own memories and White Australian forgetting, as are educational practices of Indigenous elders. Colonisation pervades Indigenous identity and the Holocaust has come to pervade Jewish identity. It is difficult for the next generation to reconstruct, in Brett's case, the pre-Holocaust Lodz her Polish- and Yiddish-speaking parents knew. As an Australian child, before she was able to travel to Poland and attempt an imaginative reconstruction at the scene of the crime, Brett was mainly aware of paradoxical loud silences and absent ancestral presences:

It was hard  
to be heard  
in our house  
  
a loud chorus  
sang  
the main score  
  
dead people  
with strong  
voices  
  
an aria  
of saints  
and angels  
  
a  
scattered  
madrigal  
  
a  
doomed  
dirge  
  
it's  
your aunty Fela  
your uncle Felix  
  
your cousin Mara

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<sup>36</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 261.

your sister Hannah  
your brother  
your brother  
your mother  
your father ...<sup>37</sup>

Like many Holocaust survivors' children, Brett has lived without the physical presence of grandparents: 'My grandmother/ two words/ I've rarely/ put together'.<sup>38</sup> However, their absence, alongside that of all the other relatives, emerges as a constant historical reminder and an everyday hindrance. The grandparents' memories, passed on by their bereaved children, enable Brett's generation to reconstruct links. Brett tells how, when she was fifteen, the family received the only photograph it would ever possess of one of her grandparents. It was of her maternal grandfather, Israel Spindler, and had been found by a distant relative in America. The photograph is now enlarged, framed and on Brett's wall, representing a form of ancestral 'angel'. She sees in it her daughter's eyes, her son's mouth and much more that relates to her sensitive, beautiful mother's past. Brett was originally named 'Luba' after her maternal grandmother; her mother continued to use the diminutive 'Liebala' in Australia.<sup>39</sup> Stories, an image and a name enable the reconstruction of links, but, for the survivor, the premature loss of too many lives overshadows the pleasure of small continuities. This loss also halts aspects of the grieving survivors' lives. Brett's parents never quite arrive in the sanctuary of Australia. Voices of those left behind accompany and detain these survivors, however distant the scene of parting and however seemingly tranquil the diasporic haven. The survivors are drowned out in their refuge, both by loud local voices entering the house and by the ghosts of people who were taken away and never given a proper burial. There are moments of arrival, but these are repeatedly intercepted by the call of distant choruses.

Crawford's memories are often of the absence of an 'our house', but are also punctuated by the loud silences of separation. Before the move to the mission, Crawford, her sister Gladys and their parents camped near her paternal grandparents in sandhills near their traditional land. The girls witnessed two accidental fires in their beloved grandparents' camp. Their grandmother died in the first, their grandfather in the second. Then, at the mission, they lived with a range of displaced and grieving people. Mission management attempted to cut ancestral links, but there were moments when strong dead voices resonated, though their sounds had changed. One such moment was the claypan dance, when each member of the fragmentary but newly extended 'family' had a role to play. Preparation for the dance involved clearing the claypan, killing a kangaroo or emu and mincing its meat. Crawford remembers:

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<sup>37</sup> Brett, 'A Chorus', *Unintended Consequences*, p 35.

<sup>38</sup> Brett, 'My Grandmother', *The Auschwitz Poems*, p 95.

<sup>39</sup> See Brett, 'Food', *In Full View*, pp 221-23.

For music they had an accordion and a mouth organ. One feller had an old violin with only two strings but he could play a lot of tunes on it. The gum leaf was a favourite instrument, all the boys played gum leaves. Girls weren't supposed to, makin' music was a man's thing. That's why I didn't play the accordion, at least not openly, till I grew up. ... They danced waltzes and barn dances, quicksteps – you should've seen the dust rise when the dancin' got goin'.<sup>40</sup>

The dance was a rare moment of escape from surveillance. While most of the instruments, tunes and steps had entered the repertoire from Europe, through interactions in the pastoral industries, the organisation and structures of the evening followed ancestral forms. They enabled the dancers, musicians and eaters to imagine the voices of their various ancestors, to gesture to their regulations and to remember the dust rising from other dance floors.

In her early childhood, back at the Yantabulla sandhills, Crawford had participated in ancestral 'Aboriginal dances' with her family. These were performed 'only in the camps', never at the school, where the children learnt the Irish jig and reel to the accompaniment of her Uncle Archie's accordion.<sup>41</sup> In the public space of her book, Crawford's narrative also focuses on intercultural, rather than ancestral, encounters. However, she does elaborate on the education she received from the elders in the bush around Yantabulla, which included dancing: 'All kids learnt some corroboree dancing and it was great. Leaves were tied around your ankles and every time you stamped your foot they rattled. You made a big noise and shook all over. We learnt that there was more to dancing than just jumpin' around.'<sup>42</sup> Ancestral education was enjoyable and hard work, but primarily a means of survival. As they walked for miles in the bush with an elder, Crawford and other children were expected to demonstrate their knowledge of food sources and catching methods: 'If we didn't, they'd go back and report to our teacher that we knew nothing, and we'd have to concentrate better. Even little kids knew why. For us it was survival, and no one could learn it for us.' Baarkanji children were also expected to identify their own areas of strength or interest: 'We all learnt the basics in all parts of Aboriginal learning, so that we knew enough to make a sensible choice. Then we "specialized" in the thing we were best at, or were really interested in.'<sup>43</sup> Crawford specialised in drawing and painting, until this education was disrupted by the move to the mission.

Later, after the escape from the mission, Crawford completed 'tertiary' Baarkanji education at Mootawingee, an important Baarkanji site. This was co-ordinated by Mootawingee elders, who 'sent the message along that the special ceremonial time for kids of a certain age to be initiated was coming.' Crawford recalls the elders' message being sent 'a long, long time ahead because

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<sup>40</sup> Crawford, pp 73-74.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, p 22.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p 36.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p 35.

for lots of people it was a hell of a long way. It took us months, workin' on the way as Dad mostly did.'<sup>44</sup> Large groups of people travelled long distances to take part in this 'big corroboree time', filling Mootawingee Station with camps, where 'people would be sittin' on logs and rocks at their own fires, all laughin' and talkin' at the top of their voice from once camp to another, passin' news on'.<sup>45</sup> Education at Mootawingee was extensive and the corroborees were impressive, lasting from mid-afternoon until late at night. Both lessons and performances were inextricably connected with the land on which they took place. Crawford describes aspects of a corroboree: 'A man would stand on the hill and he'd sing. His voice would go right down the hill and all around. It was so strong it would carry way, way off./ Then you'd see the dancers comin' from way down the end of the creek, all done up in their paint and feathers and leaves...' The sounds of the corroboree depended on the forms of the land, as well as the ancestral knowledge of the performers. Instruments included the 'emu drum', a piece of timber, cleaned out and waxed in, with one small hole: 'You blew in it and it sounded like a bass drum. You could conjure up emus with it'.<sup>46</sup> 'Clever people' played special boomerangs: 'You'd hear a light sound, then it'd go into a deep tone and out again, just like waves in the water. ... If you watched the hands of those boomerang fellers they'd be goin' just like they had the shakes, and they could keep it up for hours.' Corroboree clap sticks – 'one big flat one and one little round one' – were also specially crafted: 'It was just like runnin' the scales on a piano if they tapped from one end of the flat stick to the other. It was the special wood they used and the way they made 'em.'<sup>47</sup> These ancestral sounds, in their ancestral place, remained with Crawford as she moved around, on and off Baarkanji land, throughout her long working life. She came to think of Brewarrina as 'home' because of the many years she and Gong had spent there, but when she decided to retire there after working in other places, she found Brewarrina was no longer 'the same town'.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, her ancestral home, Baarkanji land, retained its special qualities, despite the ruptures and complications of colonisation and displacement. Mootawingee, especially, 'stayed a very special place' to Crawford throughout her life.<sup>49</sup>

While Sydney became 'home' to Langford Ginibi, Bonalbo and Bundjalung country remained her 'belongin place'.<sup>50</sup> In 1986 she returned to Bonalbo for her old school's seventy-fifth anniversary. Langford Ginibi recalls the drive into her ancestral home. As the Richmond Range comes into view, she and her sisters sing along to their tape of Kenny Rogers singing *Ruby Don't Take Your Love to Town*. Langford Ginibi humorously applies the song's lyrics to events in her personal history, making 'Ruby' the song's subject and bemoaning her own past

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p 101.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p 105.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p 106.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p 107.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p 317.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p 114.

<sup>50</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 239.

decisions: ‘I turned on a high black mama voice and patted my chest. “I took my love to town too many times!” and burst out laughing’.<sup>51</sup> This song revives bittersweet memories of Langford Ginibi’s loves, won and lost, and the women exchange looks, laugh and fall silent. Meanwhile, the sight of Mt Lindsay through the van windows evokes ‘Old Uncle Roy’, a timber-getting mate of the sisters’ father. Uncle Roy used to sing to the children ‘in the lingo’ about Mt Lindsay and now the remembered sound of his voice interrupts both Kenny Rogers and the sisters’ reflective silence.<sup>52</sup> It is the sound of the Bundjalung and Githebul area to which the women belong and return. However, it also evokes the effects of colonialism. To support their families, Uncle Roy and the sisters’ father had to cut down trees in their own country, in the Taloomie scrub where the ‘timber was so very tall’.<sup>53</sup> The sound of ‘axes ringing’ was as much part of Langford Ginibi’s childhood as the sounds of the elders’ voices, the cows and horses, the baker’s caged crow calling ‘There’s blackfellers in the shop!’ and Richard Tauber singing on the gramophone.<sup>54</sup>

On Mt Lindsay Highway in 1986, Langford Ginibi’s thoughts move from Uncle Roy to Aunt Millie Boyd, a local cleverwoman she has heard about. Her thoughts are interrupted by the state border crossing and tick-gate, further signs of a colonialism unaware of and indifferent to Bundjalung ancestral boundaries. Then the Woodenbong road brings back different memories. At Woodenbong the eighteen-year-old Langford Ginibi had saved her first child’s infant life, only to see him die when he reached eighteen himself. She describes her sense of futility as she passes that place, and her response – to sing loudly, to Peggy Lee’s ‘I’m a Woman’, which happens to be on her sister’s tape. These moments in the van with her sisters, on the road home through ancestral places, trace some of Langford Ginibi’s entangled memories. Despite apparent incongruities in remembered and reproduced sounds, in vocalised and silent modes of remembrance, all her memories are interlinked. They all relate to her survival of colonisation as a Bundjalung woman and they recognise ancestral links between places and lives, despite the relocation of some cultural meanings. Although colonialism led to Langford Ginibi’s father cutting timber here, the Taloomie scrub and Mt Lindsay live on. While ancestral songs have been broken and Langford Ginibi is better able to sing the words of twentieth-century superculture, the voices of the ancestors still resonate and Langford Ginibi adapts her new words to ancestral melodies and their silences.

Like Langford Ginibi’s, Crawford’s ancestral links were cut when, after the mission experience, her mother took Crawford’s sister Gladys and moved into town. Crawford spent some time with her father, but he had to move on alone, to find work. She then lived with aunts. The community

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<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p 242.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*, pp 30, 242.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p 242.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, pp 7, 9, 15. Richard Tauber was a popular European tenor in the 1920s and 1930s. Born in Austria, with a father classified as half-Jewish, he fled to England in 1938.

was increasingly difficult to piece together, as was her husband's Camilleroi clan. When Crawford married Gong, her mother's relatives gathered to spend time with him, in accordance with convention, to explain what was expected of a Baarkanji woman's husband. Crawford and her family were disappointed by the absence of Gong's relatives:

Gong's mum was dead and his old white dad said he didn't want to mess around with blackfeller things, neither did his brother, Swinger, or his sisters. His other brothers, Tom and Dickens, really loved Gong, but they were away working. ...

There was so much about Gong's culture I should have been told at that time but didn't learn till well into our life together, as Gong passed it on to our kids.<sup>55</sup>

Displaced generations are compelled to improvise their ancestral voices. Crawford and Gong enjoyed a close, if sometimes improvised marriage, until he died, at fifty-three or fifty-four, of a heart attack. On his death, Crawford recalls a sense of absence of self, not unlike that described by Brett on her mother's death. After her bereavement, Brett goes on to engage in Holocaust research, spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on psychoanalysis and travel to Lodz and Jerusalem in search of her mother's ghosts. She locates ancestral sites, but they are no longer those her mother knew. Brett's search ends (or pauses) with another absence:

a  
grey  
angel  
has ...  
stalked  
the sky  
to  
summons  
you  
but  
where  
am I? <sup>56</sup>

In their texts, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett repair and reconstruct ruptured links between the narrating subjects and their ancestors. These ancestral links take many forms. They sometimes disrupt the narrator's movements in her other imagined communities, so that her various positions and subjectivities become difficult to distinguish, identify and remember. At the same time, in the narrators' memories, the links take the form of lessons for survival in the various communities in which the descendants move.

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<sup>55</sup> Crawford, pp 159-60.

<sup>56</sup> Brett, 'A Grey Angel', *Unintended Consequences*, pp 37-38.

### Languages, loss and a little laughter

As 'Australian' and ancestral voices intersect, they compete for space. The silencing of some ghosts makes room for the imagination of others. Unlike her parents, Brett's speaking subject is distant enough from her Yiddish ancestors' practices and lands to sometimes romanticise aspects of them. While Crawford values the practical advantages her traditional knowledge and multilingualism sometimes gave her, Brett approaches the Jewish world that is part of her inheritance from an almost monolingual position. Brett's language is Australian English and her music Western rock, but she moves around thresholds of Yiddish, Polish, Hebrew, German, Western classical music, Jewish liturgical music, klezmer and folk. These various sounds interrupt each other in unexpected places. For Brett, as for Crawford and Langford Ginibi, tradition comes to mean reducing the volume of dominant, national sounds to hear ancestral lessons and finding ways to transmit lessons to future generations. As Langford Ginibi is silenced by the memory of Uncle Roy's voice, so Crawford recalls the 'very, very loud voice' of her fellow horse taylor in 1948, old Jimmy Galton, who had been trained since childhood in corroboree singing.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, Brett is 'mesmerised' by the big Rabbi Groner:

he is speaking  
in Yiddish Hebrew and English

his Yiddish  
envelops the graves  
enriches the air  
sweetens the stones

he sways in prayer  
this big man ...

and  
then he sings  
Kaddish ...

and  
walks away  
as immense  
as he arrived.<sup>58</sup>

Like the rising dust on the mission claypan, the rabbi's presence is a momentary reminder of sites of escape from the sense of impotence imposed by other authorities. His powerful voice refuses to grant English the excessive airspace it usually demands. Likewise, Crawford's Wankamurrah-speaking Granny learnt all her in-laws' languages and spoke English only to white people. Her voice was 'big' and everyone 'listened when she talked'.<sup>59</sup> The sound of the Hebrew mourner's prayer inspires hope in the midst of grief, as the smoke of the Baarkanji

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<sup>57</sup> Crawford, p 164.

<sup>58</sup> Brett, 'Rabbi Groner', *After The War*, pp 67-69.

<sup>59</sup> Crawford, pp 2, 15.



mourner's fire comforts and protects. With such hope and comfort, descendants continue reconstruction of their lost ancestral communities.

For Langford Ginibi too, her ancestral language, the Bundjalung 'lingo', is a source of reassurance, excitement and hope. Langford Ginibi's parents spoke to her in Bundjalung when she was a baby, but she grew up in Bonalbo without hearing the language and found that she could remember only some words and phrases in adulthood. However, on hearing Bundjalung spoken again after around twenty-six years, Langford Ginibi describes 'the strangest feeling' – an evocation of long-forgotten smells, images and sensations.<sup>60</sup> One string of images and sounds recalled by Langford Ginibi relates to the role of Bundjalung in Uncle Ernie's healing of a sick Mrs Breckenridge at Box Ridge:

I watched him go to his tin trunk and take out an old tobacco tin where he kept the hair of his dead father. He warmed it on the fire-bucket by rubbing his hands together. ... I saw him put his hand with the hair on it, to her forehead. He sang and chanted in the lingo and stayed there for about an hour. When he came out he told us to be quiet, she was sleeping. She slept for a few hours and then she got up and set about doing her work.<sup>61</sup>

Much later, in the 1960s at Sydney's Martin Place, the sound of Bundjalung reconnected Langford Ginibi to her drowned-out memories, to people, places and her history. It was National Aborigines' Day and, with the Police Band sitting behind her, Langford Ginibi was surprised to hear and see Uncle Jim Morgan, from Casino and Bonalbo, singing in Bundjalung on the dais – 'an eerie feeling in amongst the skyscrapers'.<sup>62</sup> Langford Ginibi and Uncle Jim were pleased to see each other, having not met since she was at school; it was 'like meeting someone from your own town in another country'. This was to be their last meeting, but even after his death, Uncle Jim's voice continued to educate and reassure Langford Ginibi. His obituary filled in some missing links:

"A full-blood Aborigine, Mr Morgan was known as 'the last of the Dyrabba tribe'" Dyrabba? That was the name of our street in Bonalbo. "... He was a fluent speaker of Bunjalong [spelt that way] and had a working knowledge of the twelve dialects in the Bunjalong area which extends from Ipswich to Grafton ... He made many recordings for the Richmond River Historical Society ..."

... I decided to write to the RRHS for the tapes.<sup>63</sup>

Despite significant differences in cultural and diasporic history, Langford Ginibi, Brett and Crawford have similar roles in the representation of memories to readers whose historical

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<sup>60</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 135.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p 8.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*, p 117.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.*, p 117, Langford Ginibi's insertion.

education has suffered imbalances. They do not remember life before white domination in Australia or before the Holocaust in Poland, but they are subject to the effects of their parents' memories. These effects vary from subject to subject, as is evident in Doris Brett's contestation of Brett's representations of their mother. Rather than uniformly assimilating, in accordance with government plans, second-generation Australians show great diversity. What they share is a possibility of transmitting their readings of first-generation memories to the third generation and to wider audiences. Their familiarity with multiple discursive modes leads to knowledges outside national imaginaries, knowledges that are part of national reality. They challenge notions of Australia as a haven of integration, as well as its cultures of forgetting, as they identify gains and losses. However, despite such decolonising practices, forms of internal colonisation are sustained as second-generation Australians share the effects of the institutions of education and employment bequeathed by colonisers. Many are pressured, by parents and state, to relinquish 'unsuitable' languages, cultural practices and expectations. Langford Ginibi, Brett and Crawford represent three unique but manifold, shifting subjectivities, who simultaneously challenge and celebrate aspects of a nation of which they are now officially part. In these activities they are representative of second-generation Australian citizens.

The authors' multilingual parents remain on different thresholds of the varieties of Australian English used in their daughters' published texts. Brett writes that her parents spoke Polish with each other, while using their limited English with her. Her mother also wanted Brett to study German, as a form of intellectual insurance.<sup>64</sup> In contrast, Crawford remembers speaking her mother's Baarkanji and her schoolmates' Burunji:

There were eleven of us in our mob, mainly *Baarkanji* kids, all related. There were other classes too, different tribes – *Muruwadi*, *Wankamurrah*, *Burunji* and *Ngemba*. Their languages are different, but closely related. All tribal kids could speak *Burunji* because the words were easy to pick up and put together. But when you got older, say thirteen, fifteen, you had to talk the language of your tribe.<sup>65</sup>

These memories are from the time outside the mission. Crawford maintained her languages, but it took the third generation, her youngest son, to bring her back to a mediatory role she had learnt and inherited from her grandmother. In the 1930s, in Crawford's first week at school, the young white teacher seemed to cry constantly. Granny was called in from her cooking work at the hotel across the road. She diagnosed loneliness, as this was the teacher's first time away from her family. Granny introduced an early morning milk break, during which Crawford and other children taught the teacher Burunji words. Friendly, fruitful relations developed. Forty years later, Crawford again found herself in a classroom, translating for a white teacher. Her

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<sup>64</sup> See Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View*, pp 325-28.

<sup>65</sup> Crawford, pp 26-27.

sick child had started school and needed her there to help him up and down the stairs. Here, in the 1970s, the kindergarten teacher had similar language problems to those Crawford's first teacher had had in the 1930s. Crawford had meanwhile inherited her grandmother's 'big voice'. From this voluntary work, she went on to study, become a teacher's aide and later TAFE Aboriginal Regional Coordinator. While in this final role, Crawford met her cousin Badger at the football one Saturday. Badger had been raised by their Granny and spoke Baarkanji more fluently than English, so he and Crawford sat and talked in Baarkanji. Crawford recalls a young policeman's reaction the following Monday:

"Mrs Crawford, I never ever heard people speak Aboriginal language before. A few words on TV, but to be near people really talking it!"

"Where did you hear it?"

"You, at the match, and Badger, having a good old go. What were you talking about? It must have been something funny, 'cos he was sittin up on the hill, laughing away."<sup>66</sup>

This friendly response, especially from a policeman, is not typical of general white attitudes, but it is exemplary of a changing environment in the late 1980s. In national discourse and in parts of the population, cultural diversity became an object of celebration. This had useful effects, but also enabled exoticisation of the 'non-Anglo-Celtic', to which several second-generation writers have responded with humour.

Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are among those who respond with a 'strain' or 'admixture' of humour. Of her texts, Brett writes: 'I interspersed the past and its horror with humour and love, as it is interspersed in my real life.'<sup>67</sup> Like several other writers whose migrant parents learnt English in Australia, Brett spent much of her childhood searching for the vocabulary her parents needed: 'They searched for the right word in many of their sentences, and were wildly impressed when I could come up with it. ... I became adept at producing multiple possibilities for an elusive word. The admiration I received for this ability inspired me to stretch my vocabulary to its limits.'<sup>68</sup> Languages mutate constantly, and at quicker tempos when displacement and the entry of speakers of other languages contribute to their transmutations. The English language is distantly related to Yiddish, even more distantly to Polish, and unrelated to Baarkanji and Bundjalung (until interactions since colonisation).<sup>69</sup> However, English as used by Crawford, Langford Ginibi, Brett and their families carries traces of ancestral uses of those distant languages. These traces take many forms, including the vocabulary-searching strategies of a mediating child and articulations of ancestral humour and

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<sup>66</sup> Crawford, p 287.

<sup>67</sup> Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View*, p 330.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p 324.

<sup>69</sup> English, Yiddish and Polish all belong to the Indo-European language tree. English and Yiddish stem from the Germanic branch, while Polish stems from the Slavic branch.

other attitudes. This presence of ancestral traces does not render these language communities any less cohesive, emplaced or effective than the imagined monolingual Australian superculture. Australian English, like every language, clearly bears innumerable, diverse ancestral strains, but it is sometimes used, as Ian Anderson points out, to imply that its non-Anglo speakers represent ‘unfortunate ‘hybrids’’ who ‘belong nowhere and have no history’.<sup>70</sup> In contrast with such views, the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett represent (English) language communities – rural Indigenous, urban Aboriginal and urban Jewish – that improvise, expand possibilities for meaning and communicate in both local and ancestral ways. Suvendrini Perera writes that Langford Ginibi’s texts ‘represent an active process of negotiating with and surviving in a dominant culture that persistently devalues, degrades and disappears her history’. The communities depicted, suggests Perera, represent ‘a resourceful, energetic and vital culture that creates and copes, makes do, improvises and gets by, that incorporates the pain and injustice of living and responds with laughter, anger, art and play; that maintains itself, resists and does not let go: *survival culture*’.<sup>71</sup>

In Sydney’s Aboriginal communities, English becomes a dynamic, adapted ‘lingo’. Langford Ginibi’s community around Redfern was made up of people from many different language groups, some, like Langford Ginibi, fluent only in English, others more fluent in their ancestral languages. Indigenous music in twentieth-century Sydney was created and performed by similarly diverse artists, most singing in English. In the 1960s and 1970s, Langford Ginibi often attended events at the Foundation For Aboriginal Affairs cultural centre, known as ‘the Foundation’. The Foundation nurtured such artists as Jimmy Little, Col Hardy, Candy Williams and Mac Silver.<sup>72</sup> Langford Ginibi knew all these performers. Her daughter Dianne’s wedding reception was held at the Foundation in 1970, with Mac Silver and Black Lace playing.<sup>73</sup> Langford Ginibi closes her text with a football presentation dance in the 1980s, with Silver and Black Lace performing again.<sup>74</sup> Silver died in 1989, shortly after the publication of *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* and the first recordings of his own work. As well as creating significant moments in Langford Ginibi’s memoir soundtrack, Silver exemplified inner Sydney’s diasporic Indigenous adaptations of language. Silver moved to the Redfern area from rural New South Wales in the 1960s. He took over the Foundation house band, naming it the Silver Linings (in reference to the saying, ‘every dark cloud has a silver lining’) at a time when Indigenous Australians were colloquially referred to as ‘dark’ or ‘darkies’, among other things. By the

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<sup>70</sup> Ian Anderson, ‘Reclaiming Tru-ger-nan-ner: Decolonising the Symbol’, *Art Monthly* 66 (December 1993-February 1994), p 14, quoted in Suvendrini Perera, “‘You Were Born To Tell These Stories’: The Edu-ma-cations of Doctor Ruby”, *Meridian* 17.1 (1998), p 19.

<sup>71</sup> Perera, “‘You Were Born To Tell These Stories’”, p 22, Perera’s emphasis.

<sup>72</sup> *Aboriginal Organisations in Sydney*, [http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/print/theme5\\_p.htm](http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/print/theme5_p.htm) (visited 12 October 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 157.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p 269.

1970s, the band was renamed Black Lace, ‘not only after the chains once clamped around Aboriginal men’s necks [as witnessed by Crawford in 1949], but also after the sprawling social network from which the band drew its shifting members’.<sup>75</sup> Black Lace’s sound has been described as ‘country-rock with a Latin tinge, ... a joyous, freeing sound’.<sup>76</sup> Like Langford Ginibi and the rest of her urban community, Black Lace adapted a range of sounds to articulate ancestral and diasporic stories. These stories expressed amusement, celebrated love and unity and lamented separation and loss.

Inner Sydney is replete with references to central sites of the British Empire. Langford Ginibi’s first Sydney address was Great Buckingham Street, she worked in Elizabeth Street, saw films at the Empire Picture Theatre and danced in George Street. Whatever the empresses and emperors had imagined might be constructed in their names, the Empress Hotel or ‘Big E’ in Redfern was to become ‘the main meeting place for city Kooris’ in the 1960s.<sup>77</sup> Langford Ginibi recalls: ‘For the Kooris coming to the city it was a place where you could find out where all your relatives lived. It was also where you could find out things you weren’t supposed to know.’<sup>78</sup> In her case, she learnt of her partner Lance’s infidelity there. It was a site of gossip, laughter, dancing, affairs, fights, commiseration and comfort. After the death of Alfie, son of Langford Ginibi’s friend Neddy, Langford Ginibi and Neddy escaped to the Empress to still their grief. That night, Langford Ginibi’s old friend, Gerty, turned up, and met some of her relations there. Langford Ginibi remembers the effects of hearing Bundjalung, which she had last heard at six, spoken at the Empress: ‘I could smell the smoke from the open fire in our place at Stoney Gully Mission, I saw Mum pick me up and put me down again, I felt her strong arms, she was giving old man Ord his tea and saying, “Here, nyathung.” I saw her grinning at Dad when he came in the door with some eggs our chooks had laid in the long bladegrass under the railway culvert.’<sup>79</sup> She reflects on the loss of fluency in one generation: ‘Mum and Dad were the last generation to speak Bundjalung in our family.’<sup>80</sup> Despite this loss, ‘Empress English’ articulates much that ‘the Queen’s English’ might not, including damaged ancestral links and the complex effects of colonisation. It is a site of cultural exchange, a diasporic meeting place.

A related, more mobile site of cultural exchange was the pastoral industry in Eastern Australia. Langford Ginibi’s Sydney friend, James Golden, worked in the Ultimo woolsheds in the 1960s, but he had been a drover and ‘was a well-travelled man’.<sup>81</sup> James came from Tipperina Mission near Narrabri in northwestern New South Wales. He often sang his ancestral song *Do wana nanarabi* when he visited Langford Ginibi and her family; her children learnt it and passed it on.

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<sup>75</sup> Walker, p 258.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 118.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p 135.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, p 139.

James' droving work, alongside various dispersed people, meant that he also knew tribal songs from different places and languages. Many in the Sydney community suffered broken ancestral links, but quiet voices like James' could invoke ancestral sounds at crucial moments. These interacted with sounds linked to colonising culture, which Langford Ginibi and her friends often appropriated and comically adapted to their own lives. Aspects of 'Hollywood' culture presented at the Empire Picture Theatre were a pleasurable example of sounds ripe for appropriation: 'we spread a blanket on the floor in the kitchen and put the smokes and beer in the middle and in a while we were calling ourselves after movie stars. James was James Cagney (Little Big Man); ... Neddy was Connie Frances because she sang tear-jerking songs; and I was Shirley Bassey because I could out-drown everyone. I always sang too much when I was drunk.' However, in their crowded Waterloo home, these performers' weary hearts eventually sought comfort in ancestral sounds: 'When we got tired of country-and-western late in the night, James played drums on the empty beer carton and sang quietly *Do wana nanarabi* and we joined in, *nanarabi widingay*'.<sup>82</sup> The English-inscribed beer carton effectively accompanied James' ancestral lingo, which told the story of an emu resisting a kangaroo's advances, explaining 'I am not of your meat'.<sup>83</sup> Ancestral knowledge was thus maintained, as its transmission was improvised.

While Langford Ginibi was playing Shirley Bassey in Sydney and Crawford was playing her accordion by the river in Brewarrina when she got the chance, Brett's parents were meeting their friends in 'Scheherezade', a Melbourne restaurant. For Melbourne's community of survivors displaced from Eastern Europe, Scheherezade served (and still serves) a purpose not unlike that of Sydney's Empress for Kooris or the claypan and campfire for drovers crossing paths in central and western New South Wales. Here too, Australian English with various ancestral links was spoken alongside Yiddish and Polish. Scheherezade was opened in 1958 by Polish survivors Avraham and Masha Zeleznikov. Arnold Zable, a second-generation frequenter and chronicler of Scheherezade, tells how 'postwar ... refugees gather, exchange stories, jokes, the latest gossip, and, when the need arises, curses.'<sup>84</sup> Much of Zable's writing is inspired by ancestral knowledge gained in Scheherezade.<sup>85</sup> Current co-owner Elizabeth Szarach, also from Poland, tells: 'Like in a church, people sometimes come and make their confession, ... sometimes you hear stories, sometimes these people do need a hearing, a shoulder to cry on'.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p 146.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, p 139.

<sup>84</sup> Arnold Zable, *Yiddish Curses and Beautiful Losers*, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/lm/stories/s994538.htm> (visited 1 April 2004).

<sup>85</sup> Zable's work includes *Jewels and Ashes* (Newham: Scribe, 1991), *Wanderers and Dreamers: Tales of the David Herman Theatre* (Yiddish: *Di Geshikhte fun Dvd Herman Teater*) (South Melbourne: Hyland House, 1998), *Cafe Scheherazade* (Melbourne: Text, 2001), 'In Search of Refuge: Two Tales', *The Best Australian Essays 2001*, Peter Craven, ed (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2001) pp 63-73 and *The Fig Tree* (Melbourne: Text, 2002).

<sup>86</sup> Mietta O'Donnell, *Scheherezade*, [http://www.miettas.com/chefs/chefs\\_96-00/scheherezade.html](http://www.miettas.com/chefs/chefs_96-00/scheherezade.html) (visited 1 April 2004).

For the 'Australian' Brett, the restaurant represented a site of ancestral tones and rhythms, a noisy, crowded place, where survivors and their 'squeezed-in' friends and families complained and argued loudly.

In *Scheherezade*, even amidst the disputes, jokes and hearty servings of latkes, borscht, cabbage rolls, schnitzel and cheesecake, ancestral ghosts made themselves heard. After the death of Brett's mother Rose in 1986, these ghosts included hers. Most ghosts Brett had 'known' before then were those of ancestors killed before she was born. This maternal ghost was different. Brett, her oldest surviving child, knew her intimately in many ways, after their forty tortuous years together, negotiating languages, cultures, memories and emotions. However, Brett could not know her mother's previous life, the life of Polish Jewry before it was destroyed, just a few years before her birth. In Brett's depiction, even after her mother's death, her family is affected by the rupture in Rose's life, the bursting of her world wrought by the Holocaust. A Yiddish word for 'burst' is *platz*, which Zable explains as 'a combination of exploding and imploding, fission and fusion. In other words, if you *platz*, you are in a real mess.'<sup>87</sup> The effects of that 'mess' and Brett's paradoxical lack of both access to it and means of escape from it, echo around her speaking subject's disagreement with her father in her poem 'Scheherezade'. In 'Scheherezade', the father confronts his daughter about her public comment that her late mother 'spoke broken English'. As he repeats, 'she spoke a perfect English/ a beautiful English', the narrator's 'cracked voice/ creaks out', insisting her mother's English 'wasn't perfect'. Her increasingly disturbed father, while continuing to eat, shouts 'she was perfect/ she was perfect'. There is no pleasing cadence or resolution here in *Scheherezade*, no analytical disentanglement of the notions of 'perfect English' and perfect wife and mother, or consideration of Rose's impressive reconstruction of her burst world. At most, there is the mild comfort of the more than sufficient, familiar food and the noisy absence of resolution throughout the restaurant:

the other diners  
have not been moved  
no one  
has noticed us  
  
the waitress  
still looks  
flushed  
  
Mr Kliger  
and Mr Frydman  
are still together  
  
talking  
over the top  
of each other.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Zable, *Yiddish Curses and Beautiful Losers*.

<sup>88</sup> Brett, 'Scheherezade', *After The War*, p 60. (On the comforting qualities of borscht, Walter Benjamin writes: 'doesn't the warm flow soften the pieces of meat, so that it lies inside you like a ploughed field from which you can

In contrast with most public situations for survivors in Australia, in which they defer to the 'Anglo' manners, language use and other knowledges of their Australian-raised children, Scheherezade is a place where the survivors' insistent modes of remembrance dominate. The second generation may lose confidence in its Australian 'rationality' here, as ancestral ghosts and angels emerge from those noisy acts of remembrance. Like the legendary Scheherezade, these ghosts always bring with them one more episode of their irresolvable stories, forever anticipating an elusive cadence.

### **Laments and silences: Grief and religious practices**

Jewish religious practice provides for resolution of grief, with especially significant mourning rituals for children of the dead. Brett was raised with little knowledge of religious practice, but she refers to elements of it in her texts, as it was a significant part of her ancestors' lives. It is an aspect of Jewish identity with which her parents were familiar and which took on various, altered significances for Holocaust survivors. (Some survivors began to fear orthodox practice, associating it with persecution; some lost their faith, while others found or renewed theirs, or turned to a different faith.<sup>89</sup>) Traditional mourning practice involves periods of abstinence from pleasurable activities, such as listening to music. A child of a deceased parent avoids concerts, theatre and celebrations for twelve months after the parent's burial. For the first eleven months, the 'mourner's Kaddish' is recited every day by 'the son of the deceased'.<sup>90</sup> The notion of Kaddish is one of the few rituals adopted and adapted by many secular Jewish artists on the death of a parent. However, in keeping with another Jewish tradition, of bending religious rules, literary 'Kaddish' texts bear little resemblance to the conventional mourner's Kaddish, which is a prayer of praise and affirmation of faith in God.<sup>91</sup> Fay Zwicky, an Australian poet raised at a greater ancestral distance from Jewish religious practice than Brett, writes of her composition for her father:

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easily dig up the weed Sadness by the root? Just leave the vodka next to it, untouched ... It is then that you will discover the secret of the soup that alone among foods has the ability to satisfy you gently.' Benjamin, 'Food', *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, tr. R Livingstone et al, ed. M W Jennings, H Eiland and G Smith (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 362.)

<sup>89</sup> Survivor testimonies contain examples of a range of responses. For just one example, see Rolf Isaacsohn, 'Along with Democracy came the Other Side' in G J Breyley, ed, *Changing the Curtains, the Money and the Guns* (Canberra and Sydney: Southern Highlands Press, 1997), p 37.

<sup>90</sup> Tracey Rich, *Life, Death and Mourning*, <http://www.hamerkaz.com.au/religion/death.asp#Mourning> (visited 28 March 2004). Rich continues: 'Kaddish is commonly known as a mourner's prayer, but in fact, variations on the Kaddish prayer are routinely recited at many other times, and the prayer itself has nothing to do with death or mourning. The prayer begins "May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed. May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days..." and continues in much that vein. The real mourner's prayer is El Molai Rachamim, which is recited at grave sites and during funerals.'

<sup>91</sup> Gershom Scholem reflects on 'the Hebrew prose and poetry of medieval Jewry – the language of the great halakhists and of the "mosaic style," the poetic prose in which linguistic scraps of sacred texts are whirled around kaleidoscopelike and are journalistically, polemically, descriptively, and even erotically profaned.' Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: The New York Review of Books, 2003), p 131.



against all the rules, I took it upon myself to make amends ... by writing my own 'Kaddish', ... trying to find a way into what his death meant through the rituals of a religious tradition of which I was an attenuated product, lacking both knowledge and allegiance. ... Drawing upon threads of the rediscovered wisdom of a tradition, the poem is haunted by layers of ghostly presences, earlier generations of those whose lives went to make a family, with all that such a fallibly heroic enterprise entails...

I didn't know that what the prayer can tell you about familial love, obligation, guilt, and grief is supposed to be spoken only by men. ... So what about the man unlucky enough to have three daughters and no sons?<sup>92</sup>

Zwicky 'felt freer to finish' her poem after reading Allen Ginsberg's 'Kaddish' for his mother.<sup>93</sup> While Ginsberg did not break the gender rule, he did break many others. Brett followed in the tradition of Ginsberg and Zwicky when she wrote her 'Kaddish' for her mother.<sup>94</sup>

Brett's 'Kaddish' was composed within the traditional mourning period of twelve months after her mother's burial. Melody and rhythm are important aspects of Jewish prayer. In her three-part, sixteen-'blessing' poem, Brett uses rhythm to evoke changes of pace in and between the sections and their settings. Each 'blessing' represents a 'scene' in which the daughter recalls a moment shared with her mother, either physically in Melbourne or in imagination in Lodz and elsewhere. 'Kaddish for My Mother' opens with Mario Lanza singing 'Because You're Mine' in the Melbourne house of Brett's childhood and closes with the speaking subject's confession of her fear, at forty, of both her identification with and her enforced separation (by death) from her mother. Brett does not depict her mother's life before migration to Australia. Rather, her poem recounts Brett's own memories, forming a life narrative in which her mother is a secondary, though constant, presence, simultaneously 'blended' with the narrator and separate, untouchable. In *Part One* she laments her persistent detachment from her mother, even as death nears:

I thought I would hold  
you  
  
breathe  
your exotic scent  
  
feel your hands  
for the first time  
  
I thought I would touch  
you

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<sup>92</sup> Fay Zwicky, *Border Crossings*, A talk given at the Annual General Meeting of The Council of Christians and Jews, WA Inc., 14 November 1999, <http://www.ccjwa.iinet.net.au/bordercrossings.pdf> (visited 1 April 2004). Zwicky's 'Kaddish' appears in Zwicky, *Kaddish and Other Poems* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1982), pp 1-8.

<sup>93</sup> Allen Ginsberg, *Kaddish, and other poems, 1958-1960* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961).

<sup>94</sup> Brett, 'Kaddish for My Mother' in Paul Kavanagh, ed, *Properties of the Poet and other poems* (Newcastle: U of Newcastle P, 1987), pp 17-34.

and  
be touched by you  
  
smile  
at your crooked English  
  
mixed  
with Polish and Yiddish  
  
I thought I would listen  
to you ...  
  
when  
I knew  
  
you  
were dying.

In *Part Three*, the mourning daughter claims:

Mother I have never known  
where you ended  
  
I have worn us blended  
for forty years  
  
I have walked though Melbourne  
as though it were Warsaw  
  
on guard for the Gestapo  
in fear of informers  
  
alert  
to any menace in the air...

Each of the sixteen scenes evokes sounds, scents, gestures, colours and shapes around the mother (and, consequently, the daughter), as remembered by the narrator. Brett knew her mother only in Melbourne, but each scene is infused with the ancestral memory of the damaged Polish Jewish identity that is 'exotic', like her mother's scent, to the Australian daughter, while also an ineradicable part of herself. Brett's 'Kaddish' is psychoanalytical in mode. Here, rather than the faith affirmed in the mourner's Kaddish recited by believing sons, a confession of doubts and fears enables the continuation of life. Despite its regrets, Brett's poem, like the mourner's Kaddish, is finally something of a prayer of praise – for her mother's beauty and tenderness, which a believer would see as God's creation – and a hesitant avowal of faith in a kind of continuity, as she considers her inherited qualities. The mourner's Kaddish concludes with a call for life and peace. In her 'Kaddish', Brett too summons life and peace in the face of the permanent absence of her mother, the object of her complex, lived love in ways her unknown ancestors could not be. Like Langford Ginibi and Crawford, Brett adapts ancestral forms, as they become part of her 'Australian' modes of remembrance.

Like orthodox Jewish practice, traditional Baarkanji laws around mourning are strict. Crawford remembers learning rules around sound, silence and timing, especially when her grandparents died in the 1930s. Immediately after her Granny's death, all the adults left their camps to meet

at another site. Older children looked after Crawford and her sister Gladys for two days and a night. Crawford recalls the scene at sunset on the second day:

We seen all the mums and dads comin' along then. We could hear them cryin' comin' along the creek. We didn't go back home straight away – I suppose we were scared with all the cryin'. ... everything that moved, we thought it was Granny – terrified of ghosts we were. Nobody tells you there's a *gurnki* – it's just built in you. Although we knew Granny wouldn't harm us, we were still afraid of seein' her because we knew she was dead.<sup>95</sup>

Grandfather responded to his wife's death with silence around other adults. Crawford remembers him saying later, 'I wish you little fellers would've come over and talked to me when Granny died. I 'ad no one to talk to, only me dogs.'<sup>96</sup> However, Crawford and Gladys were not sure whether it was right to speak to their grandfather at that time, as they were already aware of the strictness of their law.

Less than a year later, Grandfather himself died in a night fire. This loss intensified the lingering grief for Granny, in the camps and at the school, where Crawford's grandparents had befriended and helped the young Miss Cook: 'She'd sit down and ask them questions and listen to them for hours before she got married, and after, when Tom was away drovin'.<sup>97</sup> The sadness in the schoolroom compounded the grief at home, where the girls' father seemed to be losing his strength. Gladys already knew enough to suggest to her father, 'You ought go down the *gulpa* (deep gully) and sit there and smoke yourself, stay there all day.' Crawford recalls him taking his small daughter's advice and disappearing with some other men 'for a couple of days'. He then went away working, fixing fences, for about nine days. Crawford remembers the family's relief on his return: 'he rode up singin' out, "Hello! ...g'day, Ev! ...how're you goin', Glad?" and there was our father again! ...the father that we'd lost all those months while all these bad things were happenin' to him. His voice was Dad's again. ... That night out came Dad's old accordion and he sat at the fire and played.'<sup>98</sup> In Crawford's family, a return to communal, pleasurable music making marked the close of a mourning period, in somewhat similar fashion to the resumption of the enjoyment of music that closes an orthodox Jewish period of mourning.

In *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, Langford Ginibi recounts the deaths of her grandfather, father and children Pearl, Bill and David, among others. Dispersal of the family and the demands of children and work meant that Langford Ginibi did not hear about the deaths of her grandfather and father until it was too late for her to take part in any mourning ceremony. She read of her grandfather's death, at seventy-nine in a drover's shack, in a local newspaper.

