

**BRINGING THE DINGO HOME:  
DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DINGO BY  
ABORIGINAL, COLONIAL AND CONTEMPORARY  
AUSTRALIANS**

By

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Merryl Parker

Submission of Abstract for Ph.D. degree

BRINGING THE DINGO HOME: DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF THE DINGO BY ABORIGINAL, COLONIAL AND CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIANS.

My thesis examines the discourse which has encoded the dingo since it arrived in Australia nearly five thousand years ago. While post-colonial theory has exposed the ideological structures and material practices which position indigenous peoples as “other” to the colonisers, most scholars have remained curiously silent when it comes to nonhumans. Animals now stand as the ultimate “other”, denied a subjective life of their own, for their behaviour is usually read, as Helen Tiffin argues, “as having primary (and exclusive) significance for humans.” The project of this thesis is to examine the narratives within which Australians have “trapped” their dingoes. My methodology takes as its starting point Foucault’s theories which connect discourse and power.

The thesis is divided into three sections; Colonial Discourses, Aboriginal Dreaming and Contemporary Configurations. The colonial section asks how discourse forces the dingo to represent human fears and failings. I argue that a denigrating discourse is used to justify the ill treatment of the dingo, that discourse reveals little about the “real” dingo, and that there are similarities in the discursive treatment of dingoes and Aborigines. The thesis also acknowledges the dingo’s attempts to slip through the gaps in the discourse “fence”.

The second section researches traditional Aboriginal myths of the Dreaming Dingo. By encouraging the dingo to trot back to happier times, I allow the reader to step back also and assess Aboriginal representations of the dingo, arguing that these are based on an empirical knowledge of its habits and nature. I contend that in contrast to a colonial discourse based on difference, the Aboriginal narratives assume similarities to animals and the potential for crossovers. This section argues that a pragmatic Dreaming Dingo teaches humans to live harmoniously and cautiously in an environment which is both nurturing and dangerous.

Finally the dingo returns to the trail and trots into a place where practical knowledge of wilderness is negligible. The contemporary section of this thesis argues that in their longing to claim the dingo and its wildness for their emotional and spiritual needs, urban Australians generate a confused, incompatible and ignorant mix of colonial and Dreaming Discourse. The dingo in the National Park is required to carry an impossible discourse and it fails—biting the hands which feed it.

“Bringing the Dingo Home” reflects an exciting time as one more “other” breaks “the deafening silence” described by Wolch and Emel, and demands a position in post-colonial discourse. At last the discourse of the dingo can be foregrounded and its misrepresentations can be redressed.

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Part 1: Colonial Discourses</i>	
Introduction to the Colonial Dingo	24
The Cunning Dingo	25
The Cowardly Dingo	45
The Promiscuous Dingo	67
The Killer Dingo	88
<i>Part 2: Aboriginal Dreaming</i>	
Introduction to the Dreaming Dingo	117
Myths of Human Creation	137
Myths of Environmental Creation	148
Social Dingoes in an Aboriginal Discourse	169
Hunting: Wild and Tame—A Warning Discourse	179
Resurrection	202
<i>Part 3: Contemporary Configurations</i>	
Introduction to the Contemporary Dingo	219
The Children's Dingo	220
The Tamed Dingo	244
Lindy Chamberlain versus the Larrikin Dingo	268
A Pre-conclusion	297
Conclusions	300

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Each society has its own regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth; that is the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true. (Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* 94)

For the animal shall not be measured by man. [. . .] They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time. (Beston 19-20)

### ***One old dingo – a victim of discourse***

An old dingo once lived in a crevice of the great red Ayers Rock now called Uluru. The dingo had a name; given to him by white people—Old Ding-a-Ling. He had an occupation; each day he would take a stroll through the campground to see what he could beg from the tourists; and he had a heritage; he was a descendent of the first dingoes to arrive in Australia. He was lucky to be alive and privileged to be purebred; many of his species outside National Parks were still being exterminated and a large number of the remaining dingoes had been obliged to mate with domestic dogs. He was a survivor; described by an observant reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald* as

“well built, strong and cunning, a leader” (qtd. in Wilson 60). But finally the old dingo’s luck ran out and on a summer’s day in 1980, a few months after the death of baby Azaria Chamberlain, he was shot dead by a park ranger. Old Ding-a-Ling was a victim of yet one more of the several discourses which have been applied to his breed. He was killed because of a contemporary discourse which encouraged dingoes to beg from tourists and then punished their learned familiarity and aggression.

“Bringing the Dingo Home” investigates discursive representations of the dingo and the three distinct phases of its life in Australia. In the first section “Colonial Discourse,” accounts from trappers, and stories and poems gathered mainly from the *Bulletin* are examined. The texts range from the 1880’s until the end of the Second World War; a time-span which begins with “The Coming Man” of nationalism and ends with “The New Man” of wartime (White 85, 126). Robert Dixon’s description of the *Bulletin*’s “clamour of competing discourses” in *Writing the Colonial Adventure* (8) is borne out by dingo representations which fluctuate between amused tolerance and rigid dislike. The entrenched belief in the priority of sheep over the dingo and indigenous animals is revealed in both types of discourse and has survived into the twenty-first century.

The second section of the thesis describes the dingo which is represented in traditional Aboriginal myths. The myths describe the Dreaming Time which took place during the creation of the world, but the dingo does not perform chronologically in this thesis. Instead it trots along a haphazard path following the preferences of the colonists who

gave their own dingo discourse precedence over Aboriginal beliefs. The dingo doubles back from the traps and poison and denigration to a more benign time where it can rest for a while, lick its wounds and regain its pride. The Dreaming Dingo is represented by a spiritual discourse which endorses harmony and equality between human and nonhuman. The myths, including Ronald and Catherine Berndt's collection, *The Speaking Land* were mostly gathered in the early twentieth century when they were still spoken by traditional Aborigines with knowledge of a particular stretch of land.

The dingo picks up the trail and trots along again towards the three contemporary dingo discourses in the final section. "Contemporary Configurations" discusses urbanised Australians of the last twenty-five years and the texts which encourage them to misjudge the wilderness and the dingo. "The Larrikin Dingo" examines a subversive larrikin representation of the dingo during the Chamberlain trial. Larrikin language is found and examined in accounts of the trial, lawyer's texts and such street talk as dingo jokes and gossip. "The Children's Dingo" describes the romantic beliefs which encourage tourists to bring their children to Fraser Island in a search for spiritual redemption. "The Tamed Dingo" draws tourists to the island with a discourse of appropriation which represents the dingo as a domestic dog. Newspaper accounts of the events surrounding the death of Clinton Gage, children's books, letters to the editor and holiday brochures provide the discursive texts for the two tourist essays. The behaviour of humans on Fraser Island is similar to the practices which habituated Old Ding-a-Ling to tourists and caused his death.

### ***What is a dingo?***

The dingo, *Canis lupus dingo*, stands between wolf and dog like a link in a chain. It is able to mate with the domestic dog, but is wild and untamable like the wolf. Laurie Corbett, biologist and author of *The Dingo in Australia and Asia* states that neither wolf nor dingo has been subjected to the intense artificial selection procedures which tamed dogs over five thousand years ago (10-13). The dingo does not bark like a dog; it howls like a wolf. Unlike domestic dogs, dingo and wolf females produce only one litter a year and the father and other family members help to rear the pups (Lopez 31-37, Corbett, *The Dingo* 94-97). In its natural thin state, the dingo resembles the wolf, but when well fed on mutton it looks more like a dog. The way in which Australians perceive the dingo, as alienated wolf or friendly dog, as Dreaming ancestor, or as a symbol of their own lost wildness, depends on which discourse has influence over them.

### ***Is the dingo a native of Australia?***

It now seems possible that Aborigines have lived in Australia for more than fifty thousand years but the dingo, like the white man is a more recent immigrant, arriving at least four thousand years ago (Corbett, "The Conservation Status of the Dingo" 10); current DNA testing suggests five thousand years. An Aboriginal myth confirms

recent scientific evidence that the dingo travelled by boat with Indonesian traders who paid regular visits to the coastal area of the Northern Territory. The myth, in the form of a corroboree, reveals in song and dance how the dingo jumped off the boat and headed into the bush (Corbett, *The Dingo* 22). After colonial settlement when the dingo became subject to mass extermination, it was (and still is) convenient to describe the dingo as a feral intruder. In my opinion the dingo, having lived in Australia for two or three thousand years before Christ, has established itself as at least an honorary indigenous animal.

### *What is dingo discourse?*

#### *Truth and Power*

Old Ding-a-Ling might agree that not only is discourse a way in which humans represent the dingo, but that it has tremendous power; the power to bestow harmony or degradation; autonomy or unreasonable restraint; the power of life, or for the old dingo—death. Foucault's discursive theories of truth and power underwrite every chapter in this thesis. He explains how each society accepts its own discursive representations and makes them function as the truth (*Power/Knowledge* 131). He states that such representations are much more than a voice to articulate power or a weapon to enforce power. Discourse *is* power, and those who control the discourse

own the power. Each of the three social groups researched in this thesis has employed a particular discourse about the dingo and has made it become their own powerful truth. They also believe that the animal *is* that representation. For example if the dingo is represented discursively as a vicious and excessive killer and if everyone believes it to be so and punishes it accordingly then, in the minds of those people, the dingo *becomes* a vicious killer. Foucault describes this use of representation as a powerful means of control. He writes of a “regime” of truth and a “politics” of truth (*Power/Knowledge* 133). So if the beliefs about this vicious killer are encouraged by powerful factions of control and regulation, by for example the farming lobby and the Vermin Act, then the discourse of the dingo becomes a force working for the Government and the farming economy. Through discourse the dingo can also become a powerful Dreaming ancestor, trotting into every part of Aboriginal society to uphold the law and control the progression of lives from birth through to death and resurrection. A benign interpretation of Foucault’s discourse theories does not mean a lessening of power. Whether truth sits close to the dingo’s natural behaviour, serving equality and harmony under Dreaming Law, or is used to justify the classification of indigenes as vermin, to further a search for spiritual growth in the wilderness or to increase the economic wealth of tourism, it still controls the dingo in order to achieve power. The theory that discourse employs a form of truth for the purposes of power applies to every representation of the dingo.

### *Theories of surveillance and the gaze*

Foucault's theories on the power of surveillance are described in his book *Discipline and Punish*. He applied the term "surveillance" as a tool of discourse to the panopticon; a prison designed to allow guards to keep the prisoners in their gaze at all times. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain in *Post-Colonial Studies* that an authoritative surveillance not only objectifies the subject but allows the surveyor to fix its identity (226). While surveillance was used to control human subjects, the use of the term *gaze*, (in the sense used by Lacan), is particularly suitable to the dingo because as an animal it is always (in European discourse) the alien "other," objectified as the receiver of the human gaze. In a literal sense, when farmers looked closely at dingoes in order to kill them, their gaze was sanctioned and rewarded by the Bounty Act. The tourist gazes through rose-tinted glasses, re-presenting the dingo as a romantic signifier of the wilderness or as a harmless dog. Of course the gaze works both ways. Lopez describes the wolf's gaze: "It takes your stare and turns it back on you" (4). After young Clinton Gage was killed by two dingoes on Fraser Island, a Hervey Bay resident commented in a letter to the *Fraser Coast Chronicle*: "I have often watched them watch the tourist" (Campbell 6). In her autobiography *Through My Eyes*, Lindy Chamberlain describes the gaze of a dingo at the base of Uluru: "I sensed something watching me. I looked up and

saw a dingo steadily gazing at me. It made me feel a bit creepy to see it standing there so quietly like that” (28-29).

Barbara Noske describes in *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* “that mysterious inner side” shared by humans and animals which is revealed in the meeting of eyes (61-62) but not everyone wants or is ready to know that animals have an inner side which exists without human knowledge or approval. The reversal of the gaze from coloniser to colonised can result in the transferral of power (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 228-9). Perhaps that is why the gaze made Lindy Chamberlain “feel a bit creepy” and Bacon shot an unfortunate dingo which gazed at *him*. Gullo, Lassiter and Wolch, co-authors of “The Cougar’s Tale” in *Animal Geographies*, ask “So much for people and their ideas about animals. What about animals and their notions of people?” (141). The deliberate reversal of the gaze implies a challenge from animals and signals the need to stop viewing them through the human eye; to stop interpreting them through human benchmarks of behaviour and achievement.

The Aboriginal section of the thesis will inform the other two chapters for it is simply impossible to fix a surveillance-like gaze on the Dreaming Dingo. Human and dingo stand side by side in Dreaming Law, sharing a common ancestor, revealing their similarities in a shape-changing concept, each having no need to gaze at an objective “other.” A study of Aboriginal Dreaming will show a dingo which, although discursive, is not “over there,” the object of the human gaze, but “here beside us,” standing with us as one.

*Is there a “real” dingo?*

For human beings there is no “real” dingo; there are only different representations of the dingo and different ways of applying discourse. Perhaps biological studies can reveal a more honest, less objectified dingo, one which does not rely on human representation for its existence? But such studies involve “nothing more than the nomination of the visible” according to Foucault (*The Order of Things* 132) and Barbara Noske describes the cold observation of “measurable and quantifiable” facts by animal scientists (126-7). Biologists measure skulls and examine the contents of the dingo’s stomach but most of them have not been concerned with the non-visible, the un-measurable that is the animal as subject. Foucault claims: “in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses” (“What is an author?” 209). Excluded from the biologists’ account are the dingoes which reject the bait, turning away to scratch dirt over the carefully prepared mess of sardines or young lamb (Bacon, 40), or those dingoes described in Philip Holden’s book *Along the Dingo Fence*, which linger for days by their dead mates (Holden 76).

Edward Said warned in *Orientalism* that evidence of representations as opposed to “natural” depictions were found just as prominently in the “so called truthful text(s)” (21). Biologist Laurie Corbett received partial funding for his book *The Dingo in*

*Australia and Asia* from the Meat Research Corporation (Bligh viii) and his biological examination of the dingo must be examined as carefully as J.S. Bacon's advice to "land and stockmen" in his autobiography *The Australian Dingo*, on how "to rid their country of these terrible pests" (v). Dingo discourse can be amusingly obvious or it can be so unobtrusive and well established that it is found "skulking" in the very bones of the Australian language.

The researcher, aware of the discourse "trap" and looking for the "real" dingo in texts may still only find out more about *humans*. In "Reading Animals" Erica Fudge explains the dilemma: "reading animals may actually reveal the continuing centrality of humanity" (103). Fudge begins her essay with the question "What can our work do to change current perceptions about animals?" (101) and Michael Allen Fox provides an answer. Using ideas from *Animal Welfare and Human Values* by Rod Preece and Lorna Chamberlain, Fox recognises that abstract theory must be followed by "realistic, workable solutions to problems of animal abuse and exploitation" (39). A study of texts will not reveal the "real" dingo, but insight into human attitudes towards the dingo, will, if they are acted upon, improve its situation and perhaps save it from extinction. The seemingly anthropocentric act of reading the dingo will then be justified by consequent acts and attitudes which move to de-center the human and establish the animal as subject.

With the exception of the Aboriginal myths which are filled with knowledge of animals as fellow travellers through life, discourse has until recently routinely

endorsed the animal as an alien object. The first stirrings of a challenge to the long established position of the dingo and all animals as “other” in European discourse leads me to a discussion of a new and exciting view of nonhumans.

### ***Bringing the Animals Back In***

I would like to discuss the movement now nearly ten years old which represents attempts to give animals their own voice rather than to continually offer human representations of them. It is not the first attempt; the copyright date for *Of Wolves and Men* is 1978 and Barry Lopez begins the first chapter with the words “Imagine a wolf moving through the northern woods.” Lopez describes the sensations encountered by a wolf; the feel of the ground under paws, the scents which are sniffed and the light touch of a mosquito on an ear (9). The author attempts to imagine himself into a wolf rather than observe as a human, to *become* the wolf subject. The usual critical acclaims are printed on the back page of the Touchstone edition: Walter Clemons of *Newsweek* described his feelings on reading the book as “a shiver of strangeness.” Other writers, as shown by Walt Disney and a thousand authors of children’s stories, have given animals a voice; but usually, in *Black Beauty* for example, it is a human voice. Lopez moved as close to the wolf’s side as he, a non-

wolf, was able, and he repositioned the objective gaze. It was this technique which had induced the shiver of strangeness. Lopez had introduced the idea of animal autonomy into a society which was still re-assessing the role of women, black Americans and other minority groups. Writers in academic disciplines slowly followed the example of Lopez. In *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* Marian Scholtmeyer claimed it was “the stirring of the once dormant animal in the human psyche” which brought about the discursive recognition of animals (92). Perhaps also in a natural progression, discussions which routinely excluded animals will eventually seem as strange as the scarcity of women in Russell Ward’s “his-story” of Australian identity, *The Australian Legend*. In 1995, Wolch and Emel asked in “Bringing the Animals Back In”: “What explains this deafening silence about nonhumans in our discourse, this unexamined absence which cries out for understanding and remedy?” (*Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 633). *The Others*, published the following year, allowed Paul Shepard to challenge the objective role which had been given to animals. He wrote the last chapter in the form of a letter (filled with advice for humans) from those animal “others.” In 1998 Wolch and Emel published *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderland*. The book is a collection of essays which begin to fill in the “unexamined absence” of animals and to establish a discursive place for them. *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places—New geographies of human-animal relations* followed in 2000. The editors, Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert express their hopes that the book will complement *Animal Geographies*. In Australia, geographers and sociologists began to question the past lack of animal studies in discussions of physical and social environmental space. Sociologist Adrian Franklin

explored the sites of contemporary animal-human relationships in *Animals and Modern Cultures* and environmental geographer Carol Freeman has completed her Ph.D. on the discursive connections between the visual representation of the thylacine and its extinction. The “unexamined absence” and the “deafening silence” about animals was most noticeable in the Australian disciplines of Literature and Cultural Studies until 2001 when Helen Tiffin provided “entry points” into “dialogue on the place of animals and speciesism in post-colonial discourses” (“Unjust Relations: Post-Colonialism and the Species Boundary” 30-32).

Tiffin’s use of the term “entry points” confirms the difficulty of negotiating this new field. The study of animal-human relationships has at present, no real maps or models and few established theorists. Writers in this field are pioneers, who, in the absence of an established methodology, must use instead a mosaic of intertextuality. Texts and theories seemingly unrelated to the study are pulled over from areas of science and philosophy, critically re-examined and the many resulting questions (there are few answers) are asked. Traditional monologic scientific approaches to animals are challenged; some are overthrown and replaced by daringly novel viewpoints. One long established belief is that the complex and individual traits of agency and intentional resistance belong only to humans and cannot be applied to animals. In 1992 Cresswell was still begrudging animals the ability to think for themselves: “Resistance seems to imply intention—purposeful action [. . .] Transgression, in distinction to resistance, does not” (53-54). According to this belief, the dingo which is found on the wrong side of the fence and has squeezed through a hole to get there only does so because

there *is* a hole. It is not accepted or considered that a dingo will run along the fence actively seeking a hole, will regurgitate the poisoned bait, avoid the hidden trap or even double back behind the beaters who are driving it towards the guns. The possibility of such behaviour implies a purposeful resistance by the animal. Chris Philo, writing in 1995, is still unwilling to concede agency to animals but he argues that they have “at least some potential for what might be termed ‘transgression’ or even ‘resistance’ when wriggling out of the cages, fields and wildernesses allotted to them by their human neighbours” (“Animals, geography, and the City” 656). Slowly the argument for the intentional and purposeful resistance of animals moves from *no agency* to *some agency* and particularly for the “cunning” dingoes in this thesis arrives at *considerable, even enormous agency!*

Scholtmeijer argues that animals already possess “their own power to argue against the conventions in [human] thought” (qtd in Fox 36) and certainly the dingoes in this thesis are capable of overturning the imposed limitations placed on their behaviour by humans. It is accepted that the Aboriginal Dreaming Dingo has powers and uses them, but there are two ways for the colonial dingo to seize the agency which humans seek to withhold: physically, resistance can be attributed to every dingo which is still alive and on the other side of the fence: discursively, the dingo is occasionally offered agency in texts or yarns which deliberately or inadvertently subvert the usual representation.

There is still plenty of room to move forward in a field which is concerned with releasing animals from the constraints of human actions. In an essay concerned with ethical reflections on the future: “Humans and Other Animals,” Fox considers the possibility of *moral* as well as *physical* agency for animals. Animals would be identified as capable of making moral choices “and therefore accountable for their acts” (47). Such projections and possibilities, though still hypothetical, make contemporary concessions and word play of the “Are they transgressing or resisting?” kind seem outdated and even grudging.

Authors publishing a decade ago could not be expected to predict the imminent emergence of yet another “other” and most make no mention of animals. In *The Cartographic Eye*, Simon Ryan’s excellent work on the discourse of antipodean explorers, human indigenes are selected for study; nonhumans are glossed over. He writes:

The discourse of antipodeanism works to establish the indigene as perverse and strange like the rest of the continent and what it contains, but whereas the odd fauna is merely a curiosity, the Aborigine is an insult to the natural ownership of resources by those who judge themselves best able to exploit them. (112)

I will show that “the discourse of antipodeanism” which worked to establish perversity and strangeness was used as actively against dingoes as it was against Aborigines to deny them both a place in the land. Ryan was researching the effects of discourse on

*human* indigenes and his animal omissions provide an intriguing starting place to argue for the inclusion of “the odd fauna” and especially the dingo in postcolonial studies. It is a chance to bring the animals back in.

### ***Bringing the Dingo Home***

Wolch and Emel gave their pivotal editorial the title “Bringing the Animals Back In.” I have two reasons for choosing a new title “Bringing the Dingo Home” for an Australian examination of postcolonial discourse about dingoes. Firstly the settlement of Australia by colonisers involved the destruction of native animals and their habitat. The animal indigenes either ate the grass reserved for the imported stock or in the case of the dingo, bypassed the grass and ate the stock! Marsupials and dingoes were therefore driven out of their place on the land and imported animals were put into the empty spaces. The images of place and space feature strongly in the fate of Australian native animals and Foucault’s definitions of space as sites which isolate, exclude and segregate, permeate this discussion (qtd. in Wolch and Emel xiv). The two opposing sides of the Dingo Fence with sheep on one side and dingoes (supposedly) on the other, provide contrasting spaces for the dingo. The fence, the protected National Parks and island sanctuaries, bounties and the pest management acts which vary from state to state drag the debate into the twenty-first century. The dingo is still alternately welcomed or outlawed, killed (culled if you prefer euphemisms) or protected. The fence is a long line of displacement, as unseen and unnoticed as Foucault’s prisons.

Who ever mentions or cares about the Dingo Fence which blocks the migratory paths of semi-nomadic animals? How many people even know that the fence is still there? The dingo has lived in Australia for five thousand years and its role as a tutelary animal in the Dreaming describes an animal at one with Aboriginal people and the environment. Now it no longer exists in settled areas, denied its place by European farming methods. The title of this thesis, “Bringing the Dingo Home”, highlights the displacement of indigenous animals from their territory and the fracturing of their social structures. The title acknowledges the denial of a place to animals and supports the belief that they should share in the discussions which benefit other minorities.

***Bringing the Dingo Home—the second reason for my choice of this phrase***

“Bringing them Home” is the title of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry into the “stolen generation”; those Aboriginal children who were taken from their families and homes and sent away to mission schools. The children were removed from the place where they were born and they became estranged from the land which is so important to the spiritual welfare of Aboriginal people. For some time, government, social and religious organisations and the Aboriginal stolen generation themselves have been attempting to reunite families. The children, long grown up, have visited their birthplaces and met with relatives. Hence the term “Bringing them home.”

After a short investigation into the postcolonial fate of animal and human indigenes it becomes obvious that there are close similarities in their treatment and discourse. Lopez drew attention to the treatment of wolves and Native Americans which began two hundred years before the Australian experience:

The colonist had no experience in dealing with Indians and knew little more about killing wolves. But since the two seemed so alike, he fell to dealing with them in similar ways. He set out poisoned meat for the wolf and gave the Indian blankets infected with smallpox. He raided the wolf's den to dig out and destroy the pups, and stole the Indian's children and sent them to missionary schools to be rehabilitated. (170)

Lopez also comments on the discourse or argot applied to wolf and Native American:

By the late nineteenth century the argot of the Indian wars was the argot of the wolf wars. General Sheridan said: "The only good Indians I ever saw were dead" and the wolfer said, "The only good wolf is a dead one." Indians and wolves who later came into areas where there were no more of either were called renegades. Wolves that lay around among the buffalo herds were called loafer wolves and Indians that hung around the forts were called loafer Indians. (170-71)

Two centuries later in Australia, the presence of indigenous people challenged settlers' rights to live on the land, and kangaroos and wallabies competed with domestic stock for grass. Aborigines and dingoes killed and ate sheep and cattle. Human and nonhuman indigenes were both perceived as unwanted nuisances. Strychnine was hidden in meat for dingoes to find and mixed with drinking water or gifts of flour for Aborigines (Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* 84). Dingoes were "exterminated" and Aboriginal people were "massacred." Dingoes were forced out of their territory onto rocky mountain ridges and only ventured into sheep country at night. Aborigines were driven away from the river and creek frontages and ran back at night to get food and water (see Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier* for Aboriginal treatment; Eric Rolls, *They All Ran Wild* and Roland Breckwoldt, *A Very Elegant Animal* for treatment of dingoes). Aboriginal society was damaged by the removal of children, by prostitution and death. The extended families of dingoes (so different to the domestic dog's casual mating behaviour) was fractured by human activities (Corbett, *The Dingo* 94-97). Pups were taken for bounty, lifetime partners were shot and dingoes were obliged to mate with dogs.

A denigrating discourse in which dingoes and Aborigines were both described as cunning, cowardly and promiscuous nuisances confirms my contention that comparisons between Australian indigenes, human and nonhuman are unavoidable. Sid Wright, dingo trapper and author of *The Way of the Dingo*, commented in 1968 on the injustice of colonial attitudes: "the dingo could [ . . . ] brand man a coward and a thief, for man took the land from the dingo and offered battle only when the odds were

insurmountably in his favour” (5). Wright’s comments on dingoes could be applied to Aborigines. It is the close similarities of treatment which prompts my application of the Aboriginal concept “Bringing them home” to dingoes.

Despite the way in which postcolonial discussions of objectivity, diaspora and even hybridity can be applied to nonhumans there have been few attempts to do so until Helen Tiffin opened up discussion on the place of animals in postcolonial discourse. Tiffin cites major theoretical interests: “otherness; racism; language; translation; the trope of cannibalism; voice and the problems of speaking of and for others – to name just a few,” which can be used in new ways of thinking about the animal and its place in human society (“Unjust Relations: Post-Colonialism and the Species Boundary” 32). Tiffin acknowledges the similarities in the treatment of animals and humans but fears that the linking of for example the treatment of Africans as slaves and the treatment of animals today (as fellow victims of commodification, killing and enslavement) involves entering a “political minefield” (33). One of the problems as Tiffin points out is that whilst we condemn the past treatment of marginalised humans, we collude in a particular treatment of animals (32). As meat eaters, users of products tested on animals, or as visitors to the zoo, the circus or Seaworld, we participate in the commodification of animals. It takes only one more step to argue that those who enjoy lamb chops should not protest about the treatment of the dingo. Tiffin’s essay is published in *Compr(om)ising Post/colonialism(s): Challenging Narratives and Practices*, a title which reflects her awareness of a compromising and challenging topic. Tiffin identifies another problem in comparisons between human and nonhuman

indigenes: the frequent use of animal metaphors and categorisations as justification for human oppression (33). In colonial culture, a comparison between humans and animals becomes something shameful. Dingo discourse is used in white Australian culture to denigrate humans as well as dingoes.

The title and message inside *Dingo Makes Us Human* endorse a different view. Deborah Bird Rose shows throughout her book that the claiming of dingoes as ancestors enriches and ennobles the Aboriginal people of Yarralin. In Aboriginal myths the perceived similarities of dingo and human are used as a tutelary tool. For traditional Aborigines, comparison with the dingo makes them *more* human, not less. It is a western view that human comparisons with animals and especially with a dingo are shameful. In *The Dreaded Comparison, Human and Animal Slavery*, Spiegel defends her comparative study of the treatment of black American slaves and animals as “offensive only to the speciesist; one who has embraced the false notions of what animals are like” (25). My approach to comparisons between dingo and human victims of colonialism is that information about the treatment of one informs the other. I expect to show how the discourse of the dingo reflects on such marginalised humans as Aborigines, women and Chinese gold miners. I want to say that nothing happens without consequence; that how we treat the dingo is not something unimportant but defines us as human beings and that a self-serving treatment of the dingo is mirrored in the degradation of the Australian environment and its indigenous occupants.

A study of dingo texts will reveal much about Australian people and how they treat their fauna. It may reveal no truths about the dingo and we may still see no more than “a fleeting glimpse of a wild dingo disappearing into the sunset” (Corbett, “Conservation Status of the Dingo” 18), for dingo discourse is concerned with human needs, not animal truths. Positioned quietly at the centre of all the talk, the tall stories, the jokes, the justifications and the lies, is the dingo; surviving, adapting, staying alive in a drought, refusing the poisoned meat, stepping around the trap, snatching a chop from the barbecue, trying like Old Ding-a-Ling to outrun that final bullet.

## **THE COLONIAL DINGO**

## *AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COLONIAL DINGO*

The first settlers were ignorant of most of the natural characteristics of the dingo. Their knowledge of the elusive dingo was usually limited to a howl in the night, a sprung trap or a bloody mess of sheep in the morning. Their discourse tweaked the barely known characteristics of the dingo into an objectivity which denied its role in any life stream, denied it life itself. The howl identified the alien other, the sprung trap showed the dingo's cunning, and the dead sheep justified its extermination as a vicious and excessive killer. The huge gaps in the colonists' knowledge were filled in with bush yarns and stories which described their own version of the dingo. Foucault explained how the subject is defined, not by its actual characteristics but by the way it is spoken or written about in discourse: "it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analysing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse" ("What is an Author" 209).

## *THE CUNNING DINGO*

*There be many sorts of dingoes, the black, the spotted, the brindle, the yellow, but all live and work the same way—by cunning. (Falder 35)*

In 1905, the *Bulletin* published “Dingoes I Have Met” which described a number of dingoes, all of them represented as cunning. One hundred years after Falder’s story, ABC children’s television regularly screens “The Adventures of Blinky Bill,” a version of Dorothy Wall’s classic Australian bush story which was made into a television series in 1993. The story has been brought up to date and the fox, Miss Belinda, has been replaced by the dingo family: Ma, Danny, Daisy, Meatball and a small dingo of school age called Shifty. While they don’t chase or eat the bush animals, preferring hamburgers and soft drinks, they show the traditional behaviour of cunning dingoes. Danny Dingo steals carrots intended for the impoverished rabbit family and resells them at the market. He persuades Mayor Pelican to build “Club Pet,” a tourist resort where city cats pay Danny to hunt Blinky Bill and his friends. Blinky Bill is suspicious: “I’m worried about the dingoes.” “Yes” Nutsy replies: “They’re not to be trusted. What have they ever done for us?” The discourse of the

cunning dingo has “sneaked” and “skulked” into the twenty first century and is now influencing a new generation of Australians.

The cunning dingo was evoked in the *Bulletin* through satisfyingly onomatopoeic words such as “sneaking,” “skulking” and “slinking.” Charles Hayward chose the words “creeping furtive on his victims [. . .] is a stinking, slinking dingo” for his 1927 poem “The Devil and the Dingo” (17). C. E. W. Bean extended his study of sheep in *On the Wool Track* to include accounts of elusive dingoes “flashing low like a streak of lightning through the grass” (36). Corbett claims that the description of a cunning and treacherous dingo which was seen hiding in long grass was formed from the dingo’s habits; its mobile and elusive nature and its night time sightings (*The Dingo* 23). In colonial Australia, surreptitious behaviour of all indigenes was linked with treachery. In *The Other Side of the Frontier*, Henry Reynolds foregrounds Aboriginal resistance to the arrival of Europeans. He describes how the early explorers, landing on what appeared to be deserted coasts were soon nervously aware that they were under constant, discreet surveillance from unseen and unheard Aborigines. Signal fires flared from every direction even as sailors stepped onto the beach and the explorer Gilbert was killed by a spear flung from the dense bush surrounding his group. Prophetically he had written in his diary of the need to be aware of the watchers hiding in the seemingly empty darkness around his camp (22-23). Aborigines cautiously entered the unlocked shepherd hut to search for provisions; Aborigines (and dingoes) hid outside in the grass waiting to grab a stray sheep (Reynolds, *The Other Side* 160). In *The Australian Legend*, Russell Ward described a bush ethos of hospitality for

passing bushmen and shepherds which required huts to be left open (85). “Sneaking” cautiously into the colonized space or “skulking” on the edge of that space was considered treacherous behaviour for Aborigines and dingoes.

The mental capacities of Aborigines are invariably represented as cunning rather than clever. *Frontier: Aborigines, Settlers and Land*, has four examples of settlers who, according to Reynolds, “were forced to admire the skill and determination which underpinned Aboriginal resistance” (101). However three out of the four settlers describe the local Aborigines as “cunning,” “thoroughly cunning” and evincing “a degree of craft and cunning” and make no mention of skill or determination (*Frontier* 101). Foucault emphasizes the importance of words; the need to choose the right word; the importance of the right angle in discourse: “these words rather than those, a particular type of discourse rather than some other type, [. . .] such and such an angle and not some other one” (*Power/Knowledge* 211). The settlers “were forced” to admit the skill of the Aboriginal fighters, but they chose words which evoked betrayal rather than skill. Using descriptions related to animal instincts rather than higher logic, they slanted praise into denigration. Such a reduction of Aboriginal strategy into cunning is hardly surprising in the context of armed resistance: “Their whole art of war,” wrote a Tasmanian pioneer, was “a concealed, silent and treacherous attack” (Reynolds, *The Other Side* 100). Explorers’ and settlers’ texts which denigrate Aboriginal intelligence, skill and strategy into a discourse of cunning are understandable. Simon Ryan explains the necessity of containing the “threatening difference” of Aborigines, of reducing them “safely and comfortably” to a “morally and intellectually inferior”

level (154). If the Tasmanian pioneers had praised the skill, determination and clever strategies of the opposition they would have been admitting to equality, land rights and a knowledge of the land superior to their own. The use of a “cunning” discourse controls such threats.

The explorer Leichhardt could “read” treachery in the faces of Aborigines: “a careful observer [. . .] can easily read the bad intention in their unsteady, greedy, glistening eyes” (Ryan 184). However the large number of similar texts which employ a “cunning” discourse for an *animal*, the constant need to represent the *dingo* as treacherous, needs some explanation. When J. S. Bacon published his trapper memoirs in 1960 he was able to draw on a lifetime of representations of the cunning dingo. The discourse was so well entrenched, so “in the very grain of individuals” as Foucault describes it (*Power/Knowledge* 39), that Bacon could also claim to “read” the faces of dingoes. He writes: “if you are in hiding and a pure dingo comes close you can then see the treacherous, deceitful look with the two sharp pointed ears set to catch the least sound” (5).

Colonial discourse has been established as a device which places the human indigene in a moral and intellectually inferior position whilst showing the coloniser at an advantage (Ryan 154). Texts and binary devices were used to confirm the inferiority of Aborigines and therefore to justify acts of aggression towards them. No such justification was necessary for the dingo; there was no need to employ a denigrating discourse; no reason to search for excuses to treat the dingo badly. A European

discourse which confirmed animals as inferior to humans was already in place. As an animal the dingo possessed none of the human rights which formed obstacles to the killing and displacement of Aborigines. When indigenous humans were killed, “structuring devices” were necessary to allow such inhibitions as the sanctity of human life to be overcome or bypassed (Ryan 154). No such devices were needed for animals which had always been slaughtered for meat, hunted for sport and exterminated as pests. In addition the dingo was similar to the wolf which was routinely killed by park rangers in American National Parks during the early years of the twentieth century (Emel 100). Since the dingo was wild, fierce and an animal it was natural and right to kill it. It had no rights which required bypassing, no speech to voice its protest and apparently no wits to comprehend or oppose its treatment. A few texts have considered animals to possess cognitive intelligence rather than a mere instinctive, biologically sourced cunning. Charles Darwin could find “no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties” (Spiegel 21) and George Romané asserted in 1898 that animals had intelligence (Masson and McCarthy 14). But Romané’s research has been angrily criticised by scientists since its time of publication. In *When Elephants Weep*, Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy attribute a complex life to animals. They describe how the belief that since animals lack the power of speech they are unable to reason, to plan certain actions and anticipate others continues to dominate scientific theories of intelligence in animals (14-15).

Any discussions in trappers' texts about the presence or absence of dingo intelligence should therefore not have needed strong arguments, supportive texts and an assertive discourse. The dingo was a sheep killer and a wild animal with no rights. Surely those facts gave and justified the right to kill it? Why go to the trouble of creating reasons for killing it? Yet one of the most prevalent dingo discourses from early sheep-farming days centres around an insistence on documenting the dingo's cognitive behaviour as an innate cunning. Explanations are needed for the urge to describe dingo behaviour as cunning, crafty and treacherous, for the need to justify acts against the dingo which appear to have no need of justification. The texts, with their constant need to exclude an animal which is already the ultimate "other" seem, in Robert Dixon's paraphrasing of Bhabha's words, as anxious as they are assertive (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 199).

One reason for this seemingly unnecessary discourse may be the similarity of the treatment and the characteristics of the two indigenes; human and non-human. Since Collins heard the sound of axes in the forest, changing the wilderness into domestic space and banishing indigenous life, the Aborigine and the dingo have fled along similar paths. Fanon is describing two binary opposites, the Algerian native and the settler, when he states in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world [. . .] is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature" (27-8). In Australia, settlers challenged and opposed all indigenes, while the dingo and the Aborigine stood together, linked by a discourse of exclusion and difference. A structuring device of binary opposites reveals the extent

of the gulf between the advantages of the settler and the degradations of the indigenes (Ryan 137). Black and white, wild and civilised, moral and degenerate, rational and instinctive, cunning and clever—each word challenges its opposite number and carries a lifetime of privilege or disadvantage in its very sound. Such binary devices encouraged a careful emphasis on difference and on the superior attributes of the coloniser which was necessary in the dealings between humans.

An early description of the dynamics of dingoes, Aborigines and settlers may help to explain why it was necessary to include the dingo in such discussions of difference and superiority. George Worgan, surgeon with the First Fleet describes a confrontation: “The Natives set one of these Dogs at a Man, whom the Governor employs to shoot Birds & other Animals, He found himself in Danger of being Bit, He shot Him dead on the spot” (19). Like the trappers’ texts which would follow, Worgan’s account positions the coloniser as the subject. The story; the choice of words, “these words rather than those”; the way it is told; the impression it gives, “a particular type of discourse rather than some other type”; all belong to Worgan and the Governor’s man (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 211). The two indigenes have nothing to say; the camp dingo cannot speak and Aboriginal language is “an inarticulate unintelligible Jargon” (Worgan 19). The power of speech and position seems to belong only to the coloniser: “He found himself in Danger of being Bit, He shot Him dead on the spot.” Yet a small space has been left for both the human and animal indigenes: “The Natives set one of these Dogs at a Man.” The Aborigines cannot personally attack the Governor’s Man who carries a gun, but they can set their dingo

onto him. The dingo stands in as proxy for its Aboriginal masters. It threatens the Governor's Man on behalf of them and it becomes a threat itself. The colonists must treat the dingo with a discourse of denigration more suited to a threatening Aborigine than a powerless animal. They do so because the dingo has also become a threat by association. Later the dingo's attacks on the sheep which are the farmer's property will confirm it as a threat. But it is the dingo's intelligence, its brains, rather than its teeth and claws, which really challenge the farmer. A clever dingo presents a denial of its inferior role of an animal with no rights. A clever dingo refuses the hegemony of domestication and instead offers a continual threat to the farmers.

Ryan describes texts which represent the indigene as morally and intellectually inferior. Such texts attempt to contain threatening discourse within a taming discourse to justify the treatment of Aborigines and their removal from the land (154-5). Ion Idriess wrote "The Call of the Pack" for the *Bulletin* in 1927. It describes an Aboriginal man from Cape York Peninsula who is pinned under a boulder, and a dingo which is waiting its chance to spring on the man. Aborigine and dingo compete in a mental struggle for survival. The dingo is starving but the man has one arm free. If the dingo attacks too soon, before the man grows weak, it will be grabbed by the man's strong arm and killed. The situation involves mental calculations by both of them. They must both use their brains to *think*, a task which, according to Idriess' racist text, neither of them has done before. The Aborigine is "hardly a man. Midway between the two" from a tribe which is "hardly yet even in the Stone Age [. . .] His brain was not by many centuries developed for such detailed thoughts. [. . .] Could the dingo kill

him? Could he kill the dingo?" (40). Dingo and Aborigine, according to Idriess' text, are at almost the same level of intellect: "For a long motionless hour the dingo glared at the black man. Through its baleful yellow eyes its brain, so very near akin to that of the savage black animal pinned beneath the stone, slowly calculated all his strength, all his weakness" (40). Both make an effort; the dingo uses "cunning" and "instinct" while "a dull pain hurt the black man's head as he tried so hard, and for the first time in his life, to think" (40). The need to reduce the Aborigine and the dingo to creatures of inferior intellect is as primitive as Idriess' representations. The text reveals the anxiety and urgency of colonisers who are denying a place to the original occupants. The Aborigine must be shown as so inferior that land and life can be refused him. Idriess uses the dingo's association with the Aborigine to reveal an inferiority by association. He links the primitive savageness of the dingo with the inferiority of the Aborigine. The dingo provides a bridge towards the concept of a "Stone Age" man who is "hardly a man" but more like a "savage black animal" (40). As an animal, the dingo can be denied all rights without a reason, but its position as proxy for Aborigines makes it an associated threat which must be overcome.

Ion Idriess has used the dingo for a racist discourse which denigrates by association the humanity and intelligence of the Aborigine. His text uses the dingo as a passive object which represents whatever Idriess chooses. But the following story reveals the dingo's resistance to such impositions and its alarming tendency to slip through the gaps in the chosen discourse. It is this tendency which will inspire the most assertive dingo texts in an attempt to contain it. Sorenson's account of cunning dingoes droving sheep, humorously acknowledges the resistance and the seemingly rebellious

aspirations of the “cunning” dingo. The story was told to Sorenson by a boundary rider in 1896:

They’d lifted about 200 ewes an’ were joggin’ along all serene, though a bit short-handed. The big fellow seemed to be the boss. [. . .] “Hang it all, Brindle,” he’d growl, “chuck yerself round a bit, or we’ll be here all day.” (“The Dingo” 40)

The humour of the account springs from the apparent incongruity of wild dingoes behaving like experienced drovers. But dingoes have always possessed the skills to manipulate prey. Corbett studied the traditional hunting techniques of dingoes and their use of relay and ambush techniques to overpower large prey such as kangaroos. He describes how the dingo has transferred these skills to the droving of sheep and cattle (*The Dingo* 113). There are many anecdotes by trappers, and several *Bulletin* texts (Sorenson gives three examples) about dingoes herding sheep and cattle. Each reading conveys the strangeness of a dingo droving sheep without human supervision or consent and perceives it as a perverted version of the farmer and his sheep dog. Hidden within the humour is the threat of the dingo’s intelligence, which seems formed to outwit humans and subvert their economy. The act of droving is much admired in sheep dogs and seen as evidence of their loyalty and intelligence. At the coloniser’s side is an “other”; not a woman but the domestic dog. Anthropologist Julie Marcus describes the role of the dog in helping to impose the male settler’s control over the wild and the exchange of food for the dog’s labour and unhesitating devotion (“Prisoner of Discourse” 17). The dog works for the farmer, protecting his property and serving his economic interests. The dingo as an unauthorised drover of sheep

mimics the loyalty and usefulness of dog in a parody which betrays the farmer and kills his sheep. Like the Tasmanian Aborigines involved in war, the strategic planning, the anticipatory logic, the sheer cleverness of the act cannot be permitted because it is subversive. It must be contained by a baser language of cunning and treachery.

The act of droving is changed by discourse. Foucault has described the achievement of “transformations” of meaning by the choice or slanting of words and angles (*Power/Knowledge* 211). The clever usefulness of the droving sheep dog is transformed into cunning deviousness when the dingo mimics the dog. Bacon used such transformation of discourse to describe “a notorious dingo that raided sheep for many years” as “extra cunning and savage” (v). But when dingoes used the same techniques to round up *native* animals, Bacon saw their action from another angle and could admire them and acknowledge their “skill”: “Generally speaking it can be said that dingoes are kings of the Australian bush. They have their means of killing all bush game, and if one or two cannot succeed they get extra mates to help. Their skill is remarkable” (9). Bacon’s words change from “extra cunning and savage” to “remarkable”, “skill” and “kings of the Australian bush” and his attitude changes from denigration to approval. The dingo’s hunting techniques stay the same but as the prey changes, the discourse undergoes the necessary “transformations” enabling new judgements to be made.

