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DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

„Representations of the “Stolen Generations”
in Selected Autobiographies of
Australian Aboriginal Women“

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Magistra der Philosophie (Mag.phil.)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:

A 190 344 299

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:

UF Englisch UF Psychologie und Philosophie

Betreuer:

Ao. Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Franz-Karl Wöhrer

Declaration of authenticity

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*[U]nless the great symbolism of reconciliation
is accompanied by an even greater substance,
it is little more than a clanging gong.
It is not sentiment that makes history;
it is our actions that make history.¹*

¹ As said by former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the course of the federal “Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples” on February 13th, 2008.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
Part one: Historical development of the Stolen Generations.....	5
1.1 History of Australia.....	7
1.1.1 Terra Australis.....	7
1.1.2 Terra Nullius.....	8
1.1.3 Colonisation.....	8
1.1.4 Conquest of the continent.....	9
1.1.5 Spread of settlement and frontier conflicts.....	11
1.1.6 Native police.....	13
1.1.7 Black labour.....	16
1.1.8 Abduction of Aboriginal children.....	21
1.2 Protection of Aborigines.....	24
1.2.1 White supremacy.....	26
1.2.2 Merging and absorption.....	28
1.2.3 A dying race.....	31
1.2.4 Segregation and child removal.....	33
1.2.5 Assimilation and child removal.....	38
1.3 Twentieth-century child removal policies.....	41
1.3.1 Biological absorption.....	43
1.3.2 Child welfare legislation.....	46
1.3.3 Adoption and foster care.....	50
1.3.4 Towards self-determination and self-management.....	52

1.4 Australia at the turn of the new millennium.....	55
1.4.1 Reconciliation.....	55
1.4.2 Stolen Generations court cases.....	56
1.4.3 Federal apology to the Stolen Generations.....	58
1.4.4 Building a stronger future.....	61
Part two: Autobiographies of Australian Aboriginal women.....	65
2.1 Glenyse Ward.....	67
2.1.1 Author's biography.....	67
2.1.2 Summary of <i>Unna You Fullas</i>	69
2.1.3 Summary of <i>Wandering Girl</i>	71
2.1.4 Analysis of <i>Unna You Fullas</i> and <i>Wandering Girl</i>	74
2.1.4.1 Layout and language.....	74
2.1.4.2 Voice and narrative perspective.....	75
2.1.4.3 The mission as home.....	77
2.1.4.4 The hostile public realm.....	80
2.1.4.5 Isolation.....	82
2.2 Rita Huggins.....	83
2.2.1 Author's biography.....	83
2.2.2 Summary of <i>Auntie Rita</i>	84
2.2.3 Analysis of <i>Auntie Rita</i>	90
2.2.3.1 Layout.....	90
2.2.3.2 Inter-generational collaboration and separation of voices.....	90
2.2.3.3 Rita's voice—Jackie's voice.....	91
2.2.3.4 Generation conflicts.....	92
2.2.3.5 Disagreement on readership and topic.....	93
2.2.3.6 Healing.....	94
2.2.3.7 Omissions and silences.....	96
2.2.3.8 Identity and heritage.....	98
2.2.3.9 Searching government files.....	99
2.3 Doreen Kartinyeri.....	103
2.3.1 Author's biography.....	103

2.3.2 Summary of <i>My Ngarrindjeri Calling</i>	107
2.3.3 Analysis of <i>My Ngarrindjeri Calling</i>	116
2.3.3.1 Layout and co-authorship.....	116
2.3.3.2 Voice.....	117
2.3.3.3 A piece of Australian Aboriginal history.....	118
2.3.3.4 At the mercy of state authority.....	120
2.3.3.5 Effects of child removal.....	123
2.3.3.6 Identity and genealogy.....	125
2.3.3.7 Disruption of communities.....	127
2.3.3.8 Loss of traditional cultural knowledge.....	128
Conclusion.....	132
Bibliography.....	137
Index.....	145
Abstract.....	152
Zusammenfassung.....	154
Curriculum vitae.....	156

Introduction

In 1981 the historian Peter Read published a ground-breaking work in which he attempted to document the devastating effects of past government policies of removing Aboriginal² children and rearing them at church missions, government run stations, orphanages and foster homes. With the title of his book, *The Stolen Generations*, Read has coined a phrase which is nowadays used as the byword for one of the most disgraceful chapters in Australian history. In the foreword of the fourth reprinted edition, Read explains:

When I wrote 'The Stolen Generations' in 1981, child separation was scarcely talked about. Non-Aborigines said it couldn't have happened. The victims of separation thought it shameful to talk about their removal. They believed that maybe their parents hadn't been able to care for them properly, or worse still, didn't want them. (Read, *The Stolen Generations* 2)

Although discriminatory legislation with regard to Aboriginal people had been formally abolished in 1969, public recognition of the Stolen Generations did not occur until the late 1980s. Bowing to the pressure of both white and Aboriginal activism, a national inquiry into the separation of indigenous children from their families was conducted between 1995 and 1997. Yet, another eleven years were to go by until the Australian parliament complied with the inquiry's report's recommendation and then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd finally delivered a federal apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian Government in 2008. In addition, an annual National Sorry Day in commemoration of the past mistreatment of Australia's indigenous population had been established the year before.

By 2011, however, the furor had died down. There was little evidence for a widespread public awareness of the Stolen Generations, and first-hand accounts of

² Please note that within this thesis the terms Aboriginal or Aborigine(s), native and indigenous refer to all Australian Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders alike.

people directly affected by Australia's 20th-century assimilationist policies were hard to come by, as a large part of Stolen Generation autobiographies had already been out of print again. In the meantime the Australian government has persevered in restricting Aboriginal peoples' rights and taking their children away from them. Given the fact that as of June 30th, 2013, the number of indigenous children in out-of-home care ran up to 13,914³ and is probably higher than at any other time in Australia's past, journalist John Pilger in a recent newspaper article quite rightly asks, "The mass removal of Indigenous children from their parents continues unabated—where is the outrage?" ("Another Stolen Generation"). Now, in 2014, the sad reality is that Australia's political elite conceals its true intentions behind a "Stronger Futures" euphemism while all the same tenaciously sticking to its insidiously racist old-school tactics. Unless investigative journalists, political activists, indigenous artists and not least scholarly researchers continue to touch upon Australia's Stolen Generations, history is inevitably going to repeat itself. Hopefully, the present thesis will make a small contribution towards raising consciousness for the blatant disregard of human rights with which the Australian government still separates indigenous children from their families and cultural heritage.

But how have Aboriginal people come to be in the desperate position in which they nowadays find themselves? The first part of my thesis aims at answering this question by throwing light on the historical development of the Stolen Generations with simultaneous consideration of the corresponding socio-economic and political background. The second part comprises a discussion of selected autobiographies of Aboriginal women on the assumption that life histories of indigenous writers provide first-hand testimonies of the mistreatment of Australia's Aboriginal population by the whites and at the same time offer a very accessible account of how this tragic chapter in Aboriginal history is seen by Aboriginal people themselves. The focus of my analysis is tripartite so as to answer the following questions: First, do the authors' biographies comply with the general findings outlined in part one of this thesis? Second, how do the authors proceed in narrating their life histories, that is what are the main features and issues of the books in question? Third, are there indications of negative effects that white governments' assimilationist approaches had on Aboriginal people? Three Australian Aboriginal women will be presented whose autobiographical writings are remarkably different: Glenyse Ward, Rita Huggins and Doreen Kartinyeri. The authors

3 See Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 1.

are dealt with in three individual sections, each of which initially provides a biographical overview of the person's life and a summary of the autobiographical work(s) in question, followed by a detailed discussion of the respective book(s). The main findings are then summarised in a recapulatory overview in the concluding section of this thesis.

Part one:

*Historical development of
the Stolen Generations⁴*

⁴ This introductory chapter is meant to outline the historical background underlying the Stolen Generations. Due to given limitations of this thesis, it can only provide a general outline of an exceedingly complex developmental process. The exploration and colonisation of the Australian continent extended over a period of several decades, with geographical and economic conditions varying widely between the individual colonies and later states. Therefore the specific historical situations illustrated in this chapter are often time-displaced when considered nationwide. Attentive readers are kindly asked to bear this in mind when coming across allegedly chronological inconsistencies, especially when dealing with the exemplary illustrations provided.

1.1 History of Australia

This chapter provides an outline of Australian history, covering roughly the period from ancient times until the beginning 21st century. The perspective presented is necessarily restricted and to a great extent confined to examine the impact European colonisation had on the indigenous population. The focus is on investigating the intercultural relationship between the white settlers and the Australian Aborigines as it set the stage for a succession of protectionist policies that eventually led to the forcible removal of indigenous children, which 30 years ago became known as the Stolen Generations.

1.1.1 Terra Australis

In early modern times the Australian and Antarctic continent had not yet been discovered, and the notion of Terra Australis Incognita, an unknown land in the south, was still in existence. This assumption of a hypothetical continent in the southern hemisphere goes back to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who held the belief that the land mass of the northern hemisphere needed a counterbalance in the south, and had been common in medieval geography. At the beginning of the 17th century the first recordings of European landfall had been made by Dutch navigators, who charted the northern and western coastline of the newly discovered landmass which they had named New Holland. Spanish and Portuguese navigators also claimed the existence of unknown land south of New Guinea, and by the end of the century, British explorers had set out to sail along the northeast shore, documenting the flora and fauna and collecting specimens. In 1766, more than half a century later, the Royal Society engaged the British explorer, navigator and cartographer Captain James Cook to undertake three voyages to the Pacific Ocean, and the British Government commissioned Cook to

consider trading and settlement possibilities of the alleged new continent. Cook received instructions for scientific discovery of the landmass, which not only meant carefully charting its east coast, but also the quest for exploitable natural resources.

1.1.2 Terra Nullius

Cook's expedition proved successful, and even though he had recorded clear evidence of human inhabitancy, the land was declared “terra nullius,” an expression meaning that a certain territory is unoccupied and does not belong to anyone, as it is not under any national sovereignty. But as a matter of fact, the Australian continent had been occupied long before its first documented sighting by the Europeans in 1606. Clear archaeological evidence of land inhabitancy by Aboriginal people and their ancestors reaches back more than 40.000 years. Though claims exist that date evidence back to 60.000 or even 120.000 years ago, these are either not universally accepted or strongly challenged. There is evidence from 1400 onwards that Aboriginal people had contact with Chinese sailors and indigenous traders from Indonesia, and Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese explorers and merchants, but while the latter were interested mainly in commerce, Britain sought to annex trading posts strategically placed all around the globe. After landing at an expansive bay, which is nowadays known as Botany Bay in Sidney, Cook claimed the whole east coast, and thus the eastern half of the continent, for possession under the British Crown in 1770 and named it New South Wales.

1.1.3 Colonisation

Some 16 years later, after the loss of its 13 American colonies in 1783, Britain's prisons were filled to overflowing. More than 1000 convicts each year could no longer be deported to America, necessitating the establishment of new penal colonies somewhere else. In 1788 a first fleet of migrants arrived, the passengers comprising several hundred convicts, as well as colonial administrators and military police. This was followed by a second and third fleet carrying convicts in 1790 and 1791, which also brought urgently needed supplies and provisions. Food and natural resources were scarce and the number of farmers, engineers and carpenters was very limited, but the

new colony managed to grow and gradually become self-sufficient, and finally in 1793 the first free settlers arrived in New South Wales.

During the following decades, in a race to be the first to colonise the newly discovered continent, Britain established additional penal colonies as well as free settlements, which eventually led to the founding of further colonial territories. In 1825 Van Diemen's Land was separated from New South Wales (the island got renamed to Tasmania in 1856), and as rumour had it that the French also wanted to establish a penal settlement on the west coast, the British moved the border of New South Wales even further west and annexed the rest of the continent by founding Swan River Colony in 1829, which got renamed to Western Australia in 1832. The area of New South Wales was subdivided when three more colonies were proclaimed, namely South Australia in 1836, Victoria in 1851 and Queensland in 1859. In 1901 these six self-governing colonies (NSW, TAS, WA, SA, VIC, QLD) federated to form the Commonwealth of Australia. What is today known as the Northern Territory had then been under the administration of South Australia and was not separated until ten years after the federation in 1911, although there had been a very short-lived attempt to establish North Australia as a colony in 1846. Also in 1911, the Federal Capital Territory (renamed Australian Capital Territory in 1938) was created within New South Wales.

1.1.4 Conquest of the continent

The European newcomers found themselves in an environment which differed significantly from their homeland. Not only were climate and geography unfamiliar, but the Australian continent also appeared to be a hostile wilderness, with natural difficulties that had to be fought and a great many obstacles to overcome. The belief that the land was “untouched, empty, pristine” (Reynolds 6) strongly influenced the image of Australian colonial history as one of heroic discovery. In his book *With the White People*, the historian Henry Reynolds however presents a very different view of the exploration and settlement of the recently annexed land, drawing attention to the crucial role of Aboriginal advisers, “who were in a very real sense Australia's black pioneers” (3).

Any European who attempted to venture into the interior of the continent was strongly advised to seek out an Aboriginal assistant. When on an expedition local natives met by chance were consulted, the unadorned truth being that more often than not they were run down, captured, and forced to assist the European parties, but there were also professional Aboriginal guides who permanently accompanied the treks. The “black boy” (Reynolds 17), as the guides became referred to, was often indispensable for a number of reasons. Aborigines possessed excellent tracking skills which were needed to bring back lost expedition members or pack animals when they had strayed away during night, or to retrieve items which had been lost or forgotten somewhere on the way. Their deep understanding of land use combined with being highly observant of topographical features enabled them to apparently instinctively select the safest or most desirable routes, to find mountain passes, shortcuts and easy gradients. They could guide the expedition to waterholes or wells, or predict where water could most probably be found, which was often essential for survival. When rations were depleted, Aboriginal bushcraft could save European explorers from starvation, who were generally unable to spear fish, catch game or find and dig up edible roots. The guides' abilities to build a shelter for the night within minutes or to make a bark canoe with which supplies could be ferried over deep water were also highly valuable. Last but not least Aboriginal guides also acted as diplomats to ensure the safe passage of the expedition. Local guides knew the correct protocol when approaching Aboriginal camps, they were able to gain confidence of the natives and negotiated with them to ensure their tolerance and thus a peaceful reception of the European party.

Colonial governments also soon made attempts to employ black bushcraft on their behalf. It has to be kept in mind that in the beginning of Australian colonisation many settlements consisted of convict colonies, and colonial governments quickly became aware that Aboriginal bush skills were of great value for the purpose of law enforcement, where, due to their “peculiar nature and habits,” the natives had “a decided superiority over Europeans” (Reynolds 45). Black trackers were the only ones able to successfully pursue and chase down escapees, and the certainty with which they brought fugitives back from the bush, combined with the way penal authorities made use of this threat, deterred many convicts from even attempting to escape.

1.1.5 Spread of settlement and frontier conflicts

The explorers who had conquered the interior of the continent were soon followed by pioneer squatters, and during the 1830s and 1840s a full-fledged squatting rush spilled out over Australia. Settlers however were not heading off into an all hostile wilderness, as Aborigines had managed and maintained the land for hundreds of generations. With their careful usage of fire-stick farming they had shaped the land and turned scrubs into grassland with good soil, so that the settlers found a landscape adapted for agriculture and the pasturing of flocks. As European settlement spread, local Aboriginal clans were continually deprived of their livelihood. Food and game were taken, trees were cut down and they were driven off their lands, which soon resulted in bitter conflict and fierce fighting. Aboriginal resistance included burning huts, plundering crops or driving away stock, leading enraged settlers to organise punitive expeditions to massacre the natives, which they did with inconceivable brutality and sadism as expressed in the following excerpts:

My mother would sit and cry and tell me this: they buried our babies in the ground with only their heads above the ground. All in a row they were. Then they had a test to see who could kick the babies' heads off the furthest [sic]. One man clubbed a baby's head off from horse-back. They then spent most of the day raping the women, most of them were then tortured to death by sticking sharp things like spears up their vaginas till they died. (Roberts 19)

Carrots, a European, not only killed a Tasmanian man, but he also drove his widowed wife ahead of him as his prize, and forced her to wear, dangling around her neck, her husband's bleeding head. A pregnant woman was chased up a tree and shot in childbirth. The testicles of male Tasmanians were cut off to give the British 'exclusive rights' to their women folk. It has been further alleged that Tasmanians were shot for dogs' meat and that one European used an Aboriginal's thumb as a pipe-stop. (Robinson & York 23)

Though the massacres committed on Australian Aborigines are countless, one of them, the Myall Creek massacre, shall be given special emphasis here for its historical significance. It is nowadays considered to be “one of the most shameful incidents in Australian colonial history” (Ryan 1). The Myall Creek massacre is exceptional for it was thoroughly investigated and is well documented, unlike most of the other brutal slaughters which happened at those times. Though it was sensational back then for

being one of the very rare occasions where white men were arrested, charged and sentenced to death for the atrocities they had committed against the Aboriginal population, it still provides a disgraceful example of the anarchy and lawlessness on the frontier.

In the late Sunday afternoon of June 10th, 1838, a gang of 12 stockmen, most of them assigned convicts, headed off to a native camp near the Myall Creek cattle station in New South Wales, determined to slaughter 28 defenceless inhabitants while all the able bodied males of the tribe were away cutting bark. Brandishing their swords the stockmen galloped into the camp, herded the people into a hut and tied their hands together with a long rope. They dragged the tethered victims out and hauled them over the top of a rise at some distance from the huts where they butchered them, slashing and hacking them to death, or cast them onto burning logs of wood until they died. To conceal the crime they had committed, the stockmen returned to the camp two days later and kindled an immense fire onto which they threw the beheaded corpses before they persecuted the males they had missed. They soon caught up with the rest of the tribe and murdered most of them. When the overseer of the cattle station who reported the incident to the authorities had first come to the scene of crime, recent rains had softened the soil and showed horsetracks and the victims' footprints. The attempt to dispose of the corpses had failed because the wood was too damp, leaving a haphazard pile of half-burnt skulls and other portions of human bodies. But the place had been swept clean by the time the police magistrate sent to investigate the case arrived at the end of July and only a few small bone fragments could be recovered.

With the exception of the ringleader, who was never caught nor persecuted, all but one of the perpetrators were arrested and charged for wilful murder, the indictment however only accused them of the killing of three Aboriginal males, one of them known as Daddy. They were tried on November 15th, 1838, and found not guilty by the jury after a consultation period of only a quarter of an hour. They were acquitted on all counts for none of the witnesses could swear to the identity of Daddy amongst the mutilated, beheaded and half-burnt corpses, and because the bodies of the two anonymous males could not be presented as evidence before court. It has to be stated that they were cleared on a technicality although general evidence including the witnesses' reports had been overwhelming (see "Supreme Court—Criminal Side" 2–3).

About a month after the trial a letter to the editor was printed in *The Australian*, in which a reader using the pseudonym “An English Jurymen” attested that one of the jurors had expressed the following sentiment:

I look upon the blacks (said this enlightened and philanthropic juror) as a set of monkeys [sic], and the earlier they are exterminated from the face of the earth the better. I would never consent to hang a white man for a black one. I knew well they were guilty of the murder, but I, for one, would never see a white man suffer for shooting a black (“To the Editor of The Australian” 2)

Seven of the stockmen had to face a second trial on November 29th, 1838, where they were finally found guilty and sentenced to death for the killing of one Aboriginal child. The verdict caused great excitement amongst the colonists, who felt that they were now “under attack by those in authority who should have been defending and supporting them” (Wood 67.7).

The story of the Myall Creek massacre is a telling example for the ultimate contempt white settlers had for the Aboriginal population, which is mirrored in many documents of that time. Apposite to the prevailing opinion, Australian newspapers, with the *Sydney Herald* leading the way, gave an “almost hysterical portrayal” (Wood 67.7) of filthy, ferocious, savage and murderous Aborigines in contrast to the isolated and vulnerable settlers. The fact that white men were brought to account for the killing of black people however did not discourage colonial settlers in their attempt to exterminate the native tribes. They only became more cautious and secretive in their approach, “[s]ome even went so far as to declare that in future this wretched class should be cut off by other and not less certain means; namely, by poison—by arsenic mixed with wheaten cakes, of which the poor creatures are so fond” (“Atrocious Massacre” 6). Poisoning the flour rations or substituting them with lime thus became the means of choice to conceal white men's involvement in the death of natives.

1.1.6 Native police

In response to the numerous massacres of the indigenous population, a proposal was drawn up in 1838, “a persuasive document judiciously combining a deft mixture of humanitarian sentiment, self-interest and practical advice” (Reynolds 49), which argued

for the establishment of a native police force. An Aboriginal regiment was to be created to regularly patrol the large frontier districts, to prevent conflicts and maintain peace and order. Black troopers were probably the only option the government had. They were cheap whereas ordinary colonial police forces would not have been affordable, and not dependent on European rations. They could hunt and forage, live off the land for long periods of time, and easily cope with the hardships of life in the bush. The small mounted detachments were able to travel light, which gave them a high degree of mobility.

As mentioned before, the native police was originally conceived as preventative force, so “that the hostile blacks from the frequent visits of the police, may be deterred from murder and felony” (Reynolds 52), as first commandant of the force Frederick Walker asserted. “What the Governor wants from you is to make the charcoles quiet, he does not want them killed,” (Reynolds 52) he instructed his troopers. The intention to sustain peace by the mere presence of a police force however turned out to be wishful thinking when Walker was confronted with the conditions on the frontier. Successive Aboriginal attacks during the past decade had planted racial hatred deep into colonial opinion. White frontiersmen saw subtle and dangerous enemies in the natives and considered themselves as being at war with the resident tribes, and the popular belief was that “the native police had been sent up to shoot the blacks” (Reynolds 53). The original attitude of the field police indeed changed and they became unleashed to conduct revenge expeditions and pre-emptive raids. “[A]t all times and opportunities” it was the officers' duty “to disperse any large assemblage of blacks” which “meant nothing but firing at them” because with “the natives knowing no law, entertaining any fears but those of the carbine, there were no other means of ruling them” (Reynolds 53–54). This was considered “necessary as much for the assertion of [...] [European] superiority, as for the purpose of punishing them for their depredations” (Reynolds 55). Groups of natives were shot down in cold blood without prior warning, “because directly they see you they run” and “if you were to call upon them to surrender, you would never be able to keep them in sight,” (Reynolds 55) one Lieutenant asserted.

At this point another and even more sinister motive for employing black troopers becomes apparent. During the attacks white officers often stayed in the rear so that the local clans would not infer any connection between the native police and the white

settlers, and the frontiersmen would not have to apprehend danger from Aborigines taking revenge on their stations. Europeans not belonging to the police force were prohibited from riding out with the troopers which in turn were kept away from European settlements “where inquisitive ears might pick up stories of patient pursuit and sudden onslaught” (Reynolds 63). The native police carried out its operations in a very secretive way as the legality of the policy executed by them was more than doubtful. It was “forbidden to publish any information which would give the public even the slightest glimpse of the doings of the Native Police,” (Reynolds 63) a police inspector admitted, and officers were “very particular in always avoiding indiscreet discussions” (Reynolds 63). It also came in handy that Aboriginal people could not give sworn evidence in courts back then. As long as “they were careful to dispose of the evidence” (Reynolds 64) the native police did not have to fear any legal action taken against them, and criticism was suppressed by scurrility or subterfuge to prevent public indignation.

The question which motivation young Aboriginal men had to join the native police surely has to be considered. According to Reynolds (see 73–75), it had become difficult for local clans to keep up their traditional economy with the colonial government occupying their territory. But European society in its own way also held several attractions for young Aborigines. They were enchanted by horse-riding and curious in firearms and as troopers they received clothes and daily rations, they were equipped with arms and horses and they also got paid, which meant that they could afford desirable commodities and consumer items such as tobacco, looking glasses, iron or shirts amongst other things. Thus by choosing to serve in the force, they found a way of surviving on the fringe of colonial society.

It is however still hard to understand how Aborigines could be incited to murder their own people. Giving this contentious question careful consideration and with regard to the sensitivity of the issue, Reynolds provides an interpretation based on the cultural traditions of the indigenous people (see 79–84). He explains that Australia was not seen as a whole and that a concept of Aboriginality did not exist, but that the members of individual clans lived together in small groups, strongly attached to specific areas of land. According to Evans, the Australian continent contained 600 to 700 Aboriginal nations at the time the Europeans arrived in 1788 (3). Although they shared similar

spiritual beliefs about the origins of life and their surrounding world, there also were substantial differences between the individual tribes. While Evans emphasizes the diplomatic alliance of neighbouring territories, their trade relations and cultural exchange, Reynolds points out that distant tribes foreign in speech and countenance were considered as natural enemies who caused death, epidemic diseases or natural calamities by powerful magic and unholy practices. With this knowledge of Aboriginal society, it was easy for the white commanders to take advantage of the tribal structures by recruiting black troopers far away from the regions where they later operated. Even more so, the members of the individual detachments were deliberately selected from different language groups to prevent them from using any language other than English or forging out plans against their superiors.

“Troopers and trackers killed Aborigines on the frontier, or helped Europeans to do so,” Reynold concludes, “because they were recruited and trained with that purpose in mind and deployed in districts where they were strangers with no particular sympathy for the local clans and where,” Reynolds reminds us, “they may have had a degree of hostility stemming from the deeply rooted traditional beliefs” (83). He furthermore takes the view that “the native police, combining Aboriginal bushcraft with European organisation and technology, were the major instrument in the destruction of Aboriginal society” (72).

1.1.7 Black labour

The aforementioned squatting rush of the early 19th century led to the establishment of an extensive pastoral industry. Sheep farmers constructed spacious pastoral properties in central Queensland and Western Australia and cattle producers chiefly occupied land on the vast northern frontier. The European colonisers severely interfered with traditional Aboriginal society in a number of ways. According to Reynolds, “Aboriginal troopers and trackers [had] made a major contribution to the rapid spread of settlement in all parts of Australia” (71). As part of the native police, many young Aborigines were brought to the recently settled parts of Australia, often a long way from their traditional homeland, where they “played a decisive role in crushing Aboriginal resistance” of the local clans, thus “preparing the way for untrammelled [sic] development of pastoralism,

mining and agriculture” (Reynolds 71). Furthermore the pioneer squatters did not trek on their own but always kept native guides as well as numerous servants to escort their parties who also resettled hundreds or thousands of miles away from their tribal homelands, where they were “isolated by race from the white workers and by culture and language from the tribespeople of the districts in question” (Reynolds 193).

White labour was expensive and scarce on the frontier and there was always a good chance of workers running off during various gold-rushes. Black labour on the other hand was cheap. There were no recruitment costs, no need to provide any accommodation facilities, and they usually received no wages, as their labour was obtained for payment in kind. The “station blacks” (Reynolds 193), as Aborigines working on pastoral stations were called, received clothes and rations which consisted of some tobacco, sugar, tea, flour and meat, though mostly bones and offal. They were constantly available whilst at the same time they could be dismissed to fend for themselves and live off the land.

Station blacks soon became highly valuable workers who quickly mastered new skills, adapting sophisticated knowledge inherited from their own ancient culture to the demands of European pastoral economy. Their expertise of topography, climate, vegetation and water resources was of enormous benefit, and with their tracking abilities and profound understanding of animal behaviour they quickly became exceedingly skilful in dealing with cattle and sheep. They were receptive to the habits and needs of the animals, kept herds together neatly, were avid horse riders and most successful in breaking horses. Their duties about the homestead were manifold and included mustering, shepherding, shearing, wool-scouring, butchering, blacksmithing, carting, fencing, pit-sawing, chopping wood, gardening, drawing water from nearby wells or rivers and carrying it home, washing, starching, ironing, scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, scouring, waiting at table, childcare and all other kinds of odd jobs and everyday tasks that had to be done at the stock camp (see Reynolds 194–210).

From the 1860s onwards the regional economy was expanded to include maritime industries, and station owners often profitably redeployed their station blacks seasonally after their sheep had been shorn. After the pastoralists had been shown where the natives collected their mother-of-pearl they established a pearling business along the coast. Black labour played a major role in collecting the shells at low tide or diving for

them and was indispensable in processing them, which included opening, cleaning, packing and transporting the shells. Another business which absolutely depended on black labour was the *bêche-de-mer* industry, where sea cucumbers were collected, eviscerated, dried, smoked and bagged to be exported to Hong Kong and Singapore. The working conditions must have been incredibly harsh. “Life on board one of these boats, or at the stations on the islands . . . is unspeakably squalid and dirty,” one official wrote. “It is altogether a nasty stinking business,” he asserted (Reynolds 223–224).

In the northern half of the continent, black labour made a vital contribution to European economy and soon became its mainstay without which the maritime and pastoral industries would not have been able to survive. At the turn of the century, according to Reynolds, the native workforce numbered as many as 10,000 people at any one time (227). Aboriginal labour not only ensured the economic survival of industries, but also provided financial security or even bestowed white settlers and their families with substantial fortunes. The viability of European colonies spread over half the continent, achievable due to the major contribution of Aboriginal trackers, troopers and labourers of all kinds in the first place, was the feeble argument “allowing the colonists to sustain their claim to be in actual and effective occupation of the Australian land mass” (Reynolds 227).

With the labour-hungry European economy rapidly absorbing the natives, station owners and settlers clearly believed that their servants and stock workers were their slaves rather than their employees. “After working these blacks for years without any interference,” one report reads, “pastoralists have come to regard them as goods and chattels” (Reynolds 199). They were considered as belonging to the stations and were not allowed to leave when they liked or pursued and brought back if they attempted to run away. To satisfy the maritime industries' demand for labour, young Aboriginal men were literally run down in the bush, chained up and force marched to offshore islands where they were kept until needed, with good divers sometimes even to be sold.

Severe corporal punishment was the order of the day, and as colonial law hardly cared for the protection of the natives, the workers were entirely at the mercy of their white bosses. In accordance with the commonly-received opinion back then, cheeky blacks had to be chastised to be kept in their place, and violent managers were often

well respected and admired for constantly asserting white authority. As an outback pastoralist explained in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper:

Let a native once be told that you cannot punish him, and good-bye to all authority over him and his usefulness, pamper him and pet him as much as you like, and give him clothes every day of the week, he will only work when he likes, as he chooses, let him know on the other hand that corporal punishment will inevitably follow wilful disobedience of orders, and you have a valuable servant. (Reynolds 99)

There was no need to deny the cruel actions taken against black workers, indeed they were often subject of frank swaggering. One man, who might have been a supervisor, described the way he had treated an Aboriginal woman trying to steal mother-of-pearl. “I made a grab,” he wrote in a letter to the government, “and caught her by the hair and flogged her till she pissed and shit herself Sir! Flogged her till she pissed and shit herself Sir!” (Reynolds 221).

Native women suffered in particular. The so-called “house gins” (Reynolds 210) often worked as maids or nannies and ran the household for their white masters, but very frequently Aboriginal women were also involved in shepherding or other kinds of stock work. They were preyed on by the white settlers and expected to be sexually available at any time the men pleased. Summarizing several contemporary statements quoted by Reynolds, it was not uncommon on the stations, where the “Boss [had] his own fancy woman, and the overseer [...] from eight to ten to choose from” that “every hand on the place had a gin, even down to boys of 15 years of age” which meant that aboriginal girls were “at the mercy of anybody, from the proprietor or Manager, to the stockmen, cook, rouseabout and jackeroo” (206). The white settlers did not care about the husbands or kin of the women they molested when it was their whim to lay hands on “black velvet” (Reynolds 75). White women on pastoral stations were few and far between and if not ignorant or unaware of what was happening on their homestead, simply not able to call a halt to the activities of a “sex-hungry male occupation force” (Reynolds 214). In the mining camps of north and central Australia, where male black labour was of little importance, the sexual pleasure provided by native women greatly eased the miners' hardship with which they had to cope on the isolated mineral fields. Sometimes the women managed to extract some reward for their company, such as food, tobacco or money, which was often essential for the survival of incapacitated clan members.

Along with the establishment of pastoral stations, European squatters founded a vast number of towns and villages, which appeared like mushrooms on traditional Aboriginal territory. Though the colonial settlements might have held some attraction for native tribes from the hinterland, most of them were driven towards the urban periphery due to the violent situation on the frontier and the increasing difficulties in procuring food, leading to the establishment of Aboriginal fringe camps outside almost every European town. Located on those rare spots of land the Europeans did not claim for themselves, the town camps were an assemblage of rickety constructs which lacked water supply and sewerage collection, humpies with a framework of saplings, covered with thatch, reeds, leaves or bark, but also with blankets or bags, tin plate or iron sheeting, or whatever material was available, hardly providing protection against wind or rain. Although the conditions varied, poverty and destitution were a common feature. Addiction to alcohol and opium was apparent, people were malnourished, and widespread sickness led to a catastrophic mortality rate.

The location of these camps on the outskirts was representative of the relationship between the indigenous population and the colonisers, which was marked not only by spatial and social distance but also by structural inequality. The white population's ambivalence on behalf of the fringe dwellers and their camps is given expression by Reynolds: "The large number of men who sought sexual adventure there wanted them close enough to be accessible when they swaggered away from the pubs at night but not so close that moralists and gossips could see who was joining the nocturnal procession," (152) he notes. But sexual pillage was only one aspect, for Aboriginal labour, too, was of major importance in the urban economies. Reynolds assumes that each European household engaged at least one Aboriginal worker, who cheaply provided labour in return for scraps of food, old clothes or tobacco and carried out the indispensable jobs which Europeans considered onerous, dirty and boring.

Although townspeople considered their employees to be orderly and biddable, they were also loud in their complaints and became tense and hostile whenever the town blacks moved their humpies too close to the European settlement. Tribal battles and revenge killings occasionally took place within the towns at broad daylight, as this was often the chosen place of refuge from Aboriginal avengers. But of even greater annoyance was the constant begging of the blacks which they executed with persistent

persuasion or veiled threat, as “they saw no reason at all why the Europeans should not be constantly encouraged to share their abundant possessions” for begging “carried no moral opprobrium whereas the Europeans' manifest selfishness did” (Reynolds 146).