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<sup>95</sup> Crawford, p 42.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p 43.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p 44.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*

Langford Ginibi was eighteen, with two small children, one sick with meningitis. She was staying on Mulli Mulli mission in Bundjalung country while her boyfriend Sam faced a maintenance charge for his child with another woman in Sydney. As a schoolgirl, Langford Ginibi had sometimes found her grandfather waiting for her in the park in Casino, between his droving jobs. He would greet her with ‘Hello goodfulla’ and ask her to write a letter to her father for him.<sup>99</sup> After reading of his death, she recalls: ‘sometimes when I was walking with the kids in the bush I heard a voice saying, “Goodfulla, come on goodfulla.” Later I would find out that Grandfather was a great cricketer and a man to be proud of, but at the time I had no idea what people really meant when I was introduced and they said, “Oh, you’re an Anderson.”’<sup>100</sup> However, Langford Ginibi does have clear memories of her tall grandfather’s graceful movements with the cricket ball and his humour when playing his slightly less gifted three sons: ‘He stood there ... calling, ‘Come on goodfullas, come and play your Dad cricket. ... I remember him, a tall thin figure, the way he said those words and his voice calling and drifting across the sand. There was a grin on his face and the sun falling behind him like a giant ball in slow motion.’<sup>101</sup> She also remembers his gentle comfort the last time she saw him, when he put his arms around her and rocked her, as she feared for the life of her sick child Bill.<sup>102</sup>

In 1960, Langford Ginibi had not long left hospital with her baby Ellen and gone home to the camping area at St George in Queensland, when she was woken one night by a spirit trying to take Ellen from her arms. The next day, a truck arrived from New South Wales and Langford Ginibi was told her father had died two months earlier. Telegrams and police messages had been sent, but Langford Ginibi had been away working on a station. She describes her response to the news of this most significant of deaths, the one she should have been able to mourn in timely and proper fashion:

I collapsed onto a chair. Now I knew who the spirit was, trying to take the baby out of my arms last night. No wonder I couldn’t sleep. I gave way to great sobs and Peter and Sam stood by helplessly watching me. They both knew how Dad had been mother and father to me, and he’d *always* been there when I needed him, and now there was no more always, no Dad. It was very hard for me to believe.<sup>103</sup>

In her colonised world, where survival meant the impermanence of too many relationships, homes, languages and songs, Langford Ginibi’s father had been the one figure who represented ‘*always*’, security and continuity. To ensure her own continued life and peace, Langford Ginibi could have done with an ancestral practice like Brett’s ‘Kaddish’ or Crawford’s *gupa* smoking,

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<sup>99</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 27.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p 67.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p 34.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p 66.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p 101.

at the right moment. What she still could and did do was return to Sydney and mourn with her father's widow, Mum Joyce. Of course, this coming together and mutual comfort was an ancestral practice. Mum Joyce gave Langford Ginibi her father's cricket cap and trophy. The next time his spirit visited her at night, it was a comforting presence.<sup>104</sup>

Of her time in the bush in Queensland, before hearing about her father's death, Langford Ginibi reflected: 'I felt like I was living tribal but with no tribe around me, no close-knit family. The food-gathering, the laws and songs were broken up, and my generation at this time wandered around as if we were tribal but in fact living worse than the poorest of poor whites'.<sup>105</sup> The breaking up of Langford Ginibi's Bundjalung world necessitated inventive, dynamic ways of reconstructing laws and songs. In Sydney, while much was broken, Langford Ginibi had access to people, to family members who could help her, despite the brokenness of their own lives. After the death of Bill, at eighteen, Langford Ginibi lost her hearing for several days. The only voice she could hear was that of her mother, who advised her to talk to Bill, at his grave. Langford Ginibi's mother taught her the Bundjalung words she needed to tell Bill to leave her to live in peace.<sup>106</sup> This ancestral intervention assisted Langford Ginibi as she dealt with the effects of her own grief and that of her surviving children.

Langford Ginibi, Crawford and Brett reimagine and represent their respective ancestral communities on the national discursive sites of their published texts, thus transposing some national configurations. Their reconstructions serve as contrapuntal movements in national compositions. As ancestral voices resonate, both at 'home' and in unexpected places, displacement from 'there' to 'here' and from 'then' to 'now' emerges as an ongoing event, affecting relations on national, community and familial levels. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett explore these effects through their memories of absent and transmuting voices, which interrupt processes of 'settlement' planned by authorities. They increase the volume of Australian ancestral voices that have been drowned out and marginalised.

As for the 'ideal' Australian voice, the one national authorities in 1949 had planned to settle harmoniously in their white composition, Maira Kalnins now lives, by choice, in Latvia.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p 103.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p 96.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p 160.

<sup>107</sup> Klaus Neumann, personal communication, November 2002.

## Chapter Three

### Performances: Childhood's interrupted cadences

Memory is inventive. Memory is a performance. Memory invites itself, and is hard to turn away. ... Memories are what make it hard for you to sleep. Memories procreate. And the uninvited memories always seem to the point.

- Susan Sontag<sup>1</sup>

Between us the distance is vast.  
Yet, death is so very near.  
Sing, my accordion,  
Sing and defy the wind,  
My twisted fate please unravel  
And its meaning, I beg you, make clear.

- Russian partisan song<sup>2</sup>

This chapter examines the effects of the government policies of protection and assimilation on childhood lives, especially as they are represented in the texts of Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett. The chapter is concerned with how twentieth-century Australian notions of protection and care were constructed and how the ensuing practices affected the lives and memories of children. In the first section I consider these questions, linking popular notions of care to national fears. I outline a framework of musical forms, which serve as a metaphor for these and other relations within the nation. In the next section I trace aspects of the implementation of the protection and assimilation policies, as well as Indigenous counter-strategies. This section assists my reimagination of the national sites recalled in *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, as I look at some of the differences between the policies' operation for Indigenous children and for those of people displaced from outside Australia. I further excavate these national sites by analysing aspects of the 1938 sesquicentenary celebrations and the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games. As performances of nationally imagined identity, these two events enact notions (of care and strength, among many other things) that also contribute to the construction of government policies. Such notions simultaneously position children like the narrated subjects of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, limiting their roles and performance spaces.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag, *Where the Stress Falls* (London: Random House, 2002), p 28.

<sup>2</sup> Russian partisan song, translated by Arnold Zable, quoted in Zable, *Café Scheherazade* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2003), pp 175-76.

The chapter goes on to consider aspects of autobiographical acts especially significant to memories of childhood, with reference to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. It then examines the memoirs' representations of childhood in three parts. The first part concerns 'child-resistant' or 'protective' boundaries and their moments of permeability. The next explores memories of different forms of 'watchful care' and the third part investigates the narrated subjects' quashed and diverted possibilities. The chapter concludes with the precarious relocations of the narrators' memories of Australian childhood. In this conversation between the three narrating subjects, Crawford is given slightly more space, as *Over My Tracks* addresses aspects of the Australia of the narrator's childhood in a little more detail.

### **Misplaced memories: Care and protection, worry and fear**

'Care for Kids' was a catchy campaign theme song produced in 1979, the International Year of Children. In 1970s fashion, the song urged Australians to 'find a minute to spare' and 'let down [their] hair' for kids.<sup>3</sup> Though modes of care might have changed, the representation of children as objects of care and 'protection' recurred throughout the twentieth century. In many spheres of popular imagination, children were to be protected from forces feared by national authorities. These threatening forces included some protected children's parents, languages spoken by Indigenous people and 'inhospitable' parts of the land claimed by the nation. The image of the lost child featured in popular representations, becoming an Australian archetype. Pink-skinned children were lost in the bush, memorably in Frederick McCubbin's paintings and in such novels and films as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *Walkabout*.<sup>4</sup> Initially the harsh, mysterious land was blamed for such losses, later negligent or criminal adults. If found in time, children were cared for by local heroes, trackers and/or animals, among others.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, generations of brown-skinned children were taken from their families and institutionalised, to 'protect' them from their parents' words and practices.

As notions of danger and heroic rescue played significant roles in popular Australian imaginaries, political and cultural authorities represented the nation as a site of care for children. However, the authorities' persistent apprehension and imagination of threats rendered their care closer to what Ghassan Hage describes as worrying: "'Worrying'" clearly denotes the prominence of a dimension of fear about the fate of the nation that is only minimally present in

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Best, 'Care For Kids', Albert Productions (EMI Australia, 1979), reprinted with permission.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Weir's 1975 film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* was based on Joan Lindsay's 1967 novel. *Walkabout* is an English novel (by James Vance Marshall, 1959) and film (Nicholas Roeg, 1971), set and filmed in Australia. A less commercially successful lost child film was Alan Spires' *Little Boy Lost* (1978). Back in 1960, following the much-reported search for lost four-year-old Stephen Walls, Johnny Ashcroft's song 'Little Boy Lost' was a hit. More recently, Rachel Perkins presented the lost child narrative in a different way in her film *One Night The Moon* (2001).

<sup>5</sup> For examples of popular imagery, see Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). Pierce argues that 'the lost child is the symbol of essential if never fully resolved anxieties within the white settler communities of this country', p. xi. He suggests that, from the mid-1950s, 'the agency of loss of children was now the human rather than the natural world', p. xiv.

the affective practice of “caring” ... our caring turns into worrying when something is threatening what we care for.’<sup>6</sup> Of course, Hage refers here to care for the nation, rather than care for children, but the concepts of children and nation overlap in various ways. In the twentieth century, national discourses often represented Australia as a young nation, a child of ‘her’ protective and/or aging ‘Mother England’. More generally, both children and nations are popularly represented as entities with futures that can and should be directed by authorities. As the cliché puts it, children are ‘the nation’s future’. On the level of family, children are often seen as a means of the family’s survival. This takes on added dimensions when the family has suffered loss and displacement, as in the cases of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett.<sup>7</sup>

While adult national discourses claim to protect the nation’s children, children themselves sometimes become objects of national fear. In these cases, authorities represent national borders and boundaries as the objects of their protection. These might be the country’s physical borders, which a national government claims to protect from uninvited children. For children already within the nation’s borders, the boundaries take many forms, depending on the changing nature of nationally authorised fears and the levels at which they are enacted. Many national fears in twentieth-century Australia related to notions of race. An effect of these fears was the construction of a range of barriers and borders for children designated non-white. In the myopia of their political practice, the builders of such barriers rarely considered the future role of children’s memories in the formation of community and national histories. For of course, children who survived Australia’s white boundaries became remembering adult subjects, with knowledge and stories to tell. As these relocated subjects remember, they reread and rewrite previous generations’ narratives of protection and care. Their memories interact continually with current events and discourses, as they listen, translate and reposition past and present articulations. National narratives have traditionally sought to avoid investigation of their own

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<sup>6</sup> Ghassan Hage, ‘On worrying: the lost art of the well-administered national cuddle’, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003), p 22.

<sup>7</sup> Illustrating twenty-first-century discourses around children, nations and futures, two letters to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 2004, appear side by side as I write. As in earlier times, ‘settled’ children are portrayed here as financial or lifestyle investments and displaced children as political tools: ‘**A bonus in babies:** I can’t whip up one iota of sympathy for childfree-by-choice couple Susan and David Moore (“Baby kissing,” *Herald* May 15-16). David’s attitude is self-interest par excellence, claiming no obligation to contribute directly to families with children. Moore says he’s doing enough for society by contributing to hospitals and schools as public facilities. But subsidising kids in families, no way./ Think again, David. Kids are the foundation of society and all its facilities in the future. When you’re 70, your contemporaries’ kids will be your local surgeons, engineers, architects, reliable carpenters and plumbers, and you’ll be glad to find someone else bothered to have kids. The truth is that kids cost money to raise, and for middle and lower incomes that means a sacrifice – undoubtedly willing. How many cappuccinos, theatre tickets, overseas trips does each kid represent? – Mary Shelley Clark, East Lindfield, May 15.

‘**PM a captive to ideology:** The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission believes that, by caging kids behind razor wire, Australia is failing to protect their health and welfare and therefore we are breaking our international obligations (“About face: Afghans on Nauru to be let in,” *Herald*, May 15-16). Our family friendly Prime Minister isn’t worried. He wants the kids to stay behind the wire because releasing them would send the wrong message to people smugglers. So we imprison the innocents to dissuade the evil from plying their criminal trade. That sounds like the reasoning of a hostage-taker to me. – Dave Brown, Wollombi, May 15.’



paradoxes and their demarcations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’.<sup>8</sup> This distaste for uncertainty and ambiguity, for the untidiness of most memories of childhood, has led to a tendency for narratives to exclude the complexities of adult memories of displaced childhoods. In other words, as Jonathan Rosenbaum suggests, there are ‘always more stories than you think there are, and the purpose of most conventional stories is to push these other stories out of the picture’.<sup>9</sup> However, some ‘other stories’ and complex memories persist in making themselves heard in sometimes unexpected places.

As outlined in chapter two, legislative discourse represented Indigenous Australians and displaced persons as objects of protection for much of the twentieth century. For children subject to government protection or care, these words represented complex and paradoxical relations of power and responsibility. Memories revived in adulthood, such as those of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, throw light on the nature of these relations. ‘Protection’ may mean the smothering of some forms of memory to protect such national imaginings as *terra nullius*, White Australia or national security. Self-evidently, a ‘protected’ Australia emerges as neither vacant, white nor secure, but memoirs of displacement point to more than this. As Gillian Whitlock argues, Aboriginal women’s autobiography is ‘the work of articulation and disarticulation, of identity formation and critique’.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere (as noted in chapter one), Whitlock examines effects of Indigenous texts on national discourses, claiming that black testimony triggers white memoir.<sup>11</sup> David Carter elaborates on these effects, suggesting that, among other things, ‘ideas of the national are simultaneously unsettled and energised’ when white remembering subjects engage with Indigenous discourses.<sup>12</sup> By publishing their memoirs, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett place traces of their memories onto national discursive sites and invite the negotiation of a range of implications and responsibilities of the type Carter identifies. The narrators’ familiarity with multiple discursive modes points to knowledges outside the national imaginary as it is represented by political and cultural leaders. These knowledges are, however, part of national reality, as they concern, for example, ‘silent’ contributions to Australia’s economic history, such as Indigenous labour, skills and practices, and unspoken effects of that history on the nation’s peoples. As Crawford, Langford Ginibi and

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<sup>8</sup> For example, until relatively recently, nationally authorised stories portrayed most explorers and Anzacs as unquestionably good. In his lifetime, Ned Kelly was popularly known as bad; he then became heroically good in mid-century mythology. Only recently has there been some public analysis of his complex roles as terrorist, lifesaver, Irish-Australian, son and brother.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Rosenbaum (on filmmaking practices), in Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa and Rosenbaum, *Abbas Kiarostami* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2003), p 89.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women’s Autobiography* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000), p 156.

<sup>11</sup> Whitlock, ‘Strategic Remembering: Fabricating Local Subjects’ in Rosamund Dalziell, ed, *Selves Crossing Cultures: Autobiography and Globalisation* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2002), p 163.

<sup>12</sup> David Carter, ‘Public Intellectuals, Book Culture and Civil Society III’, *Australian Humanities Review* 24 (2001-2002), <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/copyright.html> (visited 11 July 2003).

Brett both use and resist national modes, memories previously immobilised by national fears are reactivated in their texts, as ‘care’ and ‘protection’ are redefined.

As displaced children, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett were provided with various forms of care by Australian authorities. Their reconstructions of childhood in the three decades between Crawford’s birth (1928) and Brett’s twelfth year (1958) illuminate changes in national discourses around childhood and care. Within this period, Australia’s sesquicentenary year, 1938, was a turning point between the government policies of protection and assimilation of Indigenous people. At this time, Crawford and Langford Ginibi were both children. In 1956, when Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games, the ten-year-old Brett and her family, as ‘new Australians’, had muted roles in ongoing national discourses around protection and assimilation of the ‘other’. The background noise in all three narrators’ Australian childhoods is largely made up of national fears, which are collectivised by voices of authority and articulated in government policies. In their narratives of childhood, relationships with parents, sisters, friends and figures of authority – both positive and negative – point to the broader power relations conditioning care for children. As the narrators reconstruct childhood feelings of belonging and exclusion in systems of family, education, work and play, they perform the memories uninvited by the White Australia into which they were born or brought. The memories inviting themselves into their performances – of detention and escape, life-and-death responsibilities, humiliation and isolation – are not those willingly linked to childhood in a contemporary ‘caring’ Australia, or so some discourses around child protection would suggest.

### **Drone and Counterpoint: Analytical framework**

Alongside the childhood memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, contemporaneous popular and national discourses around childhood and care sometimes serve as bass drones, barely related to the authors’ lived experiences, although always audible. In music, a bass drone is a continuous low sound, which establishes the underlying tonality of a musical composition. It usually requires little conscious attention from the performer or the listener, as it consists of just one note or one chord. When the bass drone contains a chord, its continuous nature makes it difficult to distinguish individual notes. Similarly, when national discourses of childhood and care sound like bass drones, it is rarely worth the colonised subject’s (or child’s) effort to distinguish words within the continuous, seemingly monotonous hum of colonisation. This drone’s words are unrelenting, but also unreliable and thus little more than meaningless ‘white’ noise to those excluded from its tonal plan. For example, the sesquicentenary celebrations were a climactic moment for colonial Australia, with much loud proclamation of the young nation’s glorious future, to be achieved partly through its expertise in caring for its children. To the ears of Crawford and Langford Ginibi, then detained on missions, those proclamations were merely

a continuation of the distant drone of deceit that aspects of colonisation had become. The proclamations were part of the tonal system that conditioned the way Crawford and Langford Ginibi lived, but not a part that engaged them.

At other times, discourses around childhood and care are contrapuntal themes, related in many complex ways to the childhood lives recalled, and presenting melodies to be countered by the authors and their families. This is often the case with discourses around education, work and health. In these moments, the authors' voices take on the role of countersubject, defined by Alan Belkin as 'a recurring counterpoint to the theme, often (but not always) adding its own motives. When present ... [the countersubject] enhances and sharpens the profile of the theme through contrast, filling in rhythmic gaps, enriching the harmony through suspensions'.<sup>13</sup> As countersubjects to national themes, the texts' speaking subjects use forms of the national language. Through contrast, their counterdiscourses amplify discrepancies in popular and national themes. They enhance identification of national policy failures and of dominant voices of ignorance and indifference. The narrators enrich popular harmonies with suspension, 'a form of discord arising from the holding over of a note in one chord as a momentary (discordant) part of the combination which follows, it being then resolved by falling a degree to a note which forms a real part of the second chord.'<sup>14</sup> When textual countersubjects maintain 'notes' from their 'first' or parental cultural knowledges into their respective 'second' sites of learning, those imposed on children by White Australia, they create dissonance. A general example of this in Brett's work is her preoccupation (deriving from the persistence of her parents' memories) with the ostensibly resolved story of the Holocaust. Brett suspends tones of inherited anguish in chords (her relations with fellow Australians) expected to be free of discord. As children and as adult authors, Crawford and Langford Ginibi enriched Australian harmonies by holding onto languages and practices that white authorities had planned to remove from their repertoires. These suspension techniques constituted interventions in dominant cultural practice. Their dissonance effected change and sometimes resolution in future encounters, as their 'notes' became audibly 'real parts' of major cultural forms. Conversation with and between the countersubjects of displaced life narratives thus enriches, diverts and alters popular themes.

### **Protection and assimilation**

Popular themes around the care recalled by Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett were conditioned by policies of government and other authorities. Implementation of protection and assimilation policies operated in different ways for Indigenous Australians and migrants. Practices also varied with changing times and with particular places and people exercising

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Belkin, 'Contrapuntal forms', *Principles of Counterpoint*, <http://www.musique.umontreal.ca/personnel/Belkin/bk.C/5.html> (visited 12 May 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Definition of 'harmony', Michael Kennedy and Joyce Bourne, *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996) <http://www.classicalarchives.com/dict/harmony.html> (visited 12 August 2004).

authority over children. These differences and variations are reflected in the respective memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. All three remember ‘watchful care’, which took the form of state surveillance for Indigenous children, with varying levels of severity on missions and stations, in children’s homes and schools.<sup>15</sup> State authorities did not generally ‘trust’ Indigenous parents to ensure their children’s ‘protection’ and assimilation. In contrast, white migrant parents were entrusted with the responsibility of caring for their children. Authorities demanded swift adaptation by both migrant generations to ‘white Australian’ cultural practice and saw child protection and assimilation as part of white parental care. However, the pressure on migrants to assimilate usually did not involve violence or family separation, as it frequently did for Indigenous families. In return for minimal state surveillance, migrants who had met White Australia’s selection criteria were expected to maintain public silence around unpleasant memories. Thus, the surveillance of white migrant children, many of whom grew up in urban environments, was primarily social and/or parental, directed by the state only from a distance.

Despite the rhetoric of inclusivity around assimilation, the state imagined members of its assimilated nation in positions relative to differences in cultural practice, which the state attributed to differences of ‘race’ or ‘blood’. This is evident, for example, in state and Commonwealth officers’ decision in 1937 to adopt assimilation as a policy for ‘the natives of Aboriginal origin but not of the full blood’.<sup>16</sup> Careful selection of twentieth-century immigrants was designed to diminish fears among white Australians already occupying the nation. As Indigenous Australians could not be put through such entry tests, state authorities anticipated and enacted the fears of a largely ignorant white population, attempting to bring Indigenous cultural practices under strict control. Few non-indigenous Australians were familiar with any aspect of Indigenous spiritual life, but most were accustomed to its public identification as ‘heathen’, as noted by Langford Ginibi.<sup>17</sup> The vague notion of heathen, superstitious practices inspired fear in much of the white population.<sup>18</sup> Rarely, if ever, did the state seriously consider the fears of Indigenous people.

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<sup>15</sup> Weather warning research has found that the word ‘severe’ upsets and immobilises people in northern Australian Indigenous communities: “‘Severe’ does not work as a trigger word to take notice, to perhaps take action ... It was finally revealed that in the Mission days (until 1967), “Severe Punishment” was often meted out to Aboriginal individuals who happened or dared to breach the strict cultural codes attempting to be imposed on them ... The connotation of Severe is the silent “punishment” which followed “severe” on Missions across the North.’ Douglas Goudie, *Disruptive Weather Warnings and Weather Knowledge in Remote Australian Indigenous Communities*, Centre for Disaster Studies (James Cook University, 2004), p 157, [http://www.tesag.jcu.edu.au/CDS/reports/Gou\\_IWWRpt/](http://www.tesag.jcu.edu.au/CDS/reports/Gou_IWWRpt/) (visited 23 August 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, *Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities* (Canberra: Government Printer, 1937), p 3.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Our people were classed as heathens and vermin by the first settlers’, writes Langford Ginibi in her introduction to *My Bundjalung People* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1994), p xvi.

<sup>18</sup> This is reflected in Charles Chauvel’s novel and 1936 film, *Uncivilised*. In this lost child fantasy, an Indigenous tribe makes a lost white child its leader, but the tribe includes such characters as an evil ‘witch doctor’. Children’s literature also uses the ideas of the lost white child leading a tribe and of the evil ‘witch doctor’. See, for example, Lorna Bingham, *The Search for the Golden Boomerang*, colour plates by Hartmut Lahm (Sydney: Winn and Co,

Indigenous worrying about colonial practices was justified, as white authorities threatened much for which Indigenous people cared. For Indigenous children, a white presence could be obstructive in various ways. White Australia's imagination of an assimilated population did not allow for Indigenous 'aspiration' or for cultural contributions of the kind that would be publicly acknowledged and were expected of much of the white population. Rather, it demanded the silencing of intellectual and artistic Indigenous practices, while it made use of Indigenous labour, but rarely remunerated or acknowledged the labourers. As Ann Curthoys summarises, assimilation 'was a policy aiming (among other things such as ensuring a supply of domestic labour) to destroy Aboriginal identity through re-education of children in white institutions and foster homes'.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, some white migrants were expected to aspire to certain middle levels of industrial participation, so that Anglo presences were meant to inspire rather than spoil their activities. Like Indigenous workers, displaced persons were desired as efficient labour resources, but a few were to be assigned more prestigious roles than those in factories and on construction sites. For both groups, the effects of exploitation and silencing, along with memories of loss and displacement, are far-reaching. Relations across generations carry traces of the strictures of protection and assimilation and of the possibilities they quashed.

In New South Wales, the policy of protection was legislatively applied in 1909, further restricting the already colonised lives of Indigenous people.<sup>20</sup> Many restrictions of 'protection' persisted with the late 1930s adoption of assimilation, which led to 'welfare' and wardship arrangements designed for even greater control of Indigenous lives. The move from protection to assimilation entailed no recognition of white authorities' lack of ability or right to determine Indigenous futures. Rather, it enacted an increased confidence in the supposed technical and moral superiority of white administration. There was no consultation with Indigenous leaders and no consideration of Indigenous sovereignty, land ownership or cultural and environmental expertise. White authorities continued to classify Indigenous people according to ancestry, degrees of 'blood' and degrees to which they lived tribally. All were to be 'educated' in some way, but levels of education were decreed by authorities. Those not designated 'tribal' and not 'chosen' to move into white communities were forced to stay on reserves and missions.

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1941) and other *Golden Boomerang* books (based on the eponymous George Edwards radio serial). Black witch doctors frighten white Australians in other mid-century literature, such as Ion L Idriess's *Lasseter's Last Ride* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1959), p 142: 'With skinny claw the witch-doctor pulled out a dried lizard ... [H]is lips moved sibilantly and Lasseter could have sworn that the lizard hissed in reply ... [O]ver each article he pored ... as if it possessed some power of evil'. *Lasseter's Last Ride* was first published in 1931 and repeatedly reprinted throughout the century.

<sup>19</sup> Ann Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation: the Multicultural and the Indigenous' in John Docker and Gerhard Fischer, eds, *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000) pp 25-26.

<sup>20</sup> 'The Recognition Of Aboriginal Customary Laws - 25. Protection', Reconciliation and Social Justice Library, *Australasian Legal Information Institute* (a joint facility of UTS and UNSW Faculties of Law), <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/alrc/custlaw1/36.html> (visited 1 May 2004).

Implementation of the assimilation policy was as complicated as protection had been. Russell McGregor argues that the early ‘credibility’ of assimilation can be understood only when ‘the dispersed and contested nature of assimilationist discourses’ is recognised.<sup>21</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, avowed assimilationists articulated ‘some of the most cogent and forceful critiques’ of the policy.<sup>22</sup> Assimilationists, including missionaries, anthropologists, linguist T G H Strehlow, political activists and social commentators, disagreed profoundly over the policy’s desired consequences. McGregor summarises the two key questions: ‘as a social process, whether assimilation should proceed on an individualist basis or in terms of social groups; and as a cultural process, whether it entailed the comprehensive collapse of Indigenous cultures, or an amalgamation of Indigenous and western traditions’.<sup>23</sup> There were many possible local applications of various points of view on these spectra. Different mission managers, for example, could make significant differences to cultural possibilities, as suggested in the memories of Crawford and Langford Ginibi. Crawford remembers three managers. The first was tough, always shouting and whipping the children with pieces of rope, although his wife was ‘rather a nice old lady, and because of that she wasn’t allowed to come anywhere near the school.’<sup>24</sup> This manager’s methods hindered education and Crawford’s family was pleased to hear he would be leaving. However, the next manager and his wife were ‘much, much worse’, turning the mission, especially the classroom, into a place of constant fear. The final manager was not as frightening, but by then the family had little trust in any white people and Crawford’s approaching adolescence put her at particular risk of ill treatment. Around this time, the activist Pearl Gibbs was investigating conditions in Brewarrina and working to improve possibilities, especially for the girls there. In 1938, Gibbs’ demand for legislation ‘to provide for the higher education and spiritual advancement of Aborigines throughout Australia, with a view to preparing them to take their place as citizens’ seemed to share the ideals of some pro-assimilation discourses.<sup>25</sup>

While activists and theorists worked at more local levels, the state required the assimilation policy as part of its nation-building project. McGregor argues that assimilation aimed, ‘above all, to incorporate Aborigines into the Australian nation’.<sup>26</sup> While seeking to ‘make citizens of Aborigines’, assimilation was ‘tied to a normative concept of the citizen, as an individual possessing certain, more or less closely prescribed, competencies, values, aspirations and

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<sup>21</sup> Russell McGregor, Abstract for ‘Assimilationists Contest Assimilation: T G H Strehlow and A P Elkin on Aboriginal Policy’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), pp 43-50.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> McGregor, ‘Assimilationists Contest Assimilation’, p 43.

<sup>24</sup> Evelyn Crawford, *Over My Tracks* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1993), p 66.

<sup>25</sup> Jack Horner, *Bill Ferguson: Fighter for Aboriginal Freedom* (Canberra: J Horner, 1994), p 74.

<sup>26</sup> McGregor, Abstract for ‘Assimilation and Nation-building: Northern Territory Aborigines and the Australian State in the 1950s’, *The Power of Knowledge, the Resonance of Tradition*, AIATSIS Conference, Australian National University, September 2001, [www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conf2001/abstracts/B3\\_Abstract.pdf](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/rsrch/conf2001/abstracts/B3_Abstract.pdf) (visited 12 May 2004).

sensibilities'.<sup>27</sup> As McGregor points out, the exemplary postwar Australian citizen was a 'self-regulating, self-governing individual, committed to the ideal of the self-sufficient nuclear family and to the vast abstract collectivity of the nation'.<sup>28</sup> Despite its rhetoric, the state did not imagine that Indigenous people would learn to assume the responsibilities attached to its normative notion of citizenship. This is evident in the continued state co-ordination of segregation and colonising practices that limited the very aspirations it claimed to demand of its 'becoming' citizens. Seemingly oblivious to its own contradictions, as McGregor argues, state-conducted assimilation attempted to instil in Indigenous Australians a 'constellation of competencies, convictions and commitments, remodelling their social and cultural lives into conformity with presumed national norms and the demands of modernity'.<sup>29</sup> This required 'dissolution of Indigenous socio-cultural heritage, conceived as impediments to the grand projects of modernisation and national incorporation'.<sup>30</sup> Assimilationists disagreed over the extent to which such dissolution should be enforced, with state authorities the most extreme, demanding that Indigenous people 'repudiate their distinctive heritages' and 'deprecate their attachments to kin'.<sup>31</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s, when Crawford and Langford Ginibi were children, these demands were yet to be clearly articulated and widely discussed, but the practices linked to them had already wrought devastation.

Despite the devastation, Indigenous people had been developing and implementing counter-strategies since colonisation, often applying or inverting white authorities' discourses. McGregor points out that even assimilation had an 'emancipatory aspect', as part of the campaign for equal citizenship rights (that is, the right to exercise citizenship equally, rather than simply the attainment of citizenship status, while continuing to live with the strictures of protection). In 1924, well before the business of protection became that of assimilation, the Australian Aborigines' Progressive Association was formed in Sydney, and remained active until constant police harassment resulted in its dissolution in 1927. The Australian Aborigines' League was formed in 1932. In 1935, a delegation unsuccessfully petitioned the Federal Minister for the Interior, calling for Indigenous representation in parliament and the establishment of a national Department of Native Affairs and state advisory councils on Indigenous affairs. Two years later, in response to arbitrary harassment by Aboriginal Protection Board officials, former shearer and unionist William Ferguson launched the Aborigines' Progressive Association in Dubbo, in Wiradjuri country, to the east of Crawford's Baarkanji country, south of her husband's Camilleroi land and southwest of Langford Ginibi's Bundjalung country. These strategies and moves were part of the lead-up to collective

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

Indigenous action on the public, politically central site of Sydney in 1938 – action that made many ears listen.

## 1938

In 1938, between the Depression and the War, Crawford turned ten on Brewarrina mission. Langford Ginibi turned four on Stoney Gully mission and heard the birth of her baby sister. Brett's parents would soon be married in their politically diverse and active Lodz, in the last year of increasingly fearful peace before the German invasion and destruction of Polish Jewish life.<sup>32</sup> Peace was already disrupted in Austria, with the *Anschluss*, the annexation by Germany, in March 1938.<sup>33</sup> Jewish Germans came to understand the seriousness of the National Socialist threat to their peace with *Kristallnacht*, the pogrom of 9 and 10 November. In Australia, 1938 was the centenary of the Myall Creek Massacre in Camilleroi country. In Sydney, on 26 January, as some Australians celebrated 150 years of European occupation, the Aborigines' Progressive Association declared a Day of Mourning and convened a conference and protest against 'protection' practices, injustice and dispossession. Meanwhile, organisers of white celebrations had taken Baarkanji and other men from Menindee and Brewarrina to Sydney, held them at the Redfern police barracks and coerced them to participate in a 're-enactment' of the 1788 landing. Descendants of the Cadigal people at Sydney Cove in 1788 remained in the area, but the Celebrations Council decided that 'those [Aborigines] procurable from around Sydney would not suit the purpose', as they also had European ancestry and were unlikely to co-operate with the Council's demands.<sup>34</sup> Crawford witnessed the recruitment of some of the men and recalls the scene at Brewarrina:

The Mission Manager came over one day and gathered up all the full-blood men. Us kids were listening, to see what the white man wanted all these real black blackfellers for. He told them there was goin' to be a re-enactment of the landing of Captain Cook... He asked if anybody wanted to be part of it. They never answered him – just stood there... He told 'em they'd travel on the train to Sydney, and I don't think anyone had an idea how far away Sydney was. The younger blokes – curiosity would've got the best of

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<sup>32</sup> Post-Enlightenment Jewish culture in Europe was very diverse, especially in Poland, which had the largest Jewish population. Cultural choices ranged from assimilation to voluntary 'ghettoisation', with various religious, political and social possibilities. Movements included the secular but culturally Yiddish, anti-Zionist socialism of the Jewish Labour *Bund*, religious Reform, Conservatism and Orthodoxy, and both secular and religious varieties of Zionism. The shock of the Nazi threat, which put all Europeans connected with Jewish life at risk, is articulated in one refugee's letter: 'In my grievousness, I do not know how to describe my days it is not yet only some weeks that I felt myself for an equal citizen and to be protected', Eugen Lax, 21 March 1939, Correspondence file of Rabbi L A Falk, Chief Minister of the Great Synagogue, 1938-40, Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives, Great Synagogue, Sydney, quoted in Suzanne D Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1997), p 178.

<sup>33</sup> Rutland notes (*ibid.*, p 178) that for a month after the *Anschluss*, Australia House received 120 enquiries about migration daily. 'Refugees' 4, 5 April 1938, Department of External Affairs, Correspondence Files, Alphabetical Series, 1927-1942, Australian Archives Office, CRS A 981.

<sup>34</sup> Gavin Souter, 'Skeleton at the Feast' in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt, eds, *Australians 1938* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, 1987) p 15.



them... Most of the men on the Mission would never've been on anything but a horse and buggy or an old truck.

Some of the old fellers were a little bit dubious about goin'... I remember us kids standin' there watchin' them pack 'em all in the truck. Everybody cried because we didn't think we'd ever see 'em again, because whenever a black person was taken away from the Mission on a truck they never came back. These ones did come back but we'd cleared off before then so we didn't see Grandfather Hero Black again, but we heard afterwards they were told there'd be no tucker unless they did what they were told and acted like the white fellers said. On the way back, Grandfather Hero and Paddy snuck off at Bourke, headin' for Wilcannia where they'd come from.<sup>35</sup>

Despite white efforts to disrupt communication between separated relatives, friends and activists, many links remained strong and new connections were always being made. After the group of men arrived in Sydney, it was not long before Helen Grosvenor, an Aborigines' Progressive Association member and daughter of the police barracks horsebreaker and tracker, had told William Ferguson that the group was held at the barracks.<sup>36</sup> Ferguson rightly suspected that the re-enactment would include, without historical justification, a retreat by the Indigenous men. He wanted to advise Crawford's great-uncle, Grandfather Hero Black, the elder of the group, to boycott the performance. The New South Wales Aborigines' Protection Board initially forbade visits to the detained men. When two women were finally allowed to visit a relative in the group, they were supervised by a board official and Ferguson's message could not be delivered.<sup>37</sup>

While twenty-five black men from western New South Wales river country (several of them previously displaced from other parts) were confined in wooden huts in the barracks courtyard, making their own forms of prison music, white sesquicentenary celebrations were underway, involving various performances of music dislocated from Europe.<sup>38</sup> Military marching bands dominated official celebrations, along with balls, pageants, choral and classical concerts, rural music competitions and some cabaret planned by 'private interests'.<sup>39</sup> Souvenir programs list details of official events, including the street procession, in which the 'Aborigines Float' is described as '[r]epresenting primitive Australia, with the aborigines and their gins cooking 'possum outside their gunyah'. This float was 'constructed by the Celebrations Council'.<sup>40</sup> The official program provides no details of the men and women coerced to take part in this construction. However, Gavin Souter notes that Hero Black was in the group on the float, which

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<sup>35</sup> Crawford, pp 72-73.

<sup>36</sup> Jack Horner and Marcia Langton, 'The Day of Mourning' in Gammage and Spearritt, eds, *Australians 1938*, p 29.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Jack Horner, *Bill Ferguson*, p 61.

<sup>39</sup> Ephemera, *Celebrations of the Australian Sesquicentenary*, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

<sup>40</sup> 'Programme', *Australia's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1788-1938: The Celebrations*, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1938, *ibid.*

was described as 'a little morose and disinclined to acknowledge the cheers of the crowd' in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 27 January 1938.<sup>41</sup>

Also absent from official programs are details of the 'corroboree' performances demanded by officials. According to the re-enactment program, the 'corroboree' at Farm Cove would simply 'suggest the condition of affairs existing in the country prior to the arrival of the white population'.<sup>42</sup> The officials requiring this performance of Crawford's relatives and their fellow captives failed to appreciate the impossibility of their request for a corroboree in an Indigenous sense. In the first instance, various language groups were represented among the men taken from Brewarrina and Menindee, as a result of such policies as concentration, implemented between 1934 and 1939.<sup>43</sup> Among other things, this may have meant that the group had no suitable musical forms that could be shared at that time. More significantly, the languages spoken by the men were not those of the land on which they were required to perform.<sup>44</sup> The men's performances could be called corroborees only by colonisers who used the term to signify sound and movement to which their access was limited in particular ways. The white organisers choreographed as unhearing, unmoved superseders of their dancers, desiring no meaning but a confirmation of the existence of their 'other', a satisfying contrasting overture to the glorious flag-hoisting themes of white supersession. This overture, choreographed by the already-present superseders, contained the themes of the rest of the white performance, whatever pre-white sounds and movements the black performers may have employed.

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<sup>41</sup> Souter, 'Skeleton at the Feast' in Gammage and Spearritt, eds, *Australians 1938*, p 19.

<sup>42</sup> 'Programme', *Australia's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*, p 7. While the 'corroboree' is explained in this single sentence, great detail is provided of the various flags on the ship 'Supply', such as Red Ensigns, the 'broad pennant of the Commodore' and 'a small Union Jack of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century'.

<sup>43</sup> See *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*, Regional Report of Inquiry in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, chapter fifteen: 'The Historical Background, New South Wales' 23, 'The policy of concentration', *Australasian Legal Information Institute*, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/regional/nsw-vic-tas/181.html> (visited 1 May 2004): 'Enforced concentration began in 1934 and continued until 1939, but it was implemented only unevenly across the State. Most dramatically affected were Aboriginals living where the rural economy appeared to be undergoing the greatest restructuring, in the western and north coast pastoral industry areas where the largest properties were again being broken up. Whole communities of Aboriginals were moved hundreds of miles by cattle truck and dumped on Protection Board stations at Menindee, Brewarrina, Toomelah and Burnt Bridge. Aboriginals protested bitterly but they had been made even more vulnerable by the legislative changes of 1936, which they called the 'Dog Act', because it allowed them to be carted around and penned up like animals. In reality they had few choices, particularly if they had young children. Nevertheless, many were transported only at gunpoint, like the Murries moved from Angledool to Brewarrina in 1936. Others stayed in the new 'concentration' stations only so long as economic conditions forced them into dependence on Board rations, like the Wangkumarra [Crawford's father's Wankamurrah people] of the Comer Country, who were forced to Brewarrina in 1938 but left in 1940, 80 strong despite the deaths of many of their old people, to walk the 190 miles back to their country.'

<sup>44</sup> The reasons an outsider could not 'direct' a corroboree are even more complex than this. Trevor A Jones' explanation is useful (though based primarily on research in northern Australia): 'the basic principle of "exchange" that permeates many facets of Aboriginal life is significant when considering their music, as are the varying applications of "mutuality" and "exclusion" in general. These concepts help to explain matters such as *why* some songs can be sung by certain men only while other songs are traded freely, *how* extended series of songs can cover many places and linguistic groups, and *when* and *where* particular songs may or may not be performed. The concepts also underline the fact that music is considered to be a most highly valued property and a powerful asset in Aboriginal society, and any conclusions we may draw about its structure, considered purely as *sound*, must never lose sight of its immense social and spiritual significance to its custodians', Jones' emphases. Jones, 'The Traditional Music of the Australian Aborigines' in Elizabeth May, ed, *Musics of Many Cultures* (Berkeley and London: U of California P, 1980), p 157.

Grandfather Hero Black and the other men were dressed in 'aprons of cloth and gum leaves' and armed with boomerangs.<sup>45</sup> The *Sydney Morning Herald* observed: 'A corroboree, undoubtedly, was called for and a corroboree the Aborigines held ... Slowly the dark-skinned dancers moved in circles, looking uncomfortable about it all, but playing their parts as best they could. The landing party came inexorably onwards.'<sup>46</sup> It is unlikely that this 'uncomfortable' performance had much in common with 'the condition of affairs existing in the country prior to the arrival of the white population'.

Not far from the show at Farm Cove, the performers' friends in the Aborigines' Progressive Association were conferring and protesting in the city. Wiradjuri artist and historian Brenda Palma describes the impact of the gathering:

It seemed to galvanise people, the whole spirit of it, both black and white. It was this band of people coming together, very bravely, at this 150th anniversary of the invasion ... It was the first time that the Aboriginal people had united from different tribes and different regions and come together as one voice. And they – it was in the *Abo Call* – they got this newspaper going so it was published and sent out to all the different areas. So it was quite a, sort of a, strong movement towards civil rights. But then, of course, the war broke out and I think that interrupted a lot of it.<sup>47</sup>

While the sounds and sights of their constructed corroboree may have represented no more than 'primitive' exotica to white officials, the language of the Indigenous protest was not at all exotic to white Australia. In contrast to the inaccurate language of the Celebrations Council's references to its unpaid Indigenous performers, the protesters addressed Australia's non-indigenous population with the discourse of (Western) reason and justice. They used the language of white and black English-speaking activists, unionists and churches. However, they applied this discourse to a site White Australia had not included in its compositions of freedom and fairness, the site of intended supersession. The white landing party may have come 'inexorably onwards', but its countersubject employed unanticipated suspension techniques, creating the dissonance necessary to enable audiences to attend to the paradoxical nature of the landing party's direction. At the Day of Mourning rally, Aborigines' Progressive Association President Jack Patten declared,

We have decided to make ourselves heard. ... I have unanswerable evidence that women of our race are forced to work in return for rations, without other payment. ... Do white

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<sup>45</sup> Souter, 'Skeleton at the Feast', *Australians* 1938, p 13.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, pp 16-17.

<sup>47</sup> Brenda Palma, *National Aboriginal History and Heritage Council*, <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/barani/themes/theme6.htm> (visited 20 May 2004).

Australians realise that there is actual slavery in this fair progressive Commonwealth? ...  
We ask for ordinary citizen rights, and full equality with other Australians.<sup>48</sup>

Patten and Ferguson had also written a pamphlet, 'Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights'. Among other things, the pamphlet gives a picture of conditions in the Australia of Crawford and Langford Ginibi's childhoods. In contrapuntal mode, it 'sharpens the profile' of national discourses through contrast and gap-filling. 'Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights' prearranges the future Minister Calwell's use of the term 'new Australian' and inverts or counters discourses of blood, progress, civilisation and humanity. The pamphlet refers to 'humbug' (deception and nonsense), a word that has continued to appear more frequently in Indigenous discourse than in that of non-indigenous Australia:

You are the New Australians, but we are the Old Australians. We have in our arteries the blood of the Original Australians, who have lived in this land for many thousands of years. You came here only recently, and you took our land away from us by force. You have almost exterminated our people, but there are enough of us remaining to expose the humbug of your claim, as white Australians, to be a civilised, progressive, kindly and humane nation.<sup>49</sup>

It goes on to address the rights of children:

The Aboriginal Protection Board ... has 'protected' the full-bloods of New South Wales so well that there are now less than a thousand of them remaining ... Its powers are so drastic that merely on suspicion or averment it can continue its persecuting protection unto the third, fourth and fifth generation of those so innocently unfortunate as to be descended from the original owners of this land. ...

The Board may cause the child of any Aborigine to be apprenticed to any master, and any child who refuses to be so apprenticed may be removed to a home or institution.

The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine. ...

Give our children the same chances as your own, and they will do as well as your children!<sup>50</sup>

Crawford and Langford Ginibi grew up aware of the real threats of forced 'apprenticeship', removal and other disruptions to their family lives. However, the nation for which the *feu de joie* was fired and Miss Gladys Moncrieff sang 'Land of Hope and Glory' on 26 January 1938 failed to imagine the fears and joys, hopes and glories of the ten-year-old girl at Brewarrina and the four-year-old at Stoney Gully.

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<sup>48</sup> Horner and Langton, 'The Day of Mourning', *Australians 1938*, p 30.

<sup>49</sup> J T Patten and W Ferguson, 'Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights!' *The Publicist*, January 1938. Appendix Two, Horner, *Bill Ferguson*, p 193.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, pp 195-97.