When dingo and cattle-dog are involved in a life and death struggle, the message remains clear and unconfused. Idriess has established the link of dingo and Aborigine

in a discourse of inferiority and cunning. The dog as man's best mate and helper can claim the superior moral and intellectual attributes of its master. A similar story of good and bad has been told before. The medieval text of *The Book of Beasts* describes a wolf which pays a visit to the sheep fold: "So great is her cunning that [. . .] she goes like a tame dog to the fold, at a foot's pace and lest the sheepdog should notice the smell of her breath or the shepherds wake up, she goes upwind" (White 57). The sheepdog and the sleeping shepherd are fooled by the wolf. It is a double betrayal of man and his canine representative which can be partly assuaged by calling the wolf "cunning."

The wisdom of the dog is acknowledged partly because it has the good sense to flatter its master and affirm its position of mate: "Now none is more sagacious than Dog, for he has more perception than other animals and he alone recognizes his own name. He esteems his master highly" (White 61-2). An animal which will "weep for his master's woe with a piteous howl" (White 66) and which "cannot live without men" sounds astute enough to have convinced men of its exceptional cleverness (White 62). In addition *The Book of Beasts* claims intellectual powers of reasoning, deduction and syllogism for the clever dog:

When a dog comes across [...] the branching of the trail, or the criss-cross of the trail because it has split into more parts, then the dog puzzles silently with himself. [...] He shows his sagacity in following the scent, as if enunciating a syllogism. "Either it has gone this way," says he to himself, "or that way, or,

indeed, it may have turned twisting in that other direction. But as it has neither entered into this road, nor that road, obviously it must have taken the third one!” And so, by rejecting error, Dog finds the truth. (64)

“The Fourth Trap” was written by Chas. H. Shaw and published in the *Bulletin* in 1934. His story of a wild dingo, “one of those slinking outlaws”, and a dog called Bluey is filled with a similar discourse to *The Book of Beasts*. The text centres around four rabbit traps, wired together and baited by a dead sheep which a rouseabout sets to catch a dingo. Instead the traps catch the homeless Bluey, a blue cattle-dog with black spots “deserted by an owner who had indulged in a drinking bout and disappeared” (41). Bluey is caught in three of the traps and must lie “on his side in the dust, panting and helpless and in great fear.” After hours of suffering a dingo arrives and prepares to attack Bluey in the cunning and treacherous manner of all dingoes according to Shaw’s hyperbole: “the dingo gave a fiercer snarl and, all its sneaking killer instincts stirred by the helplessness of the enemy, began to advance again, horrid purpose in its evil, slinking bearing” (42). At this stage in the story the alleged difference between the calculated reasoning which marks the dog’s intelligence and the brute instinctive cunning of the dingo become apparent as Bluey works out a use for the fourth trap: “These hard-fanged things had been placed in the ground to catch such as the dingo. Then it was almost certain that there were more of them in the ground about him. If he could entice the dingo into them” (42). Shaw is describing more than the simple struggle of dog and dingo. Foucault images discourse as a battle for the status of truth (*Power/Knowledge* 132). Shaw employs discourse, these words rather than those, to

describe a battle contained within the binary opposites of settler and Aborigine, domestic and wild, savage and civilized, cunning and clever, dingo and dog. Bluey is the locus of all the settler's attributes and aspirations. Shaw describes Bluey as a help to the farmer and also emotionally dependant on him: "he lay, exhausted and covered with dust, in a semi-stupor. At times his body twitched, and once his ears pricked and his tail wagged as he dreamed that he was heeling a mob across a ford while a well-known voice issued commands" (41). Bluey's suffering throughout the night is similar to colonial descriptions of lost children. Like Bluey who dreams of his master, Pretty Dick dreams that his mother is calling him in a story of a lost boy by Marcus Clarke (49). In fact Bluey, as the farmer's mate *is* represented as human. Julie Marcus writes: "the dog becomes almost human and acts as a site for the development of human passions and potentialities" ("Prisoner of Discourse" 17). The dingo however, has no such capacity for human suffering and receives no sympathy from Shaw. When it is finally caught in the fourth trap it "flailed and threshed [. . .] its cowardice now asserting itself in short howls of pain and panic" (42). No room is given in texts for dingoes to suffer pain. In Shaw's story it does not take its punishment like a man or even like a dog but like a lowly and inferior dingo. Bluey's stoic suffering, his reasoned logic which enables him to entice the dingo into the fourth trap and his devotion to humans, combine to make him the ideal proxy for man's superior nature. In the battle over the fourth trap, the dingo, and by association the Aborigine, is the loser.

After such a thorough discursive conquest of the dingo it might be assumed that man (and his dog) could bask in a feeling of superiority which would contain all future threatening discourse. However such an assumption would seriously underestimate the dingo's ability to subvert human plans, to resist discursive texts, to bite back. The dingo which stands in as proxy for Aborigines has apparently been defeated by a dog which represents humans. Supposing the dingo refuses this discursive role of proxy and slips through the gaps, rather as the flesh and blood animal slips through the holes in the dingo fence, moving from an enforced exile in the wilderness into a forbidden space? There are several ways for the discursive dingo to squeeze through holes and create havoc in a space of resistance. Writers such as Sorenson can assist the dingo's escape with texts which reveals first one subversive act—the dingo droving sheep without the help of a master—and then subverts the text once more with humour. In a reversal of values, Sorenson challenges the reader with his light-hearted treatment of a serious subject: “Hang it all Brindle,” he'd growl, “chuck yerself round a bit, or we'll be here all day.”

While Sorenson's choice of text and his humour are deliberate, other texts *inadvertently* encourage the dingo to slip through the gaps of the clever/cunning discourse. J.S. Bacon looks back on a lifetime of dingo trapping which began in the late nineteenth century. He is keen: “I paid men to do the work of improving our property whilst I hunted and studied the habits of dingoes” (10) and knowledgeable: “I have decided to write a book on the Australian Dingo in the hope that it will assist land and stock men in their endeavours to rid the country of these terrible pests” (v).

The dingo runs rings around him! When Bacon arranges dingo drives “the dingoes are cunning enough to double back without giving the shooters a chance” (26-7), and when he puts bells on his sheep, the dingoes “kill the bell wether first” (13). He builds a fence but wombats “dig big holes under netting fences” and the dingoes run through (8). He charges the top wires with electricity but “the batteries kept running down” and the dingoes “went along the fence until they found a suitable place to cross” (Supplement 2). He builds the fence higher and takes a “photo of a dingo jumping over a 12 foot high fence” (4). He dare not allow his dogs to attack trapped dingoes: “I had two or three good dogs bitten on the legs and partly crippled” (13). My favourite example of dingo supremacy as it slips through the gaps, concerns an acquaintance of Bacon’s: “a cattle-man imported a big type of deer-hound to destroy the dingoes, but they crossed with the dingoes and produced a large, powerful type of progeny, worse killers than the native dog” (Supplement 2).

The *Bulletin* published many poems and stories about the traps men set for dingoes. The discourse of cunning still represents a treacherous and subversive thwarting of human economy, but now in the battle of the traps, the more cunning the dingo, the more prestige is bestowed on the successful trapper. Eric Rolls explains how the trapping of dingoes, especially those with high bounties, became a source of esteem for numbers of men. Each had his own secret mixture of dog’s urine or semen to smear near the trap; every piece of dirt, sticks and grass was put back in place over the buried trap but many dingoes still circumvented them. One dingo “seemed to make a

point of finding it” and pushed her front paws carefully through the sand until she located the metal of the hidden trap (*From Forest to Sea* 50-51).

“The Dogger”, written by Sorenson for the *Bulletin* in 1932, explains the interdependency of the cunning man:

In lonely parts the dogger camps,  
Where dingoes prowl and prey;  
Along the creek he rides and tramps,  
With baits and traps to trick the scamps  
When red hills turn to grey.

and the cunning dingo:

A demon known on many runs,  
And never heard to howl,  
That’s dodged the baits and traps and guns  
Of scheming sleuths for years, and shuns  
The risks where others prowl. (20)

Gaps are appearing not just in the fence but in the representation of cunning, which is distorted by the dingo’s ability to slip through the gaps and the trapper’s reliance on the dingo for his own prestige. Boundaries blur. Sorenson’s dingo may be cunning — “it’s dodged the baits and traps and guns” for years — but the trappers are “scheming sleuths”, so presumably they are cunning too. The “transformations” described by

Foucault occur; even the cattle-dog, a recognised breed since 1890 has dingo blood in it (Holden 21). Homi Bhabha recognises a third space, a space of intervention (7), and my study provides for some extra liminal space for the dingo, or perhaps just a hole in the fence, formed by texts which examine then intervene in the fixed representation of the “other” and importantly of the coloniser.

The intervention of the text, this space through which the imagined dingo can trot, may enable Australians to re-assess the human definition of cunning. The term “cunning” may represent no more than the farmer’s treacherous betrayal of an intelligent animal keen to survive. The cunning dingo, pushing her paws through the sand to locate the trap, wants to live. But the dogger, noticing that she usually followed the left-hand track of his four-wheel drive, set a trap there and etched a tyre pattern over it with a stick (Rolls, *From Forest to Sea* 51).

An acknowledgement of the animal’s desire to live would result in its move from object to subject — a switching of the gaze. Many writers have commented on the moment when an animal returns their gaze. Noske describes the gaze as a revelation of “the animal’s self and integrity” (62). Bacon just saw it as an opportunity to take good aim:

he stopped and watched, thus giving me a chance to move around to within rifle range of him. I hit him in the shoulder with a .32 Winchester and the

bullet went right thorough his chest. He leaped into the air, screamed, and fell.  
(13-14)

John Berger, in a study of visual representation *About Looking*, finds eye contact and the accompanying revelations, disturbing and confronting:

The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary [. . .]  
Man becomes aware of himself returning the look [. . .]The animal has secrets  
which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountain, seas, are specifically addressed to  
man. (2-3)

Masson concludes his study of the emotions of animals with an alarming suggestion:

Imagine what would happen if an animal addressed us on its imminent murder.  
In a slaughterhouse a pig cried out: "Please don't kill me." As a hunter looked  
into the eyes of a deer, it suddenly broke into speech: "I want to live, please  
don't shoot, my children need me." (217)

A similar situation occurs when the trapper approaches a dingo held in the grasp of the trap. Eye contact is made and the trapper raises his gun. To look into an animal's eyes as it lies in the trap, to acknowledge the intelligence that makes it a self-contained subject, to see the secrets in its eyes which "are specifically addressed to man", then to shoot it or club it to death, is to say the least a difficult task. The *dog* is allowed

intelligence and as Julie Marcus asks: “Who, other than a monster, could kill the old family dog without intense emotional distress?” (17).

Ryan has explained how the discourse of colonial texts place the indigene in a morally and intellectually inferior position (154). The same texts automatically place the coloniser in a superior position. Intelligence in a dingo is threatening and disconcerting, and the colonisers continually attempt to impose an acceptable language of cunning, deceit and treachery. Without such a denigrating discourse it becomes difficult to look the dingo in the eye.

## *THE COWARDLY DINGO—A STUDY OF FEAR*

The dingo has entered the Australian language as a synonym for cowardice—that most shameful and unmanly of vices. It appears on no coat of arms and is never seen trotting along ahead of the troops as a mascot in regimental colours. Like a schoolboy who has committed some unmentionable deed and scuffs his heels at the edge of the playground, the cowardly dingo is barred from decent Australian society. It is of course refused a place in sporting life—football and cricket teams need patriotic, inspirational and manly virtues to encourage them to the top of the league. The kangaroo for example is all Australian, strong and fast and unburdened with a denigrating discourse. Supporters are proud to shout “Up the mighty ’roos!” Naturally each team wants its own Australian mascot but latecomers must be content with black swans and magpies. Slow, lumbering wombats stay on the bench for obvious reasons, but redback spiders make the team, showing aggression and the ability to annoy an opponent. After four thousand years in Australia, the dingo is more of a native than many of the players and is a fast, quick-witted, handsome animal; a team player with a well-developed killer instinct. Yet the cry of “Up the mighty dingoes!” is never heard from our grandstands and the dingo is always passed over as a team mascot. Instead it must sit on the sidelines, banished to the bench. Australians might overlook the dingo’s recent bad publicity, perhaps even its sheep-killing habits but they will never accept a coward.

dingo: a term of extreme contempt when applied to man, because of the animal's reputation for cowardice and treachery ("dingo" Def.1).

dingo *noun*: person displaying characteristics popularly attributed to the dingo ("dingo" Def. 2).

to dingo *verb*: to behave in a cowardly manner ("to dingo").

These entries in *The Australian National Dictionary* are not describing cowardly dingoes. Instead the noun and verb "dingo" is used to describe cowardly humans. That is why no sporting teams can be named after dingoes. To call out "Here come the dingoes" will always be interpreted as "Here come the cowards." The concept of "dingo" as a term of abuse for humans is found in Falder's story "Dingoes I have Met." Falder describes an unpleasant human money-lender who was both cunning and cowardly: "I worked for a dingo for a while" (35). Falder moves to Sydney and owes money to a local storekeeper who "sooled a fierce black collector dingo on to me for payment" (35). Falder threatens to "settle up in full with him" and the cowardly debt collector retreats or to use Falder's words: "Silence; dingo evidently winded" (35).

The use of the term "dingo" as a vehicle for human cowardice has found a permanent and popular place in the Australian language. Lionel Hudson, author of *Dingoes Don't Bark*, reminisced about his post-war childhood: "In my day at school to be called a dingo was enough to make any red-blooded Australian boy lift his fists. The dingo was

the epitome of cowardice” (12). “Dingo” as a term of abuse is still used regularly and forcefully in Government debates. In 1986, members of the opposition taunted Labor minister John Dawkins with shouts of “Dingo Dawkins” over his alleged cowardice in failing to defend himself and his government during a censure motion. When he still refused to stand, opposition members began to howl like dingoes. Roland Breckwoldt describes the scene in *A Very Elegant Animal: The Dingo*: “The howling lasted a full three minutes and there was chaos in the House” (98). “Dingo” as a term of abuse for human cowardice represents the most popular discourse of the dingo.

Falder’s story of dingo-like humans was published in 1905, during a period from the 1890’s to the Second World War which experienced a series of wars and a growing sense of a bush-related nationalism. The definition of masculine bravery was of great general and personal importance and men feared being named as cowards. The same period also witnessed vigorous attempts to exterminate the dingo. It seems a short step from wartime chauvinism to the acceptance of a discourse in which the dingo functioned as a scapegoat for men’s fears. Barry Lopez describes a similar use of the wolf in the northern hemisphere (226). It *should* be possible to examine texts which fit neatly into a wartime discourse of cowardice for both men and dingoes and to confirm the scapegoat theory. However, although the dingo’s name is regularly invoked to describe cowardice in *humans* there are almost no texts about cowardly *dingoes*. The exceptions are the dingo which attacks Bluey in Shaw’s “The Fourth Trap” and which asserts its cowardice “in short howls of pain and panic” (42) and a dingo in a story published by Dal Stivens in 1940 which is paralysed with fear.

Instead of texts which support a cowardly dingo there are numerous colonial accounts of brave and stoic dingoes. Gould the naturalist, writing in 1863, was impressed by the dingo's ability to bear pain: "the agony they can endure without evincing the usual effects of pain, would seem almost incredible" (142). He gives several examples of seemingly indomitable dingoes including one which was seen to "rise, shake himself, and march into the bush" after it was "beaten so severely, that it was supposed all the bones were broken, and it was left for dead" (142). Dingo hunter Sid Wright's description of lone dingoes standing their ground against large domestic dogs corroborates accounts by trappers and biologists of the dingo's willingness to tackle kangaroos, cattle and buffalo. Wright claims the dingo is prepared to die in battles with dogs and resists any urge to slip away from a fight (5). "Brave" is defined in the *Australian National Dictionary* as "able to face and endure danger or pain." The current destabilization of long held beliefs that only humans may claim to be social subjects while animals are biological objects (Wolch, "Zoöpolis" 121) permits us to define Gould's and Wright's dingoes as extremely brave. Curiously, a brave dingo which faces pain without flinching is used to denigrate men as cowards.

It is generally accepted that discursive representations of animals are grounded in their behavioural and social traits (Wolch and Jacque Emel 633). The greedy pig, the stubborn donkey, the cunning dingo are distortions of existing habits. The almost complete absence of weakness and fear in the dingo seems to provide the exception to the general rule. How can the name of a brave animal have entered the Australian

language as a term for cowardice in men? How can a discourse survive when it is not grounded in reality?

Edward Said expands Foucault's theories on truth and discourse, explaining that cultural discourse circulates "representations" of the truth rather than truth itself. His research on the subject of Orientalism, if applied to the dingo, shows that statements about the dingo rely very little on the "real" dingo as such. Said states: "On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as [the dingo]" (21). The most familiar dingo discourse, the use of the term "dingo" to represent cowardly humans, has displaced the "real" dingo. Said also explains that Orientalism "lives on" in the same form, always accepting a "basic" ideology as "the starting point" for theories concerning the Orient (2). The representation of a cowardly dingo "lives on" vigorously into the twenty-first century and can be seen in the continuing exclusion of the dingo from sporting events and the regular use of the term "dingo" in angry pub and parliament exchanges. After one hundred years, this use of the dingo still proceeds from the same false and baseless starting point.

*National Fictions*, a study of nationalism by Graeme Turner provides an explanation of the seemingly irrational nature of discourse. According to Turner a common complaint of literary critics is that the nationalism of the 1890's no longer describes the "real" or present Australia (121-22). Turner claims that truth is not a necessary component of discourse and he believes that nationalism provides "the discourses

through which Australians currently agree to represent themselves and their country” (122-32). The discourses of nationalism and of the cowardly dingo follow similar paths. Both were shaped during the 1890s when Australians were intensely self-conscious about a distinctive national identity.: “The Coming Man” as he was known in the *Bulletin* was represented by as masculine, courageous and forged from the harshness of the land (Schaffer 29-30, White 72, Turner 110). Nationalism which created the Australian legend of the courageous bushman, (and the cowardly dingo which enforces it), have both survived into the twenty-first century (Turner 110). Both have little to do with the “real” Australia or the “real” dingo but instead they rely on an anxious human need to conform heroically to the exacting standards of an Australian legend. Nationalism (and the discursive dingo), both representations, fulfill the current needs of Australians (Turner123).

In 1896 “The Dingo of Brigalow Gap” was published in the *Bulletin* and began the involvement of the dingo in the first stirrings of nationalism. Its author Will Ogilvie combines an account of the reckless bravado of young bushmen with the similar daring of the dingo:

The boys on Kalangada care not a rap;  
All the honor they ask for is galloping down  
The red and white dingo of Brigalow Gap;  
He’s beaten us fairly at every exchange,

He's hard to keep up with and harder to track;  
He knows every stone on the Brigalow Range –  
The fastest and wildest and worst of the pack. (3)

At this stage of a youthful Australian identity, the dingo is as brave and courageous as the “boys on Kalangada” and no hint is given of the dingo's future use as a term for cowardice. A poem published in the *Bulletin* a year earlier indirectly provides a clue towards an eventual change of attitude towards the dingo. “Warrimoo” identifies the importance of mateship once nationalism was up and running (or galloping along with the boys on Kalangada.)

“Warrimoo,” written by Abbie in 1895 is an adrenaline-fuelled rush of galloping, slashing, roaring and dingo-scalping which simultaneously conveys a celebration of youth and an intense feeling of nostalgia for a lost time. The joys of being young, male, irresponsible, fearless and Australian are evoked in this poem:

Out on the banks of the Warrimoo,  
Hunting the blue-skinn'd kangaroo,  
Chasing the 'possum along the creek,  
Scalping the dingo, fat and sleek;  
Ringing the hills with a wild “Halloo!”  
Mocking the voice of the shrill curlew;  
Herding the cattle with fearless dash,

Rounding them up with a whirl of the lash;  
Up with the stockmen at break of day,  
Gallop-ing, gallop-ing, miles away;  
Slashing the horses—the devil may care;  
Spurring them on—the devil knows where;  
Rattling, battling, over the stones,  
Screwing their muscles and racking their bones.  
Lounging at night in the stockmen’s hut,  
Bag-covered windows and doors tight shut,  
Slicing the damper, spongey and hot,  
Pouring the tea from a broken-lipped pot,  
Squatting around the great flaring log,  
Swilling more tea—in the absence of grog—  
Puffing out clouds of blue-colored smoke,  
List’ning to yarns from “the city bloke,”  
Roaring a snatch from a ten-year-old song,  
Swearing and squabbling half the night long;  
Nothing to care for—nothing to fear,  
Never a trouble throughout the year. (18)

“Warrimoo” celebrates mateship, an important characteristic of “The Coming Man” but one which sits uneasily with the habits of the Australian dingo. The rough-and-ready masculinity of the hut with its “bag-covered windows” and “broken-lipped pot”

and the behaviour of the men: “swilling” tea, “roaring” songs, “swearing and squabbling half the night long”, rely on the absence of women and the friendship of men. War would soon continue to elevate the combination of bravery and mateship. The Boer War would provide the first opportunity for “The Coming Man” to emerge “as a new type of hero” (White 79). In *Women and the Bush*, Kay Schaffer explains the bonds of the bush and wartime: “the noble bushman [and] the Anzac soldier fuse into a single image of manly strength, independence and courage” (129). During wartime and afterwards, cowardice would be represented as letting down one’s mates. It is this discourse of loyalty between men which powers Australian definitions of cowardly behaviour. Bravery is not solely interpreted as the ability to withstand pain and fear; by those standards the dingo is braver than all other animals including humans. Wartime bravery involved standing firm under gunfire without running away and helping wounded comrades (mates) at whatever cost to one’s own safety. The young kangaroo hunters and dingo scalpers are reckless and carefree, but above all they are bonding together in a masculine world as mates. The dingo—both flesh and blood and discursive—fails dismally on the male human’s rigid definition of bravery as mateship. After a few years of poisoning and hunting it quickly learned to run away at the sight of a human and it is not a good mate to other animals or humans. In fact and fiction it is always eager to take advantage of weak or wounded prey or men dying of thirst in the desert.

The complex and hazy Australian rules by which the dingo is denied access to decent male society gradually make themselves clear. In “De-scribing Empire: Post-

colonialism and Textuality,” Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson wrote of the previously unacknowledged “shadows and grey areas” in texts and the need for post-colonial critics to recognize and explore these areas (7). The ambiguities contained in the discourse of wartime cowardice are made up of such “grey areas.” Texts written between the two World Wars reveal “contradictions” which must be “read out” in order to make the extent of their colonial power intelligible (Tiffin and Lawson 7). Alleged acts of cowardice at Gallipoli for example, when men were forced forward at gunpoint must resurface in texts which are filled with contradictions. The final picture might show that while cowardice in the dingo is not under scrutiny, the meaning of bravery in humans is!

Two versions of a similar story by Frank Dalby Davison were published by the *Bulletin* in 1934 and in 1940. Both texts are filled with ambiguous hints and complex metaphorical links between animal and human, male and female, tame and wild. Davison’s adventure stories attempt to construct a masculine discourse through wartime exploits and hunting. But instead of an overwhelming assertion of male dominance, there is a fracturing within the text, and an ideology which is based on masculine bravado and mateship betrays its hollow centre. Fear is always present, challenging the stereotypes of the story, but there are no cowardly dingoes. Instead the treatment of the dingo by the returned soldier stands as a disturbing and melancholy signifier of men’s fears.

Nothing promotes mateship more than the hunting of the enemy in wartime or the hunting of wild bush animals in peacetime. Robert Dixon explains how accounts of the “violent actions” of battle bind a man to his mates (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 70). Kay Schaffer describes men’s “fragile armour” of mateship in “this battle of the bush” (122). “Return of the Hunter” combines the bush life of a new selector called Tug Treloar, his recent wartime experiences as a skilled sniper and his attempts to return to those happy times by hunting a dingo with a price on its head. At first it seems that Tug’s experiences of the prestige, fun and privileges of being a sniper—“the rewards for skill and daring” (5)—will be extended by travelling to the Northern Territory with two army mates to shoot buffalo: “excitement, a gambling chance, some notoriety, a season of work and daring, and then a bit of a spree? It looked like retaining in peace the better part of war” (5). Tug’s ideal life sounds remarkably similar to the hunting songs of the 1890s and his story could be read as a sequel to the “fearless dash” of the hunting, chasing, scalping and roaring times of “Warrimoo”. But even as Tug makes plans to join his mates, “going on from glory to glory, to a life of freedom and adventure” (5), he meets Bonnie and enters instead the “morning after” sequel to “Warrimoo.” He becomes “a simple, hard-working selector, with a wife and baby” about to “lose himself in dullness and drab anonymity” (5). He has made the apparently poor exchange of mates and adventure, for a wife and the monotony of the bush. Tug looks back to his wartime experiences and concludes that then he was “the Tug he had been happiest with, sniper Tug, the Tug he liked most to recall” (5). “Sniper Tug” was a hero in a discourse which links the Australian soldier to a tradition of manly bravado (Walker qtd. in Schaffer 29). Like wartime heroes,

hunters of fierce animals are also esteemed as “skilled, praiseworthy [and] capable” (Jody Emel 112). The hunt has a dominant masculine construction of “mastery and control” (Jody Emel 102) and for Tug, the few days spent hunting a fierce dingo “temporarily compensated for not being with Mick and Tom” because it gives him back his manhood: “the Tug he had been happiest with” (5). Tug articulates his great fear; that the man “who had found himself in war” would “lose himself in dullness and anonymity.” Schaffer maintains that it is the loss of mates which causes the personal loss of identity and power (126). She describes such loss as losing one’s bearings and failing to attain an identity: “the terror at the basis of being” (126-7). Tug has already lost his mates; losing himself would mean a descent into ordinary family life and the end of his heroic identity. Robert Dixon identifies this masculine fear of losing one’s identity as “a fear of the loss of boundaries,” “the fear of becoming a remnant” and “male paranoia, the paranoia of the nation based on male bonding” (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 71). For Tug, the loss of mates and the resultant loss of a heroic identity can be traced to the domination of his wife Bonnie who had “a way of harping about things she wanted” (4).

Gaining a wife usually means losing one’s mates and finally losing oneself. Schaffer describes the belief in women’s power to control and castrate men (127). Castration is the fear which can be identified in the “grey areas” of the earlier dingo text “The Sniper.” The male dingo and the kelpie bitch must be “read out” in order to understand the doomed man, and the seductive instrument of destruction which is woman. Davison’s story begins once again with a returned soldier, Dice Chaseling, carefully

cleaning his rifle “souvenired” from the war, prior to killing a dingo which has a price on its head. Lassie his red kelpie bitch ably fills the roles of devoted female companion for Dice and sexual bait for the dingo:

The little bitch fawned, with her tail brushing the earth in swift strokes as he stooped to untie her. She whined her delight at receiving his attention, her hazel eyes brightening. Thrusting her pointed muzzle against his arms and trying frantically to lick his hands, she made it difficult for him to untie her. Flattered by her obsequiousness, he cuffed her good-naturedly into quietness. (40)

Lassie, on heat and tethered to a greenhide strap becomes the subject of the story, recording her reactions to the wild male dingo which is cautiously approaching her:

He was there, just a few feet away; standing half in moonlight, half in shadow. A big fellow! [. . .] He was moving. A slow, short step at a time! Head thrust forward, nose sniffing warily. Sense of time was suspended as he came slowly from the scrub and stood over her, full in the moonlight. Their muzzles met in mute inquiry. Ecstasy! (40)

At this moment of ecstasy, Dice shoots the dingo. He skins the dead male, leaving the head and paws in the skin: “someone might like to have it mounted and softly tanned for a rug” (“The Sniper” 40). Tug, in the later story has already revealed his wife

Bonnie's dominance: "As he said himself, he'd give her his hide for a bedside mat if she wanted it" ("Return of the Hunter" 4). Davison's men are admired as heroes but neither of them have maintained control of their wives. The great fear of emasculation is realised in the two stories. The kelpie bitch, represented as a sexually charged, obsequious animal eager to seduce Dice and the dingo, acts as proxy for the women while the dingo must fill the doomed role of the men. Its skin is sold to appease the women's joint desire for a pony and sulky—and the emasculation of both men occurs. Tug metaphorically offers his body to his wife as a bedside mat, and for Dice, physical castration comes even closer as the dingo, standing proxy for the man, is skinned and literally reduced to a mat.

Davison's comparison of men and male dingoes, kelpie bitch and women is interesting, but there is more. Dice shoots the dingo as it touches noses with Lassie but Barrie Lopez's explanation of wolf killing implies that it was usual to club the dingo to death as it stood, helplessly attached to the female dog in a copulatory tie (196). Davison's text reveals how difficult it is to define bravery. The men, so eager to recover the manly courage of wartime are in fact committing a cowardly act, killing an animal when it is so uniquely vulnerable, punishing the male dingo for its sexuality. Davison describes the wartime discourse of heroism, that manly courage which Tug and Dice fear to lose: "He recalled with satisfaction the way other men looked at his rifle and at the two decorations on his breast [...] the way he was pointed out by his officers" ("Return of the Hunter" 5). As snipers and heroes, they crawl into "no-man's-land" and lie hidden, waiting to shoot other men, known as the enemy, in the

back. A manhood based on such definitions of bravery is a sham and the heroes seem rotten to the core. Bravery or cowardice, the two are confusingly interchangeable, raising unspeakable and anxious doubts which can only be exorcised by the shouted mantra “you cowardly dingo!”

The only female writer to publish a dingo story in the *Bulletin*, Edith McKay, writing under the gender-disguising pseudonym E. Dithmac, uses such anxious doubts to explore perhaps the greatest fear for men; the dread of showing fear and weakness—of behaving like a woman. Australia’s convict beginnings left a legacy of brutality where the ability to bear pain without showing fear was considered a noble asset for men. Stories described convict men enduring a flogging of seventy-five lashes without flinching and then deliberately spitting in the flogger’s face (Ward 37). An elderly squatter remembered the convict shepherds of the nineteenth century as “men almost wild” who “feared neither God nor man” (Bean 26). By the end of two World Wars a similar image of “manly toughness” would be firmly woven into Australian identity (Schaffer 130). One of its components would be the fear of failing in battle, but the events of the First World War must have broken many men’s ability to stand by their mates and to behave calmly and courageously. Edith McKay writing in 1940 at the beginning of the Second World War explores masculine definitions of courage. She is concerned with the fear of displaying pity or kindness, particularly to something discursively represented as the enemy. Her story, “The Decoy”, concerns an old female dingo with a litter of five pups and two men keen to collect the bounty. McKay allows the dingo to take the position of subject in the story, describing its love for its

pups, its fear as men clear the foothills below the den, the family's weariness as they move up the hill to escape the men and finally the mother's grief when one pup is captured and tethered as a decoy. McKay describes the old dingo's reaction to the stealing of her pup:

She slipped silently from shelter to shelter, whimpering with an urgency that seemed to hush all lesser sounds, but no answering call came. She dared not set up the wild, piteous howl that would express her grief, but her eyes were stricken and her jaws dripped saliva as she slunk back through the bracken like a long, yellow shadow, to the rock shelter. (4)

McKay sets up a counter discourse which stands in defiance of a number of conventional ideologies. Firstly dingoes are not usually considered as subjects worthy of sympathy and their pain is rarely acknowledged. When the "cunning" dingo is caught in the fourth trap, it howls in pain and panic because it is a despicable creature. Only the suffering of Bluey is acknowledged in Shaw's story "The Fourth Trap" and that is because he is a dog, standing in as proxy for humans. McKay transgresses the conventional borders of dingo discourse again in her belief that animals experience emotions. Jeffrey Masson stated in 1994: "There is almost no investigation of the emotional lives of animals in modern scientific literature", and he asks: "Why is it controversial to discuss the inner lives of animals, their emotional capacities, their feelings of joy, disappointment, nostalgia and sadness?" (12). Perhaps because the desire to empathise with animals was generally considered a feminine quality and a

reason to disqualify women as scientists for centuries (Noske 59). A scientist, who was interviewed by Masson in 1994, refused to speculate on the possibility of an emotional life for the mammals he was studying and referred the matter to his female graduate students (12).

McKay's writing shows a defiance and resistance "of the male norm" (Schaffer 103) as she mocks the two men in her story, Murray and Wallace. Jody Emel, writing about wolves in North America, describes how hunting and killing fierce animals was "an indicator of virility" (105), but Kay Schaffer explains how masculine identity is insecure (123). McKay establishes the same insecurity for Murray by confronting him, not with the fierce mother dingo he was expecting, but with a small pup: "the raised waddy seemed all at once superfluous" (4). She continues to challenge the virility of the two men:

"Go on, kill the little beggar."

"Kill him yourself," Murray told him.

Wallace laughed sheepishly. "It'd be murder wouldn't it?" (4)

Wallace is "sheepish" about his reluctance to kill the pup, for gentleness is a soft, feminine trait which must be denied and expelled from men (Low 119). Kindness to animals other than dogs often causes the men in *Bulletin* stories to feel "sheepish." A young bush worker in "Dog Days" published in 1931 must make excuses for his distress when he finds four dingoes tearing a drought-weakened cow to pieces:

“You’ll understand it takes a lot to make a cove sick that’s used to knocking cattle about in an open branding camp, but I couldn’t have hit a bale of wool a barrel’s length say for a full minute. Shaky as a new chum getting his first sight of a live target” (Hatfield 37). The bush worker needs to explain that he is usually as capable of being as cruel to cattle as anyone else. For the men in both the stories cruelty is the normal manly way to treat animals; mercy and gentleness must be explained away either “sheepishly” or as the weakness of inexperienced English “new chums” or women. Only after Murray and Wallace have shot the mother dingo and all but one of her pups, are they freed from the exacting restraints required of male, Australian, bush workers:

The men waited, tense hands on rifles. Above them they heard a whimpering sound as the pups tumbled down the ridge, eager to find their missing mother.

“They’re up there! Murray called, “Come on!”

They scrambled through the undergrowth and bracken and presently in the clear moonlight saw the two remaining pups.

Murray raised his gun and fired. They untied the decoy, cradling him in their arms, and descended the moonlit slope with the scalps. (5).

Showing emotion was “soft, womanish, emotional” and stood in the way of manliness (Thompkins qtd..in Emel 105). While Hatfield endorses such a masculine discourse in “Dog Days,” McKay is challenging it in “Decoy.” The adventures of brave, resourceful and above all manly dingo trappers were a popular genre, published regularly in *Bulletin* poems and stories. McKay’s story shares the page with a cartoon of German bomber pilots and an account of a lone sailor who searches the ocean for fishermen in trouble. McKay boldly enters this masculine world, perhaps under false pretences, in “a male disguise” (Schaffer 103) and she creates a subtle and ambivalent space which displaces the homogeneous Western narrative. Her space is a place of dissent. By juxtaposing small, chubby, whimpering pups with large threatening men she subverts the usual genre of brave humans and creates instead bullies and cowards. She reveals the fears which lie under the battles and team sports, the shouting and posturing with guns; and she challenges the price which must be paid for being a man.

Through McKay’s treatment, “Decoy” reduces masculine bravery to a cowardly sham. Her writing is deliberately disruptive but several other writers manage to unintentionally “shoot themselves in the foot” and their keenness to display a brave and manly mastership of the dingo reveals only cowardice instead. In “Dog Days” the young bush worker proudly describes his prowess with the rifle:

I blew the third one off the muzzle, you could say, as he raced tail-down  
straight for my end of the log, and the last one streaked off wide around to my  
right. I kicked dust up in his face and turned him, then scattered gravel

between his legs, and a stone or a bit of lead must have bounced up and smashed his front paw, for he disappeared around the shoulder of the ridge on three legs (Hatfield 37).

Lodged in the text like a poorly aimed bullet is the information that the dingo has not been killed outright. Instead its life has been reduced to pain and suffering by a cowardly, ineffectual act. Bob Paddle published a letter from a Tasmanian who reminisced about the killing of the thylacine: “I cant [sic] remember ever having any remorse about its destruction. Almost like we were heroes” (29). The young bush worker intended to be a hero, punishing the dingoes for attacking a cow, but his plan backfires and instead *he* becomes the cowardly “dingo” who inflicts suffering. Stories of cowardice involve the constant setting up of stereotypes of colonial discourse (Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure* 10), followed by their inadvertent sabotage. Sorenson wrote “The Dogger” in 1932 in praise of the trapper who finally catches an outlaw dingo by setting a trap under water (20). Sorenson reserves any condemnation for the “outlaw” dingo:

The outlaw, bloody-jowled and hot,  
Slinks from his latest kill,  
With lolling tongue and lazy trot,  
Contented in that chosen spot  
To lave and lap his fill. (20)

But how many readers then and now would wonder at the cowardice of a man who hides a trap in the precious, innocent and communal commodity of water?

So the discursive dingo finds ways to subvert its representation. Having established that it is not a coward, it probes the coward in man, refusing to acquiesce to a discourse which allays those human fears at its expense. Sid Wright speaks up for the dingo:

I have seen a dingo pup, chained for weeks, resist all attempts to force it into submissiveness, and finally die with its fangs buried in the boot of the tormentor. (5)

The dingo cannot speak but there are enough Sorensens and Hatfields to inadvertently endorse its bravery and their hero's cowardice. Finally Bacon can always be relied upon to subvert his own manly declarations of bravery: "After making sure the foot was well held in the trap I have knocked them flat on the ground only to find their teeth clash in an instant within two feet of my face" (13).

The discourse of cowardice and its ambiguous application to one particular animal, the dingo, reveals a passionate and male dread of being named a coward. Like the imperial texts chosen by Robert Dixon, the shouted challenge of "you dingo" reveals a construction of the nation "at its most strident, its most paranoid and, consequently, its most vulnerable" (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 200). The shouted insult provides

the last word on the dingo, and the discourse thrives wherever men and boys form groups and define themselves in terms of mastery and mateship. Said has shown how representations continue to choose a basic ideology (2) at the cost of the “real thing” (21). But a closer examination of the “shadows and grey areas” of the written texts reassesses the dingo. Heroes are revealed as cowards, the “fragile protection” of mateship turns into a threat; kindness and gentleness become a source of shame. The brave dingo is poorly treated as a symbol of cowardice, forced to run, with the crowd at its heels, all baying for its blood, all desperate to be as brave as the next man.

*Chapter 3 prom.publishTHE PROMISCUOUS DINGO—A HOWLING SHAME.*

The discursive representation of the dingo as a sexually promiscuous animal rests firmly on a howl. At night-time, when darkness encourages a reliance on sound rather than sight and there is time and leisure for the imagination to play, the dingo sends out its howl, communicating its position in the wilderness and in society to other dingoes. The howl first confirms and exaggerates the small daytime doubts of settlers that they are insignificant strangers. A shearer on a remote station near Blackall in Queensland told me recently that when he heard the night-time howl, he felt compelled, even on the hottest nights to get up from his bed and shut the door. The howl is the dingo's native language, its own discourse, which it controls and which excludes the settler. For humans the incomprehensible communications of the howl threaten a reversal of roles. The dingo howls, another dingo answers and humans are surprised to find that "Animals have their own realities, their own world views; in short, they are subjects, not objects" (Wolch 121). Discourse is power, and the notion of dingoes dominating the night with their own subjective decisions can, like the howl, "lift the hairs on the back of one's neck" (Rolls, *From Forest to Sea* 46). As Marian Scholtmeijer points out, "our species has assumed for itself the power of deciding what is and is not valuable" (293). We humans expect to interpret the howl without consulting the dingo.

The settlers moved to re-establish their authority over the and its howl in two ways. The first way was material and the introduction of strychnine in 1845 resulted in the deaths of thousands of dingoes. Fewer howls were heard and a stockman's description of playful, trusting dingoes in 1860 would soon become rare: "On one bright moonlight night I was followed by nine large dingoes. They played and gambolled around my horse, but having a good supply of poisoned baits in my saddle pouch I succeeded in administering a dose to all of them in turn" (Garran and White 204).

And at the same time as they were destroying the bodies, the settlers were translating the dingoes into ideas which served colonial configurations of meaning. Colonial texts about dingoes allow them to be read, as most animals are read, as mere signifiers, denied a life of their own (Wolch and Jacque Emel 632). Readings of animal behaviour are interpreted only in the context of significance for humans (Tiffin, "Unjust Relations" 37) and the dingo's autonomous howl is bent to the service of human fears and frustrations. Helen Tiffin explains how the shark's "*symbolic freight*" rather than its behaviour towards humans, affects our perceptions ("Shadow of the Shark" 118). The animal becomes our imaginings; the shark as a product of fear becomes a monstrous predator; the dingo, its howl imagined by lonely men who peer anxiously into a vast darkness becomes a howling wilderness.

Shepherds and dingo trappers in the remoter areas of Australia rarely saw any other human beings. Rolls describes men in the 1870's so unused to conversation that they would greet each other stiltedly: " 'Good evening Boundary Rider.' 'Good evening

Poisoner.’ ” (*They All Ran Wild* 362). As a young journalist, C.E.W. Bean was given the task of documenting the history of the wool trade, but instead he concentrated on the people involved in the industry. He describes the solitary life of the shepherd early in the twentieth century: “With no other companions, he lived year in and year out—twenty, thirty, forty miles from the homestead. Once in three weeks or more a cart would turn up with his rations” (25). The shepherds and bush workers, who had no family to care for them, interpreted the call of the dingo according to their own needs. Lonely men interpreted the dingo’s howl as a discursive representation of their isolation, or as Breckwoldt described it: “wilderness in sound” (162). The vast emptiness of the land blended with the emptiness of men’s personal lives into one long drawn out howl.

“Bare-fang” published in 1928 by Ion Idriess describes early pioneer prospectors, who despairingly interpret the howl as “the bottled hopes of a thousand years drifting to hell” (55). “The Call of the Pack” published one year earlier by Idriess, conveys in the eloquent Welsh vowels of his ancestors, the utter loneliness of a vast and empty wilderness:

A long drawn, mournful howl that swept for miles over the silent land to echo in distant rock-walled gorges, a melancholy howl that floated far over the low hills and down to the scrubby creeks out on to the great open plains. (40)

In 1908 Jeach wrote of the depressing effect of the night-time howl:

Comes to me on nights drear and lone,  
From desolation hurried,  
The wild dog's wailing monotone  
For men whom they have buried. (3)

But it was in the evening when work was finished and darkness had fallen that the howl had its greatest effect. Sorenson wrote in 1908: "It simply fills you with utter loneliness" ("The Dingo" 39).

Laurie Corbett challenges the usual Western interpretation of the howl as an indicator of loneliness and frustration. He states that the main objective of howling is to locate other members of the family group (*The Dingo* 61). Howling is a social activity which is used to attract those who are in the dingo's group and repel or warn those who are not. A large variety of howls—at least ten, according to Corbett—is needed to send these messages (*The Dingo* 61). But whether the howl is meant to attract or repel, it is a communal activity. Biologists who study wolves (which live similar lives to dingoes), have described howling as "the jubilation of wolves" and "mood-synchronising activities" and have noted that it is accompanied by tail wagging and other signs of enjoyment (Lopez 39). Bill Neidjie, an Aboriginal man who was born at Oenpellie mission school about 1911, interprets the dingo's howl as a sociable communication of information:

Dingo e can tell.

E yelling out in the night because you can listen.

[.....]

That dingo over there she want to cry in the night

Because other one over there...give signal.

E say, "Come on...might be dead buffalo over there".

So this one e might be hungry,

So they come, big mob and they eat." (52)

Before colonisation, dingoes, contrary to colonial beliefs were neither "loners" nor promiscuous, but lived in stable family groups and chose life-time mates. Laurie Corbett, who has studied the dingo for thirty years, describes an extended family which he observed for several months at a den site in the Harts Ranges in central Australia. The family consisted of mother and father, two young dingoes from a previous litter and five pups. Corbett describes the affection between the parents: "Mum leaned against and underneath Dad, licking and gently biting his muzzle" and the cooperative efforts of the older dingoes to care for the pups: "both adults [. . .] headed out to hunt rabbits" and "Mabel [Corbett's name for one of the older siblings] was observed coaching the pups in the art of stalking." The extended family communicated frequently with each other: "adults and pups still did much howling; apparently the pups were learning the basic rule of communication" (*The Dingo in Australia* 93-97). Thomson describes a similar social organisation of dingoes in a relatively undisturbed wilderness area of Fortescue River in Western Australia.