Disregarding colonial appreciation of private property, native parties pilfered whatever useful possession they could snatch and to the great displeasure of the townspeople had quickly become remarkably skilful burglars. As a reaction to the nocturnal forays, the white citizens endeavoured to keep the fringe camps at a considerable distance from town and curfew was imposed during nighttime. Around nine in the morning Aborigines flocked into town, many of them eagerly expected to minister to their white masters' wants until sunset, when those who had not left in due time were whipped through the streets and driven out by the police. With regard to the common procession of Aborigines in and out of town, one official cynically explained:

[I]f there are any complaints made to me about blacks stealing jam tins, looking over fences where sweet potatoes are growing, dirtying the river water etc, I listen to the complaints, then remove all the aborigines out of the town, and keep them out for about a week. By that time all the housewives are very pleased to see them return again; so that things jog along smoothly until some poor old gin happens to steal another sardine tin, when out they go again. (Reynolds 153–154)

1.1.8 Abduction of Aboriginal children

Due to the availability of black labour, many settlers who would not have been able to afford white servants accomplished to hire a staff of drastically underpaid native employees. But the cost-benefit ratio was even better with Aboriginal children who were taken to live with the white families. “Far and away the greatest advantage of young Aboriginal servants was that they came cheap and were never paid beyond the provision of variable quantities of food and clothing,” Reynold declares. “As a result, any European on or near the frontier, quite regardless of their own circumstances, could acquire and maintain a personal servant” (169). From the beginning of settlement, Aboriginal boys and girls were picked up after their kin had been killed in punitive raids or died from imported diseases, or they were bartered by giving various little presents to their parents, which was considered as a fair and mutually acceptable bargain by the Europeans. But in many cases, they were simply stolen from their families. Beyond the

little costs, children were easy to discipline as they absolutely depended on their white patrons, and they could be trained up from an early age to perform sundry useful tasks. Native children “needed to be trained young if they were to be useful about the house” (Reynolds 208) one landlady argued, and by far “[t]he easiest way to obtain 'a young one' was to 'run one down' in the bush,” Reynolds (169) states. Kidnapping ventures became frequent, squatters marauded Aboriginal camps abducting black children, and for those who could not capture their own child, intermediaries offered their well paid-services.

As domestic servants the children received no pay and often only inadequate food and cast-off clothes. They had to work for long hours, were constantly accused of being lazy, unreliable and unfaithful, with beatings probably being commonplace. Many children died of influenza, tuberculosis, whooping cough or measles before reaching adulthood, diseases introduced by colonialists to which they were not immune. Aboriginal boys were well dressed and adequately cared for in cases where white settlers were proud and boastful of their boys, their bushskills and horsemanship, and showed them off to enhance their prestige. The affection bestowed on girls however was of a decidedly non-paternal sort. They were without protection from the sexual rapacity of their masters and often molested from an early age. According to Reynolds, “[y]oung Aboriginal girls were usually considered to be fair fucking game, by the 'boss', his sons, the Chinese cook or indeed anyone who had half a chance to 'bust a young gin’” (179). But it cannot be excluded that boys were also tampered with. European paedophiles had nothing to fear from colonial courts, as actions against them could only be taken when proof of age was provided for the victims, which was hardly possible. As a result girls regularly became pregnant and consequently were dismissed and abandoned.

The masters showed little concern for the future or feelings of their black children, who often made a rapid passage from one person or owner to another. Servants were given to friends when settlers moved on or simply left behind without any means of support when colonists moved back to Britain. A 19th-century writer giving account of the fate of an eight year old Aboriginal girl observed that “instead of being placed with a household of respectability and virtue [...] she was thrust into the Convict Orphan School, where some black children had been sent to be educated or to suffer and to die.” A profoundly shocking experience for the child, who came from “the luxury and

grandeur of a Government House, to a cold stretcher of the Queen's Asylum” (Reynolds 174). The rejection Aboriginal children experienced when their white masters had become weary of them is especially cruel when considering that they were the nearest thing to family the young servants had. Often captured at a very young age or even raised from infancy, the children generally had no recollection of their natural parents, no connection to their extended kin and no knowledge of their roots. Bringing them up as one of the family was an excellent argument for not having to pay them for their services, and the children associated with their white caretakers and siblings as more or less equal. But the time came when they realised that they were pariahs within what they considered to be their family, and usually in their early teens Aboriginal children began to revolt violently. They were disruptive and destructive, running away stealing and drinking and engaging in promiscuous sex.

1.2 Protection of Aborigines

Knowledge of the atrocities committed on the native inhabitants of the colonies very occasionally reached its British motherland, but it eventually did, albeit with lengthy delays. In the case of the Myall Creek massacre, journalists working for *The Times* came out with an article just over a year later, drawing upon “[l]etters and papers which have just reached [them] from Sydney” and argue that “[t]his case has called still more strongly for the appointment of regular local protectors [...] for the natives, whose contact with stockmen in different parts of the colony exposes them to the greatest tyranny and cruelty” (“Atrocious Massacre” 6).

Although as early as 1825 the governors of the Australian colonies had been instructed “to the effect that they [the indigenous inhabitants] should be protected in the enjoyment of their possessions, [and] preserved from violence and injustice,” (London Yearly Meeting 10) this was hardly likely being the case. In response to the shocking reports from the colonies, a select committee was convened which should inquire into the treatment and condition of the native inhabitants in the British colonies. Their devastating report, “consisting [...] of details which have already, in a somewhat different form, been brought under the notice of the British public” (GB Parliament v), was subsequently presented to the House of Commons in 1837. It has very forthright things to say about the conquest of the continent, the dispossession of the indigenous people and the resulting conflicts. “Europeans have entered their borders uninvited, and, when there, have not only acted as if they were undoubted lords of the soil, but have punished the natives as aggressors if they have evinced a disposition to live in their own country” (GB Parliament 4). The report gives account of frontier conflicts, where “[m]any deeds of murder and violence have undoubtedly been committed” (GB Parliament 10), of punitive raids “without any parley” where “punishment had been inflicted because of the misconduct of the tribe” (GB Parliament 13), and the mutilation of women and the kidnapping of children. In a republished edition of 1838 it also

observes the aforementioned devious method in which the natives “have been made the victims of the cruelty of other uncivilized tribes, whom our [the colonisers'] countrymen have supplied with means for invading and exterminating them” (London Yearly Meeting v). Probably with regard to the extensive small-pox epidemics of the years 1789 and 1829/30, the report further mentions the disastrous impact of imported viruses, as “[l]oathsome and fatal diseases have been introduced amongst those tribes which have shown a willingness to enter into amicable relations” (London Yearly Meeting v). Particularly negative was also the impact of alcohol, of “[a]rdent spirits, which have corrupted their morals, ruined their constitutions, and reduced whole tribes to the lowest state of wretchedness and degradation” (London Yearly Meeting vi). The report comes to the conclusion that “in almost every instance in which our [the colonisers'] countrymen have come in contact with the uncivilized Aborigines, [...] they have exerted an influence which has tended powerfully to reduce the numbers and greatly degrade the moral and physical character of the natives” (London Yearly Meeting vi).

To secure that justice was observed and to protect the indigenous population and their rights, the British government attempted the appointment of local protectors in the Australian colonies. The settlers in return were furious when they got scent of these plans and burst out in vitriolic complaints:

We are opposed, therefore, [...] to any charge being made on the Colonial funds, for the support of such offices as those of Chief and Assistant Protectors of the blacks. We, in this Colony, are, unhappily, made to feel, that it is the whites and not the blacks that require protection; and, under such circumstances, we must continue to protest against this Colony being made chargeable with the cost of further official jobs for the protection, forsooth, of a horde of savages. [...] We have too many of the murderous wretches about us already. The Colonists require an efficient itinerating mounted police-force to preserve their property from being plundered or destroyed, and the lives of their servants taken by these [...] creatures [...], instead of which, they are to have [...] a whole tribe of 'protectors,' quartered on the Colonial funds. [...] The whole gang of black animals are not worth the money which the Colonists will have to pay for printing the silly documents upon which we have already wasted too much time.” (*Oriental Herald* 531–532)

1.2.1 White supremacy

In order to be able to comprehend the colonial governments' approaches of dealing with the native inhabitants, it is necessary to consider the accomplishments of 18th- and 19th-century anthropology in Europe. According to Harris, it is natural to all humans that members of a different endogamous group are met with prejudice and discrimination, a concept he names “folk racism” (81). Towards the end of the 18th century however, social sciences started to advocate for a sort of racial determinism which should prove that white supremacy and its advance towards man's perfection was a necessary consequence of absolute biological laws.

The Swedish naturalist Linnæus, who founded the scheme of binomial nomenclature of modern zoological taxonomy, was not the first but probably the most influential scientist to divide mankind into different races. In the first edition of his *Systema Naturæ* published in 1735, he distinguished four different human races according to their geographic ancestry and physical appearance, which he labelled europæus albesc, americanus rubesc, asiaticus fuscus and africanus nigr (11). In the 10th edition of *Systema Naturæ* published in 1758, he renamed the continental varieties of homo sapiens to europæus, americanus, asiaticus and afer, and he added two further categories, the wastebasket taxonomies ferus and monstrosus, to account for wild children and any groups of unknown or somehow abnormal people that did not meet the categories of one of the four core races (20–22). In the later edition Linnæus furthermore assigned the four humours of classical antiquity and distinct phenotypic characteristics to the different races. Needless to say that the intelligent, tall and muscular white European with long hair and blue eyes, wearing fashionable tight clothes and under the authority of a government, was considered “the Crown of God's human creation” (Haderer 17). In contrast, the cunning and lazy black African with his dark curly hair and driven by impulses came off worst.

To account for this diversity of races, Blumenbach, who was a disciple of Linnæus, proposed a theory of degeneration in his 1775 dissertation *De generis humani varietate nativa*. Blumenbach designated the European or in his terminology Caucasian race as primeval type (see 1795: 286, or 1798: 204). He explains that all other races have come into being due to a process of degeneration, caused by environmental or pathogenic

influences such as climate, diet, lifestyle, illness and hybridisation. As a result, contemporary scientists often yielded strange results in their attempts to explain racial differences. The dark pigmentation of Africans' skin was considered to be a form of leprosy, their tight whorled hair the result of their skin contracting in the tropical sun, and multitudes of gnats could result in narrow eye slits when constantly creasing one's face (see Harris 86–87, and Braziel 45).

According to the American anthropologist Marvin Harris, many of the 18th-century monogenists believed in the account of creation as depicted in the Book of Genesis, with Adam and Eve being the white ancestors of all humanity, and their bibliolatry left them with the relatively short span of only a few thousand years⁵ since the creation of Adam (see 83–86). Considering the pronounced differences of the individual races, there was a good case to believe that adaptive traits could be adopted and become hereditary features within a few generations. With regard to the Australian colonies, this meant that the European settlers lived under constant fear of degeneration for they were incessantly exposed to an environment significantly different from their home country. After all, it was common knowledge that “[t]he inhabitants of New Holland [Australia], in their original condition, have been described by travellers as the most degraded of the human race” (London Yearly Meeting 9).

A different anthropological approach is provided by the 19th-century American ethnologist Lewis H. Morgan, who developed an extensive framework including material culture and social structures rather than solely focusing on biological traits. Of his prominent work entitled *Ancient Society*, elaborate as it is, only the essentials in brief can be mentioned here. Covering almost 600 pages, Morgan expresses the view that mankind has “passed through a process of development, [...] as remarkable in its courses as in its progress” (v). He defines the amount of progress made by reference to what he calls “lines of progress” (4), namely subsistence, government, language, family, religion, house life and architecture, and property. Furthermore, the individual lines are meant to provide a nuanced scale by subdividing them, however Morgan does not dwell on all of them. With the help of this framework, Morgan distinguishes the three “successive ethnical periods” (6) of savagery, barbarism and civilization, including a further division into lower, upper and middle sections for the initial two, and ancient,

⁵ The date of creation is not stated more precisely here because a wide range of estimates exists, depending on how the biblical story is interpreted and which version of the Bible is used.

mediaeval and modern for the latter, respectively. The Australian Aboriginal tribes are ascribed to the middle status of savagery, a very low grade leaving them far behind in the progress of civilization. Morgan alleges that they lack woven fabrics and pottery for boiling food, bow and arrow are unknown to them, and that they have an archaic organisation according to kinship, with groups of brothers or sisters marrying each others' partners.

Morgan's concept was only published in 1877, but it coincided with the general sentiment of the whole 19th century. Several of the terms constituted by him had been a part of everyday language long before. The London Yearly Meeting Society of Friends in its report stated that with regard to “the uncivilized nations of the earth” it was “apt to class them under the sweeping term of savages” (1) and that measures had to be taken for their advancement in and the spread of civilization. In line with the aforementioned social Darwinist ideas, it was repeatedly stated that it was the unpromising situation of the local environment which hindered the savage tribes in their development, and that advancement could be stimulated once their minds came in contact with the sciences and arts of civilization. In his 1827 published book *Two Years in New South Wales*, the surgeon Peter Cunningham wrote down his observations that the natives were “inquisitive [...] and intelligent” (45), and he asked himself: “If their intellectual functions [...] are thus so far above debasement, how is it that the abject animal state in which they live [...] should place them at the very zero of civilization [...]?” (45–46). Cunningham could only offer one possible explanation, namely to “impute their present low state of civilization, and deficiency in the mechanical arts, to the nature of the country they inhabit, the kind of life they lead, and the mode of government they live under” (46), and he comes to the conclusion that “[c]ivilization depends more upon the circumstances under which man is placed than upon any innate impulse of his own” (46).

1.2.2 Merging and absorption

With almost invincible self-confidence, not to say arrogance, the European colonisers set their sights on civilizing the savage Australian natives, and there was only one possible option to attain the end they had in view: the natives had to adopt the

European, the civilized way of life. John Hindmarsh, first governor of South Australia from 1836 to 1838, approached the Aboriginal tribes near Adelaide as follows:

Black Men,

We wish to make you happy. But you cannot be happy unless you imitate white men. Build huts, wear clothes, work and be useful. Above all things you cannot be happy unless you love God who made heaven and earth and men and all things. Love white men. Love other tribes of black men. Learn to speak English. (Reynolds 86)

But no matter how persevering the whites were in their attempts, they eventually failed, for economic as well as social reasons.

In the mind of the colonisers, steady labour was the sure formula for raising the degree of civilization and inducing a sedentary lifestyle. But everyday labour was not a habitual aspect of Aboriginal society. The natives only went hunting or fishing when in need for food, living as comfortably as they liked for the rest of the day. European economy however demanded discipline and punctuality. White employers had their hands full with black workers disrupting the day with hunting and foraging, taking a nap or making love during working hours, as they found their tasks monotonous, tedious and boring, and soon became irksome as they believed that their work had no other purpose than to benefit their employer. In regions where they could not be kept in employment by violence and force, and where it was still possible, they preferred traditional subsistence of the bush to the drudgery of regular labour and the pittance they received in return. They were not reliant on the puny recompense of tea and tobacco, which often failed to provide sufficient incentive for black workers to give up their independence, liberty and idleness, and it definitely was not worth having to cope with the constant harassment of the white co-workers who feared the economic competition. For only a fraction of the cost, black workers would get the jobs done equally well or even better, which stirred up “[t]he jealousy of many working men who, to use their own expression, don't wish to see the bread taken out of a white man's mouth by a nigger, and endeavour in many cases to entice or frighten them from any work they may be employed in” (“The Queensland Aborigines” 6), as a contemporary newspaper correspondent ascertained.

A tight labour market was only one of the reasons why the black workers got bullied. In most of the cases it was for reasons of their status in a perceived social hierarchy. The concept of social class distinction was unknown in Aboriginal society, as their kin relations were egalitarian. It was a mystery to them why one person should have authority whilst the other was his subordinate. The notion of master and servant was alien to their nature, as was individual material wealth. For the survival of the whole tribe it was necessary that possessions were equally shared by everybody. Aboriginal people thought they would be accepted in white society as equals, and that the Europeans, overburdened with material property, would cede some of their abundance. Needless to say that this was not the case. Despite the fine words about acceptance and equality, the colonial elite cherished class distinctions and aspired assimilation of the indigenous tribes with the low orders of landless wage labourers. The working class in return emphasised the difference and stressed their distance when compared with Aboriginal people. They were determined to assert the superiority of their own race, to “keep the blacks down” and “keep them in their place” (Reynolds 107). The place European society held for the indigenous population thus was in the lowest scale, on the bottom of the hierarchy. There they should subordinate, poor and powerless, their racial characteristics depriving them of any chance of social improvement. It was an arrangement many natives were reluctant to acquiesce in.

Racial prejudice also prevented the emergence of emotional social ties. Interracial marriage was rare, as European women often despised Aboriginal men and would not accept one as their companion. For those rare occasions where it was indeed the case, the relationships were bound to be stigmatised and subject to enormous social pressure. Black men thus regularly rejoined their tribe for the prospect of female companionship instead of becoming a solitary social outcast in a white society.

After years and decades of unsuccessful attempts to absorb the indigenous population into white society, colonial governments came to the conclusion that “any scheme tried will not be a great success at once [...] and the present generation will scarcely be weaned from their wandering habits; but with the rising generation some improvement may be hoped for” (“The Queensland Aborigines” 6–7). It was considered necessary “to tame the blacks into respectfulness of demeanour” (Reynolds 99) so that they would take their ascribed place within colonial society. They had to be “taught to

bow the knee” (Reynolds 95) and learn to take to obedience, order and industry. For this purpose schools for the natives were established to “alter [...] the original bend of the mind” (Reynolds 104).

With the hidden agenda of distancing them from their families, their communities, and from tribal influences, schools for Aboriginal children were founded. The first so-called Native Institution was opened in Parramatta in 1814, though with little success. But in the years to come many of such schools were established all over Australia to increase the control over indigenous children. It was not uncommon that parents were either persuaded or threatened so they would agree to send their children to school. Sometimes the children were gathered every morning and promised to be given rations after the lessons. In other cases school managers unlawfully removed the children from their communities for the sake of European education. The children were usually housed in separate living quarters or dormitories, often leading their families to resettle somewhere near.

European education of aboriginal children, however, could not in the least contribute to overcome the racial barriers which prevented equality and acceptance in a white society. After working several years as a teacher in Tasmania, the English-born writer James Bonwick observed in 1884 that “[t]he learning brought no profit, since an educated Black always felt he was treated as a *Nigger* by the unlettered White” (207). Matters were complicated further by the fact that Aboriginal education was kept rudimentary, with a strong focus on practical skills. Literacy and numeracy were only taught to the amount needed in humble service.

1.2.3 A dying race

The ruthless and uncompromising occupation of the Australian continent by European colonisers resulted in a disastrous population decline of the native inhabitants. Just over a year after the landing of the first European fleet, the Aborigines of Australia were attacked by a massive small-pox outbreak in 1789, which was attended with an extremely high mortality rate. Although the origin of the disease is fiercely disputed—it may have been introduced by British as well as French ships, by Malay traders and trepang fishers, or even by a variolous substance brought along by surgeons—Cumpston

claims that “pending the discovery of more satisfactory information, the safest course would seem to be to follow the generally accepted theory that the introduction of the disease amongst the aborigines was in some way associated with the arrival in Australia of a comparatively large number of Europeans” (2). Ongoing frontier conflicts and countless brutal massacres, as well as two more extensive small-pox epidemics in 1829/30 and in the 1860s, further added to the population decrease of Australian Aborigines, though it is somewhat difficult today to put a figure on it.

Evans, after carefully compiling and comparing several surveys on the subject, specifies an indigenous population in the order of 1.25 million at the time of first contact in 1788 (11). It is equally problematic to provide Aboriginal survival numbers, despite the fact that censuses had been taken in Australia from the early 19th century onwards. The trouble is that albeit simultaneously, censuses were conducted separately by the individual colonies and the question forms were not uniform, which makes it hard to deal with nationwide data. What is more, aboriginal natives were either partially or altogether excluded from the census, or the cards relating to them were destroyed. This was probably done to prevent colonies with high Aboriginal population numbers from allocating extra seats in parliament or gain higher per capita Commonwealth funds. In the light of the aforesaid, Madden & Al-Yaman settle for the figure provided by a noted New South Wales statistician, who estimated the total Aboriginal population to be around 200,000 towards the end of the 19th century (1).

But besides that, it surely did not need statisticians and exact numbers to reveal the embarrassingly low Aboriginal survival numbers. Their decline was so drastic it could not possibly go unnoticed, as is apparent from the evidence which was given to the 1837 select committee by William Grant Broughton, first bishop of Australia:

They do not so much retire as decay : whenever Europeans meet with them they appear to wear out, and gradually to decay : they diminish in numbers ; they appear actually to vanish from the face of the earth. I am led to apprehend that within a very limited period, a few years, [...] those who are most in contact with Europeans will be utterly extinct—I will not say exterminated—but they will be extinct. (London Yearly Meeting 9)

It therefore soon became very clear that introduced diseases and frontier violence compromised the very survival of the Australian Aborigines. But in keeping with social Darwinist notions, especially Herbert Spencer's concept of the “survival of the fittest,

[...] which Mr [Charles] Darwin has called 'natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life'" (444–445), the general belief was that the Australian Aborigines were “a primitive race doomed to extinction” (Nethery 74).

1.2.4 Segregation and child removal

As already pointed out, the 1837 report of the parliamentary select committee showed quite plainly the devastation of Australia's native population due to European colonisation. In consequence of the inquiry a legislative system for the protection of Aborigines was to be enacted, and Victoria was the first colony to implement the recommendations of the committee by establishing a government agency in 1860, called the *Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines*. In considering how the dwindling indigenous population should be dealt with, efforts were made to set aside land and to establish reserves and missions, attempting to persuade Aboriginal people to move there. Contrary to earlier attempts to absorb them into colonial society, Aboriginal people should be separated and not maintain relations with the white community. This systematic separation of all areas of life of population groups of different origin for social, cultural, religious or ethnical reasons (or just plain racist motives) is referred to as segregation or separation. “Depending upon which group (the dominant or non-dominant) controls the situation, this option may take the form either of *segregation* or *separation*. When the pattern is imposed by the dominant group, classic segregation to 'keep people in their place' appears,” John W. Berry (9) explains.

How Aboriginal people were encouraged to resettle can perhaps be imagined by using the example of Tasmania, where the indigenous population had been decimated from 4.000 to less than 2.000 during the 15 years from 1803 to 1818. In the 1820s Aboriginal raids and revenge attacks by settlers had escalated to a guerrilla-like Black War, and in 1830 Colonel George Arthur called upon 2.200 male colonists to form a human chain and sweep across the island for six weeks “to deliver the knock-out blow that would bring the conflict to an end once and for all” (HREOC 79). The aim of this Black Line was to corral the natives onto the south-eastern Tasman Peninsula, but the venture turned out to be a financial fiasco as hardly any of them were caught (see Reynolds 45 and HREOC 79). In 1835 George Augustus Robinson, the later Chief

Protector of Aborigines who was a local building contractor back then, set out for his renowned “friendly mission” (Reynolds 47) and peacefully negotiated with the less than 250 remaining Tasmanian Aborigines who had survived violence, disease and warfare. They were shaken by the dimension and intensity of action taken against them in 1830, and when Robinson offered them protection, shelter, food, clothing, and the prospect to return to the Tasmanian mainland once the situation there had calmed down, nearly all of them surrendered and agreed to move to a settlement on Flinders Island, northeast of Tasmania. Contrary to their belief, the indigenous people were not able to preserve their ceremonies and cultural traditions there, as all of their children were removed to live with the catechist soon after their arrival. Shelter and rations provided were insufficient, there was little water and no arable land. The inadequate conditions at the camp and the drastic change in climate, combined with loss of freedom and homesickness, rapidly diminished the small group of Tasmanian Aborigines, until in 1876 the last of those resettled had died. As the anthropologist Henry Ling Roth sarcastically remarked in 1899:

While Robinson and others were doing their best to make them into a civilised people, the poor blacks had given up the struggle, and were solving the difficult problem by dying. The very efforts made for their welfare only served to hasten on their inevitable doom. The white man's civilisation proved scarcely less fatal than the white man's musket. (Roth 5)

Given the “flattering success” (Roth 5) of Robinson's friendly mission concerning the indigenous people of Tasmania, relocation and segregation also seem to have been the perceived solution with regard to the Australian Aborigines living on the mainland. In an attempt to “smooth the dying pillow” (Nethery 74), they were confined to reserves and missions on territory reserved for that purpose, where they could be kept separate from white colonial society and provided “with a 'humane' environment while their race died out” (Nethery 74). Although the separation of Aboriginal people in the later decades of the 19th century was apparently carried out for their own protection from mistreatment, slavery and abuse, it also suited the colonisers in a variety of ways.

By designating territory for the natives, segregation should put an end to their violent conflicts with white settlers and thus “protect Aboriginal people from exploitation and murder” (HREOC 124). But considering that the white farmers could keep the land they had claimed all along without having to fear attacks from the native

inhabitants any more, they probably benefited from this new policy in a higher degree than the natives. What is more, in many cases the settlers soon managed to regain the reserved land. In South Australia for example, the first Protector of Aborigines Matthew Moorhouse resigned in 1856, and only four years later 35 of the 42 reserves designated to Aborigines were again leased to settlers (see HREOC 104).

In this context it is essential to understand that the Aborigines were not given land to which they could withdraw and live as they liked. They should establish farming communities patterned on rural British villages and eventually become self-sufficient. It was argued that this would improve their destitute living conditions, but it goes without saying that it would also have greatly eased their reliance on rations and thus saved government expenses. Interestingly enough, Aboriginal people who had become experienced in rural occupations while working for white settlers tried to purchase land on a number of occasions, to settle down and cultivate the land, and manage their agricultural farms either individually or as community, just the same way the Europeans did and as was requested from them (see Reynolds 123–126). But white society held no place for Aboriginal landholders, so their attempts to apply for land were on principle unsuccessful.

The reservations set aside for the indigenous population were established as training sites, where the inhabitants could always be kept under some sort of authoritative supervision. Unmanaged reserves supplied rations and were controlled by the police. Stations, as managed reserves used to be called, provided food and housing and were normally staffed by a teacher or teaching manager. Missionaries in particular lobbied the government to set aside land for their use, as the establishment of missions would provide them with the facilities necessary for the religious instruction of Aboriginal people which would eventually lead to their conversion to Christianity. Thus apart from protecting the natives, the intention of institutions such as government stations and pastoral missions was “to bring the Christian faith, and to provide European education and vocational training” (HREOC 121).

The confinement of indigenous people was also a way to prevent them from the bad influences of the white lower class. When colonists wanted to merge the native population with the white working class, they did not consider that a large majority of rural workers were emancipated convicts, whose habits and conduct were rather vicious

and disorderly. As Reverend James Günther, missionary at Wellington Valley, wrote into his diary on April 23rd, 1838: “[P]risoners whether Bond or Free, Ticket of leave men or Emancipated, they all prove with very few exceptions that they are justly banished from their Native sanctuary & emulate[?] the outcasts of mankind. [...] The injury these men do is indescribable, their conduct in all its bearings is unfavourable to our work” (Cary & Roberts Vol. 3, Journal iii, 6–7).

For a number of reasons, indigenous families were often reluctant to move to the reserved settlements and become sedentary there. In an 1876 newspaper article several obstacles are lined out, amongst them “[t]he present system of native police, which in a great measure prevents the natives settling down, as if they hear any of this force approaching the neighbouring station they are apt to bolt in a panic, and travel miles before stopping” (“The Queensland Aborigines” 6). Furthermore, parents justly feared that they would have to part with their offspring when moving to a reserve. As has already been pointed out, children were not allowed to stay within their own family circle, but were housed in separate dormitories. They were kept busy with attending school and working at the station and were generally discouraged from seeking contact with their community. Another diary entry of Reverend Günther is especially telling, considering the way he has perceived and described the following episode:

This evening another Girl, of the name of Maria, who has only been here a few months, attempted to make her escape, when I just caught her; had I been a minute later I might have been too late. From some intimations we received this evening, it appears that there is quite a kind of conspiracy among the Natives, to take away our Children. I do not think it very advisable, to keep those elderly Girls much longer, since the Natives, thinking they are marriagable [sic], are almost determined to take them away by some means or other, suspecting we intend to keep them always, a circumstance which prejudices their minds against us, & makes them less willing to entrust their children to our care. (Cary & Roberts Vol. 3, Journal iii, 7)

This journal entry clearly demonstrates how confident missionaries and white authorities were in their approach of separating Aboriginal children from their families. In Reverend Günther's words, Maria is described as an escapee captured in the nick of time, and her native family is seen as a group of indigenous conspirators plotting to abduct the missionaries' children, when in fact quite the reverse was true. Seen from a more neutral point of view, what had actually happened was that a teenage Aboriginal

girl—the name Maria had probably only been given to her at the mission—wanted to go home to its family.

It is therefore hardly surprising that Aboriginal communities often preferred to stay at the aforementioned fringe camps to avoid prescriptive interference and maintain and cherish their own ancient customs and traditions despite the destitute living conditions there. Although European anxiousness kept Aboriginal camps at a considerable distance from town, complaints from townspeople often led the local police to break up the fringe camps and send the inhabitants to the reserve settlements, where they had to cope with regulations imposed on their lifestyle with hardly any improvement of their living conditions in return. Another way of compelling Aboriginal people to the settlements was to deny them rations and assistance if they refused to move there.

The need for legal and bureaucratic mechanisms to manage the reserves and control many aspects of Aboriginal lives was met by the establishment of Aboriginal Protection Boards and the issuance of several acts, such as the *Aboriginal Protection Act 1869* which was passed in Victoria and soon followed by similar acts in the other colonies. The aim of this legislation was for one thing the segregation of the Aboriginal population from European society, and for another thing the separation of children from their parents or elder clan members respectively. The government was much concerned that children growing up at native camps would become permanently reliant on rations, a probably justified fear when considering the fact that the Aboriginal population was deprived of its native lifestyle and cultural traditions and the elders could thus not share their knowledge to pass it on to the younger generations. As Walter Roth, Royal Commissioner on the Condition of the Natives in Western Australia, argued: “There is a large number of absolutely worthless blacks and half-castes⁶ about who grow up to lives of prostitution and idleness; they are a perfect nuisance; if they were taken away young from their surroundings of temptation much good might be done with them” (Buti 3–4). W. S. Myles, Midland district protector, stated: “Would not the separation of the young

6 Ethnographers of the 19th and 20th century attempted to classify the natives of the Australian continent and the offspring they had begotten with white colonisers. For people of mixed ethnicity, the categories half-caste, quarter-caste, quadroon, octoroon, crossbreeds, etc. were commonly used, depending on the genealogical tree, and the ratio and degree of relationship of white European and black native ancestors. Several of these notions were legal terms as well as being used in common cultural discourse and became tabooed in the course of time. It is nowadays deemed offensive to use the aforementioned terms for people of mixed descent. For reasons of accuracy it is however not always possible to avoid these categories so characteristic for the time, especially when referring to the political, social, legal and cultural concepts of the period in question.

from close contact with grown members of the settlement tend to minimise the influence of their elders and so help to eradicate what may, if too frequently observed, prove to weaken their characters and usefulness[?]" (Buti 18).

For this reason, the children were forcefully removed to be trained as farmhands and domestic servants so they could later join the workforce and be self-supporting. Around the middle of the 19th century, some states had already made the first attempts to enact laws with regard to the maintenance and schooling of Aboriginal children. South Australia passed the *Aboriginal Orphans Ordinance 1844*, Queensland introduced the *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act of 1865*, and Western Australia issued the *Industrial Schools Act 1874*. Under these laws, children of Aboriginal descent could be surrendered or committed to institutions which had been established to educate and provide for them, they would irrevocably stay under either the institution's authority or the local protector's legal guardianship until the age of legal majority and in many cases could be apprenticed if they were older than 12 years old.

Once the children were removed, vigorous efforts were made to render any contact between the child and its relatives impossible. For this purpose, they were often transferred to places far away from where they were born, given a different name and separated from their siblings. Auber Octavius Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, expressed his stance as follows:

Every coloured child then, must be placed at a residential school at a settlement, and I use the word settlement advisedly, because institutions selected for this purpose must necessarily become what we now describe as Government Native Settlements. The child must be free from all parental control and oversight—it must enter at the earliest possible age—it must be considered to all intents and purposes an orphan. Many, of course, are orphans, and there should be no difficulty in these cases. There will be few exceptions other than amongst those of parents who are already assimilated into the community. The children of full-bloods are not of course referred to as coloureds. (Buti 9)

1.2.5 Assimilation and child removal

Towards the end of the 19th century, the public was concerned by the abundance of pale-skinned indigenous children and government officials soon took notice of the rapid growth of a part-Aboriginal population. It became clear that the “Aboriginal problem”

would not smoothly solve itself by segregating the diminishing native population at the reserves when, even though full-blood Aborigines were dying out, a mixed-descent population was rapidly growing. This was a thorn in the side of many white colonisers, and Protector of Aborigines Daisy May Bates, who applied her energies to the task of examining Aboriginal culture and society and was very concerned about the welfare of the full-descent native population, cut right to the chase of the matter when summing up the popular opinion with the following statement:

As to the half-castes, however early they may be taken and trained, with very few exceptions the only good half-caste is a dead one. The aborigines are unmoral, the half-castes are immoral, and to breed our own colored population as under the present system we are now doing is an ugly reflection on all of us. (Bates 18)

The cause for this fast-growing part-Aboriginal population was strictly speaking quite simple, but understandably enough not much talked about: while proper relationships between Aboriginal and European people were socially and morally not acceptable, the situation was entirely different when it came to the sexual relations white settlers commonly entertained with black women. White men often cohabited with Aboriginal girls and provided them with various conveniences in return for their services, but they also captivated and forced them into having sex or simply raped them. Although sexual exploitation was common, according to colonial society's opinion it was the Aboriginal girls who were to blame. It was argued that white men simply fell victim to their allegedly promiscuous conduct and exaggerated sexual appetite, which should be curbed by strict upbringing and long working hours. In general the men hardly cared for the children they had fathered and just left them with their mothers or the Aboriginal community.