The polyrhythmic but clear voices of the Aborigines' Progressive Association and its friends did reach national authorities, but their responses were less clear. Away from the authorities, the protesters attracted non-indigenous support from people as diverse as the Association itself. These friends included Labor Party and Communist Party members, trade union and church members, Helen Baillie, the speedy driver and friend of then lay preacher (later state governor and Sir) Doug Nicholls, socialist Michael Sawtell, feminist Joan Kingsley-Strack, writers Dame Mary Gilmore and Jean Devanny and publishers W J Miles (father of taxi fare evader Bee Miles) and P R 'Inky' Stephensen.<sup>51</sup> Even among friends, though, forms of and motives for support were mixed. The political parties lacked imagination and would put other interests ahead of those of Indigenous people when difficult decisions had to be made. As for the businessmen Miles and Stephensen, their magazine *The Publicist*, in which 'Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights' appeared, soon became an arena for their anti-Semitic defence of fascism, which Stephensen described as 'a revolt of people oppressed by the Shylocks of the Paris-London-New York financial axis'.<sup>52</sup> Such discourse was extreme, but not uncommon in many parts of the world in 1938.

When Crawford and Langford Ginibi were children, there was not yet a program of mass immigration from Europe, although it might have seemed otherwise to Indigenous eyes. The overwhelming majority of immigrants was British, a situation defended by Trade and Customs Minister White, on behalf of Australia, at the Evian Conference in July 1938. Australia expressed misgivings about Jewish migrants' reputation for a reluctance to assimilate, but announced in December 1938 that it would accept 15 000 Jewish refugees over three years. This announcement followed *Kristallnacht* and was apparently motivated by a desire to 'win support from the UK and the USA'.<sup>53</sup> 7 500 Jewish refugees managed to arrive before war broke out. After the war, when it was too late for the millions in Europe, Australia's first Department of Immigration was created and Minister Calwell began to plan its programs. In 1938, Patten and Ferguson had identified British settlers as 'new Australians', but by 1949, Calwell was implying that Anglo-Australians were the 'old', as he called for postwar migrants to be known as 'new settlers', 'newcomers' or 'new Australians' rather than 'Balts', 'Displaced Persons' or 'DPs'.<sup>54</sup> 'New Australians' was the term popularly adopted and it was in a 'new Australian' discursive world that Brett spent her childhood.

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<sup>51</sup> Horner, *Bill Ferguson*, pp 63-64, 106-11.

<sup>52</sup> P R Stephensen, 'Note for Research Students', *The Publicist*, May 1938, cited in Craig Munro, *Wild Man of Letters: The Story of P. R. Stephensen* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1984) p 189.

<sup>53</sup> Rutland, *Edge of the Diaspora*, pp 179-81.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur Calwell, Immigration Minister, 11 August 1949, quoted in *The Fifth Estate*, RMIT Journalism, <http://www.fifth.estate.rmit.edu.au/March02/refugee/refugee.htm> (visited 31 May 2004).

## 1956

The terms favoured by Calwell reflected the emphasis on assimilation, as they avoided reference to the places and events that migrant memories were expected to secure in a distant and inaccessible past. By referring only to the future, it was planned that displaced people such as Brett's parents would not engage in 'suspension techniques' and disturb the pleasant prosperity and consonance of 1950s White Australia. In the early years after arrival, this approach had a reassuring element for some Holocaust survivors. For different reasons from those of the Australian government, some survivors also wished to lock their sadness away, to mute the grief that threatened to overwhelm them as they sought stability, comfort and impossible moments of consonance. The testimony of survivors who became parents after the war often articulates a sense of wonder that children could still be born after so much death, and a strong desire to see their precious children live happily and peacefully.<sup>55</sup> In Australia, this was part of some survivors' initial willingness to accept the 'new Australian' world of silent assimilation.

In the 1950s, most 'new Australians' endured some level of exploitation and cultural marginalisation, though Jewish survivors from Europe had, of course, experienced much more extreme levels in their recent past. Materially, most were adequately provided for, through their employment and assistance from Jewish welfare groups. Though many survivors held strong political views and had been active in various forms of resistance in Europe, few engaged in protest against Australian authorities in the 1950s. This was largely due to the officially proclaimed equality of (white) Australian citizens, an extreme contrast to Hitler's persecution and genocide. The survivors had also had only a few years to regain their strength after facing possible or likely death for years. Exploitation and marginalisation in Australia, while representing possible reasons to protest, also limited survivors' possibilities to engage in political activity in the early years. Their energies were largely expended on establishing themselves financially and learning English and other aspects of dominant cultural practice. As much survivor memoir suggests, there was also a sense of redemption and gratitude that prevented open complaint against Australian authorities. In the 1950s, there is little evidence of Jewish survivors (or any other group of non-indigenous Australians) considering their role in the continuing colonisation of Indigenous land and lives. The shame attached to settler gratitude, as articulated by Ghassan Hage's young acquaintances in their discussion of 'Mabo' fifty years later, was not part of public discourse and presumably not something that concerned

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<sup>55</sup> There is a large body of memoir written and recorded by survivors in Australia. For a sample, see: *Australian Memories of the Holocaust*, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies: <http://www.holocaust.com.au/memories.htm>, *Jewish Holocaust Museum And Research Centre, Melbourne*: <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/affiliates/hlc/publications.html>, Australian Holocaust memoirs collection, Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, Melbourne and *Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation* (Steven Spielberg's project, which includes many Australians): <http://www.vhf.org/vhfmain-2.htm>.

weary survivors wishing to focus on a calm future.<sup>56</sup> The calmness of their future, desired by both migrants and ‘the nation’, seemed to require what Cantor Moshe Kraus describes as ‘God’s gift of the ability to forget’.<sup>57</sup> However, traces and echoes of the intermittently forgotten past resonated, not least in the children, the not-so-silent second generations. Some survivors recall memories of their own endangered young lives being revived as their Australian children reached corresponding years.<sup>58</sup> Children were part of the creaking and rattling of segments of survivors’ fans of memory that could interrupt the desired smoothness of ‘new Australian’ segues between stages of assimilation.

Brett, by most accounts a second-generation child not inclined to silence, turned ten in 1956. An event not mentioned in her poems about that year, but filling the airwaves around her, was the first Australian Olympic Games, held in Melbourne. Sport was Australia’s field of excellence, but an area in which the young Brett distinguished herself from ‘Australians’, referring to sport as ‘something strange that Australians did’.<sup>59</sup> This self-exclusion from Australian identity reflected the slowness of Calwell’s ‘new Australian’ discourse to take effect. To the young Brett, ‘Australian’ still meant ‘Anglo’ – no ‘old’ or other modifier was required. As the discourse and actions of national authorities had sustained some Anglo fears and suspicions of the outside world and people emerging from it, Brett’s citizenship was insufficient to make her Australian in every popular sense. In 1956, though, the authorities were obliged to demand a somewhat sudden show of friendliness to Olympic visitors and to encourage mass participation in events around the Games. Brett’s family and other survivors displaced to Melbourne in the late 1940s were unlikely to be in a position to afford tickets to the opera, chamber music and orchestral performances in the Olympics festival. However, Australian contact with acknowledged talents from Central and Southern Europe was made possible with the appearances of Bosnian-born, Vienna-based soprano Sena Jurinac and Italian bass-baritone Sesto Bruscantini in several Mozart operas.

Alongside this broadening of Australian taste in what was then considered high culture, a taste for the newly introduced medium of television, previously considered ‘American and cheap’,

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<sup>56</sup> Ghassan Hage cites an Arab-Australian youth: ‘*If the Anglos didn’t do the killing you wouldn’t have been able to emigrate here. You owe ‘em, mate.*’ Hage, ‘Polluting Memories’, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for hope in a shrinking society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003), p 100, cited in my introduction.

<sup>57</sup> *Undying Love: True Stories of Courage and Faith*, film directed by Helene Klodawsky (Canada, 2002), <http://www.undyinglovemovie.com>. Moshe Kraus, a survivor and former cantor at Bergen Belsen displaced persons camp, travelled around the camps after the war, singing for survivors at ceremonies, including thousands of weddings.

<sup>58</sup> In 1964, survivor Ruth Rack took out an insurance policy, suddenly fearing for her children’s safety. Later, she reflects: ‘I took this practical step when Roslyn was ten years old, the age at which I had been torn from my parents, family and community. My concern for the children, in case something happened to me, increased at this time.’ Ruth Rack, *Book of Ruth: Memoirs of a Child Survivor* (Canberra: Southern Highlands Publishers, 2000), p 117.

<sup>59</sup> Brett, ‘My Body’, *In Full View* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1997), p 153.

was cultivated with the Melbourne Games.<sup>60</sup> 1950s white Australian culture, though arguably rich in itself, had limited entry points for innovative cultural forms, partly because of fears and snobbery. These attitudes formed at least three complex (and perhaps defensible) cultural borders. Firstly, European intellectualism was an object of suspicion for a scattered group of Australians, including anti-communists and workers, anti-Semites and some who generally enjoyed the increasing presence of popular culture from the United States. A second barrier was the cultural cringe (a term coined in mid-century Melbourne) and a third was the fear of identification with brash American market-populism.<sup>61</sup> Just five thousand television sets had been sold in Australia before the 1956 Olympics, but sales escalated during the Games, as viewing the events became a respectable reason for buying.

Friendliness and politeness to visitors also became respectable, as Melbourne people responded to various education campaigns. Booklets such as the Junior Chamber of Commerce's *Be Courteous to Olympic Visitors* and a range of posters, stickers and press notices encouraged locals to refute pre-Olympics claims overseas that Australians, with their 'convict past', might be 'rude and uncouth'.<sup>62</sup> The convict aspect of white Australia's past – the Anglo-Celtic ancestral role as the unwanted and displaced person – was still as muted in 1956 as the concentration camp past of some 'new Australians'. So courtesy came to prevail at the Games and 8 800 visitors were billeted in private homes, enabling close contact. In many cases the hospitality was that of hesitant but warm, curious and generous hosts, surprised by the pleasure of their own friendliness. In others it may have been the humbug inspired by demands of national image and commercial interests, the generosity of hosts secure in the knowledge their guests' stay was temporary.<sup>63</sup> As with many cross-cultural encounters, the ignorant curiosity of hosts could sometimes verge on bad manners. For example, the *Herald* published a photograph captioned 'Pakistan team members demonstrate the length of a turban for a curious Australian public at the Olympic Village', in which two men appear to pose diffidently for their audience, each holding one end of a long piece of fabric.<sup>64</sup> It is not clear whether the unnamed team members welcomed the questions of 'a curious Australian public' as a gesture of friendly

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<sup>60</sup> State Library of Victoria, *1956 Melbourne Olympic Games* exhibition site, <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/slv/exhibitions/olympics/welcome.html> (visited 15 June 2004).

<sup>61</sup> The USA's McCarthy-era anxieties and their manifestations in popular culture, especially film, have been extensively studied. On the cultural cringe, see A A Phillips, *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1958).

<sup>62</sup> State Library of Victoria, *1956 Melbourne Olympic Games*.

<sup>63</sup> This approach is similar to Derrida's 'conditional hospitality', which he defines as 'the greeting of the foreign other ... as a friend but on the condition that the host, ... the one who receives, lodges or gives asylum remains the patron, the master of the household, on the condition that he maintains his own authority in his own home'. Jacques Derrida, 'Intellectual Courage: An Interview Conducted by Thomas Assheuer', *Culture Machine* 2 (2000), p 4, [http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/frm\\_f1.htm](http://culturemachine.tees.ac.uk/frm_f1.htm) (visited 15 October 2003). See also Derrida and Anne Dufour-mantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, tr. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000).

<sup>64</sup> *The Herald*, 21 November 1956, p 5.



interest or politely humoured the Australian media and ‘public’ in their act of insensitive intrusion.

Guests at the Games were surprised that Melbourne was not quite as sophisticated as the hyperbolic bid had suggested. The Invitation Committee’s promotional film had described Collins Street as ‘the Regent Street, Fifth Avenue, Rue de la Paix of Melbourne’.<sup>65</sup> Melbourne had been represented as a site of impressive cultural life, musically and artistically, with grand hotels, restaurants and shops. In fact, the only cultural activities that regularly engaged large numbers of Melbourne residents in public gatherings were related to sport. Contrary to the Invitation Committee’s implications, there was no equivalent to the café, concert and restaurant cultures of Europe (hence the need for Café Scheherezade in 1958). Cultural life tended to take place in more private spaces than elsewhere in the world. Visitors were not generally expected to join in local activities and practices tended towards inflexibility. For example, cafés did not open for breakfast on Sundays and few were willing to do so during the Olympics. In hotels, the dirty glasses and unattractive effects of the ‘six o’clock swill’ contrasted with the clean, leisurely image Australia had promoted. The interests of hygiene and ‘purity’ were, however, upheld with the last-minute decision to hold equestrian events in Sweden rather than in Australia. Melbourne’s bid had emphasised Australia’s love of horsemanship and excellent facilities for equestrian teams, forgetting that Australia’s quarantine laws prevented entry of horses from anywhere but the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand unless the full quarantine period was served. The Federal Government refused to relax its laws for the Olympic Games.

One innovative act of flexibility at the Melbourne Games was initiated by John Ian Wing, a seventeen-year-old Chinese-Australian. Wing’s proposal that the closing ceremony include an informal moment, in which all athletes walked together as one team, casually waving to the people rather than marching, was accepted and became an Olympic tradition. The opening ceremony had involved a good deal of marching, with massed army and naval bands, a gun salute, a mass choir and the arrival of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The lyrics of the specially composed Olympic Hymn spoke of fame and victory, ‘the glory of Triumph’ and ‘the Beauty of Youth’.<sup>66</sup> Of course, there was much glory and beauty to be enjoyed, but the presence of people with links to other places and times, not bound by the silent rules of white Australian assimilation, brought some unexpected voices into Melbourne’s cultural life. For example, the Soviet Union’s multiple medal-winner Viktor Chukarin was also a World War II concentration camp survivor. As his past was mentioned aloud in Australian media, the muted past lives of his fellow survivors were also given a faint voice. However, many of these, like Brett’s parents,

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<sup>65</sup> State Library of Victoria, *1956 Melbourne Olympic Games*.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

were outside the public hearing range, as they worked inside Melbourne's factories. The Games also brought current world politics closer to the minds of white Australia. The Suez Canal Crisis resulted in the withdrawal of Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq from the Games. Images of the Hungarian Uprising, with the pulling down of Stalin's statue in Budapest, lost some of their aura of distance when the water polo match between Hungary and the USSR ended in violence.<sup>67</sup> Hungarians were among the Holocaust survivors who had moved to Australia as displaced persons in the decade preceding the Olympics and echoes of their past were revived. The events of 1956 also led to several members of the Hungarian team staying in Australia or seeking refuge in other countries.

In 1956, many activists from the 1938 Day of Mourning were still working hard to have Indigenous histories heard and futures improved. The burst of friendliness in Melbourne did not extend to any change in conditions for Indigenous people. While assimilation was proclaimed, segregation was practised. Crawford and Langford Ginibi lived this discrepancy, while, on a different level, citizen Brett did not identify fully as Australian either. As Ann Curthoys points out, debates around Indigenous identities and histories and those around non-British immigrant relations with Anglo-Australia both concern 'the significance of descent, belonging and culture'. However, Curthoys argues that the 'two debates can neither be conceptualised together nor maintained as fully distinct'.<sup>68</sup> Indigenous people and continental European immigrants had different roles in the colonially imagined Anglo-Australian nation, but were connected by their relations with authorities and discourses. In relation to 'major' Australia, Indigenous people were unwanted creditors, already obstructively occupying the desired site, while immigrants were chosen, introduced beneficiaries and debtors, or subsidiary colonisers. Both groups were obliged to engage with loud colonial discourses.

### **Autobiographical acts**

Memoir is largely made up of autobiographical acts that articulate aspects of the various discourses engaging the narrator, as Smith and Watson suggest. The storytelling sites of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett are marked by the protection, White Australia, assimilation and multiculturalism policies. Each site is also conditioned by its distance from the site remembered, as each author recalls childhood from a different position within adulthood. Brett was in her forties when *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* were published. Her poems with childhood settings sit between those addressing her mid-life travels and the joys and reassurances of her second marriage. She considers the fragile securities of childhood with recovering, loving parents from a position of cautious comfort, with a loving husband and

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<sup>67</sup> State Library of Victoria, 'Blood in the pool: Hungary versus Soviet Union water polo match', *1956 Melbourne Olympic Games*.

<sup>68</sup> Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation', p 21.

children and resolutions that sometimes slip back into the dissonance of doubt and regret. Crawford was a retired elder and widow when she was interviewed. She had returned to Brewarrina after retirement, believing it her duty to contribute to the life of her community there, especially that of her grandchildren. Crawford continued to work in the field of commemoration, advising the museum and the school. In this context and after years of employment in the education sector, her memories of childhood often focus on modes of education and the effects of government policies on them.

Langford Ginibi was in her early fifties as she wrote *Don't Take Your Love to Town*. She wrote in Sydney, a place she first knew in her teenage years, but she returned to Bundjalung country, to some childhood sites, during the writing of her book. Unlike Crawford, Langford Ginibi did not have the daily reminder of the physical presence of childhood sites. The distance between her adulthood home in Sydney and the Bundjalung country of her childhood enabled the 'strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of distance' that Benjamin identified as aura.<sup>69</sup> In Langford Ginibi's case, her childhood home was closer than it seemed in several ways. Bundjalung country is part of her identity as a Bundjalung storyteller and necessarily pervades her memoir, even when its presence is silent, as in the many scenes set outside Bundjalung country. Connections of inheritance, memory and culture endure, despite the real 'disconnections produced by colonialism'.<sup>70</sup> Both links and ruptures inform the telling of Langford Ginibi's childhood, as she inhabits her adulthood site. Bill Ashcroft writes, of Sally Morgan's Nan in *My Place*, that 'the inherited ways of being in place, of seeing place as a noumenous and liberating mystery, determines her Aboriginality more effectively than any location, as indeed it must. This gift of being is the opposite of exile, for it turns location, any location, into home, into owned place.'<sup>71</sup> Though it may not be a 'determining' factor of her Aboriginality, there is something of this in Langford Ginibi's habitation of her storytelling site, where aura is not removed from her remembered childhood, but altered. As Bundjalung elder Aunty Millie Boyd tells Langford Ginibi, 'they take the land, but they can't take our butherah'. Langford Ginibi explains that 'butherah' is 'our spirit' – 'the only thing that remains intact' long after dispossession.<sup>72</sup>

Linked to their storytelling sites are the narrators' modulating subjectivities. The adult subjects speak of their childhood selves within the structures of many levels of personal and collective memory. They remember their roles as daughters while enacting roles of grand/motherhood. As a bereaved adult daughter, each narrator mourns the loss of her mother in her texts, while

<sup>69</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography', *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds, tr. Rodney Livingstone et al (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 518.

<sup>70</sup> Ceridwen Spark, 'Rethinking Emplacement, Displacement and Indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), p 96.

<sup>71</sup> Bill Ashcroft, 'Habitation', *New Literatures Review* 34 (1997), pp 28-29.

<sup>72</sup> Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1994), p xvii.

recalling the hurts of her childhood relationship with that mother. Crawford also speaks as a bereaved wife. Her memories of marriage differ from those of Langford Ginibi and Brett, in that her marriage to Gong was one of few certainties throughout her unpredictable life. As a child, Crawford was unaware of this certainty, but her marriage had already begun, as an agreement, in the collective memories of her family and Gong's family. Despite the interruptions and insecurities of her childhood, Crawford's subjectivities were conditioned by traces of the continuities sustained by her father and others around her. As an adult narrator, Crawford identifies such familial continuities as memorable childhood care.

To 'complicate' the differentiation between narrating (adult) 'I' and narrated (childhood) 'I', Smith and Watson note the intersection of these with the historical 'I' and the ideological 'I'. The historical person, the author, exists through childhood and adulthood, but differs from the narrated subject in that she is 'unknowable by readers and is not the "I" that we gain access to in an autobiographical narrative'.<sup>73</sup> Citing Paul Smith, Smith and Watson describe the ideological 'I' as the 'concept of personhood culturally available to the narrator when he tells his story'.<sup>74</sup> As historical figures, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett lived their narrated childhood lives at considerable distances from each other. However, their published texts emerged in closer proximity, so that their ideological narrators – those constructed when they told their stories – share aspects of cultural situation. Culturally conditioned memories of music contribute to this construction, while music itself was an important part of the passage of the authors' historical lives. Rites of passage and education are marked by musical ceremony in Anglo-Celtic-Australian, Baarkanji, Bundjalung and Jewish traditions. As displaced children, the historical subjects Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett heard and reproduced the sounds of love songs and laments, clap sticks and emu drums, or Yiddish tunes and the occasional Hebrew prayer. They sang tunes from treetops or horseback, heard songs sung around pianos, or danced around silent houses. Their ideological narrators present traces of these sounds.

### **Child-resistant fences and other protective boundaries**

Around 1938, the care of Australian babies and children began to be increasingly directed by various experts. A Sydney mother who gave birth that year recalls: 'that was when all the new rules came in about not picking them up and only feeding them every four hours, and we thought we had to go along like that ... And it made it very hard.'<sup>75</sup> Of course, for mothers on Box Ridge mission, it would have been even harder to watch their children being bathed in caustic soda. In the twenty-first century, public concern with all aspects of child protection persists, as well as pressure on some to strive for forms of perfection. Popular commercial

<sup>73</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001), p 59.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p 61, citing Paul Smith, *Discerning the Subject* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988), p 105.

<sup>75</sup> Clare Parr of Hurstville, cited in Kerreen Reiger, 'Babies' in Gammage and Spearritt, eds, *Australians 1938*, p 147.

culture encourages parents and guardians to fear any potential failure on the part of their children and to provide all possible opportunities. An ever-increasing array of products to enhance powers of body and mind, self-esteem and skill, is available to those in a position to buy. Generally, the more materially privileged the Australian, the greater the demands for active parental protection and childhood perfection. Institutions for children also follow these general rules. For example, schools have increasingly substantial protective fences. On private properties, a relatively recent protective measure is the requirement for installation of child-resistant swimming pool fences.

Private swimming pool fences were not part of the childhood lives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, but many other nationally prescribed barriers obstructed their paths in the name of protection and care. Various boundaries protected by national authorities divided realms of possibility for the three children. For Brett, the borders had to do with memory and its articulation, especially the possibilities afforded her Polish- and Yiddish-speaking parents. The remembered borders also had less overt effects, as Brett's own Australian English did not protect her from a sense of muted marginalisation. In Crawford's case, the borders she encountered as a child were like painful burrs, blocking her tracks and sometimes confining her in spaces of isolation and fear. Langford Ginibi recalls the 'glass door' of language, as well as strict segregation in Coraki, for example, in the cinema and hospital, before the relief of her move to Bonalbo. Bonalbo, where she remembers no such barriers, made it possible for the rest of Langford Ginibi's primary school years to be lived in relative happiness. Here she was able to live with her 'Mother Nell' and 'Father Sam', to sing at church concerts with other Bonalbo children and to practise ballet steps with Mrs Richards from the fruit shop (albeit in return for the jobs she did for Mrs Richards). Several decades after each author's childhood, the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett locate sites of borders maintained and permeated, of detention and release, division and collaboration.

Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett were born into positions of protection at the hands of strangers. Crawford introduces her text with a story that elucidates the identity imagined for her by Australian authorities in the 1920s. In 1985, all Crawford knew about her date of birth was that her mother had 'said it was gettin' on for winter'.<sup>76</sup> At the age of fifty-seven, Crawford located a record of her 1928 birth. Along with the births of nine calves, 28 lambs and two foals, Crawford's birth was listed in a sheep station book. Her parents worked and were effectively detained on Rossmore Station. Crawford explains:

Back in those days Aboriginal babies didn't have to be registered. We weren't citizens so we was nobody. But if the parents worked on a station the baby could be entered on the station books. That made us what was called 'station kids'. At least it gave us some bit of

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<sup>76</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, p x.

protection from the Aboriginal *Protection* Board who couldn't move us without the station owner's permission. On the other hand, the owner could call in the Board to get rid of us if he wanted to.<sup>77</sup>

Crawford also recalls the occasion for her research into her date of birth. By 1985, she was employed as Regional Aboriginal Coordinator by the Institute of TAFE (Technical and Further Education), whose administration office required documentary evidence of a date of birth. The inconsistent demands of 'protective' authorities emerge as a source of laughter and pain in Crawford's memories.

Langford Ginibi was born six months before her sixteen-year-old mother married her log-cutting father. While Box Ridge, at Coraki, was not quite as infamous as Brewarrina for its surveillance and ill treatment of children, neither was it the kindest mission in New South Wales. Langford Ginibi's family moved from Box Ridge to Stoney Gully when she was one, but she and her sisters returned when she was of school age. Langford Ginibi recalls the headmistress Mrs Hiscocks, who went on to become matron at the notorious Cootamundra girls' home. Her memories of harsh segregation in Coraki are reflected in the memoirs of Doug Pinch, a missionary who worked at Box Ridge after Langford Ginibi's time there. Pinch claims that some townspeople spoke of the Box Ridge residents as 'so depraved that they are helplessly given over to their vile habits and appetites' and as 'an embarrassment to the whole locality.'<sup>78</sup> Pinch apparently took pleasure in a sonic breach of boundaries, when such 'critical townspeople' were later to stand on their verandahs and hear the people at Box Ridge singing hymns.<sup>79</sup> Some mission residents may have shared this pleasure, but they also had other concerns. For Langford Ginibi's father, Harry Anderson, the mission initially provided an opportunity for his daughters' schooling, alongside their traditional education. After the departure of the girls' mother and while Anderson worked for long periods in the scrub, Uncle Ernie and others at Box Ridge were able to keep an eye on the girls.

Uncle Ernie continued to sing and tell stories, but Mrs Hiscocks' rule was harsh: 'We were never allowed to be ourselves, regimented we were like soldiers, marching to their tune.'<sup>80</sup> When the girls were seriously injured, medical care was not provided. Rita suffered a severe cut to her wrist when she fell on a squaring axe and Langford Ginibi endured weeks of pain after

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p xi, Crawford's emphasis.

<sup>78</sup> W D Pinch, *In the Beginning: Church of the Nazarene 1945-64* (unpublished memoirs), p 9. Unlike Western Australia, where churches ran the missions, NSW missions were controlled and staffed by the government, with church workers visiting.

<sup>79</sup> Glen O'Brien, "'A Dogged Inch by Inch Affair': The Church of the Nazarene in Australia 1945-1958", *Kingsley College*, [http://www.kingsley.vic.edu.au/glenobrien/NazAus.htm#\\_ftn22](http://www.kingsley.vic.edu.au/glenobrien/NazAus.htm#_ftn22) (visited 10 July 2004).

<sup>80</sup> Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p xv. For an analysis of Ella Hiscocks' working life and contradictions between her 'lived experience' and 'system of belief', see Anna Cole, 'Unwitting Soldiers: The Working Life of Matron Hiscocks at the Cootamundra Girls Home', *Aboriginal History* 27 (2003), pp 147-61. Cole concludes that Hiscocks' 'conflicting testimony is revealing ... of the impossibility of seeking to act humanely while supporting the systematic denial of Aboriginal culture and identity that is inherent in the policy of assimilation' (p 158).

being burnt while pouring kerosene onto a fire she was told to stoke. Their father took a few days' break from his work and finally took the girls to the safety of Bonalbo. At Box Ridge, the consequences of an Indigenous father being found to have acted on his own decision about the future of his children may not have been as extreme as at Brewarrina. However, secrecy was necessary: 'Uncle Ernie was the only one who knew we weren't coming back. He helped us into the truck and kissed us goodbye then walked away from us with his head down crying.'<sup>81</sup> For some Indigenous survivors, disillusionment with mission life represented a conclusive recognition that the end of the nineteenth-century massacres and the beginnings of twentieth-century talk of equal rights did not mean the bad times were over and may not have meant much at all.<sup>82</sup> Rather, survival under colonisation would continue to be a cruel struggle and would demand innovative strategies of, in turn, escape, resistance and accommodation.

In contrast, the worst really was over for what remained of Brett's family in 1946. Despite the ruins and uncertain future, Brett's birth represented new life and hope. She was born to recovering parents in the 'care' of United States military police, who patrolled the displaced persons camp in Germany. The effects of recent events persisted in the camp, where sounds of weeping dominated:

I was born  
into  
a disordered kingdom  
  
a  
cracked galaxy  
  
there was  
so much  
screaming  
  
there was  
so much  
weeping  
  
there was  
so much  
grieving.<sup>83</sup>

Like the sheep station of Crawford's birth and the mission of Langford Ginibi's, the displaced persons camp was a site where subjectivities negotiated new relations. Previous relations were disrupted, as positions of respect, prejudice and authority were swiftly reallocated. As the USA asserted new powers and defeated Germans underwent denazification, the USSR was converted

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<sup>81</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), p 9.

<sup>82</sup> As Penny van Toorn points out, Langford Ginibi was born 'when the killing times were hardly over in the north', as the Coniston massacre occurred in 1928. See van Toorn, 'History, Identity and Politics: Ruby Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Approaches to Don't Take Your Love to Town, Australian Women's Studies Resources*, <http://emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/books/ruby/rhist2.htm> (visited 28 July 2004).

<sup>83</sup> Brett, 'The Arrival', *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1992), p 9.

from ally to enemy and Jews were an object of salvation, as well as a source of labour for a 'growing' Australia.

The displaced Brajsztajns sought a new life for their baby girl in the quiet, 'white' Australia of 1948. Around a decade earlier, when the Brajsztajns still had their extended families in Lodz, Crawford's parents had taken her and her sister to Brewarrina mission, also in the hope that things would 'be better for [the] children'.<sup>84</sup> As Australian government representatives had sought 'suitable' displaced persons in Europe, so 'government fellers came' to the Yantabulla sandhills, making the mission 'sound really good'.<sup>85</sup> To make their various schemes sound good, Australian authorities' popular themes have consistently employed motifs of equality and fairness, while sustaining systems of inequity. For the respective parents of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, education was a major element of their plans for better lives for their children. In Brett's case, despite the effects of her parents' silent memories, educational opportunities were provided in much the same way they were provided to other urban white children. There were various forms of inequality, but not of the extreme level known by Crawford and Langford Ginibi. Crawford remembers her rejection when her mother tried to enrol her at Brewarrina Public School:

[W]e heard the teacher sayin', "No, we can't take them. Aboriginals can't go to this school, they have to go to the Mission." ... Dad couldn't get over it. He thought any kid could go to any school ... [M]y parents wanted the best for us. That was another good reason, they thought, for us to go to the Mission, so us kids could get educated properly. But in the end we didn't learn much more there than Miss Cook and Sister Clare had already taught us.<sup>86</sup>

In New South Wales in the 1940s, when Crawford and Langford Ginibi were already working, Indigenous children still required exemption certificates and medical certificates to be considered for admission to public schools.<sup>87</sup> (Indigenous participation in 'public' education was even less attainable in most other states and territories.) The certificate requirements were removed in New South Wales in 1950, but Indigenous children could still attend public schools only if all non-indigenous parents agreed. In 1960 this parents' veto right was finally lifted. In the 1930s, the missions were represented to Crawford's parents and Langford Ginibi's father as sites of opportunity for their daughters. Only after witnessing the cruelty at Brewarrina and Box Ridge could they reassess government talk and form new strategies for their children's lives.

Harry Anderson's decision to take his daughters to live with his brother Sam in Bonalbo proved the best move in Langford Ginibi's young life. Bonalbo was an exceptional situation for

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<sup>84</sup> Crawford, p 48.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p 47.

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p 59.

<sup>87</sup> See the New South Wales *Education Gazette*, 2 October 1944.



Indigenous girls in New South Wales in the early 1940s. Langford Ginibi and her sisters enjoyed the best possible combination of living with family members and inclusion in the educational and social life of the town. While separation from her parents remained painful, Langford Ginibi represents Mother Nell and Father Sam as the best imaginable substitutes:

Mother Nell, we called her, this gracious, kind woman ...

She taught me how to milk a cow, and how to crack a horse whip; how to cook, and how to make home-made butter. She also taught me how to love and respect my elders. And not to talk at the meal table – only grown-ups talked at the table.

She taught me the magic of listening to Old Jack Sperring's dance band on Thursday nights; she taught me how to whistle the cows up. She taught us how to laugh, and love; and how to be humble.

If I had ever had the choice of a mother, she would have won the toss ...

In my mind's eye, when things get too much for me, I remember this big robust woman, and feel ashamed of my petty whinges.<sup>88</sup>

Bonalbo, where Uncle Sam called Langford Ginibi 'the Big Noise', was the scene of much loud childhood singing, dancing, laughing and whistling, as well as the learnt silences of respect and trust. Unlike Coraki, where the breaching of racially marked boundaries created irresolvable dissonance, Bonalbo left Langford Ginibi with memories of diverse children sharing moments of curiosity and occasional terror, as when they peeped through the tall grass into the slaughterhouse. Among these childhood friends were the hiking and Hawaiian dancing queen Audrey Lee, blonde neighbour Judy Brown and the dark-skinned champion buckjumpers, Jimmy and Johnny Khan. Langford Ginibi's memories of her primary school years in Bonalbo, during the war, showed that boundaries could sometimes be crossed and community relations need not follow government prescriptions.

When Crawford was of primary school age, at Brewarrina, she and her family saw community relations abruptly upset. Ignorant and, in many cases, hostile to Indigenous power relations, mission management set up and intensified its intrusive surveillance systems. Crawford remembers her first impressions:

The Manager talked quite reasonably to our dad, but when he came to Charles Zooch his manner was very different. I didn't know the word 'abrupt' then, but now I'd say he was very abrupt, because of the way Charles spoke. His English and grammar was much better than the Manager's, and you couldn't have an educated Aboriginal person on a Mission. You either starved him out, or boned him or shot him, but some way you got rid

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<sup>88</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Real Deadly* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992), pp 5-6.

of him. It would never do for a white man to feel belittled by a full-blood Aboriginal, and Charles and Nellie were full-bloods.<sup>89</sup>

Mission discourse would exclude the displaced, multilingual Charles Zooch, who had been given this name by Sir Sidney Kidman, a magnate known as the 'Cattle King'. Kidman had sent Zooch, as a child, from one of his stations to a private school in Adelaide, where Zooch was educated with squatters' sons. Crawford presents this encounter as a positive one, one to which the terms 'protection' and 'care' did not apply: 'Kidman never made them feel that he owned them because he'd educated them ... The parents trusted him because he was a good man, a man of his word, and really looked out for the kids. In their minds he wasn't anything like the Aboriginal Protection Board.'<sup>90</sup> Kidman's gesture, towards various kinds of redemption and resolution, was directed from a secure site, where truths could be narrowly defined. Zooch was conversant with more discursive modes than Kidman, but at Brewarrina he encountered, apparently for the first time, the acute obstruction of possibilities that characterises a site unwilling to have its truths questioned. Such obstruction demands counter-protective strategies of various forms, including escape and renarration.

Unlike Crawford's family, who decided to outwit management and escape the mission, Zooch had given his word that his children would stay and 'he knew he was done'.<sup>91</sup> Ngemba elder June Barker and her husband, Murawari elder Roy Barker, grew up on Brewarrina mission and remember the many Zooch children there. Roy Barker, just a few months older than Crawford, also remembers Crawford's departure, as well as the various managers who came and went. He recalls several managers as strict Englishmen, who had previously worked in other colonial positions, in Africa or for the East India Company.<sup>92</sup> June Barker (a friend of Crawford and also a descendant of Louisa Truganina of Tasmania, the Yorta Yorta people and the Wiradjuri people) remembers the manager's 'big house' and the people's 'little houses'. She and her husband recall the routine soundscape at Brewarrina:

[T]he bell rang every morning at half past seven and we'd run down to the treatment room to get our eye drops ... The bell would ring all day, sort of. The next bell would ring for the school, ... then the ration bell would ring and doesn't matter where the people were, whether they were away fishing, they'd hear those bells and they'd come up and then certain days, if the big bosses from Sydney were there, the inspectors, the bell would ring in another tone and he'd be hurrying up to see the big bosses. And another bell then

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<sup>89</sup> Crawford, p 60.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p 48. A Kidman biography blurb tells: 'As a barely literate youth of thirteen, Sidney Kidman ran away from home and worked as an odd-job boy in a grog shanty in outback Australia. He went on to become the greatest pastoral landholder in modern history, acquiring a legendary reputation both at home and abroad as the Cattle King.' Jill Bowen, *Kidman: The Forgotten King* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1995).

<sup>91</sup> Crawford, p 62.

<sup>92</sup> June and Roy Barker, now of Lightning Ridge, personal communication, 3 August 2004.

when it rang real slow you knew there was a funeral. Sometimes you seen the little caskets being carried, people dying and you hear the death wail, all the wailing while we – we had to keep the laws of the Aboriginal ways in death. No noise on the mission. You hear the crying and the death wail at night, it's a real eerie, frightening sound to hear. Sad sound now I know, to hear them all crying. And then after the funeral, everything would go back to normal. And they'd smoke the houses out, you know, the old Aboriginal way...

[Roy Barker:] Yeah, in other words there on that mission we were controlled by a bell, for all things ...

See when we were young, when we were kids, anything Aboriginal was nothing, you know, this is how we grew up. And to say that anything Aboriginal was no good.<sup>93</sup>

However, even those who stayed on the mission devised ways to evade surveillance, with modes of communication not understood by a management ignorant of Indigenous social practice. The Barkers, Zooches and others countered government protection by secretly maintaining cultural practices around storytelling, food gathering and toolmaking. They made the most of their limited educational opportunities, rearranging and inverting little white stories. While white disdain for 'anything Aboriginal' persisted, Roy Barker remembers a general easing of pressure on Indigenous people during World War II (after Crawford's escape), as white authorities found a new enemy in the Japanese.<sup>94</sup> With the reassuring presence of family, there was much for a child to learn on the mission about human relations and strategies, despite extreme cultural rupture and restrictions.

Crawford, learning from the example of her elders, developed her own strategies to counter the limiting effects of protection and assimilation. The Baarkanji people had long been known for their powers of resistance. Writing (in the 1970s) of the nineteenth century, historian Bobbie Hardy claims:

The invaders were insatiable in their greed: the greed of the squatters for land, of lecherous whites for the women of the Barkindji, of rapacious employers who bought the reluctant services of the dark people with grog ... But even while disease and hunger and death assailed their people, and the white man by cajolery and occasionally by force pressed them into service on the stations, they struggled to preserve the tribal life. It was

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<sup>93</sup> Transcript, 'Keeping Culture', interview with Roy and June Barker, co-founders of Goondie Keeping Place, Lightning Ridge (recorded 13 March 2001 in Canberra, interviewed by Cathie Payne and Peter White), *Australian Museum Aboriginal Heritage Unit*, <http://www.amonline.net.au/ahu/culture/culture02.htm> (visited 3 August 2004).

<sup>94</sup> June and Roy Barker, personal communication, 3 August 2004.

perhaps akin to the spirit of Judaism, this fierce retention of the laws, in spite of pressures from a dominating society with alien values.<sup>95</sup>

Hardy goes on to suggest that Baarkanji labourers were valued for their 'qualities of honesty and reliability often lacking in the whites who sought employment on the Darling'. As a child, Crawford learnt that some values could be shared by Indigenous and non-indigenous, and even by workers and bosses, as in the case of the trustworthy Sid Kidman. She describes relations in her early years, at Yantabulla: 'In our little school there were Aboriginal kids and white kids from the town and the nearby stations. There wasn't any calling names like 'black kids' or 'white kids'. If you were born on a station or lived there you were 'station kids' and if you lived in town you were 'town kids', black and white alike.'<sup>96</sup> Crawford also enjoyed good relations with the Convent school nuns in Bourke, where she stayed for three months between Yantabulla and Brewarrina. Later, as a worker, she would form friendships with some 'whites who sought employment on the Darling'. However, disillusionment was inevitable: 'Just like we'd thought all teachers were like Miss Cook, I thought all nuns were like our Sisters at Bourke when I was a kid, but I found out later on that wasn't true either.'<sup>97</sup> The combination of enforced segregation and attempts at enforced acculturation left little room to move, but Crawford and her family found ways to resist and to bypass white fences.

As children, Crawford and Langford Ginibi also took pleasure in the crossing of cultural boundaries. Crawford and her family adapted and enjoyed some aspects of colonising culture, such as Celtic folk music. This was, however, more easily and thoroughly enjoyed at a distance from white authorities, that is, outside the mission. At the Yantabulla camp, Harry Lauder's music was played on a gramophone. Lauder, a Scottish one-time battler, comedian and singer, exemplified the folk music of his time in its popular, reproduced form. Crawford also took great pleasure in the dance music of Jimmy Shand, another Scottish battler, who played accordion, like Crawford and her mother. Of course, this 'battler' music held a different position in colonial culture from the smooth popular music favoured by much of Anglo-Australia, typified by 1930s star Bing Crosby. Folk music, the lamenting, laughing and dancing battlers' form, generally served rural Indigenous (and working non-indigenous) people well. This was especially true when people of different language groups were displaced and thrown together.

However, the tones of smooth, urban love could also provide moments of fantasy and border-breaching. Langford Ginibi's childhood taste in music was eclectic, including romantic tenors. Her young, beautiful mother left too early in her childhood for Langford Ginibi to know whether she shared her taste for the occasional romantic fantasy, alongside much down-to-earth

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<sup>95</sup> Bobbie Hardy, *Lament for the Barkindji: the Vanished Tribes of the Darling River region* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1976), p. xiv.

<sup>96</sup> Crawford, p. 14.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

realism and humour. The only trace Langford Ginibi mentions finding is a photograph of her mother, addressed to her father on the back, with: ‘*You are my Sunshine, love Evelyn*’.<sup>98</sup> ‘You are my Sunshine’ was a United States country song (written in 1940 by former Louisiana State Governor Jimmie Davis and Charles Mitchell), made very popular with urban audiences by Bing Crosby. Bing Crosby was not a favourite in Crawford’s childhood world, which was dominated by the Baarkanji and the Celtic, with Irish jigs and reels taught at the Yantabulla school. However, Crawford too enjoyed the smooth, exotic cheer of the American songs she learnt from Miss Cook, the teacher at Yantabulla: ‘We liked it when she’d teach us songs, like ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’ and Christmas songs that we’d never heard before.’<sup>99</sup> Crawford also recalls her grandfather’s contribution to Miss Cook’s lessons: ‘We learnt to count and do sums with sticks Grandfather Mallyer made for Miss Cook ... He used to sit around the camp and cut them. We used them as counters, and for add-ups and take-aways ... We used Grandfather’s sticks as clap-sticks too when we sang songs.’<sup>100</sup> Crawford would go on to use the effects of unwelcome government policies strategically, for example, to use aspects of white education as a means of sustaining cultural life, rather than assimilating in the ways imagined by governments.

### Watchful care

In theory, assimilationists envisaged a common Australian identity. In practice, Brett was expected to ‘blend in’, and Crawford and Langford Ginibi were required to learn and comply with colonial cultural practice, while remaining identifiably ‘other’. Authorities used various forms of surveillance and detention in their attempts to ensure Indigenous compliance. Meanwhile, Holocaust survivors like Rose and Max Brett found their care of their children disrupted by memories, although the pressures of assimilation effectively detained those memories in silent spaces. In her memoir, Doris Brett represents her parents’ ‘over-indulgence’ of their daughters as an effect of the Holocaust. She reads the behaviour and work of her ‘strong-willed and dominant sibling’, in turn, as an effect of that parental indulgence.<sup>101</sup> Lily Brett generally concurs with her sister on the depth of their parents’ love, but reads her own behaviour and the effects of their parents’ memories differently. She represents her ten-year-old self as a child at risk in the ‘friendly’ Melbourne of 1956, as she considers the care provided by her displaced, silently grieving parents:

My parents watched me carefully  
when I was growing up  
the length of my skirt

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<sup>98</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 13.

<sup>99</sup> Crawford, pp 39-40.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p 18.

<sup>101</sup> Doris Brett, *Eating the Underworld: A Memoir In Three Voices* (London: Vintage, 2001), p 14.

the way I tucked my jumper in  
whether I was wearing socks or stockings  
whether I was fatter or thinner ...  
every time I appeared  
I was scrutinized  
but when I wasn't there  
no-one noticed where I was  
I wandered  
the streets and alleyways ...  
I watched  
drunk men pour out of hotels ...  
I stole money  
I spun lies ...  
I feigned appendicitis  
and underwent an unnecessary operation  
I was  
ten years old  
I was in danger  
but they were  
too battered  
and too haunted  
they knew  
extraordinary danger  
ordinary danger  
eluded them.<sup>102</sup>

Brett represents her parents' love as constant, but constricted by memories unspeakable in the protective haven of Australia. Displaced persons selected to become 'new Australians' were expected to remain gratefully inconspicuous as they aspired to assimilate with the 'nation' imagined by its leaders. Of course, 'old Australian' authorities did not imagine assimilation to be possible on all levels. The authorities' certainties rested on the assumed simultaneous desirability and unattainability of full membership of their white nation for 'non-British' Australians. Government strategies anticipated that desire for membership would ensure compliance in many areas, including the industrial and the cultural, while the expected failure of 'new Australians' to fully belong would prevent their intervention in established systems of national 'care'.