Family groups consisted of “a dominant male and female and their offspring of various ages.” Group members “cooperated to hunt prey and took part in communal activities such as feeding, resting and raising pups” (Fleming, Corbett, Harden and Thomson 29). Wild female dingoes, unlike domestic dogs, come into season only once a year. Sexuality therefore is one part of communal dingo life, integrated into the extended family package. Desire is followed by responsibility and father dingoes contribute to the upbringing of pups.

Traditional Aborigines created Dreaming stories about highly socialised dingoes which mated for life and cared for their families. The Warlpiri myth “Jarntujarrakurlu” describes two dingoes which fall in love and get married: “They lay down together, for always” (Popeye Jangala 125). Joe Jangala describes dingoes in “Malikijarrakurlu”, the second section of the Warlpiri myths: “There were many of them sitting down. They were sitting in circles at a meeting, with their little ones, their children, fathers and mothers and uncles. There were many there sitting down. Then they all went hunting” (135). Like the settlers, Aborigines represented dingoes with human characteristics, but unlike the settlers they grounded their myths in the dingoes they knew, respected and valued.

The howling dingo in Neidjie’s poem is taking part in a happy affirmation of communal living, bonding in a group and sharing food. Canadian naturalist John Livingston claims that wild animals live participatory rather than self-centred lives (Noske xii-xiii) and Barbara Noske challenges the scientific definition of sociality and culturality as an “exclusively human phenomena” (82). In his 1963 study *Never Cry*

*Wolf*, Farley Mowat wrote of the “delusion” that complex communications among animals other than man do not exist (95). The dingo is “yelling out in the night” and the indigenous people listen. But the “deluded” colonists misinterpret the dingo’s assertion of subjectivity. They don’t listen properly but inscribe the howl with their own anthropocentric discourse. In this way the dingo fulfills the similar paradigmatic role of colonial discourse about Aborigines, which functions, according to Simon Ryan as “simply reflections of European fears and fantasies” (141). The meaning of the dingo’s howl has been overlaid with a similar palimpsest of European fears and fantasies.

The friendly communication of the dingo is perceived by colonial men as a wail of fear and loneliness or a howl of sexual frustration in a dual extension of the male settlers’ physical and emotional isolation. Bush life created an unnatural situation, where men outnumbered women by twenty to one. Frustrated men interpreted the dingo’s howl as the cries of women, especially lovesick women, calling through the dark to the listening male.

“Lady Patti” was written at Lila Springs Station, signed only with the letters W.W.J. and published in the *Bulletin* in 1892. The poem describes a jackeroo who listens each evening to the plaintive song of a “lady”: “She sings a song of blighted hopes, of weary lonely waiting, / Of faith that’s dead, of loved ones gone, of days both dark and sad” (8).

In his 1913 poem for the *Bulletin*, “The Dingoes Down the Creek”, Frank Henty explained the use of the howl to invoke guilty feelings about women and to probe every hidden corner of the human psyche:

It isn't what you drank before you banged into your bunk,  
Though it may be that your midnight griefs in shilling tea are sunk;  
But when you wake and shudder with strange geese upon your grave,  
When you hear the yelping chorus and the howling starts to rave  
[.....]  
Oh, you'll think of her at midnight when you start at every shriek,  
For the dingoes prod like conscience when they're howling down the creek.  
(14)

As well as the expressions of loneliness and the romantic possibilities suggested by the howl, other texts represented the female dingo as a promiscuous animal. Such discourse followed the historic association of the wolf with promiscuity. The wolf is compared to a prostitute in the medieval *Book of Beasts* (White 56), Lopez gives examples of the sexual imagery which surrounded the wolf of the Middle Ages (226), and the Latin word “lupa” described both wolf and prostitute (242). The dingo with its wolf-like howl shared in the wolf's promiscuous reputation.

The “serenading lady” of 1892 was transformed into the dingo “slut,” the usual descriptive term for female dingoes. “Slut” has always been a denigrating term for slovenly females but its use as an insulting description of promiscuous women is more recent. (A contemporary definition of “slut” can be found on the walls of most Ladies' toilets). The plaintive songs changed to “vamping love-calls” (Iford 20) and sex

entered the discourse in the form of the promiscuous dingo. A story by Sorenson begins “Many a high-class dog, whose character has heretofore been irreproachable, has been led astray by a dingo slut” (“The Dingo” 39). Sorenson’s tale of a respectable domestic dog seduced by a wild female dingo was published in the *Bulletin* in 1908. Eight years later G. Wright took up Sorenson’s theme in “Delilah Of The Paper Bark Swamp.”

The story of Delilah begins with a howl, “the weirdest, saddest cry that ever breaks the silence of the bush”, and continues with an invasion of the “cultivated paddocks” of domestic space (143). The wild dingo Delilah, is, as her name implies, a seductress. Delilah’s howl is represented as an act of sexual communication, “the yearning mate-seeking call of a lonely she-dingo” (143), and as a piercing invasion of culture: “from the borders of the forest there came a searching, quavering cry, a cry that gripped him even in his sleep” (144). Helen Tiffin has observed that animals exist more in representation than “in the real” (“Unjust Relations” 36) and Delilah is simultaneously imagined as the dingo slut of Wright and Sorenson’s stories, leading astray the high-class dog, and as an outlaw, living outside the borders occupied by those whose characters are “irreproachable”, invading the privileged domestic space. Wright is blunt: “She lived in a world of enemies, an outlaw with a price upon her head” (145). As an outlaw she represents wild nature and is excluded from culture by the “spatial orderings” of human society (Philo and Wilbert 15). Anthropologist Julie Marcus describes wild dingoes “prowling around the margins of civilization” (“Prisoner of Discourse” 16).

Prince the dog, as man's best friend, is firmly identified with the domestic space. He performs ably as a representative of culture:

Upon the broad verandah of the old homestead, now converted to a house of accommodation for city visitors, a big dog rested, one of the aristocracy of the canine world, a dog with a written pedigree and a prize record; a civilized dog, gentle tempered, obedient, enjoying an assured position in the regard and home of his master. (143-44)

The story follows Delilah's unauthorised progression from nature towards the cultured space occupied by the aristocratic dog:

Up the sloping gum ridge, gliding swiftly from tree to tree, a shadow within the shadows, a shimmer of yellow in the moonlight, she gained at length the shelter of a clump of spearwood. Beyond in the hollow lay the old homestead, with its big neglected orchard and ramshackle collection of outbuildings. (143)

The dingo seduces the dog and the two stand as metaphors for the outlawed Aboriginal woman crossing the boundaries into culture and entering the settler's hut. Foucault explains the western rules of sexuality: "In a society like ours, the procedures of exclusion are well known. [. . .] We know quite well that we do not have the right to say everything" (*The Order of Discourse* 52). Lynn Riddett describes settler women locking up Aboriginal women at night "to keep the women out of reach of the white men", and she claims "Settler women *knew* what could not be openly acknowledged in settler society" (85). Hodge and Mishra explain the margins of the discursive regime which controlled the representation of Aborigines: "Speakers must always know what

lies outside [. . .] so that that can be recognised and dealt with in appropriate ways. This outside of a discursive regime [. . .] is unspeakable but not unconscious” (26). Some things must be known so that they can remain unacknowledged. While Wright is describing a dingo, he can say the unspeakable and still remain within the acceptable discourse. Dingoes replace Aborigines as the key figures in a story which otherwise remains “outside” and unspoken. As an animal and a female, Delilah is well equipped for exclusion. She represents the marginalised “other” in a story which articulates in metaphor the unspeakable sexual mingling of nature and culture, primitive and civilised, black and white. Delilah presents a symbolic articulation of the words “we do not have the right to say” and the silence is broken. Only then can Hyam’s statement “sexuality was the spearhead of racial contact” be spoken (qtd. in Young 5).

The female dingo must stand as proxy for the imagined promiscuity of the human indigene: “On a bed of bracken, in a lair at the butt of an uprooted tree, Delilah sprawled in lazy abandon; her attitude expressed complete physical satisfaction” (145). Schaffer argues persuasively that Australian culture is represented within a dominant male discourse (102). Noske takes this argument a step further when she states: “Already we have noted that sexist biases do not stop at the human-animal border, that female and male stereotypes have been carried over into the world of animals” (114). Wright pulls the dominant male discourse across to the animal world. In an anthropomorphic parody of human values, Prince decides that “no self-respecting dog will engage in a stand-up fight with a slut” (146) and Delilah becomes the slut, instigator of “a hundred successful coups” (145).

Robert Young cites colonising theories which allege a mixture of compulsion and repulsion in inter-racial sexual liaisons: “the push and pull of an irreconcilable conflict between desire and aversion” (149). Human sexual intercourse was often a brutal and dangerous occupation in the early days of white settlement. In 1928, when a white dingo hunter at Coniston took the wife of an Aboriginal man he began a chain of events which resulted in his own death and the massacre of up to one hundred indigenous people. Trappers used brutal means to serve their own sexual needs and to exploit the sexuality of others. They interpreted the sexuality of the dingo as its Achilles’ heel, exploiting it as a weakness. Traps were baited with sexual lures of urine mixed with semen (Rolls, *They All Ran Wild* 370) or a tethered female dog in season. The popular texts describe a promiscuous dingo with many partners, but experienced trappers are so aware of the dingo’s loyalty to its mate that they capitalise on it. Bacon describes the situation after one dingo is caught in a trap: “as he has screamed his mate has raced round and round him, howling all the time. [. . .] I have caught as many as three out of four dingoes while the excitement was at its peak” (16).

Wright’s biased treatment of sexual relations between the dingo and the dog gives a voice to the unspeakable conflicts of desire and disgust, attraction and aversion, which occurred in *human* sexual encounters between black and white. When Delilah kills and eats a sheep the act is represented as disgusting and repellent: “Delilah gorged upon the body of a half-grown lamb” and the meal was “gruesome”. The conflicts between the civilised and the outlaw are expressed in the domesticated Prince, who “shrank back in terror; he knew that the sheep were tabu” (146). Inter-racial sexuality was

both “tabu” and widely practiced during colonial settlement and ways had to be found to circumvent guilt.

Dixon describes colonial texts filled with fears that racial and cultural degeneration would result from black/white unions (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 63-64). Blame for such unions was shifted onto the indigenous female. In a study of the cause and effects of hybridity, Robert Young cites Louis Agassiz, a nineteenth century ethnologist who was invited to comment on the question of interbreeding in the southern states of America. Like Wright, Agassiz relocates the source of guilt: “he solves the problem by blaming the easy morality of ‘halfbreed’ servant-girls, combined with the naïveté of young white gentlemen” (149). In 1934 and nearer to home, the Queensland Governor blamed the “problem” on Aboriginal women: “The blame must rest, to a very large extent, on the native girls who, by temperament, [. . .] encourage white men in every way” (Evans 18).

Dingo texts express a similar fear in a discourse of rejection and blame of the inferior “other.” Delilah’s promiscuity is accompanied by an unpleasant, aggressive nature which *forces* the gentle Prince to be “led astray” into bad habits: “Back in their lair, he awoke to find himself a prisoner” (146). Delilah guards him closely and suspiciously: “The Siren of the forest glades, the alluring tantalising Delilah of the moonlight tryst, was now a snappish, exacting taskmistress” (145).

Sorenson applied the same shifting of blame in his description of the dingo slut leading astray the high-class dog in “The Dingo” (39). “Choice” written for the Bulletin in 1940 by Henry Lamond describes a female dingo, known only as “the

bitch” which leaves her mate White-Stripe for a new-comer called Bluey. White-Stripe the dingo is as irreproachably blameless as Sorenson’s high-class dog: “By all the law of his caste he had earned his mate—slain for her, fought for her, won her on his merits” (5). Schaffer describes “the right of the white man to decide who speaks and on behalf of whom” (97). She describes the source of his guilt as “the threat of sexual, moral and physical corruption which he fears in himself” and explains how he transfers the guilty fear “by locating its cause in the other” (97). Lamond speaks for the dominant male and creates an anthropomorphic discourse which condemns “the bitch” as callously indifferent to the feelings of males: “The bitch was interested; more, she was entertained. This was a worth-while spectacle. She sat at the base of a tree, licked her chops, composed herself and prepared to watch her champions fight for her favors” (5). Blame is transferred firmly onto the “bitch” who is described as disloyal, promiscuous and the source of trouble between males: “His mate which he had won had her back turned to him while she fawned upon the blue dog which had usurped his place” (5).

A similar transferal of blame to Aboriginal women subjected them to “double colonization” (Young 162). As women and indigenes they suffered the domination of men and colonialism. Raymond Evans described it as “the double backpack of racism and sexism” and he wrote of the mixed desire and guilt of colonial men and the resulting cruel treatment of Aboriginal women (7). “Bare-Fang” written by Ion Idriess in 1928 uses a dingo text to articulate and justify another unspeakable besides the act of inter-racial sex; the pattern of domination and exploitation which defined sexual relations between settler and Aboriginal woman: “Back from her drink hurried a

brown dingo bitch. She showed her teeth as she passed. He stood looking at her interestedly. Satisfaction stirred within him as he reflected that a day would dawn when she would come cringing to him” (55).

Colonial texts which use the dingo as a metaphor for human sexuality are particularly apt for describing the treatment of Aboriginal women. Noske explains how the subordination of women has so often been rationalised through the use of animal data which in its turn is influenced by human bias (110). Evans states: “Calling the women “animals” gave them license to treat them as animals” (11). On isolated sheep and cattle stations, women were captured and passed on to other men like animals and then they were represented as animals in discourse: “Capturing women was called ‘mustering,’ raping them was ‘gin-busting,’ keepers of Aboriginal women were called ‘gin-shepherds,’ [. . . ] the women themselves were ‘stud-gins’ (Evans 15). Ironically Evans calls the deterioration of Aboriginal women into “degraded and diseased sex objects” (9) “dehumanization” (7), expressing the popular western belief that humans behave more “humanely” than animals.

Female dingoes must also carry a heavy burden. Their backpack is loaded with the cruel speciesism which is often described as the boundary between human and non-human beings. Once humans and animals are placed outside the boundaries a “brutal and exploitative” treatment is justified (Lynn 286). Admittance to either side of the boundary is controlled by tests devised by “male Homo sapiens” and “measured by our yardsticks” (Noske 41, 143). Having reduced the howl to a mere projection of human desires, the dingo and all other animals whose articulations are ignored or misunderstood, fail the first test which asks “Can they speak our language?” Western

society traditionally defines animal difference as a negation of human values (Noske 40). Difference is decided by what the animal can't do; by what, when compared with humans, it is not.

The colonisers used similar “yardsticks” to measure certain groups of humans and push them to the other side of the boundaries. Several groups were unable to measure up to the colonial norm, to speak the right language. Like the dingo, their speech was misheard by the dominant group. Potential Chinese immigrants failed the dictation test of 1901 which required them to write out a passage of fifty words in a European language (Markus xi). The discourse which accompanied the Immigration Bill was driven by fear and prejudice, while colonial texts reveal deep anxieties about the “racial and cultural degeneration” which would result from sexual relations with the outlawed “other” (Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure* 66). Wright employs Prince in a canine version of the degradation which was believed to accompany racial interbreeding of black and white:

Nearby the big dog crouched, cowed and disconsolate—a disreputable, demoralised dog was he. Blood and dirt were clotted upon his neck, one of his ears was split, his coat was matted with dry mud. When he glanced furtively towards Delilah, his eyes showed heavy and bloodshot. (145)

Wright's “morning after” description of a “disreputable, demoralised” Prince is inspired by the fear that human miscegenation and the resultant half-caste children will cause the cultural degeneration of the dominant group: “the paranoid fear of the hybrid” (Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure* 139). J. W. Bleakley, the Chief

Protector of Aborigines described the children of Aboriginal and white unions as “the half-caste evil” (Evans 18) and they were believed to have “the vices of both races and the virtues of neither” (Evans, Saunders and Cronin 108-9). Hybridity presents a disturbing and undeniably physical articulation of previously unacknowledged relationships. It shouts out the unspeakable.

The hybrid offspring of human interracial unions were known as mongrels (Young 6), the name also used for pups born to dogs of different pedigrees or to dogs and dingoes. Before the settlers arrived with their domestic dogs, all dingoes were purebred. The vigorous campaigns of poisoning and trapping quickly decimated dingo populations and their family networks were fractured. The last line of “Lady Patti”, which the poet W.W.J. chose to put in italics, explains the identity of the unseen serenading lady and what will happen to her. The dingo family’s fate probably seemed amusing in 1892 when the poem was written:

I’m lonely here; if she would come her every grief and sorrow  
    (‘Though she’d drained the dregs from out the depths of all misfortune’s cups)  
Would vanish, and would dawn for me a peaceful, glad tomorrow,  
*For I’d shoot that sweet-voiced dingo, like I did her seven pups.* (8)

One hundred years later, Corbett’s observations of the delightful dingo family in the Harts Ranges ends with the setting up of a mineral exploration camp near to the den. The pups, now aged about four months are considered a nuisance by the exploration team (they raid the camp stores and rip beds) and four out of the five are shot or poisoned. Corbett notes: “Such events are not uncommon” (*The Dingo* 97). As social

groups were dispersed and mates were killed, dingoes sought another mate. When that mate was killed they overcame their fears and crossed the species boundary to mate with domestic dogs and produce hybrid pups.

After a tour of Cherbourg Reserve in 1934, the Governor of Queensland revealed that Aborigines, once dismissed as a dying race were increasing in numbers. The increase was “not due to births of full-blood natives, but of half-castes. 95% of the females sent out to domestic service, he calculated, returned to have a child by a white father”

(Evans 18). Some Aborigines have grasped the opportunities offered by the combination of two cultures, but what does hybridity have to offer the dingo?

Breckwoldt considers dogs to be “swamping” the purebred dingo in Eastern Australia (259). Corbett claims that due to increasing rates of hybridisation, pure dingoes “may well be extinct by the end of the twenty first century” (*The Dingo* 165). Hybridity offers no empowering alternative for the pups of dingoes who have overcome their fear and mated with the domestic dog. Instead of providing a chance of survival as a dingo/dog cross breed, the presence of hybrids provides a strong argument for an increase in extermination methods. The remaining pure dingoes which live outside National Parks are discursively linked with feral dogs and hybrids as undesirable outcasts and no distinction is made between them (Wells, “ferals” 1).

Dog and dingo are both descended from the wolf. The purebred dingo has remained relatively unchanged for five thousand years, its wildness unaltered by brief sojourns in Aboriginal camps (Meggitt, “Aborigines and Dingoes” 23). The domestic dog is the result of thousands of years of intense and artificial selection procedures by humans (Corbett, *The Dingo* 13). When a female dog comes into season she mates with a

number of male dogs which then leave without claiming the responsibilities of fatherhood. Sid Wright describes the actions of a domestic dog after mating with a female dingo: “All at once her season was over. [. . .] the big collie rose from his sleep in the afternoon, yawned, stretched his legs as though to free them of kinks, and without a backward glance, trotted off down the gully and disappeared” (57). Evans describes the irresponsible attitude of colonial men on remote stations towards Aboriginal women: “Girls were only wanted around homesteads for sexual purposes while they remained young, attractive, not pregnant and free from disease. Otherwise, they were rapidly discarded” (15). Traditional Aborigines and settlers both created a dingo which provided a discursive copy of their own lives. The oral stories of the Dreaming reflect the communal family life of dingo and Aborigine, but the *Bulletin's* Western texts reveal the “push and pull” of human desire and repulsion, guilt and blame.

In America there have been attempts to return wolf populations to their former environments and interest has been shown in learning from the customs of indigenous humans and also from the behaviour of the wolf. It has been suggested that insights into the origins of humans as social animals could be gained from studying the social structure of wolf packs (Lopez 72-73). No such attempts have been made for the dingo. The exquisite dingo myths of the Aboriginal Dreaming could be used to teach humans the skills of living but they are ignored by the majority of Australians including Aborigines. While only a few young Aborigines refuse the whole message of traditional mythology, Erich Kolig, writing in 1989, describes the general Aboriginal tendency to “downplay” the animal component in Dreaming myths

(*Dreamtime Politics* 113). The colonial discourse of denigration of the dingo has been successful and the dingo has become a source of shame. Aboriginal women are resisting the denigrating representations of colonial discourse, but there are frequent reminders in the press and the courts that they are still regarded as targets for sexual assault by white males (Evans 19). The dingo continues to carry the shameful accusations of promiscuity. Hunters at Kosiosko National Park in 2002 used the term “sluts” to describe female dingoes although presumably they were aware of the sexual bias which is now connected to such a description (“Dingo Hunters”). In 2005 an ABC children’s television programme provides reruns of *The Adventures of Blinky Bill*. A female dingo, Daisy, is portrayed as a seductive flirt. She wears tight jeans, high-heeled shoes and a low cut top which reveals (quite remarkably for a dingo), a substantial pair of breasts. When her brother Danny the “cunning” dingo asks for help in distracting Splodge the kangaroo, Daisy “naturally” turns to seduction. She produces a skipping rope and skips slowly and seductively within the circle of the kangaroo’s paws. Splodge is definitely distracted (the cartoon shows him sweating profusely), and the message is conveyed to thousands of watching school children that Daisy is—well—a dingo slut.

Hodge and Mishra explain the function of Aboriginal representations: “to confer legitimacy on those who raped, pillaged, poisoned and dispossessed them” (27).

Those who join in the silence of not speaking the unspeakable are never “innocent” (26). The dingo howls out its noisy rejection of our guilty attempts to change, silence or conceal the truth.

If Corbett is correct and the pure dingo is rapidly declining, then the colonial misinterpretation of the howl will come true. A false discourse will become the reality of the dingo. Hybrids, like dogs, cannot howl; they can only bark. The few surviving purebred dingoes really will be howling out their loneliness and calling in sexual frustration for the mates who no longer exist. Now the trapper plays Judas and imitates the howl, encouraging one of the remaining pure dingoes to approach in the hope of finding its family group. Eric Rolls describes the deadly betrayal, as a dingo, answering the false howl, “steps out of cover no more than six or seven yards away. Excitement must be restrained, as well as movement, and a calm shot taken” (*From Forest to Sea* 55).

## ***THE KILLER DINGO***

*Creeping furtive on his victims, soon in carnage red to revel.*

*Canis dingo's execrated for a wanton, murderous devil. (Hayward 17)*

There is no doubt that given the opportunity, the dingo kills and injures domestic stock and that in the case of sheep it kills in excess of its needs. The evidence given by farmers after visits from the dingo consistently endorses the facts of its killing habits. The nature and frequency of such accounts may have been exaggerated but they were not imagined; dingoes do kill excessively. Bean remarked in 1908 when he heard a story of the killing of forty sheep: "Now, since a dog possesses no cold store, he could not have killed those forty for a meal" (26). Dingoes killed first for food and then they continued killing just for the hell of it.

*Bulletin* writers worked overtime to document the bloody behaviour of the dingo in sheep paddocks and the discursive dingo was kept busy too. It "raced up the wing of the stringing sheep and laid body after body in a twitching heap on the grass" (Lamond 5). It was the "grim marauder" which threatened the flocks (Iford 20) and "The outlaw, bloody-jowled and hot" which "slinks from his latest kill" (Sorenson, "The Dogger" 20).

Discourse is not concerned with truth; Foucault describes discourse as a certain kind of variable “truth.” He writes of “a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays”(Power/Knowledge 132). The colonizers eagerly accepted certain truths about the dingo; it killed an excessive number of sheep and it continued to kill long after it had satisfied its hunger. They believed that nature existed only for the convenience of man and therefore fierce animals should be routinely killed (Nash 81). They chose a version of truth which suited their chosen path and they ignored or denied all truths about the dingo which failed to fit this version. In a text which accompanied sketches of Australian animals in 1863, John Gould claimed that the dingo “visits the sheep-pen [. . .] in mere wantonness” (142) and the settlers decided upon a similar anthropomorphic theory, that the dingo killed because it was wicked, and they punished it accordingly.

In his book *Of Wolves and Men*, Barry Lopez discusses the acts of cruelty and hatred towards wolves by hunters in Alaska. He concludes that all the discourse which justified such behaviour sprang from the belief that “the wolf is ‘wrong’ in the scheme of things” like a cancer which must be rooted out (165). It is this belief which forms the basic structure of dingo discourse throughout the twentieth century. The dingo is “wrong”; it *must* be “wrong” in the scheme of things. Otherwise blame will fall on the colonizers for introducing sheep, an act which effectively sabotaged the existing environmental structure of Australia. A poem by Charles Shaw acknowledges the dingo’s excessive and frenzied killing habits with horror, but also offers an acceptance of such acts as a natural part of its wild nature.

Oh, hot the blood and soft the flesh as, ewe by ewe, they died.  
They ran together, the foolish things; he struck from side to side,  
Under the cold, uncaring stars, king for a mad red hour,  
Heart ablaze with the primal flame—the ecstasy of power,  
The warrigal raged till, spent at last, all bloody from the kill,  
He ate his fill on the dreadful plain, then crept to the waiting hill. (28)

The descriptions of “a mad red hour” filled with blood and rage and ecstasy moves the reader to feel pity for the sheep—“the foolish things”—and horror at the actions of the dingo. Shaw describes a dingo which kills far more sheep than it can eat; because it enjoys the act of killing and the feeling of power over the “foolish” sheep. Shaw appears to be describing an evil dingo which exhibits the same “hankering for gore” and “fury of greediness” as the medieval wolf in *The Book of Beasts* (White 56).

However Shaw comes close to an acceptance of the dingo’s actions as natural. “Under the cold, uncaring stars” and “Heart ablaze with the primal flame” are leading the reader to view the dingo as a wild member of a huge and indifferent nature. Rather than borrowing the medieval and colonial discourse of a wicked dingo, Shaw’s view moves dangerously close to a negation of the usual beliefs. Shaw’s dingo, terrible as its actions are, is merely providing an example of a wild animal behaving naturally. Such an example challenges the popular colonial representation which is used to justify European farming methods.

Later in the poem, Shaw describes the men's reactions when they discover the slaughtered sheep:

Deep in a Warrumbungle hole, replete and warm, asleep,  
The dingo lay as dawn light came to the field of mangled sheep;  
Deaf to the curses far below, blind to the hatred there,  
Mild and soft in his winter coat, safe in his secret lair. (28)

Shaw has positioned the reader up the hill, in the secret lair with the dingo. The mangled sheep and the men's curses are so far away that they are neither seen nor heard. The dingo's indifference to the killings negates the colonial representation of a creature of intentional evil. Instead Shaw simply describes the situation that always occurs when a wild dingo encounters sheep in a vast Australian paddock. Through the discourse of Shaw's poem, it is settlers and their sheep, not the dingo, who are "wrong" in the scheme of things.

Shaw's version of truth is concerned with the nature of sheep: "They ran together the foolish things." Peter Fleming of the Vertebrate Pest Unit explains that the circling method performed by sheep under attack exposes large numbers of them to the predator and encourages dingoes to chase and kill more sheep than they can eat (42-43). Shaw describes this surplus killing as "the mad red hour." The dingo's traditional hunting habits also contribute to the excessive killing of sheep. Since their

first arrival in Australia on visiting fishing boats nearly five thousand years ago, dingoes had been accustomed to work hard for their meal, scattering kangaroos or wallabies in a sudden explosive charge, then choosing a victim and working together in relays to wear it down with bites and nips until it was overpowered. A big kangaroo might fight back for hours, ripping dingoes' flesh with its sharp nails or seizing and crushing a dingo which came in too close (Rolls, *They All Ran Wild* 360). A wombat might use its great strength to crush a dingo's skull against the roof of its burrow (Bacon 8). Aboriginal myths confirm the past difficulties of obtaining meat for dingoes (and for people). In the myth "The Widening of Lake Gregory," two Dreaming Dingoes chase two emus all day and create an entire river network before they finally bring down their prey (Burewi 41).

Shaw's text, based on facts about the nature of sheep and dingoes, implies that the ambitious farming plans of the settlers might not be practical. But other colonial texts never present stark unadorned facts which blame the settler for introducing sheep into dingo country. Instead writers force the dingo to take full responsibility for the killing of sheep. A discursive representation of the dingo as evil, cruel, out of place and "wrong" avoids any possibility that the farmers and their vulnerable imports might be at fault. The settlers were involved in a battle to reinforce their own version of "truth" by denying that sheep and the colonial farmers who introduced them are "wrong" in the scheme of things. Such a denial had no room for texts such as Shaw's which suggests an unacceptable truth. An acceptance of the dingo's killing habits as natural

would imply that sheep and their owners were interfering irrevocably in a food chain which had evolved over thousands of years.

The arrival of sheep changed the ancient frugal pattern of hard won meat for dingoes. Sid Wright describes old, slow dingoes with missing teeth who could no longer hunt marsupials, getting a “new lease of life” on “fat, tender mutton” (70). Sheep in New South Wales increased to seven million by 1851 (Garran and White 218) and dingoes also increased significantly, eventually trebling in number (Corbett, *The Dingo* 136). The helplessness of sheep and their tendency to mob invited attack. The vastness of the country and its large numbers of sheep prevented proper supervision of stock, and the position of marginal farms encouraged regular visits from neighbouring dingoes. The presence of sheep ended five thousand years of tolerant acceptance of the dingo and changed the representation of the dingo from an Australian animal using traditional hunting techniques to an unwanted interloper. The discourse of texts, yarns and legislation would allow the newcomers to condemn the dingo as evil and “wrong” and to exterminate it. Sheep became the new inheritors of the dingo’s stolen territory.

***“the dingo is the Devil”***

O, the dingo is the Devil, not the shadow of a doubt,  
To the chaps whose jumbucks pasture on the stations Further Out.

(Hayward, "The Devil and the Dingo" 17)

Manipulating the truth and creating a discourse in which an evil dingo took the blame for sheep losses was not too difficult. Stories about the evil wolf had been in place since medieval times. The Book of Beasts describes the wolf as the devil:

The devil bears the similitude of a wolf: he who is always looking over the human race with his evil eye, and darkly prowling round the sheepfold of the faithful so that he may afflict and ruin their souls. (White 59)

The dingo is descended from the wolf and the first European sightings of a thin dingo (before it began its new diet of sheep) confirmed its likeness to the wolf: "My Men saw two or three Beasts like hungry Wolves, lean like so many Skeletons, being nothing but Skin and Bones" (Dampier 125). In *The Cartographic Eye* Simon Ryan examines the expectations which accompanied the early Australian explorers: "almost everything seen for the first time has already been in some way, anticipated" (10). The explorers utilised pre-existing representations of savagery to describe Aborigines (137) and they borrowed the long established discourse of the wolf for the dingo. According to Lopez, one of the reasons why the wolf was hated and feared was "because wolves ate the human dead on battlefields" (144). A young convict, who arrived with the First Fleet claimed that eight hundred convicts died in the first six months of settlement and their bodies were thrown into open pits. He tells of the nightly visits by dingoes "to fight and howl in packs, gnawing the poor dead bodies"

(Ingleton 240). A. E. Bridges may have heard this story, for his poem “Waiting” written for the *Bulletin* in 1904, describes an evil dingo waiting hungrily for a man to die in the desert. The dingo, hiding with other “hideous things” and watching the man is “Fixed on his prey/Like a demon’s eye” (16). A poem by Jeach, “The Men the Dingoes Buried,” published in the *Bulletin* in 1908 engages firmly with a dingo which carries all the blame for men’s vices and failed hopes:

No monuments above them rear,  
No graving false and florid,  
No more the madding thirst they fear  
The men the dingoes buried.[. . .]

And when at Gabriel’s tattoo  
We rise in columns serried  
The dingoes they must answer, too,  
For sinners in them buried. (3)

As sheep numbers grew, the “evil” dingo was required to carry another burden; it was represented as vermin. The first sheep crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813 and a few years later the dingo was reported to be a serious problem to the sheep industry. Strychnine was imported and by 1845 was being successfully used in baited meat. Thousands of dingoes were killed and their numbers declined in settled agricultural

areas (Breckwoldt 102). The use of poison on such a large scale changed the status of dingoes. Where individual dingoes had once been shot, trapped or chased on horseback now bush-workers carried a small bottle of strychnine which could poison dozens. Dingoes were discursively represented as vermin and then exterminated.

### *Dingo scalps and Chinese pigtails*

A similar representation of a group as vermin was applied to the Chinese labourers who entered Australia to work on the goldfields.

One burly Victorian went back to Ballarat and swaggered about with seventeen pigtails hanging from his belt. Some of them had strips of scalp attached.

(Rolls, "New Guests" 96)

Discourse can sometimes speak more clearly in a physical manifestation than in the text. The following quotation accompanied a photograph of Bacon holding up a dingo skin.

The author, Mr. J. S. Bacon, with the skin of a notorious dingo that raided sheep for many years, [. . .] It took eight weeks to tan his thick hide, which shrank nearly one-quarter its size in the process. (Bacon v)

colonisers: Humans and non-humans are represented as vermin when large numbers of them threaten the colonisers' space. The oppressed and restless Algerians became "yellow multitudes", "breeding swarms" and "black, brown and yellow masses which soon will be unleashed" (Fanon 33). During the early part of the nineteenth century there were less than three thousand Chinese working in scattered areas of Australia and they caused mild concern but no great alarm (Choi 18-19). In 1852 gold was discovered in Victoria and New South Wales and thousands of men moved from China to the goldfields. Soon forty thousand Chinese were working on the Victorian diggings (Schaffer 96) and thirteen thousand were mining in New South Wales (Choi 21). The Chinese, so obviously different in appearance and habits, could readily be positioned in a discourse of "other" as uninvited and unwanted pests, invading an ordered space.

Griffiths, Poulter and Sibley describe how cockroaches and rats which emerge from where they "belong" to invade public and domestic space are named as vermin (60). By a manipulation of truth, the long established dingoes were also given a vermin role of interlopers. "Dog Days", written for the *Bulletin* in 1931 by William Hatfield is a story about a young stockman who stays on alone in an isolated drought-stricken area to earn some bounty money killing dingoes. Hatfield describes a harsh and desolate environment where the starving cattle "just had to stand there and die" (37). The text is filled with vermin imagery as the stockman describes the large number of dingoes which came "from everywhere attracted by the carcasses rotting along the banks" (37). There are so many of them that they become bold. They follow him in the evening and

“Even in daylight they were terribly cheeky” (37). Their large numbers and their movement into space now occupied by the newly arrived sheep and settler, encouraged their representation as vermin.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a time when the fear of invasion was strong and the Chinese on the goldfields and the dingoes on the wrong side of the fence were both unwanted invaders. Fanon expresses such fears as the moment when the native “surges into the forbidden quarters” (31). Robert Dixon explains the Australian fear of Asian invasion which “spawned a crop of lurid narratives featuring Chinese and Russians among others, as the invader” and he describes “the ceaseless patrolling of boundaries” by the colonial male (*Writing the Colonial Adventure* 136, 200). The dingo’s last refuges are in isolated and sparsely populated desert areas of Western Australia and the Northern Territory; places which seemed most vulnerable to invasion. Bacon ceaselessly and anxiously patrols his New England boundaries: “I venture to say that if this annual invasion is not stopped dingoes will continue to come in along the same routes in 20 to 30 years time” (12). He suggests “putting pressure on the authorities to supply dingo netting [. . .] especially at creeks and water crossings where netting always breaks and where dingoes always strike first” (41). The anxious need to assert both the coloniser’s rights to land and the conviction that the dingo was “wrong,” spills over in the fear which is contained in vermin language. Bean, writing at a time when the fear of invasion by dingoes and Asians was still strong describes dingoes “swarming down almost to the Darling” and dingoes “by the thousand” which “invaded” the western part of New South Wales during the First World War (27).

Bacon writes during the same period of dingoes which are “all the time breeding up out in the bush” (10) and he describes the “nesting grounds and haunts of dingoes” (19) “dingo infested areas” (21) and an “annual invasion” (12) of “these terrible pests” (v).

An important part of vermin discourse involves the belief that the unwanted pest is dirty and disgusting, a threat to colonial health and moral standards. Bacon associates the killing of dingoes on his property with the removal of dirt: “we succeeded in getting our place clean and keeping it clean” (vi). “Dog Days” is filled with a sickness and repulsion which connects discursively with the dingo as vermin. The intense heat, the flies, “the stink of rotten carrion”, and the young man’s physical inability to eat, all stand as metaphors for a dirty and disgusting dingo: “everything I ate tasted like—scalps!” (38). In an affront to the young bush-workers’ moral standards, expressed in the words “I caught them at it once,” the dingoes tear a drought-weakened, but still living cow to pieces. Vermin language changes the natural behaviour of the dingo into something which is disgusting and repulsive. The same theory when applied to humans results in the representation of the Chinese men as vermin. They were charged with bringing “vile eastern diseases” into Australia (Markus xv) and displaying “monstrous and unnatural vices” (Schaffer 96). Boats docked at Sydney loaded with hundreds of men, who crowded into empty transit houses, slept in rows on the floor and washed in drainage water. Rolls explains that they were usually clean orderly people, forced by conditions to lower their standards (Rolls, “New Guests” 94). Griffiths, Poulter and Sibly reveal in an article on feral cats that the placing of an

animal as a pest is dependent not on its attributes but rather on its position in a particular society (58) and the same theory applies to human “pests.” Whether the Chinese men were clean or dirty was irrelevant once the changing status of truth had established that they too held the wrong position in society and were therefore “wrong” in the scheme of things.

A vermin discourse which is spoken and read by settlers established the identity of those people and animals whose “position in a particular society” placed them as unwanted pests. Once judged and condemned by the settlers, dingoes were fenced out of their territory, and killed by individuals; Chinese suffered verbal abuse, beatings and theft of their gold by gangs of miners. But eventually the settlers tired of mending holes in the fence and the miners returned to their digging. Then the dingo trotted along the fence until he found a hole; the Chinese waited a while and then went back to work. Individual citizens are fickle and indecisive but quite “decent” according to Eric Rolls. He explains the attitude of individual miners towards the Chinese: “On the fields the violence against them built up. [. . .] No one knows how many were killed, dozens certainly, but not hundreds or even scores. Too many would have caused an outcry. The majority of diggers of all races were decent” (“New Guests” 92).

Legislation was needed to keep up the momentum of the vermin language, to block up the holes. A discourse of the individual, which is based on personal beliefs that their behaviour is right, is not enough to maintain power. Without an enforcing legislation only those directly involved in stock losses will maintain their hostility to the dingo.

The remainder of the “decent” population become too busy to riot at the mine, or tire of killing dingoes. A member of Bacon’s line of night-time shooters fell asleep “for three-quarters of an hour whilst we, the beaters, were climbing mountains and over rocks to hunt the dingoes out for him and the other gunmen!” (27). A state mechanism of discipline is needed to give cohesion to the acts of private individuals such as Bacon. The language and texts of the settlers which denigrates the dingo, helps legislation to run smoothly. At the same time state laws, once set in place, encourage the individuals’ discourse to continue.

Foucault describes the two arms of discourse. One consists of the beliefs of individual citizens: “an organisation based on public right, whose principle of articulation is the social body and delegative status of each citizen.” The other arm belongs to the state: “a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions” (*Power/Knowledge* 106). The disciplinary grid enforces the possibly indecisive actions of the “decent” settlers. The purpose of the grid is “to assure the cohesion of this same social body” (*Power/Knowledge* 106). Without the disciplinary grid of coercion, spaces or escape holes can be opened up through the actions of colonizers. The “decent” digger, his anger burnt out, would allow a small space in which the Chinese could operate. The “decent” settler might find it difficult to kill a family of dingo pups, or a trapper begins to know the hunted animal too well. Bacon’s brave words “we almost lived in the bush with the dingoes day and night”, are intended to reveal him as an expert and professional killer but instead are fraught with possibilities of sympathy and escape for the dingo (vi). Soon Bacon is recognising benign as well as evil characteristics in the

dingo; its stamina; a mother dingo's care of her pups. He appreciates a good fight: "It is your experience and skill [. . .] against the King of the Australian Bush (16). He admires their speed and grace: "a pure dingo slipping along with effortless ease on tiptoes" (2). He enjoys the sound of its voice: "the best howler we heard used to camp in the granite mountains near the head of the Deepwater River. He would come down the long river valley at night and with his clear ringing voice would almost make the mountains echo" (16). A solid, unyielding and official grid of coercion which was oblivious to "decent" human frailties was needed to seal up all these escape holes. The stockman in "Dog Days" acts with the approval of those in authority: "the boss had told me I could shoot any beast that was down to it and use the carcass for bait" (37). Bacon's killing of dingoes receives official and financial confirmation that what he is doing is "right." He is a vain man who is proud of his trophy and Blue Ribbon for killing the "Australian Record Dingo," that is a dingo with the highest price on its head, caught in the shortest time. The trophy, presented to Bacon in 1916, was signed by the Federal Member of Parliament for New England, the local bank manager and Mr. Sloman, "the chief organizer and grazier" (v). States issued bounties for each dingo scalp, increasing the official signs of approval with a useful source of income. Bacon received £72 for his record dingo and the young stockman states: "At five bob a nob I was receiving as much in a day as I would have been in a week working on the station" (37).

The same methods which encouraged the increased killing of dingoes successfully excluded the Chinese from Australia. Legislation similar to Foucault's "grid" added its

coercive weight to the individuals' disgruntled discourse with the Dictation Test which required all Asiatic and coloured persons to show "a modest standard of literacy in any European language" (Choi 26-27). A racist discourse which compared the Chinese with vermin would ensure that they were treated with fear and disgust, and official legislation would prevent any decent, kindly individuals from changing their mind. The two arms of discourse pushed each other around in an interdependent motion which efficiently eliminated dissent. The holes were sealed up for the Chinese and their numbers dwindled rapidly.

The dingo equivalent of the Dictation Test, a series of wire fences known as Vermin Fences, which blocked the dingo's movements, were built at the beginning of the twentieth century. The disciplinary acts of coercion began earlier in 1852 with the passing of an Act of Parliament "to encourage the destruction of Native Dogs." Graziers were encouraged to group together to pay the wage of a poisoner (Breckwoldt 102). The introduction of strychnine in 1845 allowed *humans* the chance to become excessive killers. One million dingoes were killed in Queensland between 1881 and 1918 (Breckwoldt 211). Each state had its own legislation and its own Vermin Boards. One Vermin Board reported 3,800 dingoes killed on a station in 1885 (Breckwoldt 224).

An increased number of water holes, better pasture and the destruction of dingoes and Aboriginal people (the main predators of native animals), helped to cause an upsurge in marsupial numbers. Soon kangaroos, wallabies, pademelons and bandicoots were

competing with the sheep for grass (Rolls, *They All Ran Wild* 361). According to Rolls, “Men began to ask, ‘What have we done? Should we have wiped out the dingoes?’ ” (*They All Ran Wild* 361). If Rolls is correct and settlers were wondering if the dingo was perhaps not so “wrong in the scheme of things” after all, this would have been the time to question their inherited European farming practices. It is at these moments of indecision that Foucault’s theories become relevant and the grid of disciplinary practices coerces its weak human followers back to the rigid belief in the “rightness” of sheep-farming. Texts such as “Dog-Days” encourage individual settlers to kill dingoes and the grid of official legislation assures the cohesion of the social body. Colonists continued along the path they had chosen in 1788 when the first sheep trotted onto Australian soil, stubbornly ploughing themselves deeper into a denial that they might be “wrong.” If native animals were becoming a nuisance to the sheep industry, the answer was to destroy *them* as vermin. In Queensland the Marsupial Destruction Act of 1881 endorsed a vermin discourse for native animals. Its records show that in the following thirty-five years it paid out bounties on eight million kangaroos, eighteen million wallabies and one million bandicoots, pademelons and kangaroo rats. Bounties in 1884 were set at seven shillings and sixpence for each dingo, one shilling for wedge-tailed eagles and sixpence for kangaroos. Wallabies including the now extinct toolache wallaby fetched fourpence (Breckwoldt 211).

Simon Ryan describes “the myth of antipodality” which expected that everything about Australia would be perverse, abnormal and upside-down (106-07). The powerful sheep-farming lobby which defined the Vermin Acts, contributed to the

upside-down perversity of the myth as sheep became the privileged inheritors of the Australian earth, and native animals were outlawed as vermin.

Vermin and Dog Fence Acts made it an offence *not* to kill dingoes. (Such Acts are still in place in 2005). Vermin Acts contain a “Requirement for [the] land occupier to destroy vermin,” Dog Fence Acts require “effective maintenance of the Dog Fence by lessees” and “Direct use of traps and poison in [the] vicinity of [the] Fence” (Fleming, Corbett, Harden and Thomson 51-55). The extent and power of legislation against the dingo which is revealed by these Acts, the continuing decisions to remove native animals as “wrong” needs some explanation. Hodge and Mishra in *Dark Side of the Dream*, explore reasons for the particular discursive structuring devices used in the displacement and suppression of Aborigines (27). Ryan describes strategies which contained Aborigines within a set of stereotypes. For example, by presenting the Aborigine as a savage, who used no recognisable agricultural methods, settlers could justify their appropriation of the land (155). In other words, the Aborigines were “wrong” in the scheme of things and steps taken to remove them were justified by various strategies. Similar methods of containment are used to justify the deaths and diaspora of the dingo and other native animals by positioning them as “wrong.”