To come to grips with the prevailing circumstances, namely the continually growing “half-caste problem”, a more rigorous line of action was considered necessary, leading to the adoption of an assimilationist approach. Assimilation, as compared to segregation, means “relinquishing one's cultural [in this case Aboriginal] identity and moving into, and becoming part of, the larger society [...] by way of absorption of a non-dominant group into an established dominant group” (Berry 7). As explained in the *Bringing Them Home* report, “[w]hereas 'merging' was essentially a passive process of pushing Indigenous people into the non-Indigenous community and denying them assistance,

assimilation was a highly intensive process necessitating constant surveillance of people's lives, judged according to non-Indigenous standards” (HREOC 27). This led to the expansion and extension of the already existing Aborigines Protection Acts and the adoption of a new legislation, such as the *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (Queensland), the *Aborigines Act 1905* (Western Australia), the *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* (New South Wales), the *Aborigines Act 1910* (Victoria) and the *Aborigines Act 1911* (South Australia), all of which became commonly known as Half-Caste Acts.

Under the terms of these acts, the segregation of the remaining full-descent native population on stations and missions was continued, and in addition all aspects of their lives were tightly controlled and regimented so that Aboriginal people were subjected to almost total control. They were dictated where to work and where to live and frequently had their homes inspected. They were divested of the right of free movement and had to ask permission if they wanted to leave the reserves. Their private and social life was monitored and they were told whom of their friends and family members they were allowed to visit and associate with, including the regulation of marriage. Other restrictions prohibited the consumption of alcohol, signing of contracts or personal property.

1.3 Twentieth-century child removal policies

A key aspect of the new legislation that had been introduced at the beginning of the 20th century was the facilitation of family separation. The fact that part-Aboriginal children had a white father and were considered to have some amount of “European blood” granted them a place in white society, as they could not possibly be left to grow up with the “uncivilized Aboriginal race”. It was thus seen as the government's moral obligation to assimilate them into white society, and any measures taken were in the best interest of the child it was benevolently argued. “The native must be helped in spite of himself!” (Buti 8), Neville maintained. In many cases, Aboriginal Protection Boards assumed full custody of Aboriginal or part-Aboriginal children, making the Protector of Aborigines the legal guardian of these children. Protectors, justices of the peace and even policemen were given legal authority to forcefully remove children from their families, who were consequently educated and raised according to European standards and assimilated in white Australian society and working environment. The children were usually apprenticed soon after they had finished primary schooling. The wife of Francis Garnett, superintendent of Point Pearce Mission in South Australia in 1913, explained why this was the case:

The great need in dealing with the girls of the mission is that they be placed out to domestic services as they reach a suitable age. [...] It would be an expensive thing to train them for cooking and dressmaking. I think that would be putting the Government to needless expense, because there is so much demand for them as raw material. They can all wash dishes and scrub floors. (Lennon 54)

Neville confirmed this attitude, as it was his opinion that “[i]f they can read, write and count, and know what wages they should get, and how to enter into an agreement with an employer, that is all that should be necessary” (Buti 15). The underlying

motives of this approach are succinctly expressed in a newspaper article which was originally published in the Brisbane *Telegraph* on May 5th, 1937:

Mr Neville holds the view that within one hundred years the pure black will be extinct. But the half-caste problem was increasing every year. Therefore their idea was to keep the pure blacks segregated and absorb the half-castes into the white population. Sixty years ago, he said, there were over 60,000 full-blooded natives in Western Australia. Today there are only 20,000. In time there would be none. Perhaps it would take 100 years, perhaps longer, but the race was dying. The pure-blooded aboriginal was not a quick breeder. On the other hand the half-caste was. In Western Australia there were half-caste families of 20 and upwards. That showed the magnitude of the problem. In order to secure this complete segregation of the children of pure blacks, and preventing them ever getting a taste of camp life, the children were left with their mothers until they were but two years old. After that they were taken from their mother and reared in accordance with white ideas. (Buti 7–8)

Children of mixed descent were consequently separated from their mothers at an early age and placed in state-run or church-based institutions and due to the number of children concerned also in orphanages and homes which were privately owned and operated and which received only small and in most cases insufficient government funding. The homes the removed children were sent to often lacked the most minimal standards for treatment and conduct, and given the large number of children admitted, the conditions there often soon reached an acutely critical level and can best be described as horrible. According to the *Bringing Them Home* report, many of the places were severely overcrowded and the housing was derelict—exposed and unfurnished corrugated-iron sheds which hardly provided protection from rain and fierce wintry cold, where sanitary facilities were non-existent and the children had to sleep on blankets on the floor and eat on the ground. Provisions were meagre due to constant food shortages or rotten food and unsafe water supplies, and the children were not provided with enough clothes. Infant mortality and death rates of the inmates were high, and sicknesses such as whooping cough, leprosy and lice infestations were ever-present.

Girls of mixed descent, like their Aboriginal mothers before them, grew up separated from their families and were usually apprenticed or sent to white households as domestics at the age of 14. Young and inexperienced, all on their own and with no one they could turn to, they were susceptible to sexual attacks of their masters or other male workers. Naturally many of the girls fell pregnant at a young age and often

repeatedly, bearing a large number of children over time. As their pregnancies became apparent, the girls were generally accused of vile demeanour and as a rule sent back to the station or mission to give birth to their children. It was the standard procedure, as the following unashamed comment by Neville shows:

Every administration has trouble with half-caste girls. [...] Our policy is to send them out into the white community, and if the girl comes back pregnant our rule is to keep her for two years. The child is then taken away from the mother and sometimes never sees her again. Thus these children grow up as whites, knowing nothing of their own environment. At the expiration of two years the mother goes back into service. So that it really does not matter if she has half a dozen children. (Buti 16)

1.3.1 Biological absorption

With the appointment of Auber Octavius Neville as Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia in 1915, a new era in the separation and removal of Aboriginal children began. His views are given special attention here, as no other public servant before or after him has stood out more in the administration and realisation of Aboriginal affairs policy, and he can justifiably be called the most prominent official figure with regard to the Stolen Generations.

Neville was a British model bureaucrat and zealous administrator, determined to help enforce the laws concerning Aboriginal people, which not only made him “the symbol of all-encompassing authoritarian control” (Buti 7) but as such also the prime enemy for people of Aboriginal descent. He entirely devoted his attention to the mixed-descent population of Australia, and little was he concerned about the remaining Aboriginal inhabitants. “There are a great many full-blooded aborigines in Western Australia living their own natural lives. They are not, for the most part, getting enough food, and they are, in fact, being decimated by their own tribal practices,” (Buti 16) he explained. Neville agreed with the established segregationist practice, stating that one “cannot do much with the older people, except look after them and see that they are fed” (Buti 17), and he was convinced that regardless of the measures taken, Aboriginal people would die out. Concerning the mixed-descent population, however, he held the opinion “that the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not of the full-blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth” (Buti 14).

In addition to the socio-cultural model of assimilating children of native descent, Neville pursued a scheme of biological absorption, marked by a distinctly eugenic approach. The concept of eugenics—the term had been coined by the British anthropologist Francis Galton in 1883—had been growing in popularity in the early decades of the 19th century. Eugenicists took the view that certain hereditary traits were more desirable than others, which is why they should be promoted in reproduction (see Galton, “Eugenics” and *Hereditary Genius*). The genetic composition of a certain race could thus not only be influenced, but also improved by breeding out the less desired traits. In the case of Australia, as has already been expounded earlier in this work, the Aboriginal population was considered as being a race inferior to the primeval Caucasian, or European, type. Therefore, the eugenic view was that any traits of indigenous ancestry should be eradicated in people of part-Aboriginal descent in order to reverse the increase of an unwanted half-caste race.

Neville believed that the colour of skin was crucial in the process of absorption, and he most ambitiously proposed his idea at the 1937 Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities held in Canberra from 21st to 23rd of April, which provided him with the national stage to influentially propagate his views. According to Neville, mixed-descent children with rather fair skin should be reared and educated as if they were white. “Quadroons or nearer whites [...] must go as soon as possible to institutions for white children and learn to forget their antecedents, and their parents and coloured relatives should be strictly excluded from any contact whatever with them,” (Buti 9) he urged. Neville believed that the children would automatically become absorbed into the white population and in addition be discouraged to associate with Aboriginal people in later life and thus lose their indigenous identity.

While Neville stressed benevolent motives of educating and socialising children of Aboriginal descent, parliamentarians were less considerate in their choice of words and mainly referenced the presumed threat Aboriginal people posed to their pure white society. “[S]o fast are these people breeding that [...] in a few more years [...] we shall not know what to do,” (Buti 12) the Honorable G. B. Woods complained. Neville advocated that “the coloured people [...] must be thoroughly fit and educated” (Buti 15), “with a view to their taking their place in the white community on an equal footing with the whites” (HREOC 26), whereas Woods declared that “the long term distance

view [was] to breed these people right out” (Buti 12). The Honorable L. Graig's contribution to a parliamentary debate is worth being quoted in full length:

We might help to overcome the difficulty by getting the half-castes and the quadroons away from the full bloods. The natives are of the same blood as we are, and the colour can be bred out of them for the reason that they are not Asiatics or Negroes. The danger to-day lies in the native camps in the South-West where the half-castes go back and live with the full-blooded natives, and in that way get back once more to the darker blood. If we can separate the half-castes from the pure blacks we shall go a long way from the half and quarter-castes so that the blending shall be towards the white. The colour must not be allowed to drift back to the black. If we can only segregate the half-castes from the full-bloods we shall go a long way towards breeding the dark blood out of these people. ... We should be prepared to spend considerable sums of money in taking away the female children, giving them a good education, and training them to do useful work. If they do go out to service and then get into trouble, that trouble will be associated with white people which, in itself, will assist to breed out the colour. The main essential is to breed out the dark colour. (Buti 12)

Neville's tenure, which extended over the period of a quarter-century, was also characterised by efforts to collect and record copious statistical data of Aboriginal people such as births and marriages in order to compile complex genealogies. There was an obsession with mathematical consideration of race according to blood quantum, and similar to stud books in animal breeding, charts and tables were used to determine the fraction of Aboriginal blood a person with indigenous ancestors supposedly had. People of mixed descent were for instance categorised as half-castes, octoroons or $3/8$ castes, and efforts were taken to prohibit further racial admixture. The idea was to continually diminish the quantum of Aboriginal blood with each successive generation so that all traces of Aboriginality would finally become eradicated and people with indigenous ancestors would become indistinguishable from people of solely European ancestry. Some parliamentarians even went as far as suggesting forced sterilisation. “[S]omething should be done to stop this ever-increasing menace. There are many ways of doing it,” (Buti 12) the Honorable G. B. Woods indicated, to which the Honorable L. B. Bolton agreed, stating that “it would not be too much to suggest that we take steps to sterilise these unfortunate young women” (Buti 13).

To implement the enhanced efforts against Aboriginal people, in the 1930s most Australian states passed the new legislation required, for example the South Australian

Aborigines Act 1934 or the Western Australian *Native Administration Act 1936*. Queensland introduced the *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939* as well as the *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939*. New South Wales issued the *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1936*, and the Northern Territory repeatedly amended its existing *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918*. Common to all these new regulations was a strict prohibition against miscegenation, which meant restricting the rights on matters such as interracial marriage or sexual contacts between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. To accomplish this objective, especially with regard to “the moral risks posed to young Aboriginal girls” (Buti 11), it was necessary that the government could expand its control over Aboriginal children. To cast the legislative net further and include a wider range of people, definitions concerning Aboriginality were broadened so that they could be employed on just about any person with indigenous background. The children automatically came under official guardianship, notwithstanding that they had parents or relatives. Thereby the new laws also did away with the cumbersome procedures such as possible court hearings of parents, which previously may have had inhibited the removal process, guaranteeing the easy and unchecked forcible removal of virtually any child.

To the outside world, there was a lot of change in progress. The Aborigines Department was renamed the Department of Native Affairs, Chief Protectors and Protectors of Aborigines became retitled as Commissioners and Directors of Native Affairs, and the persons concerned were referred to as natives rather than Aborigines. Institutionalised racism against indigenous people, however, had not changed for the better. The era of Auber Octavius Neville and other self-proclaimed protectors of Aboriginal people such as John William Bleakley (Queensland) or Cecil Cook (Northern Territory) culminated in reaching a distressing peak with respect to indigenous children torn away from their families.

1.3.2 Child welfare legislation

After 1940, the legal situation for Aboriginal families seemed to improve. Australian state governments one by one enacted ordinances which subordinated children of Aboriginal descent to general child welfare laws and divested the Commissioner of

Native Affairs of the general guardianship of indigenous children. New South Wales was the first state to issue the revised *Aboriginal Protection (Amendment) Act 1940*. Western Australia launched the *Native Welfare Act 1954*—the Commissioner, however, remained legal guardian until the *Native Welfare Act 1963*. Victoria followed with the establishment of the *Aborigines Act 1957*, and the Northern Territory passed the *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964*, closely followed by Queensland enacting the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act 1965*. According to these new laws, Aboriginal children could no longer be forcibly removed from their families merely for the colour of their skin, but should be preserved from harm according to the same statutory basis which applied to all Australian citizens.

The new legislation once again brought along a change of terminology: Aboriginal Protection Boards were replaced by Aboriginal Welfare Boards, and Directors of Native Welfare took the place of Commissioners of Native Affairs. The basic objective, however, remained the same: Aboriginal people should relinquish their cultural identity and become part of white Australian society. The parliamentarian Paul Hasluck outlined the prospects for indigenous people as follows:

[A]ll Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Any special measures taken for Aborigines and part-Aborigines are regarded as temporary measures, not based on race, but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their social, economic and political advancement. (Stannage, Saunders, & Nile 128)

Native Welfare laws thus commanded that young Aboriginal people should be assisted in entering employment and be maintained while they were working. Their economic, social and political development as well as their intellectual, physical and moral welfare should be promoted to assist their assimilation into the life of the white community. So much for the theory.

In actual fact, governments were anxious about the impracticality of Aboriginal Protection Boards when dealing with indigenous communities living secluded from

state-controlled reserves⁷, for it was difficult to apply the laws set down in the Aborigines Protection Acts to them. As a transcript of a Parliamentary debate reads:

About 50% of the aborigines are camped on stations and reserves which are controlled by the Government. The remainder are living independently of the board ... It has no effective control under the present law. They are quite independent and free to live according to their own wishes [...] and in that regard they are a great annoyance to the community. (HREOC 39)

The intended application of general child welfare legislation provided the authorities concerned with a most convenient tool for pressing ahead with the separation of indigenous children from their families. Although Aboriginal and non-indigenous families were in the abstract equal before the law, they were treated significantly differently. To comprehend why this was the case, it is necessary to give the various statutes a cursory glance. The essence of the legal texts in question, namely the *Infants Welfare Act 1935* (TAS), the *Maintenance Act 1936* (SA), the *Child Welfare Act 1939* (NSW), the *Child Welfare Act 1947* (WA), the *Child Welfare Act 1954* (VIC), the *Child Welfare Ordinance 1958* (NT) and the *Children's Services Act 1965* (QLD), is to protect children who were neglected or uncontrollable or by any means in need of care or protection or control. The interpretation of these clauses, however, was often administered to the detriment of indigenous families. In many cases, the prevalent living conditions of Aboriginal people spelled the doom for their children and induced the government to withdraw custody.

Aggravated by the fact that poverty was put on a level with child neglect, parents constantly stood to lose custody of their children, as most Aboriginal families were destitute. They had been expelled from settlements and missions when the financial strains put on the government's budget had become unmanageable, on the grounds that these institutions had either been intended for the full-descent population only or the residents were said to be able to assure a livelihood outside the stations. They were not eligible for financial government support such as social security benefits or child endowment, and public housing programs or child care centres were inaccessible for Aboriginal families. Their employment opportunities were rather limited and they

⁷ According to the 1933 Commonwealth census, Patten & Ferguson (5) quote the number of nomadic Aborigines to be 36,300 as against 23,801 civilised "Full-bloods" and 20,609 "Half-castes". The total number of 80,710 people of Aboriginal descent shows very plainly a decrease in population when compared to an estimated 200,000 at the turn of the century. (See the figures provided by Madden & Al-Yaman mentioned above.)

received considerably lower wages than white workers, which made it impossible for them to rent adequate accommodation. Liaison officers were entitled to inspect the homes of indigenous children, and to monitor their social habits and hygiene practices. “The children were still being removed in bulk, but it wasn't because they were part white. They had social workers that'd go around from house to house and look in the cupboards and things like that and they'd say the children were neglected,” (HREOC 28) one evidence given in the *Bringing Them Home* report reads. “The same welfare staff and the same police who had previously removed children from their families simply because they were Aboriginal now utilised the neglect procedures to remove just as many Aboriginal children from their families” (HREOC 27–28).

The worth of native lifestyle, and the Aboriginal model of child-rearing in particular, was continually measured against European standards and denigrated by white Australian society. General child welfare laws held numerous clauses which could be construed detrimental to native families. Social welfare officers judged the conduct and behaviour of indigenous parents and whether their children were adequately supervised. In many cases, where children were raised by extended family members without fixed abode or visible means of support, or their parents' whereabouts were not ascertainable, it was argued that the children were apparently deserted. If they were found loitering, begging in public or in company of a drunkard or thief, they were considered to be in moral danger, prone to a life of vice and crime, and likely to become addicted to alcohol and drugs. Children running away from their employers to escape sexual abuse, girls becoming pregnant, and children not attending school regularly were regarded as uncontrollable.

The new native welfare laws ensured that children could not be removed from their families unless a children's court had adjudicated on the matter and decided that a child was in fact neglected or uncontrollable or in the need of care, control, or protection. According to the reasons mentioned above, courts readily applied these terms to Aboriginal children, and their parents were often incapable of taking a stand against the court rulings. Although they were entitled to appear at courts, most had no knowledge of their rights, distrusted the judicial system or could not make sense of legal English as there was no legal assistance available to them. The removal procedure was speedily conducted, not leaving parents with enough time to get to the venue, especially if they

were living in remote areas and could not come up with enough money for travelling. If parents attended the trial, they ran the risk of being charged for the criminal offence of child neglect, which entailed prison sentence and the serious consequence of having their other children removed as well.

The discrimination against Aboriginal people cannot be denied when considering the different treatment of the children removed. When a child had been separated from its family by the application of general child welfare laws, the Child Welfare Department took over responsibility for the minor only if it concerned a non-indigenous child. An Aboriginal child, on the contrary, became a ward of the Aboriginal Welfare Board. These two institutions constituted two entirely different administrative and regulative systems. Child Welfare thus got non-indigenous children out of unstable families and broken homes, whereas it committed Aboriginal children to even greater control.

As wards of the Aboriginal Welfare Board, children were institutionalised and maintained in special homes, they were trained and sent into employment, and the Director of Native Welfare became legal guardian of all wards and gained full control of any property. This also meant that wards only received a fraction of their wages in the form of a weekly allowance, the rest was purportedly put into a trust fund until the age of legal majority, but often turned out to be lost when people tried to claim their money as adults. It was unthinkable for wards to manage their own affairs, such as their manner of living, their behaviour, their social habits and personal associations. Wards were guilty of an offence if they contacted their parents, ran away from the homes or left an employment, and could be taken custody and punished by a children's court.

1.3.3 Adoption and foster care

In the 1950s and 1960s government institutions could no longer cope with the steadily increasing numbers of indigenous children taken away, and the Aboriginal Welfare Board could not raise enough funds for the establishment of further homes for the reception of these children. Nevertheless, governments firmly adhered to their policy of child removal, but according to necessity were on the search for alternative arrangements. Institutional care hence was abandoned, and welfare encouraged the use of non-indigenous foster families, where children of Aboriginal descent were

completely isolated from their communities, families, and other children of their ethnicity to completely obliterate their identity and assimilate them into white society. Aboriginal identity was disparaged or denied, and any contact between the child and its natural family was considered to be a punishable offence, which made temporary foster placements virtual adoptions. Children who revolted against their placements could be sent to corrective institutions or juvenile detention centres.

Thus, foster placements or adoptions were further ways to separate indigenous children from their families and often preferred to asserting claims of neglect in court, because all it required for the child to be removed was the natural mother signing a consent form. “You have to educate coloured people to make the sacrifice to have their children adopted and so give them the chance to enjoy the privileges of the white community,” (HREOC 62) Director of Native Affairs Cornelius O’Leary claimed. Parents consequently were often persuaded to relinquish their children, but in a multitude of cases were not aware that they actually agreed to having their children taken away. They were left in the dark about the purport of the form they were requested to sign or thought they only committed their children to temporary care. Officials were on the look-out for under-age girls giving birth and coerced them to put their newborns up for adoption by threatening them or the infants’ fathers with criminal prosecution for carnal knowledge or seduction of minors. If the Aboriginal Welfare Board was of the opinion that the natural mother was not fit to discharge the obligation, it simply applied to the court to make out a waiver of consent. Ever so often the Aboriginal Welfare Board and the Child Welfare Department worked hand in hand in the process of removal and placement of indigenous children, although many procedures lacked explicit regulations. Adoptive parents for instance brought back children if they had become tired of them, temporary holiday placements became pseudo adoptions, or adoptive agencies lost track of children entrusted to their care.

Given the large number of forcibly removed children, agencies endeavoured to place them as quickly as possible, professing that they were unwanted by their parents and facing a lifetime in institutional care. The *Bringing Them Home* report reproduced an article reportedly printed in a Darwin newspaper, the caption reading, “Homes Are Sought For These Children” (see HREOC 78). Underneath the headline is a picture of six girls in neat pristine white dresses, their estimated ages being about four or five

years. The children face the photographer, with the lighter-skinned girls standing in front, partly obscuring a dark-skinned girl. Some of them hold items which seem to be lunch bags and toys, such as a ball, a stuffed rabbit, and possibly a doll. The image conveys the impression that the children have only been given these toys to hold for the moment the picture was taken. Their faces are wary, disenchanted and sad, without the slightest trace of a smile. The newspaper text partially visible underneath the photography reads: "A group of tiny half-caste and quadroon children at the Darwin half-caste home. The Minister for the Interior (Mr Perkins) recently appealed to charitable organisations in Melbourne and Sydney to find homes for the children and rescue them from becoming outcasts." A handwritten note underneath the typeset says, "I like the little girl in centre of group, but if taken by anyone else, any of the others would do, as long as they are strong." The girl to which this note refers, a tall, fair-skinned child with blond hair, is carelessly marked with a cross drawn right in the middle of its dress. "We was bought like a market. We was all lined up in white dresses, and they'd come round and pick you out like you was for sale," (HREOC 78) one woman remembers.

Apart from those who adopted or fostered Aboriginal children to claim child support or abuse them as domestic workers, many conscientious white Australians believed to do a good action and help orphaned or abandoned indigenous children in becoming assimilated in Australian society, unaware that they supported the method of tearing children away from their natural families.

1.3.4 Towards self-determination and self-management

By the 1960s Australian governments had to accept that despite all their persistent attempts Aboriginal people were not being assimilated, but still on the receiving end of racism and discrimination and refusing to abandon their inherent culture and lifestyle. Following the 1967 constitutional referendum, the Commonwealth Government finally attended to the matter by establishing the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. The Aboriginal Welfare (formerly Protection) Board was eventually abolished in 1969, which is regarded as the formal end of official removal policies. Aboriginal Welfare laws were repealed, and Community Welfare legislation applied to indigenous and non-indigenous

people likewise. With the appointment of Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister in 1972, the government sought for a policy of Aboriginal self-determination and self-management. “Assimilation’ was discarded as the key term of Aboriginal policy in favour of ‘integration’, though precisely what difference this signified was somewhat unclear,” Altman & Sanders (211) note. They further point out that “[a]lthough these were significant changes, [state governments] continued to operate through the established structures and organizations of Aboriginal policy, rather than in any way directly challenging them” (211).

In the first years after the abolition of the Aboriginal Welfare Board, removal rates of indigenous children were still increasing. To challenge the disproportional number of Aboriginal children in care, the previously established Office of Aboriginal Affairs arranged that the states received special-purpose grants intended for the funding of indigenous community-based welfare programs. It was only then that Aboriginal families facing trials in neglect cases, removal applications, or juvenile justice matters achieved legal support provided by Aboriginal Legal Services such as the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Cooperative Ltd or the Tasmanian Aboriginal Information Service.

The First Australian Conference on Adoption held in 1976 substantially contributed to the growing awareness of the serious deficits and mischiefs within the field of government welfare. It noted the grave detrimental effects which placement in non-indigenous institutions away from Aboriginal communities had on the children removed and suggested that child welfare service should rather contrive ways and means to assist Aboriginal families in keeping their children with them. It was argued that indigenous children grew up in a racist society where they needed emotional support and a culturally appropriate environment for the development of a positive Aboriginal identity, and activist indigenous organisations demanded a reconsideration of the long-standing practice of child removal and non-indigenous placement and recommended involving Aboriginal social workers and the development of alternative programmes. In the very same year, the first of a range of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies was founded in Victoria—with today approximately 100 organisations under the umbrella of the 1981 established Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

In the 1970s, an association of these community-run indigenous services drew up the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle which implies that indigenous children who need out-of-home care preferably have to be placed with Aboriginal families for they are uniquely qualified to support children experiencing racism and identity conflicts and to convey an understanding for native lifestyle. As declared in a government submission, “only Aboriginal people can find solutions to the problems which confront them [...] and [...] have the right to make decisions concerning their own lives and their own communities and the right to retain their culture and develop it” (HREOC 377).

The Northern Territory was the first state to include the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in its *Community Welfare Act 1983* and later also in the *Adoption of Children Act 1944*. Within the following years, the principle obtained full legal force in three further states: it is spelt out in the New South Wales *Children (Care and Protection) Act 1987*, the Victorian *Children and Young Persons Act 1989*, and the South Australian *Adoption Act 1988* and *Children's Protection Act 1993*. Governments of the four remaining states admittedly accepted the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, but have not legally recognised it in their general child welfare legislation. Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory have at least included it in their *Adoption of Children (Amendment) Act 1987* and *Adoption Act 1993* respectively. Queensland in addition formalised and approved a 'Draft Statement of Policy in Relation to the Fostering and Adoption of Aboriginal and Islander Children' which contains the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, and the Australian Capital Territory has intentions to review its *Children's Services Act 1986* with the aim to also include the principle in its policy. Western Australia and Tasmania completely lack legal realisation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle. The Western Australian Department of Community Services leastwise ratified it in 1985 by a general statement in their substitute care policy, and the Tasmanian Social Welfare Department set it out in their 1993 Family Services Operational Manual.

1.4 Australia at the turn of the new millennium

1.4.1 Reconciliation

In the years which followed the publication of Peter Read's evocative 1981 book *The Stolen Generations* on the removal of indigenous children from their families, Aboriginal activists, musicians and artists as well as indigenous agencies and communities endeavoured to attract public attention and raise widespread awareness. Their efforts were answered with the appointment of Paul Keating as Prime Minister in 1991, whose agenda included a formal process of reconciliation with Australia's indigenous population. In the same year, the Commonwealth Government established the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and it commissioned a "National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families" in 1995. Covering more than 500 pages, the findings of the inquiry were presented in the *Bringing them Home* report two years later.

By this time, Paul Keating had been ousted by the new Prime Minister John Howard, whose political commitment with regard to reconciliation was rather limited. Howard firmly believed that "Australians of this generation should not be required to accept guilt and blame for past actions and policies" (Barkan 247) and consequently refused to participate in the public ceremonies of the first National Sorry Day, an annual commemorative event first held on May 26th, 1998—exactly one year after the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) had tabled its *Bringing them Home* report in parliament.

In response to the report, several state governments, churches, and municipal authorities issued statements in which they recognised their organisational

responsibilities and apologised for the mistreatment of Australia's Aboriginal population. Increasing public pressure also caused Prime Minister Howard to change his stance, especially with regard to the forthcoming centenary of the Australian federation in 2001. It might be that the celebration of the achievements of a proud nation should not be blemished by protests dredging up the inconvenient truth about the decades-long mistreatment of its indigenous population. Howard put forth a resolution in parliament in which he explained that the momentous event of the anniversary should focus on Australia's reputation for tolerance and understanding and on working together to redress adversity and achieve reconciliation (see "Howard Puts the Motion of Regret to Parliament"). He reaffirmed that the "wholehearted commitment to the cause of reconciliation" was "an important national priority" and recognised "the mistreatment of many indigenous Australians" and "the need to acknowledge openly the wrongs and injustices of Australia's past," and he expressed the government's "deep and sincere regret [...] for the hurt and trauma" Aboriginal people had to experience and suffer from "under the practices of past generations."

According to the recommendations specified in the *Bringing them Home* report, "[t]he first step in any compensation and healing for victims of gross violations of human rights must be an acknowledgment of the truth and the delivery of an apology" (HREOC 246). But Howard did not apologise. He consistently refused to offer a formal government apology, arguing that this would be construed as tantamount to accepting responsibility and the admission of guilt for deliberate wrongdoings, which in further consequence would lead to a spate of monetary compensation claims by indigenous people. Those supporting a federal parliament apology considered Howard's speech as appalling, and Aboriginal leaders made their position clear that any apology not explicitly using the word "sorry" fell beyond the pale.

1.4.2 Stolen Generations court cases

In the 1990s, two Stolen Generations test cases were put before the courts, namely *Cubillo and Gunner v Commonwealth of Australia* and *Williams v The Minister, Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 & Anor*. Lorna Cubillo and Peter Gunner had been removed from their families in the 1940s and 1950s when they were aged eight or nine

years and taken to homes for part-Aboriginal children. Both testified that they had been violently removed from their families, with Gunner describing how he had been grabbed by officials, shoved on a truck and driven off. They negated the possibility that their mothers had willingly relinquished them and explained that their relatives had frequently smothered them with animal fat and charcoal to disguise their fair skin so they would not arouse the attention of officials on the look out for half-castes. Cubillo and Gunner revealed that they had been subject to psychological, physical and sexual abuse, and they sued the Commonwealth for damages as they had been wrongfully removed and subsequently been dreadfully mistreated by their custodians working on behalf of the government.

Dragged through four years of legal proceedings, Cubillo and Gunner were browbeaten by the government's barristers who attempted at undermining their reliability and credibility, and on August 11th, 2000, the joint case on the Commonwealth's liability was dismissed by Justice Maurice O'Loughlin. Although the judge acknowledged the existence of the so-called Stolen Generations in general and also recognised the prosecutors' claims of having suffered abuse, he held that Cubillo and Gunner had been taken lawfully by government officials. In Gunner's case, evidence had been brought forward in terms of a form requesting that he was to be taken to a children's home, validated by a fingerprint of his mother Topsy Kundrilba. Whether the illiterate mother was aware of the significance of the document she was putting her mark on or was even pressured to do so was beyond consideration. In the case of Cubillo, it was argued that it was her obligation to establish proof of forced removal to the courts' satisfaction, which she was unable to do, as no documents existed and the officials involved had deceased.

The other case taken to court was the one by Joy Williams⁸, a ten year battle in which she sued the Aboriginal Welfare Board for negligence. Williams argued that her wrongful removal and the failure to arrange adequate medical treatment directly linked to a myriad of physical problems and the development of Borderline Personality

8 The story of Joy Williams' life can be read in the book *Tripping over Feathers*, an imaginatively reconstructed biography written by Peter Read in 2009. The book is rather unconventional, as Williams' biography is developed in reversed chronology, beginning with her funeral in 2006 and ending with her mother's pregnancy in 1942, stringing together scenes of her life. Many of these key moments feature a predominant use of direct speech derived from tape recorded interviews, as well as poems written by Williams under her pseudonym Janaka Wiradjuri, pictures of her, and copies of official documents.

Disorder. She had been taken from her mother almost immediately after her birth, not only deprived of a caring parent and thus denied the emotional attachment essential for her psychological well-being, but also exposed to mistreatment and abuse—childhood experiences at the hands of the government which in later life have proved harmful. Joy Williams comprehensively lost her case in August 1999, after the defence had produced a form signed by her mother Doretta Williams. The document concerned the transfer of the four and a half years old daughter Joy from one children's home to another and was construed as consent to removal. Judge Alan Abadee further ruled that she had been adequately maintained and cared for and had received dedicated support according to the standards of those days. On top of that, Joy Williams was forced to bear the full costs of the defending party. After having lost the case to the Supreme Court, Williams took it to the Court of Appeal in the following year and lost it again. In June 2001, any further appeals against the decision were rejected by the High Court.

1.4.3 Federal apology to the Stolen Generations

In 2007, contender for the prime ministerial post Kevin Rudd stated the necessity of a national apology to the Stolen Generations as central issue in his campaign for the Australian federal election. When he replaced John Howard in office in December of the same year, Rudd announced to resume work on the formulation of a formal government apology. To decide on the most preferable wording, he also involved Aboriginal leaders in consultations. Less than three months after his chairing, Rudd read the federal “Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples” aloud on February 13th, 2008. On account of the significance of this declaration, the apology is cited in full length here:

I move:

That today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment.

We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations – this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians.

We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again.

A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity.

A future where we embrace the possibility of new solutions to enduring problems where old approaches have failed.

A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.

A future where all Australians, whatever their origins, are truly equal partners, with equal opportunities and with an equal stake in shaping the next chapter in the history of this great country, Australia.

After the Prime Minister's moving speech, the leader of the Opposition Brendan Nelson rose to speak and pronounced a reply to the Rudd Government's apology (see "Brendan Nelson's Sorry Speech"). He opened with a claim to be "in support of this motion" and closed with the assertion of being sorry, but anything in between was far from sounding like an apology. Nelson disparaged the indigenous victims of European

colonisation as collateral damage in building the Australian nation, stating that “Aboriginal Australians made involuntary sacrifices [...] to make possible the economic and social development of our modern Australia.” He held that the existing generation should neither accept responsibility nor guilt for the events of bygone eras, and defended past actions arguing “that removal from squalor led to better lives – children fed, housed and educated.” Nelson spoke of “many decent Australians” who were “motivated by inherent humanity and decency to reach out to the dispossessed in extreme adversity” and who had acted “with the best of intentions,” and he was indignant that these people were “hurt by accusations of theft in relation to their good intentions.” “In offering this apology,” Nelson histrionically urged, “let us not create one injustice in our attempt to address another.”