Memories of displaced persons' responses to mid-twentieth-century government practices point to different outcomes. Gratitude is rarely unqualified, as Australia granted protection only in return for labour, population and acculturation. Few adult displaced persons aspired readily to assimilation with a nation whose cultural manifestations were not always attractive to their

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<sup>102</sup> Brett, 'Growing Up', *Unintended Consequences*, pp 110-11.

sensibilities and prejudices, which had been formed in Europe. Rather, the displaced persons' diverse tastes and practices assumed new forms on their Australian sites, and 'Australian' practices were indeed subject to their interventions. Thus, some forms of assimilation, while not always desired, were attainable. However, national discourses continued to constrict possibilities for subjects such as the parents in Brett's poem and to make it difficult for them to consider and identify the 'ordinary danger' that abounded in the Australian child's streets.

For the parents of Crawford and Langford Ginibi, when they were detained on missions, attempts at silencing memories were more violent and national discourses took different forms. At Brewarrina, mission inmates were required to wear their state-prescribed identity on their bodies:

All the clothes were grey with a red line through the material and everything was stamped 'Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission'. They stamped them anywhere on the outside when they gave them to you – on the hem of a dress, on the sleeve, anywhere. ... Blankets had 'AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINALS' printed in great big letters right down the middle. I suppose so you'd know what you were when you woke up!<sup>103</sup>

The state homogenised the diverse group at Brewarrina, while differentiating it, as a swaddled grey body, from the imagined white Australian nation. Detention on the mission proved to be much harsher than on the sheep station, with closer surveillance, violent managers and demoralisation. The loudest sounds were the yelling of the cruellest manager and his wife, the howling of their dog and the swish of the manager's riding crop, with which he hit everyone from the smallest schoolgirl to the oldest elder. Meanwhile, the manager maintained silence around his son's sexual abuse of girls in their early teenage years, sending those who became pregnant to Cootamundra.<sup>104</sup> As increasingly extraordinary dangers became identifiable, it soon became clear that the move to Brewarrina had been a mistake and also that Crawford's family was not free to leave.

As Crawford spent the tenth year of her life under the privations of mission surveillance, her approaching teenage years brought with them the risks of removal to the dormitory, rape and removal to the notorious home at Cootamundra. Her family and others detained on the mission had no desire to assimilate with the incomprehensibly punitive culture they had entered, although, as demonstrated by Charles Zooch's use of language, some aspects of the 'white' nation's cultural practice were attainable. Crawford's parents organised a group escape from the

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<sup>103</sup> Crawford, p 70.

<sup>104</sup> Crawford does not name the manager she remembers as the worst, but it was probably E J Dalley, who was at Brewarrina from 1936 to 1938. Jack Horner notes that, at Brewarrina, Dalley allegedly 'fired revolver shots at an intruder one Christmas night, and another time he had used a baton', and that in 1937 there was a 'well-repeated story of the girls at Brewarrina, whose dormitory sleep was being interrupted by a white man'. Horner, *Bill Ferguson*, pp 35, 53.

mission, involving a dangerous, eleven-day journey through the dry country of northwestern New South Wales. Parents and children were forced to move separately; one child barely survived. Crawford's early childhood bush education ensured she was neither lost nor traced, but she remembers her pains:

Burrs were startin' to worry me, my feet were so sore. All day while I was hidin' I'd try to pick them out, but I only made things worse. We were on a white clay and sand area – the kind of country the most terrible burrs love. Galvanised burrs grow on a grey bush, very sharp with orange points, very painful. ... There's another one called the cat-head, very bad burr, *very bad*. It could blood poison you in about twenty-four hours.<sup>105</sup>

The reasons Crawford was escaping, hiding and unable to strip bark for footwear, as she would have liked to (the watchful, caring white search party would have noticed the freshly-barked trees), all had to do with her position in, but exclusion from, an imagined national community. By the mid-1930s, Indigenous people all over eastern Australia were dispossessed of their land and the cultural and material sustenance it provided. Government practices made it difficult to keep families together and to support them, as Indigenous kinship structures were closely connected to the stolen land. After the escape, Crawford's family positioned itself as closely as still possible to its Baarkanji and Wankamurrah communities, while dealing briefly with others on different margins of the white Australian community. These others included a Chinese cook who showed the children how to pull toffee, Afghan camel-drivers and Irish station workers.

As an adult, Crawford remembers her treatment as an object of national 'protection' as a time of tension, fear and danger. Her childhood attitude to the white nation that excluded her, while stealing from her people, was that of a walker towards the burrs that make walking unpleasant and painful, that prevent her moving at the speed and in the directions she would like: 'I was tryin' very hard to get to understand these people ... Me, after promising myself when I was a kid to kill every white person I could when I grew up, not because I hated them, but they were like a burr when you wanted to walk with no shoes. You just want to git rid of it.'<sup>106</sup> Crawford's family made it back to the Yantabulla sandhills, which were almost deserted, after the Depression. However, white forms of watchful care persisted and a new wariness pervaded the family's encounters:

If anyone mentioned goin' somewhere you said straightaway, "I don't want to go." After the Mission time, we were always afraid there were people waitin' to grab us and take us away. If we saw a strange person on a horse, or a policeman, we'd run for the scrub. If you saw a white person before he saw you, then he *didn't* see you. I suppose I thought I'd

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<sup>105</sup> Crawford, p 87, Crawford's emphasis.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p 271.



be doing that all my life, because I never thought that one day they'd let us be ourselves, just blackfellers wantin' to live on the creek without any bother.<sup>107</sup>

Crawford was able to spend her childhood years with her parents and sister, largely due to their combined efforts to outwit those who would separate them. However, she learnt at a young age to move in fear and to develop strategies of evasive behaviour. This restriction continued into the next generation, as Crawford was wary of those who would separate her from her children.

Langford Ginibi also escaped the worst of life under mission surveillance. In her text she recalls a range of more effective elements of childhood care. Alongside her beloved Aunt Nell and Uncle Sam, Langford Ginibi enjoyed the attention of various relatives, friends and teachers, as well as animals and aspects of her natural environment. She became a songwriter while still in infants' school: 'The teacher's name was Miss Pie, and she taught us to sing. When I went on messages to the other teachers I'd give my message and sing a song. One day, it had been raining for a week, I sang songs about the rain.'<sup>108</sup> On her way home that wet day, Langford Ginibi slipped and slid into the high river. As she was sucked under water, she heard 'a strange soothing music ringing in [her] ears'.<sup>109</sup> Langford Ginibi also credits the 'roaring' river with returning her safely to a willow branch near the bank. This trusting relationship with her natural environment, despite her knowledge of its dangers, counters notions of the destructive, mysterious bush that recur in national narratives of the lost child.

Bundjalung country is a lush home to diverse wildlife. In the twenty-first century, it is a favoured site of wildlife sound recordists, who produce recordings of birdsong, frog choruses, possum calls and many other 'nature sounds'. Birds and their calls play different, spiritually significant roles in Langford Ginibi's memoirs, and her knowledge of native animals is extensive.<sup>110</sup> As a child on Box Ridge mission, she listened to Uncle Ernie's stories of the animals, *binging* (turtles), *jarahny* (frogs), *guyahny* (possums), *burbi* ('bears') and kangaroos, as well as the large birds, emus and cranes. Uncle Ernie told the young Langford Ginibi that her totem was the willy wagtail, one of the smallest, most mobile birds. She reflects: 'Years later I think about that small bird. I am a very large woman with a bird singing inside me, good news and bad.'<sup>111</sup> The family care surrounding Langford Ginibi as a child enabled her to know her little bird, the singer that would counter a world of humbug and take her into other worlds.

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<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p 99, Crawford's emphasis.

<sup>108</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 4.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, pp 4-5.

<sup>110</sup> Various nineteenth-century Europeans in Australia found birds here 'songless' (Adam Lindsay Gordon, 'A Dedication') or wont to screech rather than sing. However, recent research suggests the songbirds of the world originated in Australia 45 million years ago. See F K Barker et al, 'Phylogeny and diversification of the largest avian radiation', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 101.30 (2004), pp 11 040-45.

<sup>111</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, pp 7-8.

Of course, aspects of the world of humbug itself continued to provide the occasional pleasure. Langford Ginibi remembers the roles of radio and the gramophone in Bonalbo. She recalls the day King George VI spoke on the radio, announcing to his subjects that the War had ended. The King's voice represented a brief increase in volume of the bass drone in Langford Ginibi's Bonalbo. Even more memorable was the day she 'moved into another world and another time', dancing with Mrs Richards ('Chiefy Pie') in her new, pink satin ballet shoes: 'Chiefy Pie put Richard Tauber on the gramophone, and in the house with its windows open on the hill and the cows and chooks outside and the horses munching, he sang "You are my heart's delight" and "Come be my love, when no one else can end this yearning" and I joined in and the highest note was on the word "love" and I could reach the note easily.'<sup>112</sup> The young Langford Ginibi represented in *Don't Take Your Love To Town* delighted in the polyphony of Bonalbo care. Here voices could soar, free from the muzzles remembered by Crawford on Brewarrina mission and by Brett in Melbourne.

### **Quashed and diverted possibilities**

Despite Langford Ginibi's joyful childhood memories, the taunts of Coraki and regimentation of Box Ridge resonate in her text, as does her early separation from her mother. Likewise, the after-effects of Crawford's childhood detentions on the station and mission and of the escape persist throughout her adult life. Intersecting with these memories are those of her Baarkanji education on Baarkanji land, of her grandparents, their voices and words, and of cultural and community possibilities quashed by protective authorities. These quashed or diverted possibilities are present on her every page. In Brett's text, too, the absence of the family's unburied dead is, paradoxically, a constant presence. These ghostly figures remind the survivors and descendants of what could have been and of the incomprehensible extent of the killing of life and possibility. In her poem 'A Family', choruses of lost relatives effectively arrest and muffle the survivors' and descendants' voices:

We had a family list  
 which read  
 people dead  
  
 the dead  
 were  
 mothers and fathers  
  
 grandmothers and  
 grandfathers  
 sisters and brothers  
  
 uncles and aunts  
 cousins ...  
  
 rabbis

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p 15.

dentists  
cantors  
scholars ...  
  
a music critic  
a cashier  
a tram driver  
  
and  
  
forty-nine  
children  
  
afterwards  
there was a supplement  
of two daughters  
  
a poor codicil  
an inadequate  
addendum  
  
we could  
hardly  
be heard.<sup>113</sup>

Here, the surviving parents have trouble hearing their daughters, just as they failed to effectively see Brett's speaking subject, despite their careful examinations. Western logic might suggest that fewer living voices should be more easily heard and distinguished than many, but the destruction of a communal, cultural system of listening renders the 'supplementary' voices inaudible. Parental (and sisterly) love is constrained by memories, after-effects and ghosts, which, in turn, are contorted by their Australian discursive sites. Australian voices, including those of the four family members, enter the house and counterpoint those of the hovering ghosts. This poem is a rare instance of Brett's use of the pronoun 'we' to refer to her remembered self and her sister Doris. However, the co-positioning has a bitter edge and demands a swift full stop.

The love of Crawford's parents and her younger sister Gladys was also constricted and disrupted by displacements, detentions and bereavements. The family's first experience of separation was on the escape route from the mission. Crawford recalls the long, hot daylight hours she and the other children had to sit quietly in the scrub, between their walks in the dark: 'I sat there under my bush wonderin' if I'd ever play in a river again, or if I'd ever be singin' and laughin' with my parents and sister again.'<sup>114</sup> During the dry, hungry journey, in moments when it was safe to make a sound, Crawford's parents let her know where they were with fires and music: 'Mum used to play her old accordion real loud too in case we could hear her. When we did hear it, I felt like cryin' and sometimes I did. That was my mum and dad out there and I couldn't get to them. I suppose the other kids wanted to cry because it *wasn't* their mum and

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<sup>113</sup> Brett, 'A Family', *Unintended Consequences*, pp 33-34.

<sup>114</sup> Crawford, p 87.

dad.’<sup>115</sup> Like Langford Ginibi and Brett, Crawford represents her mother as an object of difficult love and grief. Although Crawford was not yet a teenager, the departure of her mother and Gladys for Wilcannia, after the escape, was effectively the end of her childhood: ‘[T]hat’s when my whole world of living with my Mum and Dad and my sister, the world that I’d known all my life and cried for on those terrible eleven days walkin’ to Enngonia, changed.’<sup>116</sup> Her mother’s absence left a terrible silence: ‘My mother was a very happy person, a very jolly, noisy person. She used to laugh and joke, sing and dance, and play Dad’s old accordion. She’d play jokes on me and Gladys, and Dad, and she’d laugh the loudest! You could hear her all round the camps.’<sup>117</sup> Crawford’s sense of abandonment persisted: ‘I was cold inside for a long time ... All I ever wanted to know was WHY, why I was left. And I still do.’<sup>118</sup> Crawford and her mother did not fully resolve the rupture in their relationship, but the sound of the accordion continued to represent a link between them, as Crawford herself grew to be an accordionist in demand, bringing pleasure to others, as her ‘jolly’ mother had done.

In Australia during World War II, it was common for rural working men to have to spend time away from their families. Langford Ginibi’s father often had to go away to work in the bush. Her mother, in 1940, already had a baby boy to a neighbour, Eddie Webb. Langford Ginibi and her sisters did not yet understand this, but she remembers her mother at that time as ‘upset and quiet’, seeming as if she were ‘waiting for something to happen’.<sup>119</sup> One dark night, something did happen. Langford Ginibi’s mother, probably twenty-two years old, took her baby and left, to be with Eddie Webb. Langford Ginibi tells of her father’s heartbreak and her sisters’ inability to forgive their mother. She would later get to know her a little and learn to respect her as a hard worker and good mother to her second family, while Gwen and Rita would refuse even to mourn her when she died. Langford Ginibi represents her mother’s absence for the second half of her childhood as one of several forlorn silences in her young life, sometimes broken by unexpected reminders, sometimes by song and laughter.

In contrast with their difficult relations with their mothers, Langford Ginibi, Crawford and Brett all represent their respective fathers as figures of stability in their childhood lives. Langford Ginibi’s father is the sole personification of ‘always’ in her life narrative. Crawford’s father is her teacher, her mate, her ‘everything’. Brett’s father often sits in the background in her poems of childhood, but this reflects his very reassuring, ‘normalising’ presence. He is sometimes represented as the jovial, easily satisfied countersubject to Brett’s themes of pain and loss, although the pain and loss were primarily his, rather than Brett’s. In this role, Max Brett’s laughter, cheerful use of Australian English idiom and pleasure in large meals bear some

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<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p 91, Crawford’s emphasis.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p 115.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p 115.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p 118, Crawford’s emphasis.

<sup>119</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 6.

resemblance to Langford Ginibi's joy in loud singing to drown her sorrows. Each of these displaced subjects finds ways to draw new possibilities from the ruins of those quashed by the forces of protection and assimilation.

### **Relocated memories**

The three authors learnt as children to identify the lack of correlation between national rhetoric and the effects of memory, experience and identity in their families. Brett confronts the (not altogether involuntary) muting of her own and her parents' memories in the nationally imagined migrant haven of Australia, with its discourses of protection, assimilation and redemption:

Until I was six  
I thought we lived in Paradise  
this country is Paradise  
my father said every night  
  
when he returned home  
after his double shift  
behind a sewing machine  
  
this garden of the Gods  
where men painted fences  
and birds never wept  
and brown dogs yapped their happiness  
  
we lived  
new recruits in this blue kingdom  
with Aunty Regina and Uncle Felek  
two families in two rooms  
  
my mother marketed and shopped  
her hair grew  
she hummed tunes  
  
and although her number never faded  
and she joined her dead family every night  
she thought my father was right  
we lived in Paradise.<sup>120</sup>

Here, the embodiment of the experience of Auschwitz, the mother's unchanging (Polish/German/Jewish) number on her changing Australian body, is an explicit trace of past identity. It is a trace of a previous national imagining, that of the German National Socialists, long defeated, according to Australian national discourse, but continuing to have its effects on generations of Australian subjectivities. Innumerable less visible traces interact silently with each new site of remembrance. Discursive possibilities in the Australian imagined community are limited and Brett's parents repeat the phrases of resolution and redemption that are expected (and sometimes fitting), leaving other articulations to the night and the second generation. Although the memories of the dead procreate and perform for the parents of Brett's narrating

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<sup>120</sup> Brett, 'Until I Was Six', *After the War* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1990), p 56.

subject, rather than for the child Brett herself, the child lives with the daily and nightly effects of those performances. These effects then play a major role in the child's own memories and take new forms in her adult articulations.

Brett, Crawford and Langford Ginibi all address disappointed hopes, misunderstood sorrows and separation from their respective mothers. Each narrator was born into a family that had endured dispossession, separation and displacement, due to two different but coinciding forms of nationalism, in Germany and Australia. Each represents her family's precarious positions in Australia as complicating mother-daughter relations. For the Bretts, this precariousness was primarily an effect of memory, rather than the continuing reality of unpredictable removal from temporary homes that government policy brought into Indigenous lives. In the late 1970s, when Brett, Langford Ginibi and Crawford were mothers themselves, the Year of Children songwriter represented children as having 'stars in their eyes' and suggested that adults 'help them to rise and keep the new world turning'.<sup>121</sup> The texts of the three authors would suggest that adults also do well to stop 'the new world turning' long enough to listen to echoes of their childhood selves, if they are to 'help' the next generation. The narrators of *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* attend to the distant performances of their displaced childhood selves. Their texts serve as lullabies to those small selves, who were not always allowed to sleep so peacefully.

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<sup>121</sup> Best, 'Care For Kids', Albert Productions (EMI Australia, 1979).

## Chapter Four

### Adolescent Transpositions: Dissonance, Romance and Hard Labour

Got a ticket to Nowhere, written on my face  
Going through Trouble, Sorrow and Disgrace  
Got a ticket to Nowhere, issued to my race  
A one-way ticket to Nowhere, got no town or any place

– Jim Ridgeway<sup>1</sup>

Play gypsy, play me a song,  
On the fiddle all night long.  
On the fiddle, green leaves fall,  
What once was is beyond recall.  
What once was, will be in time,  
Red is blood, and red is wine.  
A star falls, then another,  
As our hearts reach for each other.

– Yitzhak Manger<sup>2</sup>

In 1960, United States rockabilly star Ricky Nelson sang of teenagers and their ‘young emotions’, in ‘a world where love and confusion reign/ A world of hope and laughter and tears and pain’.<sup>3</sup> The notion of teenagers and their emotional needs developed in the second half of the twentieth century. This attention to adolescence as a period of transition, experimentation and relative freedom was accompanied by the loud sounds of an increasingly active popular music industry. Popular music from the United States dominated Australia’s commercial airwaves until the early 1970s.<sup>4</sup> In the decade following World War II, much of this music was smooth and optimistic. It represented relief from wartime horrors and satisfaction with increasing levels of prosperity and stability. However, by 1955, there was a young generation so familiar with prosperity and stability that parts of it desired the excitement of a little disruption and disorder. The commercialisation of this desire marked the birth of ‘teenage’ culture. For

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Fairbridge and Jim Ridgeway, ‘Ticket to Nowhere’, *Buried Country: Original Film Soundtrack* (Larrikin Records, Festival/Mushroom, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Yitzhak Manger, ‘A Yiddish Song’, cited in Arnold Zable, ‘Reflections of a Wandering Jew’, *Westerly* 41.4 (1996), p 21. Zable elaborates on Manger and this song in Zable, *The Fig Tree* (Melbourne: Text, 2004), pp 34-48.

<sup>3</sup> Mack David and Jerry Livingston, ‘Young emotions’ (Ricky Nelson, Imperial Records, 1960), *Lyrical*, <http://lyrical.nl/song/17648> (visited 23 August 2004).

<sup>4</sup> The first Australian-made hit was Slim Dusty’s ‘A Pub with No Beer’ in 1958. Col Joye and Johnny O’Keefe had hits between 1959 and 1961. Jimmy Little’s ‘Royal Telephone’ was a hit in 1963. In the early 1970s, Australians such as Johnny Farnham, Daddy Cool, The Mixtures, Helen Reddy and Olivia Newton-John dominated the charts.

many Australians, this began with the 1955 release of the US film *The Blackboard Jungle*, featuring the rock 'n roll music of Bill Haley and the Comets.<sup>5</sup> As teenage culture now continues to survive in countless dynamic variations, so too its 'birth' and accompanying music had many diverse ancestors. Long before 1955, moments of transition between childhood and adulthood were accompanied by music, community ritual and cultural significance. In their texts, Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett recall their personal transpositions of Australian themes of adolescence. Various forms of lingering instability and deprivation, in their own teenage lives or in their family memories, complicate the 'love and confusion' reigning over their very different adolescent worlds.

As discussed in chapter three, the childhood lives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett showed the extreme effects of Australian government policies. An understanding of these policies is important to readings of childhood memoirs, partly because children have limited means of escape from authorities and their policies. On the other hand, because adults generally have greater possibilities to form and implement strategies against unjust policies, such policies are also significant to readings of adulthood memories. For this reason I will return to government policies in chapter five. By contrast, this chapter examines memories of adolescence in *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* through a framework of popular music related to the texts. In adolescence, the rhythms of escape from and defiance of authorities tend to reflect imaginative, idiosyncratic and passionate applications of cultural forms, especially popular music, to personal lives and fantasies.<sup>6</sup> For Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, government policies continued to drone throughout their lives, but other sounds took prominence as each narrator grew towards adulthood. These included the sounds of guitars, attractive boys singing and shiny heels on dance floors.

After a brief outline of the narrated adolescent subjects' cultural positions and a consideration of some components of autobiographical acts, this chapter is divided into three main sections. The first concerns the narrators' respective recollections of moments of adolescent dissonance – conflicting desires within selves, families and social environments. I refer to Johnny Cash's song 'Sunday Morning Coming Down' to introduce the notion of dissonance in displaced subjects' lives as they move between imagined 'homes', such as the past of childhood and an adult future. Reflecting adolescent gestures towards divergence and individuality, I then look at

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<sup>5</sup> Bob Rogers with Denis O'Brien, *Rock 'n roll Australia: The Australian Pop Scene 1954-1964* (Sydney: Cassell, 1975), p 1.

<sup>6</sup> In 2005, in a piece entitled 'Refuge', fourteen-year-old Chloe Nankivell writes: 'I can go into my room lock the door, put on my favourite CD, lie on my bed, close my eyes ... and let my imagination run wild', *Sparx: Fantastical O-Five* (Kiama Council, January-February 2005), p 16. As adolescents, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett had different possibilities in areas of technology, privacy and leisure time. While Brett's situation was closer to Nankivell's, Crawford's and Langford Ginibi's moments of musical imagination were more likely to take place on horseback, at or on the way to work, with their own singing voices providing the sound.



each narrator's memories in more distinct ways than in chapter three. I analyse Crawford's memories of dissonance under the title 'Lonesome Valleys', Langford Ginibi's under 'Bad Moon Rising' and Brett's under 'Sunday Morning Falling'.<sup>7</sup> The second section of this chapter concerns the narrators' reconstructions of their adolescent romantic encounters. I examine Crawford's account under the title 'The Drover's Husband', Langford Ginibi's under 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love to Town' and Brett's under 'Sad Dark Eyes'.<sup>8</sup> In the chapter's third section, more briefly, I investigate each narrator's memories of work as an adolescent. I explore Crawford's stories under the title 'A Trail of Dust and Heat', Langford Ginibi's under 'Midnight Special' and Brett's under 'All Tomorrow's Parties'.<sup>9</sup> In the area of labour, the differences between Brett as a white postwar child migrant and Crawford and Langford Ginibi as stateless Indigenous girls/young women are most stark. These differences are also reflected in the authors' respective memories of having children. Brett had her first child in 1969, after reaching adulthood, in contrast with Crawford and Langford Ginibi, who include motherhood in their memories of the teenage world of 'love and confusion'.

### Positions

Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett each spent her adolescence (between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one) in the mid-twentieth century. However, there were significant cultural changes between Crawford's thirteenth year, 1941, and Brett's twenty-first year, 1967, as well as differences between the circumstances in which each author grew to adulthood. Crawford's early adolescence coincided with World War II, which, for her, primarily meant a lot of work. The work, mainly mustering, continued after the war. She also rode rodeo for Tex Morton, married and had her first child in 1946. Her youth culture (which was not yet identified as such, but rather represented levels of initiation into adult culture) valued the skills of horsemanship and the toughness sentimentalised in country music.

Langford Ginibi turned thirteen in 1947 and twenty-one in 1955. These postwar years were stable and optimistic on a national level, but it was not a stable time for Langford Ginibi. She moved between Casino, Bonalbo, Redfern, Coonabarabran, Coolah Valley, Woodenbong and Toowoomba. Her Aunt Nell died. She had three children to Sam, who was unfaithful and

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<sup>7</sup> Tex Morton's song 'The Flowers Never Bloom In Lonesome Valley' appears on his album *The Regal Zonophone Collection, Volume 2* (EMI, 2001, recorded between 1938 and 1943, when Crawford worked with Morton). His 'Lonesome Valley Sally' appears on *Volume 1* (1936-1938). John C Fogerty's 'Bad Moon Rising' was recorded by Credence Clearwater Revival (Fantasy Records, 1969). The Velvet Underground and Nico recorded Lou Reed and John Cale's 'Sunday Morning' on their album *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Verve, 1967).

<sup>8</sup> 'The Drover's Wife' is a story by Henry Lawson and a song sung by Tex Morton. Mel Tillis' 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town' was recorded by Kenny Rogers (EMI, 1969). 'Sad Dark Eyes', by Gerry Humphreys, Rob Lovett, Kim Lynch, Reg Richards and Gavin Anderson, was a hit for Melbourne band The Loved Ones (In Records, 1967).

<sup>9</sup> 'A trail of dust and heat' is a line in an (uncredited) song sung by Jimmy Little in the film *Buried Country*, Film Australia National Interest Program (Sydney: Film Australia, 2000). John C Fogerty's 'Midnight Special' (a reworking of a song by 'Leadbelly' Huddie William Ledbetter) appears on Credence Clearwater Revival's *Willy and the Poor Boys* (Fantasy Records, 1969), Lou Reed's 'All Tomorrow's Parties' on *The Velvet Underground and Nico*.

sometimes drunk and violent. The couple separated in 1953. Langford Ginibi worked as a cleaner, cook, housemaid and clothing machinist. In 1955 she had her fourth child, to Gordon. Before her children were born, Langford Ginibi went to dances, movies and the milk bar in Redfern. She followed urban fashions, once perming her hair and going dancing in high heels, a taffeta half-circle skirt and a dolman-sleeve sweater.<sup>10</sup>

Brett, like Langford Ginibi, was part of an urban youth culture, but her position as a white Australian gave her different possibilities. Brett's adolescence fell between 1959 and 1967, the closing years of the Menzies era (Robert Menzies was Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966). Cultural change now seemed more rapid than it had in the postwar years. Teenage culture was identified and debated, as popular music diversified and Australian involvement in another war brought an end to the optimistic stability of the 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Crawford, who left school at twelve, and Langford Ginibi, who left at fourteen, Brett completed high school, albeit with less than impressive marks. Her parents wanted her to go to university and her sister Doris did go on to complete a degree. Brett shared her father's (and 1960s Australia's) taste for large cars and drove a pink Chrysler Valiant, which helped her find employment as a pop journalist at nineteen. Alongside Ian 'Molly' Meldrum, Brett listened to and wrote about pop and rock stars in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. She teased her hair, worried about her appearance, made 'countercultural' friends and, with some of them, opened a fashionable café called 'Lily's' in Melbourne.

### **Autobiographical acts**

Before investigating the authors' memories of adolescent dissonance, romance and labour in detail, it is useful to consider aspects of the autobiographical acts particularly relevant to those memories. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson identify 'relationality and the others of autobiographical "I"s' as a component of an autobiographical act. They suggest that relationality 'invites us to think about the different kinds of textual others through which an "I" narrates the formation or modification of self-consciousness'.<sup>12</sup> Textual 'others' are present throughout life narratives, but they can have particular significance in memories of adolescence. In adolescence, the narrator typically increases her level of personal agency in her world, making decisions that condition her future. At the same time, the adolescent narrator often makes contact with a greater range of other people, who affect her decision-making processes. Smith and Watson distinguish between historical others, the 'identifiable figures of a collective

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<sup>10</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), pp 44-45.

<sup>11</sup> Australian army instructors went to Vietnam in 1962, followed by combat troops from 1965 to 1972. The average age of Australian soldiers in Vietnam was twenty – this was Brett's generation. (Australia also fought in Korea from 1950 to 1953, but the absence of television and other factors limited popular concern about that war.)

<sup>12</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001), pp 64-65.

past such as political leaders', contingent others, who 'populate the text as actors in the narrator's script of meaning but are not deeply reflected upon', and significant others, 'through whom the narrator understands her or his own self-formation'.<sup>13</sup> They also identify the idealised absent other, a divine or secular being with whom the narrator's relationship is profound but inexplicable, and the subject other, 'the other internal to every autobiographical subject'.<sup>14</sup> For many life narrators, significant others feature heavily in adolescence, a time of intense friendships, jealous romantic attachments and problematic family relations. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett seldom dwell explicitly on such adolescent intensities in their texts, but each author represents her significant others as integral to her self-formation. The contingent others in their texts include the voices of popular music and the unknown songwriters whose compositions contribute to the meanings of the narrators' lives. Each author also recalls close contact with at least one professional musician. These musicians include Crawford's employer Tex Morton and Brett's first husband Rob Lovett. In their texts, the narrating subjects remember ways their self-consciousness was formed and modified by relations with these people, as well as with other employers, workmates, friends, relatives and in-laws.

Another component of an autobiographical act is the emplotment of narrative, described by Smith and Watson as 'a dense and multilayered intersection of the temporal and the geographic'.<sup>15</sup> The textual organisation of memories of adolescence in *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* points to the diverse rhythms of those memories and their settings. Narrative emplotment both enables and constrains the transmission of adolescent rhythms recalled by the authors. The remembered rhythms are personal and communal, tied to intersecting cultures. Smith and Watson explain that 'a geographics of self-narrating involves the multiple modes of emplotment through which the narrating "I" entwines a personal story with the stories of others, both individuals and collectivities'.<sup>16</sup> The 'collectivities' that alternately part and meet in adolescence are those of family, community, national and cultural histories. As a time of transition and mobility, adolescence both destabilises and enriches identity, in its personal and collective forms. Smith and Watson write that Langford Ginibi's *Don't Take Your Love To Town* and other Australian narratives 'map the diverse geographies of individual struggles within collective histories of physical displacement, cultural dislocation, and state forms of oppression affecting the lives of indigenous peoples'.<sup>17</sup> Langford Ginibi's mapping of her adolescence, a time of particular tensions and choices, enables multilayered readings of the patterns of Australian dislocation. This is also true of Crawford and Brett, whose texts chart their respective adolescent

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p 65.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p 74.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p 73.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

movements within and around their displaced communities. Their movements are set against the unpredictable rhythms of cultural change, which affect their lives as deeply as the changes in their individual adolescent bodies.

### **Dissonance: Lonesome Valleys**

The narrator of 'Sunday Morning Coming Down', a song recorded by Johnny Cash, is a 'lonesome' body, coming down from a night of 'cigarettes and songs' and listening to 'the disappearing dreams of yesterday' echo through 'the sleeping city sidewalk'.<sup>18</sup> Here, Sunday morning represents a silent, empty space between the imagined healthy pleasures of familial togetherness and the self-destructive pleasures of urban adult nightlife.<sup>19</sup> Such spaces of isolation and disillusionment, of feeling stranded far from real and imagined homes, between a lost past and an uncertain future, are part of adolescence. This applies especially to the displaced lives of Crawford and others compelled to move between city and country, family and strangers, purpose and futility. While seeming silent and empty, these liminal spaces resonate with memories, fears and faint hopes. In Cash's song, the narrator hears a small boy kicking a can, a little girl laughing and a Sunday school group singing. All these signs of young life, along with the smell of chicken, take him 'back to something that [he'd] lost/ Somewhere, somehow along the way'.<sup>20</sup> The dissonance here lies in the narrator's detachment from his own young life, from an imaginable future and from the lives of everyone around him. His desires seem paradoxical, as he wishes he were stoned, even while lamenting the effects and futility of using drugs to resolve his loneliness and losses. However, these conflicting desires are consistent with the loss of hope he becomes aware of on his way 'down'. To be stoned is to forget temporarily, which is the desire of those whose memories intrude on their pleasures. While Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett do not dwell on moments of despair, they recall the will to forget, the losses and dissonances, the ups and downs, of their adolescent lives. As their respective links to family were disrupted in various ways and they moved between communities and subcultures, their sometimes 'lonesome' bodies registered many conflicting desires, within themselves, their families and their communities.

Crawford began her adolescence still 'cold' from the departure of her mother and sister. She lived with various aunts, resenting their pity: 'I hated people feelin' sorry for me. I didn't want to be near anybody that said, "Poor old Ev. You come and stay with me." ... I felt that if ... I

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<sup>18</sup> Kris Kristofferson, 'Sunday Morning Coming Down' (Combine Music, 1970). Lyrics are at <http://www.guitaretab.com/c/cash-johnny/3138.html> (visited 8 September 2004).

<sup>19</sup> According to the 'Man in Black' website, Kristofferson wrote the song when he was 'working as a bartender in Nashville, and the song reflected his situation at the time: his wife and daughter had moved back to California; he was living in a condemned tenement building; and Sunday was the worst day of the week if you didn't have a family. The bars didn't open until the afternoon, so if you had no family there was nothing to do all morning.' See [http://maninblack.net/Song\\_SMCD.html](http://maninblack.net/Song_SMCD.html) (visited 8 September 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Kristofferson, 'Sunday Morning Coming Down'.

went out on me own, I wouldn't owe nobody nothing, only just me.'<sup>21</sup> In fact, Crawford did not 'owe' her aunts. As their living conditions were also harsh, she spent her time looking after their 'mobs' of children, washing and cleaning round their camps.<sup>22</sup> This was a fairly common way of life for adolescent girls in the bush during World War II, but if there was any satisfaction in it for Crawford, it was drowned out by her longing for the life she had known with her parents and sister. As a young teenager, Crawford deeply missed the days her family had spent learning, laughing and singing together. She saw financial independence as a way out and took the first opportunity to work as a drover. While she had often felt detached from her aunts' families when living with them, she appreciated the bonds aroused by crossing paths with any relative when working in the pastoral industry: 'Almost the first person I seen when we rode into North Bourke was my cousin, Freddie Leppert – hadn't seen him for years. He sung out to me in the lingo, "What're you doin' up there on that horse, Cousin?" Now the lingo was like our secret weapon. We could say what we liked, even cheek the white feller right under his nose and not one of them could understand.'<sup>23</sup> Crawford's involvement with the white industrial world, as an Indigenous girl who was still growing, provided new opportunities, but also brought with it new forms of dissonance and detachment. These required defensive strategies, which were already part of Crawford's repertoire.

In Bourke, as well as defending her fourteen-year-old self from the pressures of work, Crawford was reunited with her mother, who lived on the reserve there: 'I walked the two miles in through the lagoons and swamps, swam the river over to the Reserve and found my way to Mum's camp. She was bakin' bread and came out, flour all over her hands and gave me a big cuddle. I couldn't say anything.'<sup>24</sup> The silence of the teenage Crawford in the arms of her mother was the only fitting response to the meeting of coldness and warmth in her defence mechanisms. This silence is echoed in the adult narrator's accounts of her adolescent encounters with her mother in her text. After her initial comment: 'I don't think Mum ever realised how much I missed her and Gladys', Crawford's narrating subject often responds to memories of her mother with silence.<sup>25</sup> This contrasts with Langford Ginibi and Brett, who find many words to trace their relations with their respective mothers. Crawford's method offers her 'subject other' a means of retreat from the compulsive rhythms of the seemingly continuous life narrative. It transposes the silences of others, creating a 'rest' at self-determined moments in her 'song cycle', as it suggests that some memories may not be recounted in sequential or audible forms.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1993), p 118.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p 119.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp 119-20.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p 120.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p 118.

<sup>26</sup> In music, a 'rest' is a 'notational sign that indicates the absence of a sounding note or notes'. It 'may, but need not, imply a silence' and 'need not result in any audible break in the music'. Richard Rastall, 'Rest', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (visited 17 October 2004).

Crawford's silences also offer her addressees, the listeners and readers of her text, the task of imagining the levels and modes of dissonance in her relations with her mother, and the conditions that contributed to them.

Crawford does not elaborate on her stay 'for a little while' with her mother, but goes on to recall her next job, which took her to Sydney for the first time.<sup>27</sup> She was working for a white family, the Bloxhams, as house- and nursemaid. Mrs Bloxham had to have an operation in Sydney and Crawford was asked to accompany the family. She remembers the fear and excitement of the long train trip and the fascination of seeing women grooming in a rail cafeteria toilet. In Sydney, she felt the effects of her limited literacy as she found her way around the streets and took responsibility for the children's bus transport to and from school. (Though still of school age herself, she does not mention any thought that she might have furthered her own education at this stage.) She wondered at the strange sensations of saltwater waves at the beach, as they stung a scratch on her leg and moved her about: 'I said to meself, "This's no water like I know. This feller's *alive!*"'.<sup>28</sup> At the zoo, Crawford was intrigued and saddened by the sight of caged birds and animals, and was briefly reminded of the old people on Brewarrina mission.

The area of greatest dissonance in this job emerged in the new levels of contact with white people that were expected of Crawford. Having been taught the practices of segregation throughout her childhood, she was now invited to talk, eat and go out with white people. At first she resisted these possibilities. She recalls her carriage in the train to Sydney: 'they were all white people in the one I was in, so of course there was nothing I could say to them'.<sup>29</sup> In Bourke Crawford had eaten in the Bloxhams' kitchen, while the family ate in the dining room. When urged to join the family in the cafeteria at Dubbo, she remembers feeling 'awful'.<sup>30</sup> In Sydney she was relieved to find that a shed had been fitted out for her to sleep in: 'Sleepin' in a house with white people, that just wasn't right, I couldn't do that'.<sup>31</sup> Later, Crawford appreciated some forms of inclusion. She remembers the Bloxhams' relatives, at whose house they stayed: 'They treated me like family. If they went out in the car I was always included, for the outing, not to mind the kids.'<sup>32</sup> However, the dissonance could not be resolved. Despite good relations with the Bloxhams, Crawford's position remained one of submission to their desires. She could be treated as family only on their terms, which meant she was the only 'family member' to do nearly all the house cleaning, food preparation and even such tasks as cleaning the children's school shoes. She was required to speak their language, adopt most of their manners (the children in the family were often allowed to express their wishes in more

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<sup>27</sup> Crawford, p 120.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p 125, Crawford's emphasis.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p 120.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p 121.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p 123.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p 124.

direct ways than Crawford dared) and go only to places they knew. After Mrs Bloxham's recovery and the family's return to Bourke, Crawford gave her notice: 'after that stint in Sydney I'd had enough of living in close quarters with white people. I wanted to get out where I could stretch me legs, I suppose, and go back to some of the places where I'd lived as a skinny bony kid, and show 'em I was a young lady, a partly-grown-up person.'<sup>33</sup> Like most young teenagers, Crawford desired a space to voice her impressions, questions and adaptations in her languages of choice. In this imagined space she would be heard and recognised, as well as enjoy companionship and belonging. As a lone Indigenous maid, even in a kind home, this would never be possible.

Crawford's 'partly-grown-up person' had taken on new forms in Sydney. She had put on weight, learnt to do her hair and bought new clothes and shoes. A large part of her excitement at returning to Bourke was the anticipation of reactions on the reserve. The most important was her mother's: 'Mum didn't say "G'day" but "Gee, Ev, you look good," and that was what I wanted to hear. "You've got a bit fatter at last," and she's feelin' me arms, lookin' me up and down!'<sup>34</sup> Crawford reflects on her newly acquired habits and their effects:

We usually swam in our clothes and sat on the roots of the gumtrees to dry out. I didn't sit on just the gumtree any more, did I? I spread a *towel* on the roots and sat on it, a proper lady. I was beginning to get the attention of a lot of people and I really liked it. For the first time in my life I could think, "People are takin' notice of *me*. They know I'm 'ere, Evelyn Mallyer's 'ere." It was nice for the little while it lasted.<sup>35</sup>

While Crawford's new style did not fail to impress, it did not lead to the long-term belonging she desired. On the contrary, she returned to the reserve at Bourke even more different from her relatives there, at least superficially, than she had been before. Again, Crawford does not dwell on this time with her mother, but moves on to memories of her subsequent jobs and her reunion with her father on Kahmoo station.

Work would take Crawford to many other places, including the Tex Morton show. Here, as a rodeo rider, she learnt to train and groom her body in different ways. Her skills gained her substantial respect from workmates. In this world that valued laconic independence and unwincing toughness, relations approaching friendship developed. However, there were moments when vulnerability was permitted to make itself heard, such as in the sentimental sounds of Morton's music. Crawford sometimes felt as alone and abandoned as Morton's many battler heroes and she often performed similar levels of bravado. When she unexpectedly crossed paths with her mother again, she answered her questions, 'Still by yourself? ... on your

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p 133.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p 132.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p 132, Crawford's emphasis.

own, like a Mad Hatter?', with 'Yeah, got a couple of dogs but'.<sup>36</sup> She reflects: 'It was awful, that feelin' I couldn't talk. I hadn't wanted to depend on anyone for anything. I didn't want to make friends because I thought, "What's the good of bein' friends with people, then all of a sudden they're gone and I'm back on me own again!" ... I was afraid of bein' left behind again. I felt more secure with just me two horses and me dogs.'<sup>37</sup> Later, still a young teenager, Crawford worked as a boundary rider, camping alone in a hut. She remembers her feelings when she became sick, unknown to anyone else, and was confined to her bunk for days: 'I could have done with some care from my mother, or my father, but at that particular time I didn't even know where they were. I never felt that bad that I'd die of sickness, but I certainly thought I'd die of loneliness.'<sup>38</sup> In his song 'In The Luggage Van Ahead', Tex Morton sang and yodelled the tale of a young man on the midnight express train. The man tries to stop his baby crying as other passengers complain, having 'paid for [their] berths' and wanting rest. As one suggests taking the baby to its mother, the man replies, 'Wish to God that I could ... But she's dead in the van ahead'.<sup>39</sup> Tragic young death was not uncommon in the early 1940s and it was something Crawford witnessed, but what she shared with the bereaved man on the night train was the ignorance, false assumptions and indifference of some people and institutions around her. At a time when life was harsh for many Australians and Indigenous 'crying' in the presence of others was unthinkable, she had little choice but to suffer in stoic silence. While Crawford's text recalls her adolescence in cheerful, often humorous tones, her teenage desires for independence and friendship, respect and comfort, emerge as especially dissonant in the 1940s Australia that desired her continued displacement, assimilation and exploitation.

### **Bad Moon Rising**

As a bereaved mother in the early 1970s, Langford Ginibi would sing along to adaptations of her favourite songs of the time, 'Bad Moon Rising' and 'Midnight Special'.<sup>40</sup> 'Bad Moon Rising' prophesied 'varied quakes and lightnin' and 'rivers over flowin', as it evoked 'the voice of rage and ruin' and warned of 'the end', which was 'comin' soon'.<sup>41</sup> This was well after Langford Ginibi's adolescence, but the songs' sounds and sentiments reflect the dissonant tones of her teenage years. The lyrics tell of inexplicable looming trouble, while the melodies and regular rhythms lend themselves to communal singing and movement and a sense of stability and resolution. In postwar Australia, national rhythms tended to be stable and melodies pleasant, while Langford Ginibi's life took many unpredictable turns. These turns required her to adapt her desires and movements to the equally complex desires of other people. She recalls a

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p 138.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p 138.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p 147.

<sup>39</sup> Tex Morton, 'In The Luggage Van Ahead', *The Regal Zonophone Collection, Volume 2*.

<sup>40</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Real Deadly* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992), p 35. Both songs were recorded by Credence Clearwater Revival (Fantasy Records) in 1969, the year Langford Ginibi's daughter Pearl died.