Indigenous people rarely share such an historic contempt for animals. An American indigene is shocked by the “terrible arrogance of the white man” who determines “This animal must go, it brings no income, the space it occupies can be used in a better way” (Masson and McCarthy 13). The dingo had lived in Australia for thousands of

years before white settlement and had integrated itself into an Aboriginal “life-stream” in which everything, human and non-human, living and inanimate had an interdependent role (Berndt, *The Speaking Land* 18). It was accepted into a system described by Robert Tonkinson as “the grand design-plan” (71). In the world of the indigene, incorporating wild animals into human life was “natural,” removing a species because it was considered to be useless or “wrong” would have been incomprehensible.

***“It was only natural to hunt them in earnest.”*** (Bacon vi)

Foucault describes a power which “reaches into the very grain of individuals.” He explains how such power “inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (*Power/Knowledge* 39). It is this ingrained aspect of discourse which persuades “decent” people that racism towards the Chinese miners or the exploitation of animals is “only natural.” Vermin language inserts itself into speech and texts until it is legitimised as quite normal. Hatfield’s stockman believed that the automatic killing of dingoes was natural: “I was [. . .] keeping my eyes peeled as usual for the chance of a shot at a dingo” (37). In “The Black Dingo” a short story written for the *Bulletin* in 1940, Will Lawson reveals the immediate association of the dingo with its killing: “A black fox. Get your gun, skipper” (5). Bacon was convinced that “It was only natural” to kill dingoes. He began a lifelong war on dingoes in the 1890’s and claimed the right to remove every

dingo from his area. He was a sheep farmer in the New England district, but left his property with hired hands so that he could concentrate on killing dingoes. He dreamed of dingo association killing groups, where trappers were linked throughout the land destroying dingoes and “great stretches could be dealt with” (40). He used every killing method available to destroy dingoes and like a keen boy scout he was always prepared: “I used three or four horses, two or three dogs, 52 double spring dingo traps, three rifles, two guns, one revolver, and adequate poison (only the best) and over a period of many years got well over 440 dingoes” (17-18). Dingo killing gave Bacon his reason for living and dingo discourse justified the killing: it was in his “very grain.” He was an old man when his book was published in 1946, but his vision of a stretch of land from which every dingo had been exterminated, still shone brightly: “Some will doubtless say that it can’t be done, but I say definitely, that it has been done before and that it can be done again” (36).

An individual language which has seeped into the grain, combined with the official legislation (which is still in place today) produced a rigid and deeply entrenched discourse. It seemed natural to destroy an ancient and established part of the environment and replace it with something new and exotic. This pattern would be reproduced many times in Australia as unwanted humans, animals, plants and trees were ripped out to make room for introduced species. What powerful argument is used to persuade people that the cruel exploitation of another group is acceptable and natural? Jodie Emel writes in an essay on wolf eradication: “If we are taught to believe or have ‘rationalized’ that an animal is ‘vermin’ and deserves to be killed, a feeling of

sympathy can be suppressed or altogether replaced with hatred, rage, anger or detachment” (92).

“Dog Days” is a text filled with the language of a stockman who hates dingoes and assumes that the reader hates them too: “Of course nobody likes a dingo” (37). The dingoes are an affront to his moral values because they kill a helpless cow in a way which prolongs its suffering. Fanon describes how the human indigenes of Algeria were declared “insensible to ethics” and represented as a negation of ethical values (32) and in “Animal Ethics and Geography,” William S. Lynn states that for humans, moral values are the criterion by which we determine who stays inside our moral community and who is left outside. Animals must rely on “human interlocutors to speak and act in their interests” (286), to decide their moral values. But as Marian Scholtmeijer states in *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction*, the value of animals is decided by humans who bend belief in favour of their own attributes (293) In “Dog Days,” Hatfield decides the dingoes’ moral value. He makes an anthropomorphic assumption throughout the story that the dingoes are deliberately cruel and therefore they must be cruelly killed in retribution. James Serpell, in his study of animal/human relationships *In the Company of Animals* writes of the role of retribution in the treatment of “vermin:” “By personifying them as evil humans, we elevated them to the status of conscious, thinking beings who could be held personally responsible for their actions” (199). The stockman shoots three dingoes and cuts off their scalps to claim the bounty: “Those three scalps didn’t take long to lift. I felt myself wishing they could feel the knife” (37). Like the imagined attributes of the Chinese as unclean

and immoral transmitters of disease, the truth can be slanted to “such and such an angle and not some other one” to form the required effect. The dingo is following its natural killing techniques but the discursive linking of the dingoes with deliberate cruelty allows their extermination to be approved. The young man describes the killing of the dingoes in detail and with satisfaction and then he puts the old cow out of her misery: “to give her a bit of peace.” The cruel and angry stockman is represented as a kind young man, a “decent” person who is sickened by the evil dingoes. The accumulative effect of discourse, the encouragement of settler’s “truths” by a well organised grid of legislation has been successful and the upside-down world of Australian sheep farming has produced a perverse language where “cruel” becomes “kind” and “right” become “wrong.” But there is a price to be paid for a perversity which endorses dominance through killing, and justifies that killing with hatred and anger.

*“And the thing which is missing is love.”* (Krutch 201)

Joseph Krutch was speaking of our potential to be loving members of earth’s community and to recognize our common kinship with animals. Discourse has successfully promoted a perverse world where dingoes and marsupials are “wrong in the scheme of things” and exotic imports are natural and right. Such a confused ideology results in a discursive “splitting.” Bhabha states: “Two contradictory and

independent attitudes inhabit the *same place*, [. . .] This results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief (132). Jodie Emel describes the confused and strange discourse of hunters such as Bacon where “to admire what one has murdered requires a curious detachment” (106). Bacon’s text reveals all the inconsistency and anxiety of “splitting” as he writes of killing the dingoes he knows so well, and, in defiance of all logic and sense, secretly admires and respects:

[He] was up again in an instant and had gone more than 200 yards before my dog overtook him. I shot him again through the chest, and again he fell and then ran on towards the river. A third shot got him behind the shoulder, but he managed to jump into the river and swim across a deep hole about 50 feet wide. When he reached the other side the water was red with blood and at last he showed signs of failing, which gave me a chance to finish him off. In brief that dingo had been hit with four bullets (three of them through the chest), had run 400 to 500 yards, fought my dog, swum the river, and was still going till the last shot. Also, when we opened him up we found the only food in his stomach was a piece of old dry cow hide, so he must have been without anything to eat for several days. (14)

Nothing can illustrate more painfully the pathos of the desperate and famished dingo, struggling with its last breath to outrun the bullets. But just as painful is Bacon’s own loss of pleasure in nature, the difficulty of enjoying any native animals because all are seen as threats to his farming plans. He shoots all marsupials and birds, feeds

poisoned carrots to the wombats which dig holes in the dingo fence and uses the “porcupine” as bait in dingo traps (8). He establishes places on his land set at two and a half-mile intervals called “dead camps,” where he lays poisoned baits. His memoirs are filled with talk of killing and death and underlaid with suffering and loss. A terrible perversity has taken control of him. Matt Cartmill’s study of hunting and nature, *A View to a Death in the Morning*, describes the link between love and cruelty, the entanglement of hunting with “something dark, violent, and irrational” (239). For Bacon, what should be “right” becomes “wrong,” the cruel and grotesque seems “only natural” and pleasure is found in a pitiless killing of the most important animal in his life.

The Dingo Fence may seem like a more benign solution to a farming mistake which has placed dingoes and sheep together, but Foucault denied the innocence of space, explaining its links with the power to exclude and to segregate (Wolch and Emel xiv). Before the establishment of National Parks the fence divided the dingo into two equally damaging representations: the unwanted invader which had forced its way through the fence and the exiled outcast on the other side. The fence was built in stages from the early twentieth century to exclude dingoes from sheep-farming areas and it exists today. It stretches for 5,309 kilometres, is nearly two metres high and crosses three eastern states, and its cruelty is writ large across the land like a grotesque scar. Philip Holden travelled the length of the fence in 1989 and wrote about the experience in *Along the Dingo Fence*. He describes the dying and suffering birds and animals caught in its wires; the wombats and echidnas shot because they make holes

in its netting, and the kangaroos, denied access to food, water and new breeding partners (102,158). Stressed kangaroos attempt to jump the two metres high fence. If they fail, the wires tighten on a front or back leg and they hang and die (Holden 82). When there is a prolonged drought, the fence becomes a final resting place for thousands of thirst-maddened animals; a monument to the colonial urge to control even the ancient migratory paths of native animals. There are few texts about the fence or the sad atmosphere of death which surrounds it. It is somewhere out there, beyond our sight and knowledge, like the “deeply hidden secret” of slaughterhouses (Scholtmeijer 148) which are usually situated away from residential areas (Serpell 196).

There were settlers who killed the dingo in hatred and fear and those who killed it out of duty, because they felt it was the right thing to do. Many “decent” people felt sorry that the dingo had to die and the *Bulletin* reflected those mixed feelings. Texts which represented the dingo with hatred and contempt were balanced by those written with humour or an acceptance of the dingo’s behaviour. The *Bulletin* began to publish texts such as Charles Shaw’s poem “The Dingo” which recognised the dingo’s habits as natural. In 1944 the *Bulletin* published a poem “Trapped Dingo” which had been written by Judith Wright nearly twenty years earlier in 1927:

So here, twisted in steel and spoiled with red  
Your sunlight hide, smelling of death and fear,  
They crushed out of your throat the terrible song

You sang in the dark ranges. (4)

“Trapped Dingo” reveals the reality of the trapper’s profession and contributes to a limited change in the discourse of the dingo. In the final chapter of his book *Frontier*, Henry Reynolds describes the sympathy and expressions of conscience which many colonisers felt about the treatment of Aborigines. However, unlike the colonial texts gathered by Reynolds, *no dingo texts express the opinion that dingoes should not be killed*. The texts and language of the colonisers which insist that the dingo is “wrong in the scheme of things” have been successful. It might be sad that dingoes must be killed in the way Judith Wright describes, but with sheep so well established in the economy of Australia, the killing of “unprotected” dingoes, on the rare occasions when it is questioned, is represented as a necessity.

A story written in 1934 for the *Bulletin* describes a dingo which temporarily transcends its vermin status and the belief that it *must* be killed.. “Down the Well” by G. F. Walker describes how difficult it can sometimes be to kill a dingo. At the beginning of the story two bush farmers Kemp and Lonergan are setting traps for a dingo which has killed some of their sheep. A bush fire burns their farm and they are forced to jump into the well to save their lives. Something appears at the top of the well and tumbles down into the water. It is the dingo; the animal the two men have been hunting for days. The men and the dingo share the well for some time while the fire burns above them. During this time the men’s attitude to the dingo changes. They notice it has been burnt by the fire and they splash water on its fur. As the fire rages

above the well, Lonergan finds that he no longer wants to kill the dingo. Instead he feels pity for it and he holds it up out of the water to prevent it drowning. “What a damn twisted joke” Lonergan thinks “to put it completely at their mercy” (48).

Walker reveals the power of discourse in his story, for when the representations of the dingo are taken away, the desire to kill it goes too and all that remains is a common need for survival: “They were all hunted creatures when it came to bushfires” (48).

The idea that the men are moving to recognition that the dingo may not be “wrong” after all is dashed when they climb out of the well:

As Public Enemy No. 1, Lonergan and Kemp killed the dingo. They lugged it out of the well with a noosed rope, and Lonergan shot it in the glare of the fire as soon as he had retrieved his rifle and some bullets.

“We’re lucky to have it served up to us like this, after all the time we hunted it,” said Lonergan.[. . .] “But, hell! It wouldn’t take much to make me let the poor devil go,” he finished wryly.

“Me either,” said Kemp as the dingo, trussed up, cowered before Lonergan’s rifle. “But go on, shoot!” (48)

Lopez provides an example of a similar challenge to the colonial discourse which insists on the destruction of certain animals as vermin: “I remember once asking some Eskimos what they would do about wolves if they were raising reindeer. Would they

wipe them out? No, they said. You would have to live with a little predation” (180). Lonergan and Kemp are unable to practice such tolerant views once they have climbed out of the well. The men’s brief challenge to the usual treatment of the dingo cannot survive in the outside world. Colonial discourse is so powerful and has presented such a convincing truth about the dingo as vermin that it becomes impossible *not* to shoot it. It *has* to be “wrong in the scheme of things.”

Wolch and Emel have asked for an explanation of the “deafening silence about nonhumans in our discourse” (633). Since their essay “Bringing the Animals Back in” was published in 1995, animals have been slowly trotting over to join the human “others,” including Aboriginal people and the Chinese miners, and to occupy a new subjective position in postcolonial studies. Such studies have allowed us to examine the human injustice of displacement and suffering. Soon animals will demand an end to the “deafening silence” and the “unexamined absence” of their position. A re-examination of the dingo, which in one way or another has refused to be trapped, will force humans to question its treatment.

Human beings may find that the dingo is not “wrong” after all, that discourse has exerted its power and tricked us all. We may find that the urge to control and exploit the environment has stolen away the native animals’ heritage and sold us a lie. If the representations of the dingo are untrue, then the aerial baiting with tonnes of 1080 dropped indiscriminately over mountain ranges, the millions of dollars spent on a dingo fence which stretches further than the Great Wall of China, the suffering of

native animals and birds as they lie poisoned or gangrenous in metal traps or struggling on the wire—all the killing will have been unnecessary. Its only function will be to stand as a monument to the greedy and shortsighted desires of the colonisers.

## *the dreaming dingo*

### ***AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DREAMING DINGO AND THE LAW***

Robert Tonkinson, who lived for a while with the people of the Western Desert, described Aboriginal religion as “the grand design-plan” (71). His book *The Jigalong Mob* referred to a religion which not only explained the mysteries of birth and death but provided a road map for the journey in between, a charter of social and spiritual behaviour to guide a person through life. Tonkinson’s phrase “the grand design-plan” evokes a religion which incorporated all living and inanimate things into one interdependent whole and which permeated every aspect of daily life. Myths in the form of sung or spoken narratives taught the design-plan to every member of the group and were handed down to future generations. They tell of a transitional time known as the Dreaming when mythic beings travelled through the empty land, filling it with rocks and trees, water and edible plants, creating all living things. Some of the Dreaming beings were human, some were animal; all are known as mythic ancestors. In many regions of Australia, particularly in the vast areas known as the Western Desert, the dingo is a Dreaming ancestor, creating people and other dingoes.

Aborigines, colonial settlers and contemporary Australian tourists have each created a dingo with human characteristics. “A dingo is a dingo” said Barbara Tjikadu at the Royal Commission into the death of Azaria Chamberlain (Chamberlain 635) but even the most kindly and knowledgeable Aboriginal use of discourse makes this statement

untrue. The Dreaming Dingo is as much a product of human interference and anthropomorphism as the “cowardly” or “friendly” dingo of Western imaginings. But fortunately for the Dreaming dingo and its dingo descendents, Aboriginal beliefs in a communal life stream allow it a positive and consistent role in the scheme of things. Aboriginal representation of the dingo is always grounded in empirical knowledge and myths build on the known characteristics of the dingo: its regular need for water, its communal family structure, its methods of controlling territory and its potential danger to humans. Such knowledge and the resulting ennobling or warning myths are used to *improve* the human condition: colonial and contemporary ideology results in the *degradation* of the dingo and its environment.

Unlike the colonial texts of the trappers and sheep farmers, Aboriginal myths are not driven by the individuals’ desire to control and exploit the environment. Nor do they resemble the inconsistent beliefs of city dwellers who are becoming alienated from the environment and ignorant of its contents. The oral myths are told as a continuum to provide a charter of informed behaviour towards other living things and the environment. This behaviour is known as the Law. Dreaming myths answer questions about creation, explaining that Aborigines were created by human or animal ancestors and share the same life force or life stream with animals. Myths are directly linked with the creation of the environment. Their grand design-plan leads the listener along paths to water and food and is fostered through religious rituals of renewal.

Some of the mythic beings remained in one area while others travelled great distances, creating many different language groups (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 6, Tonkinson 70-72, Rumsey 23-25). Such myths may be continued by new narrators in different areas. The warning myth of Kalpunya the dingo for example begins at Uluru in the Northern Territory and is taken up again in South Australia (Bonn 17). Warning myths show how to live in harmony and equality with animals, to temper respect with the knowledge that some animals including dingoes are dangerous and others will be hunted and eaten. Under the guidance of myths, land which the colonists called desert provided a good living for Aborigines because of the presence of caring ancestors who protected and guided their descendants (Tonkinson 19). Social myths teach how to live in harmony with one's family and how to behave in neighbours' territory. They emphasise the importance of the community over the individual and the need to conserve the environment for the next generation rather than raid it for personal gain. Myths impart the belief that heaven is here and now in the present environment and that the land must be passed on to the next generation in good condition. Myths are flexible enough to survive even the events of the last two hundred years but their basic beliefs are firm and unchanging. They form a charter of rights and obligations to the land. They were there when the colonists arrived and they are still available, although almost never used, for the education of government planners and farmers.

One way to deny the dingo's role in an Australian genesis is to define the myths as false beliefs. Dictionaries define myths as traditional stories involving supernatural beings whose actions explain certain phenomena. But in a second popular

interpretation, western discourse takes up a position of judgement, defining the word “myth” as a false belief. Should we use the word “myth” when we describe the ancient oral narratives of Aborigines? Some contemporary researchers of Aboriginality who wish to disassociate themselves from judgmental assumptions avoid the word “myth.” Robert Dixon and Grace Koch use the phrases “Song Poetry” and “text line” to describe the Dyirbal people’s mixture of sung and spoken narrative (xviii). In *Textual Spaces: Aboriginality and Cultural Studies*, Stephen Muecke prefers the phrase “traditional Aboriginal verbal art,” arguing that it is necessary to remove the literary assumptions which cluster around alternative genre words such as “story” and “poem” (39). Ronald and Catherine Berndt always called a myth a myth but they challenged the western discursive assumption of “false belief,” remarking wryly that such a definition is “most often referring to someone else’s beliefs and not their own” (*Speaking Land* 1). Two versions of the origins of the dingo show that the beliefs contained in Aboriginal myths are not necessarily false and that conversely scientific discourse is not a guarantee of truth and certainty. One version is a corroboree, a story expressed through music and dance; the other version is formed from various accounts of archaeological research.

The Kundi-Djumindju people still perform a corroboree which explains how and when the dingo reached Australia. Dancers imitate dingoes running excitedly along the deck of a boat before jumping into the water and swimming ashore. They roll in the sand, shake themselves dry, then follow the scent of game. The dancers, who are from the coastal area of the Northern Territory, show the dingo arriving, not with Aboriginal

immigrants but with *visitors*, Indonesian sea-farers (Corbett, *The Dingo* 22). It was assumed by all scientists that Aborigines had brought the dingo to Australia (Basedow 119) until 1960 when the three-thousand-year-old-fossilised skeleton of a young dingo was found lying under a rocky overhang (Breckwoldt 41). It was the oldest dingo fossil to be found in Australia and tallied with the datings of the earliest known rock paintings of dingoes and the disappearance from the mainland of two native carnivores, the Tasmanian Tiger and the Tasmanian devil (Mulvaney & White 80). The combined evidence finally convinced scientists that the dingo had arrived much later than they had previously maintained. The scientists had made a huge miscalculation and had held false beliefs for more than a century, while the Kundi-Djumindu had correctly dated the dingo's arrival in Australia. Recent DNA testings confirm the dingo's residency in Australia at five thousand years ("Online"). An Aboriginal discourse of narrative, the corroboree, had triumphed over the considerable power and technology of a scientific discourse.

The scientists had given the visible evidence of the rock paintings a place in their calculations, but they had ignored the more ephemeral corroboree myth. Aborigines will show doubters the scratch marks of a dingo's claws in the rock around a vital water hole, or deposits of red ochre formed from the blood of a dingo which fought a lizard. It seems reasonable to have no doubts, when the environment is filled with such solid evidence of the ancestors' achievements (Tonkinson 71). In their studies of Aboriginal languages the Berndts found only the positive word for "knowing" as distinct from "believing" (*First Australians* 228).

Historians, scientists and anthropologists rely on facts and dates to validate their discourse and they are unwilling to accept a different type of evidence. A wry statement by Fernand Comte may explain the reluctance of scientists to listen to the oral history contained in myths: “This is the age of reason and science [. . .] everything else is nothing but nonsense: a fairy tale” (16). Accounts of dingoes getting married, trying to light fires and creating water holes are reduced to fairy tales by the colonists’ facts and dates which function as their “regime of truth.” Aboriginal managers of National Parks such as Kakadu are suggesting that research be directed away from “the age of reason” encoded in western archaeological conceptions of time and towards the oral history of local elders (Allen 145). The origins of the dingo controversy and lessons learned from it should contribute to a more positive definition of the word “myth.”

While the presence of the dingo in myths and corroborees solves one problem it raises others, especially in the use of the dingo in Aboriginal creation myths. Some of the myths describe the formation of rivers which occurred long before the arrival of the dingo. How can dingoes be included as creators of a fifty-thousand-year-old environment when they arrived in Australia only about five thousand years ago? After they had arrived with the Indonesian traders, they “jumped ship” and established themselves as a top predator, replacing the thylacine on the ground (as a hunter) and on the wall (in rock paintings). Roland Breckwoldt, dingo watcher and wild life advisor to the Government suggests that the dingo may also have taken over the role

of the thylacine in oral myths (69). Like all indigenous animals, the thylacine was entitled to be present at the genesis of the world while the newcomer dingo was not. Traditional myths rarely offer a conclusive and clear-cut explanation of events and there are often several versions of the same myth. For example, the visitors described in the Kundi-Djumindu corroboree are variously identified as Baiini a type of sea gypsy or Balanda, meaning people of European descent, perhaps Dutch from the East Indies (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 419-20). Arnhem Land people call the various myths “different, but a little bit the same” (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 389). Comte explained how myths can “change, adapt, reinterpret, transform, become entangled” (14). It is difficult for members of “the age of reason” to accept such seemingly muddled discourse but Aboriginal people do. They are the caretakers of the land and the myths. They don’t *invent* traditional myths; they keep them alive by retelling them and the myths mirror what people identify as relevant and familiar (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 405). If a dingo now runs in the bush in place of the thylacine it makes sense to continue the myth “different, but a little bit the same.”

Aboriginal myths become even more “entangled” and “different” when the mythic dingo protagonist is named as a dog. In fact the majority of myths about the dingo do refer to it as a dog. How can the dog feature as a mythic ancestor when it arrived in Australia only two centuries ago? Viewed through the eye of western historical discourse the use of a domestic dog discredits the authenticity of ancient myths. Perhaps “dog” means “wild dog” which is another word for dingo? Lazarus Lamilami for example, a Maung Aborigine included the myth “Wild dog and Kangaroo” in

stories by Maung and Gunwinggu speaking people (29-32). Or perhaps the indigenous word for dingo is used by the narrator but the translator interprets it as “dog.” Joe Jangala’s myth has the title “Malikijarrakurlu” in Warlpiri language which is translated not as “The Two Dingoes” but “The Two Dogs.” Or has the domestic dog gradually replaced the dingo in myths just as the dingo may have once replaced the thylacine? By 1965, only one or two isolated tribes still kept dingoes in their camps (Meggitt, *Aborigines and Dingoes* 22). It is probable that today domestic dogs have replaced all purebred dingoes in Aboriginal settlements. Those dingoes which have not been shot by the missionaries or poisoned by the farmers have cross bred with dogs. Tim Yilngayara alternated between the words “dog” and “dingo” when he told his Dreaming dingo myths to Deborah Bird Rose in 1980 (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 47-9). By 1955 “dogs” instead of “dingoes” warned the Walbiri people of the Tanami Desert when malevolent Djanbar spirits were prowling outside the camp (Meggitt, *Djanbar* 375-403). An Aboriginal discourse is emerging which is not based on the logic of meticulous recording and detail. However there *is* logic at work.

Contemporary Aborigines must continually “change, adapt, reinterpret” every part of their lives in order to survive. W. E. H. Stanner maintained that traditional Aborigines had “defeated history” through the continuity of their beliefs (*On Aboriginal Religion* 89). Now they defeat the logical outcome of history through reinterpretation. They now know and love their dogs, as they once loved their partly tamed dingoes. Their myths have not been relegated to the distant past; they are still being told. When the last indigenous speaker has died they will be told in Aboriginal English. If the

ceremonies cease, the message or Law contained in the myths will still inform Aboriginal life. If the dreaming dingo has gone, the dog will take its place. Father Frank Brennan observed that a traditional song about a blowfly had gradually evolved over many years into a song about the drone of an aeroplane: “The ritual has kept pace with social change” (147). Perhaps the replacement of “dingo” with “dog” reveals the strength of Aboriginal myths; their ability to keep pace; to ride the storm of intense social change. Their strength lies, not in the absolute truth of facts, but in their ability to reinterpret those facts.

Stephen Muecke mentions the story of an old Aboriginal man who included the rabbit in a list of animals hunted in pre-colonial days (91). Muecke asks why the white concept of time as proceeding in a straight line should apply to all histories. He suggests that continuity can be achieved in the white way, the straight line way, or by the Aboriginal way of incorporating contemporary events into narratives about the past (91-2). This explanation introduces the first of several unique Aboriginal discourses. It challenges the historian and the anthropologist’s perception of time as an exact science. Stanner observed in *White Man Got No Dreaming* that he had never been able to discover any Aboriginal word for time as an abstract concept (23).

By using the incorporation method rather than the straight line way, perfect sense is made of the mythical use of the now more familiar domestic “dog” rather than the increasingly rare “dingo.” The incorporation method relates to living myths whose message still informs Aboriginal life. A traditional myth crystallised forever on the

white page might appeal to the purist but living myths are told on red dirt around a campfire or in a backyard at Fitzroy Crossing. Deborah Bird Rose explains how myths are “grounded”: “The earth is the repository of blood from Dreaming deaths and births, sexual excretions from Dreaming activities, charcoal and ashes from their fires” (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 57). Living myths will survive in one form or another but the Aboriginal form will not conform to the discourse of historians and academics.

There are thousands of unpublished Aboriginal myths. Tonkinson mentions “several hundred” myths which belonged to less than three hundred people at Jigalong (73). The Berndts believed that there were thousands of myths in western Arnhem Land alone (*Speaking Land* 391). There are also thousands of published myths. The Berndts chose two hundred for publication in their book of myths and A.W. Reed has published four volumes of myths. Aboriginal myths describe the genesis of the world, known as the Dreaming time, and they demanded obedience to a religion and lifestyle which is still called the Law. Mythic paths which criss-crossed the continent were formed during the Dreaming time. Moving along these paths and establishing the Law were mythic travellers: men and women, bandicoots, emu, wallaby and giant snakes (*Speaking Land* 73).

Dingoes travelled the mythic paths too. I have found more than fifty published myths in which the dingo is the main protagonist as well as others in which it plays a minor role. Most published myths about the dingo have come from groups living in the huge Western Desert area which straddles the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Interested, mostly white, people began collecting and publishing the myths more than a century ago when the religious ceremonies were actively practiced and the many languages of the Aborigines were still in daily use. Myth collectors both past and present choose a dual citizenship, living literally with a foot in both camps, inviting the necessary trust and intimacy of Aboriginal people before retreating to the white world with their spoils. Like the myth collectors, the published myths also have dual citizenship. They have “crossed the border,” making the journey from the open fireside to the white pages of a book. Like the last small band of nomads who were brought out of the desert two decades ago, the published myths have exchanged the ancient and precarious life of the bush for the doubtful protection of a twentieth century culture.

The myth collectors, like the myths, moved in and out of two cultures. William (Bill) Cowan and Catherine Langloh Parker were two of the earliest collectors. A century ago the young Cowan was “nursed by young Aboriginal girls, and from early childhood was a close friend of the local tribe near Amby where his family lived.” As a teenage stockman he “sat at the feet of Borungi, a Nogoboringi tribesman” from northwest Camooweal and heard about the travels of Bunjil and Ninji and their two dingoes (Pearn in Cowan iii). About the same time, Langloh Parker was growing up on her father’s cattle station with Aborigines who saved her from drowning and told her a myth called “The Rain-bird.” Years later as an old woman herself she recalled in *Australian Legendary Tales*, the words: “Boogoodoogada was an old woman who lived alone with her four hundred dingoes” (67). Reserve Ranger Bill Harney was

perhaps the first of the Eco-tourists. He walked around the sacred sites of Uluru for weeks with “old Kadakadeka of the Uluritdja tribe” listening to the myths about the Mala people and Kapanya the ritual dingo (184). His book, *Tales from the Aborigines* was published in 1967. Anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt collected myths from 1941 to 1988 for publication in their book *The Speaking Land*. The Berndts’ work of collecting and translating myths covers fifty years of intense change for Aboriginal people. The pair lived for months in tents and from 1949-50 they camped under a banyan tree at Oenpelli, right in the path of the two mythical “shape-changing” dingoes, Aidjumala and Maidjuminmag which created the local water holes (31).

For over a century the collectors have worked to record myths which were still being performed and understood by the narrators. Now, live narrations of myths told in an indigenous dialect are rare and flawed by memory loss: “documented and explicated really at the last possible moment” as Robert Dixon states in the preface to *Dyirbal Song Poetry* (xvii). Many of the myth collectors were fluent speakers of an Aboriginal dialect and had spent years in close proximity to Aboriginal people. Langloh Parker’s attitude to Aboriginal people and their myths was, according to her editor Drake-Brockman, “sympathetic yet completely objective” (v). Bill Cowan’s feelings of “humility and deference” towards Aboriginal culture are described in the 1989 foreword to his book *The Silent World of Bal-Bal* (Pearn iii). However this does not prevent them from bringing their own bias and baggage to the myths. Some degree of ethnocentrism is inevitable, for even the most thoughtful translation involves

movement into a different discourse. When a group of concerned people drove out to bring the nomads in from the desert, they carried a bundle of clothes with them. Their first act was to dress the naked desert people. The myths have also been tidied up to fit into a civilized society. Concerned people with the best of intentions have dressed them up in a western discourse. They have cut out the seemingly tedious repetition, censored the explicit sexual references and published most of the myths as children's stories, where they sit to this day, in the fairy-story section of the children's library.

The "dressing up" of myths in western discourse is still a part of publishing practices. The following lines introduce a recent version of "The Eagle and the Dingo" an Aboriginal myth published in 1989: "Sadly, Australia's native dog, the dingo, has developed something of a notorious reputation. This is no surprise to either farmers or the Aborigines who have always known of that beast's evil nature" (Roberts 62). The anthology, *Shadows in the Mist* is attractively presented with a brief version of an ancient Aboriginal myth compressed onto one glossy page and a striking example of contemporary art by Ainslie Roberts on the opposite page. It is a "coffee table" book, an expression of its owner's taste in European art and indigenous exotica. The myth has made a long journey from its oral narration around a campfire and it arrives at its place on the coffee table as a depleted thing. Some of the myths' useful luggage of knowledge, or life skills, or integrity has been lost on the difficult journey. "The Eagle and the Dingo" tells how a woman is turned into a dingo and her brother into an eagle. According to Dale Roberts' text, they broke an "ancient spirit law: that once brothers and sisters have grown to be adults, they may no longer look at or speak to each other"

(62). Such “conflict” myths illustrate aspects of social behaviour (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 254). In its original indigenous form it may have contained important warnings about incest, but the myth is not in its original form. Many things have happened to it since it was first seized from the fireside and carried to the white page. The name of the narrator has been lost; the reader is told only that the myth belonged to Aborigines who lived on Melville Island, north of Darwin. There is no information about how it arrived at Blackwoods the publishers. Presumably it is not a first hand account by an Aboriginal person from Melville Island. Dale Roberts mentions the efforts made and the difficulties involved in the search for the Aboriginal narrators and the original white authors and publishers (80). The myth uses as a starting point the most common discourse between Aborigines and white people, the discourse of difference which is about “us” and “them.” Stephen Muecke comments that Aborigines are rarely reported as saying “I” or “you” while their use of “we” is politically threatening to white people: “even in a pronoun system, [. . .] language has positioned a people” (23). Language controls the action in a situation where “us” not “them” own the discourse, write the version and publish the book.

Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker have recently tried to redress the injustice done to the Aborigine myth collector David Unaipon in 1925 when authorship and consequently power and authority were taken from him (Muecke and Shoemaker xii). Stories were gathered by Unaipon for his book *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines* but the book contained no recognition of his name or work. His authoritative comments, filled with wisdom and knowledge about his people, were

removed from the text and placed in the editor's footnotes. The two books, *Legendary Tales* and *Shadows in the Mist* were published nearly 65 years apart but both speak with a similar discourse of white appropriation.

The language of "The Eagle and the Dingo" conforms to a discourse begun by anthropologists. It enables editors to control the myth or in Muecke's words it "maintains the power to articulate the terms in which difference can be stated" (27). So the rewriting of myths using a colonial discourse gives power to the white readers. The publishers of "The Eagle and the Dingo" use their power to "improve" the myth, cutting it to fit a glossy page, censoring the incest myth for children. They use their power to appropriate, taking on the role of educators, explaining the uses made of ochre deposits on Melville Island, and they use their power as colonists reshaping the land to control their version of "the dingo slinking through the bush" (62). The false assumption that Aborigines share the colonial discourse about the dingo overrides indigenous knowledge. Power takes knowledge and authority from the original narrators and gives it to the editors. Power imposes a colonial discourse driven by farming economics onto a mythical Aboriginal dingo. Power makes it difficult for white to gain knowledge from black.

Muecke argues that "European ways of talking about Aborigines limit their ways of knowing what Aborigines might be" (20). The same "ways of talking" limit knowledge of the dingo. If editors and translators noisily describe the dingo through a colonial discourse, how can they hear the Aborigines' dingo? Listen to the gentle

words of Popeye Jangala describing the two dingoes which created his people: “They scratched out a little rockhole at Waanjurna. [. . .] They hunted little mice. They ate them” (121). Or listen to the ambiguous and layered statement of Tim Yilngayrri, owner of country filled with Dreaming dingo myths: “There was a man who shot dogs and he’s dead now” (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 29). Now and in the past the Aboriginal dingo has been silenced by the strident and authoritative voice of “us” and our position of authority and superior knowledge. It seems that the colonisers must always have the last word: “Aborigines [...] have always known of that beast’s evil nature.”

Since published myths such as “The Eagle and the Dingo” are not first hand “I” accounts, how many hands have they passed through? They have travelled into a different country and there must always be a great leap of faith involved in a successful journey from one culture, language and age into another. When the Irish poet Seamus Heaney translated the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf* he used the words translation and *version* interchangeably (Hardwick 18). Perhaps a mixture of translation and *vision* would make a better tool when working with Aboriginal myths, for version has overtones of colonial interference and appropriation. A translation with vision implies a successful border crossing with the luggage intact. The contents of a different culture can be unpacked and hopefully used to enrich and inform the importers. Past translations have shown a lack of vision and the gulf is too great to manage without it. Black becomes translated into white, ancient into modern, spiritual into commercial, community into self, respect for all life streams into ethnocentricity.

The leap of faith must be performed with humility. Arrogance has trivialized myths into children's stories and patronized, censored and refashioned them to reflect the discourse of a colonial culture. Arrogant editors and translators have bypassed indigenous authors and narrators, often failing to name them or identify their land or language.

Perhaps the first case of linguistic appropriation involving a dingo occurred in 1798 at Port Jackson when Governor Collins asked the name of a certain animal which came to his notice. Local Aborigines allegedly told Collins that the animal was called "dingo" (Blake 92). Warrigal was the Aboriginal name for dingo in the Port Jackson area and Barry Blake lists more than a dozen indigenous names including papa in Pitjantjatjara, aringka in Alyawarra, the pleasant sounding palangamwari of the Tiwi people and the sharper twert of the Nyungar. As papa or palangamwari or any of its other indigenous names the dingo played an important role in ancient Aboriginal myths. It appeared in creative myths as a Dreaming ancestor, giving birth to the first people, making rivers and scratching out waterholes. In social myths it taught people how to live harmoniously within their own group and with strangers. It had a role in warning myths, advising humans to treat its wildness with caution and respect. Finally it dealt with death, rejecting an offer of eternal life for itself and all its human descendants. Its most important role in myths is as a model or a benchmark for the care of the environment. The way the dingo is treated in Aboriginal myths; with respect and acknowledgement of a life stream shared harmoniously with other living things is a reflection of the way the environment should be treated. Other animals—bandicoots, emu and wallaby—were also chosen to share a mythic role with humans,

but the dingo shows how exquisitely suitable it is for the job; how similar it is to people in its life style and behaviour.

But papa and palangamwari have not made their way into everyday Australian speech. Except for warrigal, which lingered for a century in Victorian poetry (Dingo Oh Dingo just didn't sound right!), neither the dingo's indigenous names nor its respected position in society survived colonisation. Instead the word "dingo", a linguistic interloper with no known place in any indigenous dialect pushes its way to the front to participate in a colonial discourse of negation and contempt. For two centuries the dingo, like the ancient myths, has suffered an appropriation of its name and its character. As a name "dingo" reminds us of a colonist's original misunderstanding and ignorance of an Aboriginal language. As a description "dingo" invokes a nation's ignorant discourse and their denial of the Aborigines' creative Dreaming Dingo.

The dingo is a great survivor. It dodges around traps, regurgitates poison and finds allies to help it reclaim its spiritual reputation. Ronald and Catherine Berndt worked closely with the indigenous narrators of myths from 1941 to 1989, always deferring to Aboriginal knowledge. In the preface to *The Speaking Land* the Berndts state: "In all cases we discussed the content of each myth with the Aborigines involved" (6). Their book includes a list of the names and language affiliation of every storyteller. The Berndts wrote down the myths in the Aboriginal dialect of the narrators. (In 1958 they acquired a tape recorder). The work was then translated during discussion with the narrators who ensured that the Berndts understood the myths "almost as well as they did themselves" (xxviii). Comments made by the Berndts or Aboriginal members of the audience are separated by parentheses. The Berndts regretted that due to lack of

space the publishers would not allow them to place the original language version of each myth alongside the English translation. Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose lived with the Yarralin people from 1980 to 1982. She listened to the mythical stories told in Aboriginal English about their Dreaming dingo ancestor and retold them in *Dingo Makes Us Human*. In *Warlpiri Dreaming* published in 1994, Peggy Rockman Napaljarri's translations are placed next to the indigenous narration of dingo myths by Joe and Popeye Jangala. The effect of reading the myth in the Warlpiri language is similar to holding a Ming vase in one's hands rather than merely being told the vase exists. Whether the reader understands the Warlpiri language or not, the visible signs on the page that the ancient myth was being told to Napaljarri only ten years ago is thrilling in its urgency, immediacy and continuity.

Such people are helping to lessen the inevitable assumptions and positions of anthropological discourse. They return power and knowledge to the mythmakers and perform a better balancing act on the tightrope walk of "collaboration without appropriation" (Shoemaker 277). Meanwhile the dingo lies low, waiting for the right book to be picked up and opened. Then it leaps from the page, restored to the mythic dingo ancestor which inspired the original inhabitants of Australia. Some myths show a recalcitrant dingo; a warning message for the "wild" members of the tribe. The Warlpiri dingo narrated by Popeye and Joe Jangala, kicks up its heels for joy because it is in love! The travels of the first dingoes are told and retold until they forge memory paths which take the people to water and food and explain how people arrived in the land and where they will finally go. The dingo is the centre of all the myths I have chosen. It trots along with the stories, pausing to drink and hunt, taking a

detour when it sniffs an interesting trail. Like people, it lives and dies, helps its partner and cares for its family. Like Aborigines, it eats a mixed diet and is semi-nomadic. The protagonists of these myths are dingoes which are also people. The following myths explain how the first people were created by mythical Dreaming dingoes.

## ***MYTHS OF HUMAN CREATION***

“Who am I?” “Where did I come from?” Both traditional Aboriginal and Christian/Judaic narratives depict the land before creation as an empty place waiting to be filled with people and animals. But their versions of how the land was filled are in direct conflict with each other, and Aboriginal autochthonous beliefs of harmony and equality challenge an ethnocentric Christian ideology.

Creative Aboriginal myths are as many and varied as the thousands of small groups which made up Australia before white settlement. Generally they describe the acts of mythic ancestral beings who roamed the earth during a creative period called the Dreaming time. Some of the beings worked only in a particular area, creating specific language groups and environmental features while others travelled great distances across the country and created several different groups of people. The ways in which people were created varied: some were born, some emerged from a lake, and others were simply “found” or “put” on the earth (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 6, 9-15; Tonkinson, 69-71). At this point, Aboriginal and Christian creation myths begin to diverge markedly. Christian discourse gives power and superiority to humans who were made in the image of God, but while some of the Aboriginal ancestors were in human form, others were animals, birds or reptiles. Bandicoots, wallabies, catfish and dingoes are described by various Aboriginal groups as ancestors of humans.

The belief in the dingo as a mythic Dreamtime ancestor is prevalent throughout the Western Desert and many of the published dingo myths come from this area. Speaking to Deborah Bird Rose in 1980, Tim Yilngayari explained how the Dreaming dingo made people. The dingo wanted to be human so it asked the bat to mould its long nose into a round shape using native honey and wax: “In beginning, when we come out of that hole we had long nose like a dog. Dreaming been walk, catch that sugarcane and make a head.” The bat operated on the female dingo offspring and the bower bird operated on the males, cutting them and pulling their tails forward, until the dingoes were changed into human beings; “him finished longa dog now, him proper man.” Yilngayari spoke of the similarities between dingo and human, and confirmed that people were descended from Dreaming Dingoes: “*janga* (women), *ngumpin* (men). Mother and Father Dingo make Aboriginal. White children out of white dog; Dingo for Aboriginal” (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 47).

Yilngayari spoke in Kriol, a form of Aboriginal English and only the basic elements of the myth; the bare bones, have been retained in his narrative. “Mother and Father Dingo make Aboriginal” is no more than a brief summary of a myth. Yilngayari may have forgotten parts of the myth because he is not telling it in its original language. Narrators were able to remember more of myths which had been learned by rote in their original language. Or Yilngayari may not speak Kriol well enough to translate all the words of the myth. In *Aranda Traditions*, T.G.H. Strehlow, brought up on his father’s mission, reminds us: “by reason of his birth and upbringing, [he] is able to think in Aranda as well as in English” (xviii). He translated the fine *Songs of Central*

*Australia* and spoke of the “great strength and beauty” of myths told in their indigenous form. He disliked the use of Aboriginal English, claiming it reduced the myths to “poor and childish tales of little interest to any save the anthropologists” (xviii –xx). The older people of Yarralin were strong in their beliefs and most of them were fluent in several traditional languages. They spoke in Kriol in order to make their words more accessible to white people (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 30-31). But they have passed on to Rose only the essence of their beliefs, that the Dreaming Dingo is their ancestor. The Kriol medium used for this myth seems inadequate and unconvincing; it cannot transmit the complex, difficult and intricate discourse which explains the phenomena of dingo into human. Rose is obliged to add to the Kriol versions, to continually extrapolate the unclothed myths.

Early colonists who listened to myths told in Aboriginal English were already armed with their own stories of creation and were willing to disbelieve. The myths of the Dreaming Dingo ancestor transgressed all western beliefs by claiming that humans were formed from dingoes. Christians maintained that humans were made in the likeness of God not animals; scientists were convinced that humans were superior to all other life forms, and according to the Australian colonisers the dingo was the lowliest animal of all. Vermin as the creative ancestor of human beings? It was easy to ignore such heretical and unconvincing statements or dismiss them as “poor and childish tales.” Kriol could not compete.

But Yilngayari has not told the whole story. Further north at Oenpelli, Nipper Maragar related to Ronald Berndt a myth which also tells of ancestral dingoes. The myth “Peopling the Land” was told in Maragar’s language of Manger (dji) in 1949-50 and translated in a cooperative way by the Berndts and the Manger (dji) speakers. Even in translation it retains the “great beauty and strength” which Strehlow described. Like the Yarralin myth it describes seemingly alien concepts. To “hear” “Peopling the Land” the white listener or reader must accept different beliefs. Firstly the use of “newcomer” dingoes in an ancient myth requires the belief that time is flexible. The conventional historical analysis of time as a “totalisation” (Foucault, *A Reply* 112) no longer applies. Dingoes must also be taken out of the usual denigrating colonial discourse and instead accepted as heirs to the land. Yilngayari’s fragments cannot convince, but Maragar’s narration of “Peopling the Land” makes it easier to accept the concept of dingoes as spiritual creators. In a fine piece of narrative, the listeners are drawn into the adventures of two dingoes. Their metamorphosis is convincingly explained through the language and metaphor of shape-changing. The sophisticated structure of the myth gives credibility to a strange discourse. The message of equality and harmony contained in the metaphor of shape-changer is of great importance to all people for it explains a concept which could rescue the environment from further degradation. If humans share in a common life stream with nonhumans, then colonial attitudes towards the environment would be undermined. Humans would no longer possess the right as superior being to manipulate the environment according to a colonial discourse. The extermination of animals as vermin, the reorganisation of plants and animals to suit western farming, the pollution of rivers and soil would all

cease to be the inherited right of the colonists. Those same animals, plants and rivers would be contained in the body of human beings, part of them and equal to them. The shape-changing concept clarifies Yilngayari's beliefs, enlightens younger Aborigines and may show all Australians how to unblock their ears and listen to a different discourse.