Nelson continued his speech by shifting his attention to the present situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. He insisted that they lived in “real, immediate, seemingly intractable and disgraceful circumstances” and demanded to know what the Rudd Government intended to do to rescue Aboriginal Australians from their “lives of existential aimlessness.” Nelson then referred to the *Little Children Are Sacred* report which had been commissioned by the Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (BIPACSA) in 2007. The report had investigated the disproportionately high rate of physical, emotional, and sexual child abuse, domestic and family violence, and child neglect amongst the indigenous population of the Northern Territory and ascertained a “sexual abuse problem [of] Aboriginal communities” (BIPACSA 40). Nelson brought in appalling drug and alcohol related occurrences of rampant sexual child abuse and murder by indigenous people and reaffirmed that these conditions were omnipresent and had reached a crisis level amongst indigenous communities. He accused governments of the past three decades of “under-policing and tolerance [...] of neglect and abuse of children” and alleged that authorities and policies had turned a blind eye to the matter, “excusing the inexcusable in the name of cultural sensitivity.” Nelson furthermore called on the federal government to enact nationwide intervention policies similar to the 2007 emergency response of the Northern Territory (see below).

Nelson's reply caused a storm of indignation, and people watching his speech on big screens at open air meeting places turned their backs and jeered and booed until the

screens became eventually switched off. The proposed motion for an apology was unanimously passed in identical terms later that day, although several Opposition members in protest refrained from attending the voting.

1.4.4 Building a stronger future

In response to BIPACSA's *Little Children are Sacred* report, the government passed the aforementioned *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007*, an initiative affecting Aboriginal communities living in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Although allegedly implemented to counteract the alarming rate of family violence and child abuse, the intervention is widely disputed as national policy measure to regain control over Aboriginal people and their land. Samples of the measures laid down in the Emergency Response legislation are as follows:

The abuse of alcohol and the intoxicating kava plant is seen as proximate cause for dysfunctional community and family structures and overall poor health. Its purchase, possession and consumption is therefore severely restricted or prohibited, with infringements entailing severe punishment. Law enforcement officers and additional police forces are deployed in the communities affected, to increase police presence and install night patrols, all vested with the authority to ransack houses and search vehicles for alcohol. Under pretence of ensuring the safety of children and women residents, material which is sexually explicit, or glorifying or trivialising violence is banned, a measure that is criticised as stigmatisation of Aboriginal men. The law also allows that information about individual people can be transferred freely between government agencies and departments, without the consent or even knowledge of the person concerned. This calls to mind a statement by Cornelius O'Leary, former Director of Native Affairs, who boasted to "know the name, family history and living conditions of every aboriginal in the State" (HREOC 70).

Compulsory acquisition is dispossessing indigenous people of their land rights, thereby suspending provisions which have been granted under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* and the *Native Title Act 1993*. These acts had

previously recognised that Aboriginal Australians hold interests and rights to their land which ground on traditional occupation, customs and laws. As the intervention act purportedly aims at the protection of children against sexual abuse and domestic violence, it is not clear in what way forced land alienation should contribute to any improvements, and according to a submission made by the Human Rights Law Resource Centre (HRLRC), “no adequate justification has been provided” and “[t]here is no evidence that the drastic measure of compulsory acquisition will have the effect of improving Aboriginal disadvantage” (7). Although the government makes significant financial investments to address indigenous housing needs and infrastructural services in remote areas, there is no reason why people should be divested of their land rights for these achievements. Quite to the contrary, the HRLRC submission ascertains that “[m]aintaining the rights of Aboriginal peoples to their land is of central importance to Aboriginal peoples' socio-economic development, self determination and cultural integrity” (5).

Unsurprisingly, indigenous children are again direct targets of the recently installed law. Under the motto “Every Child Every Day,” parents are held accountable for the compulsory education of their children (see “Every Child, Every Day”). According to a newspaper article published in February 2011, Aboriginal children make up more than 40 per cent of the Northern Territory's child population, but represent less than 10 per cent of the children in early childcare services (see Green). Quoting a report concerning child protection dated from October 2010, Green further writes that “[s]ome teachers complained that many children treated school as a drop-in centre.” Authorities executing the Northern Territory's intervention legislation are determined to do away with this kind of truancy. Parents are admonished to enrol their children at school who are bound to attend classes regularly. If they fail to meet these obligations, that is if the children are not sent to school or fall short of a certain attendance benchmark, income support, family payments, or welfare benefits are cancelled.

But the probably most contested sanction in the emergency response plan is blanket compulsory income quarantining which means that a certain percentage of benefit payments is reserved to be spent on housing, education, healthcare, clothes and food only. Regulations on where and how Aboriginal people can spend their money are supposed to ensure that children, especially in remote areas, are properly nourished, but

Sarah Marland submits that child malnutrition in the affected communities may also be caused by inadequate care, insufficient health services or a harmful environment in general. To confirm that this measure causes nutritional improvements for children, store owners are questioned whether Aboriginal people buy more vegetables and fruit. This clearly forces shopkeepers into the corner, considering that they have to observe an excessive range of licensing requirements and run the risk of being forced to close their stores if the legal terms are not complied with. Beyond that, income quarantining is completely ignorant of the question whether healthy food is available in remote areas in the first place and, if so, what its costs are and whether people possess any means of keeping food fresh. Interestingly enough, Australia maintains a number of development programs abroad where it implements efficient, socially and economically reasonable, and medically sensible measures. “[I]f the Australian government can take a systematic, targeted approach to improving the lives of children overseas, why do we use shoddy standards and flimsy evidence for programs to help Aboriginal children?” Marland asks and at the same time finds that “the emergency response remains a political game that leaves the best interests of the children on the sidelines.”

In June 2010, Julia Gillard became the first female prime minister of Australia. According to the journalist John Pilger, “Gillard came to power by plotting secretly with an all-male cabal to depose the elected prime minister, Kevin Rudd.” He also observes that “Gillard has continued with gusto the authoritarian and mendacious 2007 'emergency intervention' designed to push Aboriginal Australians off their valuable land and box them into 'hub centres’” (“Julia Gillard Is No Feminist Hero”). The Gillard Government's Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, introduced the “Building Stronger Regions, Stronger Futures” policy in parliament in November 2011. The Stronger Futures policy basically constitutes a resumption of the Northern Territories Emergency Response as it intends to tackle issues such as child protection and community safety, alcohol abuse, school enrolment and attendance, land reforms and housing, and food security, but moreover contemplates to extend applicability in time as well as geographical ambit.

As laid down in the introduction of the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011*, “[t]he object of this Act is to support Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to live strong, independent lives, where communities, families and children are

safe and healthy” (*Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011* 4). But contrary to its stated aim, the proposed law denies the right of self-determination and bars cooperation and participation of indigenous residents. It ignores that people's needs can only be efficiently and effectively targeted when the communities affected are involved in the decisions which concern them directly. The top-down paternalistic approach of the Stronger Futures policy, however, disadvantages, marginalises and further disempowers Aboriginal people. As the United Nations' *Principles and Guidelines for a Human Rights Approach to Poverty Reduction Strategies* expound:

[L]ack of political rights and freedoms is both a cause and a consequence of poverty. Socially and politically excluded people are more likely to fall into poverty, and the poor are more vulnerable to social exclusion and political marginalization. [...] Lack of political rights and freedoms is constitutive of poverty if inadequate command over economic resources plays a role in its causation. Active participation in political decision-making, as well as in the broader social and cultural life of their communities, plays a role in expanding political freedoms and in empowering people, which in turn contributes towards combating social exclusion and political marginalization. In addition, the enjoyment of political rights and freedoms is instrumental to securing other human rights such as education, work, health and equal access to justice. Enabling the poor to participate actively in the social, cultural and political life of their communities should therefore form an integral part of a poverty reduction strategy. (OHCHR 51).

Although incurring widespread disapproval, the *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012* was passed on June 29th, 2012, in defiance of the “International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,” a United Nation's human rights covenant under international law to which Australia is a signatory.

Part two:

Autobiographies of Australian

Aboriginal women

2.1 Glenyse Ward

2.1.1 Author's biography

Born in Western Australia in 1949, Glenyse Ward was to become the third generation of Aboriginal people directly affected by the assimilationist policies of the time. Her ancestors belonged to the Ningana tribe and originally stemmed from Liveringa, some 70 miles south of Derby. From Ward's "The Stolen Generations' Testimonies" video recording can be concluded that the original Ningana settlement had been overrun by Whites. The members of the tribe, including her grandparents, had then been transported across the continent to Moore River Native Settlement near Mogumber. Originally set out as self-supporting Aboriginal farming settlement 84 miles north of Perth, Moore River had soon become Western Australia's internment camp for its indigenous population. The area was unsuitable for cultivation, and by the mid-1920s the camp was dilapidated, lacking proper sanitation, severely overcrowded and barely providing sufficient rations and supplies.

Ward's grandmother had been sent out to work, forced to leave her daughter—Glenyse Ward's mother, that is—behind. By the time Glenyse was born, her mother had ended up as an alcoholic living around the rubbish dump in Midland, a suburb in the metropolitan area of Perth. One night when baby Glenyse became acutely ill, her parents decided to take her to the doctor's surgery in Perth. Unbeknown to the anxious parents, the Native Welfare Office was informed and Glenyse was snatched from her family and brought to a Catholic orphanage in Perth, from where she was transferred to Wandering Mission (also known as St Francis Xavier Native Mission) when she was approximately three to five years.⁹

⁹ Ward is not consistent in her books with regard to her age.

Ward spent her entire childhood at Wandering Mission which was run by mostly German nuns, priests and brothers from the Pallottine order and the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. She was trained in domestic duties, but her general education remained rather rudimentary. Due to the unsatisfactory grades she received, Ward was not given the possibility to further her studies at Riverton boarding school at Perth but stayed at the mission as a so-called working girl. At the age of 14 or 16¹⁰ she had to leave what had become her home and was sent away from Wandering Mission to work as a domestic servant for a wealthy white family. After a year of constant humiliation and sheer endless domestic duties, treated as a nameless and preferably invisible black slave, feeling homesick, isolated and lonely, she finally managed to escape with the help of a friend from mission times.

Fortunate circumstances came to her aid and she was able to take up employment in the Busselton Hospital kitchen, followed by a number of jobs as a nursing assistant in several other hospitals and as member of the Community Health Service. But the sheltered environment of the Christian mission where she had grown up had left her altogether unprepared for coping with life in a racist Australian society:

For years after leaving the mission all of our group had to face the outside world in a struggle of trying to cope. We faced abuse and torment at the jobs we came up with, because of our lack of knowledge, being brought up not knowing who we were, or where we were bound, or what lay ahead of us. (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 180)

In struggling to adjust to her new, autonomous existence and connecting with a group of Aborigines, most of whom were alcoholics, Ward soon developed a drinking problem. One day in her late teens she met her mother in the middle of the street. It was by pure chance, but Glenyse was able to recognise her due to one single visit her mother had been able to make at the mission when Glenyse had only been a young girl. Glenyse got married to Charles Ward in 1975 and has two children with him, a son named Brian-Ocean and a daughter named Jodi Anne. Due to Charles, who is from Liveringa, she had the opportunity to visit the homeland of her ancestors.

Glenyse Ward has written two autobiographical books, namely *Wandering Girl* in 1987 and *Unna You Fullas* in 1991, and has continued her profession as a writer of children's books.

¹⁰ Again, there are inconsistencies in her books.

2.1.2 Summary of *Unna You Fullas*

Although *Unna You Fullas* was written and published four years later than her other book *Wandering Girl*, this review will begin with the former as it deals with an earlier period of Glenyse Ward's life, namely her childhood at Wandering. Ward begins her story on the day she is taken to a mission 75 miles southeast of Perth. Chronologically stringing together episodes of her childhood, she draws a picture of what it was like to grow up on a Catholic mission in the 1950s. The reader learns about the modest living situation at Wandering: Children sleep on thin mattresses in old and creaky wooden double-decker beds lined up in the girl's dormitory which is always locked at nighttime. In the morning, after being woken by the sound of a vigorously rung cowbell, they are marched to the washrooms in a corrugated iron shack. They get all dressed in bloomers made out of flour bags and old-fashioned grey and brown military-style khaki clothes and line up for morning workout in the courtyard, suffering chilblains and frost bites in winter for the lack of shoes. The children are served a meager breakfast of tea and buttered bread, starchy porridge or semolina, or dry or mouldy bread soaked in either hot milk or buttermilk. Depending on their age, they then have to report for different duties on the premises, the kitchen, the laundry, the sewing room, the dairy, the stables, or wherever there is work to be done. “[W]e all scattered to do our duties like robots,” Ward says. “Every girl from the smallest to the biggest had a job to do” (*Unna You Fullas* 15). Religious education, regular church services and prayers on several times of the day also play an important role in structuring the daily routine at the mission.

Many of Ward's memories involve a group of girls she has made close childhood friends with. She writes about the tasks they have to do together, their shared adventures, their leisure-time activities, and on many occasions also about the mischief they are frequently up to. Her portrayal of what seems to have been a rather normal and happy childhood is contrasted by Ward's mentioning of the unyielding strictness of the nuns and their fiery anger as a reaction to the children's disobedience or misbehaviour. There are accounts of corporal punishment, starting with being pinched in the cheeks and pulled by the ears, up to a proper hiding. Being given extra work like cutting up cabbages for sauerkraut in the cellar, peeling buckets of potatoes and onions, or hours of churning butter is also a common form of punishment at Wandering. What Glenyse fears most, however, is being locked up darning socks in the laundry during night, as the

children who like to be thrilled by telling ghost stories to each other believe it is haunted.

Starting to operate in 1944, St Francis Xavier Native Mission accommodated an increasing number of Aboriginal children over the years and from 1951 onwards boys also became admitted to what had previously been a facility for girls only. “[M]y group of girls felt our home wasn't ours anymore,” (*Unna You Fullas* 95) Ward reminisces. The situation for the children drastically changes in the early 1960s when the nuns, previously in charge of the children's instruction, are replaced by state school teachers. Glenyse and her fellow mates have to face a hard time at school, constantly being shouted at, caned, and worse. Ward describes how they start to dread classes, how she and others develop an intense and petrifying fear of failure, with some starting to stutter and others crying uncontrollably, and how a previously lively bunch of kids retreats into a dull and gloomy state. Incomprehensible to the mission children, the teachers also start to classify them according to their skin colour, giving significance to a difference they had not been aware of and which had not borne any meaning for them so far, causing unsteadiness and fights between them.

The retirement of their rector Father Albertus and his replacement by the Australian priest Father Bob Maxwell marks another radical change for Glenyse and her friends. According to Ward, Father Maxwell “couldn't believe it when he came to the mission that day. He thought he had walked into another world. A world of the past” (*Unna You Fullas* 167). Although not directly mentioned by Ward, there are indications that the institution had received financial funding from the state on this occasion: The children are provided with different sets of proper modern clothes, and Father Maxwell acquires two brand-new buses to replace the old Bedford truck where the children had had to sit on an open tray with cattle-sides and which had often earned them unconcealed stares when they had gone on an outing. New buildings are erected where children can be cared for in a more family like atmosphere, and the mission schools are closed and the children sent out to the schools in the district which might also be an indication of changes in Western Australian legislation.

Towards the end of her book, Ward recollects that most of the nuns had left and that her circle of childhood friends was gradually breaking up, as little by little all of the girls were suddenly gone. Ward also tells us about her puppy love for singer Brian

Hyland and Father Maxwell's concern that she and the others have to be taught the facts of life before being sent out into service. The talk she has with Father Maxwell, however, and his inability to deal with the subject in plain terms—caused by the religious repression of sexuality and the human body—leaves her more confused than ever.

2.1.3 Summary of *Wandering Girl*

Glenyse Ward's first work *Wandering Girl* continues her story approximately at the point of life where her narration had finished in *Unna You Fullas*. The book begins with the day she is forced to leave the mission which had been her home for 13 years. She provides an introductory summary of her childhood at Wandering, with her strict upbringing and daily duties “done to the ring of a bell and with prayers” (*Wandering Girl* 3), but also speaks fondly of her caretakers and gives a picturesque description of the mission's surroundings. She tells of being full of anguish and grief due to her imminent and inevitable parting and frightened by the uncertainty of her future. Without any further information she is bundled into the smart car of a sartorially dressed couple in their fifties and driven off to some unspecified rural district somewhere in the southwest of Western Australia¹¹. There awaits her the grand manor of the town's Lord Mayor and his family, a magnificent building elegantly furnished with heavy dark red carpets and polished antique furniture, vivaciously glittering silverware and sparkling chandeliers and an open fireplace. But as Ward remarks in her interview recorded for “The Stolen Generations’ Testimonies”: “I was happy I was in a flash house, but I was never, I had to work there, I wasn't there to live there.”

The Bigelows—as Ward calls her employers in her book—are anxious to keep her away as far as possible, for they have the racist notion that everything the Aboriginal girl has come in contact with is therefore contaminated, and were it not for her domestic duties, she might probably not have been allowed into the house at all. So she is allotted a dingy room in the garage, horribly filthy and shabbily furnished, and has to use an ill smelling bathroom where the family used to shower its dogs. While the Bigelows are using the most exquisite china, Glenyse is given an old mug and plate both made of tin.

¹¹ Ward calls the town Ridgeway which Day believes to be Bridgetown (see Day 18).

Cooking sumptuous meals for the family, she is instructed to eat only meager portions of inferior food. She is not allowed to address anyone or stay in the same room when a member of the family is present, and she especially has to conceal herself when visitors are present, as Mrs Bigelow “[doesn't] want the embarrassment of [Glenyse] amongst her supercilious friends” (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 22). Apart from Ward's accounts of situations that mirror her humiliating treatment and the misanthropic attitude her employers hold towards her, descriptions of the domestic duties she has to tend to constitute a major part of *Wandering Girl*. Glenyse is given all sorts of unfamiliar tasks without being instructed how to do them but naturally scolded if she does anything wrong—which according to Mrs Bigelow almost always happens. Beyond that Mrs Bigelow has a whole range of special requests Glenyse has to comply with. The oranges for Mrs Bigelows juice, for example, have to be freshly picked from a tree in the orchard right before breakfast every day. And as if working at the Bigelows' country residence is not enough, every fortnight Glenyse also has to clean the Bigelows' daughter's town house.

Her humble behaviour, however, seems to undergo a change when after her first three months of working for the Bigelows she is allowed to accompany her mistress to town. There she meets a kind and gentle old lady, the shopkeeper of a candy store, who lends her a sympathetic ear and tries to console the poor young girl. Back at the Bigelow estate, Glenyse is instructed to clean the car seat she had been sitting on. She does so by emptying a whole bottle of disinfectant all over the front and back seats and sloshing the car out with a hose pipe, leaving it all wet and soaked, much to the chagrin of Mrs Bigelow. Even though in “The Stolen Generations' Testimonies” interview Ward asserts she did it for being in a hurry as she still had a long list of duties to work off, one cannot avoid the impression that she did it to come back at her boss. Some time later, Glenyse accidentally strikes dead a turkey when fending off its attacks, and for fear of not being able to explain the incident to Mrs Bigelow, she decides to secretly bury the dead animal, afterwards admitting: “Being brought up in a strict environment I was never allowed to tell lies; but since I had been working there for her [Mrs Bigelow], I found myself really good at it” (*Wandering Girl* 57).

Glenyse's attitude towards her boss becomes more bold when she meets old Bill, a Scottish farmhand also working for the Bigelows. He keeps her company and helps her

with the abundance of work loaded onto her. But most importantly, Bill inspires Glenyse's self-worth and raises her self-confidence: “[H]e said, “Lassie, never put yourself down.” [...] He said for me not to worry about what people said. I was to hold my head up and not feel shame about myself. I was as good as anybody else, if not better” (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 93–94). What follows are parodistic accounts of a kind of subversive micro-resistance: When all of the Bigelow family members are out, Glenyse sets out the table with fine crockery, raids their fridge and helps herself to delicious meals and desserts. She bashes the piano, singing at her heart's content, and even dares to use Mrs Bigelow's private bathroom, lavishly soaping herself and shampooing her hair, and picking the cosiest towel after her shower. Leaving wet footprints on the fluffy white carpet and trying out Mrs Bigelow's perfume and cosmetics, she then rummages through the drawers and tries on some old lace dresses and does the catwalk.

After eight months in service, Mrs Bigelow tells Glenyse that a friend of hers has also hired an Aboriginal girl from Wandering Mission, and Glenyse is overwhelmed with joy when she is allowed to fortnightly meet the girl by the name of Anne. “As much as I hated my boss, I could have hugged her for joy. I couldn't control my emotions. My tears splashed onto the floor. It seemed like years since I had seen anyone from home,” (*Wandering Girl* 111) she writes. But the situation at the Bigelow's becomes increasingly unbearable for Ward, and it shows dismayingly obvious how little they care for their servant. Towards Christmas Glenyse is allowed a two weeks vacation at the mission, and Mrs Bigelow simply drops her off at the bus terminal, although the girl is entirely unfamiliar with the procedure of travelling by public transport. It is only due to the help of a sympathetic old lady that she makes it back home safe and sound. However, the incident which probably arouses the most empathy in the reader is the one when Glenyse and Anne are abandoned in town on Christmas day: “We were told we could stay in town all day as Christmas was a time for families – theirs, that is – and we would only be in the way” (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 148). Pinched with hunger and hurting for the warmth and love of what they consider their family at the mission, they search for a convent in town. “As the nun opened the door, I just about fell through the doorway. I broke down and cried, and my mate ended up having to speak for us,” Ward remembers (*Wandering Girl* 149).

Encouraged by Bill, Glenyse finally makes up her mind that she cannot continue “playing a dummy's life” (*Wandering Girl* 131). With the help of another girl from Wandering Mission, she is able to work out the address of her friend Kaylene in Busselton. She contacts her and they arrange for Kaylene to wait at the bus stop every Friday. After several weeks have passed and Glenyse is allowed another holiday trip to the mission, she seizes the occasion and boards the bus to Busselton instead. It takes about a week until a priest from the mission, worried Glenyse did not turn up at the usual meeting point, finds out about her whereabouts. He urges her to come back to Wandering to find her another position at a farm, which is a dreadful thought for Glenyse. With the help of Kaylene who puts in a good word for her at a job interview and explains the desperate situation her friend is in, Glenyse becomes employed at Busselton hospital. Ward ends her biography at this point, stating that “there was no looking back for [her]” (*Wandering Girl* 157), and concludes with a short epilogue informing the reader that she is now a happily married woman with two children.

2.1.4 Analysis of *Unna You Fullas* and *Wandering Girl*

2.1.4.1 *Layout and language*

Both of Ward's books portray different periods of her life in a chronological way. Her texts are structured in short, episodic chapters consisting of fragmented paragraphs. *Unna You Fullas* runs to 182 pages divided into 39 chapters and covers 13 years of her childhood. *Wandering Girl* consists of 24 chapters on 161 pages and the narrated time extends only for approximately one and a half years. The layout of *Wandering Girl* further suggests that the manuscript has been elongated by adding extra spaces between the paragraphs which gives the text a rather fragmented appearance. Ward has inserted several illustrations in her books: generally narrow banners that intersect the pages and depict different items mentioned in the stories. The symbols are arranged in a repetitive style and alternate with hatched and dotted patterns in Aboriginal style. Occasionally there are also a few sketches.

Ward uses a kind of hybrid language in her books, a simple though formal style of English interspersed with Nyungar terms and other colloquial expressions. The title of *Unna You Fullas* provides an example for this and is translated as meaning “isn't that

right, you fellows?” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 182). Although a short glossary is appended at the back of *Unna You Fullas* and some of the words are explained within the text, for other instances the meaning of unfamiliar words has to be drawn from the context in which they are used. Vernacular style, however, is reserved for the representation of spoken language only. The formally written word belongs to the public domain of the dominant culture, while oral expression is part of the private Aboriginal realm (see Day 17). An example of the latter can be found in *Wandering Girl*, where Glenyse exclaims “Choo, I am *winyarn*, big shame!”, and being asked by Bill what she meant by it explains to him, “That's our way of speaking in the mission” (93).

2.1.4.2 Voice and narrative perspective

Although Ward was in her late thirties respectively early forties when she wrote her autobiographical works, the narrator's voice coincides with the age of the protagonist in both books. *Unna You Fullas* is therefore written from the point of view of the child Ward was back then, drawing attention to issues that were important to her then, like the adventures she had with her friends or cherishing the secret of a discarded dark green china teapot which she treated like a treasure. Ward gives an account of events as she perceived them through her infantile ears and eyes. Her lack of knowledge and understanding as a child keeps the narrator from perceiving the momentous experience of the social and political circumstances in which she grew up. As a result there is little in the text that would allow the informed reader an analysis of the historical context.

In *Wandering Girl* Ward portrays her story through the eyes of a rather naïve 16-year-old mission girl and again hardly makes any attempts at clarifying its historical setting, except from an introductory note saying: “You see in the early days of survival and struggle, there was a lot of hardship and agony amongst the Aboriginal people. Through the misguided hands of earnest white people we were taken away from our natural parents [...] being put into missions, forced to abide by the European way” (1). It is striking that Ward's voice is never angry or accusative, there is no hostility, no apparent bitterness in her words. She never calls the Bigelows' behaviour or attitude racist, she just presents events to her audience and leaves it to the reader to decide that her employers are misanthropic racists. Ward even pretends not to understand the reasons for the harsh treatment she receives, depicting it as an experience which is altogether new and unfamiliar to her, as the following example illustrates:

Soon as I opened the door all the chatter and laughter stopped. You could hear a pin drop as all eyes were on me. All of a sudden, some poshed-up voice, with a plum in her mouth, came out of the crowd, "Tracey dear, is this your little dark servant?"

I just stood there smiling. I thought it was wonderful that at last people were taking notice of me. [...] I turned to the lady who did all the talking, and said, "My name is Glenyse". She was quite startled; she said, "Oh dear, I didn't think you had a name".

[...] I didn't understand what she was going on about. Mrs Bigelow came over to me and said in the sweetest voice, "It's alright dear, you may go to bed now".

This was a shock to my system. I thought, "My luck has changed." At last she felt sorry for me, which stirred my emotions up, as she ushered me out of the room, and waited till we got out of hearing distance. "Don't you ever do that to me again!"

[...] I had disgraced her in front of all of her friends. [...] I wondered what could be so bad about me? (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 24–25)

In trying to answer the question why Ward wrote *Wandering Girl* the way she did, Kurtzer suggests that Ward might have felt the need to "[tailor] her story to meet the demands of 'white' audiences" (4), for after Sally Morgan had published *My Place* in 1987, they "would indeed embrace certain kinds of stories told by Indigenous authors," but at the same time "there was a limit to just what kinds of stories 'white' Australia would accept" (Kurtzer 3). At some points of the story, Ward inserts reflective comments from her mature position as the author. Concerning the incident mentioned above, she tells of being scolded and accused of being a very ignorant person by Mrs Bigelow, to which she remarks: "If there was any ignorance, I felt it was on her part, but in those days it was wiser if you didn't say anything" (*Wandering Girl* 26). Day refers to this as "conversion", or a changed way of thinking since the events" (41). He claims that by using this technique, "Ward is able to answer back and intervene in 'History'" (41). Still, Ward keeps her voice non-threatening at any time, for never does she appear to confront an assumedly white readership. It might also be for the sake of constructing a non-threatening story that several negative issues she addresses in the video recording for "The Stolen Generations' Testimonies," like her and her mother's problem with alcoholism or the negative intergenerational effects her experiences as a stolen child have had on her children, are left out entirely in *Wandering Girl*.

For Kurtzer, the book “could be viewed simply as a story of a young girl overcoming adversity” (3). She argues Ward might incidentally have placed the racist treatment she had experienced into the world of a past gone by, so a white readership could distance itself from such a disposition. This goes in line with Day, who gives utterance to the hope that Australia has come to an age of reconciliation where an enlightened audience would identify with the colonised and the oppressed and reject Mrs Bigelow's smug complacency and arrogant attitude (see 40). The enlightened reader is thus freed from the guilt of an earlier society because the acts of violence have been committed by persecutors other than ourselves. For Day, the author Ward is a mediator between the protagonist Glenyse and the readership (see 43), as the intimate diary style of the book further reduces the distance between the readers and the teenage Glenyse of the story and allows them to feel sympathy and understanding for the poor girl.

Mudrooroo Narogin is less generous in his critique of *Wandering Girl*. He disapproves of this type of story which he refers to as “battler genre,” where “[t]he plotline goes like this[:] Poor underprivileged person through the force of his or her own character makes it to the top through own efforts” (149), and complains that in individualised stories where the “emphasis [is] on 'sharing and understanding' rather than on justice [...] the concerns of the Aboriginal community are of secondary importance” (149–150). Mudrooroo Narogin disfavours the idea that Aboriginal literature might be “entering a post-activist period” (150) and is highly critical of the way Ward concludes *Wandering Girl*, for in the epilogue she gives voice to her hope that her children will receive a sound education

So that they can take their places
In today's society as Lawyers or Doctors,
Or etc.- and be equal in the one human
Race! (159)

It is a statement which Mudrooroo Narogin condemns as being “an assimilationist affirmation” (149). “[I]t is O.K. to be Aboriginal as long as you are young, gifted and not very black” (149), he cuttingly remarks.

2.1.4.3 The mission as home

In her books, Ward sets up two different spheres. One is the relatively enclosed, private sphere of the mission, which provides a space where the children's sense of

community is allowed to develop to some extent, even though boys and girls are generally kept separated, and where they are not debased for their Aboriginal descent. At the mission the children are allowed to use their own hybrid language and they even make up a sign language of their own which they use to communicate with each other whenever the nuns are present and the children are not allowed to talk. In this context it is important to point out that Ward frequently refers to the mission as home and regards the people there as her family. In “The Stolen Generations’ Testimonies” interview she describes the one time only visit of her natural mother and how she shied away, being a child of six or seven years and scared by the agitated behaviour of this person entirely unknown to her. Ward explains how she hid herself behind the habit of the nun, “[b]ecause I thought that the nun was my mum, not her, you see.” In *Wandering Girl* Ward states that “Christmas party brought us all together like one happy family. [...] The nuns were like real mums. I reckon the look on our little faces when we opened our presents and cuddled our peg dolls, brought a tear to their eyes” (7–8). Another ostensive example is Glenyse's reaction to the news of her natural father's death which can be found in *Unna You Fullas*:

Sr Ursula spoke to me in a soft voice. “Girl, your father was killed today. A water tank fell off the back of a truck and rolled on him. Well he was working.” I felt a numbing sensation all over my body [...]. It all seemed so strange. I wanted to say, “That's my father, over there. He's all right,” pointing to Fr Albertus [...]. He was the only father I knew. (47–48)

Ward's second book also includes the subordinate story of two girls, Nicky and Bella, who entered the mission at an older age, which sets the background for a significant dialogue taking place between Glenyse, nicknamed Sprattie, and the girls. The two newcomers have grown up at an Aboriginal reserve in close proximity to Wandering Mission, and at nighttime in the children's dormitory they tell the others stories of their family at the reserve. Unbearably sorrowful and homesick, they make up plans to escape and return to their relatives and also try to convince some of the older children to join them:

Nicky [...] asked us, “How about it? Do you want to come with us to our home? [...] some of that mob might be your relations.” [...]
Bella glanced my way.
“[...] Sprattie, you coming?”
“Nah, this is my home.”

Then Bella put her hands on my shoulders and looked straight at me.
 “This is not your home.” She shook me.
 “Where's your mum, Sprattie?”
 “She wakes us up every morning.”
 I noticed tears welling in Bella's eyes again as she put her arms around me and pressed me into her bosom. Everyone just sat there quietly. I felt the back of my head getting wet.
 “Bella, you're wetting me.”
 She gently dabbed my head with her pyjama top.
 “Sprattie, I am crying for you.” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 70–71)

Ward also repeatedly remarks how fond she has grown of the nuns and how dear they have become to her. She mentions how she was soothed and fed with jelly on the day of her arrival, how the children are rewarded with small gifts for doing their tasks well or given boiled lollies, how they are bought ice cream on Sunday picnics in town, and how the gentle and kind rector Father Albertus lets everyone select their favourite marbles from a box. Day suggests Ward's sympathy for the nuns might ground in their shared experience of being exiled and living at the political fringe of society, far away from their mother country and linguistically marginalised (see 32). Nevertheless, Ward does not downplay the strict treatment of the nuns, for she also points out how children who had wetted their beds at night had to make their morning prayers in clammy pyjamas and how one of the girls was viciously beaten in front of all others, as a warning to those who might also attempt to run away. But for most of the times, it seems that punishments are easily forgotten or not taken too seriously in the first place. Whenever the children get scolded, they find it hard to keep themselves from sniggering and laughing, because the nuns and priests from Germany often struggle with the English language. When the nuns are angry they tend to get muddled up to an even greater extent, which is made obvious to the reader by Ward's phonetically spelt reproduction of their comical speech. Occasionally the children even dare to make outright fun of the nuns, for example when they are asked to introduce themselves:

“Oontz, vhat iss your name,” she pointed at me, and when I told her she started stuttering, trying to pronounce it. “How are you saying zhis name, girl?”
 Banner piped up then, as she [...] got a kick out of ridiculing any new nun. Banner explained our names real slow-way, ending with mine, “G-l-e-n-y-s-e.”
 Sister followed the motions of Banner's mouth and after trying for a while became puzzled. “Ve don't have zhis name in Shermany.” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 37–38)

2.1.4.4 *The hostile public realm*

Opposed to the private sphere of the mission is the sphere of the Australian public, where Ward encounters rejection and humiliation. This is most obvious in Glenyse's treatment in *Wandering Girl*, but also in *Unna You Fullas* where racism comes to the mission with the arrival of the two state school teachers. While Ward remarks that the children “used to think it was a big joke to be slapped and told off” (*Wandering Girl* 79) by the nuns, she draws an entirely different picture with regard to the state school teachers. They are described as jumpy, quick-tempered and in some cases even intrusive, and their punishments are cruel and fierce, as they never hesitate to furiously thrash the children with a thick flat wooden bat or a long springy cane. Apart from the severe corporal punishment the children receive, they are constantly intimidated, humiliated and made to look silly in front of their classmates. The teachers incessantly assert their authority and insist on the exclusive use of standard English, making clear that they loathe the children's way of speaking.