<sup>41</sup> John C Fogerty, 'Bad Moon Rising' (Fantasy Records, 1969).



curious teenage self, who took pleasure in gaining knowledge and in ideas and sounds from many times and places, including the poetry of eighteenth-century England and the songs of mid-twentieth-century United States. The national bass drone of Langford Ginibi's adolescence was one of simultaneous anxiety and optimism. As well as lingering notes of fear of the natural world and the stranger, fear of the imagined 'bad moon' of communism grew louder in the 1950s, even as commercial and popular culture suggested a sunny and youthful buoyancy.

When Langford Ginibi finished primary school in Bonalbo, her father arranged for her to board with a family in Casino, so she could attend high school there. Here she found a teacher willing to read her ten-page compositions and was inspired by poetry that told of adventurous white Australian men and melancholy or fanciful white English men: 'when we looked out the windows we saw Clancy with his thumbnail dipped in tar, and Andy crossing for the cattle, and the Man from Snowy River galloping up the rise. Through the same windows we saw the Lady of Shalott, we saw the solitary reaper, the deserted village, the swains and bowers and the golden sheaves, and behind that the boys' toilets and the woodwork room.'<sup>42</sup> The sounds of fantasy, which Langford Ginibi transposed to meet her realities, continued to fill her early teenage air. As she had done throughout her childhood, she took to the various uses of the English language and sometimes resolved her dissonances. Her favourite poem was Gray's 'Elegy', which she liked to recite loudly, especially the stanza about serene gems in 'unfathom'd caves' and unseen flowers wasted 'on the desert air'.<sup>43</sup> This joy in sound and rhythm, combined with the commemoration of unappreciated beauty, articulated aspects of Langford Ginibi's complex worlds, while giving Gray's words meanings and accents he would not have imagined in his eighteenth-century English churchyard.

Despite the pleasures of poetry and playing piano in a school band, Langford Ginibi sometimes wished herself back in Bonalbo. As vigoro captain, she would lead the team's 'war cry', chanting the names of towns whose school teams might dare 'try and beat Casino High'.<sup>44</sup> The names reminded her of her home in Bonalbo and of her minor position at Casino, as one of only around twelve Indigenous students among hundreds. She does not dwell on this, though, reflecting that the 'Koori kids' were 'doing all right'. They were class and sports captains, 'ran the fastest, wrote the longest stories, and Beatrice Hogan was dux of fifth year'.<sup>45</sup> The dissonance in this movement of success became audible when Langford Ginibi's father came to get her after two years at high school. The headmaster urged him to keep her at school, suggesting the Aborigines' Protection Board would then help her go to teachers' college. As she

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<sup>42</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 30.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751): 'Full many a gem of purest ray serene,/ The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear,/ Full many a flower is born to blush unseen/ And waste its sweetness on the desert air'.

<sup>44</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 35.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p 35.

listened, Langford Ginibi's head buzzed: 'Every teacher I'd ever seen was white. I tried to imagine black kids being taught by black teachers, then I tried to imagine white kids with black teachers.'<sup>46</sup> The image was as fanciful as the Lady of Shalott she had seen through the classroom window. Langford Ginibi's father quickly, politely rejected any notion of Protection Board assistance, commenting outside the school that the only protection it had provided so far was to 'take people from their land and split up families'.<sup>47</sup> He left the decision about third year to Langford Ginibi, who decided it would be fairer to find work and help her father out. Difficult decisions such as this were (and remain) part of everyday life for colonised, displaced fifteen-year-olds, whose pleasures and desires – for knowledge, community, family, home, success, recognition and fulfilment of obligations, among other things – were rendered dissonant by continuing national fantasies of protection and assimilation.

Langford Ginibi soon found herself in Redfern, where the dissonance between her father and mother suddenly made itself heard again, nine years after her mother's quiet departure. One Saturday, Langford Ginibi, her sister Gwen and their father were shopping on Botany Road, when 'a woman with two little girls' ran up to them, crying.<sup>48</sup> Langford Ginibi was startled as her father pushed Gwen and her behind him and shouted, 'You stay away from my kids ... you didn't want them when they were little, just clear off'.<sup>49</sup> Although her father refused to allow contact for years, Langford Ginibi was curious about her mother. Some time later, after she had been going out with her first serious boyfriend, Sam, for a few months, she saw her mother on the street again. This time both were alone. Langford Ginibi wondered about the woman who had given birth to her when she was sixteen, the same age she herself was now. She warily accepted a piece of paper with her mother's address and, a week later, secretly visited her. After talking for a while, Langford Ginibi's mother said, 'you want to stay away from Sam Griffin, he's no good'.<sup>50</sup> Langford Ginibi found herself responding angrily, like her usually composed father: 'You don't have to worry about me now, you never cared before'.<sup>51</sup> With that, her mother beat her so badly that her father had her charged with assault when he found out. Langford Ginibi herself was more forgiving, appreciating that her words had hurt her mother. However, she did not see her again until three years later, when she was a mother of three herself. These encounters between Langford Ginibi and her mother were too brief for either to articulate effectively her feelings and desires, her regrets and wishes for the other's happiness. The 'bad moon' of silent separation and unresolved hurt had risen over Langford Ginibi's parents and this was exacerbated by their living and working situations. Both were compelled to

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<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p 37.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p 38.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p 47.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p 52.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

work far too hard, to support their respective large families, as well as providing moral support and guidance. Despite the warmth of Langford Ginibi's life at home with her father, stepmother and sister, her success at work, her busy social life at dances, the picture theatre and the milk bar, and her charming boyfriend, the same bad moon was rising in her own life. Her hurt mother's violence foreshadowed future violence, at the hands of other hurt people. The long-term effects of betrayed trust and broken relations, on many levels, would echo beyond the initial optimism of her teenage life.

### **Sunday Morning Falling**

In June of 1967, when voting Australians had just endorsed the inclusion of Langford Ginibi and Crawford in the national census and as adolescent Australians sang about 'Sadie (The Cleaning Lady)', 'Georgy Girl' or 'Minnie The Moocher', a twenty-year-old Lily Brett was working at the Monterey International Pop Music Festival in the United States.<sup>52</sup> As a journalist, Brett sat at the front with the performers. She recalls her excitement at all the talk of love and peace, as well as an 'adult concern' for the drugged and otherwise imperilled young people who already seemed to be somehow losing their will to live.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, Brett accepted offers of joints and LSD herself, though she soon realised they were not for her: 'Pot made me feel sick and the distortions and confusions of LSD frightened me'.<sup>54</sup> Brett's stance on love and peace also held different complexities from those of the dominant voices at Monterey. The emerging hippies rejected the idealised 'happily-ever-after' love celebrated in some 1950s songs, in favour of an equally idealised 'free love', sexual relationships free of commitment and responsibility. In the example of her parents, Brett had seen that love could be deep and even last forever, but both 1950s ideas of secure happiness and 1960s notions of freedom and peace were problematic. In Brett's world, happiness was undeserved in the face of others' suffering and could not be fully enjoyed. Her family's history made it clear that any form of lasting security was impossible, although desirable. However, it also meant that attempts at love were haunted and gestures towards freedom were intercepted by memory. 'Free love' may have attracted some survivors and their descendants as a form of forgetting, not unlike the stoned state desired by the singing subject of Johnny Cash's 'Sunday Morning Coming Down'. In Brett's fiction, committed sexual relationships are fraught with the complications of memory. However, when her characters attempt or enjoy sex without commitment, this enjoyment too is always interrupted.<sup>55</sup> For her haunted Jews, feeling unambiguously good and forgetting,

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<sup>52</sup> 'Sadie (The Cleaning Lady)' by Johnny Farnham, 'Georgy Girl' by the Seekers and 'Minnie The Moocher' by the Cherokees were Australian hits in 1967. *Oz Net Music Chart*, <http://www.onmc.iinet.net.au/AUS/67.htm> (visited 12 September 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View*, p 323. At Monterey, Brett met Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Keith Moon, Mama Cass and Brian Jones, who all died young.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*, p 324.

<sup>55</sup> See especially Brett, *Things Could Be Worse* (Carlton: Melbourne UP, 1990), *What God Wants* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1991) and *Just Like That* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1994).

however briefly, that actions have unintended consequences and that responsibility for others could mean their life or death, soon feels like a betrayal of the dead, or, at best, a fleeting, empty pleasure (albeit one that itself leaves traces in the memory). As for peace, survivors knew it was too late to dream of a lasting universal will to live in harmony, however many powerful flowers the beautiful 'gentle people' gathered in California.<sup>56</sup>

Another woman at the Monterey festival and not on her way to becoming a hippy was the singer and former model, Nico.<sup>57</sup> Not far from Brett's parents in Poland, Nico had survived World War II in very different circumstances in Germany. Hitler had planned her Germanic, tall, blonde survival, unlike that of the Bretts, but Nico's survival was also haunted. Brett has reflected on the popularity of her own work in contemporary Germany and identified a common sense of responsibility and concern with the past among descendants of both victims and perpetrators.<sup>58</sup> Nico (and most of her generation) did not publicly or explicitly address such concerns, but her work as a singer shares some aspects of style and substance with Brett's poetry and with Brett's representations of herself as an adolescent. Nico's album with the Velvet Underground, a band with diverse links to Europe, was released in 1967.<sup>59</sup> By contrast with the passionate singing at Monterey (where the anti-hippy Velvet Underground did not perform), critics described Nico's delivery as deadpan, her voice as 'deathlike' and her face as beautifully 'macabre', while band member John Cale called her a 'statue'.<sup>60</sup> The first song on the 1967 album is 'Sunday morning', in which the singing subject feels a restless paranoia. Like Johnny Cash's song, this concerns 'coming down', but the regrets and fears are less defined: 'It's just the wasted years so close behind/ ... Sunday morning/ And I'm falling/ ... It's all the streets you crossed, not so long ago/ Watch out the world's behind you/ There's always someone around you who will call/ It's nothing at all'.<sup>61</sup> Some of Brett's representations of her adolescence in Melbourne have a similar sense of uneasy gradual falling. Her narrated subject is sometimes 'slipping' or

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<sup>56</sup> The Monterey festival was dubbed a celebration of 'music, peace, flower-power and love'. *Monterey International Pop Music Festival – 1967*, [http://members.tripod.com/Yelnats\\_Yarkled/Monterey/](http://members.tripod.com/Yelnats_Yarkled/Monterey/). John Phillips' theme song, 'San Francisco', promised 'gentle people with flowers in their hair'. *San Francisco – John Phillips (Lyrics and Chords)*, <http://www.guntheranderson.com/v/data/sanfranc.htm> (visited 13 September 2004).

<sup>57</sup> A photo of Nico (born Christa Päffgen) at Monterey, in a conspicuously neat black pants suit, is at *Beautiful People Everywhere*, [http://members.tripod.com/Yelnats\\_Yarkled/Monterey/page10.html](http://members.tripod.com/Yelnats_Yarkled/Monterey/page10.html) (visited 13 September 2004).

<sup>58</sup> See Brett, 'Surviving Germany', *The Age: Saturday Extra*, 10 July 1999, pp 1, 6 (which also appeared as 'Love Thine Enemy' in *Spectrum, Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 July 1999). Brett writes of a 'young man in Berlin' who thanks her for 'allowing him to think about the past without sinking'.

<sup>59</sup> The Velvet Underground included Welsh classical musician John Cale, Jewish former literature student Lou Reed and Anglo Long Island drummer Maureen Tucker. Andy Warhol, son of Slovak migrants, produced the album.

<sup>60</sup> In *Art News*, David Antin writes: 'the macabre face – so beautifully resembles a momento mori, the marvelous deathlike voice coming from the lovely blond head', quoted on *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, <http://smironne.free.fr/NICO/vu.php>. John Cale recalls: 'suddenly Andy throws us this red herring ... But it worked. Sometimes she would love to be on stage in her white outfit ... Okay, we've got a statue in the band', quoted on *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, <http://www.cs.wisc.edu/~ehansen/VU/vu&nico.html> (visited 14 September 2004).

<sup>61</sup> Lou Reed and John Cale, 'Sunday Morning', *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Verve, 1967).

‘dizzy’.<sup>62</sup> In the safety of her family home, Brett did not know the struggles of Cash’s battlers or of young Indigenous women like Langford Ginibi and Crawford, who were compelled to move from place to place as they sought forms of security. Neither was the mild paranoia drug-induced, but rather brought on by the knowledge, or at least the sense, of her parents’ wasted years and a fear of her own potential to waste their efforts to overcome those years. It also came from an inherited sense of an unpredictable world that echoed with the unidentified calls of people who no longer existed, who were ‘nothing at all’. These sensations created a quiet dissonance in the otherwise comfortable 1960s life of Brett and her family.

In Brett’s early to mid adolescent world, Sunday mornings regularly fell into Sunday evenings. Unlike Crawford and Langford Ginibi, Brett’s narrated subject was in a position to observe her mother at length throughout her teenage years. The mother who, at other times, gave her full attention to her daughters, took on a different role on Sunday evenings. This role accentuated the quiet dissonance in the family home shared by two young Australians who remembered only Melbourne and two Australian adults who came from a place that had become ‘nothing at all’. In Brett’s poem ‘Every Sunday Evening’, this dissonance sounds briefly when the poem’s addressee Rooshka (Brett’s mother’s name), the hostess of an evening of card games and food, is urged to ‘have a chocolate’.<sup>63</sup> This occurs in the poem’s fifteenth stanza, after a graceful extended crescendo detailing Rooshka’s careful, tasteful creation of ordered warmth:

you unfolded  
 five square green tables  
 and twenty padded chairs ...  
  
 each table  
 carried ...  
  
 a small crystal dish  
 of Israeli bon-bons  
 and Dutch caramels ...  
  
 next to the nuts  
 were the chocolates ...  
  
 at eight  
 the players arrived ...  
  
 you made  
 tea and coffee  
 emptied ashtrays  
 and sliced some cake for supper ...<sup>64</sup>

At this point, Rooshka seems to be conducting a performance of peaceful consonance: ‘the house hummed/ with the quiet sound/ of thinking/ and sucking’.<sup>65</sup> However, as is inevitable in

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<sup>62</sup> See Brett, ‘I Have Been Slipping’, *Poems (In her Strapless Dresses; Mud in my Tears)* (Sydney: Picador, 2001), p 111, and ‘I Have Days’: ‘On a radio/ in the distance/ The Shirelles/ are singing/ “Mama told me/ there’d be days like this”/ I almost laugh/ but I am/ too dizzy’, *Poems*, pp 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> Brett, ‘Every Sunday Evening’, *After the War*, p 45.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, pp 43-44.

Brett's narratives, this harmonious air is soon 'jabbed' by a memory. When offered the chocolate, Rooshka replies:

I can't touch sweets  
they make me  
sick ...  
  
the last sweet  
I ate  
was an irys  
in the ghetto ...<sup>66</sup>

Brett's mother had been forced into Lodz ghetto at seventeen, in 1939. Gila Flam, in her study of street songs from this ghetto, notes 'four dominant themes', in the following order: 'hunger or food; corrupt administration and abuse of power, hope for freedom, and a call for revolt'.<sup>67</sup> One of Flam's informants, Yaakov Bressler, had sold 'saccharine or candies' in the ghetto at thirteen and he remembered his song, 'Street Cry for Saccharine and Taffy', very clearly.<sup>68</sup> In Brett's poem, Rooshka and her guests, also survivors, discuss sweets as currency in the ghetto, who had connections and therefore access to sweets, how long an 'irys' would last, how they were made by children who added sand, and how their tough consistency made chewing 'really feel/ as though/ you were eating'.<sup>69</sup> Like the sound of the Velvet Underground's jangling instruments percolating behind Nico's elegant, motionless singing, the survivors' memories unfold and swell until they fill the air. The Melbourne lounge room reverberates with the rhythms of a place unimaginable to any Australian adolescents in the room. In this poem, the narrator does not explicitly identify herself and there is no reference to the players' children, suggesting that the listening ears of Brett's (silently) narrated subject are quite forgotten by the adults. The reverberation of 'an irys in the ghetto' finally comes to an abrupt end when Mrs Weinberg says:

it doesn't matter  
if you had an irys  
or if you didn't ...  
  
Rooshka  
what good  
does it do you  
to think of the ghetto<sup>70</sup>

The players revert to the present and restore order, clearing the plates and washing up. In Brett's adolescent world, with her resilient but remembering parents, ups could follow downs in quick succession, in a few moments of a Sunday evening or any time at all.

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p 44.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p 45.

<sup>67</sup> Gila Flam, *Singing for Survival: Songs of the Lodz Ghetto, 1940-45* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1992), p 102.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp 99-101.

<sup>69</sup> Brett, 'Every Sunday Evening', *After the War*, pp 46-47.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

## Romance: The Drover's Husband

As dominant Anglo-Australian cultural practice demanded resilience and certain silences of Melbourne's Holocaust survivors in the 1960s (in contrast with the resilient but comparatively effusive Eastern European cultures from which most had come), so too did 1940s bush culture require its workers to maintain a stance of fearless, disciplined strength. The discipline could be eased in moments between jobs, when some workers indulged in alcohol and singing. While music allowed space for a little emotional vulnerability, Crawford's memories suggest that there was also tacit, practical acknowledgement of workmates' physical needs. She reflects on her time with the Tex Morton show: 'I guess that was another world I was tryin' to fit into, to become part of, from bein' on me own for so long. It was a wild world to want to be part of too, 'cos a lot of 'em drank and they fought ... yeah, they were tough. But nobody seemed to be really hurt in the fights, and everybody looked after anyone hurt in a fall.'<sup>71</sup> It was in this 'wild world' that Crawford began to think about attracting a boy. She explains how this was done:

At that age, if you were well-dressed and could ride a buckin' horse, or any decent horse, that was the way to attract young Aboriginal males. When we started roamin' around as teenagers, it wasn't important to boys or young men, or to yourself, that you had a pretty dress or beautiful hair. ... What you could do as a horseman, that was the thing. ... Some of us nearly killed ourselves, literally killed ourselves, tryin' to prove that we could do these things. When I see the young girls today prettying themselves up, I think, "Gee, if it had only been as easy as that when I was tryin' to catch meself a boy!"<sup>72</sup>

Being well-dressed, for girls and boys, meant fancy shirts and hats, sharply creased trousers and 'boots you could see your face in'.<sup>73</sup> The young riders' moves on their horses were a form of dancing, in which skill, style and elegance were judged and acknowledged by the audience of connoisseurs on the rodeo rails. One rider with the Tex Morton show was regularly acknowledged as one of the best, especially by the girls on the rails. He was a quiet, good-looking young man called Raymond, or Gong by his Camilleroi people. Unlike some girls, Crawford was not brave enough to express her admiration directly to Gong, but she admits staying with the rodeo show 'to follow, but not too close, just close enough to trip anyone who got in the way'.<sup>74</sup> However, this quest was not enough to keep her with the Morton camp for very long. The day she saw the cook preparing the next meal in the same tin dish he had just used as a bathtub, Crawford and her workmate Lizzie decided to move back to northern New South Wales. It was still wartime and there was plenty of droving work for anyone willing to take it.

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<sup>71</sup> Crawford, p 146.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, p 144.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p 144.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p 145.

Although still a young teenager, Crawford felt as if all the girls around her were already marrying, while she was yet to find a boyfriend. She remembers one very good friendship that could have led to marriage, if she had ‘just let [herself] go and forgotten [she] was an Aboriginal’.<sup>75</sup> Despite the assimilation policy, Crawford’s good relations with her white workmates and her imagined independence from her family, she could not seriously consider her friend’s proposal, because he was white. Crawford had not needed the pastoral industry and rodeo culture to teach her personal discipline, as this was a significant part of her traditional Baarkanji education. This discipline that she had learnt as a child now guided even her adolescent responses to romance. She explains the importance of the law that formed the basis of her self-discipline:

we’d been brought up strict in Aboriginal law, and it’s the whole support for your life. But just sometimes it becomes like a steel band around you, ’n you feel like it’s chokin’ you off from things you’d like to do. You’d try to say to yourself, “There’s no ’arm in doin’ it,” but because I was punished as a kid for doin’ the wrong thing, – the “not-Aboriginal” thing – I just couldn’t break the Aboriginal laws set down for marriage and family.<sup>76</sup>

Like most adolescents who negotiate between parental and dominant cultural practice, such as second-generation Australians, Crawford faced decisions about the balance of security and freedom in her life. She did not judge those who upset the ‘support’ of Aboriginal law, such as her mother, who had left the family for another man. Crawford knew the desire to be rid of ‘steel bands’, especially in adolescence, but she also knew the desire for a lifelong form of support. For her, with her sixteen years of life experience as a ‘protected’ and ‘assimilated’ person, among other things, this was possible only within the limits of Aboriginal law.

Crawford’s decision to abide by her law paid off in an unexpected way. Between jobs around the end of the war, she was catching up with her father, when he brought up the subject of marriage. Crawford laughed and asked who would marry her, to which her father replied, ‘You know, Ev – that feller who wins at all the Rodeos – you know Gong Crawford’.<sup>77</sup> It emerged that Gong’s family and hers had secretly arranged their marriage when Crawford was a child, as she explains: ‘Nobody was to know till you was told about it, by the right person at the right time. Kids weren’t told till they were considered old enough to be able to handle that sort of news. And because both of us – me and the feller they’d planned for me to marry – were droving all over the country we were both older than the age when we should have been told.’<sup>78</sup> By this time, Crawford thought she was over her infatuation of the Tex Morton days and

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p 152.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p 152.

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p 153.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p 153.



considered Gong too quiet for her. She decided to ignore her father's plans and set off driving again. However, as Gong was also driving, the two kept crossing paths. Gong too now knew about and agreed to their engagement, while Crawford still resisted. Gradually, this changed: 'When anyone would say, "There's drovers up the road," I'd think, "Wonder if that boy's with 'em?" Then I'd find myself bein' disappointed if he wasn't, and wonder why the hell I was disappointed not seein' this feller I said I wasn't goin' to marry anyway!'<sup>79</sup> Soon the two began to camp together when their paths crossed and to find work together when they could. Their first child was born in 1946 and they finally had their traditional marriage, with most of Crawford's relatives present, at Bourke in 1948. Unlike Langford Ginibi and Brett, Crawford chose to submit to her parents' choice of husband. (Of course, it may be assumed that had the choice been less attractive, she might not have submitted.) As mid-twentieth-century popular culture romanticised either the 'true love' or 'free love' of independent young people, it would not have imagined that Crawford's act of obedience to tradition could end in lasting happiness. However, of the three authors, she was the only one (according to her text) to enjoy a single, lifelong, loving and happy marriage, as idealised in romantic pop songs.

### **Ruby Don't Take Your Love to Town**

Bravado and its counterpart, vulnerability, are the stuff of country music, the genre to which Langford Ginibi usually fell in and out of love. The driving, unchanging rhythms of country music suggest a fatalistic stance. Its celebrated battlers are vulnerable in their inability to change the unjust rhythms of the world and the potential for wrongdoing in themselves, but show bravado in their willingness to fight them. Country music traditionally tells tales of sustained courage, even for lost causes, of swift, effortless violence in defence of honour (or in fear of humiliation), of unnatural death, missed chances and lost or betrayed love. Much of this is also the stuff of longstanding popular Australian themes, for example, in Gallipoli's defeated heroes, Ned Kelly's defiant death, the 'wild colonial boy's' doomed vigilante methods and the swagman's honourable suicide in 'Waltzing Matilda'. Langford Ginibi and her communities counter these themes with their own tales of bravery in the face of persistent injustice and early death, as well as tales of love gone wrong. For Langford Ginibi, love began to go wrong in her adolescence.

'Ruby Don't Take Your Love to Town', performed by Kenny Rogers and by Langford Ginibi herself, draws from Johnny Cash's 'Don't Take Your Guns to Town'.<sup>80</sup> In Rogers' song, a paralysed veteran of the US-Vietnam War begs 'Ruby' to stay home with him:

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<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, p 155.

<sup>80</sup> According to Brad Wind, Mel Tillis based 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town' 'on a couple who lived near his family in Florida. In real life, the man was wounded in Germany in World War II and sent to recuperate in England. There he married a nurse who took care of him at the hospital. The two of them moved to Florida shortly afterward, but he had periodic return trips to the hospital as problems with his wounds kept flaring up. His wife saw another

You've painted up your lips and rolled and curled your tinted hair,  
 Ruby, are you contemplating going out somewhere? ...  
 It's hard to love a man whose legs are bent and paralyzed,  
 And the wants and needs of a woman your age, Ruby, I realize,  
 But it won't be long, I've heard them say, until I'm not around,  
 Oh Ruby, don't take your love to town.<sup>81</sup>

This singing subject represents himself as 'proud' to have done his 'patriotic chore', though powerless against those who 'started that old crazy Asian war'. He has no qualms about a quick, violent end to his humiliation in the face of Ruby's independence: 'If I could move I'd get my gun and put her in the ground'.<sup>82</sup> Such efficient methods of removing obstacles to satisfaction are both taught and punished by colonial powers, as in the use of violence and alcohol in relations between Australia's colonisers and Indigenous people. They are also a concern in Cash's 'Don't Take Your Guns to Town', as a mother fears for her son Billy Joe's safety on his first outing to the urban/rural borderland of the cattle town bar. The dangers here are those of a fallen world, where violent histories create cruel strangers and humiliation arouses bad instincts in good characters. This world is represented by the intersection of money, alcohol, arms, gendered bravado and competing masculinities in the bar: 'He drank his first strong liquor then to calm his shaking hand/ And tried to tell himself he had become a man/ A dusty cowpoke at his side began to laugh him down...'.<sup>83</sup> The tale ends in futile death and the echo of another grieving mother's words. This would become familiar territory for Langford Ginibi, but her text rearranges notions of good and bad, right and wrong, pride, honour, love of country and romantic love, pointing to different complexities from those evident in the records of Rogers and Cash. She also injects her renditions of country songs with the humour they sometimes lack in their recorded form.<sup>84</sup>

When Langford Ginibi was fourteen and had just left school, she joined the Casino Indigenous community on its Christmas camp at Yamba. She recalls the 'very romantic' atmosphere, which began each morning with the old woman on the cliff singing in the lingo to the porpoises and culminated at night in the boys playing guitar and everyone singing around campfires.<sup>85</sup> At the time, Langford Ginibi had a crush on a boy called Reggie, who 'serenaded' her, but he 'acted

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man as the veteran lay in the hospital./ Tillis changed the war to Vietnam in the song, and departed from the ending that happened in real life – he killed her in a murder-suicide.' *Songfacts*, <http://www.songfacts.com/detail.lasso?id=2113> (visited 15 August 2004). Johnny Cash recorded 'Don't Take Your Guns to Town' in 1958 (Sony Music, Columbia).

<sup>81</sup> Mel Tillis, 'Ruby Don't Take Your Love To Town'.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Johnny Cash Lyrics*, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/johnnycash/donttakeyourgunstotown.html> (visited 15 August 2004).

<sup>84</sup> Pamela Fox points out that humour is 'the least recorded but certainly one of the most important aspects of live country music'. See Fox, 'Recycled "Trash": Gender and Authenticity in Country Music Autobiography', *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998), p 254.

<sup>85</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 38.

off-hand' and was soon forgotten.<sup>86</sup> The next year, at fifteen, she received her first proposal of marriage, from Mervyn (who, with her, had boarded with the Pentland family in Casino), but she was then about to move to Sydney to live with her father. In Sydney, against her father's wishes, Langford Ginibi and her sister Gwen sneaked out to the Easter Show. It was here that they first crossed paths with Sam, who smiled at them and followed them around. Sam soon turned up again, this time at the factory where Langford Ginibi was working with his aunt. She recalls thinking he was 'nice looking and dressed well'.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, Mervyn had also turned up again. One day Langford Ginibi came home from work to find him sitting with her father, who agreed to let him take her out to a show. However, she remembers: 'I didn't like the way my life was being arranged for me, so I butted in and said I was doing some sewing at Betty's and with that I took off out the door'.<sup>88</sup> She goes on to explain that she 'had the huffs' with Mervyn, having heard he had been seen at the pictures with Ethel Hogan, their old schoolmate. Langford Ginibi describes her teenage self as 'very jealous'.<sup>89</sup> The attentive Sam was more appealing to her and she was soon going out with him, to movies, the city and the zoo. They quickly became 'inseparable' and then she was pregnant. Langford Ginibi's main concern was for her father: 'I couldn't lie to Dad but I didn't want to bring any shame on him, so I told him I was going to Coonabarabran to stay with Sam's mother until I had the baby'.<sup>90</sup> Her father was upset and would have preferred her to stay with him in Sydney, but Langford Ginibi, now sixteen, was soon on her way back to the country.

On the train to Coonabarabran, Sam told Langford Ginibi about his family. His father had died at about thirty and his brother had died at two. With the pregnancy and the move, the romance in their relationship slowly faded. When their baby boy was born, Sam could not visit the hospital because he had gone to work at Coolah Valley, but Langford Ginibi did not know why he was not with her: 'I was sitting up in bed waiting for Sam, but he didn't turn up. Because I had no visitors and was unmarried it made me embarrassed, so when the other women had visitors, I would turn to the wall and cover my head and cry to myself'.<sup>91</sup> The crescendo of disillusionment continued when Langford Ginibi visited her one new friend, Nerida, and saw that Nerida's husband 'used to drink heavily, and rattle tunes out on the mouth organ, and spent the rest of the time fighting with her'.<sup>92</sup> Langford Ginibi rarely saw Nerida 'without black eyes and bruises'.<sup>93</sup> Soon she herself was 'throttled' at the hands of a suspicious, jealous Sam. The optimistic, romantic teenager who had loved to sing and dance was now 'shaken up' and

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<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, pp 38, 41.

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p 51.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p 51.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*, p 51.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, p 54.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p 58.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p 58.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p 58.

‘always on [her] guard’.<sup>94</sup> By 1954, Langford Ginibi had a son, Bill, and a daughter, Pearl. One day, Sam was suddenly arrested and Langford Ginibi found out that he was facing a maintenance charge for a child in Sydney, who had been born to a woman called Merle, a month after Bill’s birth. She remembers her response: ‘I walked back to the hut and stared at the wall for a while. The wall was nothing to look at. In a while I heard Pearl’s voice, aaerooo-aah, from Iris’s place. Ruby, I said, GET UP. Look at our names, flowers and jewels.’<sup>95</sup> Rather than submit to the rising hopelessness, Langford Ginibi, both romantic and educated to survive, grasped an echo of Gray’s elegy for the desert flower and the gems in dark caves, as well as the thought of her father and family. She did get up, and found comfort with the family of Uncle Ernie Ord’s brother, Uncle Nulla. Uncle Nulla ran dances on weekends, where boys played guitars and accordion. Langford Ginibi went along, but, for the first time, just ‘sat there and watched’.<sup>96</sup> She was back in her home country, listening to the sounds of a world she now knew was damaged, but one that continued to dance and make space for its survivors.

At nineteen, Langford Ginibi met Gordon. She remembers this relationship in less romantic terms than the early days with Sam: ‘He picked up the kids and nursed them. Said he wanted to look after me. He was kind. And a hard worker.’<sup>97</sup> In Langford Ginibi’s last years as an adolescent, she carried heavier responsibilities than most Australian adults, having her fourth child at twenty-one. There was little space for romance, except perhaps in her role as mother. She named her third child Dianne, after a pop song: ‘I’m in heaven when I see you smile/ Smile for me, my Diane/ And though everything’s dark all the while/ I can see you, Diane/ You have lighted the road leading home/ Pray for me when you can/ But no matter wherever I roam/ Smile for me, my Diane’.<sup>98</sup> With her children, in the rare moments not taken up with practical matters, Langford Ginibi could dream, play and sing. By her twenty-first birthday, which she does not mention celebrating, Langford Ginibi knew the dangers of taking her love to town. Her adolescent ‘town’ was a simultaneously colonised and decolonising world, stretching from Toowoomba to Redfern, with few safe houses on its streets. It was populated with figures like the silenced ‘Ruby’ and the war veteran in Kenny Rogers’ song, people betrayed by governments, bodies and love. There were also figures like the bitter ‘cowpoke’ in Cash’s song, avenging their own humiliation or grief by humiliating others. There were young men like Billy Joe, their dignity offended, enraged and reaching for their guns, as well as fearful mothers warning their children. However, despite the many risks, Langford Ginibi also knew the decolonising value of sustaining her love and finding the right places to take it. By refusing to

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p 59.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p 64.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, p 65.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p 70.

<sup>98</sup> Erno Rapee and Lew Pollack, ‘Diane’ (1927), recorded by The Bachelors in 1964, *The Guitar Guy*, <http://www.theguitarguy.com/diane.htm> (visited 17 September 2004).

relinquish love and laughter altogether, she resisted the fear with which colonisation would continually silence her and her communities. This act of resistance required certain levels of bravado and vulnerability, for which Langford Ginibi transposed a rich and varied soundtrack.

### **Sad Dark Eyes**

In contrast with the wartime adolescent Crawford, who worked constantly and was pleased when her teenage body finally gained a little fat, Brett remembers a teenage self who could and did find ways to buy, steal and eat excessive volumes of food. She links this overeating to her complex relations with her parents, especially her slim, beautiful mother, and their memories. She links her supposed lack of early teenage romantic success to the results of her overeating. In adulthood, Brett is surprised to finding herself deeply loved:

I didn't expect  
any  
of this.  
  
At school  
I was too tall  
and too fat  
  
for  
all  
of the boys.<sup>99</sup>

Although she often cites her excess body fat as a boy deterrent in her youth, Brett remembers meeting her first boyfriend at fifteen. She was 'overwhelmed and overjoyed when he asked [her] to dance' and her parents 'embraced him', but he left when she refused to have sex.<sup>100</sup> At seventeen she had another boyfriend, with whom she did have sex.<sup>101</sup> This was just two or three years after the 1961 introduction of the contraceptive pill, which had begun to change attitudes and habits. The mid-1960s, when Brett was in her late adolescence, were generally a time of cultural change in Australia. While a theme of the 1950s teenage movements had been a desire for change in a time of stability, 1960s adolescents were instead 'creating culture that dealt with the society in which they were growing up, which was changing', according to Brett's first employer, Phillip Frazer.<sup>102</sup> Frazer identifies 'the pill, the war against Vietnam, electrified music that blended the major American genres (big band, crooning, musicals, blues, jazz), and other effects of the multiculturalization of America' as unexpected changes that 'made life different for baby boomers from what it had been for their elders'.<sup>103</sup> While emanating from the United States, these changes affected and, in some cases (particularly the war), shocked Australians. Brett, with the muted shocking knowledge of her parents' past, was not inclined as a teenager to

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<sup>99</sup> Brett, 'I Can See', *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1992), p 93.

<sup>100</sup> Brett, 'Sex', *In Full View* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1997), pp 93-94.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p 80.

<sup>102</sup> Email to me from Phillip Frazer, editor of *Go-Set* from 1966 to 1972, 31 August 2004.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

articulate shock about anything, but she was part of her generation's diversifying culture and registered its effects. Cultural change also had some effect on the ways others saw and heard Brett, including the boys around her.

Brett began working for *Go-Set*, Australia's first rock and pop newspaper, when she was nineteen. It was 1966 and she was soon the girlfriend of Rob Lovett, a blonde guitarist in one of the most successful bands of that year, The Loved Ones.<sup>104</sup> In a fictional representation of this relationship, Brett writes: 'Lola was captivated and wholly satisfied by Rodney's blondness. She would lie awake next to him for hours, looking at the golden hairs glinting on his arms.'<sup>105</sup> Blonde hair has had various associations in Australian imaginaries. It featured in the choice of 'flaxen-haired' Maira Kalnins as the publicly displayed 50 000th displaced person in 1949 (as discussed in chapter two). Hitler's Germany had similarly favoured images of blonde people for its domestic propaganda. Later, in Australia, blonde hair was associated with surf culture, a subculture linked to mid-century notions of freedom and relaxed pleasure. (In 1963, Australia's Little Pattie sang 'He's My Blonde-Headed Stompie Wompie Real Gone Surfer Boy'.) All these associations – White Australia, imagined racial superiority and a casual, 'old Australian' (performance of) absence of anxiety – had muted significance for the teenage Brett. As well as the pill, the US-Vietnam War and American music, voices from Poland infused her adolescence with unutterable doubts and questions. These voices were anxious, dark and Jewish, the frightening voices of the *Luftmensh*, which the teenager wished to drown out, at least temporarily.<sup>106</sup> Of the fictional Lola, Brett writes: 'By the time she was twenty, Lola knew no Jews ... She fell in love with blond, blue-eyed men whose fathers were president of the golf club and whose mothers had been the school hockey captain. Jewish boys looked awful to Lola ... They looked frightened of their mothers, frightened of their fathers.'<sup>107</sup> Brett's blonde boyfriend, who became her husband two years later, embodied the mythical laid back, laconic Australian. This mythical figure's 'freedom' – and its attraction for Brett – turned out to have as much to do with the established social and economic security of an 'old Australian' family as with romantic 1960s ideas of active self-discovery.

In Brett's relationship with Lovett, a romantic attraction to the 'other' presumably operated in both directions. As suggested by Frazer, above, new forms of popular multiculturalism emerged in the 1960s. On one level, this meant that young Australians heard the voices of non-Anglo American singers. On another, the Anglo tendency to romanticise exotic others was given a new

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<sup>104</sup> In 1966 The Loved Ones' hits were 'The Loved One' and 'Everlovin' Man' (In Records, Universal).

<sup>105</sup> Brett, 'A Mixed Marriage', *Things Could Be Worse*, p 109.

<sup>106</sup> Bob Dylan (like Brett, a descendant of Jewish Eastern Europeans, born in the 1940s) uses imagery of light and dark to compare his work with his contemporary Ricky Nelson's: 'Ricky ... was singing bleached out lyrics ... It was like he'd been born and raised on Walden Pond where everything was hunky-dory, and I'd come out of the dark demonic woods, same forest, just a different way of looking at things'. Dylan, *Chronicles: Volume One* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), p 14.

<sup>107</sup> Brett, 'I Heard You Got Another Husband', *Things Could Be Worse*, p 150.

working space in popular music. The process of exoticisation was complicated by non-Anglo participation, but it is evident in much 1960s music, with the ‘gypsy’ epitomising exotic cool. In late 1966, after days spent listening to Bob Dylan’s album *Blond on Blond*, Lovett and his band wrote ‘Sad Dark Eyes’: ‘I look at you/ And your sad dark eyes/ And your gypsy face/ With your Spanish grace/ ... Your ghost-like soul/ ... You’ll be mine/ Until the end of time’.<sup>108</sup> While neither ‘gypsy’ nor Spanish, Brett’s face was ‘striking’ for the ‘almost doleful eyes’ (in Frazer’s words).<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, in ‘settler’ imaginaries, the ‘gypsy’ stood alongside the Jew as the archetypal *Luftmensch*, a figure romantically attached to time rather than place. Of course, the Roma and Sinti people also stood alongside the Jews as primary objects of Nazi genocide.<sup>110</sup> Today, from Ireland to Russia, the Roma and Sinti in Europe collectively suffer greater levels of persecution than any other group.<sup>111</sup> However, in places like sub/urban Australia and North America, where the ‘real’ gypsy is rarely visible, the imagined gypsy may still evoke romance.

Brett was not untouched by the tastes of her generation – she and Lovett later named their daughter Gypsy, a name Brett associated with ‘freedom’. However, the romanticisation did not extend to the sad dark eyes of her parents at this stage. Rather, she resented their anxious interruption of her adolescent pleasures:

My father was grateful  
that neither of his daughters  
took to drugs  
or sold themselves to men  
  
... he said to friends ...  
what more can you ask for  
  
what more did you ask for  
an education an education ...  
  
and what about  
the cries to get rid of the fat ...  
to nab a nice boy like Josl  
  
and what about  
the domain of pain  
nothing could  
compare with the war  
  
and what about  
some quiet  
some stillness

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<sup>108</sup> Chris Hollow, *Interview with Rob Lovett*, 16 October 2000, <http://www.brella.org/sandpebbles/LovedOnes.htm>. Lyrics are at <http://www.milesago.com/Artists/lovedones.htm> (visited 19 September 2004).

<sup>109</sup> Frazer, email, 31 August 2004.

<sup>110</sup> Lodz ghetto musician David Beigelman wrote a ‘Gypsy Song’ (*Tsigaynerlid*) in the early 1940s. See Shoshana Kalisch with Barbara Meister, *Yes, We Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), pp 87-91.

<sup>111</sup> See Michael T Kaufman, ‘Europe’s Enduring Disgrace’, *Transitions* 4.4 (1997), p 3: ‘anonymous scrawls proclaim “Death to the Gypsies” ... newspapers publish signed letters from readers calling for Roma to be expelled ... a Czech beauty pageant contestant promised to spend her life working for the removal of “dark people” from her home district’.

some silence ...

and why  
were you angry  
when I laughed  
with friends

and why  
was I so lucky?<sup>112</sup>

Under the gaze of her parents' sad eyes, Brett's capacity for happiness was paradoxically limited by that which most desired her happiness, her parents' love. Of her mother, Brett writes: 'in my teens ... I was mostly conscious of my need to get away from her. I couldn't bear to feel the intensity of my love for my mother ... My own anguish at her anguish'.<sup>113</sup> Both laughter and ingratitude felt unseemly in the presence of Brett's parents. They would have preferred her to marry a Jewish boy 'like Josl', but yet another pair of sad dark eyes was not part of Brett's dream. Her adolescent desires for freedom and security flew in different directions from those of her Anglo contemporaries and from the desires of her parents. At least temporarily, her first husband fulfilled a desire for freedom to be 'quiet' and 'still', freedom to laugh, complain and be admired. He also satisfied a muted fantasy of white Australian security.

### **Hard Labour: A Trail of Dust and Heat**

Jimmy Little once sang of 'resting by a campfire in the cool evening breeze, weary from the blazing sun all day ... Thinking of tomorrow when we again will rise ... The days ahead will be the same, a trail of dust and heat'.<sup>114</sup> He was singing of the kind of bush work Crawford did throughout her adolescence. As a rural Indigenous girl, Crawford had a limited choice of work. Apart from the pastoral industries, the only options were domestic work for white families and kitchen work in pubs. Crawford did each of these for a while, but she preferred droving, where inequalities were less pronounced. Droving was relentless, exhausting work, with many dangers. Both Crawford and Gong suffered serious injuries at work, which they treated themselves. One time, Crawford's horse 'danced around and swung itself against the fence of the horse-yard', jamming her leg and giving her a 'gash over ten inches long right down the front of [her] shin'. Her bone was split and she 'poked out chips of bone' with her pocket knife and removed splinters from the rails with a needle, using *gweeyuhmuddah* from the bush to prevent blood poisoning. This injury affected all aspects of her health and she lost a lot of weight, but continued to work.<sup>115</sup> Crawford remembers seeing less tough workers give up, such as Bluey, a 'young red-headed white feller', with whom she was to drive forty-two horses (and baby Maree) across hundreds of kilometres from northwestern New South Wales to western

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<sup>112</sup> Brett, 'My Father Was Grateful', *After the War*, pp 40-41.

<sup>113</sup> Brett, 'Love', *In Full View*, p 295.

<sup>114</sup> A clip of Jimmy Little singing this song appears in the film *Buried Country*.

<sup>115</sup> Crawford, p 156.



Queensland.<sup>116</sup> At a stop shortly before the Queensland border, Bluey announced, ‘This kind of life is no good to me’. Crawford thought, ‘And you’re not much good to it, mate’, and continued alone.<sup>117</sup>

On the same job, Crawford rode to a station homestead in Queensland, to request permission to cross the land, only to be met by a former welfare officer:

In them days the Welfare people were pretty strict and seemed to pop up everywhere, like bad pennies. I was always scared they’d try to take Maree, even though she was a fat, well-cared-for little baby, with nice dresses and clothes.

The first thing that woman said was, “What’re you doing with that baby on your saddle?”

“She’s my baby.”

“Are you married?”

“No, I’m not married.” Well, not the way she meant, anyway.

“Where’s the baby’s father?”

“At Thargomindah, where I’m goin’.”

She thought there was just me and the baby, the dogs and my one horse. She’d have had a fit if she’d seen the mob of horses. All these questions, and she’d never seen me before. And I answered her, because I’d grown up thinkin’ white people had a right to question me about anything.<sup>118</sup>

Even out in the bush, voices of inequality were loud, especially when state and industry intersected. When white people in this world approached Crawford with friendly impartiality, it was a surprise and a relief. This happened once at Yaraka in western Queensland. The woman in the shop there invited Crawford to have some bread and butter with her. (Both were luxuries for a drover used to tinned meat and johnny cake.) She then invited her to a Christmas party and dance, where Crawford was overwhelmed by a present from Santa:

I just couldn’t believe it. It was a brush and comb set. It had a peacock on the back of it, silver edge right round it, and silver handles ...