"Peopling the Land" tells of an old man called Ilbad who was camping with his two children, a boy named Aidjumala and a girl, Maidjuminmag. They all ate a good meal of goanna and afterwards the old man lay down to rest:

However, the children were still hungry and started to chew the goanna bones. Ilbad heard them breaking them with their teeth: "Why do you do that?" he asked. "We are still hungry," they answered. "You've eaten a lot of goanna," he replied, and threw a stick at Maidjuminmag to stop her chewing the bones, hitting her accidentally on the arm and breaking it. She began to cry. Ilbad threw another stick at her brother and he too began yelping like a dog, but in his case his arm was not broken. As a result of this ill-treatment they ran away together. The old man was sorry for what he had done. He tried to catch them, but the brother and sister ran far away and Ilbad was unable to follow them. [They were now in the process of becoming dogs.] (Maragar 30)

"Peopling the Land" has all the elements needed to capture our attention and interest. It combines the daily tasks of hunting and preparing food with the subtle and universal

frailties of human nature; the children irritate their father by noisily chewing the bones. He is tired and loses his temper with the children who should no longer be hungry after a good meal of goanna. The sticks were perhaps the throwing sticks used to bring down game since they had the force to break the daughter's arm and were kept close at hand. The myth is non-judgmental but rather reflects a living society whose members are rarely all bad or totally good; "the old man was sorry for what he had done" and ran after his children.

A unique discourse is becoming evident through a particular use of language and metaphor. The children are changing into dingoes. They gnaw on the goanna bones and the father throws a stick at them causing the boy to "yelp." The narrator, Nipper Maragar has not yet told us in words that the siblings are changing their shape. Using comments in square brackets—" [They were now in the process of becoming dogs]"—the Berndts offer unspoken aspects of the myth, which are understood already by the Aboriginal audience but perhaps not by the white reader. The Berndts explain how storyteller and listeners share information: "A hint, a glance, a gesture or even a pause may be enough" (*Speaking Land* 390). The audience may have recognized the shape-changing genre or taken cues from the boy's yelping and perhaps from the girl's broken arm that this myth is about Dreaming Dingoes. The Berndts call this information a "given"; something that can be glossed over because the audience already knows what it means (*Speaking Land* 386, 390).

The metamorphosis of the siblings is narrated gradually and the link between dingoes and creation is steadily reinforced:

The two siblings came to Alala where they found a big banyan tree, and stayed there for a while to make a large well. They dug it out like dogs, rolling about within it “like a dog with a broken arm.” And Maidjuminmag found water there, saying to her brother, “Let’s make it deep, so that other people will come here and drink from it.” They left that water for the old man, Ilbad, and for Nagalapan and Marnng-ga people. (Maragar 30)

It is now clear even to the non-Aboriginal reader that the siblings are changing into dingoes. Like all good narrators Nipper Maragar has freedom to develop the interest of the story while still retaining the particular didactic messages of a genesis myth. His description of the brother and sister rolling about in the hole “like dogs” and the use of the sister’s broken arm as a metaphor for a limping dingo were perhaps once accompanied by gestures which have not made the journey onto the page. (If only video recorders had been available in 1949!) As we read this paragraph, we become aware, perhaps for the first time of the different Aboriginal discourse of the dingo. No longer is the animal depicted as a loathsome pest to be routinely exterminated or a cute photographic beggar. Instead the myth describes the dingo as a powerful Dreaming deity, creating vital water holes, good deep ones which will serve several language groups. God-like, the dingo’s power is tempered with kindness (“Let’s make it deep,

so that other people will come here and drink from it”) and forgiveness (“They left that water for the old man, Ilbad”).

The two dingoes are fulfilling their mythic destiny by giving birth to people and dingo pups and “putting” them into the landscape:

Leaving this place, they went on to Wululbii. They left here Amurag people. [. . .] There they “put” Djanberu, Gumulya and Inbili, three brothers, and Arawindji and Marbmu, their “sons”: they spoke Amurag. [. . .] The two Dog Dreamings stayed there for a while: the sister was heavy with pups, all those stones by Gunbalanya billabong are her pups now! [. . .] They stayed at Mang-gol, and put puppies there. Then they went on to Waramadja-galib, leaving more Mangeri people. [. . .] Aidjumala and Maidjuminmag walked along the Mamuri Plain until they reached Aramalya, where they rested among the rocks at Iyumbi. There they made a camp, and left a small puppy dog which is now a rock at this place. [. . .] At these two places they left Garaba, Gumudur and Ngalem, three brothers; [. . .] [comment: ‘those Dreaming Dogs “bred” them up, bringing them up, leaving those people there.’] (Maragar 30)

The comment in square brackets shows that like the Yarralin people, the audience at Oenpelli want to make sure that Ronald Berndt understands the most important part of the myth, that the ancestral Dingoes bred up people: “those Dreaming Dogs ‘bred’ them up.” For Europeans accustomed to a different discourse, the use of the dingo as

a Dreaming ancestor is startling and soon the narrator subtly acknowledges that the shape-changing concept might puzzle his Aboriginal listeners too. The siblings meet an old man called Marawulbol who does not at first realise they are dingoes. The imagery of the old man who is not looking closely extends to include the audience. “Look properly” the myth is signalling. “Then you will see the truth.”

He had not looked at them closely or actually seen they were dogs, but had only spoken with them at a distance. Now they came into Mang-gol and sat with the old man. They told him their story, how the girl had been injured by Ilbad, and that they had run away and “turned into” dogs, but before that were human! (Maragar 31)

The siblings first appear to be human, then as the old man looks closer and hears their story he sees them to be dingoes. The siblings are both people and dingoes at the same time, tangled together, serving as a metaphor of acceptance and tolerance. Ancestors may be dingo or human; Dreaming dingoes may give birth to puppies or to people. The Dreaming was a mythic time when people could be both dingo and human simultaneously. The concept of shape-changer is difficult to grasp; the Berndts interpreted it as a sharing of a common life-stream (*Speaking Land* 18). The indigenous words of the myth have been carefully placed like stepping stones; each one leading the listeners to an understanding of the spiritual complexities of shape-changing. Like western poetry the *words* are only as important as the abstract concept the words convey. The old man’s eyesight acts as a metaphor for our understanding of

shape-changers. At a distance he can only see people. He needs to look more closely in order to explain the shape-changing phenomena which cannot be “seen” at a glance. Strehlow wrote: “The soul of a race is enshrined in its legends” (46). Yilngayari and the other old Yarralin people *know* but cannot share in Kriol what is in their souls. Indigenous myth is the poetry by which the Dreaming discourse can share its abstract concepts and express the soul of Aboriginal culture.

By using both animal and human creative life forms as ancestors, the mythic beings were defining and taking responsibility for a world of interdependency, where humans took their place alongside all other creatures and were neither more nor less than them. Through the vehicle of oral myth a charter of behaviour was formed and passed on to each listening generation. Robert Tonkinson heard myths in 1963 which were almost identical to those recorded by Roland and Catherine Berndt twenty two years earlier. The myth “Peopling the Land” was still being told in 1950 and according to Rose, the old men at Victoria River were telling her the myth of the creative dingo and holding on to their beliefs in 1982. The charter, so powerful and important in its indigenous telling, has remained irrelevant to white people.

Aboriginal myths and trappers’ dingo stories represent opposing discourses. Michel Pecheux stated that “the meanings of discourse are set up in what are ultimately antagonistic relations” (185). Pecheux was referring to the class struggles of twentieth century Europe but his claim that words change their meaning according to their position (111) is relevant to the differences which have existed in Australia since

colonisation. Multiple discourses now struggle for possession of the dingo. The language of the colonists still seeks to impose itself on a new environment, creating a culture which allows the careless bending of the environment to the service of humans. But contemporary discourses involve an appreciation of the native environment and may eventually encourage a reevaluation of the dingo. In other unacknowledged Aboriginal beliefs the dingo is raised up; taking its place with other creative ancestors and challenging western religious values. Even at this late stage in the farming and development of Australia, a willingness by contemporary Australians to listen to Aboriginal theories of creation could encourage a different treatment of the environment and of those native animals which are routinely exterminated as pests.

## ***MYTHS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CREATION***

***No traditional Aboriginal myth was told without referencing to the land, or to a specific stretch of country. (Berndts, *Speaking Land* 5)***

Myths are not told *about* the environment; myths are *one* with the environment. They are as much a physical part of it as the red soil gathered up in the hand or the rocks which give out warmth long after the sun has set. Oral myths and songs speak in a physical discourse; an initiate's mouth was held open and the myth spoken into it (Muecke 51). Songs of the Dyirbal people were "thrown" at a sleeping girl to make her fall in love with the singer and "put" into the mouth of the dying to guide their spirit home (Dixon and Koch 328, 109). The tangible and visible maps were spread out on the earth with words and ochre. Like road maps they describe signifiers along the way and what will be found at the journey's end. The people either travelled along to the sound of the myth or they rehearsed the journey in their minds as they sat and listened to it. They passed rock signposts and stopped to drink at waterholes and crossed rivers, always following the ordained route across their land. Through a mixture of accumulated knowledge and ancestral beneficence the Aborigines were able to take their place in the environment. There was continuity and order in the telling of the myths. The pieces of the environment—animals, humans, plants, rocks

and water holes—all fitted together. Such a physical discourse gave the narrator power to woo a girl, or call up spirits or to make the young men learn.

The physicality of the myths also gave people power over the environment. Levi-Strauss opposed such an idea, stating that myths came second, that myths were grafted onto existing features of the environment (Wagner 73). His beliefs deny the power of myths, reducing them to a mere explanation of existing phenomena. Aborigines believed that the myths had come first; that the mythic beings had observed the empty land and had filled it with environmental features, rocks and rivers, hills and trees, everything it needed. Aborigines living west of Tennant Creek believe the Yarralpa waterhole only exists because two Dreaming dingoes dug it out. The origins of every aspect of the environment are imprinted firmly and visibly onto the land, “ineradicably recorded in the landscape” for those who know how to look (Strehlow 26). The wide sweep of the Flinders Ranges recalls how the kangaroo pushed back the rocks with his tail (Tunbridge xxvi); the sinuously curving rivers show us the work of the rainbow serpent, while scratch marks around waterholes in the desert reveal the vital role of a creative Dreaming dingo. Aborigines believe that the environment’s existence depends on the myths and the mythic beings. Positioning myths over environment opened up the possibility of control over that environment. If the Law contained in myths is even more ancient than the land, if it is as solid and tangible as rock and if it never changes, then it seems possible that through ceremonies and appeasement, myths can cause the environment to stay the same. Doug Campbell, a senior Yarralin Aborigine, showed Deborah Bird Rose a nearby hill and compared it to the Law of the myths: “You see

that hill over there? Blackfellow Law like that hill. It never changes” (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 56). Later, Jack Jangari comments on the physicality of the myth/maps to Rose: “Well he can’t wash out, that map. He’s on the ground, map” (56). The references to the supposed permanency of hills and the contrast between colonial and indigenous “maps” provide an ironic comparison between the two discourses. According to Stanner, traditional Aborigines identified the visible signs of permanency, such as hills, as a way of stating “men’s lives had to follow a perennial pattern and, if they did so, men could live always under an assurance of providence” (“Aspects of Aboriginal Religion” 2). Myths reflected Aboriginal wishes for permanency, consistency and renewal (Stanner, “Aspects of Aboriginal Religion 2-3) but the colonisers moved mountains and relocated boundaries. A Western commitment to change and non renewable practices are reflected in a discourse which justifies the extermination of the dingo.

Despite the permanency of the myths, the environment was in a continual state of fluctuation. Life in arid areas was not always as hard as white people imagine and even seemingly barren land was filled with the means to acquire food and water if one only knew how (Tonkinson 102). But there are myths which speak of the bad times, when no rain fell and people perished. Water holes and even rivers could run dry. Other myths talk of floods which swept people and animals away and destroyed the vegetation. The basic requirements for living, food and water, were dependent on an inconsistent environment and could never be taken for granted. A discourse of constancy and power must continually be called upon through myth in an attempt to

control, encourage and appease the environment. The support of the ancestors and the power of the myths were needed as they followed the tracks to reach the right place at the right time, arriving in the mountains for the summer harvest of moths or gathering in their hundreds to eat bunya pine (Mulvaney and White 90). They met other members of their language group at such harvest times for ceremonies and trading and social intercourse. The power was released at these gatherings in sacred ceremonies which reincarnated the ancestors. Once brought to life the mythic beings could be called upon to try and ensure rain and plant growth and the birth of living things.

Control of a fluctuating environment is a huge task and Aborigines could only be responsible for their area. Aboriginal Australia consisted of hundreds of self-governing areas, each like a little country. David Turner describes pre-contact Australia as many promised lands, each with its own “chosen people” (14). Oral narratives were passed down in a continuum of telling, endorsing ownership and control of a particular area from one generation to the next. Environmental myths speak for Aborigines in a language of power, physicality and of ownership.

The dingo is a highly suitable vehicle for defining ownership and territory as it runs along, sometimes in pursuit of prey, sometimes just following its nose, trotting through the myth with its mate, naming and identifying various features for the generations of people who will follow behind it. Some myths describe two Dreaming dingoes which split up, following their own prey until they meet up again towards the end of the myth. They can mark twice as much territory when the narrative follows

each dingo in turn. John Burewi told the myth “The Widening of Lake Gregory” to Ronald Berndt in 1960. It describes land around Balgo in the south-eastern Kimberleys. Speaking in Walmadjeri, Burewi narrates how Lake Gregory is widened by the breath of an exhausted panting dingo:

Two djambidjin Dreaming Dogs chased two Emus who were djungurei. They chased them down the Sturt Creek, from Burewi, near Sturt Creek station, to Lubu billabong. They were coming from the east, following them to Wideleg (or Walwedjaru, a large billabong), to “Wobelan” [small billabongs, their name said to be a derivation of a European one], to Didjil, to Ngeima-ngeima [a big billabong], to “Wulp” [Wolf Creek is the European name, Walwala the Aboriginal one], to “Ken” billabong, [European name: Yana, Aboriginal name], to Maiara, to Linggi-linggi, to Bolabiaru, and to Wonmandara billabongs, and then on to Won-gu, old Billiluna station. Still chasing the Emus, the two Dogs came to Galwalari Billabong and then to Gurabanda billabong. At this place, another creek “came around” at Wiriyani or Wirarara. Here the two Emus took separate tracks each followed by a Dog.

(41)

For readers who are not Aborigines from the south-east Kimberleys, this type of myth is about as interesting as reading a street directory. In his research into the “language” of Aboriginal place names Michael Walsh agrees that the repetitious lists of names might sound like “a stuck record” to some (107). There is pleasure in listening to the

exotic and “different” place names; their sounds burble along quietly and purposefully like water running over smooth dark stones and of course place names are poignant with allusions to lived experiences for all people. But as a story, “The Widening of Lake Gregory” and other similar myths seem to have little point. Two Dreaming dingoes chase two emus on a long and circuitous route past more than fifty landmarks until they meet up and kill the emus.

However, the names which roll off Burewi’s tongue offer more than reminiscence to the Aboriginal audience. “The Widening of Lake Gregory” is more than an Aboriginal bush version of the street directory and it is more than a functional road map which guides the listeners along well trodden paths towards seasonal sustenance. The long list of place names has other uses. In his essay “The land still speaks?” Walsh writes of a neglected area in Aboriginal Studies, the link between the discourse of place names and the environment. Walsh describes the suffusion of Aboriginal place names with both myth and lived personal experience (107). He explains that Aboriginal people and places often have the same name and share a close association (106). In 1958 Stanner criticised the official view that Aborigines be listed as individuals, complaining that it showed no understanding of the organisation and structural divisions of groups (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 43-44). One name links several people and the land. The connections go deeper than the reminiscences of white people, for all the people who are hearing the myths and following the tracks can identify with the names in the Lake Gregory roll call. They either hear their own names or the names of group members. In a compelling discourse of belonging and

ownership the names form a continuum which leads back far beyond parents and grandparents, back through the generations of people who followed the tracks to these places and finally back to the mythic ancestors who first spoke the place names. At the end of the myth, the land, the people and the human and nonhuman mythic beings are blended together as one interdependent narrative of life. Unlike the colonial use of power and ownership which often treats the land as a temporary resource, this mythical blending of people and land and the awareness of a continuum encourages regeneration of the environment.

Walsh describes the speaking out loud of the place names as “a way that a storyteller can celebrate the land” (107). “The Widening of Lake Gregory” is a celebration of water, the most limited and precious resource in Australia, and it is a statement of ownership of that water by the Walmadjeri people.

In the meantime the other Dog, on leaving Gurabanda went directly down the Sturt Creek to Gulamara and on to Gura (Gross Soak) to Billiluna yard (Dawal) chasing his Emu. He went on to Lamanbragu creek; to Mgul-ngul; to Langan yard (billabong, beside the Sturt); to Banjanbragu (deep water here); to Ngalg, Gidji and Boingadjilal; and then on to Gilwar (salty water); to Djalwi (salt lake; creek) and Yadjalanu; close to Mundagwi-ngadjada (big “open” water: Lake Gregory); and back again to Wiriyani, where he killed the Emu, and where the other Dog started chasing, and later killed, his Emu. The two Dogs cooked the meat and ate it. After that, exhausted, they breathed heavily

and the strength of their breathing widened Lake Gregory. “That is why it is so large!” (Burewi 42)

Language and environment are linked in the various descriptions of the source and quality of water. The type of water was explained to Ronald Berndt during the translation and placed in parentheses: “Banjanbragu (deep water here),” “Gilwar (salty water),” “Djalwi (salt lake; creek),” “Mundagwi-ngadjada (big ‘open’ water: Lake Gregory).” Walsh writes: “Aboriginal languages are repositories of knowledge about country” (108). The name “Lake Gregory” conveys only a colonial discourse to the ignorant map reader but to the Walmadjeri people, Mundagwi-ngadjada is a name, a description and a rich source of ancestral information. The names Lake Gregory and Mundagwi-ngadjada both employ a territorial discourse of ownership, but the Aboriginal name is also a celebration of water, of the people who drink from it and fish in it, and of the Dreaming dingoes who widened it.

When people—colonisers or Aborigines— talk about the dingo, they are narrating themselves. The colonisers produce an imagined dingo, which justifies their feelings and actions. The “cowardly” dingo represents the fears of men, the “killer” dingo is so called by the farmers who routinely exterminate native animals. Dreaming myths about animals are also about Aborigines. Stanner explains how an Aborigine’s “clan-totem” is not “out there” and “external” to him, but is “a part of his inwardness as a human being” (“Aspects of Aboriginal Religion” 18). Dreaming discourse articulates the shared life-stream—the similarity and the “inwardness”—of animals and

Aborigines. The regular and constant need of water by human beings is acknowledged in the use of an ancestor which has similar needs, the Dreaming dingo. Although other creatures such as the python (known in Dreaming as the Rainbow Snake) are associated with water creation, the dingo is particularly suited to the task. Australian marsupials have evolved with the ability to survive long periods without water, but the dingo is a relatively new immigrant. Like people it must drink water at frequent and regular intervals.

The two dingoes act as Dreaming “surveyors” for the Walmadjeri people, trotting around the Balgo area, locating, describing and naming the water sources, compiling a meticulous myth/map. The narrator of the Walmadjeri myth is careful to identify the place names correctly; if there are two Aboriginal names for a water source, both are given. The English named Ken billabong is also named as Yana. Wulp is named as Wolf Creek in English and Walwala in the Walmadjeri language. The narrator of the myth, John Burewi and the audience are asserting their ancient rights to water sources over those of colonists and other Aboriginal language groups.

Traditional attitudes to sharing have been documented by Henry Reynolds who states: “Reciprocity and sharing were central to the social organization and ethical standards of traditional society” (*The Other Side* 68). Myths suggest serious punishments for those who do not share. But what about those neighbours who want to constantly share in other people’s resources, whose territory perhaps borders or even overlaps one’s own? Of course one must share with others but the notion of reciprocity puts

sharing into a less romantic, more practical discourse. Share with one's own group unconditionally, but expect something back from neighbouring groups. Some myths speak of resentment at sharing with strangers who have nothing to give in exchange. A myth from the Western Desert conveniently takes the onus of saying "no" out of people's hands. It describes shape-changing rainbow serpents called Wonambi who drain the waterholes dry when they smell strangers but allow the people who own the country to drink as much as they like (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 118). A similar myth from Arnhem Land also lets people "off the hook." It describes the Dadbi—Dreaming snakes which live at a creek where there is water and lily roots: "It's our country, the narrators noted, so we can drink that water and get those roots that grow nearby. The Dadbi won't come up to us, but they will to other people, and they will kill them!" (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 61).

It seems that myths shouldered the responsibility of unpopular decisions, of claiming rights to assets over others. In "The Widening of Lake Gregory" it is not the Walmadjeri people who are mapping out the territory and claiming the water sources but the two Dreaming dingoes. The Ngemba people of the Bargon River area were able to make use of even more impressive "surveyors." The Ngemba's fishing rights had been determined by no less than Baiami, an important Dreaming spirit and four huge spirit dingoes called jugi. Dreaming discourse seems designed to negotiate in a language of diplomacy mixed with self-interest. The uncertainty of regular food and water supplies made it necessary to maintain good relationships with neighbours (Tonkinson 18). Cooperation with others was essential at certain times; there were

similarities of language and culture in quite widely separated people and close neighbours were usually part of the same kinship network (Tonkinson 16). The myth/map provided a list of assets and proof of ownership. Giving was not a specifically generous act; Reynolds cites groups which had no words for “thank you” (69). Reciprocal giving, not gratitude was demanded and for that it is necessary to be aware or made aware of one’s obligations. Speaking in 1970 to Janet Mathews, Jimmie Barker narrated the myth of Baiami. The route taken by Baiami and his jugi followed the rivers Darling and Barwon, and the tributaries included the Warrego, Culgoa and Bokhara rivers. Baiami left his large footprints (which could still be seen) in flat rock surfaces not far from the Fisheries, marking the area for the Ngemba people. Barker said: “Until I was fourteen years old, in 1914, there was still a rigid rule. We, from Muruwari, and other tribes always had to ask some of the old Ngemba men if we could fish near the Fisheries” (White 9).

The language of the myths is always connected with the environment. Myths are solid and tangible like the rocks and rivers. Words are spread out on the ground as myth/maps which explain the environment while the mythic beings work as surveyors, discovering and naming. Ownership behaviour is similar for environment and myths; neighbours must ask to use the Fisheries and it is a serious transgression to speak a text which “belongs” to someone else (Sansom qtd. in Muecke 86). For both land and myth the word “belong” has a different meaning in Aboriginal discourse to the “belong” of ownership and authorship which brings profit or fame to one person. The narrator of the myth and the Aboriginal occupiers of the land are both stewards rather

than owners, caring for the myth and the sites it describes until it is time to pass them on (Muecke 86-89).

### *Dingoes and territory*

The Lake Gregory dingoes stayed within the boundaries of the narrator's land but sometimes the myth moves across a border as well as down to the next generation. In the following myth two dingoes run right through one stretch of land and into another myth, another narrator and another country. "The Two Dogs" myth is narrated first by Popeye Jangala and then by Joe Jangala.

"The Two Dogs" was published in 1994 in *Warlpiri Dreamings*, a collection of myths and stories from an area between Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Every story is printed on one page in the original Warlpiri language and followed by Peggy Rockman Napaljarri's translation. (One story is about the indigenous people who saved Olive Pink's life, carrying her for several hours on a stretcher). Popeye Jangala narrates the first myth, called in Warlpiri, "Jarntujarrakurlu." But the nature of Dreaming discourse compels him to end his account at a large waterhole on the edge of his land where the dingoes sleep for one night. He tells Napaljarri that he can only narrate the myth which is connected to his own land: "That is as far as I can follow it.

That is all, Napaljarri. The rest which I now leave belongs to other people. This is what I can relate now, this is what belongs to me” (125).

He has defined the limits of his narration. The myth and the land are bound together. Popeye Jangala’s land ends at a particular waterhole and the myth ends there too: “That is as far as I can follow it.” Joe Jangala picks up the second part of the Myth called “Malikijarrakurlu,” at Warlarla and he narrates the Dreaming dingoes’ travels to Alekarenge where they will finally settle. It is clear in the narration of both myths that the Jangalas are walking through the land and telling the story simultaneously. At the beginning of his narration Popeye Jangala describes some rockholes to a group of listeners: “you know, the ones I went and found while you all waited for me over to the west. From Wirninginpa it is halfway. You stayed by the little rocks, while I drank first from that waterhole” (121). In Joe Jangala’s narration he not only points out the place where the dingo travelled, he can still see the Dreaming dingo: “He ran this way, this way. There he is, still running this way” (131). Joe Jangala is narrating the myth as he walks the track where the dingo once ran and is still running. In Aboriginal discourse time is not a straight arrow and reality is not empirical. Muecke states: “Stories are all true to the extent that the discourse is correctly produced within the cultural apparatuses which make it possible” (89). When the myth is told and the track is walked, then the Dreaming dingo runs, and the circumstances of time and sight become irrelevant

The Walmadjeri dingoes in the Lake Gregory myth have travelled all over their land and made an inventory of environmental assets and territory. The second of “The Two Dogs” sequel “Malikijarrakurlu,” narrated by Joe Jangala, advises how to hold on to one’s assets and how to avoid quarrels with neighbours at places where territory overlaps. The two Dreaming dingoes are on the last leg of their journey to Alekarenge, the place where they will finally settle. Alekarenge is on the border of three different countries in the Western Desert—Warlpiri, Kayeteje and Warrumungu—and it was important that all three groups worked out a plan for harmonious living (Napaljarri and Cataldi 137). Dreaming spirits such as the sibling dingoes Aidjumala and Maidjuminmag had created localised groups of people speaking different languages as they travelled across the land. Despite the similarities observed by Tonkinson, those outside the immediate group would always be treated with some suspicion (Berndt, *First Australians* 336).

As narrator of the second myth, Joe Jangala immediately identifies the dingo as belonging to his group. In claiming the dingo he also claims the land:

He ran this way from Warlarla, that is from Ngarnka, from Ngarnka now, from Ngarnka he ran this way. At Warlarla he went along running, right to Warlarla. He was still a long way from here. He ran right through the centre. The dog was still running along, running along, coming straight through this way. The dog belongs to us first, to all of us first, to Jangala and Jampijinpa.

He ran this way, this way. There he is, still running this way. He belongs to our side. We are the owners, and it was ours first, belonging first to Jangala and Jampijinpa [. . .] They ran this way straight past Warlarla, right past the place where the building stands today, the pub. (131)

Joe Jangala is precise in the details of his myth. He is exact in his description of the dingo's journey and uses various devices to link his people's past and present ownership of the area. He moves between tenses—"We *are* the owners, and it *was* ours first"—and he uses the pub at Warlarla to relate the ancient myth to the present-day environment. His oral narration of the myth is a discourse of power and ownership, for as Jurg Wassmann argues in his essay "The Politics of Religious Secrecy," the performance of knowledge is a performance of ownership, identifying the speaker as one with rights to the area (68). The act of telling the myth strengthens Joe Jangala's claims to the land on behalf of the Jangala and Jampijinpa groups.

Tonkinson denies that Aborigines were warlike people (18), and in *Dreamtime Politics* Erich Kolig considers that the appropriation of land by violent, warlike methods was probably extremely rare (45). "Malikijarrakurlu" shows how respect for neighbours' territory and defence of one's own was achieved through a subtle and diplomatic assertion of rights. The knowledge of territory and the rights of ancestors contained in the myths gave credibility and force to such assertions.

In the second section of the Warlpiri myths Popeye Jangala explains the rules of behaviour when travelling through another group's territory. The first time the male dingo notices a ceremony being performed by others, he takes evasive action:

Then they ran on through the country to the south, to that place owned by Lajamanu people, on the south side. They ran then to the place owned by Lajamanu people.

They ran to Yurlpuwarnu. They went out that way to Yurlpuwarnu to avoid coming across a ceremony. He had noticed that people were singing there. At that place they were singing to the accompaniment of clapsticks. (131)

The next time the male dingo witnesses a ceremony he abandons caution and common sense and attempts to take part:

They met the others at Ngumurlungu. They met up together at Ngumurlungu. They were the ones he had caught sight of earlier, the dogs. He ran to meet them with the high-stepping run used in ceremonies. Then they all sat down together to perform the ceremony. They looked closely at each other.

“Oh, oh, you who came running up to this sacred ceremony using the high-stepping run, this is not for you. It belongs to us alone, but you have come here and joined us.”

So he went away. (Joe Jangala 133)

The male Dreaming dingo has discreetly avoided the Lajamanu people on the first occasion. However when he meets the dingoes again at Ngumurlungu he attempts to join their ceremony. He may look similar to the other dingoes and use the correct high-stepping run but they are aware that he is not of the same group: “this is not for you.” His social faux pas: “Oh, oh” stands as a warning to those who are travelling through neighbours’ territory: don’t approach the ceremonies of others even if they appear to be dingoes like yourself. It is a simple step to apply the same rules to humans. Roland and Catherine Berndt explained the protocol concerning sacred sites which belong to others: “people [ . . . ] did not trespass on sacred or secret-sacred or traditional sites or enter them freely or without permission, or without due reason” (*First Australians* 141).

Tonkinson described the importance of territory to the semi-nomadic people of the Western Desert. They travelled long distances in order to access scattered food and water resources but they returned regularly to their home area, linked to it by strong emotional and religious bonds (17). Their forays into the wider area or range inevitably involved contact with other groups and encroachment onto the land and resources of others (18). Like Aborigines, most ordinary non-Dreaming dingoes live in a home area in family units of three to twelve members but they must travel long distances into shared grounds in order to seek prey. The home range of dingoes in the Fortescue River area west of Jangala’s territory averaged 77 square kilometers. They also have a strong attachment to their home site and return regularly to it. Dingo myths are particularly appropriate for explaining the rules of territorial behaviour because,

like Aborigines, dingoes are semi-nomadic (Corbett, *The Dingo* 6, 5, 92). They defend their own territory and use discretion when visiting the territory of others. Whether they are out temporarily on a hunting trip or travelling in search of a place to live, dingoes like Aborigines seem keen to avoid warlike confrontations. Like the male Dreaming dingo which skirted around the Lajamanu ceremony they prefer an avoidance technique. Territory boundaries were stable over time and between pack encounters were extremely rare (Fleming, Corbett, Harden and Thomson 29). Breckwoldt describes a juvenile dingo whose territory consisted of two areas joined by a corridor of alien land: "It always passed through the corridor very quickly to get to the larger areas" (155). Corbett cites a study of five packs over four years which recorded only five encounters between neighbouring packs (92). Dingoes use scent marking and howling to warn off strangers and to establish their territory (Corbett, *The Dingo* 5-6). Howling is similar to the narration of myths; both vocalize an ownership of the land and both seek to avoid confrontation.

If it seems disrespectful to link the howl of the dingo with the sacred continuum of myth telling, then nothing has been learned about the beliefs of Aborigines. The myths reveal that Aboriginal people have rights to land, to ancestral sites and to resources. But the myths also give dingoes a share in the human life-stream and the right to land and water. Maidjuminmag placed pups by the pleasant sounding Gunbalanya billabong and dingoes rest eternally in a waterhole near Lake Gregory. The Warlpiri Dreaming dingoes show the different groups of people who had settled at Alekarenge how to live together as a community:

Then they settled down and lived with all the others living here. In the beginning they were all dogs, not just one but many. As this story has shown, this is how they became all one family, one people (Joe Jangala 135).

The myths showed that rights to land were a communal concession, to be used for the good of the group. They were guarded carefully and shared with others in the full knowledge of what they were offering and what they expected to receive in return. As long as each group obeyed the Law contained in the myths, it was reasonable to believe that the justice and balance of peaceful negotiation would continue forever. Doug Campbell tells Deborah Bird Rose that the Law contained in myths resembles a stone, and traditionally the Dreaming is recognised in physical manifestations. The indigenous name for Lake Gregory, Mundagwingadjada, simultaneously contains a mythical and a physical description of water. For traditional Aborigines, the land, the myths and the knowledge or Law contained in the myths were all metaphorically “hard—like a stone” (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 56).

But Doug Campbell used the hill metaphor in 1980 and he should have known by then that hills no longer last forever, particularly those hills containing valuable minerals. When the colonists arrived they had no knowledge of the Laws contained in the myths. They did not understand the subtleties of the Law relating to territory and assets, how it relied on the diplomacy of peaceful cooperation between groups and also between individual group members. They could not see the boundaries between

land, and they were unaware of mythic dingoes sitting at the bottom of waterholes, guarding the land forever. In fact “forever” used in relation to the environment meant little to people who had no scruples about moving to different areas, exploiting the assets, displacing the occupants and then moving on. When exploration of minerals began on the sacred sites of the Noonkanbah people of the Kimberley region in 1971, the myth of two giant dingoes, Yangurra and Djidimbil, was invoked to prevent mining. Like the careful documentation of language groups by the sibling dingoes Aidjumala and Maidjuminmag, such myths provided what the Berndts had once optimistically described as “a charter for contemporary land ownership” (*Speaking Land* 5). Aboriginal elders objected that mining at Noonkanbah would damage the sacred sites and consequently “threaten the community’s spiritual well-being.” The eternal presence of the two huge mythic dingoes in a billabong not far from the Noonkanbah homestead was proof to the community that they had sole rights to the land. Ronald Berndt “spoke out strongly and publicly” in support of the legitimacy of the people’s religious beliefs but the drilling went ahead in August 1980. Erich Kolig concluded: “myth proved a pitifully ineffective weapon against powerful economic interests” (*Government Policies and Religious Strategies* 240-249).

Two groups now claim ownership of the Australian land and the opposing discourses of the dingo serve as a metaphor for the struggle. Breckwoldt provides a map of an area between Katoomba and Sydney which traces the sad history of the dingo (97). Before colonial settlement, dingoes took their rightful Aboriginal place in the land. The dingoes remained in abundance for a while, seen by the explorers and

acknowledged by cartographers when the land was first explored and named. For a few years Little Dingo Gully, Mount Dingo and Dingo Gap, Yellow Dog Creek, Mount Yellow Dog and Yellow Pup Ridge provide an empiric proof of the presence of dingoes. Later as farmers spread out from agricultural land around Sydney, strychnine became available and dingoes declined rapidly (Breckwoldt 102). The names on the map remain long after the dingoes had fled to rocky mountain ridges, the last place of retreat for exiled dingoes and Aborigines. The map spoke in a colonial discourse, stamping the land with a new and more forceful authority of appropriation and possession. The Aborigines believed that mythical Dreamtime beings created the land. Nothing seemed stronger and more enduring than a myth which created people and dingoes, water and mountains. But what if the unthinkable happens and the people and dingoes are poisoned and driven from their home? What if the mountain is mined and quarried, its sacred sites blown to pieces with dynamite? How can the myth survive? How can the Dreaming dingo run when the last narrator of the myth poetry has died, the track is overgrown and the waterholes are trampled and muddy?

## ***SOCIAL DINGOES IN AN ABORIGINAL DISCOURSE***

The following is an extract from Dr. Laurie Corbett's book *The Dingo in Australia and Asia*:

Chapter 2.

### **Studying Dingoes**

Dingoes are not easy to study. [...] This chapter describes some of the techniques used by researchers to unravel some of the dingo's secrets.

### **Catching Dingoes.**

With a dingo in hand, samples can be taken to determine diet, reproduction, health and other physical attributes; or a live dingo can be released with a radio-transmitter (See Plate 2) that gathers information about its home range, social relationships and other behaviours. But first, one has to catch a dingo.

[. . .] Of the many trap arrangements that have been used, the so-called "single acute off-set" arrangement (Figure 2.1c) was found to be the most effective by a research team that captured about 2,000 dingoes over 8 years in central Australia (23).

Corbett is a research scientist and uses the discourse appropriate to his profession.

There are many ways of talking and writing about the dingo and its close relative the wolf. Barry Lopez describes the different ways in which scientific and indigenous discourses deal with questions such as how many cubs have been born to a wolf

mother. While American biologists count the placental scars on a dead female, Eskimos take part in the living world of the wolf, identifying each mother and her successive families. Lopez suggests that while Eskimos accept that there is “no ultimate wolf reality,” that animals change and adapt and have individual personalities, biologists “want no question about the wolf not to have an answer” (79-80). Scientific discourse in Australia involves a similar quest for the definitive dingo, but a radio-transmitter collar can only prove how far the dingo travelled, not where it went and why, whom it went with and what it did when it got there. European discourse limits our knowledge of Aborigines (Muecke 20) and our knowledge of dingoes is limited by a scientific discourse. Scientific data cannot cope with the mysterious, the inconsistent and the indefinable parts of dingo life; the parts in fact, which are so similar to humans. No fitting of radio collars, no examination of the stomach contents of dead dingoes and no weighing and measuring of trapped dingoes can adequately teach us about the dynamics of happiness, excitement and fear which make up the “whole” dingo.

Corbett’s discourse changes temporarily during three months spent observing the social life of a dingo family in the Harts Ranges of central Australia. He gives the dingoes names (Mum, Dad, Mabel and Dave) and describes his view of the family as “one of the most fantastic sights one can imagine” (*The Dingo* 94-95). For just a few pages he deviates from scientific discourse to delight in the “whole” dingo.

Like the dingoes in colonial stories and those observed by biologists, the Dreaming dingoes are also the product of human representation. But the Dreaming is narrated by people who were not separated from the elements, who lived so close to nature that they saw themselves as just one more link in a human and nonhuman life chain. The dingoes of Dreaming discourse are represented subjectively as living individuals, not as biological specimens or as symbols of alienation. Dreaming dingoes create human life and the means to sustain it. They fall in love, share out food and play games. They experience happiness ranging from the quiet contentment of family life to the fierce excitement of sexuality and hunting. They can also be dangerous and recalcitrant. They are like us: “They are what we would be if we were not what we are” (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 47). Their natures are as varied and individual as humans and their similarity to people makes them both fitting ancestors and useful benchmarks of social behaviour for us. Traditional Aborigines seem better people because of the way they represent dingoes: the achievements of the colonisers seem diminished by *their* discourse.

The Berndts stated that myths provide a mirror of human society, reflecting what was familiar (*Speaking Land* 4), but myth narratives are also the *cause* of social events. The initiation ceremonies for young boys anticipated every one of the feelings which would occur throughout their lives. Myths and the accompanying initiation permitted or *caused* them to enter into the adult society which generated such joy and excitement. In *Tales of the Aborigines*, published in 1967, Kadakadeka an old man of the Uluritdja tribe at Uluru recreated the events of his initiation ceremony fifty years

before. Kadakadeka and Bill Harney, the Ranger of the Uluru Reserve spent “days and weeks” wandering around the mountain which was then known as Ayers Rock. Harney could not speak Kadakadeka’s language and he converted into English the ceremonial words which Kadakadeka first chanted in the Uluritdja language and then translated into Aboriginal English. The chant was filled with the sounds and stains of living, trickling blood as the boys cut the median vein in their arms and the blood flowed down their bodies, black water marks on the rock, ochre smeared onto the painting of the serpent Woma, the flow of breast milk which the women mixed with grass seeds to make the sacred bread, and the gushing of the water when the sacred wana or digging stick struck the earth.

Kadakadeka described how he and the other boys crouched in a symbolic nest, covered in eagle down which was fixed to their bodies with human blood. Harney writes: “Forlorn they must lay in the nest and await the coming of the ritual-dog Kapanya, who is sent eastward from his conception-burial place at Palpealla to drag them down into the womb of the Mother-place.” Kadakadeka describes the many, intense feelings which overwhelmed the young boys at this time: fear of the spirit dingo Kapanya, which might leap out at the initiates and kill them as it had done in the past; trust in their guardians who reassured them at every stage, and pride at becoming a man. Kadakadeka described the most important emotion of overwhelming and long-lasting happiness at their symbolic rebirth and acceptance into the group. Harney states: “that dark mark made down the mountain side by running water is the

tribesmen's symbol of happiness [. . .] The central core of the mother is happiness” (184-9).

If the boys did not attend the initiation ceremony, they could not become men and the adult life of the group would be closed to them. They would be outside what Stanner describes as “the unique joy in life which can be attained by a people of few wants” (38). So power lay not only in the myths themselves but in their telling and chanting at ceremonies. In an interpretation of discursive formation Muecke wrote: “Talk structures, values and authenticates the existence of the event” (62). One of the “events” or “unique joys” which was now available for the initiated boys at Uluru was marriage.

### *Dreaming dingoes fall in love and get married*

“Jarntujarrakurlu” is Popeye Jangala’s narrative of the continuing myth “The Two Dogs.” It describes two creative Dreaming dingoes who go on a journey from Yarrajalpa to Yurlpuwarnu. As mythic shape-changers they behave like people and like dingoes at the same time: “they scratched out a little rockhole at Waanjurna. [. . .] they camped. [. . .] they hunted little mice” (121). Following the usual discourse of myths the two dingoes, a male and female, travelled together then went in different directions for a while. The male became lonely and howled for the female to rejoin

him; “He sang to try to find her, he called out to try to find her. [. . .] She came straight running all the time, and calling out as she ran” (123).

“Jarntujarrakurlu” is a gently unfolding, tender account of dingoes falling in love. Two vastly different discourses have been applied to the dingo. Single colonial men on outback stations have interpreted the dingo’s howl as a projection of their own loneliness and isolation rather than as part of Popeye Jangala’s beautiful love story: “He sang to try to find her.” Hearing a single howl in the dark the settlers assumed that a dingo was expressing its loneliness rather than communicating with other members of its pack (Corbett 5). Colonial discourse is filled with bush yarns and poems told by the solitary lonely bushman about the solitary lonely dingo. Aborigines experienced no such feelings of isolation in the bush, which they perceived as a nurturing environment filled with family and ancestors, and I have found only two mythical references to a solitary Dreaming dingo. One is Kurrpannga the killer dingo of Uluru which the Mala people say is “mamu (an evil spirit) not a dingo” (Wallace 94). The other is Dwert who was banished from the Bibulmu tribe for his antisocial behaviour (Bennett 59-62). Using their superior knowledge of the animal world, the Warlpiri people chose two Dreaming dingoes as models for a happy and loving marriage.

As people who are also dingoes, they fall in love and make marriage clothes and head-dresses. The male paints his body with white clay in readiness for the ceremony. The

myth describes an ideal marriage where both partners are willing and happy (Napaljarri and Cataldi 127):

They made a camp with a wind-break. The man and the wife, the married couple, put everything they needed in the camp. Then they lay down together, for always. [. . .] They set off toward the east. “This way perhaps?” They only had eyes for each other. How sweet. They camped again for one night. The next day dawned. They set off again, walking slowly. There they were travelling toward the east, walking slowly.[. . .] There they performed a ceremonial dance, a little one. Then they made camp there, right there. Early the next day they set off to go across, walking slowly. From there they went toward the east. They kept on looking across at each other. Near Rabbit Flat, while singing love-songs, he scattered little rocks behind them. (Popeye Jangala 125)

These beautiful words translated directly from the narrator Jangala should be the proud heritage of all Australians. Stanner mourned the loss of myths which had been allowed to die unrecorded (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 3) and felt that he was “not alone in finding beauty, gravity and insight” in those which remained (“Aspects of Aboriginal Religion” 6). The love song of the dingo has survived and forms part of the neglected poetry of the Dreaming. The complete involvement of two people in the early stages of love is subtly captured by Popeye Jangala: “they set off to go across, walking slowly. [. . .] They kept on looking across at each other.” He conveys the

happiness of the two people in their role as dingoes: “Near Rabbit Flat, while singing love-songs, he scattered little rocks behind them,” creating the image of a joyful male dingo kicking up stones with his back legs! Lopez advised humans to extend the same variables to the wolf that they allowed themselves (97). One of these variables may involve an acceptance by Australians of a different discourse, one which states that dingoes can love their mate. Laurie Corbett is compelled to slip briefly into a non-scientific discourse which can allow statements such as “the most fantastic sights one can imagine.” A trapper, Lennie Dixon has difficulty with the usual brutal discourse when he sees a male dingo grieving, its head resting on the body of its dead mate (Hudson 42). Other settlers confused the dog with the dingo, applying the indiscriminate mating and lack of paternal responsibility of the domestic dog to the dingo.