It is also them who start to racially segregate the children from each other. Ward remembers one of the girls named Ruby talking about the experiences she had made at a state school before being sent to the mission:

“We never liked him [the teacher], because he let them white kids call us black boongs and niggers.” [...]

Being so innocent and vague, I didn't know what she was talking about. [...] “... that's a sling-off word used by them white kids at school for us people who are dark.”

“Choo.” We looked at one another, we'd never heard of that before. [...] It sort of never really sunk in, as I listened to Ruby carry on [...]. (*Unna You Fullas* 99)

Glenyse is confused when her teacher divides the classroom into one section for the fairer kids whom he considers to be brainier and another for those with darker skin. He announces to have wasted enough of his time on the black kids as they do not have any future anyway and are bound to end up in the camps. Naturally, the children soon become stirred up due to the teacher's discrimination. “That's when the fights started amongst us kids outside the school. Us dark ones wouldn't talk to the fair ones, because they walked around the place thinking they were king pins and better” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 133).

Ward explains it was for feeling angry and bitter that she got into the first real fight of her life when she hurt another girl, Megsy, by throwing a sugar basin after her. She again uses this incident to demonise the state and idealise the mission as a shelter from the racism of the outside world: When Sister Ursula takes Glenyse aside and in a soft and caring voice asks her what had come over her, Glenyse replies that Megsy had called her sister “darkie”. A clueless Sister Ursula goes on to ask, “Vhat iss zhis language, girl, darkie, vhat iss zhis meaning? [...] [V]e have never have zhis kind of language here in zer mission, vhat do you suppose Megsy meant by zhat?” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 135–136) It turns out the nuns have not been aware of how the teachers had graded the kids according to their colour as Sister Ursula is truly surprised by Glenyse's explanation and sighs, “Ach girl, zhis explains zer whole situation about zer unsteadiness of you children lately” (Ward, *Unna You Fullas* 136). A fight, as Ward informs the reader, would usually have entailed serious punishment, but to Glenyse's surprise, Sister Ursula leaves it at reminding the children that under God's care everybody is equal. Ward observes that after this incident the nuns become more kind and understanding in their attitude. It might have been beyond their scope to challenge the state teachers directly, but Ward gives the impression that they supported the children by other means available to them. During a reading lesson, for example, the teacher boots one of the girls in the stomach with full force because she cannot control her stuttering. Although the girls are scared to tell someone as they are never to speak ill of their teachers, the nuns take notice of it for the obvious pain the girl is in at bedtime and decide to initiate reading lessons in the evenings.

Rejection, humiliation and racism of the public sphere are also ubiquitous in the Bigelow household and neighbourhood. There, as opposed to the mission, however, Glenyse is all on her own with nobody to help. To cope with the hegemonic and supercilious attitude of the Bigelows, Ward mimics the posh behaviour of her employers, thereby subverting the imposed hierarchy and depriving them of their presumed authority. “The servant uses the techniques of carnival,” Day explains, “the reversal of roles and temporary suspension of authority [...] to destabilise the inner-sanctum of the Bigelows' meticulously-kept home” (19).

2.1.4.5 Isolation

When reading *Wandering Girl*, Glenyse's isolation at the Bigelows' farm is striking. After being constantly surrounded by other children at the mission and sharing every room with them, she appears to be not only entirely alone, but also dislocated and displaced, with feelings of incompleteness repeatedly taking over. Hardly any of the Bigelow family members are mentioned in the text, and Ward's narration furthermore creates the impression that Mrs Bigelow, her mistress, is the only person of the family who talks to her at all. Conversation between the two of them, however, is limited to Mrs Bigelow "yoohooing out" (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 51) to her nameless servant to give her "a fierce tirade of orders" (Ward, *Wandering Girl* 13) or to reprimand her. Glenyse gradually manages to overcome the isolation when she first befriends the lady from the candy store in town, later the farmhand Bill, who is also a marginalised individual far away from his mother country Scotland, and eventually even another girl from Wandering Mission whom she constantly used to fight with during her childhood.

2.2 Rita Huggins

2.2.1 Author's biography

Rita Huggins was born in Central Queensland in 1921 as a member of the Bidjara-Pitjara tribe. Her people lived in the area of what is now considered Carnarvon Gorge within Carnarvon National Park, located 370 miles northwest of Brisbane. Rita was just a small child when troopers attacked and demolished the settlement and forced everybody on an open cattle truck. Rita and her parents were taken to Barambah Reserve, better known under its later name Cherbourg, where she had to attend school from the age of eight but otherwise was allowed to stay with her parents. When she was twelve years old, Rita was separated from her parents and sent to live in the children's dormitory. "It was pretty rare to have escaped this experience for so long" (Huggins & Huggins 27), she admits. She received a year of domestic training before she was sent out to work for a white family, suffering greatly from the maltreatment by her employers.

In 1942 Huggins gave birth to her first child Marion (Mutoo) whom she had to leave in her parents' care due to her placement in domestic service. Four years later, she filed for exemption which was granted to her. Pregnant with her second daughter Gloria June, terrified that she would have to surrender into the restrictions of reserve life again, and above all for fear of her family's reaction to another illegitimate child, she "did the disappearing act" (Huggins & Huggins 45) and ran away to stay with a friend in Mackay. Even though she was able to find a job where she could take her baby with her, Huggins got back to Cherbourg in 1949 as she was homesick and missed her family.

Working as a domestic in Brisbane, she met Jack Huggins whom she married in 1951. They moved to Ayr and had three children together, the girls Ngaire and Jackie and a son named John. The family led a happy life until tragedy struck in 1958 when

Jack died of a heart attack following a stroke. Rita moved back to Brisbane where she and her children were living on the superannuation fund and war widow's pension of their late husband and father. Rita, however, could not cope with the loss of her beloved husband who was only 38 years old when he passed away. Swallowed up by grief she went out almost every night and spent the money hand over fist on alcohol and parties. Her careless attitude and inability to budget eventually got the family evicted from their home, followed by restless years of moving back and forth in Brisbane.

During the 1960s, Huggins became actively involved in the burgeoning Aboriginal protest working for an organisation named "One People of Australia League" (OPAL), an experience and a task making her life meaningful again. "OPAL gave me the strength to survive my problems" (Huggins & Huggins 86), she asserts. In the early 1970s she was travelling Queensland, busy doing research on the serious shortcomings of Aboriginal education for a university project. But it was the fatal car accident of her daughter Gloria which finally marked a watershed in her life, as it made her assume the mother's role for her orphaned grandchildren. Only then did she put a halt to her habitual socialising and drinking. "The children were more important to me, and I was afraid of losing them. I had to give them a decent home and stop the gypsy life that my children had led" (Huggins & Huggins 105), she explains.

Rita Huggins died in 1996, only two years after the publication of her critically acclaimed autobiography *Auntie Rita*, a book she had written in collaboration with her daughter Jackie and with the assistance of their editor Alison Ravenscroft.

2.2.2 Summary of *Auntie Rita*

Following an introductory chapter that will be referred to below, Huggins begins her autobiography with her abduction from her native country to a state controlled Aboriginal settlement in Cherbourg. She describes how her tribe has to endure a journey on an open truck during wintertime for several days and nights, and how families become torn apart as the authorities segregate the people according to their skin colour. The older people are unloaded in Woorabinda, because "the officials [...] wanted to keep 'wild bush Blacks' on these reserves" (Huggins & Huggins 10), and those remaining are taken further on to Cherbourg, as "the government people thought that

those of us who looked whiter would more easily assimilate than the darker ones” (Huggins & Huggins 11). Rita's parents, Rosie and Albert Holt, are both considered half-castes, and from a segment of Rita's family tree which is provided at the beginning of the book one can discern that they both were born to an Aboriginal mother and a white father. In other words, both of Rita's grandfathers are whitemen.

Cherbourg is described as a dismal place, as a “prison” and “concentration camp” (Huggins & Huggins 12) for Aboriginal people, set in a sparsely vegetated arid flat country entirely different to the paradisaical surroundings of Carnarvon Gorge where Rita Huggins was born. At Cherbourg, Rita's family is forbidden to use their tribal names and native tongue¹², and daily life is highly regimented. Aboriginal people living there have to apply for a permit if they want to leave the settlement which in most of the cases is only granted for employment contracts. The government provides blankets, clothes, cleaning implements and fortnightly rations, though hardly enough to last for more than a few days and consisting of “anything bad for health [...] and very little of any nutritional value” (Huggins & Huggins 19). To make ends meet the women and children rummage for useful materials on Murgon's rubbish dump, a white town settlement 3 miles from Cherbourg, whereas the men go hunting with spears and boomerangs.

Huggins speaks with great appreciation of her parents and the childhood she had with them. She describes her mother as a diligent housekeeper and careful administrator of what little money they owned. Being a mother of 14 children, Rosie Holt is also overly protective of her offspring. Keeping informed through the Aboriginal grapevine, she only knows too well of all “the terrible things [the whites] did to [their] people like shooting, poisoning and, the worst crime, taking [their] children from [them]” (Huggins & Huggins 20). Rita's father is portrayed as uncontradicted head of the family, and as a strong-minded, self-confident, proud and rebellious Aboriginal man, who “was called a stirrer by white officials because of his outspoken views and his arguments for better conditions” (Huggins & Huggins 24), and who “never had and wasn't about to bow down to any whiteman” (Huggins & Huggins 21–22). He is strict and rigid in his standards of loyalty, reliability, honesty, respect, pride and humanity when it comes to

¹² It is a fate they share with other indigenous people from more than a hundred different areas who were also forcibly relocated to Cherbourg (see Evans 140). Restrictions like these caused not only the loss of cultural heritage, which is an integral part of Aboriginal identity, but eventually also resulted in the extinction of most of the unique languages of the indigenous population of Queensland.

the moral conduct of his children, and merciless in his disciplining. Rita tells of one instance where she received beatings with a stockwhip for stealing a peach from one of the neighbour's trees which were so serious that she later had to be hospitalised. When in her adult years she returns to Cherbourg with her second illegitimate child, her father refuses her to stay with them and sends her to live in the dormitory for single mothers, "because he [considers her] a disgrace to the family" (Huggins & Huggins 47).

The third chapter in *Auntie Rita* is dedicated to Rita's employment as domestic servant. Being only 13 years old, she is sent more than 370 miles east to work for a pastoralist family in Charleville. Huggins explains that parents never had any say in when and where their children were placed. Picked up by black policemen and equipped with a new set of clothes "to look respectable" (Huggins & Huggins 36), she is sent into service in 1934. "We were like spare parts for cars, things to be used when needed, replaced when necessary" (Huggins & Huggins 36), she writes. She describes the duties she has to tend to, starting at the crack of dawn and plodding until late at night, with never a day off and hardly any time for herself. "The days were long and tiring and never changed. [...] We were made to act like grown-ups and to have grown-up responsibilities before our time. Child slave-labour in many ways" (Huggins & Huggins 37–39), she sums up. Rita is given the possibility to move closer to her family when the Cherbourg superintendent Mr Semple acquires a house in a suburb of Brisbane and she is asked to work there. She willingly accepts, as the Semples have always been sincere in their attitude towards the Aboriginal residents and Rita is treated with decency and respect while being in their service.

Following the birth of her first daughter and the realisation that she is pregnant again, Rita pleads with the Director of Native Affairs to be granted exemption. She provides copies of the application forms which were filled in by Mr Semple and which in her opinion contained questions that were "nosey and insulting" (Huggins & Huggins 44). The files, for example, asked the employers to comment on the child's character, behaviour and cleanliness and whether they believed the person in question was "intelligent enough," but also what the "breed" of the parents was and if the child was born in wedlock (see Huggins & Huggins 49–50).

Huggins then tells us how she started going out with Jack, their romantic love relationship and the weekend she introduces him to her parents and her father's bidding

advice that she should “be a f. good woman to him” (Huggins & Huggins 53). Due to her exemption, Rita needs formal permission to be allowed on the reserve to visit her family and even has to pay for their accommodation. “It was like booking into a minus minus five-star motel” (Huggins & Huggins 53), she illustrates. Unknown to Rita and her mother, Jack, who is a free man and has never been confined to living on a reserve, has also smuggled several bottles of beer and rum into Cherbourg, a severe offence which could have gotten him into prison as alcohol was strictly forbidden on any Aboriginal reserve. When Huggins writes about the “magical times” (Huggins & Huggins 61) she had with Jack, the pain she suffered when losing him is ever-present. “There have been men in my life since Jack,” she admits. “But I would never meet anyone to match him and have never remarried. For to have married would be to say goodbye to Jack completely and I could never have lived with that. He is always with me in spirit. I think and talk about him every day” (Huggins & Huggins 64).

The premature death of her husband completely throws her off the track. “I was grieving beyond relief for my precious husband. My life felt like one big, empty hole with no way to climb out” (Huggins & Huggins 65), she remembers. She moves back to Brisbane, but getting accustomed to living in the city and being a widowed mother with three children under the age of three proves to be too much for her to come to square with. Unable to handle the pain, she seeks for diversion. Leaving her children in the care of her teenage daughter Gloria, she is out to drink and amuse herself whenever she has money at hand:

I never learnt the value of money and how to make it last until the next pay. It was in one hand and out the other, all in a matter of days. I'd get so excited the day before pay day and never really plan how to spend it. All I knew was that soon I would be having a good time. My fortnightly thrill was coming up and I would look forward to the next one. (Huggins & Huggins 71)

Most of what she acquires she agrees to pay by instalments, only to hide when the bill collectors come around who would then let out their frustration on the children who keep telling them that their mother is not at home. Reflecting on this period of her life, she ashamedly admits: “Little did I realise how in those days I was neglecting my children [...], my priorities were solely about me and my life. I was so busy having a good time [...]. My children paid the price, but I couldn't see it. As long as I was having fun, who cared?” (Huggins & Huggins 69–70).

Towards the middle of the book, Huggins inserts a chapter about her work for OPAL, an organisation which started making Aboriginal peoples' concerns the focus of public attention. She explains how OPAL not only helped her to overcome her feelings of loneliness, for she finally felt that her efforts were greatly needed and highly appreciated, but also how it strengthened her self-confidence and her pride of being of Aboriginal origin. "Instead of being made to feel ashamed of our identity, [...] I could use my Aboriginality as a force" (Huggins & Huggins 87), she remembers. "In OPAL was the first time I remember ever speaking up and being heard by others" (Huggins & Huggins 90). She shares her personal memories of events she had organised or attended, but also writes fondly of the many people she had been friends with and of their involvement in OPAL or similar organisations. She praises their willingness to participate actively in the fight for their peoples' rights, acknowledging the strain and workload it implied. "At that time for so many Aboriginal people just surviving was a big enough effort. To find the extra energy for this kind of unpaid work was the most unselfish thing anyone could do," (Huggins & Huggins 90) she expounds.

The second half of the book consists of a variety of issues which intermingle: they concern her family and friends, her cultural heritage and the social fabric of Aboriginal communities. Parts of chapters deal with Huggins' family life following the tragic death of her daughter Gloria. She tells of the long rehabilitation of her son John, who had also been seriously hurt in the car accident, and the responsibility she has to take over for her grandchildren. She describes the wedding of her other daughter Ngaire, cherishes her son-in-law and also speaks proudly and fondly of their three sons. She refers to the death and funeral of her beloved mother and how painful this loss was for her, and mourns the decease of her grandson Kenny, who died of asthma when he was only 18 years old. Towards the end of the book she briefly mentions the first Holt family reunion which about a 150 members of her family attended.

In several of the chapters in the second half of the book, she refers to the impact white interference has had on Aboriginal communities: She states how Cherbourg, the settlement where she grew up, has been neglected by the government for years. As a result, people living there nowadays have to cope with alcohol and drug related problems. She writes of young men she knew who were put into jail or died young for their risky behaviour and of the sorrow this caused their families. She is sad about the

untimely and sometimes violent deaths of people who have been dear to her, and complains about the impersonal church services which have so little in common with their traditional way of celebrating funerals of which so little knowledge has survived. Huggins also mentions the vast increase of domestic violence in indigenous families: “Aboriginal families would know about it from their own experience. Mine is no exception. We've had it very close. Two of my granddaughters are going through it right this minute. It happens everywhere. No family would not be touched by it” (Huggins & Huggins 133).¹³

In one of the later chapters Huggins approvingly mentions Aboriginal musicals, theatre productions and festivals she is very fond of, and the many conferences dealing with the current issues of Aboriginal people. She is glad that improvements have finally been made in Cherbourg, even if it was only for the sake of the Commonwealth Games and the tourists coming to Brisbane who want to visit a genuine Aboriginal reserve. To her it seems that the corroborees, which are held there, are not merely a tourist attraction but a means of keeping the culture alive at this place.

The last passage of the book is not listed in the table of contents and is entitled “Having the Last Say.” This appears appropriate, as Rita has mentioned earlier in the book that she always has to have the last say in everything. In this final section she describes how she made her peace with Barcudgel Station, the place where she had first been sent to as a domestic servant. “Something was calling me to it” (Huggins & Huggins 155), she remembers. In 1991, five years before her death, she is determined to find the farm when she is on a visit to friends in Cunnamulla, 125 miles south of Charleville. She manages to work out the address and to find the property, although

¹³ According to the *Little Children Are Sacred* report, family violence “has become such an accepted behaviour in Aboriginal communities that it is now an integral part of children's socialisation and this acceptance has now been normalised and crossed generations” (BIPACSA 199). Although the report has its emphasis on sexual child abuse, it also tries to specify the reasons for domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in general. With regard to the findings given in the report, the causes that lie behind it are both social and cultural: Family and community relationships are continually breaking down, as are traditional customs and laws, and the traditional ways of child rearing have mostly been disrupted. Children lack consistent care for the absence of parents or other community members which would usually have been in charge of their socialisation. Instead of being led into autonomy, children grow up in a state of anarchy. They become disrespectful, unruly and lawless, as they never experience peace and good order. In many cases, there are no longer custodians of traditional knowledge and the cultural heritage has been lost. Therefore, ceremonial initiation practices which would have promoted the responsibility and discipline of the adolescents do not take place any more. Although present-day governments are trying hard to take action to counteract the increasing presence of family violence, it is a remedy to the symptoms rather than the cause. The damage that had been inflicted is too severe to be cured and the programs installed once again consist of white authorial restrictions instead of guidance sympathetic to Aboriginal people's needs.

there are only ruins left as most of it has been burnt down by a bushfire. Her return there is very emotional, with many painful memories coming back to her:

I saw my life pass before me on that day, at that special place. The memories and the tears came flooding back. I had mixed feelings. I thought about how the white people had treated us and how they misunderstood us and still do today. I thought about how they could never keep us down. But more, I thought about being given the privilege of being born Aboriginal. (Huggins & Huggins 157)

2.2.3 Analysis of *Auntie Rita*

2.2.3.1 *Layout*

The book binding of *Auntie Rita* is in dark orange. The cover shows two photographs of an aged and white-haired Rita Huggins, which melt with a blurred background. The picture in the left bottom corner is a close-up and placed in the foreground, the one in the top right corner is a medium shot and set one layer behind. In both photographs Rita does not directly face the camera but gazes sideways and upwards into the distance. The look on her face is worried in one picture, but hopeful in the other.

Auntie Rita has 160 pages and is divided into twelve main chapters plus a foreword by Lillian Holt, an unnumbered introductory chapter, and Rita's "Last Say." It provides a copy of the Holt-Conway family tree as it had been recorded by the anthropologist Norman Tindale in 1938 in the beginning of the book, a glossary of words in the back, and a map of Cherbourg. The text itself is interspersed with many private photographs showing Rita, members of her family and her friends. Private letters are quoted within the text and official forms are reproduced as copied images.

2.2.3.2 *Inter-generational collaboration and separation of voices*

Auntie Rita can be considered as a rather unique book because it is the first Stolen Generation autobiography which has been collaboratively written by an Aboriginal mother and her daughter. How this came about is explained in the introductory chapter: According to Jackie, her wish to record her mother's autobiography was "born out of so many years of [their] talking" (Huggins & Huggins 3). After many conversations, Jackie

recorded her mother's stories on tape and tried to transcribe them, not only transforming the spoken words into what she felt was adequate written language, but also rearranging Rita's memories into a linear, coherent and monological narration. In the process of writing, however, Jackie experienced a number of obstacles which impeded her project.

For one thing, she could not truly reproduce her mother's voice, as she was scared of the way a white audience might perceive Rita. In an attempt to protect her mother's voice from being vulnerable, she initially began to polish it up and make it more accessible and more acceptable to white readers, but at the same time deprived it of its individuality and its raw energy so characteristic of Rita's words. The other thing that frustrated Jackie was the fact that she often disagreed with her mother's way of viewing and presenting her life and simply could not hold herself back from commenting on different topics and episodes of Rita's life. A solution to this dilemma was provided by their editor Alison Ravenscroft, who had become close friends with Rita, sharing almost a mother-daughter like relationship with her. Ravenscroft suggested that Jackie should write the book in two separate voices, clearly demarcating them by the use of different fonts. The end result is a dialogic text, an intergenerational autobiography in which Rita is the primary narrator of her life and Jackie participates with inserting comments, but to some extent also provides her own life story. They have also made the decision to leave the "Pitjara, Wakka Wakka and Aboriginal ways of talking" unchanged as they are their "natural way of speech" (Huggins & Huggins 3) and to provide a glossary at the end of the book. Jackie finally hopes that "[t]he separation of voices [...] will [...] prove to be one of the book's strengths" (Huggins & Huggins 3), and she asserts: "Now I am not speaking for my mother but to her, with her, and about her" (Huggins & Huggins 3).

2.2.3.3 *Rita's voice—Jackie's voice*

As already said, Rita narrates the story of her life, and she surprisingly does so in a lively way and with little bitterness for the unjust treatment she has received. Her voice is pragmatic and calm and consistently remains so throughout the book. Jackie, however, has to adopt a variety of speaking positions and makes use of a range of registers. As a historian she adds a meta-narrative, thus explaining the historical and political background in an academic voice. As activist she is angry and aims to put her mother's memories in the perspective of today's society. As daughter she speaks gently and reassuringly, often directly responding to her mother, but she is also wounded and

sometimes needs to clarify matters on her behalf. With regard to Rita's "[g]rand days" (Huggins & Huggins 68) of excessive partying, she comments: "I hurt a lot about the bad old days [...]. Writing about them has proved an extraordinary healing process for me and I'm sure you won't mind me telling a few yarns" (Huggins & Huggins 70). She goes on illustrating how neglected and constantly hungry she and her brother and sisters were and how they had to walk to school barefoot and dressed in rags, while her mother "[got] done up perfectly and rush[ed] off into town [...], always immaculately decked out like a queen, with dress, jewellery, handbag and shoes all matching" (Huggins & Huggins 71).

2.2.3.4 *Generation conflicts*

As mentioned before, Jackie often disagreed with Rita's opinion, and sometimes this tension becomes very obvious in the dynamic nature of the text. In the introductory chapter Jackie admits: "During the book's writing, we have had many arguments (fighting with our tongues, as Rita calls it) and some of this has not been resolved, continues and remains evident in these pages" (Huggins & Huggins 3). According to Brennan, this kind of tension was inevitable, for the book grew out of a collaborative process between a mother and a daughter, "whereby Rita is afforded respectful authority as the elder Aboriginal woman and mother, and Jackie has to negotiate a complicated set of speaking positions" (157).

In many instances, the reason for the tension between the two women can simply be accounted for by their difference in age, the generational gap between a mother born in 1921, who has been mission-raised, and a daughter who has been born free more than a quarter of a century later. In the meantime, the political groundings have changed, and Rita's and Jackie's perspectives and positioning manifest vastly different throughout the book. For Rita, being black carries the negative connotation of society's prejudice, whereas Jackie assures that her generation has reclaimed its Aboriginal heritage with pride.

In sharing her memories with the reader, Rita admits that her being sent to the dormitory at the age of twelve was a punishment for speaking to boys. About a year later she and a friend had their heads shaved and were imprisoned for a week with rations of bread and water for the same offence. "Just because we spoke to the boys, the

officials thought we were doing niggi niggi [making love],” Rita explains, and she agrees that “we deserved what we got because we didn't do what we were told. Sneaking around and talking to boys and all that business” (Huggins & Huggins 27–28). This is emphatically denied by her daughter Jackie: “No, Mum, non of youse deserved it. They brainwashed you into believing you were responsible and it was your fault. It was about white paternalistic control and surveillance” (Huggins & Huggins 29).

Jackie's reflections on single motherhood provide another telling example. She assures that her mother had no other choice than leaving her first daughter Mutoo in the care of her parents, for she was indentured to work on the station with no possibility to take her child with her. Talking about her own experiences, she admits to have initially been ashamed about the absence of the child's father and that raising her son alone has been a financial struggle. But she also affirms that for her, “being a single mother has meant independence, freedom, choice, acclaim, unreserved happiness, status and power over [her] own life” (Huggins & Huggins 48), a chance Rita had never been afforded with. Responding to her mother, Jackie further acknowledges, “being a single, Black and penniless pregnant woman in your time was your greatest test and punishment” (Huggins & Huggins 48).

2.2.3.5 Disagreement on readership and topic

Another aspect of tension in the book arises out of its intended readership. In *Sister Girl*, Jackie remembers how her mother insisted on the book being her story, primarily written down for her daughters, her family, and the Aboriginal community, with the book's style, language and contents meeting this purpose. According to Rita, “[t]his means no big words, little (conscious) politics, and [her] story” (Huggins 47). On some occasions, Jackie behaves as respectful daughter, responding to her mother in a spirit of gratitude and reassurance, facilitating her mother's healing with her deep and sincere love. But she also admits that “[her] ego [took] a bruising” (Huggins 47), for as a writer and historian, Jackie wants to reach a broader readership. She wants the book to be more than a story within the familial reach, she wants it to be a political document, a powerful statement challenging the white readership to ponder on the still ever-present negative effects of more than two centuries of colonial rule.

In addition to their disagreement on the readership of *Auntie Rita*, they are also divided over the topic of the book. Jackie wants to include the distressing episodes of Rita's life, whereas Rita feels embarrassed and is reluctant to issue these painful memories. "There are some parts of my life that I probably didn't want to have in the book," Rita admits, "because to me they are shame jobs. But they are part of the story and Jackie tells me, in her loving way, that I don't need to feel ashamed" (Huggins & Huggins 2). Jackie makes the point that her mother's experience is typical of the common history shared by many Aboriginal women, and Rita agrees with her daughter that "[her] story is not rare among Aboriginal women" (Huggins & Huggins 2). Concerning this, Jackie feels the urgent need to address Aboriginal readers who may not be aware that what had happened to them was no solitary case. She aims to point out that generations of Aboriginal women should not resign themselves to this manifest injustice of 20th-century Australia, but should realize that it was an orchestrated policy utterly disregarding their human rights. "These events should be exposed so that we might have another view of Aboriginal labour history than the gross distortions that present those years as a golden age" (Huggins & Huggins 36), she argues.

Therefore, Jackie tells us about the appalling and cruel treatment her mother received during one of her early placements as domestic servant. She had not been aware of that fact until one day it accidentally came to her ears that Rita's parents were anxious to have their daughter removed from one particular employer, as they feared the severe beatings Rita received might eventually have led to her death. For Rita, this seems to be one of the "shame jobs" (Huggins & Huggins 2) she has referred to earlier, for she does not make any mention of it in the text. "My mother does not want to talk even to me about the kinds of bitter treatment she experienced," Jackie says about her mother's reticence. "I respect that, but I will not forget nor forgive the people who inflicted that pain" (Huggins & Huggins 36).

2.2.3.6 Healing

Jackie also touches upon a difficulty many victims of Australia's assimilationist policies have to come to terms with, namely guilt and shame. Both feelings "are manifest in women who have suffered like this," she asserts, "and there is a self-blaming that makes them see their situations as their fault, or the fault of their race" (Huggins & Huggins 36). To understand why this is the case it might be helpful to

consider what causes shame and guilt in the first place. According to common definitions collected and elucidated by Wong & Tsai (see 210–211), a person experiences shame or guilt if he or she is negatively evaluated, an assessment which can come from others as well as from the self. In order to judge whether a person has behaved in an inappropriate or undesirable way, certain norms and standards are consulted. These are usually closely related to a certain culture and its ideas and practices which have been derived over time and transmitted by society. In the eyes of the white colonisers, Aboriginal people have constantly violated their superior cultural models. Aboriginal people have therefore and without cease been accused of behaving in a wrong or bad way by the whites who were never reticent in voicing their negative opinions. People who have been made to experience shame and guilt consider themselves as defective and are very anxious not to expose this to others. They internalise their anger, withdraw themselves and actively avoid the issues which are causing them shame.

Jackie is convinced that “[t]he sense of guilt will remain as a terrible weight to be carried all their lives unless they can allow themselves to challenge and speak it” (Huggins & Huggins 36). Rita's reluctance indicates that the anguish her memories are causing her is still very vivid and undigested. “There are [...] things that I just cannot speak about because they are too painful to remember. These things I must keep to myself” (Huggins & Huggins 2), Rita declares in the introductory chapter. Nevertheless, Jackie is trying hard to convince her mother to disclose her experiences, for justice demands it and for the benefit of those who have suffered from similar injustices and must handle the trauma inflicted on them all by themselves. Jackie is also acutely aware of the fact that her aim of facilitating healing for the Stolen Generations is a race against time. “Recording and publishing the memories of elderly Aboriginals is an especially urgent task, otherwise important aspects of Australian history that our elders can pass on will be lost forever” (Huggins & Huggins 5–6), she states.

Not only does *Auntie Rita* negotiate racial healing, but in a broader sense also healing on a national scale. According to Brennan, “[i]n publishing their private conversations, the Huggins women seek to bridge the rift of understanding between many Black and white Australians” (159). Due to Rita's testimony and Jackie's comments, readers can gain an understanding of how Aboriginal people have been

affected by government policies of the past two centuries, but also how the negative influences are still lingering on until today.

The most powerful passages, however, are those where healing happens on the personal scale. Parts of the book are deeply intimate pieces, where Jackie's address to her mother is personal and similar to a private conversation. Examples for this are the instances already mentioned above, where Jackie reassures her mother that she is not to blame for leaving her first-born with her parents, and that she was not guilty of any offence when she was imprisoned for talking to boys. Rita is convinced there are certain things in her past her children have never forgiven her for. But Jackie ascertains that "the bad old days [...] are gone now" (Huggins & Huggins 70). She is grateful to her mother for the fact that in a time of adversity she decided to keep her children and raise them herself, when she could just as well have sent them all to foster homes. "[W]e love and respect you for that" (Huggins & Huggins 73), Jackie tells her mother. "I believe these are the hard years that have added and made you the person that you are today. No one is perfect, as you've always told me. You need not feel ashamed anymore" (Huggins & Huggins 73), she consoles Rita. "All I want to say to you is that it's okay. All your children and grandchildren love you, understand you and forgive you" (Huggins & Huggins 48).

2.2.3.7 Omissions and silences

Although the Huggins women have disclosed their private conversation of healing, their confessions and forgiveness, to a public forum when writing and publishing *Auntie Rita*, the reader cannot help but notice a number of omissions and silences in the book. Rita, for example, does not say a word about the father of her first two children. We never get to know who he is or what the circumstances were under which Rita got pregnant. That is, we do not know whether Rita had been in any kind of loving relationship with this man, or if she had been in a state of dependency. It is even possible that he had forced himself on her and it might also be the case that she conceived the elder two of her children from two different men. In any case, Rita does not convey the impression that the father or the fathers kept in any contact with her or the children in later life. Concerning the loss of her family members, Rita refers to the death of her husband and her mother as being the two major tragedies of her life. She describes the funeral of her mother and also of other people dear to her, but she never

talks about Gloria's burial or how she felt after losing her daughter, except for the burden of taking over responsibility for Gloria's children.

Rita's silences can at times be challenging. Brennan (161) argues that especially Western readers often demand the subject of life writing to disclose absolutely everything. It is only then that a readership can validate an autobiography as authentic or true, as omissions would lead them to evaluate the author as dishonest. Rita seems to be aware of this, for in the beginning of *Auntie Rita* she makes it quite clear that she is willing to accept a certain amount of exposure even though it causes her discomfort. However, she will not satisfy the public's voyeuristic greed by a public display of all her "shame jobs" (Huggins & Huggins 2), that is all the experiences so embarrassing to her. Her silences could be attributable to a number of reasons:

Her refusal to talk about the cruel treatment she received as young domestic servant might be indicative of denial caused by intense trauma. Concealment of the identity of Mutoo's and Gloria's father(s) might secure a certain degree of self-respect and autonomy, especially when keeping in mind what young unmarried women had to endure when they came back to the reserves pregnant. Usually they had to submit to a demeaning and insulting interview, being asked nose-y and disgusting questions about the further particulars of their conception, all of which would go straight into the file that was kept on them. So when Rita refuses to give away private and intimate details of her life, it could also be considered a form of resistance against a society and government which controlled, regimented and dictated every aspect of Aboriginal people's lives. Rita is also aware of her ethical responsibility for the Aboriginal community, and she is sensitive to the difficulty of confessing her failures and drawing attention to the general dysfunction of Aboriginal society nowadays. Probably considering the white readership, Rita employs a degree of self-censorship to prevent racist prejudice from being fuelled, as she does not want to promote racial stereotypes even more. "I don't want to condemn my people. [...] I don't like to speak ill of it too much. [...] There are services available where you can go to speak to people about it. But, sadly, if we talk about it, it can be used against us, too" (Huggins & Huggins 131–133), she remarks.

2.2.3.8 Identity and heritage

One of the chapters in *Auntie Rita* is entitled “Journeying” where Rita gives an account of her travels to the Northern Territory and to New Zealand. Although in the first place it only looks like a description of the things she has done, the places she has visited and the people she has met, it is also the discovery that part of her family's heritage and identity has been lost forever. When she spends time with a group of Aboriginal people in the Kimberleys, she is astonished how comfortable and happy they are with their lives, and “feel[s] a sense of belonging, of being known” (Huggins & Huggins 119). She argues that this must be for the reason that they had not been forced to leave their native country and to give up their traditional way of life, but have been able to preserve their culture and to pass it on to future generations.