I didn’t know what to say. I think if I’d said anything I would’ve cried. Nobody’d ever given me anything like that, not even in my dreams. I’d seen things like that on flash white women’s dressing tables and in the catalogues and never thought that anyone would ever give *me* a thing like that in all my life ...

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p 163.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p 166.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, p 169.

I treasured it. Everywhere I went I put it in my saddle bag. They were the nicest lot of white people I'd ever met ... Not just one or two of them, but everybody.<sup>119</sup>

Crawford ended up dancing with these white people, which she had not intended to do, although she loved dancing. When the accordion music grew 'slower and slower', as the player drank more jugs of beer, Crawford, a non-drinker, took over. She sat on a bale of hay and played the accordion until daylight, as others danced or slept. The next day, the old man whose accordion she had played showed her his opals and gave her an old accordion to keep. Both the rarity and the joy of such encounters made them particularly memorable. They were moments when the mateship celebrated in folk and country music became believable, as well as moments for weary bodies to move in pleasure rather than in the gruelling rhythms of driving bullocks, sheep and horses through endless dust and heat.

### **Midnight Special**

In Sydney, Langford Ginibi often sang along to 'Midnight Special', which opens: 'Well, you wake up in the mornin', you hear the work bell ring,/ And they march you to the table to see the same old thing./ Ain't no food upon the table, and no pork up in the pan./ But you better not complain, boy, you get in trouble with the man.'<sup>120</sup> This was originally a prison song, with the light and sound of the Midnight Special train representing hope, communication with distant loved ones, a desired mobility and deliverance. The song's sentiments are also applicable to some lives outside jail. As Cherie Watkins sang, 'Prison's nothing special, to any Nyoonga I know/ Because the white man makes it prison, most everywhere we go'.<sup>121</sup> Langford Ginibi found ways to enjoy aspects of the working life that was part of her prison from her early teenage years. She liked to work hard, like her father, and to see her father feel proud of her. At the Brachs clothing factory, she was a lead bander of trousers and was presented with a set of white lace underwear at Christmastime. In her next job, 'Old Joe Dadah' at the shirt factory raised her pay when she 'made that damn machine fly', attaching epaulettes to shirts 'for the Korean War'.<sup>122</sup> Before these jobs in Sydney, the fifteen-year-old Langford Ginibi had worked as a cleaner, cook, chambermaid and housemaid in Bonalbo.

Langford Ginibi had also had other responsibilities. Like Crawford and Brett, she was the elder sister in her family. Crawford's separation from her sister deprived her of an adolescent role as 'big sister'. Brett's early discord with hers (and her self-confessed self-absorption) meant that she too remained primarily an object of her parents' care, rather than a caring big sister. Langford Ginibi's situation was different. She was usually the one called upon to care for

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<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*, p 175, Crawford's emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> Fogerty, 'Midnight Special', *Willy and the Poor Boys*, Credence Clearwater Revival (Fantasy Records, 1969).

<sup>121</sup> Cherie Watkins, cited in Clinton Walker, 'Prison Songs', *Buried Country: The Story of Aboriginal Country Music* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2000), p 119.

<sup>122</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 53.

relatives in need, such as Aunt Mary, with whom she stayed until she neared death.<sup>123</sup> Langford Ginibi's father would ask her to explain things to her younger sisters, and her grandfather would ask her to write to her father.<sup>124</sup> Her early responsibilities for communication and patient, practical care prepared her for the demanding tasks of early motherhood and life with her boyfriends and their families. Langford Ginibi represents motherhood as the most important of her many jobs. Sam's mother taught her everything she needed to know about childbirth, and what to do next: 'She ... taught me how to swing a (kelly) axe, and chop down trees which were then left to dry out for the winter fires. She taught me how to make a bough shed to shade us from the summer heat; how to cook in an old camp oven the best rabbit stews – and how to set the rabbit traps to catch them'.<sup>125</sup> When Sam was arrested and taken to Sydney, Langford Ginibi was eighteen. Their son Bill then contracted meningitis and was not expected to live. At the hospital, Langford Ginibi did the only thing left for her to do: 'I sat and prayed beside his bed and wouldn't leave him for a week straight. "Dear Lord don't let my baby son die, he's only little and I love him, and need him, please don't let him die." I repeated this till I had exhausted myself and slept, then when I woke I started again.'<sup>126</sup> Bill survived and Langford Ginibi continued to work to the point of exhaustion. The pleasure of being with her extended family, though this was not always possible, made her efforts worthwhile. After giving birth to her third child Dianne, at twenty, she was able to go home to her father's place: 'Beside my dinner plate were wrapped presents. I opened them up: clothes for Dianne, bootees, a rattle. The family was around me. This was what it was supposed to be like.'<sup>127</sup> The work of caring for her children, at all moments of night and day, would occupy Langford Ginibi for many decades to come.

### **All Tomorrow's Parties**

The one time in her adolescence that Langford Ginibi recalls lacking energy to work was shortly before she realised she was pregnant for the first time. She 'felt weird', doodled with a pencil and 'didn't want to do anything'.<sup>128</sup> For Langford Ginibi, this feeling did not last long, before she was on the move again. Brett, in contrast, remembers her adolescent self as 'so calm, [she] was in a stupor' for years.<sup>129</sup> She writes that her only teenage ambition was to lose weight. At her mother's insistence, she eventually began to apply for jobs and, by all accounts, was given the position at *Go-Set* (a compound from 'go-go' and 'jet-set') because she was willing to let one of the editors (who were also still adolescents) use her car.<sup>130</sup> In Brett's fictional account,

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<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*, pp 22-23.

<sup>124</sup> *ibid.*, pp 28, 33.

<sup>125</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Real Deadly*, p 14.

<sup>126</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 66.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*, p 71.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p 53.

<sup>129</sup> Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View*, p 316.

<sup>130</sup> This is Brett's own account, confirmed by Frazer: 'She bought early issues of the paper at a newsagent, then showed up at our "office", and my partner Tony Schauble told her she could be a staff writer even though he didn't read anything she'd written (if she had written anything) ... I asked him why he'd encouraged her and he said,

much of which is based on her memories, Lola's anxious parents give her a 'large pink Valiant' for her eighteenth birthday: "“Lola darling,” Renia said, “We are giving you this car, not because you have been such a wonderful daughter that you deserve a new car, but because we want you to drive in something safe. I want to sleep at night, and so does Daddy. And now you won't have to drive in somebody's old bomb.””<sup>131</sup> By all accounts, Brett also had little interest in the music she wrote about. Lovett remembers the early reception of *The Loved Ones*: ‘*GoSet* magazine – the most influential rag at the time, wouldn't write about us. Actually, that's not entirely true ... while we were scorned by the two leading writers, Lily and Ian “Molly” Meldrum, we had a couple of articles by writers who actually listened to music.’<sup>132</sup> However, Brett found that writing itself interested her greatly. This was the business of arranging words and sentences, as she had tried to do for her parents as they learnt English, and of capturing the sounds and motions, the thoughts and actions, of other people. She worked hard for *Go-Set*.

In the pop industry, hard work involved a lot of parties. With sequins on her face and hair, in Melbourne and in London, Brett mixed with Normie Rowe, Johnny Young, the Rolling Stones and Jimi Hendrix, among many others. She remembers: ‘I was a fat Jewish girl who wasn't at all sure of where she was. On the surface, I glittered ... I was an outsider on the inside.’<sup>133</sup> Meanwhile, in New York, Nico was singing Lou Reed's observation of an adolescent working hard on her one ambition, to glitter at the next party: ‘And what costume shall the poor girl wear/ To all tomorrow's parties.../ A blackened shroud, a hand-me-down gown/ Of rags and silks, a costume/ Fit for one who sits and cries/ For all tomorrow's parties’.<sup>134</sup> Brett's busy schedule and pleasure in writing filled her days and nights, saving her from sitting and crying at this stage. (Later, when addressing her parents' memories and their effects, she would sit, cry and reflect that her adolescent drowning-out of those memories had prevented her young self from reflecting and mourning both past and future.) Brett represents her teenage self as immersed in the superficial details of youth culture, unaware of connections between history, politics, that culture and her own anxieties. Comparing her second husband's youth in Sydney with her own in Melbourne, she writes: ‘He was reading books of Chinese and Japanese poetry in Gympsea Bay. He was reading Christmas Humphrey's *The History of Buddhism*. He'd read a biography of Leonardo da Vinci when he was ten. And he was particularly interested in Bertrand Russell. I was in Carlton, Melbourne, seeing how high I could tease my hair.’<sup>135</sup> Phillip Frazer recalls that Brett ‘didn't talk or write about politics’, but ‘seemed comfortable

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"Because she has a car." ... [T]il then I had the only working car in the company, which I declined to lend to Tony' (email, 31 August 2004), and by Rob Lovett: 'when hiring staff, Tony Schauble and Philip Fraser [sic] were mostly concerned whether a) they had their own transport, transport that could be borrowed by the managing editors, and b) that they didn't need to be paid every week' (Chris Hollow, *Interview with Rob Lovett*).

<sup>131</sup> Brett, 'Every Death', *Things Could Be Worse*, pp 70-71.

<sup>132</sup> Chris Hollow, *Interview with Rob Lovett*.

<sup>133</sup> Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View*, p 321.

<sup>134</sup> Reed, 'All Tomorrow's Parties', *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Verve, 1967).

<sup>135</sup> Brett, 'New York', *In Full View*, pp 144-45.

with [*Go-Set*'s] anti-war and pro-counter-cultural worldview, which was only gently expressed in the magazine'.<sup>136</sup> He remembers the *Go-Set* team as 'close – like the crew on an unguided voyage'.<sup>137</sup> Brett represents her own 1960s voyage as one without thought of a destination, a roving dance from party to party, seemingly lacking any form of guidance.

Brett had, however, had the example and guidance of her parents. She had once had something like an ambition to follow that guidance:

I had dreams  
of making  
my mother happy ...

I came  
top  
of each class

I  
played  
the piano

I  
was  
pretty ...

but  
I didn't  
know

that  
no  
child

could  
make up for  
the dead

no  
child  
could replace

her  
life.<sup>138</sup>

Brett later identifies her failure to 'make up for the dead' as treachery:

I stole life  
from my parents  
they lost theirs  
  
and never recovered  
I was a traitor  
for just possessing it  
  
I had youth  
I had parents

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<sup>136</sup> Frazer, email, 31 August 2004.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Brett, 'Dreams', *Unintended Consequences*, pp 113-14.

I had promise  
 I managed  
 to mumble and discard  
 most of what I had  
  
 a crooked  
 two-faced  
 double-crosser  
  
 trying  
 to  
 straighten out.<sup>139</sup>

Of the New York partygoer, Nico sang, 'where will she go and what shall she do/ When midnight comes around'.<sup>140</sup> Brett's adolescent work as a writer would provide a clue to where 'the poor girl' could go and what she could do when the 'midnight' of her 'treacherous' partying came around. Her adolescent narrated subject worked like the girl in the 'hand-me-down dress from who knows where', but she would later 'straighten out' by questioning just where her 'hand-me-downs' came from.<sup>141</sup> Her work would become that of trying on her own family's 'gowns of rags and silks' and 'blackened shrouds', rather than those of Mick Jagger and Janis Joplin. As Phillip Frazer comments, 'she had much more to say than many of her interviewees did', but it would take a while for that to occur to her.<sup>142</sup>

Crawford and Langford Ginibi would have to wait much longer than Brett to have their words heard in Australia's major public spaces. However, for all three narrators, adolescence was a time of transposition, as each adapted and rearranged conflicting aspects of her life and culture. It was a time to hear and identify dissonant and duplicitous notes in selves and others, in subcultures and in a nation of paradoxes. Each narrator grew up with different forms of instability and came to desire and create her own forms of security. The adolescent memories recounted in the texts of all three suggest that the displaced subject, who has had insecurities and fragmentations thrust upon her, tends to desire gestures towards certainty, like the resolutions of folk, country and pop songs. Differences between the country and folk music of the rural poor and the pop and rock music of urban baby boomers reflect subcultural differences between the adolescent lives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. However, a shared distaste for some forms of experimentalism also reflects each narrated subject's desire for resolution. Displaced subjects differ from 'settler' and 'settled' subjects, who, like some Western teenagers in the 1950s, may experiment with notions of 'freedom' and mobility, fragmentation and disruption, from the seeming solidity of their inherited, spacious 'homes'.

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<sup>139</sup> Brett, 'I Stole', *Unintended Consequences*, p 147.

<sup>140</sup> Reed, 'All Tomorrow's Parties'.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> Frazer, email, 31 August 2004: 'After her marriage to David Rankin ... she finally began writing serious poetry and fiction instead of personality journalism – I know he encouraged her, knowing that she had much more to say than many of her interviewees did.'

For the subjects represented in *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, paths towards security are not always clearly visible. Brett, Langford Ginibi and Crawford represent their respective adolescent years as periods of survival, in which each began to locate such paths, in the form of relationships and/or work, and to forge new paths where necessary. As each narrated adolescent subject interacted with various Australian realms of 'hope and laughter and tears and pain', she left new tracks, personal and collective, for her children and others to follow. In chapter five I turn to the 'beating' of these tracks.

## Chapter Five

### Compositions: Adulthood and the next generation

I shall stumble from houses of education  
and I shall stumble from institutions of reform ...  
  
I shall stumble over poverty, over policies, and over prejudice ...  
  
to surprise you by my will ...  
  
we will rise from this place where you expect  
to keep us down  
and we shall surprise you by our will ...

– Romaine Moreton<sup>1</sup>

Families are places to eat, sleep and drink.  
To rest your head, weary of this century's thronging  
Music ...

– Melissa Lucashenko<sup>2</sup>

Adolescence, for most people, is a time to focus on personal desires and paths towards their fulfilment. Such potential personal paths have much to do with the major narratives constructed by collective national imaginaries and government policies. However, it is sometimes possible to disregard the ways these major narratives are constructed, especially with the self-focussed imagination of adolescence. In adulthood, while this possibility remains, other possibilities – for reflection and response – often emerge. As adults, Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett all took up the responsibilities of engagement with major narratives, in their published texts and in their personal lives. This chapter is concerned with the ways narratives are constructed – the collective narratives composed and performed by national and other authorities, the personal and communal narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, and the ways these all intersect and affect each other's movements.

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<sup>1</sup> Romaine Moreton, 'I Shall Surprise You By My Will', *Post me to the Prime Minister* (Alice Springs: Institute for Aboriginal Development Press, 2004), pp 137-38.

<sup>2</sup> Melissa Lucashenko, 'After He Drives Away', *Southerly* 62.2 (2002), p 40.



In chapter three I analysed the dissonances of official 1938 sesquicentenary celebrations, alongside the effects of government policies on personal lives, especially the lives of the young Crawford and Langford Ginibi. Fifty years after the sesquicentenary, when Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett were all adults with Australian citizenship, it would seem that much had changed, especially in the area of government policies. To investigate what had changed and what had not, especially concerning the construction of national narratives, I begin this chapter by examining Australia's celebration of its bicentenary in 1988. Official Bicentennial events were informed by, among other things, interpretations of the multiculturalism policy. I argue that authorities intended a grand performance of national harmony in 1988, as is often the case in moments of national commemoration. However, while the loudest parts may be kept 'simple', such performances are inevitably more complex, heterophonic and dissonant than planned, for reasons evident in the narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett.

The three narrators engage with national stories and demonstrate the effects of government policies, including multiculturalism. This policy conditioned the cultural and social positions of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett in 1988, when they were all in the process of putting their personal memories into public spaces. After outlining their cultural positions that year, I consider two elements of autobiographical acts, 'coaxers' and 'structuring modes of self-inquiry', and the collaborative work involved in the production of *Over My Tracks, Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*. As in the preceding chapters, I continue to focus primarily on these four texts, but I also investigate the authors' imaginations of life beyond their texts. Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett imagine futures that involve changing national narratives, as well as the evolving lives of their children and grandchildren. Through some of the narrators' adulthood memories, I explore the educative roles of their lives and texts in their communities and the nation. Drawing titles from popular songs, this section investigates Crawford's memories and roles under 'From Little Things Big Things Grow', Langford Ginibi's under 'We Have Survived' and Brett's under 'I'll Be Your Mirror'.<sup>3</sup>

The final section of this chapter examines the authors' adulthood journeys to ancestral sites. These journeys are part of each author's negotiation of and contribution to cultural memory. Crawford's work for her communities and her final years are traced under the title 'Down River', reflecting the centrality of the Darling River to Baarkanji life. I follow Langford Ginibi's return trips to Bundjalung country under two titles: '*Gunningah-nullinghe*' ('Listen to the voice of the people')

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<sup>3</sup> Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly's 'From Little Things Big Things Grow' (Larrikin, Universal Music Publishing and Song Cycles, 1992) is recorded on Carmody's 1993 album *Bloodlines*. No Fixed Address recorded Bart Willoughby's 'We Have Survived' on *From My Eyes* (Rough Diamond Records, Mushroom Music, 1982). The Velvet Underground and Nico recorded Lou Reed's 'I'll Be Your Mirror' on *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Verve, 1967).

refers to her ongoing education and listening, while ‘Aboriginal Woman’ reflects her role as an elder and educator of others. Finally, Brett’s engagement with Poland is examined under the title ‘Café Jew Zoo’.<sup>4</sup> By the time Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett had their work published, in the late twentieth century, they were increasingly concerned with the effects of their stories on the lives and memories of their children and younger Australians in general. Most of the popular songs referred to in the above titles are those of younger generations, the authors’ successors in the work of commemoration and storytelling. This chapter gives a little more space to Langford Ginibi than to Crawford and Brett, as *Don’t Take Your Love To Town* was published in 1988, the Bicentennial year, which affected the text’s reception and the construction of her subsequent narratives. Also, Langford Ginibi is the only one of the three authors who continues to live and work in Australia.

### **1988: Tall ships and tall stories<sup>5</sup>**

Back in January 1988, while the texts of Langford Ginibi, Crawford and Brett were being prepared for publication, descendants of the Aboriginal protestors of 1938 gathered with thousands of others to contest the stories being told in ‘celebration of a nation’.<sup>6</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson draw on sociologist Ken Plummer’s work to define the ‘coaxer’ or ‘coercer’ of autobiographical acts as ‘any person or institution or set of cultural imperatives that solicits or provokes people to tell their stories’.<sup>7</sup> Anniversaries such as the Bicentennial coax nations into grand performances of their life narratives, just as diverse intersections of present and past demand the articulation of personal memories. Where the policies of protection and assimilation had played the bass drone for the 1938 sesquicentenary celebrations, as discussed in chapter three, the multiculturalism policy played along fifty years later. The implementation of this policy ensured that attempts were made to have Australians of all backgrounds celebrate something on 26 January 1988. Along with ‘Celebration of a Nation’, Bicentennial songs and themes included ‘Living Together’, ‘Sport ’88’, ‘There’s a Whole

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Down River’ (by Wally Ebsworth, Keith Dutton, Colroy Johnson, Lendal King and Buddy Blair) was recorded by The Wilcannia Mob (aka The Baarkanji Boys) on Morganics’ album *All You Mob!* (ABC Music, 2002). ‘*Gunningah-nullinghe*’ is the title of chapter eleven of Ruby Langford Ginibi’s book *My Bundjalung People* (U of Queensland P, 1994), used with permission. Mixed Relations performed Bart Willoughby’s ‘Aboriginal Woman’ on the ABC Television series *Blackout* in 1989 and recorded it in 1993 (Redeye). Yale Strom with Hot Pstromi and Klazzj recorded Strom’s song ‘Café Jew Zoo’ (arranged by Strom, Norbert Stachel and Jeff Pekarek) on their album *Café Jew Zoo* (HNH International and Leaping Waters Music, Naxos of America, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> ‘Tall ships Tall stories’ is the title of a poster, which juxtaposes ‘black truths’ and ‘white lies’, designed in 1987 by Amanda Holt, with photos by Elaine Pelot Kitchener and Juno Gemes, who, incidentally, also photographed the image on the cover of Lily Brett’s *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1992).

<sup>6</sup> The Bicentennial theme song was ‘Celebration of a Nation’, music by Les Gock, words by Fran Allan and Tim Phillip (Melbourne: Allans, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2001), p 50, referring to Ken Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change and Social Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995).

Lot Better to Come' and 'Eureka'.<sup>8</sup> Central events, such as those around the First Fleet re-enactment voyage into Botany Bay, favoured Anglo themes and traditions, but attempted, again, not to offend anyone.

Of course, celebration of the devastating first acts of colonisation was intrinsically offensive to those who continued to suffer devastating effects, as well as to some who witnessed such effects and even to some who continued (with various forms and levels of shame) to benefit from colonisation. Any attempt on the part of Bicentennial organisers to have it both ways, that is, to have celebration as the central theme, while allowing moments of lamentation and protest as forms of 'ornamentation', was bound to fail in its aim of avoiding the ugliness of offence. However, this was indeed what organisers attempted, in tune with the dominant practices and tones of late 1980s Western popular culture. These tones reflected ideals of swift gratification, if possible in multiple, simultaneous forms, and a nonchalant pleasure in consumption. Musically, the greatest commercial successes in Australia in 1988 included Billy Ocean's 'Get Outta My Dreams, Get Into My Car', Yaz and the Plastic Population's 'The Only Way Is Up', Kylie Minogue's 'I Should Be So Lucky' and, slightly more critically, Bobby McFerrin's 'Don't Worry, Be Happy'.<sup>9</sup> In counterpoint to the sentiments of these most popular sounds, much music calling for various forms of fairness and justice was also made in 1988. For example, Midnight Oil's pop-rock album *Diesel And Dust* gained considerable airplay that year, but not as much as the more upwardly mobile rhythms enjoyed by most young day-glo-clad, walkman-bearing 1980s Australians.<sup>10</sup>

The values of speed, fun, casual prosperity and disposability lent themselves to cute and colourful imagery, which also entered official Bicentennial celebrations. Organisers sought to avoid the affectations of colonial formality that had characterised celebrations of the early to mid-twentieth century. They encouraged the use and construction of 'Australian-made' symbols of identity, such as 'The Marching Koalas', who appeared at the New South Wales Royal Bicentennial concert, and the images of a blonde male surfer with pink board, blonde 'Minties'-wrapped female in high heels and flag-draped Hills Hoist that accompany the National Anthem text on the concert program. The program includes the songs 'Waltzing Matilda', 'Made in Australia' and 'Goldrush', songs with

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Bicentennial Authority, Audiovisual Presentations, recorded 1981-89.

<sup>9</sup> 'Top 30 Number One Singles of 1988', *Oz Net Music Chart*, <http://www.onmc.iinet.net.au/top/1988.htm> (visited 26 October 2004). In counterpoint to 'The Only Way Is Up', Langford Ginibi quotes Bobbi Sykes: 'black women are on the way 'up'/ ... you must try not to let your bitterness/ be construed as 'black racism'/ as you recall the abuses/ heaped upon you all your life/ ... and the accumulated pain of two centuries', Sykes' emphasis. Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1988), p ix.

<sup>10</sup> Midnight Oil's *Diesel And Dust* (Columbia/Sony, 1988) includes the songs 'Beds are Burning' ('The time has come/ To say fair's fair/ To pay the rent/ To pay our share ... It belongs to them/ Let's give it back'), 'Put Down That Weapon' ('Some things don't come for free ... You must be crazy if you think you're strong') and 'Warakurna' ('White law could be wrong/ Black law could be strong'), all by Peter Garrett, Jim Moginie, Martin Rotsey, Peter Gifford and Rob Hirst.

links to multicultural events in Australian history. However, except for Maestro Tommy Tycho, a survivor of a concentration camp in Hungary (and former court pianist to the Shah of Iran), the many performers' names are all Anglo-Celtic. The two performers from outside Australia – Cliff Richard and John Denver – come, respectively, from the United Kingdom and the United States.<sup>11</sup> The most loudly honoured members of the audience were the Prince and Princess of Wales.

In May 1987, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip had farewelled the First Fleet re-enactment voyage from the United Kingdom. The Re-enactment Company's motto was 'Part of our Past. Start of our Future'.<sup>12</sup> This group, unwilling to give up its dream of adventure, also sought to have it both ways, finding words to 'justify' its resolution to go ahead with the voyage to Australia. Team member Patricia Franklin explains:

I knew that to re-enact the voyage that founded white Australia would be an insult to the Aboriginal people. However when I met the Fleet personnel in England ... I realised what a tremendous undertaking the voyage was and that the Re-enactment could raise consciousness ... about the early history of white settlement, in particular the conflict between Aboriginal Australians and European settlers when first contact occurred.<sup>13</sup>

'Tremendous undertakings', especially those that could be said to 'raise consciousness', were increasingly admired in the late twentieth-century Australia that represented itself as culturally and economically successful. However, while the re-enactment voyage may have raised some forms of consciousness, the insult remained. The kind of consciousness that, despite itself, endorsed the celebration of insult was one that flourished in some readings and enactments of multiculturalism. It represented the coloniser's desire to maintain dominance while appearing to have surrendered the unfashionable role of conqueror. This was a desire for stories of adventure without encounter, for 'virtual' invasions, which educated 'other' parts of the world in abstract ways, while evading the touch and voice of the colonised.<sup>14</sup> In 1988, the New South Wales government shared this desire to have it both ways. It imagined that insensitivity to Indigenous people could be avoided by cutting the performance of the Fleet's landing in Botany Bay from the re-enactment. This was supposed to indicate that Indigenous history was being heard and given a performance space of its own. Similarly, the Re-enactment Creative Director, Jonathan King, endorsed a public statement that the 'way in which Aboriginal society has been disregarded and almost destroyed since the arrival of

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<sup>11</sup> 'Programme', New South Wales Royal Bicentennial Concert, 25 January 1988, Sydney Entertainment Centre.

<sup>12</sup> Wally Franklin, Executive Director of the First Fleet Re-enactment Company, quoted in 'The Strength behind the First Fleet Re-enactment Voyage', *The First Fleet Times*, Edition 7, January 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia Franklin, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> This storytelling method resembles twenty-first-century war reporting, especially the practice of 'embedding' reporters with soldiers. Here, supported by discourses of 'freedom', those with superior arms are seen and heard firing on 'the enemy', while those fired upon and their discourses remain out of earshot, even for the 'winning' troops.

Captain Phillip's fleet must now be recognised. Their needs must be acknowledged, their protests must be heeded.'<sup>15</sup> However, he himself did not heed 'their' protests to the point of altering the nature of his 'creative direction'. Indeed, the only performance space granted Indigenous storytellers was the street protest, where contrapuntal voices continued to imagine different futures from those performed on the tall ships.

Indigenous protests were not allowed to spoil the grand party. In the form of official words, performances of inclusion made it easier for those who celebrated to evade responsibility for the stories they told. Gary Foley suggests that, in some ways, there was more direct engagement with Indigenous history in 1938 than in 1988. Foley notes that the *Sydney Morning Herald's* 'Sesquicentenary Supplement' on 2 January 1938 'seemed remarkably willing to concede past atrocities in a manner Australians seemed to have lost 50 years later'.<sup>16</sup> From the 1938 'Supplement', Foley cites Percy S Allen: 'when we read in the old files of the 'Herald' from John Fairfax's day onwards, the protests against the barbarous treatment of the blacks we may be sure that the poor wretches were dealt with atrociously'.<sup>17</sup> The adjectives 'barbarous' and 'atrocious' may have been absent from the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1988, but as the celebrations were being organised, so were the protests. A range of people across Australia produced slogans, posters, music and books to tell the stories they knew, countering the louder duplicitous gestures. Stories of Indigenous deaths in police custody were told throughout the country, as few Indigenous families remained untouched by such deaths. The 'Tall ships Tall stories' poster states: 'On May 13, when helicopters, boats, planes and jet skis joined the British navy frigate in farewelling the First Fleet Re-enactment ships from Portsmouth there were 47 recorded Aboriginal deaths in custody since 1980.' It goes on to quote artist Tracey Moffatt:

The re-enactment was an insult to the memory of the thousands upon thousands of Aborigines murdered by the invading British ... It makes me particularly angry when at home my people are still struggling for just compensation in the form of land rights for the theft of their land; when our infant mortality rate is the highest in the world; when currently, according to the police, black youths are mysteriously hanging themselves in jails.<sup>18</sup>

As Moffatt suggests, the late 1980s stories were a continuation of the deaths under white

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<sup>15</sup> Notice in *Sydney Morning Herald*, cited in 'Australia Day – History', *Australia Day Council of NSW*, <http://www.australiaday.com.au/history.html> (visited 1 November 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Gary Foley, 'The *Sydney Morning Herald* and Representation of the 1988 Bicentennial', *Gary Foley's Koori History Website* (1997), [http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/essay\\_11.html](http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/essay_11.html) (visited 1 November 2004).

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, quoting Percy S Allen, 'Sesquicentenary Supplement', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1938.

<sup>18</sup> Moffatt, quoted on Holt's poster 'Tall ships Tall stories', 1987. Similarly, in his song 'Bicentennial', Paul Kelly sang: 'A ship is sailing into harbour ... And they want us all to cheer/ Charlie's head nearly reaches the ceiling/ But his feet don't touch the floor/ From a prison issue blanket his body's swinging/ He won't dance any more/ Take me away from your dance floor ... I have not the heart for dancing ... on his grave', *Under The Sun* (Chaos Music, 1987).

surveillance that had begun with colonisation two hundred years earlier.

In protest against continuing imprisonment, injustice and despair for Indigenous Australians, many thousands of people marched for 'freedom, justice and hope' on 26 January 1988 in Sydney. By contrast with the coerced 'corroboree' fifty years earlier, the march began with a mourning corroboree properly planned and performed by Indigenous people. Thousands of people travelled to Sydney from around Australia, forming the largest Indigenous demonstration in colonised Australia's history. The rally and concerts also enabled new connections between Indigenous musicians from around the country. This was a productive time for Indigenous recording. While greater numbers of Australians heard Kylie, Billy and Bobby, some in 1987 and 1988 were listening to *Warumpi Band Go Bush!*, Casso and the Axons' *Australia for Sale*, Coloured Stone's *Wild Desert Rose*, Joe Geia's *Yil Lull* or Wama Wanti's *Drink Little Bit*. Yothu Yindi, who performed at protest concerts in Sydney, also recorded *Homeland Movement* in 1988, releasing it in 1989.<sup>19</sup> The 'Building Bridges' and 'Rock for Land Rights' programs were initiated and concerts in celebration of Indigenous survival would become an annual 26 January event in the 1990s.<sup>20</sup>

### **Multiculturalism**

Despite his misgivings about some Australian media in 1988, Gary Foley commented that the large gathering of protestors on 26 January represented 'black and white Australians together in harmony ... what we have always said Australia could be'.<sup>21</sup> Harmony is also a stated aim of the multiculturalism policy. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs states that the policy 'gives emphasis to promoting community harmony and the benefits of our cultural diversity for all Australians'.<sup>22</sup> Some implementations of this policy have succeeded in making space for previously silenced voices to be heard (albeit in colonially qualified ways) and thus for encounters between various Australians to be a little more balanced and occasionally

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<sup>19</sup> Warumpi Band, *Warumpi Band Go Bush!* (Festival Records, 1987), Casso and the Axons, *Australia for Sale* (Greg Castillon, 1987), Coloured Stone, *Wild Desert Rose* (RCA, 1988), Joe Geia, *Yil Lull* (Dex, 1988), Wama Wanti, *Drink Little Bit* (CAAMA, 1988), Yothu Yindi, *Homeland Movement* (Mushroom Records, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> 'Building Bridges' brought together Indigenous and non-indigenous musicians for concerts, debate and recording. In Sydney, the Survival or Invasion Day concert is now held at Redfern Oval and known as *Yabun* (Eora: 'song with a beat' or 'getting together for music'). See *Gadigal Information Services*, <http://www.gadigal.org.au/>.

<sup>21</sup> Foley, quoted in 'Australia Day – History', *Australia Day Council of NSW*.

<sup>22</sup> 'Multicultural Australia: United in Diversity – Updating the 1999 New Agenda for Multicultural Australia: Strategic Directions for 2003-2006', *Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs: Policy Documents*, <http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/australian/policy.htm#2> (visited 1 November 2004). For a related analysis of the administration of 'Harmony Day', see Catriona Elder, Cath Ellis and Angela Pratt, 'Whiteness in constructions of Australian nationhood: Indigenes, immigrants and governmentality' in Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ed, *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), pp 208-21.

harmonious.<sup>23</sup> Early successes (in the 1970s and 1980s) were often in areas of workplace relations, education and media. For example, people not fluent in English could substantially improve their understandings of Australian employment and tenancy conditions, or their relations with their children's schoolteachers, when provided with information about rights and possibilities in their first languages. Australian-born English-speakers, on hearing the diverse articulations of speakers of various languages, especially through the broadcasting media, could more effectively imagine some of the complexities within Australian communities and their collective memories. However, the nature of such imagination (or the discourses surrounding it) has changed direction since the early days of the multiculturalism policy. Ghassan Hage argues that 'working class-centred multiculturalism has been eclipsed from Australian society and it seems that middle-class multiculturalism has been used to eclipse it'.<sup>24</sup> Alongside cultural pluralism, which Hage links to 'middle-class' pleasures, issues of access and equity were central to early multiculturalism. Since the 1990s, there has been a tendency for dominant groups to separate the imagination of multicultural identities from that of multicultural working lives. 'Middle-class' Australians increasingly enjoy their own constructions of 'others' identities, assisted by such cultural commodities as cinema, informed debate, travel or literature, but they often forget the less pleasurable task of engaging with their nation's policy implementations and their effects. Thus, many book-buying Australians willingly read the life narratives of displaced people like Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, imagining the authors' culturally diverse identities, while seeming less willing to imagine substantial changes to the ways other displaced people in Australia continue to work and rent, raise families and eat.<sup>25</sup>

Multiculturalism was first defined in Australia in 1977, as resting on the principles of 'social cohesion, equality of opportunity and cultural identity'.<sup>26</sup> Work had begun on related policies in 1968, when Polish-born sociologist Jerzy 'George' Zubrzycki contrasted the concept of cultural pluralism with those of assimilation and integration. Zubrzycki identified obstacles faced by migrant workers and by migrant children at school. He linked equity with cultural pluralism and proposed alternative approaches to migrant settlement.<sup>27</sup> Eighteen years later, in 1986, policies had been developed to ensure 'equitable opportunity to participate in the economic, social, cultural and

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<sup>23</sup> For a more extensive discussion of 'the colonial seeds of multiculturalism', see Sneja Gunew, *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalisms* (London: Routledge, 2004), in which Gunew argues that 'the mechanism of ... colonialism, covertly structures ... multiculturalism', p 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ghassan Hage, 'The Class Aesthetics of Global Multiculturalism', *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2003), p 109.

<sup>25</sup> On eating, such 'middle-class' readers would desire the displaced people's recipes from 'elsewhere', but would prefer not to imagine how the displaced pay for their food in Australia, or that it may be chips and hamburgers.

<sup>26</sup> Jerzy Zubrzycki et al, *Australia as a Multicultural Society, A Report by the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council* (1977).

<sup>27</sup> Zubrzycki, *The Questing Years, A Report* (1968).

political life of the nation', 'equitable access to, and an equitable share of, resources', 'equal opportunity to participate in/influence government policies, programs and services' and 'rights, within the law, to enjoy one's own culture, practise one's own religion, use one's own language while respecting the right of others to their own culture, religion and language'.<sup>28</sup> However, by 1988, problems were emerging.

In the Bicentennial year, a report suggested that 'the official definition of multiculturalism did not correspond with the popular concept of it'.<sup>29</sup> As was indeed reflected in official Bicentennial celebrations, this report identified a popular understanding of Australian identity that conflicted with that officially imagined in accordance with multiculturalism: 'Many people, from a variety of occupational and cultural backgrounds, perceived it [multiculturalism] as divisive. The majority of these people also expressed concerns about immigrants' commitment to Australia and to Australian principles and institutions.'<sup>30</sup> 'Commitment' in the form of hard work, among other more complex and painful things, did not satisfy parts of the population that were interested in (and committed to) neither multicultural identities nor access and equity. Such 'concerned' Australians may have been reassured by the 2004 definition of the multicultural policy, which includes this condition:

The freedom of all Australians to express and share their cultural values is dependent on their abiding by mutual civic obligations. All Australians are expected to have an overriding loyalty to Australia and its people, and to respect the basic structures and principles underwriting our democratic society. These are the Constitution, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, the rule of law, acceptance and equality.<sup>31</sup>

The notion of mutual obligation has come to replace that of harmony, as national authorities have persisted with having it both ways – proclaiming fairness while maintaining inequitable practices. As Hage observes, 'We are very instrumentalist in choosing our migrants, but we don't want our migrants to relate instrumentally to us.'<sup>32</sup> This paradox has also applied, in different ways, to official and popular attitudes towards Indigenous Australians. While there was considerable interest

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<sup>28</sup> James Jupp et al, *Don't Settle for Less, Report of the Committee of Review of Migrant and Multicultural Programs and Services* (1986).

<sup>29</sup> Summary, 1988. *Immigration: A Commitment to Australia. A Report by the Committee to Advise on Australia's Immigration Policies* (chairman, S FitzGerald), <http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/australian/summaries.htm#06> (visited 1 November 2004).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> 'Australian multicultural policy: Definition', Last update: 23 March 2004, *Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs*, <http://www.immi.gov.au/multicultural/australian/index.htm> (visited 1 November 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Hage, 'Polluting Memories', *Against Paranoid Nationalism*, p 101. As Mary Coustas puts it (playing 'Effie', about to meet her fellow 'wog-come-good', boxer Kostya Tszuyu): 'They like us when we come good'. *Effie: Just Quietly* 2, Episode 2: 'Wogs' (SBS Independent, 2001).



in the memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett in 1988, constituting a popular choice to allow their voices into public spheres, it was an interest that often expected the authors to dance to pre-composed official tunes.

## **Positions**

Although exclusionary practices continued for many displaced people and Indigenous Australians in 1988, Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett all found themselves in rather different positions from those they had held as adolescents. Crawford was the TAFE Aboriginal Liaison Officer for the extensive Far-West region of New South Wales. She was based in remote Broken Hill. Over her many working years, Crawford had negotiated various forms of English, including some spoken by migrants from England, Ireland, China and Afghanistan, as well as several Indigenous languages. She had overcome a range of obstacles and resisted some authorities' attempts to direct the course of her tracks. By 1988, Crawford's time as a pushed and shoved object of dispossession might have seemed to be in the past. Indeed, in May 1988, she accepted an invitation from the State Premier to meet Queen Elizabeth at a luncheon in Sydney. However, here too, albeit in a less serious form, Crawford met an attempt to block her path. She remembers the response to her decision to take a short cut to lunch over the red carpet, as she was feeling the discomfort and impracticality of her expensive new shoes: 'A feller came over to me, all dressed up in some kind of uniform and said, so-o-o politely, "Excuse me, ma'am, the Queen hasn't walked on that yet. It's for the Queen to walk on."' As she had done many times before, in other contexts, Crawford responded to this 'authority' with a counter-discourse of security and protection: "'I'm sure the Queen wouldn't want one of her visitors to be sitting in the dining room with a broken leg because she slipped and fell over, so will you please just move away and let me pass so I can go in and sit down. Besides, I'm tired, I came all the way from Broken Hill.'" <sup>33</sup> As dispossession was carried out in the name of the security and protection of those becoming or being Australian, Crawford and other dispossessed and uprooted Australians fashioned new, 'counter-protective' modes of conversation.

Crawford was accompanied at the luncheon by her daughter Verina.<sup>34</sup> As Crawford stepped onto the red carpet in Sydney, Verina 'hissed' at her not to go ahead, but was soon persuaded by her mother not only to let her proceed, but to bring two other elderly guests to join her. Typically, Crawford had noticed 'two old ladies ... holding each other and shivering, thinkin' they'd slip over too' and was determined to see the national resource of red carpet equitably shared (as government

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<sup>33</sup> Evelyn Crawford, *Over My Tracks* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1993), p 308.

<sup>34</sup> Verina was named by Gong, who explained: 'I was sittin' in the cart shed one day on a station where I was workin', and all these bags was folded and stacked up, and I seen this word, 'VERINA'. I reckoned it'd be a nice name for a little girl. I undone the top bag and it was a fowl food bag from the Riverina! I laughed, but I still think it'd be a pretty name.' *ibid.*, p 221.

policy prescribed). Apart from these two ladies, the fellow guests who most interested Crawford were two champion horse trainers, Bart Cummings and Tommy Smith. Verina photographed her mother with the two men. This impressed the people back at Broken Hill, who, as Crawford observes, were all ‘racehorse mad’.<sup>35</sup> Horseracing, like the pastoral industry, had the potential to divide and to link people of different social classes or cultural backgrounds, as well as rural and urban people. A longstanding tradition in Anglo-Celtic cultures, horseracing has also been a significant part of rural Indigenous life.<sup>36</sup> The greatest mutual interest of Crawford and Queen Elizabeth was probably the love and knowledge each woman had of horses and dogs, despite the very different contexts in which each had developed her knowledge. However, because of that great contextual difference, as well as the context in which the two met in 1988, where Crawford’s invitation came in recognition of her work in the education sector, horses were not their topic of conversation. This reflects an aspect of the increasingly ‘middle-class’ multiculturalism identified by Hage. Crawford’s work for Indigenous students was acknowledged in Sydney as a contribution to cultural harmony, although, in the far west of New South Wales, its effects may have been more significantly appreciated as counter-colonial. Education, which Crawford saw as vital to the survival of working Indigenous people, also enjoyed the recognition of middle-class Australians, but Crawford’s long years of working with horses in the bush, contributing to other forms of cultural harmony, would not rate a mention to the Queen.

For Langford Ginibi too, 1988 was the year in which her hard work was publicly acknowledged. As with Crawford, those bestowing honours recognised Langford Ginibi’s work in sharing knowledge in the form of publication, rather than the manual work she and other Indigenous women had been compelled to do over the preceding decades. However, *Don’t Take Your Love to Town* told the stories of that work, among many other things. After its publication, Langford Ginibi accepted the Australian Human Rights Literary Award. Later, she reflects on the unfulfilled hopes in 1988 that ‘the world would take notice of our plight’, as she remembers the huge rally in Sydney on 26 January:

This was the first time Australia had been confronted with so many of our people, ever. I think it frightened a lot of people because they still don’t understand us. It wasn’t a march of violence, it was a march of sorrow. Sorrow at all the things we’ve lost to the British colony. But as usual, they turned a deaf ear to us because Australia is still catering to the whims of

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p 307.

<sup>36</sup> Originating many centuries ago in Central Asia, horseracing was developed into its current Anglo-Celtic form after twelfth-century knights took Arab horses back to England from the Crusades. In Australia, several Indigenous jockeys have been successful nationally and internationally. See John Maynard, *Aboriginal Stars of the Turf: Jockeys of Australian Racing History* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2002).

the very bored royals. On that day, 26 January, Charles and Di were welcoming the Tall Ships as they sailed past the Opera House, and we Aborigines had declared it a day of mourning over the loss of our land.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the sorrow and continuing grounds for mourning, the dearth of effective listening and of forms of acknowledgment that could bring substantial change, Langford Ginibi also reflects that she 'wouldn't change places with the Queen of England'.<sup>38</sup> Her inspiration for this reflection is her position as loved mother and grandmother, especially evident at a family gathering on her birthday, 26 January (which Langford Ginibi refers to as 'Shame Day'). While most Australian ears remain 'deaf' and the royals are 'bored', her family celebrates her life and its own survival with love and laughter: 'in this house this day, there was so much love, and laughter, then jokes were being told and the more that were told the sicker they got'.<sup>39</sup> Langford Ginibi's unchanging position as loved member of a large, laughing family enables her to persist with her work on the positions of Indigenous people in Australia's national imaginaries.

For Brett too, 1988 was a year to savour public recognition, while still mourning her mother's death in 1986. She had won her first poetry award, for *Poland*, in 1986, and further awards for *The Auschwitz Poems* in 1987.<sup>40</sup> Brett also continued to be surprised by the joys of her second marriage. In 1979, at thirty-three, she had fallen in love with David Rankin, also thirty-three years old, an artist who would soon win awards. They were married in 1981. By 1988 Brett and Rankin had collaborated on several projects. They lived in Melbourne, but had begun to enjoy spending time in New York, where they were to move in 1991. In 1988 Brett had fewer publications than in the surrounding years. Apart from a few reviews of other people's work, she published 'Miriam', a short story, and 'After Days', a poem.<sup>41</sup> In her life writing, Brett does not reflect on the Bicentennial, or the relationship between colonisation and the continuing differences in opportunity for Indigenous and migrant or settler Australians. Inasmuch as she addresses politics directly, she generally comments on the past in Europe and its effects on her immediate communities in Melbourne. However, in her reviews, Brett seems most moved by stories of Indigenous tragedy, betrayal or defiance in the face of racism. For example, in her review of the anthology *The Babe is Wise: Contemporary Stories by Australian Women*, Brett finds 'Maralinga', Lallie Lennon's oral

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<sup>37</sup> Langford Ginibi, 'The Oppressed People', paper presented at Lismore Club, 1990, quoted in Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung people* (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 1994), p 45.