“Jarntujarrakurlu” teaches that love can be felt by dingoes as well as people.

“Malikijarrakurlu” the second part of the Warlpiri myths describes the Dreaming dingoes when they have moved into Joe Jangala’s country:

They stopped here, in this country. They looked at the other dogs. There were many of them sitting down. They were sitting in circles, at a meeting, with their little ones, their children, fathers and mothers and uncles. (135)

The myths describe dingoes which lived long before the white farmer began to destroy its habitat and its social structure. In their natural surroundings in the wild, such as the

relatively undisturbed Fortescue River area of north-west Western Australia, dingoes still take one partner; the male is the father of the pups and helps with the feeding and training of his family. They live in extended families, and pups from a previous litter help to bring up the new litter (Corbett, *The Dingo* 93-97, Fleming, Corbett, Harden and Thomson 29).

By applying the same variables to dingo and human, Aborigines show their understanding of the shared life-stream of living things. Their gentle acceptance of the two dingoes is reflected in their care of the land. The little rocks which the happy dingo scattered behind him still rest on the land, near Rabbit Flat. The myth “Jarntujarrakurlu” is a celebration of happiness and an acceptance of the joys of family life. Kadakadeka’s story is a celebration of the emotions of living—of fear and excitement, of trust—and again arching over all the emotions is the happiness of social life.

Stanner describes Aboriginal ancestors such as the Dreaming dingo as “other than men (because they walk on animal feet, do not die, and so on) but not wholly other (because of so many human attributes).” The ancestors are “high above the earth,” so these human attributes are transformed into something “idealised and unconditioned.” Dreaming dingoes do not provide a mere copy of human life but rather they transcend it, offering Aborigines the chance of happiness through examples of idealised social life (“Aspects of Aboriginal Religion” 7). The colonisers’ dingo is an inferior animal, its social life degraded into promiscuity, its human characteristics twisted into

something unpleasant. Colonial dingo stories allow and justify a baser form of life for humans.

Picturing the dingoes sitting in circles with their children and uncles, the nature of human pleasure becomes clear. For Aborigines a myth about dingoes falling in love, getting married and enjoying family life explains *human* happiness and fulfillment. Suddenly we realise what Aborigines with their different view of the dingo have always known—that dingoes show people how to aspire to better things.

*HUNTING: WILD AND TAME— A WARNING DISCOURSE*

*On the morning after the first rift with their families, and especially with their womenfolk, the leader again took the boys away. From this time, until their first initiation was over, they were not referred to by their names, but as “wild dogs.”* (Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming* 348)

So far, the myths of the Dreaming dingo have been narrated in a sympathetic discourse which stresses creativity, teaching and happiness. Like a wise and kindly uncle, the Dreaming dingo has put people on the earth, provided them with water and trotted around the territory showing them the boundaries. He has taught how to get on with the neighbours and provided an example of a happy marriage between willing partners. Mythic beings, whether human or animal, have to live and the Dreaming is played out against a backdrop of daily normality. The discourse of the Dreaming dingo reflects the needs of everyday living.

But what example can the Dreaming dingo offer to those who don't or won't obey the rules—the young women who refuse to marry old men, the wicked uncles who abduct girls or commit incest, the young men who are greedy and selfish or violent? Calling the uninitiated boys “wild dogs” is an acknowledgement of the blurring of boundaries between humans and dingoes. Aborigines acknowledged both the common life-stream of all animals and the particular similarities between dingoes and themselves. The use

of the term “wild dogs” reveals the knowledge that people and dingoes could break the rules. The uninitiated boys had been indulged by everyone and were troublesome, undisciplined and hostile to authority. Stanner called their behaviour “boyish rambunctiousness” (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 348). The discipline of initiation encouraged them to conform as group members. Boys with a wrong outlook were said to have “hard ears” (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 349), meaning they were unwilling to listen to advice and learn. If their wildness continued unchecked it would hinder the dynamics of the group.

In an Aboriginal discourse which links the environment with people, harmony and nurturing, “wildness” implies a neglect born of irresponsible, transgressive behaviour. Deborah Bird Rose explains how the Yarralin people describe what white people call “beautiful wilderness.” Looking at a video of land which had been set aside for a National Park in the Victoria River Valley, Daly Thompson called it “wild” in the sense that it was wasted land. Rose states:

They do not see a beautiful wilderness. Where they see beauty they see all the care and attention that generations of their ancestors put into the country. Within their own system, responsible actions combine self-interest with consideration of the interests of others. All parts are interconnected: to destroy a part is to set up a chain of responses which will eventually destroy one’s self. (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 232-3)

Stanner's use of "wild" revealed a similar awareness of social responsibility: "The calling of the boys [. . .] creatures of the 'wilds' was a way of saying: 'man is truly man only within the companionship and society of his fellows' " (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 351). In traditional Aboriginal society the boys would be called "wild dogs" until after their first initiation. The Law contained in the myths discouraged wildness in land and boys. Rose uses the word "quiet" to describe an environment in which the care of generations of people is evident and it also seems a suitable term for responsible and nurturing people who follow the Law (*Nourishing Terrains* 19). Often the telling of the myths was enough to encourage the required and necessary "quiet." The Berndts explain: "The pattern or blueprint of behaviour is everywhere in traditional Aboriginal Australia framed in terms of the past" (*First Australians* 336). Myths which described bad behaviour encouraged the people to an acceptance of normal behaviour (Berndt, *First Australians* 340). Dingoes in hunting myths were useful examples of the wild and untamable. There are several published versions of the myth "The Bora of Baiame" which shows what might happen to those with "hard ears." Katherine Langloh Parker's version was published in *Australian Legendary Tales* as a children's story which provides a gentle nudge towards conformity. During the Dreamtime hundreds of mythic people took part in sacred ceremonies. All were shape-changers: the Wahn were crows, the Du-mer were pigeons, the Ooboan were blue-tongued lizards and the Madhi were dingoes. The myth describes how the Madhi would not listen to the elders but "kept up an incessant chatter and laughter amongst themselves, playing and shouting" (17). The Madhi were warned on several occasions to listen and conform but they continued to behave badly. The myth ends in the

punishing of the Madhi; their human speech is taken away from them forever and as dingoes they will only be able to howl.

Although the Madhi were punished for behaving like uninitiated boys more emphasis is laid on descriptions of the disobedient behaviour itself. The Berndts describe such emphasis as “a recognition of the fact that people can and do behave in unreasonable ways” (*Speaking Land* 216). Myths provided examples of good and bad behaviour and Dreaming dingo myths were divided between the two. Traditional Aboriginal discourse has as much to say about badly behaved dingoes as about good. The “wild dog” side of the dingo is as grounded in reality as the creative dingo. The hunting myths are an acknowledgement that like disobedient and uninitiated people, dingoes are wild. Even the camp dingoes never became fully tame and unless their legs were broken they soon ran away to the bush (Meggitt, “Aborigines and Dingoes” 15). The mythical use of dingoes whose habits are so like humans is a symbolic acceptance that people could also be wild and dangerous.

Once again the dingo’s similarity to people makes it an ideal protagonist in myths. As a shape-changing “stand-in” for people, the dingo acts in expiation of human behaviour. Dingoes and humans both hunt prey and hunting myths give warning of wild and dangerous members of both societies. Women hunted small prey and myths confirm that half-tame camp dingoes were indispensable for this type of hunting. But Meggitt concludes that camp dingoes were of little use in the hunting of large prey such as kangaroos and emus (“Aborigines and Dingoes” 18). However the wild dingo

and the Aboriginal man both hunted large prey. Men must be always ready to hunt with their spear and throwing sticks close to hand and like human hunters the wild dingo was always alert and ready to chase similar prey. Men and dingoes need speed to chase animals which often get away, strength and endurance to follow them for hours and the skill to work with others as a team. The leader of a group of dingoes forces the kangaroo or other large game to change direction into its companions' path. They in turn cut corners or replace the tired leader. Once caught the kangaroo is overpowered by the combined attack of several dingoes (Corbett, *The Dingo* 113-114). Aborigines must stand upwind of the prey and move quietly and quickly through the scrub. They rub themselves with mud or ochre to camouflage their bodies and hide the smell of sweat (Berndt, *First Australians* 115). Present day Aboriginal men who live in or near the bush still go out together to hunt kangaroo. Now they kill from a distance using a rifle and a vehicle. In the past they came in close like dingoes, attacking with spears and boomerangs instead of teeth and claws.

Dingoes and humans both eat meat if it's available although neither is totally carnivorous. Both are the hunters rather than the hunted. Sometimes the hunting link between dingoes and people can be almost overwhelmingly symbiotic. Meggitt spent a year with the Walbiri people in 1953 and they told him how they made use of wild dingoes:

A group of Walbiri men out hunting picked up the relatively fresh tracks of a dingo (or pair of dingoes) which in turn was trailing a kangaroo. If necessary

they followed the dingo for the whole day, endeavoring to overtake it just as it was pulling down the exhausted quarry. Without harming the dingo, the men despatched the kangaroo with spears or boomerangs and gutted the carcass then and there preparatory to carrying it back to the camp. According to some men, it was common for some scraps of offal to be left for the dingo to eat. (“Aborigines and Dingoes” 19)

The Walbiri hunting method binds human and dingo together in an intimate search for meat. Were the wild dingoes aware that the Walbiri men were following them? Did they hear the exhausted panting of the men and smell their sweat? The discourse of hunting always occupies a special place between humans and their prey. Now the Walbiri brings an extra dimension to the hunt. Meggitt’s account does more than tighten the bond between dingo and human. Knowledge of the Walbiri hunting methods merges dingo and human into one shadowy figure, following its prey. The figure is neither animal or human but the hunter. Hunting myths about wild and dangerous dingoes are also describing humans.

The “wild boys” were lured to the initiation ceremony by a flattering invitation to go hunting with the men (Stanner, *White Man Got No Dreaming* 346). Paul Shepard describes the excitement of hunting large prey and the energy it generates throughout the group. He calls it “the metaphysic of meat” (“Primitivism” 83). It draws the group together in a continuum of ritual. Large prey must be encouraged with renewal ceremonies. Stanner explains that it is difficult to hunt elusive prey: “Time and again

the hunters fail [. . .] and life in the camps can be very miserable” (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 74-5). But when large prey *is* caught—and kangaroos can weigh from seventeen to sixty-six kilograms—its preparation, sharing out and eating around the fire confirms the centrality of meat (Shepard, “Primitivism” 83). Shepard speaks of the stories which surround hunting in other indigenous cultures “from its first plan to its storied retelling, from the metaphors on food chains to prayers of apology” (83). Lopez describes the Animal Master of North American stories, which controls the rules of hunting (93). Aboriginal hunting myths use a different discourse. The hunting of *small* prey by humans and camp dingoes is mentioned frequently as part of the daily routine of life, but myths about hunting *large* prey usually describes wild dingoes which kill and eat human beings.

The violence and bloodshed involved in hunting make it as ambiguous an area as inter-tribal fighting. A myth about Dwert the Dingo, from Western Australia, describes a shape-changer hunter who was banished from the tribe. He alarmed the other members of the group because he had become a violent and angry being who killed more prey than was necessary and eventually killed other hunters (Bennett 59-62). For Dwert, killing to nurture the tribe with meat had slipped into killing for pleasure. The blood on his hands (or paws) signified pride or guilt. Hunting myths are filled with contradictions including indigenous problems of sharing kinship with animals which are also prey. Squeamish western discourse represses the figure of the dying animal from our need to eat meat (Shepard, “Primitivism” 82), but how do Aborigines reconcile their belief that they are descended from animals, with the killing

and eating of those same species? Ronald and Catherine Berndt claim that “even when a man identifies himself with the totem it is eaten quite casually” (*First Australians* 239). The Warlbiri people told Meggitt that they only ate adult dingo in times of famine but this was because the meat tasted horrible (they claimed it was worse than feral cat), rather than a fastidious dislike of eating dingoes. They roasted and ate dingo pups taken from the nest whenever they were available and they ate other animals descended from the Dreaming (“Aborigines and Dingoes” 14).

If it is difficult to accept the shape-changing concept, it is still harder to take the concept one step further and accept what appears to be a hypocritical duality.

Contemporary western discourse perceives hunting, killing and eating of prey as a forceful and aggressive action. Gary Snyder wrote of the self-disgust of Westerners who resented the need to kill for meat: “all of nature is a gift-exchange, a potluck banquet, there is no death that is not somebody’s food, no life that is not somebody’s death” (Snyder qtd. in Shepard, “Primitivism” 82). Lopez explains that in native American cultures death is an exchange, a choice, a mutual decision between hunter and prey in which both signal their intent (94-95). Lopez and Snyder’s perceptions of hunting clarify rather than confuse the concept of shape-changer.

Eating one’s ancestor represents the total integration of one shape into another.

Strehlow interpreted the extensive use of animal symbolism in myths as a ploy used by later storytellers to hide an earlier cannibalism (8-15). When people eat shape-changing animals with a shared life stream they are crossing into an ambiguous area of

at least a symbolic cannibalism. Aboriginal discourse is filled with accounts of Dreaming dingoes which kill and eat human beings. This knowledge does not lessen the respect shown for dingoes in the discourse of myths. Noble creator, kindly uncle and opportunistic killer are blended together in the whole animal. The Berndts have described Aboriginal mythology as a huge mirror which reflected familiar and identifiable scenes (*Speaking Land* 4). To convince an audience, the values and lifestyles of mythic beings must run parallel with those of earthly human beings. Myths are grounded in reality; dingo myths are based on the known characteristics of wild dingoes.

Acceptance of a darker side of the dingo was encouraged by its similar eating and killing habits to humans. Aborigines ate dingo pups; dingoes killed and ate any frail or foolish human left unprotected. In the everyday world described by Daisy Bates, dingoes crept behind the wind shelters to attack babies (204). In “Jarntujarrakurlu’s” mythic world the male dingo discovers a lone man sleeping on top of a hill: “He sprang on the sleeper, and bit him and fought and finally left him dead.” The female dingo returns and they both eat the body: “They ate it, they ate it, there up on top at Pawuru. They were completely full. Those two ate until they could eat no more” (Popeye Jangala 123).

A chasm has opened between Western and indigenous/mythical discourse and something unmentionable is lurking down there. The gentle myth about two dingoes in love has shown a darker side. Strehlow claimed that later Aboriginal myth-makers

“toned down” accounts of “cruel and disgusting” elements in their stories, and excuses were made for patricide and cannibalism (13-14). There are various ways in which the colonisers dealt with such alien chasms. One way is to express shock and horror and insert the word “cannibalism” into the discourse of empire. Such a “powerful and distinctive” definition of the “savage” was used to justify imperialism according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (30). Or writers may use a different approach to alien elements in myths and assume a superior position which trivialises the “other.” The editor of *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines* seized the knowledge of David Unaipon and claimed it for himself. Katherine Langloh Parker also presumes a more sophisticated knowledge for herself and her young readers in a patronising explanation of a bull-roarer: “The noise really sounded, if you had not the dread of spirits in your mind, just as if someone had a circular piece of wood at the end of a string and were whirling it round and round” (16).

Cataldi and Napaljarri prefer to look the other way when Popeye Jangala describes the dingoes’ behaviour on the hill. As editors and translators of “Jarntujarrakurlu”, Cataldi and Napaljarri know that the dingoes represent humans. They explain in a footnote: “The dogs which are black are clearly also people, since the Australian dingo is usually a reddish brown” (127). While they happily discuss the dingoes getting married and defining territory they make no comment about the killing and eating of the sleeper on Pawaru hill. They ignore the chasm gaping beneath their feet; and the subject becomes unmentionable.

Foucault describes the process of evasion and exclusion used in the discourse of sexuality, a topic which at times has also been unmentionable:

It is quite possible that there was an expurgation—and a very rigorous one—of the authorized vocabulary. It may indeed be true that a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor was codified. Without question, new rules of propriety screened out some words: there was a policing of statements. A control over enunciations as well: where and when it was not possible to talk about such things became much more strictly defined; in which circumstances, among which speakers, and within which social relationships. Areas were thus established, if not of utter silence, at least of tact and discretion. (Rabinov 301)

The seizing of knowledge; the patronising conversion of profound beliefs into quaint children's stories, the silent refusal to acknowledge the chasm; all these devices hide the naked form of the "other."

Evasions and exclusions are not limited to colonial discourse. Wildness in the forms of violence or disruption posed a threat to the harmony of the group. Power was constructed so that only a few elders held all the knowledge. From the "wild dogs" who know nothing through to the older members of the tribe, knowledge came piece by piece, a little at a time and throughout life there was always some knowledge which was withheld. Kolig explains: "a man's learning process was never quite completed during his lifetime" (*The Silent Revolution* 66).

The discourse used in the myths, and in particular in the duality of the dingo hunting myths was one of “exclusions and choices.” Foucault explains how groups establish their own discursive rules: “Discursive practices are characterized by [. . .] the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts.” The norms are put into position through a discourse which chooses what is said and how it is said and what is not said: “Thus each discursive practice implies a play of prescriptions that designate its exclusions and choices” (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 199). Such exclusions bolstered the power of the elders who would always have the most knowledge. Kolig describes the ritual wailing which takes place when a man is given a new item of religious knowledge as an expression of “grief at having missed out for so long on something so eminently important” (*The Silent Revolution* 66).

Hunting myths complement the exclusivity of power. The Dreaming dingo frequently moves into a secret sacred area known only to a few and even those parts which could be told to all were filled with evasions. In matters of marriage, territory and creative acts, human being and dingo are interchangeable; everything fits together like a jigsaw and the result is a scene of harmony. But in hunting myths the dingo supports a uniquely Aboriginal duality, where facts can be interpreted one way or another in a discourse of exclusion and secrets, and some of the pieces of the jigsaw are always hidden. Hunting myths usually describe dingoes which eat human beings. If the extra pieces of the jigsaw were added, if the secret sacred ceremonies were invaded and if the things left unsaid were spoken, then the finished picture would reveal the dark side

of the shape-changers' idyll. For if dingoes are at the same time people, then the myths are describing cannibalism.

Each group creates its own "regime of truth" (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 131). In a study of religious philosophy, Stanner stated that for Aborigines: "reality is of a dual nature" (*On Aboriginal Religion* 56). Erich Kolig saw Aborigines as "pragmatists acting within the confines of a rigid, quasi-idealist dogma" (*Dreamtime Politics* 70). Traditional Aborigines had to obey the rules, but they also had to live, and in some situations, obedience to the law and survival were not compatible. Famine may have been one of those desperate situations where pragmatism took the shape of cannibalism. Some needed no excuse for human predation; the Berndts claim "the sole intent" of the Western Desert mythical mamu or evil spirits "is to treat human beings as a source of food" (*Speaking Land* 154). Dingoes, like mamu, also need no excuse and in the majority of hunting myths the dingo has a role as a predator of humans. Should the acts reported in myths be considered a verification of past behaviour? Since the dingo as a shape-changer is also a human being, the hunting myth offers the ideal vehicle for bending the rules and creating one's own "regime of truth." Hunting myths may be about cannibalism or they may not be. If the predator is a human then it is about cannibalism, but if the predator is a mamu or a dingo, then perhaps it is not. A reality which is of a dual nature allows the pragmatists to survive.

There are many myths about Mingari the Mountain Devil Woman and her pack of dingoes. The myth of Mingari and Galaya the Emu Woman illustrates the nature of

duality. Mingari and her daughter Neri watch Galaya as she bumps into trees and they decide that she is blind. She is also old. Although it is the dingoes who physically attack Galaya, the mother and daughter seem to assess her as prey: “The two Mingari talked together and decided that she must be blind” (Mungu, Ridge and Malgala 66). They do however drive off the dingoes, wipe the matter from Galaya’s eyes and show her the right track. The old Emu Woman sets off alone. But the dingoes don’t accompany the Mingari to their home camp: “Instead, they had run after Galaya, bringing her down at Badil and killing her. They tore up the meat and ate it all” (67). The myth is told in a language of evasion and exclusions. “Galaya’s death is nothing to do with us” the Mountain Devil Women seem to be saying. “We tried to help her. Blame the dingoes.” But the myth gives a hint that Mingari is not innocent when she dies after eating some of the disgorged meat. The discourse of the hunting myth twists and turns in its evasions. The dingoes are blamed for the killing and eating of the old Emu-Woman but punishment falls haphazardly on the mother rather than the daughter who also eats the meat but survives. The dingoes make a convenient vehicle for wrongdoing. They can absolve any human guilt, for the animal part of the shape-changer is behaving naturally as a dingo.

An account of an attack on a shape-changing emu explains the hunting techniques of dingoes and the risks of underestimating them. The myth can also be interpreted as a symbolic warning against attack from humans. “Ilia the Emu-Man,” was narrated by Tjonba of the Arranda tribe and published in an anthology *The Feathered Serpent* by Roland Robinson in 1956. (Robinson does not mention if Tjonba told the myth in an

indigenous language or in English.) The myth describes how several Emu-men ask Ilia to join them but he wishes to travel alone. Twice he runs past two dingoes and teases them: “Why do you two fellows sleep?” When he runs past them a third time “he kicked them, hard, as he went past.”

Now the two dingoes sprang up and chased Ilia. They chased him south to the Goyder River. But Ilia sang as he ran. He sang his legs so that he ran as fast as the wind. But close to New Crown Point the dingoes caught up with Ilia. They leapt at him and turned him there and pulled out some of his feathers with their teeth. And there, as Ilia wheeled and raced round, again he left his emu footprint in a stone.

Ilia was singing his legs. He was running as fast as the wind, yet the two dingoes were close beside and behind him, leaping up at him when they could. At the Goyder River the two dingoes leapt at Ilia’s neck [. . .] They gripped him and pulled him down [. . .] they took out his lungs, his liver and his heart.  
(82-3)

The myth is filled with knowledge about dingo behaviour. The dingoes chase and attack Ilia the Emu-Man because he lacks the protection of others and is therefore vulnerable. Importantly the myth explains that Ilia has underestimated the dingoes. He has taunted them with his own speed and strength and he makes the mistake of travelling alone, refusing the company of other Emu-men: “I won’t sit down here. I’ll

keep on travelling” (82). The dingoes follow their usual attacking procedure, chasing the emu together, leaping up to pull out a few feathers, then running along beside, jumping up at Ilia to bite him. Eventually they weaken the Emu-Man until he runs more slowly and the dingoes can bite his neck and bring him down. Using these techniques, two dingoes can overcome a large strong emu. Aborigines were aware of the dingoes’ hunting habits; they accept its ferocity, yet respect its sacred Dreaming role: “Two tjurungas they pulled out of his dilly-bag as they raced beside him and sprang at him. All the Goyder River men have those tjurungas now” (Tjonba 82). Tjonba explains that the tjurungas are sacred objects which have become corroborees. The permutations of the myth seem endless. In the evasive discourse of hunting myths, the dingo is at the same time a ferocious killer and creator of a sacred ceremony and Ilia the emu is both man and bird. As creators of the tjurungas the dingoes represent men. The myth might tell of dingoes killing emus or men. Or it might be about men killing emus or other men. The oral myth cannot be pinned onto the page in black and white but is breathed in around the fire like a whisp of smoke, drifting around the consciousness, swirling in indeterminate shapes, as hazy and mysterious as the shape-changers.

### *Warning Myths*

The relationship of traditional Aborigines to other living things was simple and sensible. Animals were on an equal level to people, sharing the same life-stream. They were also a source of food. Dangerous animals must be treated with caution but there was no hatred or disrespect towards them. The farmers' brutal discourse, which justified the extermination of dingoes as vermin does not appear in traditional myths. Since both were interdependent, humans could not have feelings of superiority towards animals. Consequently the contemporary expressions of outrage when dingoes attack people are absent from Aboriginal myths. When dingoes attack a mythic baby which has emerged from the ground in an act of self-creation, they are not killed but are driven off (Wadedi 22). The same Aboriginal discourse which recognises that people can behave in unreasonable ways accepts the behaviour of the dingo. Discursive practice has imposed the boundaries of customary behaviour. Unlike Western stories about the dingo, there is no condemnation. Kolig writes: "Perfection achieved through the complete elimination of the undesirable was never considered an ideal" (*Dreamtime Politics* 70). The ignorant beliefs of some contemporary city dwellers who treat the wild dingo as a domestic dog would also have had no place. Dingo hunting myths inform about the possible dangers of dingoes and explain ways to protect people. The myths encourage people to guard their children, to protect the old and frail and to avoid travelling or sleeping alone.

Hidden within the discourse of the hunting myth and linked to fears about the dingo was the risk of attack from humans. Myths tell of cannibals who used the strength and skill of dingoes to catch humans. Bougoodooogahdah, retold by Langloh Parker, and Yirbaik-baik, retold by Charles Mountford, are the names of solitary old women who keep large packs of dingoes; Bougoodooogahdah has four hundred! With the help of the dingoes they go out hunting each day—for human prey.

Being old and female or even as small as a mouse is no hindrance to those who are accompanied by dingoes. A charming myth from Uluru, “The Mice Women who Turned into Dingoes,” describes Mice Women who physically *become* dingoes. The tiny Mice Women have never seen a man until Pungalung the giant wanders into their camp to show them what men do to women. The startled Mice Women grow bigger, turn into dingoes and attack the giant. The myth is filled with knowledge about the natural characteristics of dingoes hunting in a group. They snap at Pungalung; one fastens her teeth in his leg; another leaps at his throat and finally he is buried under a snarling mass of dingoes. Pungalung escapes bleeding and bitten but lives on to create features of the environment (Reed, *Aboriginal Legends-Animal Tales* 52-54). Even a giant becomes a target when he travels alone and harmless mice may quickly turn into fierce dingoes. Traditional Aboriginal discourse is grounded in knowledge of wildness and filled with expediency. Warning myths teach how to be wary of wild things; whether dingo or human. Myths warn against complacency—Pungalung was strong and Emu-man was fast but they acted carelessly and became vulnerable.

Hunters were at risk of attack as they travelled far from the camp in pursuit of prey and those who hunted alone were most vulnerable. “The Dog Owners” tells of Newal, his wife and their dingo who prey on solitary hunters. All three lived together in a hollow tree and they craved human flesh. When Newal tries to attack two hunters who are travelling together, they fight back, injuring him. The dingo advises Newal: “You must go out and walk through the bush until you meet a solitary hunter. Choose one who has walked a long way and is tired and thirsty. Tell him to come to your home where he may rest and refresh himself” (Reed, *Aboriginal Stories* 216-221). The fate of the solitary hunter provides a warning to take care in the bush especially when hunting and always to travel with a companion.

Another myth, also retold by Reed, describes the extra risk that occurs during a severe drought in the Nullarbor plain. The people are weak and starving; their eyes are bloodshot and they are “too weary to show interest.” The myth warns that at such times some people are vulnerable and others will take advantage of them. Cheeronear is the terrible “Dog-Faced Man” who preys on these starving people. He has the head and ears of a dingo and a huge pouch under his chin which is filled with human flesh. He travels with six dingoes who help him to snatch and eat people (*Aboriginal Stories* 205-9).

Children were particularly at risk from dingoes and humans, and myths were told which warned them not to stray far from the camp by day and to stay close to the fire at night. “Goolagaya and the White Dingo” was retold as a children’s story by Charles

Mountford in 1979 and by Jean Ellis in 1995. Their versions describe a mean and solitary old woman Goolagaya and her fierce dingo who stole a child to spite the mother. The child is accidentally drowned and the two kidnappers are killed and buried in the mud of the lagoon. Mountford writes: “the spirits of Goolagaya and her companion leave the tree, ready, when darkness comes, to steal any wandering child” (44). In the Ellis version the spirits roam about at night “searching for any little children out on their own. Any they found they would snatch and drown” (53). Ellis and Mountford are attempting the impossible in their representation of Goolagaya. The subject, little children and white dingoes, combines with an authoritative “all-knowing” colonial discourse to encourage a children’s version of the myth. But the chasms are as wide and deep and as filled with “unmentionables” for editors in this myth as they are in “Jarntujarrakurlu” or “Ilia the Emu-Man.” “Goolagaya and the White Dingo” can only function as a children’s story if it is given the most superficial reading in which no mention is made of cannibalism. The flexible and pragmatic message of Aboriginal hunting myths is translated into an evasive western version filled with Foucault’s “tact and discretion” where no questions may be asked about the fate of the little children after they are caught by the old woman.

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But whether the discourse is Aboriginal or colonial it can only obscure or ignore the chasm of difference; it cannot do away with it. According to the myths, cannibalism existed. It was not condoned but sometimes it was necessary. The wise creators of myths did not waste their time in chastising dingoes or Aborigines for killing humans. Instead they warn people how to avoid dangerous encounters with wild things, dingo

or human. Dingo hunting myths speak in a warning discourse. They describe those at particular risk of being killed and eaten and how to avoid such a fate. Like the wolf in European fairy stories the dingo fills a double role. It acts out a role in cautionary tales about dangerous animals and serves as a metaphor for human aggression. Wandering alone through the forest or the bush is not advisable for Little Red Riding Hood or Iliia the Emu-Man. Aboriginal myths explain clearly the dangers of dingoes and how to avoid them but urban Australians have not listened to them. *Their* fairy stories are as obsolete as the wolf in Wales and they have put nothing in their place. With no warning myths of their own, they have replaced the wise caution of avoidance with an ignorant and sentimental carelessness. They visit the habitats of wild dingoes and take no precautions; they walk on the beach alone, leave babies unattended and allow children to play unsupervised.

The myth of the spirit dingo Kurpannga was told by members of the Pitjantjatjara tribe and published in 1980, the year baby Azaria Chamberlain was allegedly taken from her tent at Uluru by a dingo. It describes the creation of an evil spirit in the form of a giant dingo, called Kurpannga. Tony Tjamiwa offers a fragment of the Pitjantjatjara version of the myth, adding to the story told earlier by Kadakadeka of the Uluritdja tribe. Tjamiwa describes how the spirit dingo ran from Wintalyka (Docker River) into the Mala ceremony: "Kurpannga bit the young eagle at Ayers Rock and all the Mala scattered" (Isaacs 40).

Kurpannga's role is to terrify the initiates, to symbolically bite the young boy/eagles and drag them away. There are many myths about the creative, kindly dingo but in the sacred Uluru ceremony *wildness* is given its place. In the story of Ilia the Emu-Man it is the wild behaviour of the two dingoes which creates the sacred objects: "Two tjurungas they pulled out of his dilly bag as they raced beside him and sprang at him" (Tjonba 82). The warning myths of Kurpannga and Ilia the Emu-Man describe dingoes whose wildness is not tamed or punished but is used constructively, to control the initiates or to create a sacred corroboree.

The boys described by Stannard were allowed every liberty for a long time; they were encouraged to be truly "wild boys." At initiation their wildness is disciplined into a reliance on others for protection and an acknowledgement of their role in the group. Rose draws an analogy between young uninitiated men and camp dingoes, stating that both live "outside human culture," "stalking food and sexual partners." Young men "take their rightful place" in the group when they marry and have children (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 177). For dingoes the process of wild and tame is reversed. It is the *camp* dingoes which don't participate in dingo society; the *wild* dingoes take on responsibilities of partner and offspring when they reach maturity (Corbett, *The Dingo in Australia*, 87-98).

White settlement fragmented the society of Aborigines and dingoes. By 1972, when Stanner wrote his essay "Aborigines and Australian Society," the young people were becoming increasingly recalcitrant and the elders were refusing to initiate them. The

young people were denied the disciplined channeling of their wildness into responsibility, so vital to traditional Aboriginal society. Stanner called these young people a “lost generation” denied “home or status or honour either in their society or in ours” (*White Man Got No Dreaming* 352). Too many young Aborigines would now live and die as “wild dogs.”

## ***RESURRECTION***

So I gave Digger the word to go over the high roots of the old fig tree, Tiger following. Here was an old male dingo and small puppies coming out. I had a stick in my hand, I killed six, then I notice a female with a small pup in her jaws. I put a bullet through her heart. I caught the little pup, killed him. By now Digger and Tiger had killed the old male dingo. As I leaned over the big fig tree roots, here I saw Digger wagging his tail, Tiger still biting the dead dingo. (Cohen 139)

When the morning came my people were up already waiting to see what was to be done with them. The white settlers came forward and counted the children including me. [. . .] Now all the men and women lined up and the white settlers put chains around their wrists and they shot a fire gun to make us move. We children had two white men looking after us while they had seven. They drove us like bullocks, little bit by little. I could understand how these white settlers were taking us. None of my people understood English. They were bush men. That's what they called us. (Wally Guma qtd. in Isaacs 290)

Dreaming dingoes advise Aborigines how to live according to the Law. Dingo myths showed how to avoid confrontation with neighbours, how to ask others for the use of their resources and how to avert dangerous situations. On the day the white men exploded into Wally Guma's life, the myths which had seemed eternal were overturned, the Law was not heeded and the familiar way of life ended forever.

Bill Cohen's account of the killing of the dingo family somehow seems more shocking because he is an Aborigine, "a grandson of the Gumbangarri." In traditional society sentimental behaviour towards the camp dingo was mixed with a pragmatic callousness. Lumholtz observed in 1880 that Aborigines were fond of their dingoes and treated them well: "Its master never strikes, but merely threatens it. He caresses it like a child, eats the fleas off it, and then kisses it on the snout" (196). Later Meggitt describes the breaking of dingoes' legs to keep them in the camp and the roasting and eating of pups ("Aborigines and Dingoes" 14-15). But Cohen's several accounts of the killing of whole families (with its accompanying sad proof that dingoes *did* form stable family units) supports a colonial discourse. The slaughter of entire groups of animals for bounty was not endorsed under Dreaming Law and would have been impossible with traditional weapons. The title of Cohen's book is *To My Delight* and the killings are told in a hegemonic discourse of triumph and delight. The incident takes place shortly after the Second World War. Cohen is desperately poor (like the old male dingo, Bill Cohen has seven children) and the taking of nine dingoes means a larger bounty payment. In both accounts, Cohen's and Wally Guma's, men with guns further a policy of powerful control, which will replace indigenous human and

nonhuman “pests” with cattle and sheep. Both reflect a similar acquiescence to a law which is far removed from the balanced and responsible teaching of traditional myths. The use of guns and the paying of bounty as a means of control and extermination, the shooting of the bush men’s camp dingoes, even the names and the actions of the domestic dogs Digger and Tiger as agents of the colonisers, all reflect the hegemonic discourse of a startling new regime which has overthrown the old.

The dingo and the Aborigine had co-existed for five thousand years. For most of that time they travelled along the same paths in an accommodating, and at times wary, harmony. The resemblance between human and dingo continued after colonial settlement but now in decreasing numbers they would tread a similar tragic path of misery, persecution and diaspora. Aborigine and dingo no longer possessed seemingly inalienable rights to the land. Both were described in a hostile discourse as unwanted nuisances, killing and eating the imported domestic stock which now grazed on the land. The first act of the white settlers who took away Wally Guma’s people was to shoot all the camp dingoes (Isaacs 290). The carefully balanced social structure of both human and nonhuman indigenes, their extended families, the male’s protection of partner and offspring, were fractured. An official government policy of mass extermination was put in place for dingoes. For Aborigines, death came in more subtle and unofficial ways. Secret killings disposed of some, disease and starvation dealt with many others. Aboriginal children like Wally Guma were sent away to mission schools and their culture was denied them. In traditional society the Gunwinggu stuffed the ears and nostrils of a corpse with soft paperbark “to stop him from thinking

of us, so he will go for ever” (Berndt, *First Australians* 477). The colonists tried to ensure that the outcasts would also go forever, removing all traces of their language, their families and their Law, metaphorically stuffing their ears and nostrils with wadding. For dingoes and Aborigines there seemed little hope of resurrection.

“I been die ‘inside’ that place,” he said, “and when business over I was ‘outside’ and alive once more.” Kadakadeka spoke at Uluru while showing Bill Harney the symbolic womb of the Earth Mother from which the initiates came to be “re-born into manhood” (188). (Visitors to the base of Uluru may walk past this symbolic cave called Mala Puta). Kadakadeka had been born as a baby, reborn as an adult and would eventually die and be reborn one more time as an invisible spirit person. After the final rebirth, part of him would return to his own land and a life similar to his previous one. The Berndts explained that traditional Aborigines viewed death “as a transition, through which a person passes to another life not entirely unlike the one he has left” (*First Australians* 476-86). As part of the battle for the souls of the remaining Aborigines, the Pentecostal missionaries at Yarralin preached the following message in 1983: “those who are saved will go to heaven while those who are not will be cast into the fiery pit” (Rose, “Jesus and the Dingo” 363). Rose describes sermons which asserted that heaven is a “golden city,” the earth is “rubbish” and that humans are “just tourists on this earth” (“Jesus and the Dingo” 364). The Apostolic Christians at the Jigalong mission in the mid-1960’s preached that the spirits of the dead might be condemned in hell if they had sinned during life (Tonkinson 129). They made few conversions, for the Aborigines rejected a message which contradicted their own

belief that every spirit returns to its earthly home (“Jesus and the Dingo” 129). At Yarralin many new converts abandoned the Christian faith within a year or so. The missionaries’ statements indicate a gulf between Christian and Aboriginal beliefs, for while one group regards the earth as a wicked and sinful transit stop on the journey to heaven, the other believes that heaven is to be found on earth. The environmental implications of the two viewpoints are important. The missionaries’ discourse sounds similar to the early settlers’ treatment of Australia. A temporary stopover in a wicked, “rubbish” land can be exploited and degraded before returning to one’s real home, but an earth which provides the only chance of heaven both now and in the future, must be lovingly nurtured. If one accepts the discourse of the missionaries, then the teaching of the myths must be rejected. According to Rose, the Dreaming dingo myths were still being told at Yarralin in 1982. For a little while longer, the mythic dingo could rest and heal and reclaim its dignity. It would only be a brief respite however; ceremonies were no longer being held and knowledge of the Law was fading bit by bit as the old people died. It was fitting that at Yarralin, myths about the Dreaming dingo would be some of the last to be told, for it was the Law of the dingo which had provided one of the greatest challenges to missionary teaching. According to Yarralin elders it was the Dreaming dingo which had refused the opportunity of eternal life.

### *The Moon and the Dingo*

Moon stories about death and revival occur across widely separated areas. Moon's visible position in the night sky, its constant cycle of waxing and waning, made it the ideal vehicle for questions about immortality. "When human beings die, why don't they come back to life again in the same form, as Moon does? Why are human bodies not renewable as Moon's is?" (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 374). Usually, myths describe how the moon offers Dreaming dingo some form of renewable life and for various reasons dingo fails to take up the offer. Daly Pulkara narrates the Yarralin version of the myth in Aboriginal English or Kriol:

Dingo and moon, those two made a culture. Moon said: "I'll stop three, four days dead, and I'll (be) coming back again!"

Walaku (Dingo) said: "I'll got to die forever. I'll lose my self, bone and dust."

(48)

Jarkulin (moon) then offers his urine for the dingo to drink, so that they can share the same life: "we'll make (become) same life" but dingo refuses: "too dirty." Moon shows dingo how easy it is to return. He dies and then comes back to life singing: "Kilikilir (his song)...I'm here again, I'm home." Dingo replies apprehensively: "If I'm dead, I'm dead forever." He dies and tries hard to return to life: "(He) tried and tried" but he "couldn't come back." The dingo's failure to "come back" denies human beings the chance of everlasting life. Another Yarralin elder, Tim Yilngayari explains:

“We all gotta follow longa dingo...we be dead for good. We follow that dingo [. . .] that’s the Law belong the dingo” (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 48-49).

Rose speaks of “a story within this story” (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 104), and Kolig explains that rather than “simple-minded explanations of the real world” myths move beyond “the empirically graspable” (*Dreamtime Politics* 23). Later, Daly Pulkura analysed the seemingly ingenuous myth for Rose and concluded that although the dingo is to blame for failing to renew himself, the moon is also at fault. Dingo asked moon for help—“You try, learn me how to go”—but the moon was cruel and didn’t explain things properly (*Dingo Makes Us Human* 104-5). A quintessentially Aboriginal compassion for the dingo and censorship of the ungenerous moon are revealed in Pulkura’s analysis. His remarks unlock the “story within this story.” By refusing the moon’s urine, the dingo remains independent. Rejection of the sterile moon and its endless renewal means the acceptance instead of a flawed but generous human life. It states a preference for the earth as a home during life and after death. Ceremonies re-enacted the adventures of the mythic beings, recharging the life force of the ancestors, enabling them to bring rain and to promote the growth of plants and animals. In this way the ancestors continued to live and to provide for the people. A belief in such rituals was the Aboriginal interpretation of resurrection. Moon’s offer of the chance to glitter forever in the sky, so similar to the missionaries’ Christian teaching, was firmly and perhaps sensibly rejected.

The theme of offers made to the dingo and its refusal of them occurs in other myths. “Dog and the Macassans” refers to seasonal visitors, mostly traders who sailed south from Makasar in the Celebes islands and travelled to the northern coast of Australia, building temporary camps and exchanging tobacco, cloth, knives and food with Aborigines for trepang (sea cucumber) (Allen 10-11, Berndt, *Speaking Land* 419). Danggoubwi, described by the Berndts as “a superb story teller”, told the myth of “Dog and the Macassans” in the Djambarbingu dialect in 1950.

He set off from Djiliwir, that dog called Djuraindjura. [. . .] “I heard movement, noise. Macassans, working on posts for a house.” [. . .] He trotted along on his paws, and stood up. “Who are you?” asked the two Balanda. He said, that dog, “I’m Djuraindjura!” “What place are you from?” “I’m from Djiliwir!” The Balanda went on making a house. Dog said, “I want to come close to you, I want to see what kind of flesh you have” [what you look like from close-up]. He was carrying on his head a lot of fire-sticks, and little pegs or nails for joining bark canoes. The Balanda asked, “What do you want? Do you want some of this cloth, or other things?” “I don’t want any of that!” said Dog. “Do you want matches?” “No! I’ve got fire-sticks!” “How do you work them?” “I do it like this” [He showed them.] “And what about your fire, how do you make it?” “Like this.” “Oh, that’s good, your fire! My fire-sticks take longer,” said Dog. [. . .]

He asked, that Balanda, “Do you want food? Rice? “No! No, I don’t want that! I eat wallabies and goannas!” [naming various kinds] “Yes, all right. But here’s this different kind of food for you. I’ll put it down here for you.” “No! I don’t want your food. I’m going away. I have plenty of meat food. And in the waters and along the River banks there are plenty of geese and other birds for me to eat.” “All right, you go. But you’ll be sleeping without fire.” “My fire, my light, is good!”

[. . .] Those Balanda were getting ready to depart. They were pulling up the house-posts, taking them away. [. . .] He went away then, Djuraindjura, and the Balanda went away. They went back each of them, to their own countries. (418)

Daly Pulkara had spoken forgivingly of the dingo which “bungled” the chance of physical resurrection: “He made a mistake now, walaku” (Rose, *Dingo Makes Us Human* 104). The Macassans did not offer eternal life, but material goods, and the story teller, Danggoubwi, a lively and active grandmother, was not so understanding. She complained, “That dog was no good! She/he refused matches, and food, and cloth! Now we people with dark skins are badly off!” Her companion agreed: “We could had had all those things!” The friend described what she would like to do to Djuraindjura: “If I had that dog here, now, I would beat it, strike it on the nose!” (Berndt, *Speaking Land* 419).

Two opposing discourses surround the Macassan myth and together they represent stages of a transition period. “Dog and the Macassans” describes approaches and reactions to a situation which had existed for thousands of years, the seasonal visits of traders and fishermen from “outside.” In one discourse Djuraindjura the dingo refuses the various items which were repeatedly and persuasively offered to him. In an opposing discourse spoken in 1950, Danggoubwi and her friends retrospectively criticize Djuraindjura for his refusal of useful goods. Did Aborigines really turn their backs on the chance to trade? They had trepang and the sexual services of women to offer and there is evidence that they did not run away from the Macassans like Djuraindjura but traded with them for knives and axes, tobacco, cloth and food (Allen 11). According to Kolig, the answer is somewhere in the middle. Aborigines accepted the material goods but not the techniques needed to produce more of them (*Dreamtime Politics* 68). The “story within this story” explains Duraindjura’s refusal of everything as a symbolic rejection of a different life philosophy. While the Law continued and the balance within the environment remained, there was no need for change. In fact, for as long as their world remained the same, traditional Aborigines were “ideologically and ritually” committed to maintaining the status quo (Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics* 58). But by 1950, when Danggoubwi voiced her criticisms, the Law was rapidly losing its authority. Tony Swaine described the dynamics of Aboriginal religion as “more a question of geography than theology” (qtd. in Charlesworth xx) and now the increasing appropriation of the land and a diaspora which excluded people from their particular sites made the Law unworkable. The actions of the colonists had subverted the vital connection of Law and land. Once this

connection was broken, Aboriginal people began to accept the changes which the Dreaming dingo had symbolically refused.