Rita also describes an experience she and Jackie have when they are in New Zealand for a holiday: They are on a coach tour with people from all over the world, and Huggins remembers a “Yankie tourist” addressing them: “He asked us 'what' we were and when I said we were Aboriginal he shook his head in disbelief and said he's just been to Australia and, no, we weren't” (Huggins & Huggins 127). To Rita, this is evidence that her people are still not accepted in their own land by whites who pretend to know which model a “real” Aborigine has to comply with.

In 1988 Huggins and her daughter Jackie spend two months in Ti Tree, a small town in the Northern Territory approximately 120 miles north of Alice Springs. Jackie is working as a teacher there after having finished her university degree and a diploma in Aboriginal education. Rita is looking after Jackie's young son in the meantime. She writes how wary the native people in Ti Tree are in their attitude towards them, and how hard it is for Jackie and her to become accepted:

It was then that I realised how different we were, not only to the whites in town, but to the Aboriginal people. I am sure they saw Jackie as a white person because she was a teacher and couldn't speak her own language apart from the Aboriginal English we use between ourselves. For the first time in Jackie's life she suffered from an identity crisis — she was too black to be white and too white to be Black. And I am not sure they knew what to think of me. Here I was, this little old granny looking after a small boy but still very different from them. (Huggins & Huggins 124)

Jackie's return to the place where her mother had been born was a momentous experience adding to her sense of identity and her feeling of belonging. This is how she expresses her conviction in *Auntie Rita*:

The land of my mother and my maternal grandmother is my land, too. It will be passed down to my children and successive generations, spiritually, in the manner that has been carried on for thousands of years. [...] Like most Aboriginal people, it is my deeply held belief that we came from this land, hence the term 'the land is my mother'. The land is our birthing place, our cradle; it offers us connection with the creatures, the trees, the mountains and the rivers, and all living things. There are no stories of migration in our dreamtime stories. Our creation stories link us intrinsically to the earth. We are born of the earth, and when we die our body and spirit go back there. This is why land is so important to us, no matter where and when we were born. (Huggins & Huggins 13)

What Jackie aims to explain is that this mystical connection with the land exists since the beginning of time, it was laid down in universal laws at the time of creation. Aboriginal people are connected not only to landforms and watercourses, but also to plant life and species. They experience these links as holistic and tangible, as totemic relationships with eternal ancestral beings. Everything is composed of the similar substance, with living humans, deities and all that exists in nature being made of the same matter. During their life, Aboriginal people are obliged to preserve the traditional law and to take responsibility for these relationships with the land, as they are accountable for what is done to it. And when an Aboriginal person finally dies, ceremonies and rituals are practised to ensure that the spirit of the deceased can return to its birthplace and hence be reborn (see Grieves 12–14 and “Aboriginal Culture - Aboriginal Religion and Ceremony”).

2.2.3.9 Searching government files

Another important aspect victims of Australia's assimilationist policies have to deal with concerns the search into the files which have been kept on Aboriginal people, especially those who have been removed from their family as children. In *Auntie Rita* Jackie points out the two main issues that people who want to gain insight into their files have to handle: for one thing the difficulty to obtain access, and for another thing the emotional turmoil that is triggered when reading the files.

The HREOC inquiry dedicates a whole chapter to the topic of searching for government files (see 281–309). The report points out the many obstacles Aboriginal people have to face, starting with the fact that in many cases the records simply do not exist any more, for they have been destroyed—either intentionally or by accident—or got lost. If files still exist, they may be very hard to locate, buried in archives with inscrutable indexing systems. And even if the storage place could be made out, access to the documents is probably denied. Speaking of her own experience, Jackie is indignant that “[t]hese gatekeepers,” as she calls the public servants, “behaved as if the files were their personal property whereas they are in fact part of my people's inheritance, part of a history that remains to be recovered and claimed” (Huggins & Huggins 5).

This may sound perfectly right from a moral and non-judicial point of view, the legal situation, however, proves to be entirely different. According to the *Bringing Them Home* report, the files in question are not owned by the people they concern, but still belong to the agencies which created them in the first place, or to the departments which succeeded them. These can be numerous, and apart from the obvious such as protection boards or welfare departments can also include records made by the police or by hospitals, by adoption agencies or education departments, or by churches and religious missions. Therefore, any person who wants to see his or her files first has to ask for permission from all of the agencies involved. If the files include information about other family members as well, then their consent is needed, too. In cases where people who have been forcibly removed at a young age seek to find out their parents' identities, they find themselves trapped in a catch-22 situation when the parents whose permission they would need are unknown to them or, even worse, dead. Even though several states have now passed legislation which warrants the right to have access to personal information, these laws are rather restricted, including only few personal details which must be disclosed, and require a formal procedure which can be costly and exceedingly time-consuming. No nationwide uniform law exists, and there may be up to three different statutes simultaneously operating in one state. When people want files to be retrieved, they have to specifically name the document they want to see, as no government office would provide the whole collection of records. Another matter why attempts to trace one's roots are often bound to fail is the fact that as a rule family information is never supplied (see HREOC 281–309).

Jackie does not say which formalities she and her mother had to comply with when they first enquired to see Rita's file, but she informs the reader that the necessity arose during the writing of *Auntie Rita*, and she describes her experience of accessing her mother's file as follows: "I was made to watch across a huge desk as two white public servants turned the pages. Watch, not touch. The men stopped at various pages and read them, and made comments to each other that I couldn't hear" (Huggins & Huggins 4–5). She goes on to narrate how a white friend was easily given access and with bitter sarcasm remarks: "He was taken to be a credentialed researcher whereas I am dismissed as just another Blackfella wanting to know some family roots" (Huggins & Huggins 5). It was only thanks to a sympathetic Aboriginal staff member that Jackie and her mother could eventually see the file which had been compiled on Rita over the years.

Finally, after having overcome all the administrative barriers, the other problematic issue in searching one's government files becomes apparent in *Auntie Rita*. As Jackie remembers:

We had been forewarned that the file could contain hurtful material and to remember the times in which it was written and the paternalistic nature of those who wrote it. [...] But nothing could really have prepared my mother for the experience of reading her files. The first entry is 1942 and the last 1974—thirty-two years of surveillance. (Huggins & Huggins 5)

Rita's and Jackie's experience is an example for what most people are confronted with when gaining insight into the documents which had been kept on them. According to HREOC, the language used is racist and derogatory, the overall style and tone are offensive. The report further asserts that reading documents written in such a way is a rather disturbing experience nowadays. Many people are distressed and dismayed when they see the kind of information that has been written down on them. In many cases it contains inaccurate facts, some authority's wild guesses or even lies. The records often include details of a person's life which are of a very private and intimate nature. There may be reports on incidents which had been suppressed or preferably forgotten by those who had experienced them. Being reminded of these incidents, especially in the denigratory language of that time, inevitably causes painful memories to rise which often leads to despair, outrage, or even trauma (see HREOC 281–309). Rita hardly comments on the impact that seeing her files had on her. All she has to say with regard

to this matter is: “It told all the bad things in my life and none of the positive [...]. Anyone would think I was a murderer. [...] There were even comments in the files on the lives of my children who were born free, not on the mission” (Huggins & Huggins 5).

2.3 Doreen Kartinyeri

2.3.1 Author's biography

Doreen Maude Kartinyeri was born on Raukkan, an Aboriginal mission in Point McLeay, in 1935. The settlement was located near the southeastern coast of South Australia, approximately 85 miles from Adelaide, in a region called Coorong, a coastal lagoon system at the mouth of the River Murray, including lakes, islands and peninsulas. Although Kartinyeri has miscellaneous ancestral roots, she considers herself as a descendant of the Ngarrindjeri tribe.

Doreen grew up with her family in a little two room tin hut and attended a school for Aboriginal children on the mission. When she was ten years old, her mother died of complications following the birth of Doreen's younger sister Doris Eileen. Unbeknown to the family, the baby was removed to Colebrook Home for Aboriginal Children in the southern outskirts of Adelaide, and Doreen was soon later made to leave her family and was also taken to Adelaide, albeit to the Salvation Army Girls' Home at Fullarton. When Doreen had just turned 13¹⁴, she was committed to the care of a white family named the Dunns in Charleston, 20 miles outside of Adelaide, where she had been working as housemaid and nanny for slightly more than two years. She then moved to Mrs Dunn's parents in Adelaide for a few months, as their health was declining and Mrs Dunn's mother needed care.

In September 1950, when Doreen was 15½ years old, she could finally return to Raukkan, because her grandmother's health was deteriorating fast and Doreen was needed to look after her younger siblings. To support her family, Doreen took employment as a domestic on Raukkan and for a short period of time became the poorly

¹⁴ According to the date given in *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, Doreen left Fullarton in 1949. This, however, seems to be a mistake in the book, as it is not consistent with Doreen's age, or the time frame, or other dates mentioned in the book. The correct year must therefore be 1948.

paid “little black lackey” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 85) of the superintendent's family. She further mended her wages by weaving reed baskets and mats and by making delicate feather flowers which she sold. During 1951, Doreen became a foster mother for three of her cousins and took even more children into her care when their mothers were in hospital expecting another child. But it was the burden of bothering about her grandmother who was suffering with severe depression which became too much for Doreen, so she decided to move to relatives living on an Aboriginal mission in Point Pearce.

After a series of menial jobs, she got married to Terry Wanganeen in 1954, and in the course of time they had nine children together. Kartinyeri continued to foster other people's children, 23 in total, and she explains her reasons for doing so in *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*: “I started to help others out when there was sickness and death in the family [...] because I still had that bitterness in me about Doris being taken away when Mummy died. [...] So I felt an obligation towards those kids; I didn't want to see them go through what I went through, being taken away and finishing up in a Home” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 108).

During her years at Point Pearce, Kartinyeri developed a close bond with her mother's elder sister Rose Kropinyeri. Aunty Rosie, as she was called, became Kartinyeri's mentor and passed on her knowledge about Aboriginal history and genealogy, and about numerous diversified issues in the context of midwifery. What was to become more important in Kartinyeri's later life was the fact that Rose Kropinyeri also shared with her her secret knowledge of traditional women's ceremonies and of the cultural significance of Hindmarsh Island, a sacred site referred to as Kumarangk by Ngarrindjeri people.

The abolition of Aboriginal Protection and Welfare Boards in 1969 and the repeal of assimilation laws brought along major changes in the lives of Doreen Kartinyeri and other Aboriginal people. The government purchased homes in towns near former Aboriginal settlements and encouraged indigenous people to move there. But to integrate into white society was a hard and often unmanageable task as Aboriginal families living in the cities were often met with terrible prejudice. Doreen and Terry moved to Kapunda with their children, but the infrastructural situation there was insufficient and Doreen felt isolated, for her marriage was at an end and she hardly had

friends and longed for the supportive network of her community. In 1975, Doreen left her husband Terry after 21 years of marriage and moved to Adelaide where she supported teenagers who had absconded from Point Pearce Mission and committed petty crimes.

The 1970s marked the beginning of Kartinyeri's formal genealogical work. In the 15 years before, she had memorised everything her aunt Rose Kropinyeri had told her about her family relations. "By now I was carrying so much information about kinship in my head, it was starting to hurt, so I decided to try and put it down on paper" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 112), Kartinyeri comments on her first attempts of pinning handwritten cards on a partition and connecting them with strings. In 1979 she received funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, but still lacked the scholarly methods to conduct proper scientific work. "The knowledge was there in my head. I just needed to put it on paper and I didn't know how to do that and I didn't know how to search the archives for other materials" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 123), she explains. Due to her vast knowledge of Aboriginal genealogies, she gained access to restricted material, and with the help of university colleagues she learned how to use it which ultimately led to the publication of no less than seven genealogy books between 1983 and 2006.

In early 1994 Kartinyeri got actively involved in the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy, a legal and political dispute concerning the construction of a bridge connecting the island with the mainland near Goolwa.¹⁵ Kartinyeri argued the case for

15 In 1977 Binalong Pty. Ltd., a company owned by the developers Tom and Wendy Chapman, purchased land on the Murray River estuary to build a marina and other associated buildings on Hindmarsh Island. The project was still in its construction phase when it became obvious that it would not be profitable, therefore Binalong Pty. Ltd. planned to increase the size of the original project. This was denied in 1988 as the existing cable ferry would not have been able to handle the additional traffic. A year later, however, permission was granted on the condition that Binalong Pty. Ltd. would bear the costs for construction of a bridge which would connect the mainland with the island. A condition attached to the approval was that the resident indigenous tribes had to be consulted on whether there were any significant mythological sites on the construction area that had to be protected. When building work was about to begin in late 1993/early 1994 the Chapmans were in the belief that they had satisfactorily met this requirement, but it was then that the controversy about secret women's knowledge of sacred Aboriginal sites arose. The preservation of traditional Aboriginal heritage, however, was only a small aspect of the contentious issue of the Hindmarsh Island bridge: At the beginning of the 1990s, Binalong Pty. Ltd. sought assistance from the state government for the company was facing financial straits. Following a series of redeployments of funding and malinvestments of the state in other projects, the South Australian State Bank also ran into financial difficulties, which in turn put pressure on the Labor government that not only had to protect its already effected investments, but also needed the bridge as the only realisable vanity project in the upcoming election campaign. Events, however, ran a disastrous course: The state-owned bank collapsed with a multi-billion dollar debt, and South Australia was legally viable for the whole string of liability

Ngarrindjeri heritage and wanted construction of the bridge to be banned. She claimed to be in possession of traditional knowledge, publicly referred to as “secret women's business”¹⁶, which would provide evidence for the existence of sacred sites that had to be protected. As a consequence, Kartinyeri became embroiled in a debilitating controversy which dragged on until 2001.

During that time, she started suffering with ulcers which soon turned cancerous and led to the surgical removal of most of her stomach. Her illness and the barrage of criticism she had to face took a toll on Kartinyeri. In the second half of 2001 and with her health failing, she approached the historian and cultural heritage consultant Sue Anderson to record her autobiography, and she was already close to death towards the finalisation and publication of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* in 2006. Doreen Kartinyeri died in December 2007, after long and serious illness, at the age of 72 years.

claims, adding up to several hundred million dollars in the worst case. To put it briefly, South Australia was essentially bankrupt on account of a privately owned company that wanted to increase its profits. The public was furious, and in the December 1993 election voted Labor out of office in favour of the Liberals who had promised to stop the bridge when in opposition (see Simons, *The Meeting of the Waters*, Partington, and Goldsworthy). This was the political and economic situation when in early 1994 a thin and wiry elderly Aboriginal woman by the name of Doreen Kartinyeri belligerently entered the stage, claiming that her traditional beliefs prohibited construction work to commence.

16 Indigenous people are still highly secretive about their traditional cultural knowledge (see Eller). Some aspects concerning “secret women's business” that became revealed in the course of investigations and are mentioned or indicated in *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* include the following: Hindmarsh Island and the surrounding wetlands constitute an area which is considered significant for the fertility of Ngarrindjeri women, especially due to the mixing of fresh water river streams with salt water from the open sea, a process which must not be interfered. Kumarangk, Hindmarsh Island's traditional Ngarrindjeri name, is related to the word *kumari* which means pregnant, and when seen from an aerial view the region's shape resembles the anatomy of female reproductive organs. According to Ngarrindjeri beliefs, permanently connecting the island with the mainland would come level with linking bodily organs and therefore entail serious consequences. In Ngarrindjeri mythology the topography of the Fleurieu Peninsula includes remnants of ancient creation figures, and Aboriginal dreamtime stories including those about the Seven Sisters constellation of stars command that there must not be barriers between the sky and the waters of the Goolwa channel. On some places of Hindmarsh Island are traditional Aboriginal burial grounds, where the ritual smoking of the bones of deceased community members was conducted. From the 19th century onward, Kumarangk was also the place where Aboriginal women went to abort and bury fetuses they had conceived when being raped by white men (see Partington, and Kartinyeri & Anderson). The reason that this knowledge became referred to as “secret women's business” lies in the fact that Aboriginal traditions are intensely gender segregated (see Eller). Female knowledge of this kind must never be revealed to men nor are they permitted to talk about it. With special ritual knowledge it might even be the case that only a small group of properly initiated women is selected to become custodians of this heritage.

2.3.2 Summary of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*

Doreen Kartinyeri's autobiography *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* provides an account of her life from her early childhood spent at Point McLeay Aboriginal Mission on the shores of Lake Alexandrina in South Australia until only just a few years before her death in 2007.

The book starts out with a vignette of events which take place on the late afternoon of March 6th, 1995. Kartinyeri is informed that some secret envelopes have been opened by Ian McLachlan, who is Shadow Minister for the Environment at that time. Her reaction shows that this piece of news sorely shocks her, as she slumps to the ground like someone has punched her. Within one paragraph the reader finds out that the contents of the envelopes is about traditional Aboriginal culture and was written down by Kartinyeri for the protection of Hindmarsh Island. Kartinyeri admits that she has done wrong in “put[ting] black history on white paper” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2) and becomes aware that she will have to face punishment from her ancestors. Then follows a jump back to the 1940s: Kartinyeri introduces herself and portrays the living conditions at Raukkan at the time she grew up there. The first chapter ends with a prelude to the trauma Doreen is to experience, namely the loss of her mother due to complications that had set in when she gave birth to Doris Eileen.

In the following five chapters Kartinyeri chronologically relates her life approximately until her 60th birthday, although each of these chapters in the beginning features a glimpse of her involvement in the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy in 1994 and 1995.

In chapter two there is another short prolepsis continuing at the afternoon of March 6th, 1995. Anxious to learn what has happened to the envelopes, Kartinyeri and her friend Sandra Saunders call McLachlan's office and it becomes known that the papers inside have been copied and passed on to the media, which Kartinyeri considers “a despicable act of violence against Ngarrindjeri people” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 27). Then her autobiography continues with her mother's funeral in 1945: When her father wants to pick up baby Doris from the hospital, she is missing. The tragedy of recent events leaves a disturbed and devastated family in a dazed state. Doreen's father, Oswald ('Oscar') Kartinyeri, is beside himself with despair and leaves the mission in

search of his daughter. Her grief-stricken grandmother Sarah ('Nanna Sally') escapes from reality into a religious obsession. Doreen's younger siblings suffer tremendously from the loss of their mother, the absence of their father and the withdrawal of their grandmother. With the eldest brother away stump-picking, Doreen is burdened with the responsibility of caring for her family. Yet again, things become worse: Doreen shall be sent to a children's home. Being an adult when writing the book, she still cannot understand why none of their relatives supported her grandmother or offered to take care of Doreen when she was child, but she believes that they must have been threatened, pressured or influenced in any way by the authorities. For two months young Doreen cleverly manages to disappear whenever the welfare officer Sister Pearl McKenzie is on her way to pick her up and take her away until Nanna Sally tells her that her behaviour causes trouble for the whole family. With the prospect of being with her sister Doris, Doreen can finally be persuaded to give in and go to the home. Her arrival there is unpleasant, she is scrubbed down in the bath and fixated by three adults who first wash her hair with an acrid substance and then cut off her beautiful long curls. But the worst and most disappointing fact for Doreen is that her sister Doris is not there at all.

Chapter three initially quotes a newspaper bulletin from July 7th, 1994. From this the reader can extract that the construction of a bridge is proposed on Hindmarsh Island and that a row has erupted between Kartinyeri and the South Australian Premier Dean Brown because the building work would destroy a sacred site of Ngarrindjeri women. Kartinyeri then explains that the Kumarangk (Aboriginal name for Hindmarsh Island) is their ancient burial ground and asks, "How would whitefellas like it if Aboriginal people dug up their great-grandmothers?" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 44). She appeals to the authorities for help, informing them about the spiritual significance of the construction site, though with little success. Again there is a change of place and time, and the narration continues in Fullarton back in 1945 where Doreen finds it hard to adapt herself to the daily run of the girls' home. She is homesick, confused and weary: "It took me a long time to work out the routine of the Home because it was so different to life with my family. [...] I was walking around like a little zombie, just doing what I felt I had to and no more" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 52). Family visits are hardly permitted, the children have to perform domestic work every day from after school until the early evening, and religion constitutes a major part of daily life.

Fullarton Girls' Home is run by the Salvation Army and the staff is portrayed as strict, insensitive and distant. Being a substitute home for children charged as neglected, it accommodates white as well as Aboriginal kids, and Doreen soon becomes aware of the different treatment they receive. At the seasonal distribution of clothes, for example, white girls have first pick. “[W]ith what was left we'd be lucky to find something to fit” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 53), Doreen remembers. Educational ambition and academic achievement are discouraged: “I never got good grades in school, but if I did try and make an effort they would say I was cheating” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 52). The Aboriginal girls in the home also have to put up with being bullied by the white kids, and they do not dare to speak up. “If anything went wrong, the white girls would all point their fingers at the nearest Aboriginal kid and it was impossible to defend ourselves. Nine out of ten times I'd be the one to get blamed” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 63).

Doreen's temper undergoes a drastic change during her time in Fullarton. “I was a good sweet little girl” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 37), she says about herself when reflecting on her childhood at Raukkan. But following the shattering loss of her family, Doreen is increasingly rebellious and aggressive. “I decided to become what Sister McKenzie said I was, a very naughty girl” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 49). She is full of resentment and anger for the unfair treatment she receives and the opaque rules of a racist white government she is forced to abide, and probably also frustrated by a pressure to perform as the army staff of the home has “young girls of eleven and twelve doing the work of women” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 53). Doreen's reaction to these circumstances is quite natural: she becomes defiant and deliberately misbehaving, and she stubbornly sits out most of her punishments. It is only the prospect of going on outings and being allowed to participate in sporting events or the upcoming of holidays which she could spend at Raukkan that would prompt her to behave properly. Doreen's time at the home ends with her being expelled for her uncontrollable behaviour. She started a fight with a white kid whose group had harassed two young crippled Aboriginal girls, and the lieutenant who stepped in stumbled and broke her arm when Doreen pushed her off.

Chapter four provides an extract of a newspaper interview which Kartinyeri gave a few days after the opening of the sealed letters in March 1995. In it she explains how

she has been passed on traditional knowledge during the 17 years she had spent with her aunt Rose Kropinyeri, and that according to Aboriginal law this knowledge is “women's business” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 67) which must not be revealed to men. She claims the decision to admit the Ngarrindjeri women had secrets concerning the building site of the bridge was made by the community which had appointed her as spokeswoman. Kartinyeri also mentions her anxiety that some of these secrets which she had revealed in two confidential letters might get into the wrong hands, which would cause sickness and death as punishment.

Without any further comments on the interview the book proceeds with Doreen's experiences in the late 1940s: Thinking she would be sent back to Raukkan after being expelled from the home, Doreen is shocked to find herself committed to the care of a white couple in Charleston. Still she manages to settle in well, and the place becomes a substitute home for her as the Dunns and their parents treat her with kindness and respect. It is a time of healing for Doreen, as the hatred she holds for white people slowly and gradually starts to ease. At the Dunns' family home she looks after the children while their parents are working on their farm and she helps in the household, duties she considers as light when compared to her work at Fullarton. Up to a point the family also promotes Doreen's education, a fact she is still very grateful for as an adult. But considering this topic, Kartinyeri also has to put in a poignant remark concerning the public notion of these days and the disadvantage of Aboriginal people:

Mr Dunn's mother [...] thought Fullarton Girls' Home was bringing up the Aboriginal children very well. I thought to myself, 'Fullarton never brought kids up that well. Some of them finished up in the reformatory, some of them finished up on the streets, some of them finished up going back to broken homes, so that wasn't a good result'. At that stage no Aboriginal girls from Fullarton Home had gotten anywhere academically. If my treatment was any example, they had no chance to. [...] [M]y cousins Una and Pat Rigney [...] had been given an IQ test and came out with flying colours. [...] Una and Pat were allowed to go to high school and high hopes were held for their futures, but they both eventually went out to work like the rest of us. They finished up going back to Raukkan and marrying local fellas there. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 72–73)

In September 1950 Doreen is allowed to return to Raukkan to take care of her seriously ill grandmother. On her journey back home she becomes aware that alcohol is smuggled into the mission. It turns out that the Aboriginal people have developed some cunning methods for the inconspicuous transport of wine bottles, like hiding them inside

bread loaves or towing them along underneath the water surface in a bag tied to a rowing boat. Doreen is alarmed, even terrified, as she knows that being in possession of alcohol is a serious offence for Aboriginal people who have not been exempted, and later that day she also becomes witness of the negative effects drinking has on the people: “[T]hat night a big fight started up. [...] It wasn't often that I saw people under the influence of alcohol on Raukkan, but when people got hold of a drink they couldn't seem to handle it sociably and the men would get aggressive” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 84). When Doreen is 16 years old, she starts going out with a young man named Jack Sumner. He appears to be her first big love, but her father intervenes, telling her that she is too closely related to Jack. It was this particular incident which initiated Kartinyeri's later career as genealogist: “I was heartbroken, but my interest in kinship and genealogies blossomed after that. I was intrigued who could see who, and hungry to find out as much about family trees as I could” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 85), she remembers.

The opening cameo of chapter five is dated with the year 1995 and again a short one in which Kartinyeri describes how her mood and emotions changed during her fight for the preservation of Ngarrindjeri heritage. She anxiously notices how her hatred for white people is burgeoning again, for they do not want to comprehend the significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage but meet her with open hostility. “I never knew people could be so narrow-minded, ignorant and nasty” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 87), she says with regard to the media harassment and the racist hate mails she and her supporters have to put up with. She also refers to the ongoing conflicts between white Australians and Aboriginal people and gloomily concludes that “there will always be black and white in this world” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 88). The chapter then deals with Kartinyeri's young adulthood from 1951 to 1975: she writes about her experiences as foster mother when helping out members of the family and community, the menial jobs she takes on, and how she sets up a home at Point Pearce Mission with her husband Terry Wanganeen and starts a family with him. It is also the period of life where Kartinyeri spends much time with her aunt Rose Kropinyeri. “I soon realised there was more happening than just making mats and baskets” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 100), Kartinyeri remembers the time she sat together with her aunt weaving rushes. She learns about kinship and Aboriginal midwifery, and about sacred traditions, rituals and sites.

The chapter ends with Kartinyeri's referral to Hillcrest Psychiatric Hospital because she had tried to stab her husband Terry with a smashed bottle when he was in an alcohol-fuelled rage. Kartinyeri relates her experiences of domestic violence to the increasing alcohol abuse in Aboriginal communities following the lift of the ban on alcohol: “[B]ecause people weren't used to it, it caused all sorts of problems. That's when the women used to get bashed up and many of them, including me, ended up in hospital sometimes. The doctors would patch us up and send us back to Point Pearce, to our husbands, the same environment” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 112–113).¹⁷

Chapter six is the last one that has a division of narrated time. It starts with a morning in May 1994 when Kartinyeri first hears about the plans for a bridge to Hindmarsh Island on TV. The reader learns that the idea for this project was raised by Tom and Wendy Chapman, developers and proprietors of a small marina located on Hindmarsh Island. Kartinyeri endeavours to find out more about the proposed development and reveals that she has traditional knowledge about the Coroong area which must be taken into consideration before construction work can be allowed to begin.

Kartinyeri then continues her story in 1975 when she is sent to Hillcrest. The way she portrays her experiences during her six weeks' stay at the psychiatric hospital resemble her time in Fullarton Girls' Home. She considers it unjustified and unfair to be admitted for attacking her alcoholic husband: “They decided I had an anger problem, but it was Terry's drinking that needed treatment, not me. [...] I couldn't believe a perfectly sane person like me should have to spend six weeks in a mental institution” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 113–116). Kartinyeri shares the ward with seven other patients, all of them white, and she feels at a disadvantage during group therapy. In her point of view, the others get away with being uninhibitedly racist towards her, while she is reprimanded or even put in a straitjacket when openly expressing her feelings and thoughts. Once more she is full of anger, and she takes out her frustration on the staff of the clinic as she brings trouble upon the nurses only to spite them.

¹⁷ Alcohol-related violence was and still is widespread in Aboriginal communities. According to the *Little Children Are Sacred* report, those Aboriginal people who drink consume alcohol at significantly higher quantities than the general population. Therefore, the negative effects of their abusive drinking are much more harmful not only for themselves but also for nearly all aspects of Aboriginal community life. The report further states that alcohol abuse has extraordinarily devastating and damaging effects, most likely leading to family, social and cultural breakdown, and contributing to the neglect and abuse of children (see BIPACSA 161–162).

The chapter titled “From Madwoman to Historian” then mainly deals with Kartinyeri's recollection of how she became “the genealogist of her nation” (Rowse 250). For her research she is provided access to an extensive collection of government files and like Rita and Jackie Huggins is terribly upset by their contents in the beginning. She finds letters concerning family members which contain serious allegations against them, about incidents Kartinyeri cannot believe are true. But she quickly becomes aware of the authorities' reasons for doing so and puts the government practices of the time in a nutshell:

Women were accused of having affairs, so they would be 'bound down to the mission' (not allowed out). Men got expelled off the mission for fighting the white officers, bringing alcohol into the mission and other offences. These letters were the official record of how Aboriginal people's lives and bodies were being controlled and it was a shock to be witness to them. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 124)

Due to her detailed knowledge about the genealogical relationships of many indigenous families in South Australia, Kartinyeri becomes the first Aboriginal person who is given permission to work with the material of famous anthropologist Norman Tindale, a fact she proudly mentions in her book. Kartinyeri publishes her first family genealogies and co-authors a book about the first South Australian Aboriginal Mission Poonindie. She starts making field trips to collect material for further genealogies, but also to bring this information back to the communities it concerns.

Chapter seven finally deals with Kartinyeri's involvement in the Hindmarsh Island bridge controversy.¹⁸ When the proposed construction eventually comes to her attention in early 1994, she is a successful and honoured historian, genealogist and author, and in a happy relationship with her life partner Syd Chamberlain. It seems she is not aware of the political minefield she is to enter:

[W]hen I spoke out I didn't know much of what had been going on in the lead up to the bridge proposal. But I didn't intend to hurt anybody; I did it because I needed to protect something that was important to my people. I actually never thought nothing much about the Chapmans at all. To me, they wasn't even worth thinking about. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 151)

¹⁸ The reader is asked to keep in mind that *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*—and hence the summary provided in this thesis—reflects Kartinyeri's personal concerns regarding sacred knowledge and her private fight against the building of the bridge. And as Anderson points out in the afterword, this account is by no means comprehensive, but a rather subjective and limited representation: “It is the way Doreen saw it; the way she remembers or doesn't remember it. [...] Doreen's story is her story. Other people in this story have theirs” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 205).

In her autobiography she writes about meetings of community members which are hurriedly organised to prevent the beginning of construction work. A letter is written to Robert Tickner, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, who takes out a 30 day emergency ban and appoints the lawyer Prof. Cheryl Saunders and the anthropologist Dr. Dean Fergie to investigate and assess the claims of Ngarrindjeri heritage. In the meantime, the media starts a vicious campaign accusing Aboriginal people of “only raising a stink at the last minute” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 151), but Kartinyeri defends herself explaining that “people don't realise how out of touch a lot of Aboriginal people can be” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 151). She explains that many still live in segregated communities on former missions and lack the financial opportunities to keep in touch and up-to-date.

Kartinyeri is also accused of only having fabricated “women's business,” and in *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* she repeatedly states arguments to support her assertions. Many times she emphasises the significance of this traditional knowledge and how absolutely vital it is that men neither know nor talk about it, but eventually finds herself in a quandary: “[W]e needed to record some of it if we were to have any effect. I had to make a choice; write it down or let them destroy our sites by building a bridge” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 159). Kartinyeri finally agrees to have some of her sacred knowledge typed out as long as it is kept in sealed envelopes. In the beginning it seems that the Aboriginal community has been successful in its efforts to prevent its heritage as a 25 year ban on construction of the bridge is obtained. But the Chapmans, who are the building promoters, manage to overturn the ban on a legal technicality in February 1995. Then Shadow Minister for the Environment Ian McLachlan has the secret envelopes opened on March 6th, 1995. Kartinyeri considers this “the biggest tragedy” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 161) for Ngarrindjeri women and claims her soul ruptured on that day. McLachlan is forced to resign in the same month for he had falsely placed on record that the envelopes had not been marked as confidential.

In chapter eight Kartinyeri narrates how she experienced the numerous court cases concerning the Hindmarsh Island bridge issue in which she had been involved. In 1995, South Australian Liberal Premier Dean Brown calls a Royal Commission to investigate into “secret women's business” and traditional Aboriginal beliefs. Kartinyeri and her supporters refuse to co-operate, they think it outrageous, deeply offending and unlawful

to have their sacred spiritual beliefs scrutinised by a whites' government inquiry. In the following months Kartinyeri becomes the key player in a witch-hunt beyond example. She is incessantly chased by the media, newspapers are full of nasty racist articles perverting the facts, she is bullied and threatened. Some of her supporters are duped or blackmailed to confirm that “women's business” is only an invention, and even a number of Aboriginal women from her community turn against her. The authorities are grimly determined to get hold of the secret envelopes, involved parties are threatened with jail or have their houses searched. Shortly before Christmas 1995, the Royal Commission's final report is released, concluding that “women's business” is a hoax and denouncing Kartinyeri as publicly branded liar.

Parallel to the Royal Commission's inquiry, Tickner has proposed a federal inquiry. Senator Rosemary Crowley consults Aboriginal cultural rules and appoints the female judge Jane Mathews. Minister John Herron however insists on being the one to read Mathews' report and states that it has to be made available to all of the parties it concerns. The prospect of having their stories revealed to a male minister and probably other men as well leaves the Ngarrindjeri women with no other choice than to ask for their evidence to be excluded from the report. In 1997 the *Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act* is legislated, and even though it contradicts the Aboriginal Heritage Act, Aboriginal people are again unsuccessful in their appeals. The bill is passed, and in November 1999 the first pylon of the bridge is driven into the earth of the Kumarangk.