<sup>38</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Real Deadly* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1992), p 109.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Brett received the Mattara Poetry Prize for *Poland and Other Poems* (Melbourne: Scribe, 1987) and the C J Dennis Award for Poetry and the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for *The Auschwitz Poems* (Melbourne: Scribe, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Brett, 'Miriam', *Overland* 110 (1988), pp 2-4; Brett, 'After Days', *The Age*, 17 December 1988, *Saturday Extra* p 11.

history, 'heartbreaking', with its 'so innocent, ... so helpless' survivors of British nuclear testing.<sup>42</sup> She is moved by Robin Sheiner's 'My Sister's Funeral', a 'story of three part-Aboriginal sisters', and finds 'wonderful, sensuous and defiant' moments in Lyn Hughes' 'The Plain Clothes Man', set in South Africa with a 'black maid' as protagonist.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, she cannot like this anthology as a whole, finding it bleak, brutal and filled with 'unrelenting harshness' and 'indifference'. Perhaps Brett's responses here suggest that she understood her (long-distance) relationship with Indigenous Australians as one of empathy between people who knew or had witnessed the effects of extreme injustice. As she identifies bleakness in most of the non-indigenous women's representations of Australian life, she attributes it primarily to simple indifference, rather than to any ongoing effects of a muted knowledge of past violence in this country, as other critics may have done. There is no suggestion that Brett thought to link her position as a prosperous, successful settler/child migrant Australian to an ongoing history of colonisation.

### **Autobiographical acts: Coaxers**

By 1988, the subjectivities of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett had seen many shifts, as had Australia's national imaginary. 'Australia' had come to desire the publication of the three women's private but collectively significant narratives, albeit on its margins. Meanwhile, in the United States, Smith and Watson suggest that 'generations of immigrants ... have responded to the need to affirm for other Americans their legitimate membership in the nation by telling stories of assimilation'.<sup>44</sup> Such a coxer also operates in Australia and even applies, to an extent, to the work of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. However, in counterpoint, the desire to assert difference from the dominant culture by telling of resistance against assimilation forms another coxer. In their discussion of coaxers, Smith and Watson consider collaborative life writing. As they point out, the negotiation of 'final' versions of texts involves coaxing, solicitation and sometimes coercion. In Crawford's case, the direct coxer, her interviewer Chris Walsh, was the initiator of the *Over My Tracks* project, as well as what Smith and Watson call the 'ethnographer', the assembler of the narrative.<sup>45</sup> The ethnographer's whiteness and the 'informant's' Indigeneity further complicate the politics of this coaxing and assembling role, introducing 'a set of issues about the process of appropriating and overwriting the original oral narrative', as Smith and Watson suggest.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Brett, 'A Woeful World of Women', review of Lyn Harwood, Bruce Pascoe, Paula White and Victoria Fairfield, eds, *The Babe is Wise: Contemporary Stories by Australian Women* (Melbourne: Pascoe Publishing, 1987), *The Age*, 17 October 1987, *Saturday Extra* p 14.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p 53.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p 54.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.* Smith and Watson write specifically of narratives translated from Indigenous languages, but the issues they identify apply to any 'major' reconstruction of a 'minor' oral narrative.

Perhaps partly because the initial idea for a book was not her own, Crawford voiced no public dissatisfaction with her final version, in contrast with Langford Ginibi's response to the editing of *Don't Take Your Love To Town*. The coaxers for Langford Ginibi's writing of her life narrative were complex and persisted over several decades before she found a moment to begin. In her two years at high school, she dreamt of writing a book, but there was no opportunity while she raised her nine children. Finally, in 1984, when all her children had grown up and most had moved out, she had given up drinking and was finding time to read and follow politics, especially conditions for Indigenous prisoners. One November night, she 'couldn't sleep' and 'picked up the pen to write' her book, dedicating it to all her children.<sup>47</sup> A few hours later, Langford Ginibi was told that her son David was dead: 'I didn't realise it then but the time I was writing in my book was the time they found him dead'.<sup>48</sup>

For Brett too, death is linked to the coaxers for her life writing, which she took up seriously in 1979, when her relationship with Rankin began. She reflects:

Part of my need to write comes out of a need to document my parents' past. To let people know what happened to them, and to all the other Jews. ... so many terrible things ... happened because so many people agreed that the world could afford to lose a few of its Jews ... Individuals agreed, governments agreed, politicians and diplomats agreed, religious leaders and communities agreed, welfare organisations agreed and newspapers and radio stations and newsreel companies agreed.<sup>49</sup>

This list of bodies that 'agreed overtly and enthusiastically, or by their agreement to look away' is echoed in Langford Ginibi's attention to similar bodies in Australia as she wrote *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, reflecting that 'prison broke people's spirits, and it was killing our sons like a war'.<sup>50</sup> Along with the need to document far-reaching damage to selves and parents or children, Langford Ginibi and Brett were both inspired to write by love – love for those parents and children and, in Brett's case, her love for Rankin. Brett's first (unpublished) drafts of poems have titles such as 'Love at thirty-three', 'A day with David', 'December with David', 'The Lovett-Rankin circus' and 'Jenny's legacy'.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 226. (In her acknowledgements, p v, Langford Ginibi mentions starting her book in May 1984, seemingly contradicting her account of the night in November. Of course, it is possible that the start she made in May took a different form from 'picking up the pen' in November.)

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p 227.

<sup>49</sup> Brett, 'The Writing Life', *In Full View* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1997), p 329.

<sup>50</sup> Brett, *ibid.*; Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 224.

<sup>51</sup> 'Early and Miscellaneous Poems', *Papers of Lily Brett*, Special Collections, Australian Defence Force Academy Library. Rankin's first wife was the poet Jennifer Rankin, which no doubt complicated the coaxers for Brett to take up poetry, as well as its role in the couple's relationship. Jennifer Rankin died in 1979.

### Structuring modes of self-inquiry

Smith and Watson point out that ‘both the modes of inquiry and the self-knowledge gained or produced [by or in autobiographical acts] change over time and with cultural locations’.<sup>52</sup> In Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was increasing demand for Indigenous life narratives, especially in the form of transcribed oral history or autobiography. As Crawford and Langford Ginibi respectively took up these forms, their modes of self-inquiry were structured accordingly. However, each narrator also brought with her several decades of inquiry and self-knowledge conditioned by the subcultures she had known. Crawford’s role as interviewee meant, firstly, that she examined herself in response to Walsh’s questions. Secondly, her knowledge that the details of her life were of interest to urban non-indigenous Australians meant that she articulated her responses and reflections within a discourse that she could share with those urban readers. This necessarily limited the modes of her self-inquiry, but, in other ways, extended its scope. The task of investigating her past – of ‘going over her tracks’ – in ways that ‘others’ could follow involved tracing those tracks very carefully and clearing obstacles to others’ understanding. To the narrator, such obstacles might have been as self-evident as the burrs in sandy western New South Wales, but she worked to represent her memories to a non-indigenous audience and thus also knew herself within this structure. In the final pages of her text, Crawford reflects:

While I’ve been workin’ with Chris on this book, it’s been drainin’, yes, *very drainin’*. Sometimes after we’d been talkin’ for weeks, it took me *months* to come back to livin’ in the present.

But it’s been good too. I felt the white people I met while we were doin’ it didn’t look *at* me as an Aboriginal person, but *into* me, to see what sort of a person I am, to see me for what I really am, under my glorious colour of tan! That made me feel good, because all Aboriginal people are conscious, when they go to meet new people, of what those people will think of them.<sup>53</sup>

This consciousness shared by Indigenous Australians – a knowledge of others’ ignorance and indifference and a wariness of their effects – was part of the process that took Crawford’s memory into a place somewhat like Walter Benjamin’s ‘cool tomb of long ago, from the vault of which the present seems to return only as an echo’.<sup>54</sup> However, ‘cool tomb’ hardly describes the long,

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<sup>52</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, pp 69-70.

<sup>53</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, p 317, Crawford’s emphases.

<sup>54</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘A Berlin Chronicle’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, tr. Rodney Livingstone et al, Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 634.

sunburnt tracks she follows as she takes up the possibilities of the oral history mode to structure others' self-knowledge alongside her own.

Langford Ginibi's modes of self-inquiry differ from Crawford's in that Langford Ginibi initiates her writing herself. However, the way she writes and knows herself is informed by her reading of such texts as 'Charles Perkins' autobiography, *A Bastard Like Me*, and James Miller's *Koori, A Will to Win* ... Mum Shirl's biography, a book by Margaret Tucker called *If Everyone Cared*, and ... *My Place*, by Sally Morgan'.<sup>55</sup> As she wrote her life narrative, Langford Ginibi also acquainted herself with urban Indigenous political and educational movements, especially those linked to Sydney's Tranby Aboriginal College. She recalls her first visit to Tranby: 'In a classroom I watched "Surviving Culture" and felt the powerful feeling you get in a room of educated Aboriginals. One thing surprised me – the number of white people there – teachers, students, churchpeople – all interested in the betterment of our culture and people'.<sup>56</sup> The relations between people in this classroom and the shared desire for self-knowledge conditioned Langford Ginibi's modes of self-inquiry. So too did the shock and anger, sadness and hopelessness aroused by the Committee to Defend Black Rights' thirty pages of 'prison statistics, case summaries, proposals for action ...' that she took home and read the next day.<sup>57</sup> Langford Ginibi includes the details of a few of these case studies, of deaths in custody, in her text, concluding her 'Surviving Culture' chapter with: 'I couldn't read any more. I didn't feel like talking to anyone for days.'<sup>58</sup>

Langford Ginibi's process of self-knowledge entailed improving her knowledge of the conditions in which many of her fellow Indigenous people 'wasted' or lost their lives. Of course, she already knew something of what her son Nobby had endured at the hands of police and she personally knew two men who had died in custody. However, the printed life and death narratives of other men with names and histories, interspersed with the strange discourse of doctors and coroners, pointed to the complexities and potential pain of both self-investigation and the sharing of life experience. With this range of knowledge, Langford Ginibi writes mostly in a diary-like mode, contrasting what she knows with the silences and misrepresentations of her superculture. She juxtaposes her memories with excerpts from press clippings and letters Nobby and others write from jail. She reflects on her reactions to various forms of knowledge and on the reactions of her parents, lovers, children and friends to her own behaviour. While she considers the contributing factors to her emerging patterns

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<sup>55</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 259.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p 255.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p 258.

of behaviour, her narrative is neither Bildungsroman nor quest narrative.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, this narrator's primary goal is not knowledge of self, but a knowledge of her world and especially her people. In this sense, *Don't Take Your Love To Town* follows the self-inquiry structure of the testimonio, which Smith and Watson describe as an 'exemplary' protagonist's narrative that 'bears witness to collective suffering, politicized struggle, and communal survival'.<sup>60</sup>

Brett's cultural location as she structures *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* is also complex. As outlined in chapter four, her tastes were conditioned by Western 'counterculture' in the late 1960s. Here, self-inquiry sometimes attempted to focus on the individual self and his or her present to the exclusion of historical and cultural factors. However, as Brett found, most forms of self-inquiry inevitably led to links with the past and with other people. In 'Wrapping Elaine', Brett's narrator reads the poetry of Anne Sexton, whose work was published in the 1960s and 1970s, and Marina Tsvetayeva, who wrote in the early twentieth century.<sup>61</sup> Sexton lived in the United States until her suicide in 1974. Tsvetayeva left Russia after the revolution, for Prague and then Paris, but returned to the Soviet Union, where she stayed until her suicide in 1941. While there are echoes of both these poets' styles and cultural situations in Brett's modes of self-knowledge, the discourses of European-Australian psychoanalysis also provide patterns for her introspection. In *After The War*, several poems address the narrator's acknowledgment that her 'fears and dreams ... were [her] own invention' rather than an external infliction or real danger.<sup>62</sup> She declares:

I am returning  
the borrowed bruises  
the embezzled anguish  
  
I am disrobing myself  
of composed cramps  
and contrived aches ...<sup>63</sup>

These statements, combining confession and resolution, represent post-analysis reports to the self, perhaps to guard against forgetting and to assert a turn away from the course of the romantic suicidal modernist, without abandoning her altogether.

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<sup>59</sup> Smith and Watson describe the Bildungsroman model as 'a narrative of education through encounters with mentors, apprenticeship, renunciation of youthful folly, and eventual integration into society' and the quest narrative as one in which 'a hero/heroine alienated from family or home or birthright sets forth on a mission to achieve elsewhere an integration of self that is impossible within the constraints ... imposed in a repressive world and to return triumphant'. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p 70.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p 71.

<sup>61</sup> Brett, 'Wrapping Elaine', *Unintended Consequences* (Sydney: Paper Bark Press, 1992), p 91.

<sup>62</sup> Brett, 'Finally', *After the War* (Melbourne: Melbourne UP, 1990), p 135.

<sup>63</sup> Brett, 'The Half-light', *After the War*, p 127.



## Collaboration

Trevor A Jones notes that a ‘very important aspect of Aboriginal singing is *polyvocality*: a singer cultivates several different voice qualities, and an essential aspect of correctly performing a particular song is to use the appropriate voice (or manner of vocal production) for that song.’<sup>64</sup> On a less intricate level, the composition of a life narrative also requires forms of polyvocality. As the texts of Crawford, Brett and Langford Ginibi contain more than one ‘song’, the narrators use several voices, adapting their qualities to suit each song. The authors and their respective interviewers, editors and illustrators also negotiate appropriate registers for their collaborative work. The qualities of these registers depend on such things as how collaborators meet, how the texts are negotiated and which textual conventions are followed. As well as using polyvocality, the texts follow negotiated patterns of signification and allusion. Again, traditional Indigenous performance provides a model for this: ‘During the performance of a long series of totemic “history” songs, constant cross-references occur, whereby several ... patterns [of design, dance, song text, melodic structure and rhythm] may simultaneously refer to different segments of the story’.<sup>65</sup> For example, in *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, Langford Ginibi quotes the Redfern All Blacks football team song: ‘We keep the ball in motion/ Just like a rolling ocean’.<sup>66</sup> Depending on his or her level of knowledge, the reader may attend to the rhythm of that song and its associations, to the ‘dance steps’ of the football match, the history of the All Blacks, the structures of relations within the Redfern community and/or Indigenous Australian history and culture. Jones explains that traditional song texts ‘may have many levels of meaning, specificity, and allusion, varying from place to place and from person to person (according to the singer’s age, status, and degree of initiation). ... [T]hese songs consist of an intensely elaborate encoding of information, of many kinds and level of experience, by means of interlocking layers of melodic, rhythmic, and textual patterning.’<sup>67</sup> Similarly, Langford Ginibi’s quotations and the patterns throughout her text encode information for both the ‘initiated’ (such as her children and ‘every black woman who’s battled’, to whom she dedicates the book) and the ‘ignorant’. The audibility and intelligibility of the subtleties of this encoding depends on the reader’s positions. In twentieth-century life writing, neither the narrator nor her collaborators knows all the possible levels of meaning her text transmits as it circulates.

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<sup>64</sup> Trevor A Jones, ‘The Traditional Music of the Australian Aborigines’ in Elizabeth May, ed, *Musics of Many Cultures* (Berkeley and London: U of California P, 1980), p 161, Jones’ emphasis. On the diversity of techniques, Jones notes: ‘Unusual effects found occasionally include continuous singing (that is, maintaining vocal cord vibration even during breath intakes) and deliberate “croaking” of two or more pitches at once by allowing the vocal cords to divide into more than one section.’

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p 162. This description is based on Catherine J Ellis’ work with Pitjantjatjara people. See Ellis, ‘Australia, Folkmusic of: Aboriginal Music and Dance (south of the Tropic of Capricorn)’, *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>66</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 269.

<sup>67</sup> Jones, ‘The Traditional Music of the Australian Aborigines’, p 163.

The conventions of the music described by Jones have been refined over a longer period than the conventions of collaborative twentieth-century life writing. While traditional singers know the precise significance of their age, status and degree of initiation, such matters are not always clearly identified by collaborators with Indigenous life writers. Thus, the role of the white Australian editor can sometimes verge on coercion rather than coaxing. Langford Ginibi explains:

it is we Aboriginal people who have always had to conform to the standards of the invading powers, learn the Queen's English so that we can write, and you mob can understand what we are writing about! And we've had great difficulty with white editors, gub editors, because they tend to cut out our oral way of talking and use the Queen's English, which is again, denying us a voice.<sup>68</sup>

The negotiation of registers for collaboration is, like all Australian transactions, conditioned by the conventions of colonialism. These conventions require a *moderato* tempo, that textual subjectivities may become identifiable in 'major' or 'moderated' terms. Langford Ginibi invites her reader to consider the nature of such 'moderation', referring explicitly to her manuscript, editor and publisher in *Don't Take Your Love To Town*. She does not take these 'instruments' of her text for granted as silent extratextual factors, as 'grand' self-portraits usually do. Rather, she reflects on their many levels of meaning. Similarly, Crawford reflects on the process of talking about her memories to Chris Walsh, describing it as both 'like sittin' down with a friend, yarnin' about old times' and 'drainin''.<sup>69</sup> While their respective textual selves differ significantly, Crawford and Langford Ginibi share the politicised self-consciousness of Indigenous life narrators, as their private texts negotiate with public understandings of identity and 'moderation'.

Long before the publication of her book, Crawford had developed collaborative strategies in her working life. The education sector was a site particularly fraught with the memory of coercive colonial relations and one in which Crawford negotiated new practices of mutual recognition. In the publishing sector, Indigenous Australian life writers have conventionally acknowledged and sometimes shared copyright with their editors. By contrast, as Gillian Whitlock points out, most 'Western literary (and other) autobiographies are the products of extensive editorial work' and this work is not usually explicitly acknowledged.<sup>70</sup> However, for many writers and readers, it is important that Indigenous life writing should not only cross, but also reveal 'the boundaries of

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<sup>68</sup> Langford Ginibi, 'I Call Myself an "Edumacator"', Older Women's Network, *Steppin' out and Speakin' up* (Sydney: Older Women's Network NSW, 2003), p 176.

<sup>69</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, pp ix, 317.

<sup>70</sup> Gillian Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography* (New York: Cassell, 2000), p 160.

race'.<sup>71</sup> In Whitlock's words, texts 'must engage readers with whom they do not identify, and who may not in the first instance recognize and take responsibility for their own implication in colonialism's culture, given the transparency of whiteness as a racial identity'.<sup>72</sup> This is often a difficult task in the discursive context of the text published in English. In the case of Crawford's text, Walsh's name appears on the cover, her biographical note on page *i* and her preface on page *viii*. Thereafter, however, the nature of her role in the text is not clear. There are no clues as to what questions she asked Crawford as she listened to and recorded her oral history or to what extent she made editing decisions. Had it been provided, some of this information may have produced what Whitlock describes as 'a point where the stage lights come up, and the apparatus around the production of the autobiographical self are brought into view', a point where textuality and difference are foregrounded.<sup>73</sup> Its absence may be seen as one of many muted factors in the textual construction of the autobiographical 'I' that, as Smith and Watson indicate, is comprised of multiple 'I's'.<sup>74</sup> This particular absence of 'lighting' need not preclude other textual modes of revelation of boundaries. Whitlock continues: 'the text is not a place where the desire to speak is liberated unconditionally, but rather a site of multiple constraints and negotiations of meaning, where there is room to manoeuvre, for oppositionality to arise, and change to occur'.<sup>75</sup> The colonialist community's discursive sites conceal as many burrs as does the country it occupies. These 'burrs' may make the collaborative walk of remembrance and reconstruction painful and slow, but they need not halt it altogether.

While the collaboration of non-indigenous editors with Indigenous life writers may constitute or be seen as appropriation of Indigenous histories, Brett and other second-generation writers face questions around the appropriation of their parents' memories. Brett's choice of poetry as a life narrative mode enables some blurring of her textual subjectivities. Poetry is not usually met with demands for 'the truth', but when it is represented as a form of history, it may invite demands for forms of substantiation. In *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, Brett does not turn to historians or even other Jewish people for collaborative evidence. Instead, her poems are interspersed with David Rankin's drawings, the most appropriate form of corroboration for Brett's narratives of love and shared sorrow. These illustrations represent an accompanying life narrative – that of a fellow witness of the far-reaching effects of the Holocaust. Rankin, like Brett, was not

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<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p 166.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p 162.

<sup>74</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p 58.

<sup>75</sup> Whitlock, *The Intimate Empire*, pp 162-63. For a related discussion of collaborative storytelling, see Stephen Muecke, 'Visiting Aboriginal Australia', *Postcolonial Studies* 2.1 (1999), pp 49-54.

‘there’, but he too, through his connection with his wife, comes to know a little of the legacy.<sup>76</sup> He enters the continuing narrative of the Holocaust in a different way and later in life than Brett, but his images – of sorrowful eyes, of fragmented, buckled and huddled figures, of Brett’s facial expressions – present the ‘evidence’ of his belief and his sorrow. In their Melbourne marriage, Brett and Rankin share a very different collaborative space from those shared by Crawford and Langford Ginibi with their respective editors and others in the publishing industry. While Brett’s work may not yet be termed ‘major literature’, it finds ways to breathe increasingly freely in its ‘cramped’ spaces.<sup>77</sup> Her early collaboration with Rankin is a significant factor in the growth of her work from ‘little’ to ‘big’.

### **From Little Things Big Things Grow**

While Brett collaborated with Rankin in the early 1990s, the former drover and educator Crawford was collaborating with Chris Walsh. Meanwhile, former drover and educator Kev Carmody was writing a song with singer Paul Kelly. ‘From Little Things Big Things Grow’ tells the story of the Gurindji stockmen’s strike in 1966, which grew into a movement for land rights.<sup>78</sup> The song concludes: ‘That was the story of Vincent Lingiari/ But this is the story of something much more/ How power and privilege cannot move a people/ Who know where they stand and stand in the law’.<sup>79</sup> Crawford’s story bears some similarities to Lingiari’s. In adulthood she continued to find ways to resist unjust treatment of Indigenous people, beginning with her children. Her somewhat accidental move into the education sector was the beginning of a long process of mediation and teaching (of Indigenous students and non-indigenous educators), with some desired results taking years to materialise. The perseverance Crawford had learnt early in life, and her knowledge of where she and her people stood, made those results possible.

After her tough childhood and adolescence, it is unlikely Crawford needed any further evidence of where her people stood in mid-century Australia and how cruelly people exercising power could behave. However, she found such evidence on her final long droving trip, which took her and

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<sup>76</sup> For a discussion of Rankin’s collaboration with Brett, see Dore Ashton, *The Walls of the Heart: the Work and Life of David Rankin* (Vienna: Verlag Christian Brandstätter, 2001). An extract appears as ‘The Walls of the Heart’, *Social Alternatives* 20.4 (2001), pp 10-15 (p 12: ‘At first [Rankin] was reluctant. He was unwilling ... “to trivialise someone else’s pain.” He suggested instead ... Yossi Bergner ... When Bergner flinched at such a task, there was nothing left but for Rankin to take it on himself ... “Her story,” he says, “became, in a sense, my story.”’). See also Rankin, interviewed by Roland Bleiker, ‘Abstracting the Political’, *Social Alternatives* 20.4, pp 16-21.

<sup>77</sup> As discussed in chapter one, Deleuze and Guattari represent minor literature as a form whose ‘cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics’. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*, tr. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986), p 17.

<sup>78</sup> Led by Vincent Lingiari, the stockmen at Wave Hill station initially demanded wages, later the return of Gurindji land. Not until 1975 were the Gurindji granted a lease over part of their land. Another song about this story is Ted Egan’s ‘Gurindji Blues’.

<sup>79</sup> Carmody and Kelly, ‘From Little Things Big Things Grow’.

toddler Maree to Queensland. Crawford's Uncle Alf, a station worker in that state, went missing while she was there. She explains that he 'was a drunk, and had been in the horrors and wandered off'.<sup>80</sup> When Crawford and her aunt heard that Cunnamulla police had found Uncle Alf, they went to the police station, where he was brought, 'laying down in the back of a truck'.<sup>81</sup> Uncle Alf, a 'little old thin bony man', could not obey the policemen's orders to 'Get out here', as '[t]hey had the biggest chains on him, on both his legs, his two arms and around his waist'.<sup>82</sup> Crawford recalls:

I yelled, "What've you got chains on him for? The man's lost his memory, he's in the horrors!"

"We thought he might do some harm."

"To you bi-i-i-g coppers!" Big strappin' young fellers they were.

"We can't take chances with mad blackfellers."

"He's not mad. He's SICK."<sup>83</sup>

Crawford's aunt sent for her 'big grown-up sons' to come with their axes, to cut the chains. At this, the police 'pulled out their guns, but the boys didn't care'.<sup>84</sup> Uncle Alf was freed and taken home by his family, but Crawford 'wondered how people could be so cruel'.<sup>85</sup> She remembers that people would 'just run' when they heard there was a policeman about. Crawford's own approach to the dangers of potential cruelty came to combine strategies of running, resisting and educating. Her response to the policemen, pointing out the absurdity of their claims of self-defence, would be echoed decades later in her dealings with teachers and principals, sergeants and state ministers.

Between 1946 and 1969 Crawford and Gong had thirteen children. They also took on the care of their granddaughter when her mother, Evelyn Junior, broke her leg on a station and had to spend long periods in hospital. Raising these fourteen children took up most of Crawford's attention for three decades. In Brewarrina, Maree went to the school Crawford had not been allowed to attend: 'they'd passed a law in 1949 that Aboriginal children could be enrolled ... but if anyone in the community objected, they couldn't go to school'.<sup>86</sup> Crawford's children did very well at school, gradually shifting her thoughts on education: 'Gong and me had thought ten years of schooling ... was enough for any kid. The rest of the learning was what would come from life later on. In those

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<sup>80</sup> Crawford, p 192.

<sup>81</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, pp 192, 193.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*, pp 192-93.

<sup>84</sup> *ibid.*, p 193.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *ibid.*, p 201.

days, white man's education didn't mean a real lot to us. You just used it enough to get by, so you wouldn't feel stupid if somebody spoke to you. ... Then as our kids did real well, we were proud of them'.<sup>87</sup> In 1974, Crawford's youngest child, Jess, was due to start school when he suddenly became sick. Accompanied by his mother, he was taken to Sydney for treatment. While they were there, Gong had a heart attack. Crawford travelled back to Brewarrina to be with Gong and stayed with him until he died a few days later. After Gong's death, Jess became the head of the family, in accordance with the tradition of Gong's people. Crawford explains that the youngest has 'the longest to live'.<sup>88</sup> She wondered how her older children would respond to their little brother becoming the decision-maker, but found there was no problem: 'With people reared traditional, the respect for tribal custom is much, much stronger than that. He talks to his brothers and sisters about things, then whatever he decides they all go along with it.'<sup>89</sup> While tradition and love held her children together, Crawford found herself withdrawing from people, even her children, in her grief at the loss of her husband and mate. She reflects that two people 'never became better mates' than she and Gong did and that, despite her extended family, she 'was alone'.<sup>90</sup> However, out of this grief and her continuing care for her little son, a new opportunity was on its way.

As Jess remained weak for some time, Crawford carried him to school, upstairs to his classroom and downstairs to the toilet at recess. During classes she sat on the verandah and listened: 'I'd hear that first-year-out young lady teacher strugglin' to get through to little kids who used a lot of Aboriginal words in them days. Even though it was less than twenty years ago, lots of them were minded, or reared, by their Grannies, who spoke traditional languages.'<sup>91</sup> Sometimes, when the children came out, Crawford talked to 'happy kids', to relieve the sadness and grief hanging over her and her own children. However, she learnt that 'those kids that seemed happy had their own problems too, especially learnin' in the classroom' and she wanted to help.<sup>92</sup> Encouraged by her older son Rocco, Crawford approached the young teacher and began to spend afternoons with her. She recalls: 'I worked out the different languages in her class and we wrote down each kid's name and how he'd express it in his language. It took her about a week of school days to catch on.'<sup>93</sup> Several positive effects were soon evident: 'Kids'd come home and say, "Gee, Mum, my teacher can say Aboriginal words" ... They'd be so proud the parents would think, "If that teacher's taken the trouble to say an Aboriginal word, to make my kid feel good, that's a white person we gotta

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<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p 224.

<sup>88</sup> *ibid.*, p 250.

<sup>89</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*, pp 248, 251.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p 252.

<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p 253.

meet.” And the flow between teachers and parents would begin.’<sup>94</sup> For Crawford personally, ‘[o]ne little boy really started it all’, when, one Tuesday morning, the teacher asked her to listen to him read.<sup>95</sup> By the end of 1974 Crawford was a ‘Reading Mum’ and she spent all 1975 working as a volunteer at the school. Life at home improved too: ‘My kids seemed relieved that Mum was comin’ good. I could talk to them again, about their schoolin’ as well now.’<sup>96</sup> Crawford also realised that other Indigenous parents would appreciate communication from the school and that she could take on this mediating role:

I ... knew that most of the Aboriginal parents were scared about the school – it was a white man’s place and they didn’t feel comfortable about goin’ there. So whenever a kid did something good, I’d go to his place – in the town, down the river bank, or out at Dodge – and show his parents. That sort of gave me a bit of a right to go when I knew something was going wrong – first the good news, then the bad!<sup>97</sup>

On the state level, Crawford and others negotiated with the Department of Education and a course for Aboriginal Teacher’s Assistants was established at the University of Sydney in 1976. Overcoming her fears and with the support of her children, Crawford agreed to do the course herself. With this qualification and her sometimes difficult initiation into the ways of state institutions and her shifting positions within them, Crawford’s career as a paid educator and mediator began.

Crawford reflects: ‘When Gong died I’d felt like an old tree way out in the middle of the desert, just space all around me, not another tree beside me. After I was in the school I never felt I was in the desert any more. I was in among other trees, and lots of little bushes, and I liked it.’<sup>98</sup> As she completed her teacher training, she learnt that she was not ‘uneducated’, but rather ‘educated in a different way’.<sup>99</sup> The state education system, imperfect as it was, came to represent an opportunity for mediation between different historical representations and their effects on individual, community and national subjectivities. Crawford’s book, produced in her retirement, is an extension

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p 254, Crawford’s emphasis.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p 260. Dodge City is a West Brewarrina community of around 250 people, created in 1965 just before the Welfare Board was dismantled: ‘Thirty cramped and cheap houses were rapidly built on an exposed, treeless hill over a deep gully. The whole Mission population was moved there’, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, ‘Lloyd James Boney - Historical Background 2’, Reconciliation and Social Justice Library, *Australasian Legal Information Institute*, [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/individual/brm\\_ljb/19.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/rciadic/individual/brm_ljb/19.html) (visited 9 December 2004). See also Phillip Noyce’s 1977 film *Backroads*, which features Dodge City (and Gary Foley), Essie Coffey and Martha Ansara’s 1978 film *My Survival as an Aboriginal* and Coffey’s 1993 film *My Life As I Live It*.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p 263.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p 267.

of this work. Like the land rights movement, the ‘big’ task of education about Australia’s past, and Crawford’s role in it, continues to grow and plant diverse seeds.

### **We Have Survived**

In adulthood, Langford Ginibi also continued to take on roles of mediation, sometimes for her children, sometimes for strangers. She recalls the beginning of a friendship at Sydney’s Cricketer’s Arms Hotel in the early 1980s, when she stopped an argument over football becoming violent by calling out for the jukebox to be played. Langford Ginibi chose the songs, the fight stopped and the white ‘juke box man’, John King, bought her some beers and became a friend.<sup>100</sup> At that time, one song often played around Redfern was ‘We Have Survived’, recorded by No Fixed Address: ‘You can’t change the rhythm of my soul/ You can’t tell me what to do/ You can’t break my bone by putting me down/ Or by taking the things that belong to me./ We have survived the white man’s world/ And the pain and torment of it all/ We have survived the white man’s way/ And you know, you can’t change that’.<sup>101</sup> This rock-reggae song, with its collective subjectivities, was a favourite primarily with Langford Ginibi’s younger children’s generation. It serves as an appropriate theme song for her memories of motherhood and the stories of community survival she records and tells.

The ‘pain and torment’ that began in Langford Ginibi’s childhood and intensified in her adolescence persisted into her adult life as mother and lover. The main forms of torment she recounts are the deaths of three of her children, her repeated disappointment with men and the deaths of Indigenous people in police custody. Langford Ginibi’s children were (and remain) the centre of her life. Their stories, like her own, reflect the changing positions of Indigenous people in Australia. In 1968, Langford Ginibi’s eldest daughter Pearl was sixteen and ‘badly wanted to go’ to the first debutante ball at the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs cultural centre.<sup>102</sup> Langford Ginibi remade a Smith Family ball gown to fit Pearl. Activist Charles Perkins gave her a pair of white shoes. At the ball, the girls were presented to the Prime Minister John Gorton, who then invited Pearl to dance with him. This made news the next day, as Pearl was ‘the first Aboriginal ever to dance with the Prime Minister’.<sup>103</sup> A photo of this dance soon took pride of place in the family’s lounge room.

In December the following year, Pearl was killed as she walked to the swimming pool: ‘A car and a van had collided at the intersection and the van mounted the footpath and struck her, slammed her

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<sup>100</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 214.

<sup>101</sup> Bart Willoughby, ‘We Have Survived’ (Rough Diamond Records, Mushroom Music, 1982). The bands No Fixed Address and Us Mob feature in Ned Lander’s 1983 film *Wrong Side Of The Road*.

<sup>102</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 140.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p 141.



into a brick wall'.<sup>104</sup> Langford Ginibi vowed she would 'never be sure of anything again'.<sup>105</sup> She began to drink heavily and to fight: 'People I knew would walk around me, and were too frightened to say anything in case I became violent and punched them'.<sup>106</sup> When drunk, she took the only form of therapy available to her in that state: 'I'd con up some bloke in the Empress and get him to take me out to Botany cemetery and I'd leave him in the car and climb through the fence and I'd lay on Pearl's grave and go to sleep'.<sup>107</sup> Langford Ginibi broke this pattern with the sudden thought that her father had not brought her up to be 'a drunken fightin foul-mouthed woman'.<sup>108</sup>

Langford Ginibi's eldest child, Bill, grew up to be 'a very nice young man', following in his grandfather's footsteps.<sup>109</sup> Musician Mac Silver taught him to play 'Wipeout' and 'Finglebunt' on the drums. Bill's epilepsy prevented him working, so he looked after the younger children for his mother. One Saturday, just eight months after Pearl's death, Bill had a fit, then fell asleep, as was usual after a seizure. As Langford Ginibi watched *Bandstand* on television, Bill got up and went to the bathroom. After a while, Langford Ginibi 'couldn't get over how silent the house was, when suddenly something said, "Go out there."'.<sup>110</sup> She found Bill too late. He had been washing his trousers in the bathtub when he had taken another fit, fallen into the tub and drowned. Langford Ginibi ran out to the street: 'I turned one way and another like a crazy dog looking for something, it didn't know what, nothing, nothing was there, half-whimpering and half-hysterical I ran up and down the street and turned in circles till one of the neighbours came up and said, "Ruby, what's WRONG?"'.<sup>111</sup>

After the deaths of Pearl and Bill, their brothers Nobby and David began truanting and stealing. Langford Ginibi continued to get drunk fairly regularly for years, until her daughters Aileen and Dianne asked her to think about the effects of her drinking on their youngest brother Jeff. Finally, she gave it up. By this time, David seemed to have settled down with his girlfriend Debbie and their two children. However, in the early 1980s, he moved back to his mother's house in tears, as Debbie had left him. In 1984, David died of a drug overdose. Langford Ginibi, keeping her vow not to drink, 'had to take the full force of David's death'.<sup>112</sup> Her only comfort was the thought that he, at least, no longer hurt: 'he was heartbroken, "Buckem in the heart" we called it in Bundjalung'.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p 147.

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p 148.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*, p 149.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p 149.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p 149.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p 151.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.*, p 158.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*, p 159.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p 227.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, p 228.

Langford Ginibi's family and community suffered many levels of heartbreak and the various effects lived on with the survivors.

When Pearl and Bill died, their father Sam was no longer in touch with Langford Ginibi. When David died, his father Gordon was no longer in touch. In early 1960, in Gordon's home state Queensland, he had left the family to go drinking with some other men, not for the first time. This time he never returned. (The next time Langford Ginibi saw him was 1981. He was drunk, on the street in Sydney. Their daughter Aileen approached him, but he 'wouldn't really look' at her and denied having children.<sup>114</sup> After this encounter, Langford Ginibi tried to think of something good about Gordon, to comfort her shaken daughter: 'the last scene in my mind was him drunk and then disappearing from our camp on the river bank ... I pushed myself to think. Then I saw him on the log near my campfire, playing "Hang Down Your Head Tom Dooley" on the mouth-organ'.<sup>115</sup>) After Gordon's departure, Langford Ginibi married Peter, 'a good man' who sang to cheer her up, but he became 'a mad gambler' and also disappeared.<sup>116</sup> She reflects:

it seemed like the men loved you for a while and then more kids came along and the men drank and gambled and disappeared. One day they'd had enough and they just didn't come back. It happened with Gordon and later it happened with Peter, and my women friends all have similar stories. Neddy and I have talked about it often as we get older, and how it's not always different for our daughters and their kids ...<sup>117</sup>

Langford Ginibi was camping in northern New South Wales when Peter left. After she gave birth to his child Pauline, her doctor, of his own accord, had Peter tracked down. He was in Tasmania. Langford Ginibi and her children were alone again, until another man who liked to sing by the fire turned up. Lance, Jeff's father, stayed for nearly eight years, until he too became unfaithful, drunk and violent. By this time the family was back in Sydney and Langford Ginibi, still in her mid-thirties, had many friends and visitors. She welcomed a range of survivors, Indigenous and non-indigenous, into her home. Most of these people were tormented in some way and in need of the sister or mother figure that Langford Ginibi now represented.

In the 1980s, Langford Ginibi's friend Mac Silver sang a song that Radio Redfern would later play on high rotation.<sup>118</sup> 'Malabar Mansion', referring to Sydney's large Long Bay Jail in the beachside suburb of Malabar, is a reflection and a prayer for survival:

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<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p 210.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p 210.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, pp 82, 99.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p 96.

<sup>118</sup> Radio Redfern began as part of Radio Skid Row, Sydney's 1980s broadcaster to Long Bay prisoners, homeless and other marginalised people. Presenters included Indigenous people, communists, migrant workers, squatters and prison

I was in a sad and sorry state  
The day they brought me through that gate.  
I felt just like a bird in a great big cage.  
Then they put me in a wing  
Where the lifers think they're king.  
If you're weak, you'll never live to see old age.  
  
Long Bay Jail, you're doing bad -  
You have made sane men go mad.  
Some even took their life at different times.  
But you won't do that to me,  
I'll still be sane when they set me free,  
And I pray to God to help me keep my mind.<sup>119</sup>

This song hints at the swinging moods and states of the prisoner or former prisoner, shifting between fragility and strength, defiance and despair. Langford Ginibi lived with such shifts in the many prisoners she knew, most painfully in her son Nobby.<sup>120</sup> Nobby wrote to her regularly from jail. She recalls:

he'd ask me to speak for someone for him, or not to mention so-and-so in my letter,  
sometimes angry and other times pleading. One letter ended:

Until somebody lowers themselves enough to write to me,

Your son,

NOBBY

and the next one began

"Hi Sweetheart, well how's my beautiful mother today."<sup>121</sup>

Nobby survived jail, unlike many others. However, his survival was tormented. After his release in 1978, signs of this torment included locking himself in his room for hours and being frightened by noises, especially the sound of babies crying. Years later, he attempted suicide by lying on a busy road and fighting with drivers.

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activists. In 1988, Radio Redfern co-ordinated and broadcast much of the Bicentennial protests. Since then the station has moved to the suburb of Marrickville and become Koori Radio. One of its current presenters is Crawford's granddaughter Edwina Crawford, who plays rhythm and blues, hip hop and specials on her show 'Ecky's Jam'.

<sup>119</sup> Mac Silver, 'Malabar Mansion', *Koori Classics vol 4: The Aboriginal Prison Song Collection* (1988).

<sup>120</sup> Langford Ginibi tells Nobby's story in Ruby Langford Ginibi, *Haunted by the Past* (Allen and Unwin, 1999).

<sup>121</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, p 199.

The songs that Nobby, Langford Ginibi and their extended family sing on special occasions differ from the songs of remembrance that are heard at increasing volume each Anzac Day, Australia Day and at sporting and other ‘national’ events. In Langford Ginibi’s texts, such official renditions form part of the bass drone that forgets colonisation’s survivors. Meanwhile, those survivors’ medleys draw on complex memories and intimate knowledge of aspects of national history and its effects. The knowledge and collective memories that built up in and around Langford Ginibi’s adult life led her into the roles of educator and activist. Her activism involves maintaining the rhythm of her people’s soul and making that rhythm audible in as many places and times as possible.

### **I’ll Be Your Mirror**

In Sydney in 1967, amid the heartache, Langford Ginibi’s friend ‘Pommy Bob’ gave her children a tape recorder and used it to record her snoring, which gave the children ‘many hours of pleasure’.<sup>122</sup> This form of collaborative ‘sound art’, sense of humour and pleasure in the replication or mirroring of a loved one’s reassuring presence differed from the art forms being recorded by major music producers that year. Langford Ginibi’s community had little time and space for the kind of introspective soul-searching that was fashionable in the less cramped spaces of the late 1960s. Those roomier spaces were accompanied by such voices as those of United States singer/songwriters Carole King and Joni Mitchell. Meanwhile, other spaces combined self-absorption and analysis with a hint of self-irony and haunting collective memories. In New York in 1967, Nico sang a song written for her by Lou Reed:

I’ll be your mirror  
Reflect what you are, in case you don’t know ...  
When you think the night has seen your mind  
That inside you’re twisted and unkind  
Let me stand to show that you are blind  
Please put down your hands  
’Cause I see you ...<sup>123</sup>

While Brett was closer to the earnest confessional modes of singer/songwriters than Langford Ginibi, she did not comfortably belong there either. Rather, like the hiding beauty identified by Reed, her worried but game-playing narrator suspects that her soul, if it exists, hides ‘twisted’ secrets. Brett’s adult narrating subject is as self-absorbed as any of her generation and as desirous of attention. However, when she focuses that attention on her internal twists, she is surprised to find

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<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, p 137.

<sup>123</sup> Reed, ‘I’ll Be Your Mirror’, *The Velvet Underground and Nico* (Verve, 1967).

connections to a collective past and possibilities for collective futures. Her analysis of these findings constitutes her educative role. The form of education that emerges is primarily for herself and secondarily for any reader of history or member of a family or community.

Reed's composition for Nico is echoed in Rankin's many paintings of Brett. Rankin's mirroring of his wife is, in turn, reflected in her own work, as her writing mirrors her remembered and imagined self. The self represented in Brett's texts is one who gradually dares to put down her hands, seeing that her games are up. This concession leads the exposed narrating subject to act as a mirror to her parents. They too are revealed as reflections of 'twisted and unkind' pasts, rather than unkind agents. As a life writer and an analyst's subject, Brett disconnects and reconnects the details of her life. Her narrator points to endless entanglements between national and personal, historical and cultural, real and imaginary threads, identifying some of them:

It is hard work  
this analysis business  
  
I sift dreams  
and sort fantasies  
  
I make connections  
I've never seen  
  
for I have been  
quite a liar  
  
sometimes  
it seems such a mess  
  
and  
then I move  
  
I navigate  
mazes and puzzles  
  
I often weep  
and sometimes spin  
  
and wail  
because I'm still dizzy.<sup>124</sup>

In Australia, analysis is often seen as an idle pursuit of the urban rich. While Brett and her family have moved between wealth and poverty, she consistently represents herself as the urban child of urban ancestors. Her parents are part of the actual basis for the national myth of the battler in the manufacturing industries, but she does not take on the pride of the factory worker or union member. Brett sometimes hints at a desire for the old capitalist glory her father knew in Lodz, but her Melbourne is represented by cafés and corner shops, beach picnics, trams and analysts. Most of

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<sup>124</sup> Brett, 'This Business', *Unintended Consequences*, p 104.

these might feature in any twentieth-century Melbourne memoir, but Brett distinguishes her memories, framed by voices from Lodz, from those of their 'other', the imagined 'old Australian'. While Brett's speaking subject and her family worry constantly and discuss the various dangers of the world, the mythical Australian whistles in blissful ignorance as he lies on the beach. Alongside the liminality of being a migrant and an Australian – not quite belonging here, but nowhere else either, Brett's subjectivities move between the 1960s youth culture of her Australian generation and her parents' persistent memories. Brett's narrating subject begins analysis with a desire to lose weight; she emerges from it with a desire to confront the muting of her parents' memories. From the desire to have blonde children and separate herself from her parents' 'otherness', to merge with the 'major', Brett comes to desire union with her parents, to the extent that she occasionally romanticises what she identifies as Jewish.