The myth “How the Dingo-Man Lost His Head” was told to Bill Harney by a Mara Aborigine called Dingle and published in *Tales from the Aborigines* in 1967. The myth takes another step away from tradition by incorporating beliefs and language from the missionaries into an old story. Dingo and Native-Cat meet at a camping site north of the Roper River. Native-Cat offers to show Dingo the secret of eternal life: “I can be reborn because I have found a thing called faith.” Native-Cat puts his head on a log of wood and instructs Dingo to “Cut off my head and bury it away from my body, then see what happens.” After three days Native-Cat returns to life, climbing down a tall tree which reached to the stars, but although Dingo claims he has faith and allows his own head to be cut off he remains dead. It seems that he was “without faith” (138). The myth is similar to “The Moon and the Dingo.” The Native-Cat with its spotted skin and a habit of sitting in trees in the moonlight represents the moon and once again Dingo-man has “bungled” the chance of resurrection. By 1967, such resurrection myths were moving further into the transitional stage between old and new. The original myth themes—the tree which reaches to the stars and the use of Dingo-Man the shape changer—are still present, but they are now intermingled with New Testament references. The rising from the dead after three days, the calling of Dingo’s name and the practice of burying the dead, show the influence of Christian beliefs. The myth is now told in biblical language: “for to me is faith” and “show the people the way.” Change happened overnight for Wally Guma when he was removed

from his mother and his tribe and sent to the mission school. For others it was long and drawn out. Each year marked the decline of a sacred site, the dying out of a plant or an animal which had once been replenished with annual rites, the death of one more language, the loss or distortion of another myth.

Popeye Jangala had travelled back to Yarrajalpa in the Northern Territory to record his section of “The Two Dogs” myth “Jarntujarrakurlu.” He now lives far away in Yaruman in Western Australia. Traditionally oral myth lives in the person who tells it; the narrator and those who listen to it; the audience who discuss every aspect of the story and add their own information. Together they foster the life of the myth and ensure its integrity. The listening audience can fill in the gaps in stories told in an elliptical manner where a shrug or a gesture speaks volumes. The Berndts began recording in 1940, and the myths are filled with comments from the audience who explain what has been left unspoken. At Lajamanu on May 30, 1990, the old narrator Popeye Jangala struggles to recall the complex dreaming map held in his head and linked to the land which he no longer occupies. People accompany Jangala on his journey across the living mythical map, but they cannot help him with the retelling. They wait “over to the west” while he searches for the rockholes:

I begin this story at this place with my father, whose initiation finished at that soak, his soak, at Yarrajalpa, at the waterhole Yarrajalpa. They finished the ceremony there at that waterhole.

The two dogs slept in their camp. Then those two dogs left to go away towards the east. There they were going away to Wirninginpa. They went, in fact, along the north side, north from Wirninginpa. Then they crossed over to the east to those rockholes—you know, the ones I went and found while you all waited for me over to the west. From Wirninginpa it is halfway. You stayed by the little rocks, while I drank first from that waterhole. [. . .]

The fire, the fire burnt its way past along to the south of where they were. In fact, the fire went straight past them and away. [. . .]

At Waanjurna they camped. Then they probably continued east. At the soak, they hunted little mice, or maybe that happened at the rockhole at Tapu, at Tapu. They hunted little mice. (121)

The unthinkable has happened! The Dreaming seems to be fading, flickering weakly in the mind of one old man who now lives far away from the land where he was born: “the country that belongs to me.” He is drawing on memories, childhood memories of a dying past: “my father, whose initiation finished at that soak, his soak, at Yarrajalpa.” The Dreamings were continually reborn through repeated tellings of the myths, through ochred hands pressing against the drawings of kangaroo, dingo and spirit people in caves, and through bare feet walking the tracks. The Aborigines knew this fact of reincarnation so well that they would call out to the spirits painted into the rock as they approached. Without this care there could be no traditional resurrection

and sites would have no meaning. At a meeting held at Ernabella in 1971, after a sacred cave at Uluru had been entered by a white woman, Paddy Uluru explains the Aboriginal definition of resurrection:

my fathers and grandfathers entrusted me with this cave. [. . .] Ayers Rock is holy. I am Ayers Rock and these things are mine. And now white people have broken that which is ours, our Law, ours, our great ceremony, the ceremony of the Mala wallaby from which we are taught. [. . .] Finished! My fathers are finished. They are finished. (Isaacs 40)

For as long as Paddy Uluru continued with his protection of the cave and the ceremonies, his ancestors would live on after death. The breaking or ending of the Law denied the ancestors their cycle of renewal: “My fathers are finished.”

Kadadeka vividly and passionately described his own rebirth to Bill Harney, but at the end of his account he looked towards Uluru once again: “ ‘now nothing in this country’ he said, ‘nothing only tree and this old rock’ ” (189).

Fanon states: “After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but the disappearance of the colonized man” (198). He is referring to the way in which colonialism “distorts, disfigures and destroys” the past of the colonised (169). Popeye Jangala’s dingo myth which has been recorded “at the last possible moment” will be preserved in a book, *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories*. It will provide an example of a past discourse in a forgotten language told by an elderly man. The book will sit on a

library shelf in the fairy tale section and remind us of “Once Upon A Time.” The Dreaming dingoes which entranced and amused, taught and warned so many generations of Aboriginal people will be “finished” like the ancestors of Paddy Uluru. The myths have been overwhelmed by new values and the domestic dog has “swamped” the purebred dingo. Except for a few protected areas such as Fraser Island where dogs are restricted, the purebred dingo has almost disappeared. Lumholz reported in 1880 that dingoes in the settled south were inbred with the colonists’ dogs (195). The Dreaming dingo is disappearing too, “swamped” by an alien discourse. Even the well-meaning act of preservation of the Dreaming Dingo myths confirms their growing irrelevance. Paul Hamilton explains in *Historicism*, how the beliefs and works of the colonised “can be neatly excluded from serious historical interaction with the present by being respectfully placed in an anthropological, archaeological or comparative ethnological archive” (180).

It was inevitable that the myths and the Law embodied within them, could not survive in their previous form. Myths give meaning to the social and cultural patterns of human existence (Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics* 108-9); they must relate to the land and its occupants. When the land is taken away, the people dispersed, and the dingoes and other native animals exterminated, the myth loses its relevance. Contemporary Aborigines cannot relate to the traditional myths because the patterns have changed. The myths provided for a pre-European hunter-gatherer lifestyle, and Aborigines now live and participate in a modern western society. Paul Hamilton considers the indigenes’ loss of the “textual war of communications” to be “indistinguishable from their physical submission.” He asks for an opposition to colonialism which neither

mirrors its oppression nor repeats past events “with a new cast” (171). Driven by the intrusion of mining and a renewed pride in their culture Aboriginal people are attempting to oppose colonialism as Hamilton suggests. They are not accepting that the myths are “finished” and they are not satisfied with the “respectful” placing of myths on library shelves and their resultant exclusion from history. Elders are entering Aboriginal schools and teaching the myths to children. The myths were not created for children and inevitably they must be modified, sometimes drastically (Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics* 113), but they can still give meaning to the social and cultural patterns of a people who despite years of enforced assimilation have reached the twenty-first century as a unique and identifiable group.

But other changes have been made which once again interfere with the myths. In the past a colonial discourse was imposed on the myths, reducing them to childish stories, patronising and appropriating both myths and narrators. Now Aboriginal elders have taken on the task of appropriation themselves! In a process of cultural hegemony, they have internalised the dominant society’s discourse and have removed from the myths elements which they fear might invoke scepticism and even scorn. The non-human and the super-human are “no longer accepted without more than a grain of incredulity and occasional ridicule” (Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics* 112). Kolig describes the situation in the southern Kimberleys in 1989; initiation ceremonies are still performed but the relevant myths have been modified. Kolig writes: “The Dreamtime as a whole is humanised. The animal component is played down” (*Dreamtime Politics* 113). Played down? Imagine a mythical world without the mice women who change into a pack of snarling dingoes and attack Pungalung the giant. Maidjuminmag and Aidjumala the

shape-changing siblings, who howl and limp and create waterholes will not be there. The Warlpiri Dreaming dingo which sings happy love songs and kicks up its heels for joy will be gone. Mingari the cannibal woman and her voracious dingoes will no longer chase the old Emu Woman. The howling, noisy Madhi, the dingo hooligans who disrupted the solemn ceremonies will have been expelled. In *White Man got no Dreaming* Stanner passionately lamented the lost “wealth”: “If the future poets and dramatists of Australia ever learned what a wealth of mythology, rich in its imaginative feeling and with a true ring of human drama about it, has been allowed to die unrecorded....” (3).

I can forgive the loss of adult themes from the myths so that children can listen to them, the fear fostered by colonialism that Aboriginal culture will be mocked. What I cannot forgive is the exclusion of the Dreaming dingo from contemporary Australian life.

## ***CONTEMPORARY CONFIGURATIONS***

### ***AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTEMPORARY DINGO***

Now the dingo trots into the twenty-first century, dodging the effects of a variety of western discourses in its attempts to stay alive. The Aboriginal myths are rarely heard, but the farmers' lobby still provides a powerful argument for the continued extermination of the dingo. In recent years, Australia has become increasingly urbanised and domestic pets and pot plants have replaced the flora and fauna of the bush. New, but equally uninformed and alien discourses have played around in the wilderness. Children's books, tourist brochures, dingo/baby jokes and cartoons, and hundreds of letters to newspapers, combine with the legacy of old colonial texts to produce wildly fluctuating, contemporary versions of the dingo.

*A ROMANTIC DISCOURSE—THE CHILDREN’S DINGO*

*Wild animals are not our friends. They are uncompromisingly not us nor mindful of us [. . .] They are the last undevoured riches of the planet.*

(Shepard, *The Others* 151)

At eight o’clock on the morning of April 30, 2001, a nine-year-old boy was playing on a beach with his brother and a friend. The children planned to explore sand dunes one hundred and fifty metres away from their family campsite on Fraser Island. By ten past eight, after a few brief moments of terror the boy was dead, his femoral artery severed and his small body disemboweled by two of the island’s dingoes. The child’s name was Clinton Gage and his death broke his family’s heart, sold newspapers around the world and challenged and reproached Australians for their failure yet again to interpret the dingo and its wilderness environment through an informed and responsible discourse.

Fraser Island is a world heritage listed island situated on the Queensland Coast, about two hours drive from Brisbane. It has a small resident population of fishermen, and workers in the rapidly growing tourist industry. This large island of 163,000 hectares

supports a wide variety of plant life, about two hundred species of birds, and up to two hundred pure dingoes (known as “purebred” dingoes), which roam freely. Because it is an island of sand with no made roads; tourists must travel by four-wheel drive, bringing their own or rented vehicles over on the ferry. They stay in one of the island’s hotel resorts or in official campsites, or they can drive to any quiet spot on the beach and put up a tent. They must obtain a permit from the Department of Parks and Wildlife who manage the island in order to camp. The Gage family was spending the Easter holidays at Waddy Point campsite in the north of the island. Despite the building of two luxury hotel resorts and a rapid increase in the number of tourists, the island has retained its remoteness and simplicity. It has only a few small shops and the electricity supply is limited to solar power or generator.

Because of difficulties with mobile phone reception on Fraser Island, it was midday before the news of Clinton’s death reached the mainland town of Maryborough and was broadcast to the world. Since the Azaria Chamberlain case twenty years earlier, any story involving a dead child and a dingo makes headline news, and by early afternoon ten helicopters were competing for space above the Waddy Point campsite. A no-fly exclusion zone was declared, forcing the journalists to fly back to the mainland without any interviews or photographs. Editors, eager to fill several pages of their newspapers, found that on the first news day after the attack there didn’t seem much to say about a small boy who had prayed in his tent the night before his death.

A reporter with the Brisbane *Courier Mail* was told that Clinton Gage’s father had pounded his fist on his four-wheel drive outside the Ranger’s station and had asked

over and over—“Why?” (Smith, “Island death” 5). No photograph of Mr. Gage was available and the report was second hand, but due to the shortage of copy it was printed anyway. In fact the journalist’s brief account captured all the vital ingredients of a tragedy which would soon question the management of dingoes and tourists on the island. Mr. Gage, the father who brought his young sons to Fraser Island, is part of the strange and ill-informed mix of Australian families camping “cheek by jowl” with dangerous animals. His four-wheel drive is one of the thousands of vehicles which explore beaches described as pristine wilderness. The Ranger station where Mr. Gage stood pounding his fist and asking “Why?” represents a Government group whose role is to protect Fraser Island’s wildlife and its human visitors, but on April 30 it failed them all. Mr. Gage’s agonized question needs answering. Why was an urban family encouraged to visit a place where aggressive dingoes roam freely among tourists and where young children had become regular targets for attacks in the previous ten years? Why did the Department of Parks and Wildlife continue to encourage camping after the senior ranger had warned “a child could be killed if the illegal feeding of the island’s dingoes by visitors continued” (Ryan, “Ranger warning” 5).

Many Australians have never accepted that a dingo had killed a baby at Ayers Rock National Park twenty years earlier, but unlike the Azaria Chamberlain case, the cause of Clinton Gage’s death could not be denied. The Australian public, the tourism industry and the Government decision-makers needed to question the various discourses which had encouraged visitors, especially families with young children, to seek out the dingo and to ask if they had ignored rational and informed knowledge in favour of a flawed ideology.

***“Everything that was written about dingo management before [. . .] is out of date.”***

Statement by Dean Wells, Queensland Minister for the Environment (Bissett 7)

In the confused, sad and confronting days following the death of young Clinton Gage, the newspapers were gradually able to provide more information and the public began to express their feelings. A study of the Brisbane *Courier Mail* and the smaller and more parochial *Fraser Coast Chronicle* reveals the discourse of the Queensland public, and of government and tourism departments. Initially many writers sympathised with the Gage family and demanded the removal of all dingoes from Fraser Island. But feelings changed from regret at the child’s death to more violent emotions when Peter Beattie, the Queensland Premier, ordered a cull of twenty-eight dingoes which frequented the tourist areas. Photographs of a dingo eating a food scrap while a ranger aimed a rifle at its head caused public outrage. Peter Beattie and the Gage family received “hate mail” as sympathy swung away from the child and towards the dingoes which were dying because of human mistakes.

After the death of Clinton Gage, his parents were criticised as uncaring for taking their children to a wilderness area and failing to supervise them. A writer to the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* asked: “Where were the parents and what were they doing at the

time to allow their small children to be wandering on their own?” (Allen 6). A letter with the heading “Parents to Blame” stated: “Parents and responsible adults must make sure their children remain with them” (Shepherd 6). A year after the attack on Clinton Gage and in direct contradiction to holiday brochures which had described the island as a “carefree place” suitable for children, the Queensland Minister of the Environment began advising visitors that: “they should not camp outside designated areas if they have children under 14 with them” (Wells, “should not camp” 5).

The Minister was as “wise after the event” as the writer of a letter which is now filed in the Chamberlain archives. It was sent in April 1984 to Lindy Chamberlain at Darwin gaol where she was serving a life sentence for the murder of her child. It was perhaps one of the cruelest letters she was to receive—not a crank letter to be filed under “Nuts” by the organised and wryly humorous Lindy, but one written with the benefit of hindsight. The writer asked: “why did you ever go to that outlandish place with a nine weeks old baby? [ . . . ] my daughter would no more have taken her adored little one on such a ‘roughing it’ stint, than fly” (Bernoth Box 112).

Many Australians chose not to confront their alienation from “that outlandish place”—an alienation so profound and dysfunctional that they no longer seem able to recognize the dangers of wildness. It appears that for thousands of families the wild and potentially dangerous Uluru and Fraser Island were considered suitable places for children on holiday. The Waddy Point campsite was crowded with families when the Gages arrived for the Easter school holidays of 2001 and Lindy Chamberlain describes

her family's arrival at the Ayers Rock campsite in 1980: "Lots of families had decided to visit one of Australia's great tourist attractions during the school holidays and we could tell, even in the darkness, that the camping area was fairly full. Later we learned there were around 2000 there" (22).

Even after Clinton's death, no attempt was made to limit the numbers of visitors to the island—only the Fraser Island dingoes were "limited." Children were still encouraged, new packs of aggressive dingoes took the place of those which had been killed by rangers and more visitors (mostly children) were bitten, scratched and attacked. The lucrative tourist industry settled down to make more money and tourists continued to pour on to the island at the rate of 350 thousand a year.

A resident of Banff in Canada used the words "Snack sized" to describe how grizzly bears perceived his small children (Conway 25). "Snack sized" children and babies continued to visit Fraser Island and to play a dangerous game of chance with a wild predator. So why did so many parents bring their children into close proximity with places and animals which others consider to be dangerous and unsuitable? Were they uncaring parents or were they perhaps parents who cared too much; who wanted the very best for their children; who believed that time in the wilderness was beneficial? Were the Chamberlain and Gage families victims of two confused and contradictory discourses which first encouraged them to take their children into the bush and then, when things went wrong; condemned them for behaving irresponsibly?

An article in the *Courier Mail* speaks of “the innocence of Fraser Island” (Smith, “Aura of fear” 5). The special relationship of children with the spontaneous, innocent and uncontaminated elements of Romantic environmental discourse has been embraced by parents and teachers since John Locke and Rousseau “discovered” the child in nature (Lesnick-Oberstein 210). Matt Cartmill places the origins of such beliefs in folktales and medieval stories of saints where “friendship with the wild animals is proof of a pure heart” (53). Nature study was introduced into the American school curriculum in the 1880s to encourage respect and reverence for the creatures of the environment and their creator (Cartmill 151). Adrian Franklin identifies a contemporary group of parents who “enjoy watching TV programmes about animals, visiting zoos, safari parks and national parks” and who believe that a sympathetic knowledge of animals is an important part of their children’s education (32). Karin Lesnik-Oberstein explains the evangelical role of the child in literature as a redeemer of adults. She considers that two-thirds of children’s books make use of the environment and especially animals. The books which adults choose to give or to read to children often convey the redemptive power of nature and animals (208-210). *Black Beauty*’s suffering which raised awareness of animal cruelty and the sacrifice of the Christ-like lion Aslam in the *Narnia* chronicles are examples of a redemptive discourse in which contact with animals mends, improves and redeems humans, particularly children. Shepard agrees: “Failure to nurture childhood enthusiasm for animals produces adults bereft of diverse living forms as the basis of religious conceptions and values” (*The Others* 89).

Spending time with animals may offer other advantages besides redemption. In “Looking for Nature at the Mall” Jennifer Price reveals the marketing strategy of a chain of American stores called Nature Company. She claims the store “plugs into longtime, distinctly middle-class traditions of using nature to educate children's emotional lives” (189). In an essay about San Diego’s Sea World, Susan Davis also links the idea of redemption through nature with middle-class notions of education and self-improvement. Davis defines parents who visit nature as the “right sort” and “caring, sensitive persons” (212-13). Presumably Mr. and Mrs. Gage were the “right sort,” for in a newspaper interview, Clinton’s school principal described them as “lovely people. You want a school full of them” and their son is described as “clever, gentle” and “thoughtful” (Watt, “Student’s memorial” 1). The Chamberlains were also the “right sort,” middle class and educated. Michael was a pastor with a University degree and Lindy, the daughter of a pastor, was studying to be a teacher. It seems probable that the Chamberlain and Gage families brought their children to wild and remote areas not just for enjoyment, but for affirmation of their place in society. In his book about the trial of Lindy Chamberlain, *Evil Angels*, John Bryson describes two different groups of people at a Northern Territory campsite. Those on their way to Ayers Rock National Park, as it was still called in 1980, stayed quietly in tents and caravans, leaving their car doors open to avoid annoying neighbours with the sound of slamming doors. Those travelling to a rodeo drank alcohol, played loud music and were rowdy throughout the night (15-16). My own method of identifying the “right sort” of children is to watch who drops their litter on the ground and who collects it up and puts it in the bin!

On their return to school from their wilderness holiday, the children's diaries, photographs, and Show and Tell sessions will earn them praise from their teacher and consolidate their position as members of a particular, elite group. The parents also receive personal rewards—their engagement with the Australian bush and its animals has replenished the child within themselves. Some carry nostalgic memories of their own bush childhood folded away among the T-shirts and the sun block. Others have little experience of the bush, since two-thirds of Australians now live in towns of more than one hundred thousand people and have only experienced the bush vicariously in stories, films and television series and commercials.

In his book *The Future Eaters*, Tim Flannery describes how the knowledge of native fauna has gradually been lost to young urban Australians. He recalls keeping blue tongue lizards, snakes and frogs as a boy and caring for his grandmother's cockatoo and a friend's pet magpie. Now such activities are discouraged by protective species legislation and many children no longer understand the interaction of people and fauna (403). Parents are keen to travel to wilderness areas like Fraser Island to regain what has been lost and to pass this knowledge on to their children, but they are ignorant about how to relate to nature and to wild animals such as the dingo. All these feelings—muddled longings to regain the child in the man, yearnings for the lost world of a bush childhood, guilt that one's children have not known that world, ambition for those children—are exploited by the Fraser Island tourist industry in advertisements, brochures and websites.

Families are actively encouraged to visit Fraser Island through a Romantic discourse which endorses the interaction of children with dingoes. Cartoons and photographs of cute dingoes dressed in clothes promote the island in brochures. Kingfisher Bay Resort carries a Qantas “Family Value” logo which offers baby-sitting, child menus, highchairs and cots as well as a “Kid’s Club” and a children’s pool (Qantas Holiday Brochure 26). The *Courier Mail* revealed a website for Kingfisher Bay resort at the time of Clinton’s death which showed a group of children crouching in the sea with a hotel “ranger,” smiling at a dingo just an arm’s length away. The caption read: “Kids have fun learning about the Fraser Island environment with the junior Eco ranger program at Kingfisher Bay resort.” With the title of “Snap Happy Dingoes promote tourist resort” the article in the *Courier Mail* stated: “Fraser Island’s award-winning Kingfisher Bay resort has been promising tourists a close encounter with dingoes through slick advertising brochures and its website” (Retschlag, Ryan and Dullroy, “Snap Happy” 5). When questioned about the dingo/children combination, the media manager for the resort stated there was no intention to remove the contents of the website which had been part of the Junior Eco Ranger programme for five years. She told journalists: “one of the reasons people came to Fraser Island was for the dingoes” (Retschlag, Ryan and Dullroy, “Kids have fun” 5). (The dingo has since been airbrushed out of the website photograph and a warning “Watch Out For Wild Dingoes” has been placed on the Kingfisher Bay brochure.)

Fraser Island tourist operators appear to have researched the ambitions and dreams of potential customers. They have targeted parents, identified and exploited their desires to share an enjoyable, educational and improving wilderness experience with their children. Like an irresponsible version of the Pied Piper, the tourism industry played its bewitching music, luring parents and children to the island with a flawed and impossible discourse—the children’s dingo. They have encouraged families to visit Fraser Island with their young children, babies, toddlers and adventurous nine-year-olds. They have created a friendly, family dingo, similar to the quiet domestic dog at home, but better than old Spot or Rover, because the new discourse of the dingo carries all the middle-class, didactic advantages of Australian wildness and Romantic improvement.

The enormous gulf between city and bush, between street-wise and practical country knowledge shows up in this cynical seduction of families. Sensible, well-educated parents who daily negotiate the challenges of busy city life make irresponsible decisions about the wilderness. Their behaviour provides an answer to Mr. Gage’s agonized cry of “Why?” Because the tourist industry knew how to probe the ambitions of parents and capitalize on them. Because the presence of purebred dingoes acted like a magnet, drawing a growing number of families and their dollars to the island. Because like *Babes in the Wood*, parents threw away their last crumbs of common sense, denying or perhaps ignorant of the mounting evidence of the dingo’s wild and predatory nature, their fears lulled by the seductive discourse of the children’s dingo.

Families had been conditioned to accept the redemptive power of animals years before they sent off for brochures, bought the tent or booked the hotel. Many parents would attempt to replace their own and their children's lost knowledge by choosing books and film about animals and children interacting with nature. Few children's books have been written about dingoes and most reflect the author's struggle to come to terms with a wild animal, their ignorance about the habits of predators and their inability to reach the conclusion of experienced handlers that dingoes are not to be trusted. The three books I have selected for review were available in school libraries and bookshops in 2005 and target older primary school children. Presumably they would have been read by many school children before a family visit to Fraser Island. Two of the authors endorse a dangerous lack of caution towards the wild dingo and parents should not consider them as suitable models for child/dingo interaction.

*The White Dingo*, published in 1965 was written by Mary Elwyn Patchett, author of several children's books about animals. The white dingo, Palari, is rescued as a puppy by two children, Trudi and Tim, and their dog Barney. Patchett seems aware of the difficulty of dingoes living with humans after the puppy stage has passed and Palari returns to the wilderness, reappearing later with a mate to rescue Trudi who is trapped in an underground cave. Patchett's writing reflects the problem of blending the factual dingo which is wild and impossible to tame with the fictional redemptive dingo demanded by Romantic discourse.

Trudi whispered “Palari, oh Palari, please help us.”

She felt Barney leave her side and still the white dingo stood there. She remembered that dingoes do not like dogs, perhaps Palari had forgotten his friend, Barney, perhaps he would attack and kill him...she held her breath. [. . .] she sensed rather than saw that Barney was putting out his nose in greeting [. . .] Trudi’s voice came softly through the darkness, trembling with nervousness as she called to the wild dog that had once loved her as she had loved him. (135)

Patchett has difficulty sustaining the idea that wild Palari is as loyal as a domestic dog might be. The author refrains from falsely describing a loving, caring dingo which remembers Trudi and instead she uses two devices to sidestep the issue of the unreliable wild dingo. She creates an unusual and special white animal which can move outside the restrictions of fact and she overcomes the problematic child/wild dingo relationship by using Barney the dog as a mediator. The white dingo communicates with Barney, showing him an escape route and the child follows Barney to freedom. A Romantic discourse which represents the dingo as benign and helpful to children is alluded to indirectly through Palari’s purity of colour and his association with the family dog.

*The Dingo Summer* (1987), by Ivy Baker, uses the same device of difference and whiteness to explain the behaviour of a dingo which befriends an orphan Mark. In Baker’s story, the recent deaths of Mark’s father and the dingo’s mate create a shared

bond of sympathy and friendship. The dingo, Pandi, is completely wild; it has never lived with humans or been tamed by them, yet Baker describes it accepting food from Mark and allowing the boy to pet it and take it to a shed to live. The use of a special white dingo fails to absolve the author from the inaccurate and improper suggestion that a wild dingo can be tamed like a dog. The author imparts her knowledge of dingoes through Mark and a supposedly wise old farmhand called Fred. Mark is a schoolboy from the city who learns his dingo facts from an encyclopaedia, while Fred, living in a rural area where dingoes are still trapped, is supposedly providing bushman knowledge. Uncle Jack tells Mark: “if you want to know anything about dingos (sic), ask Fred. He’s the finest bushman I know” (40), and so Fred “reminisced about dingos (sic) to his eager listener” (52): “There’s two kinds. There’s th’one they call th’ desert dingo. Y’see that one in th’ dry parts of Australia. It’s usually a darker brown colour, ‘n it’s thinner, ‘n it’s coat’s finer. The alpine dingo, now, that’s th’ one we ‘ave up in th’ mountains” (47).

Despite his colloquial speech, and Uncle Jack’s endorsement, Fred (like Mark) appears to have gained all his information from the same encyclopaedia. And like Fred, Ivy Baker shows no practical knowledge of dingoes and appears ignorant of the danger of small boys feeding meat to wild dingoes, patting them and sitting alone in the bush or in a shed with them. She creates a situation which is alarmingly similar to events on Fraser Island and encourages a romantic interpretation of the wild dingo as noble, wise and redemptive. (Befriending the dingo helps Mark to recover from the death of his father).

Similar redemptive discourses now surround the wolf and are challenged by Barry Lopez. He describes how in the past “it was assumed that wolves were basely motivated” and that “suddenly” they are perceived as “noble and wise” (62-63). Aboriginal myths describe Dreaming dingoes which are also noble and wise, teaching and looking after the interests of humans. But such representations are balanced by the knowledge that dingoes will kill and eat vulnerable humans if the opportunity arises. Lopez and Barbara Tjikadu, the Aboriginal tracker who gave evidence at the Royal Commission into the death of Azaria Chamberlain, both use a discourse which is grounded in empirical knowledge. When Tjikadu was asked: “what kind of tucker or game do dingoes get around the Rock?” she replied: “A dingo is a dingo, and if he wants a feed, he’ll kill to eat” (Chamberlain 635). Lopez states that analysing the wolf in human terms “leads us even further from an understanding of the animal” for “wolves are wolves, not men” (63)—and similarly “a dingo is a dingo.” Aboriginal ways of talking about the dingo in myth and daily life are sourced from its biological habits and tempered with warnings, but non-indigenous dingo discourse is becoming as polarised as the extreme ideologies of the wolf. Although the dingo is still hunted as vermin in many areas it is now protected in National Parks and opinions have divided. A newspaper reporter succinctly describes the two contemporary attitudes as “cull or cuddle.” Both extremes arise from ignorance of the dingo and both result in its death, since it is the habituated dingo, that is the dingo which has lost its fear of humans, which is killed. On Fraser Island, the use of a Romantic discourse which describes a redemptive, noble and wise dingo is as misguided as the trappers’ belief in a cowardly

or promiscuous dingo. Ivy Baker's writing inadvertently shows the danger for humans of the "cuddle" or even "kiss a dingo" discourse: "It extended its black-flecked muzzle to touch him lightly on the cheek. Mark's breath caught in his throat with sheer pleasure" (38). Baker is describing a wild dingo sitting alone with a small boy! The irresponsible discourse of *A Dingo Summer* provides yet another answer to Mr. Gage's question "Why?"

It should have been apparent for several years before the death of Clinton Gage that there was a rogue factor in the commercial juggernaut rolling through the wilderness of Fraser Island. The tourists were pulling their weight, bringing their children along and growing steadily in numbers each year. The resorts were winning awards, providing jobs for local people and making money. Only the dingo was letting the side down, so to speak, attacking the very group of humans that it was supposed to attract. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service was well aware of the high number of attacks on children by dingoes and produced The Fraser Island Dingo Management Strategy in 1999. Its authors wrote firmly: "Dingoes regard humans (mainly children) as their prey," and "You cannot continue to encourage families with young children to holiday in the company of uncontrolled predators" (Taylor 6). Rhonda Cook, a member of the Management Board maintained in an interview that dingoes hunting for food did not differentiate between children and animals ("Dingo Management Strategy" 4, 14). While the tourism industry saw the dingo as bait to entice child visitors, the dingo assessed children as prey.

Laurie Corbett states in his book *The Dingo in Australia and Asia* that dingoes kill young animals more frequently than adult animals and target prey in terms of its ability to defend itself or injure the attacking dingoes (113-16). On Fraser Island the food resources of the dingo had been dwindling for some time. Dingo numbers had grown while small native animals had declined. Nature follows a fragile and complex balance. A decline in sea grass has caused a depletion of the dingo's fish diet. At the same time three sources of food had ceased with the decision of the Government Department of Parks and Wildlife to remove brumbies, close the rubbish tips and bury fish offal. As it became increasingly used to people through hand feeding, the dingo turned its attention to the only remaining prey—humans. For the last decade it has chased and attacked vulnerable humans, especially children. David Seward, veterinarian and manager of the Bargo Dingo Sanctuary, described one of the triggers which will change a passive dingo into a hunter of prey as “a shrieking, running child” (5).

After the death of Clinton Gage, letters and articles in newspapers documented attacks on children at Fraser Island, many of which had previously gone unreported. Tom Savage wrote from England: “When I visited in 1999, I saw two attacks in three days. [. . .] In the second incident a terrified father was forced to hold his baby above his head as two dingoes jumped up, trying to reach the child” (14). One week before Clinton's death and only three hundred metres from the sand dunes where the boy was killed, Dean Monaghan, chairman of the Fraser Island Wilderness Club, drove his vehicle at a dingo which was aggressively circling a woman and her fourteen-month-

old child (Smith, 'Island death' 5). The day after Clinton's death, the *Courier Mail* printed a list of dingo attacks and incidents at Fraser Island in the last decade. Attacks on children were particularly severe during 1998. On April 4<sup>th</sup> at 7.30 in the evening a thirteen-month-old girl, Kasey Rowles, was snatched from the Waddy Point campsite by a dingo which locked its jaws on her shoulder and dragged her towards the surrounding bush. It dropped the child when her father ran to rescue her. On the same day a two-year-old Norwegian girl was chased and bitten by a dingo. In May of the same year a two-year-old boy was attacked and in August a four-year-old boy was hospitalized. In March 1997 a five-year-old boy playing near a barbecue area of Eurong Beach Resort was attacked by two dingoes. The animals bit him on the legs and groin and tried to drag him away. In January 1994 a mother beat off a dingo which was attacking her nine-year-old son on a Fraser Island surf beach. He required thirteen stitches to a bite wound on the inside of his thigh and six stitches to wounds on the back of his legs. The following month Fraser Island fishermen drove off a pack of dingoes which were herding a mother and her fifteen-month-old baby into the sea. One dingo lunged at the woman's arms, the others snapped at her legs to keep her moving back into the water. In 1993 a nine-year-old girl was knocked to the ground and bitten eight times on her legs and buttocks by two dingoes ("Chronicle of serious injuries" 5). Despite these serious incidents, the discourse of the children's dingo was maintained for several years by a tourist board which crossed its fingers, handed out some cautionary literature and prayed that the dingo situation would not deteriorate any further. Parents were not made aware of the frequency and severity of the attacks on children.

The early settlers had never accepted a European discourse of nature as a place where children could blossom and improve. Instead it kept its young close to home, fearful of dangers. The visits of the Chamberlain and Gage families to Uluru and Fraser Island were condemned by a colonial discourse of the lost child who wanders into the wilderness and is never found. The role of the mother of the lost child was to stay at home, waiting, weeping and perhaps brewing hot tea for the men who searched the bush. She was not supposed to take her children into the dangerous bush and lose them there! Romantic discourse both encouraged the child to visit the bush and perceived nature as mother earth. But as Kay Schaffer observes in *Women and the Bush*: “in Australia the fantasy of the land as mother is one which is particularly harsh, relentless and unforgiving” (22). Julie Marcus explains how Lindy Chamberlain was seen as a “bad mother” because she “entered the wild and exposed her child’s purity to its danger” (“Prisoner of Discourse” 16). However mothers do not always have to bear all the blame for the loss of their children. Peter Pierce describes how Pretty Dick’s cries in Marcus Clarke’s story of a lost child are mistaken for those of a parrot by the overseer, Mr. Gaunt, and are ignored. Pretty Dick interprets the overseer’s failure to hear his cries as a human desertion by adults (43). Pierce explains how insinuations of parental absence and neglect are directed at the father instead of the mother in Lawson’s story “The Babies in the Bush.” The father of the children, an experienced bushman who could have found the children was away at the time on a drunken spree (49).

The culling of dingoes at Uluru and particularly at Fraser Island twenty years later increased the hostility towards bad and irresponsible parents and polarised public attitudes towards children and wild animals. The official “knee-jerk” response to the Fraser Island attack involved the shooting of a large number of dingoes, followed by a regular culling, which continues to this day, of those dingoes which have learned to come too close to tourists. Killing the offending dingoes was a fairly predictable solution for a number of reasons. Firstly, aggressive dingoes interfered with the lucrative tourist industry and must be dealt with quickly and obviously. Secondly, although protected, the Fraser Island dingoes are in every other way identical to their less fortunate unprotected relatives, who are legally and routinely exterminated in sheep farming areas. Many letters from trappers and farmers made no distinctions between protected and unprotected and endorsed the view that Australia would be a better place without *any* category of dingo. Thirdly, the idea of a human being, and especially a child, being attacked and eaten by a wild animal energises an immediate vendetta which draws on the assumption expressed in letters as “One child is worth more than a whole country full of dingoes” (Short 6). The Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, used this assumption in a reply to those who condemned the killing of protected dingoes: “I just say again, let’s have a bit of a reality check—a young boy has lost his life (Balogh, Robbins and Newman 6).

While one group punished the dingoes, another group blamed tourists, especially careless parents, for the attacks on children and the consequent killing of dingoes. Belinda Wilson cites a newspaper account which appears to blame Lindy

Chamberlain's alleged lies rather than her carelessness, for the killing of a popular dingo, Old Ding-a-Ling: "After he was shot there was an air of sadness and loss, but Lindy had said a dingo took the baby and so 'dingoes became the enemy'" (60). Two decades later, letter writers were ready to challenge historic anthropocentric assumptions about the value of humans and to perceive the culling of dingoes as equal to the grief of "irresponsible" parents. The Fraser Island attack prompted several letters to newspapers which began: "I am sorry for the death of the child *but...*" The writers then qualified their sympathy with condemnation of the ignorance of tourists in general and parents in particular.

The debate swung wildly from the grimly traditional belief that a thousand dingoes are not worth one child's life, to the "benign, sweet view of animals as better sorts of people than people themselves" described by Franklin (55). Cartmill describes how Walt Disney's films and cartoons portray animals as more innocent and friendly than humans (220) and provide a polarising discourse of good animals and bad adult humans (158). Even the voracious and snarling Tasmanian Devil, known to locals as "a jaw on legs" is now the cute and fluffy star of an American cartoon. Such Romantic discourse which Cartmill calls "nursery Romanticism" (220), bathes the dingo in the reflected golden glow of Walt Disney's Bambi and spiritual dolphins. Ironically, this same 'anthropocentrism in reverse' (that is the replacement of the idea that humans are better than animals, with the belief that animals are better than humans), is used simultaneously—by the parents who brought their children to Fraser Island, and the

critics who blame those parents for actions which resulted in the deaths of protected dingoes.

There are more sensible ways to treat the dingo and the publication of *Dingo Boy* in 1980 provides a compromise somewhere between “cull or cuddle.” Fourteen-year-old Carl has been brought up in a city orphanage and is sent to live with foster parents on a sheep property. Carl is used by them as an unpaid labourer and he feels unwanted and unloved. The farm is bounded by a dingo fence and Carl hears the dingoes’ howls in the night and sees them running in a pack. The farmer Ray hates and fears the dingoes which have broken through the fence several times and killed his lambs. Carl identifies and sympathises with their position as outcasts on the other side of the fence: “He became aware of a distant sound, a long drawn-out and rather eerie howling. That must be the dingoes, he realised. No one round here likes them much either. At least I haven’t got people coming after me with guns” (Dugan 19).

The author, Michael Dugan writes with accuracy about farming life, conveying the hard work and blisters of a day’s fencing: “Ray threaded the wire through a hole in the strainer post which was about the width of a tree trunk. Then he wound it round the post and fixed it into the wood with a series of v-shaped staple nails” (13). Dugan’s symbolic use of the dingo as a mirror of Carl’s personal alienation from the world is never confused with a redemptive children’s dingo. They remain wild animals, to be observed and thought about from a cautious distance. When a dingo becomes caught in one of Ray’s traps, Carl is unable to help it: “He tried talking gently to the dingo as

one talks to a pet dog, but the animal showed no sign of understanding and only increased its ferocity whenever the boy tried to approach it” (42).

Carl is forced to borrow Ray’s gun and shoot the dingo to end its suffering. The author succeeds in giving dignity and nobility to the dingo, not by manipulating it into relationships with children, but by allowing Carl to respect an alienation similar to his own. Carl’s actions also give dignity and nobility back to himself, the unwanted orphan boy who can identify with the dingo. Dugan’s book was published in the same year as Azaria Chamberlain’s death at Ayers Rock and long before the Fraser Island death. Perhaps if the knowledge contained in *Dingo Boy* had been used as a teaching tool for all visitors to the island, parents would have been better equipped to protect their children.

The damage has been done. The number of dingoes on Fraser Island have been severely reduced, a young boy is dead, his brother and countless other children have been traumatized by dingo attacks, and parents are being advised not to bring children to camp on the Fraser Island beaches. Dean Wells now states: “If they wish to lie down with wolves, leave the children at home” (“wolves” 1-2). The brochures of smiling dingoes, dressed in clothes and playing with children have done their worst. John Djilganji Jones, a descendant of the Ngulugbara people who once lived on the northern part of Fraser Island, described the message in the brochures as “wrong, wrong, wrong” (Retschlag, Ryan and Dullroy, “snap happy” 5). The Romantic

discourse of thoughtful, caring dingoes, reaching out to children in friendship is  
“wrong, wrong, wrong.”

The parents arrive at Fraser Island with good intentions. They will wash the city grime from their bodies in soft blue lakes and walk barefoot in the sand. They will show their children how to make their own agenda, learning from nature, moving at a slower, quieter pace. They will teach them to be self reliant, to find happiness in simple pleasures, to do without the electronic gadgets which fill up their city lives. But they must learn to temper their admiration of the dingo with knowledge. Like traditional Aborigines they should respect the dingo with respect but also treat it with caution.. Parents must be watchful and alert and keep their children close beside them or leave them at home, for the age of carefree innocence is over on Fraser Island.

***A DISCOURSE OF COLONIAL APPROPRIATION —THE TAMED DINGO***

***Let's kill all the dingoes and while we're at it let's bulldoze those sand dunes and drain those dangerous lakes. Then we can build Dingoworld on Fraser Island to remind us of the former Aussie wildlife.*** (Dootson 10)

The above letter provides an exasperated response to the culling of dingoes on Fraser Island after the death of Clinton Gage. As the writer implies, tourists visit the island for its wildness, but when the wild things bite back, they want them tamed into Dingoworld. Ideally, the increasingly popular habit of holidaying in the wilderness, known as ecotourism, should have a minimal negative impact on the environment (Weaver 3). But as an annual influx of 350,000 tourists and countless four-wheel drives churn up the sands of Fraser Island, ecotourism can be viewed dismally as “the thin end of the wedge,” encouraging unsuitable developments and human interference in a fragile environment (Figgis viii). “Green sells” writes Weaver in *Ecotourism* (97). Holiday brochures tempt the tourists with the promise of wild animals in a pristine environment: “You’ll stay in the Wilderness Lodge, set in a eucalypt forest and surrounded by a wealth of bush tucker plants and birds;” “Spot the birds of prey and keep an eye out for the dingo” (Wilderness Adventure Tours); “Watch native animals roaming free in their natural habitats for a rare insight into the world of the

wild while you visit Fraser Island.[...] Dingoes are a common sight on the island” (Fraser Coast Visitors Guide 15).

Green dreams lure the visitors but a green environmental discourse has never sat comfortably with the colonial urge to tame and exploit. One group protects the trees and the other chops them down. Environmentalists might thrill to a brief glimpse of the elusive dingo but tourists with cameras urge it to beg for a biscuit. For many visitors to Fraser Island the sublime and pristine provide only a backdrop, albeit a glorious backdrop, to the serious business of appropriation. The tourists’ entrenched belief that nature can be improved, tempts them to coax wildness into civilized culture. On Fraser Island green and colonial pull in opposite directions in an uneasy mix of awe and appropriation.

For several years, until the death of Clinton Gage, dingoes provided the bait which lured tourists to Fraser Island, fulfilling all the requirements of a green environmental discourse. Their situation is spiritually uplifting: while other dingoes in Queensland are still persecuted, this group has found sanctuary on the island. They are rare and pristine, one of the last groups of purebred dingoes. They are also beautiful, wild and Australian. Unfortunately they have one more attribute, exploited to the full by the tourism industry. It is a characteristic which reveals the dark side of ecotourism, swinging the discourse from sacred to secular. Dingoes resemble dogs.

Confronted with the dingo as yet another example of island wildness, many tourists withdraw into a comfortable and familiar suburban agenda, treating the dingo like a dog. Biologically the dingo stands half-way between wolf and dog; socially the

dingoes which frequent tourist areas are half tame and half wild. John Morton describes the methods used by Lévi-Strauss to categorise animals into related sets of oppositions and finds that such European definitions apply “even better here than they do there.” Morton applies a local version of the Lévi-Strauss theory and interprets native animals as *like* human Australians, sharing similar characteristics. He interprets pets, especially domestic dogs, as *being* human in all but name (33). Morton chooses kangaroos and wallabies as examples of native animals, and foxes as an example of the feral. His Australian adaptation excludes or ignores the dingo, which resists every attempt to categorise it and instead inhabits all three discourses. Letters and comments to newspapers support an Australian confusion about the dingo. It can be dog:

“They’re quite cute” (Green and Watt 21), or native: “These animals should be protected like crocodiles” (Adsett 6), or feral: “This savage Asian dog flourishes in every mainland Australian state” (Freer 12). In Kaye Kessing’s series of paintings “Out of the Spinifex”, which depict the conflict of native and feral animals, the dingo, is firmly positioned as a feral predator about to swallow a native lizard. Yet her description on the back of the “Bilby’s Ring” poster describes the dingo as “probably introduced about 6000 years ago.” Even the shorter DNA-supported estimate of five thousand years seems a very long time for an animal to be branded as feral.