From Diane Bell, a feminist anthropologist who intends to use Judge Mathews' report for her book *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, Kartinyeri is informed that important documents have been found in Norman Tindale's assets and in unpublished manuscripts by Ngarrindjeri writer David Unaipon. They verifiably prove that stories about Ngarrindjeri cultural traditions were told long before Doreen made her claims to prevent the construction of the Hindmarsh Island bridge, but it is only when the Chapmans initiate a lawsuit for damages against Tickner, Saunders and Fergie amongst others that Kartinyeri is provided with an opportunity to present this newly discovered evidence. She is in frail health, recovering from a major surgery where most of her cancerous stomach had been removed, but again decides to wage the struggle. “[W]e had to go on because we couldn't let our grannies and great-grannies [grandchildren and great-grandchildren] read their history and think we were fabricators. [...] [W]e needed to

clear our names. [...] We needed to prove [...] that we did not lie” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 194), Kartinyeri urges. In August 2001 the Federal Court chaired by judge John von Doussa finally rules that “secret women's business” is in fact part of genuine traditional knowledge of Ngarrindjeri people.¹⁹

Kartinyeri ends her narration with a short epilogue in which she provides transcripts of radio news and newspaper articles showing that she and her people have been vindicated at last, and with a flashback of sitting together with her aunt Rose Kropinyeri.

2.3.3 Analysis of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*

2.3.3.1 *Layout and co-authorship*

The front cover of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* features the oil painting *The People* by Sandra Saunders which depicts an abstract scene of traditional Ngarrindjeri life. On the left margin there is an Aboriginal woman in the foreground. She is covered in a coat of woven dried rushes and holding a bundle of freshly picked ones. The woman stands in front of a reed belt which occupies the bottom third of the painting. It is drawn in yellowish green colours and with bright red spadices. The middle horizontal axis depicts Lake Alexandrina in blurred shades of green. The indistinct silhouettes of two human figures holding a net for fishing and a flock of white birds can be made out in the background. On top of the painting the tree-lined shore of the lake contrasts against a bright blue sky with flat white cumulus clouds.

My Ngarrindjeri Calling runs to 232 pages and is thus much more comprehensive than the works by Glenyse Ward or Rita and Jackie Huggins. On the initial pages of the book a family tree of Doreen Kartinyeri, a map of the southeastern part of South Australia and an explanation of Ngarrindjeri words are provided. There is also a list of

¹⁹ Irrespective of Kartinyeri's account in her autobiography *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, the dispute regarding “secret women's business” has by no means been settled. Unfortunately it is not possible to further elaborate on this topic within the scope of this thesis, but those who are interested in learning more precise details about the Hindmarsh Island controversy should consult the following two texts: Margaret Simons in her 2003 book *The Meeting of the Waters* portrays Doreen Kartinyeri and her supporters as victims of outrageous political plotting fought behind the scenes with dirty tricks. Geoffrey Partington in contrast dismantles Ngarrindjeri heritage and exposes “women's business” as (in his words) folly (see 114) in his paper “Hindmarsh Island and the Fabrication of Aboriginal Mythology” of the same year.

illustrations, referring to the two sections in the book where private photographs and historical documents have been inserted. At the back of the book a useful index has been added, as well as clarifying endnotes which also help the reader to conduct further research. As this layout already suggests, Kartinyeri had professional assistance: she orally related her life history to co-author Sue Anderson who recorded and transcribed many of the conversations they had and according to Simons “has done an admirable job of curation and compilation” (“Doreen Kartinyeri: My Ngarrindjeri Calling by Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson” 299).

2.3.3.2 Voice

As with Rita Huggins, it was important for Kartinyeri that her voice remained as unaltered and undistorted as possible. This means none of “them big jawbreakers” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 45), and “[n]o more whitefellas interpreting, changing or twisting her words” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 206). The book is plainly written, in a rather straightforward storytelling style which, according to Paulson, creates such a strong presence of Kartinyeri's personal voice it almost feels as if she was sitting next to her audience, telling her story (see 120). Yet, Kartinyeri's style of narrating her life story is significantly different when compared to the autobiographies by Glenyse Ward and Rita Huggins: As has already been pointed out, Ward's tone is never accusative or angry, there is no hostility or bitterness in her words, and never does she threaten or confront a white readership. Huggins' voice is calm and pragmatic, and when emotions are discernible, they consist of shame and a reluctance to speak out, of self-blaming, guilt and internalised anger. Kartinyeri, however, does not silently endure the racism and iniquities. She does not humbly seek sympathy and understanding, and she does not mince her words in expressing her feelings. Doreen Kartinyeri is angry. She is outspoken in showing up the injustices of the past and present, she is not afraid of pointing a finger at those whom she thinks are to blame, and she is unapologetic in her use of language. A telling example can be found early in chapter two:

It seems to me they had a funny way of 'protecting' Aboriginal people. I think that 'Protector of Aborigines' was the worst name they ever gave anyone. As far as I was concerned a protector was someone who'd look after you. Well they didn't look after my family and they didn't look after a lot of others. I told the Protector that many times later. I said, 'You call yourself fucking Protector of Aborigines. You weren't that to me'. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 30)

Another example is in chapter five, where Kartinyeri illustrates the circumstances leading to the death of her first born son in July 1955. The baby boy died in her arms when he was only seven months old because there were no doctors at the mission, the nearest hospital in Maitland refused to treat Aboriginal people, and the doctor in Ardrossan had already been booked out. Kartinyeri is unmistakable in naming those responsible for the death of her child:

I blame the government for it, because there were about eighty to a hundred people living on Point Pearce in those days, and considering the poor conditions we were living under, we should have been provided with better medical facilities. We were controlled by the government, but not provided for adequately. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 104)

2.3.3.3 *A piece of Australian Aboriginal history*

The way in which Anderson has compiled the book, with vignettes of events surrounding the Hindmarsh Island bridge issue in 1994 and 1995, suggests that Kartinyeri's attempts to protect the cultural heritage of her nation against economic and political grounds constitute not only the most defining period in her life, but also the central topic of her autobiography. This, however, is not the case. Although the Hindmarsh Island bridge affair is “the looming drama of the book” (Eller) and *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* at times reads as if it was a vigorous attempt of heroic self-vindication, the reader is hardly offered more than glimpses of the controversy. What is more, *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* is a unique contemporary document as it constitutes a historical testimony of early colonial contact and the atrocities committed and provides an original and fascinating first-hand account of the living conditions and white dominance at state controlled Aboriginal missions in the 1940s and 1950s.

Kartinyeri for example recounts tales about massacres committed in the early days of European settlement. She mentions mortal remains found floating in Lake Bonney after a storm and stories told by Aboriginal elders that the white settlers used to knock the indigenous people unconscious and throw them into the lake to drown. She writes about the uncovering of a mass grave of Ngarrindjeri people who had allegedly died of smallpox but whose skeletal remains revealed bullet wounds. Kartinyeri also addresses sexual violence against Aboriginal women. Her grandmother, for example, was sent out by the superintendent to work for a doctor when she was only a young girl. She was however soon returned to the mission after she had been raped by her white employer

and had fallen pregnant to him. “This was the sort of thing that was happening to a lot of young Aboriginal girls in those days and they just had to accept it,” Kartinyeri explains. “The Aboriginal families had to deal with it and the white bosses were never charged with any offence” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 79–80).

Another historical incident she refers to is the participation of Aboriginal soldiers in the First World War, where 21 men from Point McLeay Mission enlisted to war and to fight for a country which should deny them citizenship of their own land for half a century more to come. Yet they volunteered for being presented the prospect of financial support for their families. Three of Doreen's uncles never returned from the war, and she remembers her family's pain. Appearing on ABC's TV program “The 7.30 Report” she recalls: “I think about all that crying I had to listen to when I was a little girl, my mum, my dad, and my grandmother and the other old ladies used to come and sit with my grandmother and they'd howl for days, a couple of days before Anzac²⁰ and a couple of days after” (“One Service Charged with Extra Emotion”).

When Kartinyeri describes her childhood at Point McLeay and how she settles in with her husband at Point Pearce, she draws a vivid picture of camp life. The local facilities and utilities are as would be expected: there are a church, a school, a little hospital or a dispensary, and a shop which only offers the bare necessities. The few brick houses are occupied by teachers and authorities. Aboriginal people live in shacks barely furnished, mostly little two room huts built with flattened kerosene tins where up to five children sleep in one double bed. There is no electricity, no sewerage system, and fresh water has to be carried inside in buckets from a water tap shared by several families. Children receive basic European education “by repeating everything over and over parrot fashion” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 14) and are sent out at the age of 14 at the latest to work as domestics or farmhands, providing cheap labour for little or no pay. Adults usually attend to various farm work around the mission, for example in the dairy, the stables and the cattle pit, or cultivate grain fields and the vegetable garden. Women are instructed in cooking, cleaning and needlework, men also work off the mission, shearing or building railway lines and highways. One of the main jobs of Aboriginal men, however, is to clear the land and erect fences for white farmers. In *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* Kartinyeri finds harsh words for the damages inflicted on the

²⁰ National Australian remembrance day in honour of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (hence the acronym ANZAC) who fought in World War I.

ecological system and the negative impacts of European farming: “[T]he whitefellas had raped our women and then they had raped our land” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 44), she states. Yet the men have no choice. If they refuse to do the work they have their rations cancelled. Although many of them also become versatile and capable craftsmen, they are never apprenticed and as unskilled workers cannot get a proper job or claim basic wages. “That was a way of keeping Aboriginal people down and out of white communities” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 97), Kartinyeri believes. Interestingly enough, Aboriginal missions like Raukkan also serve as tourist attractions for white people who are brought in by boat to take photos and buy Aboriginal handicraft products while the school choir sings and Aboriginal children are diving for pennies.

2.3.3.4 At the mercy of state authority

Although Raukkan, the Aboriginal mission where Kartinyeri spends her childhood, has its own hospital, the medical care provided there is described as deficient. As a matter of routine, all of the children on Raukkan have to undergo tonsillectomy. “The doctors were just pulling tonsils out left, right and centre” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 23), Kartinyeri remembers. Her younger sister Nancy does not survive the operation, a healthy kid who died because of a procedure conducted without any medical indication. Another sister, Doris Alma, dies of diphtheria at a very young age, and her brother Ron is dismissed as fidgety child for years when he is in fact developing chorea, a disease which is marked by vigorous jerking movements. At Point Pearce, where Kartinyeri moves to after her wedding, she also notices the rapid increase of puerperal mortality which her aunt Rose Kropinyeri ascribes “to white interference in the traditional birthing ways” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 29), with Aboriginal women in labour taken in old utility vehicles and on bad roads to Wallaroo hospital almost 45 miles away.

The provision with basic supplies is insufficient as well. To make ends meet, people carry on hunting, fishing and collecting wild food, and women handstitch clothes out of old rags they receive in Red Cross boxes. Meager rations of rice, jam, butter and tobacco in combination with inadequate shelter lead to fatalities which according to Kartinyeri in many cases certainly could have been prevented. As part of her genealogical research in later life, Kartinyeri sifts the Raukkan register of births, deaths and marriages, on which she comments:

People were dying of all sorts of things in the old days. Pneumonia was a big one, because it used to be really cold in winter time and all they had was an open fire or an old wood stove. There were children dying in infancy from 'malnutrition'. If you look at the ration supplies the families were getting, you could see that there wasn't much to go around for many of the families. Then of course they would take the other children away if one died of malnutrition. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 124)

What also features strongly in Kartinyeri's accounts are the prevailing legal norms of the time, the experienced omnipotence of authorities and the often harsh and inhumane treatment Aboriginal people received. In chapters one to four of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* which deal with Kartinyeri's childhood and early youth, white government rule is impersonated in the female welfare officer Sister Pearl McKenzie. She is the executive power of Australia's colonial ruling class which prioritises social, political and economic motives over the well-being of its indigenous population. Similar to the state school teachers in the books by Ward, Sister McKenzie is portrayed as cruel and vicious, and those who have worked with her describe her as “a very cold type of person... and totally unsuited to deal with [Aboriginal people]'s problems” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 59). Kartinyeri also reproduces part of a conversation about Sister McKenzie which she overheard when temporarily living with the white family in Charleston: “I cannot believe they've got a woman of that manner working in Welfare with young children” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 74), she quotes Mrs Dunn. Throughout *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, Sister McKenzie is depicted as Doreen's nemesis and as the person responsible for the distress many of the people at Raukkan have to endure. Is it any wonder Doreen becomes a wayward child who tries to get back at her at any given opportunity? With satisfaction Kartinyeri recounts her little acts of vengeance amongst which the incident with the jumper is probably the most amusing: On a long train ride from Raukkan to Fullarton Doreen pulls on a loose strand of Sister McKenzie's knitted jumper and carefully unravels it stitch by stitch. When McKenzie finally notices, half of her jumper is missing and exposing her underwear, causing the other children on the train to burst into laughter.

As Kartinyeri gets older, she becomes increasingly aware of the authoritative power structures and misanthropic arbitrariness. She writes that people are not familiar with the government policies, they are forced to abide by the regulations and rules and helpless against the repressive apparatus, stating that “[i]f the government wanted to do

something, the government did it” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 30). *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* for example illustrates how almost every action required a special permission by the Protector of Aborigines. If people want to leave the mission, they need permission first. If those who have been exempted want to come back to visit their relatives, they need a permission, too. Parents have to ask permission if they want to visit their children who have been taken to the various homes. The children who have been sent out to work or live in such homes in turn have to ask permission to be allowed to go home to their parents during holidays. People cannot quit or take on a job without having asked for permission first. Even ill or hurt people who need to see a doctor or go to a hospital need permission to do so. For the Aboriginal people in Kartinyeri's autobiography, asking for permission is more than a mere matter of form. The withholding of permissions is a common form of punishment, especially where family relations are concerned, and people have to submit to whatever the authorities' arbitrary decisions dictate, as a failure to observe entails further punishment. Doreen's brother for example got expelled from Raukkan for getting into a fight. When he tries to sneak into the mission to attend a funeral,²¹ he is arrested and sent to jail.

In some cases having ones children removed and sent to a home is also deployed as a form of punishment for previous misconduct, either actual or alleged. “I was born fearing the word 'Protector',” Kartinyeri remembers. “In fact we feared any whitefella who came to the mission. [...] We all used to run and hide for fear of being taken away” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 12–13). In many other cases, however, deception is the means of choice to abduct children from their parents. If a family faces times of hardship, the authorities offer their support in caring for the children until the domestic problems are sorted out. But this is only a lie to mollify the parents as the removal of a child always turns out to be irreversible. As to that Kartinyeri states her father has been talked into leaving his newborn daughter Doris in the hospital for a few days to prepare his wife's funeral. When he wants to pick the baby up, she is gone. As an adult Kartinyeri catches sight of a document signed by her father in which he relinquishes Doris into state care. She persists that he had been duped, falsely being told that Doris was in temporary

21 Funerals are of great importance in Ngarrindjeri culture (see Kartinyeri & Anderson 15). The death of an Aboriginal person imposes a demand on friends, family and community members, as everybody who has been a part of the deceased person's social world is expected to attend the funeral. Not to comply with this obligation means denying the relationship one had with the deceased and insulting the bereaved kin. Non-attendance of a relative's funeral, as was the case with Doreen's brother, is often construed as desertion or neglect of one's family (see Macdonald 124).

foster care and he needed to agree to have her child endowment paid towards her upkeep for the time being. A copy of the document is provided in the illustrations section of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, and Kartinyeri comments on it defending her father:

It didn't have all the detail on it, but if it did he wouldn't have read it, because with blackfellas they used to say, 'Sign your name here' and you would have to sign it. You could be signing your own death warrant and you wouldn't have known. Dad knew there was nothing else he could do. That was the procedure. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 32)

She also refers to the way she was coaxed into voluntarily going to Fullarton Girls' Home by her conscious-stricken grandmother who dangled out hopes to Doreen that she would be together with her younger sister Doris: "For years I never considered myself part of the Stolen Generations because I had agreed to go into the Home. But I was stolen. They got me there by lying to me and my family" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 48).

2.3.3.5 Effects of child removal

My Ngarrindjeri Calling is not only a considerably valuable account in the context of the Stolen Generations for it reveals former government policies and the officials' way of thinking and acting concerning this matter. Furthermore, it also illustrates the effects this has on the families left behind and on the communities in general, and it portrays the experiences of a person removed.

As a child, Kartinyeri experiences the grievously devastating impact the removal of her younger sister Doris has on her family. For months her father Oswald is on a desperate search for his youngest daughter and prowls the streets of Adelaide. When he finally returns to Raukkan, he is dirty, exhausted, haggard and aged, he is sullen in his distress, pushes his family away and stirs up. Her grandmother Sarah sinks into the depths of depression, for she cannot bear the pain of having lost both her granddaughter and her daughter in law and watching her son engulfed in misery. Together with two of her cousins, Doreen has to take care of her grandmother, and with her father being incapable of conveying comfort, responsibility for the traumatised children also rests heavily on Doreen. Grieving herself, she has to cope with her constantly crying three-year-old sister Connie and her apathetic five-year-old brother Ron. Although many relatives who have moved into towns want to come back to Raukkan to support the family, the authorities refuse to allow the exempted people to stay at the mission.

Kartinyeri later recalls that it was her grandfather Archie who proved a tower of strength when the whole family was in distress. Although she assures that he wholeheartedly cared for her and built up her self-confidence, the tragic events surrounding her mother's death also tell on Doreen. Her temper and her state of mind change drastically and she becomes an increasingly angry and aggressive child. "I had got to the point where every time I saw a white face I just felt sick" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 74), she writes. In retrospection Kartinyeri believes it was during her time at Fullarton Home when her anger first started to flare up. She expresses bitterness due to the removal of her three cousins and her younger sister Doris, and for having been lied to by her grandmother and being separated from her family. "These bloody white bastards were taking control of everybody [...], those fellas were aiming guns at me and wanting to bring me down" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 48), she remembers her emotions. In addition to being deeply hurt and upset, Doreen finds herself in an almost unbearable new living situation in which she is utterly powerless. In helpless rage she becomes imbued with hatred,²² a change which causes her sorrow. This can be seen in several instances in *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* where she refers to her uncontrollable feelings. Considering her time at Fullarton Home, Kartinyeri says: "No child should have to have so much hate in their body, but I had it for white people, and I wasn't brought up to hate" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 74). Reflecting on her debilitating fight against the construction of the Hindmarsh Island bridge, she explains that it was not the controversy she was afraid of: "[The] thing that bothered me was that I could feel my hatred for white people coming back," she utters her worries. "I prayed to God that my hate wouldn't come back like it used to" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 87–88).

While the community at Raukkan Aboriginal Mission is suffering from the disruption of its families, Doreen's youngest sister Doris grows up at Colebrook Home in Adelaide, unaware of the tragic events surrounding her birth. Although the nuns in care of Colebrook seek to raise a sense of community and encourage the children there to think of each other as brothers and sisters, Doreen is unsympathetic to the fact that the children in Colebrook Home are not aware of their biological families. On their rare visits, Doreen as well as her brother Oscar and their father Oswald are not acknowledged as family members by young Doris. "It was the church people who put

22 See Erich Fromm who describes reactive hatred as reaction triggered by threats to the life, well-being or ideals of oneself or of people one loves or identifies with (91).

those ideas in the kids' heads," Doreen tries to show her sister understanding, "but I was so hurt that my little sister didn't own me [...] [and] seeing Doris just occasionally just wasn't enough to help me heal from that terrible rejection" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 76). Doreen tries her best to make her younger sister understand that they have the same parents and shows her some old family photos. Three year old Doris, however, applies her own logic: "I [Doreen] showed her the one of Mum, me, Connie, Ronnie and Nancy. She [Doris] didn't want to look at it, but when she finally did, she wasn't in the photo because she hadn't been born, and that made her sure she wasn't my sister" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 77).

2.3.3.6 Identity and genealogy

In chapter six, where Kartinyeri writes about her scholarly work, she again raises an important issue concerning the Stolen Generations: the breaking of family ties by the missionary system and the concealment of one's heritage by the authorities. Kartinyeri explains how crucial knowing one's ancestry is for Aboriginal people: "It is the basis of our identity, especially for the ones that were taken away and lost touch with their families" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 123). Beyond being separated from their families, children have also been removed in a geographical sense as they have often been taken far away from their birthplace. Considering Aboriginal peoples' spiritual affinity for their homeland, this dislocation caused even further deracination.

Genealogical origin is a significant part of one's personal identity. Our birthright defines which family or kinship network we belong to and defines our ethnicity. In many cases it also determines our nationality, our socio-economic class and our religion. Or, as Watson puts it: "Knowing one's roots signifies being someone" (298). The above mentioned factors locate our self, and our identity is anchored as we are embedded in a transpersonal historical chain. Linking with one's generational family thus also establishes a sense of historical connection and historical significance of oneself. But there is even more to our self-understanding than our inherited blood and the soil we stem from. It is what Guelke and Timothy refer to as "generational continuity" (2) and the question that is associated with it, namely which values and traits we have inherited apart from our genes, and which of our personalities' characteristics, our prejudices and attitudes, are bound to our heritage.

Knowing who you are is therefore first and foremost a question of whom and where you came from. In the case of the Stolen Generations it has been state policy for a long time to break up the link connecting children with their ancestors and to consistently hide this information from those it concerns. While naturally everybody has once descended from a biological mother and father somewhere, the uncovering of relevant information is often an unmanageable task for members of the Stolen Generations. Beyond the vital statistics like the parents' names and places of death and birth, those searching for their heritage also yearn for more information about the life histories and contexts of their ancestors.

My Ngarrindjeri Calling shows Kartinyeri's attempts to share the data she was able to access as a scholarly researcher with the source communities it concerned and the difficulties she encountered:

The biggest problem I had in that job was getting the information back into the Aboriginal communities where it was so needed and wanted. [...] So you see it took me a lot of heartache, a lot of travelling, a lot of time, a very little bit of money, because I didn't have a lot of money to do this. [...] But I was so determined to do it. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 132)

Her systematic project of repatriating the material is described as a rewarding ethical commitment, but at the same time also as an arduous and at times even dangerous task: “Sometimes I got told off, I got cursed, told I shouldn't be doing this and it's not my fucking business and sometimes I got beer thrown in my face” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 133). The material which Kartinyeri uses was gathered by Norman Tindale and often contains sensitive data like information about illegitimate children and offensive notes by former welfare workers or government officers. Kartinyeri, in contrast to some of her white colleagues, is aware of the sensitivity of this material, but even though she is careful in articulating it, many Aboriginal people are still shocked by it. They would rather forget about these painful chapters of their lives and have them eradicated from history: “Some people were saying that Tindale had no right to write their family's stuff down or to take their photos” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 137). While they are burdened to live with this past, Kartinyeri is convinced that the truth has to be revealed for the sake of the generations to come: “I just stood my ground, because if I didn't do it now, our grandchildren would not know anything” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 132). Kartinyeri walks a tightrope in mediating the different interest groups, and although many people

with indigenous heritage call on her to find out about their kinship links, she is also met with opposition by some of her co-workers. One of the social workers for example criticizes her for bringing together separated family members and tells her to leave this task to welfare workers who are better qualified to handle the issue. “But I believed I knew more about the way these Aboriginal families felt than the welfare workers would ever know” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 136), reads Kartinyeri's reply.

2.3.3.7 *Disruption of communities*

Kartinyeri repeatedly mentions how the way of life that is forced onto people on Raukkan often leads to tension and fights. Aboriginal communities traditionally shared everything, but on the mission they are allocated their portions on a first-come, first-served basis. Families receive different allowances for their children according to the colour of their skin. The lighter the skin, the more financial benefits a child is entitled to receive. “It was very hurtful to be classed as different from your brothers and sisters because of the colour of your skin” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 21), Kartinyeri remembers. In general, the whole system of categorizing people in castes seems very obscure to her: “The anthropologists used to classify people as 'full-blood', 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and 'octoroon', but whitefellas don't classify themselves as 'full-blood English' or 'half-caste Scottish' or whatever. I could never figure out what difference it made” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 21).

Kartinyeri's accounts also provide evidence of the disintegration of the social system, how networks, groups, associations and hierarchies of social stratification were disrupted. Naturally, Aboriginal communities would have supported each other with raising the children. Doreen's mother, for example, had also taken three of her nieces into her care as their mother had died. But when grandmother Sarah is seeking support following the death of her son's wife, the other community members are reluctant to help, probably due to pressure put on them by the authorities. Apart from child removal, exemptions often led to family break-up. The light-skinned brother of Doreen's husband changed his name in order to pass as white and escape assimilationist policies, therefore disowning his identity, his indigenous heritage and, consequently, also his relatives and tribe. Doreen's aunt Doris Sandel who had conceived children with a white man ran away seeking refuge in another state for fear of having her children removed. It was also

common for siblings or children from the same Aboriginal mission to become separated and be sent to different homes. Kartinyeri writes:

I never thought much of it at the time, but later as a teenager I realised that the government really did what it could to split families up. Colebrook Home was more for children from the far north of South Australia, particularly Oodnadatta way, so I didn't understand why a little Ngarrindjeri baby like Doris was in there. Doris grew up knowing Pitjantjatjara more than her own language. (Kartinyeri & Anderson 56–57)

The dispersal of the Aboriginal communities is the inevitable result, a phenomenon Kai Erikson refers to as “collective trauma, [...] a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. [...] [T]he community no longer exists as an effective source of support” (187).

2.3.3.8 Loss of traditional cultural knowledge

According to Sztompka, “[c]ulture is a depository of continuity, heritage, tradition, [and] identity of human communities. Change, by definition, undermines and destroys all these” (162). In the case of the Stolen Generations, this change was brought about by the imposition of an alien culture in the course of imperial conquest. Sztompka further claims that “the cultural tissue is most sensitive to the impact of traumatogenic changes [...] and [that] once the cultural equilibrium is broken, it is most difficult to restore it” (162). Kartinyeri's experiences and memories are a sad example of how European cultural aggression deprived Australian Aboriginal people of their cultural identity and destroyed the cultural stability and continuity of their traditional heritage.

What immediately strikes the reader of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* is how Aboriginal lifestyle adapted due to the European influence in the missionary environment, but at the same time also persisted the imposed western way of life. In Kartinyeri's descriptions of camp life people still build windbreaks and dome-shaped shelters but use shards of glass to smooth down the branches. Instead of tying them with animal tendons and covering the structure with brush, they use strings and empty flower bags. For sleeping they pile up dried seaweed and cover it with a grey government blanket to make a comfortable bed. They sit around the camp fire singing Christmas carols and eat goose for dinner which they have boiled in empty tins and then cooked in the ashes.

They steal shovels from the shed but break off the handles as they are used to digging in a sitting position, and also thief wire from fences which they use to prop up animals skins in order to dry them.

Kartinyeri still knows about some of the ancient myths of creation time which are seemingly casually sprinkled throughout her narration. She tells about Ngurunderi, the god of Ngarrindjeri people, who once lived at Raukkan with his wives and after his death became a bright star in the Milky Way. She mentions that the streams and lakes of the Coorong were shaped by the crying of seven sisters who had been raped by an old man. The girls then ascended into heaven and became the star constellation known as Pleiades. Kartinyeri explains that every area was somehow created by or consists of a mythological figure, for example the mountain ranges near Adelaide which according to dreamtime stories constitute a big man lying in the landscape. There are also mentions of traditional laws and the severe punishments people had to face when breaking them. They could be speared, or the *thampamaldi*, a clan member responsible for punishment, could sing them to death, or the spirits of their ancestors brought sicknesses over them. When writing about her conversations with aunt Rose Kropinyeri, Kartinyeri also reveals some of her knowledge concerning pregnancy, childbirth and Aboriginal midwifery.

My Ngarrindjeri Calling, however, is also full of incidents which are indicative of the unstoppable loss of cultural heritage: Aboriginal history is passed on orally, Kartinyeri explains, and in the early days of settlement her people were powerless to defend themselves against the desecration and demeaning of their history by white people. This accounts for the loss of major parts of their heritage.

Kartinyeri states that many of the Aboriginal people living on Raukkan at the time she grew up there were devout Christians who observed many aspects of the Christian faith and took great pleasure in singing and playing music during church services. According to Grieves, Christianity did not replace the existing spiritual belief structures of indigenous people but was rather incorporated as the main doctrines fitted with their dreaming stories. She believes it is especially the Bible story about the life of Jesus and its focus on concepts of fair dealing, generosity and sharing which strongly resonates with the traditional values of Aboriginal society (see 18–19). Yet, Kartinyeri also draws a different picture: For one thing, in the beginning the Christian faith was rather

imposed than willingly incorporated by people living at Raukkan. When the first missionaries there christened the Aboriginal people and urged them to get married in church, this caused a disruption of the community's established social hierarchies which even led to blood vengeance among the members of the tribe. For another thing, traditional Aboriginal rituals like the initiation of girls as they reached puberty was simply prohibited by the white staff members.

With regard to her fight against the Hindmarsh Island bridge, Kartinyeri states: “A lot of Ngarrindjeri people did not know of the women's business and you can blame the Government for converting the people [to Christianity] in the nineteenth century” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 66). One anecdote in the book also suggests that oral history was accompanied by certain movements or dances, probably to facilitate memorability, which were considered shameful, embarrassing, weird or stupid by young people who had grown up in a missionary environment and with European moral values:

The way Auntie Rosie would tell me things; she used to do a lot of actions and I laughed at her. I'd say, 'I'm not going to be doing actions like that' and she'd say, 'No, you don't have to do them, my girl; they don't do them things any more, but these are the actions that go with these stories.' (Kartinyeri & Anderson 140–141)

What is more, Aboriginal people who had experienced how traditional knowledge was often used against them by white settlers became reluctant to pass it on to their children. Kartinyeri remembers that her grandfather still owned a great deal of traditional knowledge he wanted to share with his grandchildren but was snapped at by his wife: “Don't go filling those kids' heads with those silly stories, Archie” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 8), she used to say. And she urged her granddaughter Doreen, “When the white people want to ask you questions, don't go telling them anything” (Kartinyeri & Anderson 8). The transmission of traditional knowledge is subject to a number of strict rules and regulations in Aboriginal communities. Certain knowledge is only distributed within a restricted group of people and only a few are chosen to become custodians of sacred knowledge. Along with this ownership also goes a certain social rank within the community and thus part of one's identity within the group. If Kartinyeri's accounts are to be believed, many of the Raukkan women who oriented themselves towards the European ways of living were not considered suitable or worthy to become inaugurated and so traditional knowledge got lost when the tribal elders died without having passed

it on. And those who still knew fragmentary parts of Ngarrindjeri heritage were jealous and inimical in guarding what they considered to be their or their family's private property.

These factors made for numerous conflicts within the Raukkan community and along with already existing personal fights and hostilities caused several women to turn against Kartinyeri during the Hindmarsh Island controversy. Some were offended that their own parents, aunts or grandparents had passed on their knowledge to Doreen instead of them and wanted to publicly denounce her in return. Others believed that sacred knowledge would best be kept safe and secret by denying that it even existed. 'Aunty Laura' who according to Kartinyeri also told her about "women's business" for example later put on record: "I do not know anything and it was not our business to talk about those things to white people, to talk about secret business to white people was in itself breaking our law" (Rowse 254).

As already pointed out in the summary of *My Ngarrindjeri Calling*, Kartinyeri is torn between her attempts to protect the sacred sites of Hindmarsh Island and its surroundings, and the moral obligation to obey traditional Ngarrindjeri law. Many a time has she been warned by her people and relatives: "Never put black history on white paper'. [...] 'Never tell whitefellas what you know about your culture; they'll pick your brains and bleed you dry'" (Kartinyeri & Anderson 2). But she sees no alternative to have her knowledge written down as evidence base for the upcoming trials, a decision she should later come to regret bitterly. On the day the secret envelopes are opened by McLachlan's staff members, Kartinyeri incurs her ancestor's wrath:

I closed my eyes and started to cry and then I could visualise all the pakanus [grandparents] and ngatjus [aunts] and muthar [grandmothers], all the old ladies looking down at me. They were looking at me wild way, anger in their faces. [...] I knew I would pay for this error of judgement.
(Kartinyeri & Anderson 2)

Kartinyeri is convinced that the stomach cancer she later conducted was her punishment for breaking Ngarrindjeri law by revealing women's secrets to men.

Conclusion

The establishment of British colonies in Australia at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century was marked by the aggressive conquest of the continent and rapid progression of European occupation. Indigenous people(s) who were deprived of their living environment engaged in bloody conflicts with the early settlers and were unscrupulously massacred as a result. Savage persecution, de-facto enslavement, sexual exploitation and the abduction of indigenous children were common cruelties committed in the colonies, and as these atrocities became known to the public of the British motherland, measures for the protection of the Aboriginal population were to be adopted.

The then accepted anthropological notion of biological and social supremacy of the white European race led to the implementation of a two-fold strategy in the mid-19th century: for one thing the segregation of the native population in reserves, purportedly to prevent them from further frontier conflicts, but in actual fact on the supposition that the Australian Aborigine was a primitive race doomed to extinction, and for another thing the coercive assimilation of the young who should be reared and educated according to European principles and moral values. The sharp increase of a mixed-descent population accompanied by the government's economic impossibility to pay for its sustenance on the reserves, however, required adjustment and modification of the previous approaches.

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, further miscegenation was to be prevented at all costs. Aboriginal people were put under near total control and fair-skinned children of mixed descent were separated from their families in pursuance of two aims: firstly, to “breed out” (hereditarily eradicate) any traits of indigenous ancestry in successive generations, and secondly, to absorb them in the white community and the Australian economy to slash the cost of government maintained Aboriginal reserves. In

the 1940s, a shift away from the racist “half-caste” legislation towards allegedly non-discriminatory native welfare laws was conducted, but a mere pretence for a timely adjustment of policies to expedite child removal. When government institutions in the 1950s and 1960s finally could no longer cope with the number of children removed, foster placements and forced adoptions were facilitated.

The year 1969 is considered as the official end of the Stolen Generations, and the decades which followed gave rise to Aboriginal activism which promoted indigenous self-determination and self-management, but also unmasked the century-long wrongdoings of past governments and endeavoured reconciliation. When Kevin Rudd delivered the federal government's apology to the Stolen Generations in February 2008, it gave some cause for hope that the bicentennial policy failures might slowly and incrementally go into reverse. Only four years later, however, the Australian government under Julia Gillard was once again rolling back the rights of Aboriginal people with the implementation of the Northern Territory National Emergency response in June 2012.