For the survivor Nico, who shared with Brett a name for memory manipulation and fabrication, Reed wrote, 'I find it hard to believe you don't know the beauty you are/ But if you don't, let me be your eyes/ A hand in your darkness, so you won't be afraid'.<sup>125</sup> Brett represents Rankin as such a 'hand' in the 'darkness' of her fears and hopes. Her narrator discards her fears to acknowledge the 'beauty' of her self and her parents. She continues her guided walk in the dark, into new listening rooms. To the sounds of Beethoven's 'La Pathetique', she reflects:

this listening  
to music  
is new to me  
  
for years  
I required silence  
  
I was listening  
for murderers ...  
  
and  
couldn't be disturbed.<sup>126</sup>

Brett's adult narrator disturbs her own silent fears, to reflect those of others. These reflections throw light on the possibilities of beauty and motion that come with new forms of trust and collaboration. Educative commemoration is one of these possibilities, as selves, families, nations and other communal sites mirror their entangled memories.

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<sup>125</sup> Reed, 'I'll Be Your Mirror'.

<sup>126</sup> Brett, 'La Pathetique', *After the War*, pp 125-26.

## Down River

The forms of educative commemoration provided by the life narratives of Brett, Crawford and Langford Ginibi are assisted by the narrators' journeys into their respective ancestral sites. Their physical trips intersect with those of the memory and imagination. For Brett, travel to her birthplace Germany, Hitler's birthplace Austria and the Jewish state Israel is significant. However, her trips to Poland – her parents' homeland and the site of Auschwitz – represent the most effective mirror to the wonder of the Brett family's survival. I examine Brett's responses to Poland below, after looking at Crawford's and Langford Ginibi's respective movements around their ancestral lands. In Indigenous Australian narratives, returning to country is a significant theme. This is especially true for people who were forcibly removed from country and family as children. Over the course of their lives, Crawford and Langford Ginibi were both compelled to move from place to place. There were various reasons for these moves, many of them related to colonialist practices. For both women, returning to country remained the most significant and enjoyable move.

Brett did not see her parents' home country until well into adulthood. By contrast, Crawford's intimate knowledge of Baarkanji land began in her infancy. The river remained central to Crawford's life as she brought up her children: 'In every way the river was always part of our family life – we ate from it, we drank from it, we washed in it, we played in it'.<sup>127</sup> Today, the Baarkanji people's river suffers the effects of agriculture and industrial pollution.<sup>128</sup> However, it remains central to old and young life on Baarkanji land. One of the towns where Crawford did much to promote educational opportunities was Wilcannia. In Wilcannia in 2002, five boys performed their narrative of Baarkanji life:

When it's hot, we go down the river and swim  
When we go fishing, we're catching the bream  
When the river's high, we jump off the bridge  
When we get home, we play some didge.<sup>129</sup>

Crawford's own children enjoyed a similar life in Brewarrina in the 1960s. She and Gong had discussed moving to their 'special place', Mootawingee. Instead, after several years with their children in their tent, they began to build a house on the riverbank in Brewarrina. Crawford laughs over her memory of Gong taking on this task 'in a big white-feller way of building'.<sup>130</sup> The house

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<sup>127</sup> Crawford, *Over My Tracks*, p 225.

<sup>128</sup> See *Darling River Action Group*, <http://www.d-r-a-g.org/>.

<sup>129</sup> Ebsworth, Dutton, Johnson, King and Blair (The Wilcannia Mob, aka The Baarkanji Boys), 'Down River'.

<sup>130</sup> Crawford, p 207.

and large family survived many years of floods and accidents, dances and laughter. Crawford stayed there until Gong's death.

After her career in the education sector, moving around western New South Wales, Crawford retired to Brewarrina. She continued to play her accordion, as one visitor, John Meredith, recalls: 'Ev got out her old button accordion and, in perfect old-time waltz tempo, played many tunes for us, ending with an old tune called "On the Sidewalks of New York"'.<sup>131</sup> As well as the Celtic folk and North American popular dance music of her youth, Crawford enjoyed aspects of the Australian bush literary canon:

One of the good things about being retired is I can read and listen and think. I read a lot of poetry – Banjo Patterson [sic], Henry Lawson, Will Ogilvie. ... There's one bit,

*"I've seen the plains lying cracked and dry,  
And bleaching bones 'neath the pitiless sky."*

I've seen that all right, and all the other things they tell about in their poems. ... the bush was my life, and I made the most of it when I was young.<sup>132</sup>

The sounds and texts of Crawford's cultural memory encompassed Indigenous and non-indigenous adaptations and responses to the land and its rivers. While she played tunes inspired by walking the streets of New York, Crawford's identity remained as primarily rural and local as Brett's was urban and (selectively) cosmopolitan. The generalised 'other' of Crawford's childhood and adolescence was white people, but urban Australians of any 'colour' were a major 'other' in her adulthood. Most pastoral workers, Indigenous and non-indigenous, were outsiders in the cities, where tales of their skill and strength were represented in sanitised image, text and song. As most readers of *Over My Tracks* may be urban and/or white, Crawford's journey of memory repositions these relations, reconnecting broken links between city and country, black and white, imagination and memory.

Crawford died just outside Baarkanji country, in Broken Hill (where the land was 'broken' by nineteenth-century colonial mining). At Crawford's funeral, Brewarrina schoolchildren held a banner reading 'Thank you, Aunty'. New South Wales Member of Parliament Linda Burney knew Crawford and was at the funeral. She reflects:

Evelyn Crawford's work set the framework for Aboriginal involvement in education from the classroom right through to ministerial level. She spent her life supporting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in not just their academic work but to grow into confident people.

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<sup>131</sup> John Meredith, *Real Folk* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1995), p 68.

<sup>132</sup> Crawford, pp 317-18.



She was strong in her culture and that was one of her strengths. She was a true elder and was respected everywhere.

Her funeral was amazing. It was huge with people travelling from all over the state to attend. I think The Old Rugged Cross was one of the hymns. On the Order of Service there was a wonderful photo of Eve with her dog. The caption was ‘The past is not for livin’ in – but it sure makes for real good thinkin’’.<sup>133</sup>

This caption is also the final sentence of *Over My Tracks*. As the land and rivers of Crawford’s past changed over her lifetime, so too did modes of commemoration and the range of storytelling practices. Crawford’s own thoughtful interventions and trips ‘down river’ did much to affect the course of those changes.



‘Evelyn Crawford of Brewarrina, NSW’, photographed by John Meredith, image number: nla.pic-an14320677. By permission of the National Library of Australia.

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<sup>133</sup> Linda Burney, MP, email to me, 10 December 2004.

**‘Gunningah-nullinghe’ (‘Listen to the voice of the people’) or Aboriginal Woman**

Like Crawford, Langford Ginibi has intervened in the ways people think about Australia’s past. Unlike Crawford, Langford Ginibi had a long physical separation from her ancestral land. However, her attachment survived and she returned to Bundjalung country as a listening descendant. In this role she attended to the voices of her people, in order to mediate – to pass on their stories to others who might be separated from their land. As storyteller and elder, listened to by younger generations, Langford Ginibi is one of many Aboriginal women celebrated by the band Mixed Relations when they sang: ‘Aboriginal woman, you are the backbone of our spiritual way’.<sup>134</sup> Like Crawford, again, Langford Ginibi performs her educative role for both Indigenous and non-indigenous people. When asked in 1999 what she would be doing ‘at the turn of the millennium’, she replied: ‘What I’m doing now, educating you mob about us mob’.<sup>135</sup> On her ‘creative process’, she explained: ‘The spirits of my people push me to do what I do, they have got a sharp spear, poking me in the back sayin’ “Go on, start story tellin’ Ginibi”’.<sup>136</sup>

Langford Ginibi’s first return trip to Bundjalung country, after decades in Sydney, was in 1985, when she took her son Jeff to a family reunion. From the mobile distance of the bus, she pointed out the lights of Cabbage Tree Island, telling Jeff it was their tribal home, that of the ‘Richmond and Clarence River tribe’.<sup>137</sup> The following year, as outlined in chapter two, Langford Ginibi joined her former schoolmates to celebrate ‘75 years of Education in Bonalbo and District’.<sup>138</sup> While always appreciative of the education she had received in Bonalbo, Langford Ginibi had, by this time, taken on different kinds of educative roles herself. In the years that followed, she would return to Bundjalung country as often as family, funds and health permitted, to record her people’s stories. On one such trip, Langford Ginibi met her talking match in her cousin Henry ‘Tub’ Bolt. As Tub discussed politics, she ‘found it hard to get a word in’.<sup>139</sup> When she saw her father’s sister, Aunty Eileen, Langford Ginibi was surprised to hear her ask: ‘How come you never mentioned me in your book niece? I read right through and you never mentioned me’.<sup>140</sup> The listening niece and storytelling author dedicated her next book, *My Bundjalung People*, to Aunty Eileen and other elders of Box Ridge mission. In this book she combines Bundjalung language, maps, stories, photos and political essays. She reflects on her journey home: ‘It has been an experience, and an inspiration

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<sup>134</sup> Bart Willoughby, ‘Aboriginal Woman’.

<sup>135</sup> ‘Interview: Ruby Langford Ginibi’, *Red Mangrove* 3 (1999), <http://www.uq.edu.au/~enjmckem/red/index.htm> (visited 23 December 2004).

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 241.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.*, p 244.

<sup>139</sup> Langford Ginibi and Pam Johnston, ‘A Journey into Bundjalung Country’ (photographic exhibition, Lismore Regional Gallery, 1991).

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

that our beautiful Koori culture will get the recognition and respect it deserves from the people of this now multicultural Australia'.<sup>141</sup>

Langford Ginibi articulates the importance of transmitting Bundjalung knowledge to Bundjalung people, wherever they may be. Alongside this task, she considers the knowledge shared by all Indigenous people as survivors of colonisation. This knowledge is voiced at such gatherings as the huge rally in Sydney in 1988. Langford Ginibi also reflects on the knowledges that can be shared between different Indigenous groups. This kind of sharing is another form of ancestral journey, as well as a means of temporarily drowning out supercultural tones. One such moment for Langford Ginibi was a 1964 visit to the Elizabethan Theatre in Newtown, Sydney, by some dancers from Mornington Island. She remembers: 'I'd never seen a corroboree or been in a big theatre before'.<sup>142</sup> This suggests liminality and exclusion from the grand sites of both superculture and Indigenous culture. However, as an Indigenous Australian, Langford Ginibi was included in the performance in various ways: 'Something inside me understood everything that was going on. I had tears in my eyes and I could feel the others in the group were entranced like me'.<sup>143</sup> After the performance, Langford Ginibi and her group met the dancers: 'Only one of them could speak English, a bit pidgin and they were wary as they looked at us, until the one who could speak explained that we were part of them, and then they gave us big toothy grins and we were shaking hands all round. I can remember almost every detail from that night'.<sup>144</sup> This clear memory amid the blur and noise of the 1960s reflects the calm transmission of knowledge that was part of the urban encounter of different Indigenous people displaced by colonialism.

Two decades later, Langford Ginibi enjoyed an encounter in a different country, on and with the dry land of the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people of Central Australia. She writes of these people as 'our people', again suggesting the commonality shared by different Indigenous groups.<sup>145</sup> On the bus to Uluru, she marvels at the surrounding country: 'Looking out the window I wondered how our ancestors survived here. They must have been very strong people and I was proud to be just a portion of this race'.<sup>146</sup> She remembers how her sense of time slowed down on tribal land and recalls her feelings on her return to Sydney: 'I had a longing for the relaxed tribal sense of time and of looking after the earth, but I knew I enjoyed luxuries like not having to boil the billy for a cup of tea, or having to make a fire to do that – and the hot shower and watching TV. I'd

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<sup>141</sup> Langford Ginibi, *My Bundjalung People*, p 212.

<sup>142</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, pp 115-16.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p 116.

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p 116.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p 232.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p 233.

become soft in the modern world'.<sup>147</sup> Langford Ginibi's trip to Central Australia gave her insights into different aspects of her positions as a mission-born, urban Bundjalung woman in twentieth-century Australia. As well as articulating her connections with and differences from other Indigenous people, she saw how non-indigenous tourists behaved on Aboriginal land and responded to aspects of cultural practice. The memory she emphasises, though, remains the encounter with the land itself: 'At home I lay in bed thinking about the part of the rock that looked like a skull, and like tribal markings. It made me feel very humble and I could sense, even so far away, the spirit of the great rock we call Uluru'.<sup>148</sup>

Langford Ginibi becomes a 'backbone' of a 'spiritual way' through her application of hard-learned knowledge and her will to listen to elders and others who live on ancestral land. Both links and ruptures inform the telling of her stories and the singing of her songs. Tangible and audible connections of inheritance and culture endure, despite the real 'disconnections produced by colonialism'.<sup>149</sup> Langford Ginibi's understanding and humour enable her rearrangement and inversion of 'major' systems of remembrance and forgetting. Her understanding and humour are evident in such moments as her impulsive singing to her sons of love and work. For example, she tells:

[Nobby] says, "Mum, I'm in love again," and I say, "You say that every time you meet another girl." So I start singing to him, "Falling in love again, what am I to do, can't help it." And my young fella, Jeffrey, he's got about six or seven trades and now he's working on the railway, he's a signalman. He was trying to pull these tyres off an old car over there that was his, anyhow, I'm sitting on a big old wooden log over there and I'm singing to him, "I've been workin' on the railroad all the live long day," and he's running round looking for something to chuck at me!<sup>150</sup>

Langford Ginibi's texts and their musical and other cultural references represent just a few segments of Australia's fan of memory, which she continues to open for her readers and listeners.

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<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p 236.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, p 236.

<sup>149</sup> Ceridwen Spark, 'Rethinking Emplacement, Displacement and Indigeneity: *Radiance*, *Auntie Rita* and *Don't Take Your Love to Town*', *Journal of Australian Studies* 75 (2002), p 96.

<sup>150</sup> Janine Little Nyoongah, 'Talking With Ruby Langford Ginibi', *Approaches to Don't Take Your Love to Town*, *Australian Women's Studies Resources*, <http://emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/books/ruby/little.htm> (visited 28 July 2004).



Ruby Langford Ginibi, 1990s, photographer unknown.  
By permission of Ruby Langford Ginibi.

### Café Jew Zoo

Brett's texts unfold other segments of Australia's fan of memory and they also touch on segments of Poland's fan. Her trips to Poland have aroused a range of textual responses, most controversially in her more recent writing. In this section I focus on her earlier journeys, especially as they emerge in *Unintended Consequences*. Here, her questions sometimes reflect those put by klezmer Yale Strom in his song 'Café Jew Zoo':

We hoodoo and voodoo  
at the Café Jew Zoo! ...

I remember the melodies from my childhood  
Grandma sang and Grandpa blew ...

Who are these people, with their curious faces?  
They bother me, they pinch me, they say psalms ...

Is this nostalgia, or is this guilt?  
Is this the devil disguised as Samuel?<sup>151</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Strom, 'Café Jew Zoo' (from the Yiddish: 'Mir hudu, un vudu, / Bay der Café Jew Zoo!... / Ikh gedenk nokh di melodie fun mayne kinder yorn Bobe hat gezingn un der zeyde hat geblozt... / Ver zaynen di mentshn, mit zeyr modne p'nimer / Zey tshepn zikh, kvetshn mikh, zey zogn ikh tehilim... / Iz dos benkenshaft, oder iz dos shuld? / Iz dos Samoel farshtlt vi

This klezmer song, sung in Yiddish with clarinet and accordion improvisation, articulates what Strom describes as ‘an underlying discomfort in seeing European gentiles adopting the surface trappings of Judaism’.<sup>152</sup> He explains:

I’ve played klezmer music in places like Berlin, Krakow, Prague, and smaller towns, where I would find myself the only Jew onstage and sometimes, the only Jew in the building. The appreciation for the music is genuine, as is the appreciation for the authenticity of my performing Jewish music as a practicing Jew. Despite this sympathetic response ... I’ve felt a bit on display as much for my Jewishness as for my performance. And what is the nature of a zoo, but to exhibit nearly-extinct species?<sup>153</sup>

The discomfort felt by Strom (and by Brett as a visitor to Krakow’s klezmer cafés) is echoed by some Indigenous Australians when they see non-indigenous people seeking various forms of ‘authentic’ Indigenous experience. These quests range from learning didgeridoo (which is popular in Germany) to selectively adopting aspects of Indigenous spiritual practice. Langford Ginibi recalls: ‘Occasionally white people who’d worked with Kooris would say, “We as a white race are losing out on a spiritual journey”’.<sup>154</sup> As well as ‘genuine’ appreciation and pleasure in the ‘zoo’ experience, both Poland and Australia have kitsch manifestations of the ‘nostalgia’ or ‘guilt’ of which Strom sings. For example, in Polish market squares, figurines of old Jewish stereotypes, such as stooped, bearded men with exaggerated hooked noses, are on sale. Meanwhile, on the shelves of Australian airport shops stand figurines of Indigenous stereotypes, such as naked black-skinned men with spears (mostly made in China).

Brett’s narrated subject initially sets off for Poland unaware of and perhaps indifferent to the complex desires of Polish gentiles. Her interest is in seeking out memorial sites and listening for reverberations of the voices her parents carry with them in Melbourne. The narrator of *Unintended Consequences* remembers her mother’s response when told about Brett’s plan to travel to the death sites of Poland:

she wept  
there’s no-one left  
in Poland  
only the dead

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Shmuel?’). Klezmer music is usually associated with Eastern Europe (where few, if any, residents continued to play it after the Holocaust), but, as Strom points out in his CD notes: ‘the DNA of klezmer ... is the melismatic prayer modalities chanted by the ancient Hebrews of the Middle East. We klezmerim today often overlook that Abraham came from Ur in Iraq, and not Uman in Ukraine’.

<sup>152</sup> Strom, CD notes, *Café Jew Zoo*.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Langford Ginibi, *Don’t Take Your Love To Town*, p 231.

she said  
you can't  
see them  
any more clearly  
in Lodz  
than you can  
in Melbourne.<sup>155</sup>

For this mother, in this moment of her daughter's new adult mobility, the dead are 'left' in Poland, but, being dead, are no longer to be seen anywhere. On the other hand, despite their deaths, they, or traces of their living and dead selves, have been relocated to Melbourne along with, or as part of, the narrator's parents' memories. The dead continue to act, to follow survivors 'home' and disturb their sleep. The survivor in this poem does not need a trip to Poland to understand this disturbance, but her daughter does require such a journey.

In 1980s Lodz, Brett's narrator finds that she can indeed see her pre-Holocaust mother more clearly than she had before. One moment of perception comes somewhat unexpectedly. The strolling narrating subject contrasts the quiet, grey Saturday-night streets of Lodz with a memory of her fifteen-year-old self on a Saturday night in Melbourne:

Melbourne  
meeting at fifteen  
  
under  
the clocks  
at the station  
in  
my one-shouldered  
Polynesian print  
  
exuding  
shrill  
sophistication  
  
another  
policeman  
marches past me  
  
on  
Kilinskiego  
street  
  
and  
I  
freeze  
  
I  
cannot

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<sup>155</sup> Brett, 'In Poland', *Unintended Consequences*, p 55.

breathe  
I  
have  
you here  
mother  
we  
are  
fifteen.<sup>156</sup>

Brett's mother was fifteen in Lodz in 1937. As Brett walks the streets her mother walked, half a century later, she embodies the rhythms of the life that survived – the girl who made it out and went on to produce another generation. The memory of the girl the narrator once was, and the way she moved on a Saturday night, suddenly makes the obvious clear: her mother too was once such a girl, walking on a Saturday night. Brett's physical presence at the site of that walking makes this knowledge suddenly accessible.

Like her mother, Brett survived to produce a next generation. When her son was old enough, he too made his way to Poland. As well as wondering how clearly he might see the dead, Brett's narrator wonders whether they could see him:

these unburied  
uncles cousins  
and aunts  
could  
they  
see  
how  
tall  
he is  
how  
clear  
he is  
how  
sure  
he is.<sup>157</sup>

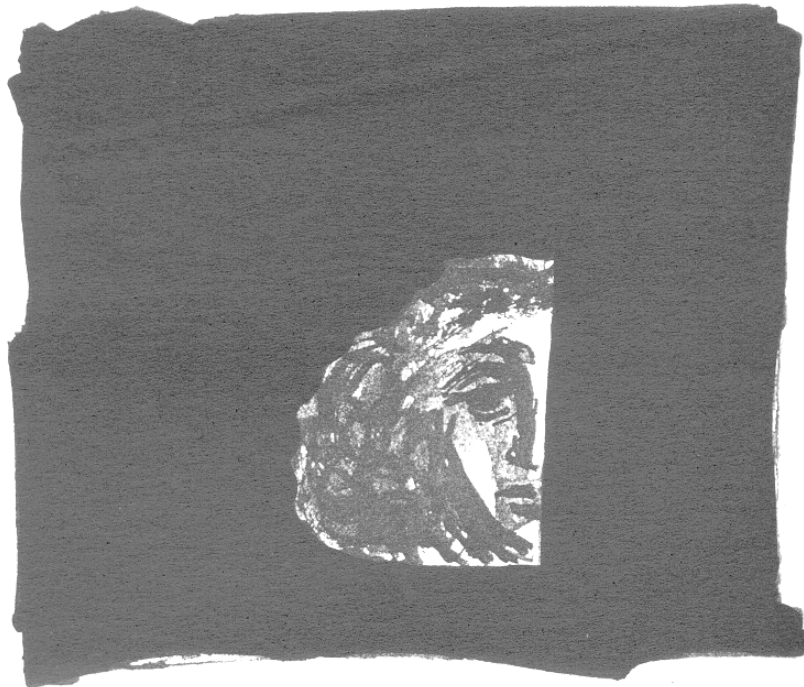
One reason to survive and reproduce is to give pleasure and hope to older generations. Although the uncles and aunts in Poland are dead, the 'tall', 'clear' and 'sure' descendant represents a reassurance that survival is possible and a hope that the damage will diminish from one generation to the next.

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<sup>156</sup> Brett, 'At Eight O'clock', *Poland and Other Poems* (Melbourne: Scribe, 1987), pp 42-43.

<sup>157</sup> Brett, 'In Poland', *Unintended Consequences*, pp 58-59.





David Rankin's illustration, p 100, alongside Brett's poem 'Places' ('There are small places/ I feel in place in/ I feel comfortable/ wrapped in my husband/ I am happy/ with my children/ ... I am not/ Polish or Australian or German/ I have stayed/ displaced/ in/ most places'), *After the War*, p 101.

Poland and Australia share the problems of histories that are, in part, unspeakable. In different ways, this is as much a problem for 'beneficiaries' of acts of genocide and colonialism as it is for survivors and their descendants. The texts of the survivors Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett stand among many possible forms of commemoration. As some Australian authorities continue to act in the spirit of their 'White Australian' antecedents, they demand that acts of commemoration sing from the song sheet created by 'White Australia' and that they remember the rules of white composition. However, as Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett demonstrate, it is precisely when the rules of white composition are clearly remembered that it becomes most desirable to counter those rules. The three authors and their texts also show that it remains possible to resurrect 'other' song sheets and to compose narratives on collaborative sites other than those where major ceremonies of remembrance are performed. It also remains necessary to find ways to do this, as I will suggest in my conclusion.

## Conclusion

### Feminine Endings

O Jailer, you wear a ball-n-chain you cannot see

You can lay your burden on me

You can lay your burden down on me

You can lay your burden down upon me

But you cannot lay down those memories

– Nick Cave<sup>1</sup>

Our history is your history too.

– Ruby Langford Ginibi<sup>2</sup>

In music, a feminine cadence or ending is the ‘melodic termination of a phrase on a weak beat’.<sup>3</sup> It connotes ‘(rhythmic) “weakness”, ... melodic ornament and elaboration, and ... sentiment or expression that attend these later 18th-century uses and definitions’.<sup>4</sup> While a ‘masculine ending’ is ‘normal’, the feminine ending is ‘preferred in more romantic styles’.<sup>5</sup> Susan McClary points out that much Western musical theory, which derives from prosody, is encumbered by such gendered terminology and related discourses. On the minor triad, she cites Georg Andreas Sorge: ‘we find after the major triad another, the minor triad, which is indeed not as complete as the first, but also lovely and pleasant to hear. The first can be likened to the male, the second to the female sex’.<sup>6</sup> My conclusion to this thesis, following the ‘minor triad’ of conversation between Evelyn Crawford, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Lily Brett, does not reach ‘termination’ on a ‘strong’ beat. It is less than ‘complete’ in the sense that its final note does not represent an emphatic and conclusive resolution, after which all performers and listeners may ‘go home’. Rather, this thesis concludes with a feminine cadence – a ‘strong beat’, followed by a ‘weak beat’. The closing ‘weak beat’ represents the ongoing resonance of displaced lives and memories in Australia (and elsewhere). It may be more ‘romantic’ to listen for this resonance than to drown it out with a ‘strong’, ‘normal’ major triad, but it is also less fanciful. This

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, ‘Knockin’ on Joe’, *The First Born is Dead* (Australia: Mute Records/Mushroom Music, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Ruby Langford Ginibi, in conversation with Margaret Throsby (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 5 July 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Head, ‘Feminine Ending’, *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (visited 8 January 2004).

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Willi Apel, *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and enlarged (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1970), p 506, cited in Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991), p 9.

<sup>6</sup> Georg Andreas Sorge, *Vorgemach der Musicalischen Composition [Exposition of Musical Composition]* (1745-47), tr. Allyn Dixon Reilly (PhD dissertation, Northwestern University, 1980), p 179, cited in McClary, *Feminine Endings*, p 11.

conclusion takes the thesis' work back into the 'real world'. My analysis of the memoirs of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett applies not only to the memories of these three authors. Many other people and communities, in Australia in 2005, remember displacement and live with its various effects. My 'feminine ending' listens to a few of those 'other' memories.

Before turning to the weak beat of other voices, I will review and synthesise the thesis' primary arguments. The thesis began with four main questions. First, it asked how the nation of Australia – which publicly performs and rhetorically celebrates its values of fairness, tolerance and generosity – could have become a site where practices such as the legal indefinite imprisonment of children and the rejection of survivors of persecution are approved by most citizens. It asked how it is that significant numbers of Indigenous people continue to die young, in and outside police custody, and that ill people, in some circumstances, are punished and excluded.<sup>7</sup> Through my analysis of the published memories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett, I have shown that colonialism and its legacies have made such practices and conditions – along with the public, collective performances that deny the practices or drown them out – a norm in Australia.<sup>8</sup> The patterns that characterise this norm are illustrated by Crawford and Langford Ginibi's memories of childhood confinement on missions, of adolescent exploitation and of non-indigenous authorities' indifference to Indigenous workers and their cultures. *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* further illustrate Australia's general failure to recognise Indigenous sovereignty and memory, as well as longstanding practices of punishing the discordant and the ill. Examples of this include the chaining of Crawford's ill uncle in Queensland and Australia's rejection of Brett's parents' fellow Holocaust survivors who were less well than them, mentally and physically. Each text also points to Australia's cultural expectations that ugly, inexplicable survivor memories be muted, while survivor memories that may be represented as heroic (and white) are amplified.

Secondly, to enable better understandings of the above national paradoxes and to seek ways of addressing them more productively, I asked how minor memoirs could be read and re-read to gain access to different strands of knowledge. The thesis has demonstrated that, among many possible ways to read, an emphasis on the aural and the ethnomusicological enables a concentration on intertextuality. This attention to intertextuality brings new insights into cultural memory, especially the ways minor life narrators and their narrated subjects may engage with

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<sup>7</sup> A 2003 report revealed that, in NSW, the 'majority of male (78%) and female (90%) reception prisoners were found to have had a mental disorder in the twelve months prior to interview'. See Population Health Division, *The Health of the People of New South Wales - Report of the Chief Health Officer* (Sydney: NSW Department of Health), [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/chorep/prs/prs\\_mental\\_type.htm](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/chorep/prs/prs_mental_type.htm) (visited 20 March 2005). These rates are almost five times higher than in the general community. On a different level, the federal Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has made it increasingly difficult for people with disabilities to migrate to Australia.

<sup>8</sup> Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that 'it is the content of the psychotic character of a white sovereignty that seeks to retain the benefits of colonial theft on the one hand, while exalting its sense of tolerance and fair play on the other', Moreton-Robinson, 'Treaty Talk: Past, Present And Future', *Melbourne Historical Journal* 29 (2001), p 14.

popular culture. My reading of the texts of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett reveals some of the ways minor life narrators move in and out of popular culture, adapting aspects of the minor and the major to their lives and the narration of those lives. These insights into cultural history also contribute to an understanding of how the cultural and the political intersect and divert each other. The aural reading method points to narratives of unlikely encounters and intersecting memories, in readers' imaginations and in narrators' representations.

Thirdly, the question of how to read minor memoirs invites that of what constitutes the 'minor' and 'major' aspects of the thesis' primary data. I asked what the narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett could tell the reader about minor and major Australian lives and their possibilities, memories and modes of commemoration. My reading of the texts has shown that the ways people are positioned in authorities' imaginaries, for example, as white or black, educated or uneducated, constrict their possibilities for movement. Major, 'authoritative' imaginaries condition the ways people remember and limit the places and times at which they may engage in commemoration. Authorities and major and minor subjects may all employ strategies to intensify or to change these conditions. They may act to maintain colonising positions, to move into them or to decolonise. My study of the work of Indigenous life narrators Crawford and Langford Ginibi and that of Brett, a white settler, child migrant and displaced person, alongside Australia's major national narratives, illuminates the nature of various positioning strategies. *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* demonstrate some of the ways colonised, decolonising and displaced survivors might register and record the effects of their shared histories in their everyday lives.

Finally, I asked what the primary texts could tell their readers about the ongoing effects of colonialism and genocide. This is, of course, part of the answer to my initial question, of how Australia had arrived at its current state. The thesis reveals that the many unintended consequences of colonialism and genocide are diverse, varying according to each survivor's and descendant's circumstances. They persist for generations, in the everyday lives of descendants of both 'perpetrators' and 'victims'. The effects – or damage, as Larissa Behrendt states – include the accelerated breaking of some ancestral links and the loss of some forms of knowledge and hope (for victims and perpetrators).<sup>9</sup> In colonialist cultures such as Australia's, Indigenous survivors continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged. The settlers who thereby continue to be economically and socially privileged remain collectively deaf to the links between 'good' and 'bad' consequences. *Over My Tracks* and *Don't Take Your Love To Town* confirm that which is obvious to their respective narrators, but actively muted by national

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<sup>9</sup> See Larissa Behrendt, 'Genocide: The distance between law and life', *Aboriginal History* 25 (2001), p 142, quoted in my introduction. For more on the effects of racism, see Mab Segrest, "'The Souls of White Folks'" in Birgit Brander Rasmussen, Eric Klinenberg, Irene J Nexica and Matt Wray, eds, *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp 43-71.

authorities: that Indigenous disadvantage and white privilege are directly linked and ongoing effects of colonialism and genocide. In different, complex ways, Brett's *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences* corroborate this 'finding'. The maintenance of national deafness by authorities is an ongoing effect of colonialism. It is also a reason to attend more effectively to Australia's narratives of displacement and survival. The narratives of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett demonstrate that, while some damage is permanent and procreative, other forms of damage may be inverted and new hopes may emerge.

The 'weak beat' of this conclusion attends to some ongoing effects of colonialism, genocide and displacement, especially as they emerge in the memories of people not currently in a position to publish their life narratives. In chapter two I argued that the legacies of ancestors' lives resonate in the memories of displaced descendants, as well as in cultural and national memories. The voices of Crawford's Baarkanji ancestors, Langford Ginibi's Bundjalung ancestors and Brett's Polish Jewish ancestors echo around each narrator's stories and in the corners and trenches of Australian history. Today, ancestral voices continue to accompany and interrupt displaced and settled, Indigenous and non-Indigenous lives. These diverse voices invite a range of responses, from laughter to sorrow. For Lightning Ridge's June and Roy Barker (Crawford's friends and fellow survivors of Brewarrina mission), ancestral legacies enable them to educate local schoolchildren, travelling retirees, European backpackers and others. At their Goondie Keeping Place, the Barkers maintain a historical exhibition, demonstrate traditional toolmaking and tell Dreamtime stories, among other things.<sup>10</sup> While authorities in Germany oversee the construction of much debated, large, centrally located Holocaust memorials, the Barkers remember their ancestors, respond to others' desires for knowledge and build on their own authority at the (relatively) quiet, small and remote Goondie Keeping Place.

For Jackie Huggins, writer and co-chair of 'Reconciliation Australia', the memory of her ancestors' suffering becomes overwhelming every Australia Day:

It's a day of reflection and mourning, a time to think about what the invasion of their country meant for my ancestors, and on the terrible suffering that continues for many Indigenous Australians ... During the day, I feel overwhelmed by a wall of sorrow that doesn't shift ... I think about the ancestors, locked in chains and shunted to reserves and missions. I think about the harsh treatment they endured and of the great damage done to a community through intolerance.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, in his musical *The Sapphires*, playwright Tony Briggs celebrates the lives of his Yorta Yorta mother and aunts. Briggs' mother Laurel Robinson and her sister Lois Peeler were

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<sup>10</sup> See Transcript, 'Keeping Culture', interview with Roy and June Barker, co-founders of Goondie Keeping Place, Lightning Ridge (recorded 13 March 2001 in Canberra, interviewed by Cathie Payne and Peter White), *Australian Museum Aboriginal Heritage Unit*, <http://www.amonline.net.au/ahu/culture/culture02.htm> (visited 3 August 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Jackie Huggins, *Australia Day*, <http://www.australiaday.gov.au/ausindigenous.asp> (visited 8 January 2005).

two of the MacCrae sisters, who became the Sapphires, a soul group, in the 1960s. In 1968 the two sisters toured Vietnam, singing for Australian troops at war. The four former Sapphires still sing together, 'mainly [at] funerals now'.<sup>12</sup> With Australia again involved in warfare in (arguably) similar circumstances, *The Sapphires* director Wesley Enoch says that the questions of 1968 still resonate.<sup>13</sup>

Garth O'Connell, soldier and descendant of Camilleroi and Irish World War I veterans, finds that his Indigenous ancestors' sacrifices and betrayal stay with him, despite temporal and spatial distances:

they were shunned, their sacrifices ignored and their families oppressed even further ... Returned soldiers were not allowed to have a drink with their comrades at their local pub, their children were being taken away and there was no Government support for the wounded or mentally scarred veterans ... we as a people were willing to serve Australia for the better, but white Australia was not willing to help us improve our way of life ... Today the bodies of those that fell in the battlefields of France and Belgium remain with their mates, thousands of miles away from their ancestral homes.<sup>14</sup>

In Dandenong, Melbourne, meanwhile, members of a different community remember their dead, who are buried thousands of miles away. More than one thousand Hazara refugees from Afghanistan have settled here, at least temporarily. They remember parents, siblings, uncles or children killed in the decades of war in their homeland.

In chapter three I examined ways in which Australian government policies have affected childhood lives and memories. The stories of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett demonstrate how children learn to perform to the tunes of others. Today, past policies continue to have their effects, especially on Indigenous children. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care estimates that, in New South Wales, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up 28% of all children in the care and protection system despite comprising less than 2% of the total population of children aged 0-17'.<sup>15</sup> Langford Ginibi and Brett have both suggested that it will take several generations to overcome the familial ruptures wrought by twentieth-century colonialism and genocide. However, both women also rejoice in the many achievements of their children and, in Langford Ginibi's case, her twenty-one grandchildren.

Langford Ginibi points out that government policies affecting children are part of the shared

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<sup>12</sup> Clare Morgan, 'Sisters keep doing it for themselves', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 January 2005.

<sup>13</sup> See 'Aboriginal soul group revived for Sydney Festival', 10 January 2005, *ABC News Online*, [http://www.abc.net.au/message/news/stories/ms\\_news\\_1279140.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/message/news/stories/ms_news_1279140.htm) (visited 10 January 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Garth O'Connell, *Indigenous Australians at War*, <http://www.fortunecity.com/meltingpot/statuepark/620/why.html> (visited 10 January 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Muriel Cadd, 'Working with Indigenous Children and Families: What do services need to know to provide effective support to protect Indigenous children, provide care and strengthen Indigenous Communities?' paper, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) conference, Sydney, September 2002.

history of all Australians. Today, government policy endorses the detention of children seeking asylum in Australia. This has had a direct effect on Australian doctor Simon Lockwood, who worked at the Woomera detention centre in South Australia from 2000 to 2003.<sup>16</sup> For Lockwood, 'of all the memories that he'll carry with him, [he is] haunted most by a terrible silence, the silence of Woomera's children'.<sup>17</sup> He explains: 'I didn't see many of the detainee kids – towards the end – cry. They got to a point where they just couldn't cry. That was the only life they'd ever known, being behind razor wire. I think they were just existing'.<sup>18</sup>

In chapter four I traced the dreams and disappointments, the hard work and pleasures of the adolescent narrated subjects of Crawford, Langford Ginibi and Brett. Each sought ways to move between her memories of childhood and her hopes for adulthood, paths that might provide friendship, fun and security. In the twenty-first century, young people in parts of Australia continue to face obstacles, such as laws endorsing mandatory sentencing. In 2000, as Iain Stewart *et al* note, a fifteen-year-old orphan 'hanged himself in a detention centre in the Northern Territory after serving 24 days of a 28 day sentence for a second offence of petty theft under the NT's "three strikes and you're in" law ... The items stolen by the boy were stationery ... [Laws] are targeted at home and street property crimes, hence effectively at Indigenous youth ... This suicide was not an isolated incident'.<sup>19</sup> Despite inquiries, reports and recommendations, Indigenous suicide and deaths in custody continue, even among people in early adolescence.

Other Indigenous teenagers continue to survive and voice their hopes and fears, boasts and laments. Among many others, these include rappers and musicians such as Brisbane's MC Murriz and Murri Skool Girls, Bourke's The BLB, Broken Hill's Girls Out Loud, Wilcannia girl Sam and Redfern's Jesse and the Clevo St Boys.<sup>20</sup> These adolescents, like the young narrated subjects of *Over My Tracks*, *Don't Take Your Love To Town*, *After The War* and *Unintended Consequences*, transpose community narratives and forge new paths of collaboration.

Teenager Nooria Wazefadost also transposes and collaborates, as she negotiates her displaced adolescent path. A Hazara refugee, she remembers her childhood: 'The only music I heard in my childhood in Bamiyan was the screaming with horror and mothers crying for their children's

<sup>16</sup> When the Woomera centre was closed, most detainees there were moved to Baxter, where Iranian asylum seekers protested in 2004, as noted in my introduction.

<sup>17</sup> Margot O'Neill, 'Woomera detention centre doctor speaks out', *Lateline* (ABC, 27 October 2004), Transcript at <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2004/s1229335.htm> (visited 8 January 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Dr Simon Lockwood, *ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Iain Stewart, Margaret Kelly and Alex Reilly, 'LAW309 Constitutional Law and Administration 2004: Mandatory Sentencing', *Macquarie University*, <http://www.law.mq.edu.au/Units/law309/mandatory.htm> (visited 10 January 2005).

<sup>20</sup> MC Murriz' '2 Black 2 Strong' (Athol Coultz, Jesse Coultz and James Ellis) appears on the EP *Ain't No Suckers* (Gold Tooth, 2004). Broadcaster Mundanara Bayles introduced the Murri Skool Girls' 'Pay Attention' (Alkia Daley Brown and Emily Bonner) on 'noise'/AMRAP in 2004. Morganics (<http://www.morganics.info/>) has produced tracks by The BLB and Girls Out Loud, as well as Sam's 'Wilcannia Girls' and Jesse and the Clevo St Boys' 'The Block'.

future, and I heard it again on this boat. We were all vomiting. My poor mother with a newborn baby was sick the whole way'.<sup>21</sup> Wazefadost was fourteen on that boat, in 2000. Her family's reasons for leaving Afghanistan at that time were clear: 'civil war, persecution, ethnic cleansing of ... the Hazara, the dangerous environment and the unfair treatment of girls and women'.<sup>22</sup> However, the family, like many others, spent the final three months of 2000 in Curtin Detention Centre, Western Australia, before being granted 'temporary protection'. Since her detention, Wazefadost has learnt English and become a sought-after public speaker. She transposes narratives between languages and communities, collaborating with her seniors and juniors, teachers and listeners, as she tells her personal and collective stories of displacement. Wazefadost completed her Higher School Certificate in New South Wales in 2004. In December, while she considered her possibilities, fellow Hazara teenagers Alamdar and Muntazar Bakhtiari had their possibilities made clear, as they were deported with a 'ticket to nowhere', a large bill and their memories of Australia.<sup>23</sup>

In chapter five I considered the ways adults, personally and collectively, negotiate narratives and relationships. Today, Australian policies and laws continue to coerce the composition of life narratives by displaced people. Native title claimants must narrate their connections to land, while asylum seekers must narrate their memories and fears of persecution. In other Australian contexts, government strategies work to limit possibilities for life narration. Despite these strategies, in Dandenong in 2005 (as noted in my introduction), Jwahir Baqiri and Rose Breyley share memories without words, while their children share joys and fears in Australian English. Like these temporary residents and citizens who defy authorities' precautions against their meeting and storytelling, Langford Ginibi continues to share her memories with a range of listeners. She speaks at schools and universities, appears on television and welcomes groups of fellow senior citizens into her home, for storytelling and singing. Her eldest surviving son 'Nobby' has changed his name and remains fearful, 'hurt, angry and institutionalised' after his many years in jail, but he too shares his knowledge in Sydney's western suburbs, where he now teaches art to senior women.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, Crawford's granddaughter Edwina Crawford is now an adult who follows in her ancestors' footsteps, mediating and advising the New South Wales state government, among others. Finally, in the United States, Brett and her children continue to tell their stories of Australia.

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<sup>21</sup> Nooria Wazefadost, 'A young refugee's plea for a better future', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 June 2004.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Joan Fairbridge and Jim Ridgeway, 'Ticket to Nowhere', *Buried Country: Original Film Soundtrack* (Larrikin Records, Festival/Mushroom, 2000), cited in chapter four. On the Bakhtiari, see 'The Bakhtiari Family Saga' (AAP), *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 December 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/Immigration/The-Bakhtiari-family-saga/2004/12/30/1104344900959.html> (visited 10 January 2005).

<sup>24</sup> Langford Ginibi, personal communication, December 2004.



The long-term, far-reaching effects and legacies of colonialism and genocide include the encounters and conditions listed above. There are countless ways to remember these legacies. For what he calls ‘authentic memories’, Walter Benjamin writes that:

it is far less important that the investigator report on them than that he mark, quite precisely, the site where he gained possession of them. Epic and rhapsodic in the strictest sense, genuine memory must therefore yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through.<sup>25</sup>

The paradoxical conversations of twenty-first-century Australia, as illustrated by the examples above, are part of the strata around this thesis. In my physical site of remembering, reconstructing and writing, the air also carries the calls of crows. The type of crow call that brings me most pleasure is that which ends in resolution – concluding with a long, low, sliding ‘aaah’.<sup>26</sup> However, the crows here often seem to stop mid-lament and let others take up the ‘conversation’. Similarly, I began this thesis by taking up the ‘scraps’ of others’ unresolved conversations. I conclude it now with the hope that its ‘weak beats’ and ‘feminine endings’ might form ‘scraps’ that others may, in turn, take up.

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<sup>25</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘Excavation and Memory’, *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*, tr. Rodney Livingstone et al, Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith, eds (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999), p 576.

<sup>26</sup> The birds most of us here know informally as crows are Australian ravens. A field guide describes this raven’s call as ‘high, child-like wailing; series of slow notes with strangled, dying finish’. Ken Simpson, Nicolas Day and Peter Trusler, *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, Fifth Edition* (Melbourne: Viking Penguin, 1996), p 252.

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