A critical study of four exemplary female Stolen Generations autobiographies, namely *Unna You Fullas* and *Wandering Girl* by Glenyse Ward, *Auntie Rita* by Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins, and *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* by Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson, produced the following main results:

First, the texts offer historical perspectives on the treatment of indigenous people in Australia and are concerned with the cultural imperialism of white government policies. Being autobiographies, the writings chiefly deal with the experiences of mixed race children on rural native camps, in church missions or government welfare institutions. Glimpses of a dignified Aboriginal past with its spiritual beliefs and integrity of traditional societies are contrasted with the degradation of native origin and the lack of a positive sense of identity, and the cultural dispossession, racial exclusion and material poverty Aboriginal people have to face in 20th-century Australia. The inner disunity of attempting to successfully integrate into white society and at the same time being owned by one's original tribe is another key feature of the texts, as is the search for one's identity, one's history and one's home. Healing is crucial to the writings and is partly accomplished by accepting and claiming one's Aboriginal heritage, and by voicing one's feelings and giving utterance to one's individual worth by expressing one's personal

story and being heard. As successfully published authors, the writers also share with us their quests in raising consciousness for Australia's deep wrongs in connection to the Stolen Generations.

Second, experiences and life stories portrayed in the autobiographies follow a similar pattern: Children have been separated and institutionalised by means of lies, force or regimentation. Exposed to substandard living conditions and an unbalanced and poor diet of unhealthy food, they hardly received comfort and affection and were susceptible to brutality and abuse. Frequent caretaker turnover inhibited the establishment of affectional bonds, along with the fact that the children's traumatic grief reactions were not responded to adequately. Personal individuality was neither noticed nor nurtured, the focus was on discipline and hygiene instead. The children received little European schooling and just enough truncated education for the exploitation of their labour. Rigorous authority figures triggered fears of failure and punishment and in further consequence learning difficulties and a general retardation of skills. Conduct disorders, maladjustment and control battles also were among the results. Family information was often withheld, the children's Aboriginal ancestry either hidden or denigrated, and they were brainwashed with the enforcement of European supremacy. Although the autobiographies suggest that clerics were more humanitarian in their approach, they in turn performed religious proselytizing and bible bashing. As adolescent working girls female Aboriginal children were sent into quasi slavery under control of their white employers and only received weekly allowances as most of their salary was withheld. Isolated and excluded from the white community and hindered in their social and intellectual development, they were easily victimised and exploited.

Third, there is evidence of social exclusion and cultural deprivation in the autobiographies in question: Inappropriate socialisation and low educational achievement impaired successful operation in the outside world and forced the protagonists to take ill-paid low-skilled wage labour to cope with continual poverty. They were assigned the lowest social rank, dispossessed, discriminated and marginalised in white Australian society, and at the same time isolated from their own extended families and other members of their original tribes. Previous institutionalisation had rendered full participation in the Aboriginal communities difficult or impossible as knowledge of traditional customs, spiritual affinity or social

bonds were missing. Feelings of alienation from the indoctrinated white culture and a disrupted connection with traditional spiritual heritage further indicated a lack of cultural identity. In addition, the destruction of cultural links due to a separation in childhood not only deprived them of assuming traditional responsibilities, but also had adverse effects on land entitlements and certain legal rights.

Fourth, the autobiographies reveal symptoms of poor physical health, emotional distress and psychological trauma in the people affected by forced family separation. Inadequate care in childhood along with numerous stressors led to poor health and various somatic symptoms of a complex post-traumatic stress disorder. Grief and despair were common reactions to being separated from families or caregivers, humiliation and degradation shattered the children's self-esteem and their worth of being Aboriginal. The frustrating experience of subjection and powerlessness caused a lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy in later life. Some made inappropriate partner choices and experienced difficult and abusive relationships and domestic violence for reasons of their learned helplessness. Others were incapable of rearing and parenting their own children due to an absence of role models in their own development. The characters in the autobiographies displayed diverse reactions to their childhood experiences: there were implications of guilt and shame, outbursts of anger and poor impulse control, attempts of masking the pain by the suppression of feelings and numbing them with alcohol, and incidents of self-destructive behaviour or suicidal tendencies. Caught in a world between black and white—separated from their biological relatives and alienated from their ancestors, stigmatized by government policies and marginalised by a racist Australian society—they experienced a lack of historical coherence and personal belonging which ultimately manifested in a fragmented sense of identity and identity conflicts and crises.

Within the necessarily very limited scope of this thesis, the life stories of only three female Aboriginal writers could be discussed in detail. Several other autobiographies, however, raise additional issues which could be the starting point for further, more extended research in support of the outcomes presented above.²³ In addition, autobiographical works by male Aboriginal writers could also provide material to be examined in favour of the findings presented in this thesis, whereas for a contrasting

²³ Especially *Kick the Tin* by Doris Kartinyeri, *Orphaned by the Colour of My Skin: A Stolen Generation Story* by Mary Terszak and *Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation* by Rosalie Fraser.

juxtaposition, the autobiographies of Dulcie Wilson or Stan Grant, in which assimilation of Aboriginal people is rather seen as a chance for advancement and prosperity than the reason for socio-economic deprivation, might be interesting. On the assumption that the Stolen Generations suffered from ineffable personal pain and collective misery, and with reverberations of that episode in Aboriginal history still evident, a more comprehensive study could further incorporate a discussion of the extent to which the experiences described agree with theoretical concepts of psychological, social and cultural traumata. Last but not least, the consideration of other ethnic groups, for example concerning the forced assimilation of Aboriginal and First Nations people in Canada from the late 18th until the early 20th century, offers an incentive for a variety of comparative studies yet to be conducted.

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Index

A

Abadee, Alan 58
 Abduction 21-22, 36, 84, 122, 132
 Aboriginal Affairs 43, 52-53
 Absorption 18, 28, 30, 33, 39, 42-44, 132
 Abuse 34, 49, 52, 57-58, 60, 62, 68, 89, 112, 134
 – Substance 61, 63, 112
 Activism, Aboriginal 1, 53, 55, 77, 91, 133
 Addiction 20, 49
 Adelaide 29, 103, 105, 123-124, 129
 Adoption 50-54, 100, 133
 Agencies
 – Aborigines Department 46
 – *Central Board Appointed to Watch over the Interests of the Aborigines* 33
 – Child Welfare Department 50-51
 – Department of Community Services 54
 – Department of Native Affairs 46
 – National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care 53
 – Office of Aboriginal Affairs 52-53
 – Social Welfare Department 54
 Al-Yaman, Fadwa 32, 48
 Alcohol 20, 25, 40, 49, 60-61, 63, 67-68, 76, 84, 87-88, 100-113, 135
 Alexandrina, Lake 107, 116
 Alice Springs 98
 Alienation 62, 135, 152
 Altman, Jon Charles 53
 Anderson, Sue 104-114, 116-128, 130-131, 133, 152, 154
 Anthropology/Anthropologists 26-27, 34, 44, 90, 113-115, 127, 132
 Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples v, 1, 56, 58-61, 133
 Ardrossan 118
 Aristotle 7
 Arthur, Colonel George 33
 Assimilation 2, 30, 38-40, 47, 51, 67, 77, 94, 99, 104, 127, 132, 136, 152, 154
 Audience/Readership 69, 73-77, 79, 81, 91-97, 101, 107-108, 112, 117-118, 128
Auntie Rita 83-102, 133, 152, 154

Australian Capital Territory 9, 54
 Australian Referendum, 1967 (Aboriginals) 52
 Autobiographies 2-3, 67-68, 75, 84, 90-91, 97, 106-107, 114, 116-118, 122, 133-136, 152, 154-155
 Ayr 83

B

Barambah Aboriginal Settlement 83
 Barbarism 27
 Barcudgel Station 89
 Barkan, Elazar 55
 Bates, Daisy May 39
 Battler Genre 77
 Bell, Diane 115
 Belonging 98-99, 135
 Berry, John W. 33, 39
 Bidjara 83
 Black Line 33
 Black War 33
 Bleakley, John William 46
 Blood Quantum 45
 Blumenbach, Johann Friedrich 26
 Bolton, L. B. 45
 Bonney, Lake 118
 Bonwick, James 31
 Braziel, Jana Evans 27
 Brennan, Bernadette 92, 95, 97
 Bridgetown 71
Bringing Them Home 39, 42, 49, 51, 55-56, 100
 Brisbane 42, 83-84, 86-87, 89
 Broughton, William Grant 32
 Brown, Dean 108, 114
 Bryant, Nick 152, 154
 Busselton 68, 74
 Buti, Antonio 37-38, 41-46

C

Care
 – Foster 123

-
- Institutional 50
 - Out-of-Home 2, 54, 152
 - Substitute 54
 - Carnarvon Gorge 83, 85
 - Carnival 81
 - Cary, Hilary M. 36
 - Chapman, Tom & Wendy 105, 112-115
 - Charleston 103, 110, 121
 - Charleville 86, 89
 - Cherbourg 83-90
 - Christianity 35, 68, 129-130
 - Christmas 73, 78, 115, 128
 - Church 1, 42, 55, 69, 89, 100, 119, 124, 129-130, 133
 - Civilization 27-29
 - Colebrook Home for Aboriginal Children 103, 124, 128
 - Colonial
 - Administrators 8
 - Contact 118
 - Courts 22
 - Elite 30
 - Funds 25
 - Governments 10, 15, 26, 30
 - History 9, 11
 - Law 18
 - Opinion 14, 39
 - Police 14
 - Rule 93
 - Ruling Class 121
 - Settlements 20
 - Settlers 13
 - Society 15, 30, 33-34, 39
 - Territories 9
 - Colonialisation 7
 - Colonies
 - American 8
 - Australian 5, 9, 18, 24-25, 27, 32-33, 37, 132
 - Convict 10
 - Penal 8-9
 - Colonisation 5, 8-10, 33, 60
 - Colonisers 16, 20, 25, 28-29, 37, 34, 37, 39, 95
 - Compensation 56
 - Compulsory
 - Acquisition 61-62
 - Education 62
 - Income Quarantining 62-63
 - Conflicts 11, 14, 24, 32, 33-34, 54, 92, 111, 131-132, 135
 - Conversion 35, 76
 - Cook, Captain James 7-8
 - Cook, Cecil 46
 - Coorong 103, 129
 - Crowley, Rosemary 115
 - Cubillo, Lorna 56-57
 - Cumpston, John Howard Lidgett 31
 - Cunnamulla 89
 - Cunningham, Peter Miller 28
 - Custodian of Sacred/Traditional Knowledge 89, 106, 130
 - Custody 41, 48, 50, 57
- D**
- Darwin, Charles 28, 32-33
 - Darwin (NT) 51-52
 - Half-Caste Home (Myilly Point Home) 52
 - Day, William B. 71, 75-77, 79, 81
 - Degeneration 26-27
 - Derby 67
 - Discrimination 1, 26, 50, 52, 64, 80, 133-134, 152, 154
 - Diseases 16, 21-22, 25, 31-32, 34, 42, 122
 - Distance 77
 - Dormitories 31, 36, 69, 78, 83, 86, 92
 - Doussa, John von 116
 - Dreamtime 99, 106, 129
- E**
- Education of Indigenous Children 22, 31, 35, 38, 41, 44-45, 51, 59-60, 62, 64, 68-69, 77, 84, 98, 100, 109-110, 119, 132, 134
 - Eller, Jack David 106, 118
 - Emergency Response/Intervention, Northern Territory National 60-63
 - Erikson, Kai 128
 - Ethnic Periods 27
 - Ethnography 37
 - Ethnology 27
 - Eugenics 44, 152
 - Evans, Raymond 15-16, 32, 85
 - Every Child, Every Day 62
 - Exemption 83, 86-87, 111, 122-123, 127
- F**
- Federal Capital Territory 9
 - Federation, Australian 9, 56
 - Fergie, Dean 114-115
 - Ferguson, William 48
 - Files Kept on Aboriginal People 86, 99-102, 113
 - Fleurieu Peninsula 106
 - Flinders Island 34
 - Foster
 - Care 50, 123
 - Families 50
 - Homes 1, 96
 - Mother 104, 111
 - Placement 51, 133
 - Fostered Children 52

- Fostering 54
 Fraser, Rosalie 135
 Friendly Mission, Robinson's 34
 Fromm, Erich 124
 Frontier 11-12, 14, 16-17, 20-21, 24, 32, 132
 Full-Blood 38-39, 42-43, 45, 127
- G**
 Galton, Francis 44
 Garnett, Francis 41
 Genealogy 37, 45, 104-105, 111, 113, 120, 125
 Gillard, Julia 63, 133
 Glossaries 75, 90-91
 Guilt 12-13, 50, 55-56, 60, 77, 94-95, 117, 135
 Goldsworthy, Kerryn 106
 Goolwa 105-106
 Government 1-2, 7, 10, 14-15, 19, 23, 25-28, 30, 33, 35, 37-38, 41-42, 46-48, 50, 52-63, 84-85, 89-90, 96-97, 99-101, 104-105, 109, 113, 115, 118, 121-123, 126, 128, 130, 132-133, 135, 152
 Graig, L. 45
 Grant, Stan 138
 Green, Shane 62
 Grieves, Victoria 99, 129
 Guardianship 38, 41, 46-47, 50
 Guelke, Jeanne Kay 125
 Gunner, Peter 56-57
 Günther, James 36
- H**
 Haderer, Stefan 26
 Half-Caste 37, 39-40, 42-45, 48, 52, 57, 85, 127, 133
 Harris, Marvin 26-27
 Hasluck, Paul 47
 Healing 56, 59, 92-96, 110, 125, 133
 Heritage 2, 85, 88-89, 92, 98, 105-106, 111, 114-116, 118, 125-129, 131, 133, 135
 Herron, John 115
 Hindmarsh Island 104-108, 112-116, 118, 124, 130-131
 Hindmarsh, John 29
 Holt, Lillian 90
 Howard, John 55-56, 58
 Huggins, Jackie 83-84, 90-96, 98-101, 113, 116, 133, 152, 154
 Huggins, Rita 2, 83-98, 101, 113, 116-117, 133, 152, 154
 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) 33-35, 40, 44, 48-49, 51-52, 54-56, 61, 100-101
 Humiliation 68, 72, 80-81, 135
- I**
 Identity 12, 39, 44, 47, 51, 53-54, 85, 88, 97-99, 125, 127-128, 130, 133, 135
 Illustrations 74, 117, 123
 Inquiry
 – Into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (BIPACSA), Board of 60-61, 89, 112
 – Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families, National 1, 55, 100
 Institutionalisation/Institutions 31, 35, 38, 42, 44, 48, 50-51, 53, 70, 112, 133-134, 152, 155
 Integration 53, 104, 133
 Isolation 17, 51, 68, 82, 104, 134
- J**
 Jail 88, 115, 122
 Juvenile
 – Detention 51
 – Justice 53
- K**
 Kapunda 104
 Kartinyeri, Doreen 2, 103-131, 133, 152, 154
 Kartinyeri, Doris Eileen 103-104, 107-108, 122-125, 128, 135
 Keating, Paul 55
Kick the Tin 135
 Kidnapping 22, 24
 Kimberley (NT) 98
 Kinship 28, 30, 105, 111, 125, 127
 Kropinyeri, Rose 104-105, 110-111, 116, 120, 129-130
 Kumarangk 104, 106, 108, 115
 Kundrilba, Topsy 57
 Kurtzer, Sonja 76-77
- L**
 Language 16-17, 27-28, 74, 79, 81, 85, 93, 98, 101, 117, 128
 – Colloquial 74
 – Denigratory 101
 – Hybrid 74, 78
 – Sign 78
 – Spoken 75, 91
 – Vernacular 75
 – Written 75, 91
 Laws and Legislation
 – *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* 115
 – *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Affairs Act 1965 (QLD)* 47

-
- *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (NT) 61
 - *Aboriginal Orphans Ordinance 1844* (SA) 38
 - *Aboriginal Protection Act 1869* (VIC) 37
 - *Aboriginal Protection (Amendment) Act 1940* (NSW) 47
 - *Aboriginals Ordinance 1918* (NT) 46
 - *Aboriginals Preservation and Protection Act 1939* (QLD) 46
 - *Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* (QLD) 40
 - *Aborigines Act 1905* (WA) 40
 - *Aborigines Act 1910* (VIC) 40
 - *Aborigines Act 1911* (SA) 40
 - *Aborigines Act 1934* (SA) 46
 - *Aborigines Act 1957* (VIC) 47
 - *Aborigines Protection Act 1909* (NSW) 40
 - *Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1936* (NSW) 46
 - *Adoption Act 1988* (SA) 54
 - *Adoption Act 1993* (ACT) 54
 - *Adoption of Children Act 1944* (NT) 54
 - *Adoption of Children (Amendment) Act 1987* (QLD) 54
 - *Child Welfare Act 1939* (NSW) 48
 - *Child Welfare Act 1947* (WA) 48
 - *Child Welfare Act 1954* (VIC) 48
 - *Child Welfare Ordinance 1958* (NT) 48
 - *Children and Young Persons Act 1989* (VIC) 54
 - *Children (Care and Protection) Act 1987* (NSW) 54
 - *Children's Protection Act 1993* (SA) 54
 - *Children's Services Act 1965* (QLD) 48
 - *Children's Services Act 1986* (ACT) 54
 - *Community Welfare Act 1983* (NT) 54
 - *Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Other Legislation Amendment (Northern Territory National Emergency Response and Other Measures) Act 2007* (NT) 61, 152, 154
 - *Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act 1997* 115
 - *Industrial and Reformatory Schools Act of 1865* (QLD) 38
 - *Industrial Schools Act 1874* (WA) 38
 - *Infants Welfare Act 1935* (TAS) 48
 - *Maintenance Act 1936* (SA) 48
 - *Native Administration Act 1936* (WA) 46
 - *Native Title Act 1993* 61
 - *Native Welfare Act 1954* (WA) 47
 - *Native Welfare Act 1963* (WA) 47
 - *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* 152, 154
 - *Social Welfare Ordinance 1964* (NT) 47
 - *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Act 2012* 64
 - *Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill 2011* 63-64
 - *Torres Strait Islanders Act 1939* 46
 - Layout 74, 90, 116-117
 - Legal Services, Aboriginal 53
 - Legislation 1, 37, 40-41, 45-48, 52, 54, 61-62, 70, 100, 133, 152
 - Lennon, Jessie 41
 - Linnæus, Carolus 26
 - Little Children Are Sacred* 60-61
 - Liveringa 67-68
- M**
- Macdonald, Gaynor 124
 - Mackay 83
 - Macklin, Jenny 63
 - Madden, Richard 32, 48
 - Maitland 118
 - Malnutrition 63, 121
 - Marland, Sarah 63
 - Massacres 11, 13, 24, 32, 118, 132
 - Mathews, Jane 115
 - McKenzie, Sister Pearl 108-109, 121
 - McLachlan, Ian 107, 114, 131
 - Melbourne 52
 - Merging 28, 35, 39
 - Miscegenation 46, 132
 - Missionaries 35-36, 130
 - Missions 1, 33-35, 37, 40-41, 43, 48, 67, 68-71, 73-75, 77-78, 80-82, 92, 100, 102-105, 107, 110-111, 113-114, 118-120, 122-125, 127-128, 130, 135
 - Mixed-Descent Population 37, 39, 42-45, 132-133, 152
 - Mogumber 67
 - Moore River Native Settlement 67
 - Moorhouse, Matthew 35
 - Morgan, Lewis H. 27-28
 - Morgan, Sally 76
 - Mudrooroo Narogin 77
 - Murgon 85
 - Murray, River 103, 105
 - My Ngarrindjeri Calling, Doreen Kartinyeri* 103-114, 116-131, 133, 152, 154
 - My Place* 76
 - Myall Creek 11-13, 24
 - Myles, W. S. 37
- N**
- Native Affairs, Commissioners and Directors of 46-47, 51, 61, 86
 - Native/Aboriginal
 - Camps 10, 12, 20-22, 34, 37, 42, 45, 67, 80, 119, 128, 133

-
- Settlements 34, 36-38, 48, 67, 84-85, 89, 103-104
 - Neglect 48-51, 53, 60, 87, 92, 109, 112
 - Nelson, Brendan 59, 60
 - Nethery, Amy 33-34
 - Neville, Auber Octavius 38, 41-46
 - New Guinea 7
 - New Holland 7, 27
 - New South Wales 8-9, 12, 28, 32, 40, 46-48, 54
 - New Zealand 98, 119
 - Ngarrindjeri 103-104, 106-108, 110-111, 114-116, 118, 122, 128-131
 - Ngurunderi 129
 - Nile, Richard 47
 - Ningana 67
 - Northern Territory 9, 46-48, 54, 60-64, 98, 133, 152, 154
 - Nuns 68-70, 73, 78-81, 124
 - Nyungar 74
- O**
- Octoroon 37, 45, 127
 - O'Leary, Cornelius 51, 61
 - O'Loughlin, Maurice 57
 - Omissions 96-97
 - One People of Australia League (OPAL) 84, 88
 - Oodnadatta 128
 - Orphanages 1, 22, 42, 67
 - Orphaned by the Colour of My Skin: A Stolen Generation Story* 135
 - Orphaned Children 38, 52, 84, 135
- P**
- Pallottines 68
 - Parliament 1, 32-33, 44-45, 47-48, 55-56, 59, 63
 - Parody 73
 - Parramatta Native Institution 31
 - Partington, Geoffrey 106, 116
 - Patten, John Thomas 48
 - Paulson, Barbara 117
 - Permissions/Permit System 40, 85, 87, 122
 - Perspective, Narrative 75, 91-92, 133
 - Perth 67-69
 - Pilger, John 2, 63
 - Pitjantjatjara 128
 - Pitjara 83, 91
 - Placement
 - Foster 51, 133
 - Non-Indigenous 53
 - Principle, Aboriginal Child 54
 - Temporary 51
 - Point McLeay 103, 107, 119
 - Point Pearce Mission 41, 104-105, 111-112, 118-120
 - Police 8, 12, 14-15, 21, 25, 35, 37, 41, 49, 61, 86, 100
 - Native 13-16, 36
 - Policies/Policy 1-2, 15, 35, 41, 43, 50, 52-55, 59-61, 63-64, 67, 94, 96, 99, 121, 123, 126-127, 133, 135, 152, 153
 - Poonindie Mission 113
 - Poverty 20, 48, 64, 133-134
 - Priests 68, 70-71, 74, 78-79
 - Progress, Lines of 27
 - Protection
 - Acts, Aboriginal 37, 40, 46-48
 - Boards, Aboriginal 33, 37, 41, 47-48, 52, 100, 104
 - Child 48-49, 62-63
 - Indigenous Population 18, 20, 22, 24-25, 33-35, 42, 47, 117, 133
 - Of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (BIPACSA), Board of Inquiry into the 60-61, 89, 112
 - Sacred Sites, Cultural Heritage 105-107, 113, 118, 131
 - Protectors of Aborigines 24-25, 34-35, 37-39, 41, 43, 46, 117, 122
 - Punishment 14, 18-19, 24, 50-51, 61, 69, 79-81, 92-93, 107, 109-110, 122, 129, 131, 134
- Q**
- Quadroon 37, 44-45, 52, 127
 - Queensland 9, 16, 29-30, 36, 38, 40, 46-48, 54, 83-85
- R**
- Race 17, 26-27, 30-31, 33-34, 41-42, 44-45, 47, 77, 94, 132-133
 - Racism 2, 26, 33, 46, 52-54, 68, 71, 75, 77, 80-81, 97, 101, 109, 111-112, 115, 117, 135, 133
 - Rations 10, 13-15, 17, 31, 34-35, 37, 67, 85, 92, 120-121
 - Raukkan 103, 107, 109-111, 120-124, 127, 129-131
 - Ravenscroft, Alison 84, 91
 - Read, Peter 1, 55, 57
 - Reconciliation v, 55-56, 77, 133
 - Records Kept on Aboriginal People 45, 100-101, 113
 - Religion 27, 33, 35, 69, 71, 99-100, 108, 125, 134
 - Relocation 34, 85
 - Removal

-
- Child 1-2, 7, 31, 33-34, 38, 41-43, 46-47, 49-53, 55-60, 99-100, 103, 122-125, 127, 133, 152
 - Indigenous Peoples 21
 - Reserves 33-37, 39-40, 48, 78, 83-84, 87, 89, 97, 134, 132
 - Resistance 11, 16, 73, 97
 - Reynolds, Henry 9-10, 13-23, 29-31, 33-35
 - Riverton Boarding School 68
 - Roberts, David A. 36
 - Roberts, Janine 11
 - Robinson, Fergus 11
 - Robinson, George Augustus 33-34
 - Roth, Henry Ling 34
 - Roth, Walter 37
 - Rowse, Tim 113, 131
 - Royal Society 7
 - Rudd, Kevin v, 1, 58-60, 63, 133
 - Ryan, Lyndall 11
- S**
- Salvation Army Girls' Home, Fullarton 103, 108-110, 112, 121, 123-124
 - Sanders, William 53
 - Saunders, Cheryl 114
 - Saunders, Kay 47
 - Saunders, Sandra 107, 115-116
 - Savagery 13, 25, 27-28
 - Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary 68
 - Schooling of Indigenous Children 22, 31, 36, 38, 41, 49, 62-63, 68, 70, 80, 83, 92, 103, 108-110, 119-121, 134
 - Secret Women's Business 104-106, 110, 114-116, 130-131
 - Segregation 33-34, 37, 39, 40, 42-43, 45, 80, 84, 114, 132, 152
 - Separation 1, 33, 127, 135
 - Child 1-2, 31, 36-38, 41-43, 48, 50-51, 55, 83, 124-125, 132, 134-135
 - Families 127-128, 135, 152
 - Indigenous Peoples 33-34, 45
 - Voices 90-91
 - Servants 17-19, 21-23, 25, 30, 38, 68, 73, 76, 81-82, 86, 89, 94, 97
 - Seven Sisters (Pleiades) 106, 129
 - Shadow Child: A Memoir of the Stolen Generation* 135
 - Shame 1, 73, 75, 87-88, 93-97, 117, 130, 135
 - Silences 96-97
 - Simons, Margaret 106, 116-117
 - Small-Pox Epidemics 31-32, 118
 - Sorry
 - Day, National 1, 55
 - Speech, Brendan Nelson's 59-60
 - South Australia 9, 29, 35, 38, 40-41, 45, 48, 54, 103, 105-108, 113-114, 116, 128
 - Spencer, Herbert 32
 - Spheres 77, 80-81
 - Stannage, Tom 47
 - Stations 1, 12, 15, 17-20, 35-36, 40, 43, 48-49, 89, 93
 - Stolen Generations 1-2, 5, 7, 43, 55-59, 67, 71-72, 76, 78, 90, 95, 123, 125-126, 128, 133-134, 136, 152-153
 - Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory 2, 63-64
 - Style 74-75, 77, 93, 101, 117
 - Swan River Colony 9
 - Sydney 13, 24, 52
 - Sztompka, Piotr 128
- T**
- Tasmania 9, 11, 31, 33-34, 48, 53-54
 - Tension 92-93, 127
 - Terra Australis Incognita 7
 - Terra Nullius 8
 - Terszak, Mary 135
 - Ti Tree 98
 - Tickner, Robert 114-115
 - Timothy, Dallen J. 125
 - Tindale, Norman 90, 113, 115, 126
 - Torres Strait Islands 1, 46-47, 55, 59-60, 114
 - Trackers/Troopers, Black 10, 14-16, 18
 - Traditions/Traditional Life and Knowledge 15-16, 20, 29, 34, 37, 62, 89, 98-99, 104-107, 110-112, 114-116, 120, 127-131, 135
 - Trauma 56, 95, 97, 101, 107, 123, 128, 134-136
 - Tribes/Tribal 12-14, 16-17, 20, 24-25, 28-31, 43, 67, 83-85, 103, 105, 127, 130, 133-134
 - Truancy 62
 - Tsai, Jeanne 97
- U**
- Unaipon, David 115
 - Unna You Fullas* 68-71, 74-75, 78-81, 133, 152, 154
- V**
- Van Diemen's Land 9
 - Victoria 9, 33, 37, 40, 47-48, 53-54
 - Violence 24, 29, 32, 34, 61, 77, 107
 - Alcohol-Related 112
 - Domestic/Family 60-62, 89, 112, 135
 - Sexual 118
 - Voice 75-76, 90-91, 117
- W**
- Wallaroo 120
 - Wakka Wakka 91

-
- Wandering Girl* 68-69, 71-78, 80, 82, 133, 150, 152
Wandering Mission 67-69, 71, 73-74, 78, 82
Ward, Glenyse 2, 67-82, 116-117, 121, 133, 152, 154
Wards 50
Watson, Julia 125
Welfare 34, 39, 47, 49-50, 53, 62, 121, 152
– Board, Aboriginal 47, 50-51, 53, 57, 104
– Child 46, 48-51, 53-54
– Departments 50-51, 55, 100
– Directors of Native 47, 50
– Institutions 133
– Laws/Legislation 46-50, 52, 54, 133
– Native 47, 49, 133
– Office, Native 67
– Officers 49, 108, 121, 126
– Workers 126-127
Wellington Valley Mission 36
Western Australia 9, 16, 37-38, 40, 42-43, 46-48, 54, 67, 70-71
Whitlam, Gough 53
Williams, Doretta 58
Williams, Joy (Janaka Wiradjuri) 57-58
Wilson, Dulcie 136
Wong, Ying 95
Wood, Rebecca 13
Woods, G. B. 44-45
Woorabinda 84
- X**
Xavier, St. Francis
– Native Mission 67, 70
- Y**
York, Berry 11
- Z**
Zoological Taxonomy 26

Abstract

In recent years the Australian government has temporarily suspended its 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act* and implemented legislation²⁴ which dramatically curtailed Aboriginal peoples' rights and has led to a sharp increase of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. It is a cause for alarm as similar policies in the past century have eventuated in the forcible removal of probably tens of thousands of Aboriginal children, now known as the Stolen Generations.

The intention of this diploma thesis is to provide an understanding and raise awareness for the current developments and the negative effects to be expected which is accomplished by two approaches: First, by identifying and examining the circumstances which have already led to a state-controlled system of forcible family separation in Australia in the 20th century. Second, by reviewing four exemplary female Stolen Generations autobiographies (*Unna You Fullas* and *Wandering Girl* by Glenyse Ward, *Auntie Rita* by Rita Huggins and Jackie Huggins, and *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* by Doreen Kartinyeri and Sue Anderson), providing authors' biographies and book summaries, and discussing the most prominent issues and features of each text.

The consideration of the historical development reveals efforts of genocide and segregation, eugenic ideas underlying assimilationist approaches, and racially discriminatory welfare practices, all of which were designed to meet the socio-economic conditions of the time. The autobiographies in question bear witness to the misanthropic treatment of indigenous and mixed-descent children and the often destitute living conditions of Aboriginal people. Impaired physical and mental health, marginalisation, and cultural alienation can be noticed as the long-term effects of childhood institutionalisation.

²⁴ See *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, subclauses 132(1) and 132(2). Although the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* was reinstated in 2010, the practical effects are relatively small as the main elements of the previous policy have kept in place (see Bryant).

It is to be feared that present-day policies will lead to new Stolen Generations in 21st-century Australia with equally devastating impacts on those affected.

Zusammenfassung

In den vergangenen Jahren wurde das aus 1975 stammende Gesetz zum Verbot von Rassendiskriminierung²⁵ von der australischen Regierung zeitweilig ausgesetzt und eine Gesetzgebung implementiert²⁶ welche die Rechte der indigenen Bevölkerung dramatisch einschränkte und zu einem steilen Anstieg der Fremdunterbringung von Aboriginekindern geführt hat. Dies gibt Anlass zur Sorge, da ähnliche Verfahrensweisen bereits im vergangenen Jahrhundert in der gewaltsamen Wegnahme wahrscheinlich zehntausender Aboriginekinder resultiert haben, welche heute als die Gestohlenen Generationen bekannt sind.

Es ist die Absicht dieser Diplomarbeit, Verständnis zu vermitteln und Bewusstsein zu schaffen für die gegenwärtigen Entwicklungen und die zu erwartenden negativen Auswirkungen, was durch die folgenden beiden Ansätze erreicht werden soll: Erstens, indem die Umstände bestimmt und erörtert werden, welche bereits im 20. Jahrhundert zur vom Staat systematisierten gewaltsamen Trennung von Familien geführt haben. Zweitens, indem vier beispielhafte Autobiographien (*Unna You Fullas* und *Wandering Girl* von Glenyse Ward, *Auntie Rita* von Rita Huggins und Jackie Huggins und *My Ngarrindjeri Calling* von Doreen Kartinyeri und Sue Anderson) von den Gestohlenen Generationen angehörenden Frauen rezensiert werden, was die Biographien der Autorinnen und Zusammenfassungen der Bücher beinhaltet sowie eine Auseinandersetzung mit den wesentlichsten Themen und Eigenschaften eines jeden Textes.

Die Betrachtung der Entwicklungsgeschichte offenbart Bemühungen in Richtung Völkermord und Rassentrennung, eine Assimilationspolitik mit zugrundeliegender

²⁵ *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*

²⁶ Siehe *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*, § 132 Zif. (1) und (2). Der *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* wurde im Jahr 2010 zwar wiedereingesetzt, die praktischen Auswirkungen dieser Entscheidung waren jedoch gering, da an den grundsätzlichen Inhalten der bisherigen politischen Linie festgehalten wurde (siehe Bryant).

eugenischer Denkweise und rassistisch diskriminierende Praktiken der Kinder- und Jugendfürsorge, welche allesamt nach den sozio-ökonomischen Bedingungen der jeweiligen Zeit ausgelegt waren. Die betreffenden Autobiographien legen Zeugnis ab über die menschenverachtende Behandlung von indigenen Kindern und solchen mit gemischter Abstammung und von den häufig armseligen Lebensumständen der Aborigines. Beeinträchtigungen in der körperlichen und mentalen Gesundheit, soziale Ausgrenzung und kulturelle Entfremdung sind die merklichen Spätfolgen von Institutionalisierung während der Kindheit.

Es ist zu befürchten, dass die aktuelle politische Ideologie zu neuen Gestohlenen Generationen im Australien des 21. Jahrhunderts mit gleichermaßen verheerenden Auswirkungen für die Betroffenen führt.

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