The farmer’s discourse of the dingo as an introduced feral killer of sheep means little to urban Australians who buy their lamb chops at the supermarket and have no reason to identify the dingo as a wolfish enemy. When city people visit Fraser Island they invariably perceive the dingo as a thin version of their own domestic dog. The close physical similarities between dog and dingo sends confusing messages to western

civilization. In fact owning and caring for a dog is one of the strongest signs that Australians *are* civilized. Julie Marcus the anthropologist explains how we train and teach our dogs and children to fit into our society, rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad. Bureaucracy sanctions our ownership of dogs by issuing licenses. Cruelty to dogs is socially unacceptable and the perpetrators are treated as outcasts. Marcus describes our disgust with people who eat dogs. (Our belief that the practice is uncivilized has caused offence in Asia.) We lavish love and care on our dogs, treating them as cherished family members, paying for operations if they are sick, grieving if they die. Marcus writes, “Who, other than a monster, could kill the old family dog without intense emotional distress?” (“Prisoner of Discourse” 17).

The dingo, which looks similar to the beloved and devoted dog but behaves as a wild animal is fraught with problems for many tourists. In the bush the working dog’s efforts are rewarded with food, shelter and a pat. The attempts of urban dogs to imitate human behaviour, to beg and sit, to succumb to the wearing of a collar and lead, all endorse the superior intelligence and status of its owner. A contract has been made between man and dog in which both give and receive certain things. The dingo fails to fulfill the dog part of the contract and according to Dr. David Seward, manager of the Bargo Dingo Sanctuary, we feel betrayed when it bites us or attacks a child (5). Larry Monk of the Tourism Board states: “The trouble is that they look cute and they are not” (“Visitors not deterred” 2).

The urge to tame wild dingoes into domestic dogs should not come as a surprise to the writer of the Dingoworld letter. Australians have been busy taming nature into culture since Collins arrived with the First Fleet and stepped into a wood:

the spot which had so lately been the abode of silence and tranquility was now changed to that of noise, clamour, and confusion: but after a time order gradually prevailed every where. As the woods were opened and the ground cleared, the various encampments were extended, all wore the appearance of regularity. (6)

At first the wood seemed silent and tranquil to the colonists. If there were any birds, animals or humans hiding in the wilderness, they remained still and unheard. Gradually the land became a living palimpsest, a blank space of cut trees and cleared ground in which order and regularity were written confidently over the fading indigenous presence. Collins provides a housewifely description of order. Dave Foreman, founder of *Earth First*, writes of “midwifing” agriculture (qtd. in Cronon 83). Nature was tamed, controlled, civilized, tidied up and led by the nose into culture. The settlers claimed the land in a discourse of appropriation and they changed the rules. The intruders became the rightful owners while the indigenous retreated into the body of the unwelcome wild “other.” Trees and undergrowth, Aborigines and native animals, especially dingoes, were pushed to the edges of the clearing.

For two centuries after Collins’ great spring clean, the emphasis would be on civilizing nature, an Aegean task in a vast land teeming with unwanted vegetation and superfluous humans and animals. Australia’s settlement population has always been predominantly urban and in the last thirty years rural living has declined further until eighty-six percent of Australians now live in towns. The census of 1996 reveals that over half the Australian population live in the five major cities (Weaver and Oppermann 78).

Most of the visitors to Fraser Island have travelled from urban homes where wildness has been thoroughly tamed. Gary Snyder calls such people “nature-illiterate” (28). Dogs and cats have replaced the native animals. There are no dingoes in towns or cities, and the only night-time howls are from the wind in empty car parks. As early as 1924, John Flynn, founder of the Flying Doctor Service, was aware of the estrangement of city people from the bush and he advocated the first version of ecotourism for them. He described city people as “strap-hangers,” only interested in “frocks and cars” and suggested holidays in the outback to enable the feeble strap-hangers “to breathe into the body, and mind and spirit, deep draughts of virgin air” (qtd. in Hains 159). It would be many years before increased leisure time and spending money combined with better roads and transport would encourage Australians to take such holidays (Weaver and Oppermann 76-83).

Dingoes on Fraser Island were not exploited as money earners until recently. The *Lonely Planet's* “Travel Survival Kit” of 1989 makes no mention of them in its description of Fraser Island, relying instead on “towering dunes, thick forests, walking tracks, interesting wildlife and clear freshwater lakes and streams” (383). Lindy Chamberlain wrote of the “fossicking” dingoes at Ayers Rock which moved around tents and stood in the shadows of barbecues in 1980, seeking food scraps from the tourists (32). But dingoes remained shy and hidden for years on Fraser Island, troubling no one until increasing numbers of tourists had corrupted them with titbits. A regular visitor describes the behaviour of the Fraser Island dingoes in 1991 when the number of holiday visitors was still small:

They were extremely shy—terrified of humans and vehicles. If a dingo did show up scavenging along the shoreline, there would inevitably be a gathering of four-wheel-drives as visitors threw their barbecue sausages and sandwiches to tempt it to stay long enough for a photograph. (Ryan and Hammond, “extremely shy” 15)

The flexible dingo soon learned to overcome its fear and trade its dignity, freedom and eventually its life for a sausage. A letter to the *Fraser Coast Chronicle* described how dingoes had learned “the mechanisms for a morsel and a smile for the camera” (“mechanisms for a morsel” 6). Other writers accepted that dingoes no longer waited to be handed food but served themselves: “they steal food, including baby’s bottles, from backpacks [. . .] they knock open Eskies, they tear down tents” (Green, “Mother of 1998 survivor Sad but not Surprised” 5). A tourist staying at the Kingfisher Bay Resort described a particularly resourceful dingo which “crept from its lair beneath the stumps of the resort, dodged between sunbathers and grabbed a sandwich from a table” (Green, “Savaging the hand that feeds them” 15). A woman holidaying in a unit at Kingfisher Bay beat off a dingo with a folding chair as it attempted to climb on to the balcony (Green, “Brisbane woman” 5).

By 2001 the transition from shy hunter to aggressive entrepreneurial beggar was complete. David Seward describes the dingo’s natural mixture of low aggression and high prey drive as Jekyll and Hyde behaviour. He writes of a typical dingo “placidly mooching around a picnic area, the next leaping up, snapping excitedly” (5). The tourist’s urge to tame, aided by the hungry dingo’s willing acquiescence had produced an animal which could experience dog-like intimacy with humans, then attack them as

a wolf. Feelings about human interaction with the dingo were expressed in newspaper articles and letters: “humans on Fraser Island and elsewhere regarded them as shy pets and used food to coax them into camp sites or residences” (Maynes 8); “seeing that they look like a normal dog they think its alright to pat and feed them” (“like a normal dog” 4); “The problem with dingoes is that too many people relate to them via their pet dogs” (Lacy 12).

Tourists perceive the dingo as just a feed and a pat away from the beloved family dog and they have received the full force of criticism for their attempts to tame it. John Sinclair, environmentalist and protector of Fraser Island claimed that those who had contributed to the taming of dingoes “should be hanging their heads in shame” (Ryan 5). The tourists fought back briefly, claiming that long term residents and a Park Ranger had also fed dingoes. A letter to the *Courier Mail* described two dingoes called Sox and Alice which were allegedly fed, petted and protected during the cull by residents (Lucas14). The local residents soon rallied and Mrs. Fremantle, the island’s taxi driver, had the last word: “we don’t do silly things like get on all fours with a biscuit in our mouths—which I have seen tourists do” (Watt 3). Her words evoke a horrifying picture of a tourist crouching on the sand, teeth gripping a biscuit, straining towards a hesitant dingo, replaying the colonial hegemonic role of domination by consent.

Joseph Sax describes a similar attitude to wild bears in American National Parks. In *Mountains Without Handrails*, he describes tourists as vulnerable, fearful people who insist that the wilderness be tamed before they enter it (15). He discusses the popular anthropomorphous desire to change the grizzly bears which frequent campgrounds in

North America into cute and docile housepets. Sax explains the need to allow another version of bears:

the animal in his own habitat, behaving quite without regard to any predetermined notion of how we would like him to behave, sometimes threatening, almost always elusive, at times quite annoying. When we have to react to park animals in this setting, we are on the way to making our own agenda. (86)

At a conference held in May 1999, two years before Clinton's death, Laurie Corbett, scientist and dingo expert, explained that visitors to Fraser Island must change their expectations of the dingo. He advised that tourists should be educated so that "a fleeting glimpse of a wild dingo disappearing into the sunset would be more rewarding than a mob of wild dogs stealing food from a barbecue" ("Conservation Status of the Dingo" 18). John Dalungdalee Jones, gives the same advice: "The best way to see them is if they're completely shy of people and they're skipping through the scrub 20 to 30 feet away" ("the best way" 3). Events in 2001 showed that many tourists had not been educated. They had ignored notices posted around Fraser Island campsites, warning them not to feed the dingoes. Instead they had continued to break down the natural fear and timidity of the dingoes by feeding and petting them. The crouching fool with the biscuit and all the other people who have approached the dingoes on Fraser Island have not been prepared to observe the dingo in its own habitat. Speaking about the indigene in literature, Edward Said maintained: "there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a re-presence, or a representation" (21). Tourists have failed to make a new agenda, in which human and dingo share the same life stream in an

interdependent way without interfering with each other. Instead they incorporate the dingo into a colonised version of a re-presence—the domestic dog. They have come to the island bearing unsuitable gifts and demanding something in return, wrapping up the sausages and sandwiches in old western agendas of appropriation and dominance.

### *Feeling “at home” in the wilderness*

“Green sells” but it does not necessarily convince. The ecotourists have been enticed to the wilderness by a green discourse but once there they may reject what seems a passive role. The fleeting glimpse of an elusive dingo fails to satisfy the tourist. Cronon described the American environmental movement as “the grandchild of romanticism and post-frontier ideology” (73). Australian ecotourists voice a similar muddled discourse, in which environmental protection loses out to an active interference with the wilderness. The Fraser Island ecotourists seem unable to stand in awe, mouths agape with wonder; instead they roll up their sleeves and appropriate.

“The trouble with wilderness”, as William Cronon remarked in an essay of that name, is that it “expresses and reproduces the very values its devotees seek to reject” (80). And the trouble with ecotourists, is that they are so many and are often so alienated from bush life that their presence on Fraser Island changes wild nature into “Dingoworld.” Like King Midas with his hands of gold, the ecotourists seem doomed to change everything they touch.

Some National Parks make it easier to learn from nature than others, to return to simple pleasures. At Eungella near Mackay, the ranger strolls around in the late afternoon, encouraging campers to walk to the top of a steep river bank and stand quietly for half an hour, enduring the occasional mosquito or leech. Eventually to the crowd's delight, platypus swim out from the bank and go about their business, unaware of the quiet humans watching patiently from the bank. There is no point in bringing cameras; it's hard to see the platypus clearly; the water is murky or obscured by rocks and the animals don't perform on cue, yet the satisfaction of seeing these elusive creatures is immense.

But Eungella is special in the uncorrupted way that dingoes were once special on Fraser Island. Other more entrepreneurial ventures are keen to exploit the relationship between ecotourists and wildlife. Tourist operators at Fraser Island, finding it is becoming too difficult for tourists to feed and pet the dingoes, have other plans. In small type at the bottom of a "Dingo's Adventure Resort" brochure are the words "Feed the dolphins." At Monkey Mia in the Western Australian shire of Shark Bay the dolphin viewing enterprise is thriving. A fee is charged to enter the area and the dolphins are encouraged with handouts of fish. The tourists stand in rows, their legs immersed in a cold early morning sea. They are the pilgrims of the western world, seeking salvation through the touch of a dolphin. Rangers choose people from the crowd; they are given a fish and allowed to feed and touch a dolphin. Children are held out to the dolphins; there is laughter, tears, ever-smiling dolphins and the smell of raw fish (my observations in 2002). By 2003, Shire President Les Moss is chafing at

the restrictions placed on the dolphin feeding by the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. Each session attracts up to six hundred people during the high season and delivers “many millions of dollars a year” to the area. He wants more dolphins and more opportunities to feed them despite warnings about the effects of human interference. Ten years ago, twenty dolphins visited Monkey Mia regularly with seven being fed. Now there are only three, all of them dependent on humans, incapable of socializing with other dolphins or of successfully rearing calves (Hodge 42). Unlike the dolphins at Monkey Mia and the dingoes on Fraser Island, the platypus of Eungella are allowed to follow their own agenda, untamed and uncorrupted by humans. In return, tourists at Eungella make *their* own agenda. Like hiking a long steep trail into the mountains, Eungella requires the tourist to dig deep, to seek satisfaction from simple pleasures, to leave behind the material props and the cultural baggage of modern living.

Ross Gibson, writer, filmmaker and author of *South of the West: Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of Australia*, suggests that the common preoccupation with reshaping the environment which began with Collins’ springclean, results from the feeling that Australia is “unmanageable or uncultured.” He perceives the continent as “a paradox—half-tamed, yet essentially untamable” (67), very like the Fraser Island dingo. Gibson applies Hegel’s observations of other societies to explain the Australian urge to interfere with nature:

Man realises himself through practical activity, since he has the impulse to express himself, and again to recognise himself, in things that are at first

simply represented to him as externally existent. He attains this by altering things and impressing on them the stamp of his own inner nature, so that he rediscovers his own character in them. (qtd. in Gibson 61-2)

In order to feel at home in the new country the settlers took charge of the environment: “altering things.” They cleared the trees and undergrowth and destroyed or relocated the indigenous occupants. Collins’ establishment of “order” and “regularity” simply marked his attempt to give the land “the stamp of his own inner nature”—he wanted to feel at home. Referring to the Australian film genre, Gibson states: “until recently, every plot outside city limits has tended to signify just one thing: homelessness” (65). Now tourists are prepared to crouch on all fours with a biscuit in their mouth to bring the dingo into a controlled domestic domain. In order to feel at home, Australians focus on their domestic clearing, for the surrounding wilderness signifies homelessness.

For Kay Schaffer, the homelessness of the bush is depicted in “The Drover’s Wife” as “the dilemma of absence where presence was desired” and “a void, a wasteland” (132). Fraser Island with its limited electricity, few shops, primitive roads and isolated position duplicates that absence or void in its lack of the social contacts and entertainment which are provided in the city. Two days after the death of Clinton Gage, a journalist asked Shane Boyd, the chairman of the Fraser Coast South Burnett Tourism Board, why tourists visit the island. His reply seems a positive and uplifting endorsement of good intentions: “Tourists visit Fraser Island because it is a wilderness area. A part of the reason they go there is to experience the unique flora and fauna and a part of that is the dingo” (“Fatal dingo attack” 3). If only human behaviour was so

straightforward! Complaints were sent to newspapers about the many tourists who fail to live up to Shane Boyd's vision of the wilderness as an empirical learning experience. Letters and articles in the *Courier Mail* describe the "stupid behaviour" of visitors to Fraser Island: "people ask for National Park trees to be trimmed because they scratch their four-wheel drives, people have killed melomys thinking they were rats" (Williams 4). "Cull the 4WDs on Fraser Island. They damage the environment and spoil the pleasure for people walking on the beach" (Williams 4). "I have noticed that Fraser Island is being loved to death. Rubbish litters the beach, four-wheel drives are destroying the dunes" (McIntosh 14). Another letter writer describes "beaches being chopped up by four-wheel drives, rubbish being spread everywhere and pristine water ways being polluted" (Kohring 20). Although Fraser Island is only a few hours' drive from Brisbane, Queensland's capital city, large areas have remained wilderness. The environmental discourse of the brochures emphasises its visual and spiritual attributes, but in fact the island is a dangerous place, unsuitable for inexperienced city tourists. Poisonous spiders, scorpions and three species of venomous snakes inhabit the island, and the sea has a dangerous undertow. During the Chamberlain Inquiry, Justice Denis Barritt commented on the hazards of snakes as well as dingoes: "All animals dangerous to man should be safely enclosed or eliminated" (Sanders 175). In *Docklandscapes*, a reading of the city of London as a clearing, Peters described the fear which invades the clearing's comfort zone: "the security is never secure enough. There is always more work to do, excluding the forest" (80). Perhaps the seemingly "stupid behaviour" of visitors is driven by a similar need to make things secure. Killing the rat-like melomys, refusing to get out of the four-wheel drive and walk,

trimming back the trees and of course taming the dingo, resembles the actions of Sax's fearful city dwellers or Collins with an axe, anxious to keep the clearing safe through control and exclusion.

### ***FILLING THE VOID***

#### ***The "party animal" dingo***

After a few days on Fraser Island, tourists may remember why their parents and grandparents left the bush and retreated behind the flyscreened windows of the city. Drawn to the bush by Banjo Paterson's "Vision Splendid" or its brochure equivalent, they find instead at the end of their journey, a situation which is closer to Lawson's gritty and fly blown ennui. In *Mountains Without Handrails*, Joseph Sax describes the boredom experienced by some city dwellers when they are transplanted into nature. He recalls a young man working as a waiter at the Grand Canyon National Park. "After six weeks he was getting ready to leave. 'How long can you keep looking into that hole?' he asked. 'There isn't anything to *do* here'" (87). The tourism industry provides entertainment and an alternative dingo for those tourists who become bored with endless expanses of white sand, towering forests and elusive wild creatures. A brochure offers a "party animal" dingo for single backpackers and international tourists in a marketing exercise which promises a "Wilderness Adventure." Competing

discourses are represented on the front page of the brochure by a dingo wearing hiking boots, sunglasses and an Akubra hat. On the back page tourists in party hats stand in front of a cartoon dingo picked out in lights: “Rock into the Wilderness Bar, adjacent to your accommodation. Happy hours, Internet access, pool tables, beach volleyball, automatic teller and coin laundry. All night, every night is a party with great music, games and giveaways” (“Wilderness Adventure Tours”).

### *The dangerous dingo*

The Wilderness Adventure is only available to young people and overseas backpackers aged 18 to 35. Many young people come from countries where nature is not perceived as alien or intractable. Gibson describes English society for example as growing out of the soil: “Having no clear social memory of its beginnings, England simply *is*” (65). If the discourse of the brochures is accurate, both groups (European backpackers and young urban Australians) whose dreams and memories are centred on the city, are not seeking identity and definition from the wilderness, but fun and excitement and a hint of danger. Neither group fears the alienation of the wilderness nor do they seek to turn it into something homely. Some of these young people will relish the potential hazards of the bush and especially of the dangerous dingo. Jean Genet described dusk, known as “between the dog and the wolf” as “the hour of metamorphoses when people half hope, half fear that a dog will become a wolf” (qtd. in Griffiths, Poulter and Sibley 59). A reporter interviews young tourists on Fraser

Island two days after the death of Clinton Gage and discovers the lure of the dangerous dingo. Two campers from Sydney, Peter Gauci and Steve Gow, have brought a slingshot with them: “ ‘We haven’t had to use it yet’ said Gauci, just a little wistfully” (Smith 5). Once young people took part in hunting, defined by Cartmill as “armed confrontation between humanness and wildness, between culture and nature” (30). Now they visit Fraser Island with a slingshot and whether they are seeking danger or a party, their wilderness comes ready packaged in the discourse of a brochure.

### *Too close for comfort*

Tourists, especially the new breed of ecotourists, love the idea of wildness—at a respectable distance. In *Nature Wars*, Mark Winston discusses the city dweller’s delight at the squirrel in the park and their disgust when it nests in their attic (60). At a recent conference, Helen Tiffin spoke of the hostile response to fruit-bats in Melbourne’s Botanical Gardens (“Are we Bats?”).

Others find the wilderness too primitive, too empty and just too close for comfort and they seek to fill it with material baggage. Tourists long to drive cattle like Bryan Brown or Lawson’s Andy, but preferably from the comfort of the lounge room television or on the well advertised “Annual Cattle Drove”:

The Year of the Outback. A year when every true blue, dinky-di Aussie needs to make that pilgrimage to the spiritual and physical heart of our nation. And what better way to do it than on the premier event: The Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive. Picture it: 600 head of cattle led by 150 horses (and you) down the legendary Birdsville Track.[. . .] includes all gourmet bush tucker meals (wine & beer with dinner), horse, saddle and tent accommodation (erected for you). (“Drive a Cow”)

The tourists’ experience of miles of pristine beaches or wildflowers in the desert is usually from the padded seat of a four-wheel drive and through a tinted windscreen: “There’s no better way to see the interior of Australia than from the interior of a Subaru Outback” (“Subaru” 28). The confused and contrasting discourse of desire and distancing is not a new phenomenon. Henry Lawson preferred to enjoy the bush from the comfort of “The Night Train” and at some time in the future:

Have you seen the Bush by moonlight, from the train, go running by,  
Here a patch of glassy water, there a glimpse of mystic sky?  
Have you heard the still voice calling, yet so warm, and yet so cold:  
I’m the Mother-Bush that bore you! Come to me when you are old? (*Poetical Works* 37)

When Lindy Chamberlain visited Ayers Rock with her parents as a teenager there were no luxurious facilities. Tourists keen enough to travel the unsealed road in the 1960's stayed at the "Rock" camping ground consisting of "one ranger's house and a small joint ablution block, with two showers and a couple of toilets each end" (23). Today the tourist can stay in the Sheraton Hotel at Ayers Rock (now called Uluru) or bring along a caravan. The tourist's "vision splendid" will include a trailer load of accessories to screen a wilderness which is no longer a romantic description in a brochure but instead is disconcertingly uncivilized.

On my last visit to Uluru I arrived at the privately owned Ayers Rock campsite at 6pm. It was a popular time to check in and a long line of vehicles stretched back almost to the entry gates. Each one had travelled across hundreds of kilometres of isolated country and many of them pulled caravans or trailers with boats or motor bikes fastened to them. Painted on the back of each vehicle were names which explained that this trip was an escape from normal life: "Lost on purpose," "The Great Escape," "Adventure Inc.," "Freedom." In "The Journey to Ayers Rock," Julie Marcus describes the tourists who own such vehicles as "pilgrims" searching for national identity at Ayers Rock which stands "alone at the centre of the great Australian 'emptiness'" (261-2). But these pilgrims have taken the precaution of bringing their own identity, in the form of a home, with them. Later that evening as televisions flickered in the red shadows of Uluru, the same advertising jingles leaked out of the fly-screened windows of a thousand caravans. This was "The Great Escape," a miniature replica of the houses they had left behind and which would still

be waiting for them when they returned. Their search draws the tourists to the wilderness, but once there the great “emptiness” overwhelms them and they re-create a colonised space. The indigenes have been removed from the clearing and there are no longer any dingoes at the Uluru tourist site. Since Azaria Chamberlain’s death all dangerous animals have been “enclosed or eliminated” as Justice Barritt suggested. The untamable dingo has been pushed back once more to the margins of the civilized space. The order and regularity of Collins’ clearing have been re-established and the tourists are perhaps unaware of what has been removed. Scott Russell Sanders recalls a caravan parked at the edge of a stunning gorge. The family stayed inside, ignoring the view, watching a Tarzan film and Sanders concluded that this generation has less direct contact with the organic world than at any other time in history (193).

### *Appropriation*

Despite the present lack of dingoes at Uluru, tourists still find ways to control the wilderness outside the wire fence of their resort. Visitors exercise their right to walk all over the “Rock,” ignoring prominently placed Aboriginal requests not to: “You shouldn’t climb. It’s not the real thing about this place. The real thing is listening to everything” advises Kunmanara, a Traditional Owner (6). The climb is situated on the traditional route taken by the ancestral Malu and has great spiritual significance for the Anangu people. Tourists are encouraged to follow an alternative and culturally more interesting walk, tracing the mythical movements of the Mala people and the dingo

Kalpunny around the base of the rock. But the urge to take control of the “Rock” is too strong and thousands of tourists ignore the polite and humble requests not to climb. Routinely they violate the sacredness of the “Rock”, pulling themselves up by chains attached to metal stakes driven into the rock surface. Edmund Hillary used a similar discourse of disrespect and appropriation when he climbed Mount Everest fifty years ago. Although he has since redeemed himself with years of work for the Himalayan Trust, his words of conquest, “we knocked the bastard off,” were telegraphed around the world (“Hillary” 27). Postcards depicting another climb also travel around the world, showing a long line of people like little black ants or “minga” in Anangu dialect, streaming across the huge red body of Uluru. The message is conveyed to the world that in Australia we don’t approach nature with awe and respect and a willingness to learn; we don’t “listen to everything” as Kunmanara suggested; instead we knock the bastard off.

### *The smiling dingo*

At Uluru and at Fraser Island the partial taming of wild dingoes with food was encouraged by the powerful urge to take photographs. The discourse of photography is filled with words of appropriation: “taking” a photo, “shooting” film, “caught” on camera. James Agee described a church as ‘trapped, possessed’ by photography (qtd. in Gibson 111) and Gibson perceives the taking of a photograph as “a momentary action (which) is arrested and stored” (112). For twenty years tourists have been

carrying out the same process of appropriation of dingoes as the trappers before them. Tourists don't shoot the dingo with a rifle and proudly hang its pelt on a fence or bull bar but they settle for taming it into submission before shooting it with a camera and taking away its image as a trophy. And like trappers they are responsible for the killing of dingoes. John Sinclair blamed tourists with cameras for the consequent aggression of half-tamed dingoes on Fraser Island and he warned that those people who were now demanding that dingoes be shot "should not include anyone with a picture of dingoes close-up" (Ryan 5). The dingo on the cover of a 2003 Fraser Island "Wilderness Tours" brochure has a camera slung around its neck.

The title deeds to Uluru were returned to its traditional owners in 1985 and the area is now jointly managed by the Anangu people and Parks Australia. Two causes of friction between the different groups involve the "climb" and the western obsession with photography:

The tourist comes here with the camera taking pictures all over. What has he got? Another photo to take home, keep part of Uluru. He should get another lens—see straight inside. Wouldn't see big rock then. He would see that Kuniya living right inside there as from the beginning. He might throw his camera away then. (Kunmanara 9)

Kunmanara's perception that the tourist wishes to "keep part of Uluru" shows his awareness of the colonial urge to appropriate nature. Every day at sunset, tourists

photograph Uluru as it glows with redness. Vehicles and tour buses line up in rows at a “viewing area” and their occupants scramble for the best position. Cameras, light meters, tripods and telescopic lenses are set up in the front row or on car roofs. Michael Barbour states in “Toward a Conclusion,” “we interpret nature through a filter [. . .] we see any place through a lens” (457). A photograph filters out the flies and heat and boredom and captures the tourist’s holiday in a favourable light. Bad memories of the mangy snapping dingo which frightened the baby can be torn up and thrown away. Selected memories such as the healthy golden dingo accepting a sausage can be displayed as trophies. The tourist with his camera directs his filtered version of the wilderness. On Fraser Island the photographer controls the dingo, trapping and grooming it for a tamed role. If as Said states, there is no such thing as the delivered presence of the indigene, then the tourist can produce the “re-presence” of the “Rock” or the dingo over and over until he finds a version that suits him.

Fiske, Hodge and Turner claim in *Myths of Oz* that photographing nature keeps “the strange” outside: “Looking through the camera lens is like looking through the hotel’s plate glass window; it is a way of standing inside culture observing nature” (123). The strangeness of the wild dingo or the overwhelming threat of encroaching vegetation, can be filtered out or kept at a safe distance by the axe, the camera and the glass windows of the hotel or the four-wheel drive. Barbour writes: “We come to each new landscape with a baggage of memories accumulated from all the other places we have ever been” (457). We bring our baggage in with us and we expect to take a piece of the wilderness away with us when we leave. The appropriation of the dingo is one

part of a tourist intrusion which routinely captures our wild fauna and steals their lives away—a “turtle watch” at Mon Repos near Bundaberg can involve “a frenzy of flashes” as seventy people photograph one nesting turtle (“turtle watch” 8).

A return to the wilderness should give respite from the city but this spiritual rebirth should not come at too high a price. After Clinton Gage’s death, John Connor, campaign director of the Australian Conservation Foundation, called on the tourism industry “to rethink the way it portrays dingoes” with an emphasis on limiting the impact of humans on native animals and their habitat (10).

Sax explains the feelings of the ecotourists: “you want to deceive yourself; you would like to believe that you are striking out into the wilderness, but you insist that the wilderness be tamed before you enter it” (15). The tourists who hoped to experience the fauna and flora of Fraser Island have been outmaneuvered by every government department, tour operator and resort manager who exploits the dingo for profit. But they have also been cheated by their own fears and unrealistic expectations. They leave the city with good intentions but somewhere on the journey, perhaps as they drive off the ferry and rev their vehicle through the oil stained and heavily rutted parody of a pristine beach, the desire to learn from nature is replaced by the ethnocentric wish to appropriate, control and tame.

## *LINDY CHAMBERLAIN VERSUS THE LARRIKIN DINGO*

*“The dingo’s got the baby!”*

There seemed no reason why Lindy Chamberlain’s words should be doubted when she claimed that a dingo had entered her family’s tent and seized her baby daughter Azaria: “I started to scream to the others as I burst into headlong flight—‘The dingo’s got the baby!’ ” (Chamberlain 37). Neighbouring campers gave evidence that Lindy seemed to be a loving mother; the time of the baby’s last cry was verified by a reliable witness; and Aboriginal trackers identified the paw prints of a dingo emerging from the Chamberlains’ tent. Rangers and campers confirmed other dingo attacks on humans, including three near the campsite on the day of Azaria’s disappearance. Most importantly, no motive could be established for the mother’s killing of her child. Lindy (as all Australians intrusively and possessively call her), is a practical person and her scream was partly an expression of her unimaginable horror, and partly an urgent request for immediate help. The baby was very young, only nine weeks old, and Ayers Rock was, except for a small circle of light and warmth around the barbecue area, a dark, bitterly cold wilderness. Lindy’s words demanded belief, sympathy and aid but instead her claim that a dingo had taken her baby would be “laughed out of court” (Norman Young 26). She was found guilty of the murder of

her child and sentenced to life imprisonment. The dingo walked free (in what would become a hollow victory for all the dingoes killed in reprisal).

Perhaps it was inevitable that the dingo, with its history of slipping through the gaps in the fence and its ability to subvert the most virulent forms of human discourse, should be exonerated. It was not particularly strange that so many Australians would deny both the sensible, unbiased testimonies to Lindy's innocence and the dingo's "guilt." The key witnesses for the defence were women and Aborigines, and the prosecution became adept at overriding their evidence. Mothers who recognised a baby's cry and Aborigines who identified the tracks of dingoes leaving tents with something heavy in their mouths were listened to but not really heard. Neither was it unusual for an innocent to be condemned by the courts while the guilty walked or in this case trotted free. The popular accounts of martyrs and heroes, which encouraged stories and films about Ned Kelly and Breaker Morant, were proof that public perceptions of justice could differ from the court verdict. The surprise lay in the lack of resentment over the Chamberlain verdict, the hostility of the public, their active participation in the discourse which brought Lindy down, the mischievous and perverse content of that discourse.

Lindy and the dingo were representatives of two different groups and they did not stand alone in the dock. Behind each of them were their supporters: a few quiet friends around Lindy according to John Bryson in *Evil Angels* (273), a much larger number barracking noisily for the dingo. Senior prosecuting counsel was Ian Barker,

described by Ken Crispin in *The Crown versus Chamberlain*, as a “local boy” with an “intuitive grasp of practical psychology” (118). At an early stage of the trial the counsel for the prosecution seemed to have identified at least some of the issues which are inherent in this sad story. The trial would be played as a giant tug-of-war in which the prosecution pulled on the rope of the dominant myths and attempted to drag Lindy into the chilly wasteland of “other.” In “Naturalising ‘Horror’ Stories,” Christine Higgins explains the particular use of contrasting terms in the Chamberlain case: “where so many cherished Australian institutions and icons were being interrogated, the use of oppositions provides a conceptual structure whereby inherent contradictions could surface and be held up to scrutiny” (139). Through the employment of such a structure of binary oppositions, the dominant discourse of the Australian larrikin is particularly relevant to the dingo and can be used to exonerate it while discrediting Lindy.

The nature of the larrikin and his journey of identity from nuisance to a “wide and valued cultural currency” (Schaffer 20), needs some explanation. In 1881, a *Bulletin* editorial provided this description of the larrikin:

Among young Australians there is, unhappily, a demoralised residuum whose antics give occasion for keen anxiety, and whose influence, if not checked and controlled, threatens to be burdensome and offensive to the community as it expands. [. . .] The larrikins who demonstratively display their evil propensities and outrageous proclivities in full public view do not as a rule belong to the

well-to-do classes. They are the idle, the uncared for, the wilful, and the depraved. (“Larrikin Residuum” 1)

The *Bulletin* was describing a hooligan with unpleasant habits and offensive traits which few Australians would wish to emulate. But in a study of the larrikin mode, *For Freedom and Dignity*, Andrew Metcalfe describes how the “young street rowdy” was transformed by writers such as Henry Lawson and C. J. Dennis into the nucleus of an influential and defining myth (74). The hooligan was shaped into a different, improved larrikin version, and his poor and demoralised working-class background, described in such a negative manner by the editor of the *Bulletin*, was advantageously reworked into the “authentically ‘Australian’ characteristics of non-conformism, irreverence [and] impudence” (“larrikin” Def.2).

The dingo, like the early larrikin, could sound remarkably like a hooligan when it was subjected to the denigrating texts of the sheep farmer. Or again it could “read” like a harmless pet dog in a contemporary children’s story, or an inspirational ancestor in an Aboriginal Dreaming myth. Layers of meanings from other texts and viewpoints enfold the words “dingo” and “Lindy.” Higgins describes the Chamberlain case as a “story positioned within a pre-existing system of meaning” (137). She is referring to the Australian themes which are layered into the case — the same intertextuality which Noel Sanders describes in his study “Azaria Chamberlain and Popular Culture” as “the instance of reading in which more than one text is actually being ‘read’ where only one appears to be on the screen or page” (172). Julia Kristeva contends that

literary texts are made up of a mosaic of quotations, and that any text is the “absorption and transformation of another” (Cuddon 424). As one reads about the baby taken by a dingo, the story is overlaid with the mosaic of other texts. The Chamberlains’ act of bringing their child to Ayers Rock can be read through the emotive Australian theme of the lost child and also through the role of women as intruders in the wilderness. It can be read as the act of a middle-class mother providing an environmental education for her children or gossiped about as the bloodthirsty actions of a religious extremist. Through such layers, Lindy might fluctuate between misguided mother, woman as alien “other,” caring teacher or weird witch.

The dingo’s role in the Chamberlain text must also be read through the busy mosaic of intertextuality. It is a story positioned within several meanings. The Chamberlains’ claim that the dingo is a child-killer is supported by both the empirical knowledge of local Aborigines and their Dreaming myths but is also overlaid with ignorant white interpretations of devil dingoes and child sacrifice. The Aboriginal myths describe children stolen and then killed either by evil people who use ferocious dingoes as their agents or by huge magical dingoes or in the case of Kalpunya of Uluru, by dingoes which are devils in disguise. Gossip and popular media reports soon linked these myths with bizarre interpretations of the Chamberlains’ Seventh Day Adventist beliefs. Unsubstantiated colonial stories of children stolen by dingoes gives depth to the sheep farmers’ representation of a vicious killer which might or might not take a child. Scattered throughout the texts and influencing contemporary larrikin readings is the wit and cynicism of many *Bulletin* stories about the dingo. Such texts stir in a

more tolerant blend of discourse which celebrates the rebel and provides gaps of reprieve for the dingo in an otherwise rigid atmosphere of disapproval and denigration. There would be more layers to add in the years following the Chamberlain case, with the growth of ecotourism and the production of texts about a dingo which . Such intertextuality makes it impossible to read the word “dingo” impartially and my choice of the dingo as a mascot for “the push” cannot be made lightly. Since colonisation, the dingo has been given the same characteristics as the human larrikin. First it reveals a non-conformist refusal to fit into farming plans or a tourist role, then, according to humans, it shows irreverence and impudence as it runs through the carefully mended fence to reach the sheep or bites the hand which offers the biscuit. “Larrikin” explains a certain ignoble shabbiness or shame which has traditionally been associated with the colonial dingo. The word “dingo” has run the gauntlet of discursive experiences over five thousand years, beginning as a joyful and creative Dreaming ancestor and now preparing to end its days as a dwindling novelty on the United Nations Register for Animals at Risk of Extinction in the Wild. But every dog has its day and every dingo too, and in the 1980’s it joined up with humans of the larrikin breed and overturned the justice system.

In striking similarity to the dingo, the human larrikin is a mischief-maker who lives and thrives within the conventional social space, but always as an outsider, disrupting and opposing the authority of that space. Defined “not only in terms of what he is, but also of what he is not” (Schaffer 19) the larrikin positioned himself against the values of the Chamberlains, acting with “apparently careless disregard for social or political

conventions” (“Larrikin” Def.2a). The Chamberlains as members of a minority religious sect, are vigorously opposed to all the vices of the larrikin and have a tendency to pray in public. Lindy’s beliefs and lifestyle represent her as a wowser: “one who is publically censorious of others and the pleasures they seek; one whose own behaviour is puritanical or prudish” (“Wowser” Def.2). The counsel for the prosecution identified the binary pairs, larrikin and wowser, and they seized the opportunity to articulate the fiercely contrasting oppositions in an equally fierce discourse which would always place Lindy in an excluded position of “other.”

In “Larrikins—The Context,” Manning Clark blames the increasing conformity of society and an “insensible authority” for the larrikin’s disregard for convention, his “rejection of received opinion” (39). Ironically, this same enforced conformity of society allows a wistfully sympathetic treatment of the larrikin, a tolerance of his mischief from those whose lives he disrupts. There still flourishes amongst our usually passive citizens, a belief in the larrikin myth of defiance of authority, an illogical but passionate support for the rebel who swims against the current of conformity. Faced with a choice between an innocent Lindy and a guilty dingo, or a guilty Lindy and an innocent dingo, the Australian public chose the rebel. Manning Clark describes the Australian need to explain ourselves through such acts of defiance: “every tribe must have a myth by which it defines and justifies itself. Larrikinism, no doubt, is ours” (39).

The Northern Territory, rural, isolated and hot, attracts larrikins: “home to a rich array of drifters, rolling stones, unrealistic dreamers—the capital of the second chance” according to an article on Darwin in the *Australian* (Rothwell 13). Larrikins pull up for diesel in battered utilities or stand at the bar in a solid, masculine bunch, for the Northern Territory is also home to a population with the highest rate of beer consumption in the world (Hamilton 21). Their physical presence influences the discourse of other would-be larrikins who admire those who rebel even as they themselves conform. Not everyone is a larrikin, but everyone can identify with him and few Australians want to be a wowser. At this early stage in the Chamberlain case, the larrikins identified the dingo by their own beliefs and discourse. They recognised themselves in the dingo.

***The dingo in the larrikin/The larrikin in the dingo.***

In Queensland a stretch of sand eighty kilometers long, ending at Rainbow Beach, links Noosa with Inskip Point, where the ferry leaves for Fraser Island. Vehicles have churned up the beach until it resembles a boggy paddock with deep ruts and tyre tracks following the water line and sometimes turning off into the softer sand dunes. “80” kilometre speed limit signs are stuck incongruously into the sand at regular intervals in an attempt to control the drivers of the roaring, four-wheel-drive vehicles which race in one direction, turn in a storm of flying sand and revving engines and race back the other way. These are the human larrikins of contemporary times — young, male,

noisy, drunk, randy, as “burdensome and offensive to the community” as they were in 1881, but relatively harmless. Young men stand up in the back of a utility, drinking beer and shouting instructions to the driver. He turns the vehicle towards two young women walking along the beach and cuts them off, forcing them into the sea. The women shout abuse but remain good-natured. It’s all part of the game.

On Fraser Island in May when the mating season begins, the young male dingoes run in groups, agitated and excited. Corbett describes how body contact is accompanied “by much snarling and pronounced teeth-baring. Lunging and snapping is usual [. . .] backing into, hip-slamming, or standing over or on the threatened dingo” (*The Dingo* 58). But no serious aggression takes place: “biting is uncommon and inhibited. [. . .] The threatened dingo responds with passive submission and either crouches, flattens on the ground, or rolls over on its back” (*The Dingo* 58). It’s all part of the game.

The young human on Rainbow Beach, the young animal on Fraser Island, provide a number of reasons why the larrikin recognises the dingo in himself. Clem Gorman comments on the “original larrikins:” “Today they would be street kids” (xi).

Certainly the behaviour of the larrikins during the Chamberlain case was similar to the graffiti and vandalism of street kids. The articulate discourse of power and wealth is not available to larrikins, who by the early *Bulletin* definition “do not usually inhabit the well-to-do classes.” Theirs is “a hoon world” lacking “civil discourse” (Pierce 177). Their texts are created with oral and physical gestures; they use the snarling and lunging of the dingo, the revving and shouting of the Rainbow beach hoon, to express

themselves. Lindy Chamberlain writes: “we suffered dingo howls, whistles, toots and calls past our house at all hours of the day and night” (94). Car stickers and T-shirts displayed their owner’s confident assertion: “The Dingo is Innocent.” Long-distance truck drivers listened in to gossip and dingo jokes on their CB radios (Chamberlain 92-93). Noel Sanders states that dingo/baby jokes represent those without speech and include “the dumb animal” and “the socially [. . .] persecuted classes.” He describes how the jokes work to destroy the legitimacy of “official discourses,” to articulate the silences in the wordy texts of media and court (180-81). Transcripts of the proceedings in the Chamberlain case numbered sixteen thousand pages (Crispin 11) and dingo jokes provide a provocative exclamation mark at the end of each page, a scrawled tag of graffiti on the court wall, a snigger over the CB. *What could have changed the course of history? A dingo at Bethlehem.* It’s a joke in bad taste, cruel, offensive and unsubtle, but it fills up the discreet silences with an outrageous larrikin discourse of cynicism and rebellion. It provides a response to “the bourgeoisie’s dehumanising moral gaze” which Metcalfe claims, in his study of larrikin miners, is the politically motivated reason for larrikinism (76).

One of the most powerful and wealthy factions in Australia is the sheep-farming lobby. Its compelling discourse has been at work since early colonial times to denigrate and destroy the dingo. Graziers still maintain that sheep are the natural inheritors of Australia and dingoes are the alien intruder which should be exterminated. During a recent debate a Queensland Member of Parliament supported the treatment of the dingo as a feral dog and not “as a part of the natural ecosystem.”

The same member was keen to ensure that the 1080 used for killing dingoes was of a high concentration (Queensland Government 1-3). The sheep industry and the accompanying necessity to “control” dingoes has provided work for generations of itinerant rural workers who fit easily into the bush larrikin category. They have trapped and shot dingoes and claimed the bounty in the past and they still do. There are still shearers at Blackall, who set and check a dozen traps after work. The larrikin bush worker might earn his living from sheep, but he has no reason to join in the discourse of the grazier. The larrikin’s sheep-stealing ancestors had more in common with the sheep-stealing dingo than with the grazier. Russel Ward cites Anthony Trollope—“every honest bushman, more or less, was a thief upon occasion”—and the theme of “Waltzing Matilda” to show that there was little or no shame attached to the stealing of stock (161). The jolly swagman of course drowned himself in the billabong rather than face the consequences of his sheep-stealing. His larrikin descendant sings a similar song to the same tune:

*Ode to Azaria*

Out came a dingo nosing around the camp fire,

Lindy winked at Michael and said “it wasn’t me...”

What happened to the baby you put into the camera bag,

Give it to the dingo and you’ll get off scot free.

Give it to the dingo, give it to the dingo,  
give it to the dingo and you'll get off scot free.  
What happened to the baby you put into the camera bag,  
Give it to the dingo and you'll get off scot free.

Up jumped the dingo and ran past the camera bag,  
you'll never blame her murder on me,  
and Azaria's ghost may be heard as you pass by the kurrajong tree  
"Mummy was the one who did away with me." (Higgins 148)

The contemporary larrikin, "exceeding limits, bending rules and sailing close to the wind" (Gorman x), has more in common with the dingo which is "trustworthy up to a point, but forgivable in breach of that trust" (Sanders 178) than with the influential, respectable, law-abiding, authoritative members of society.

When the dingo trotted over to the larrikin side, it brought all its discursive baggage with it. The larrikins accepted the dingo, not *despite* its discourse, but *because* of it. They chose bits and pieces from the mosaic of intertextuality which had become the dingo and created a suitable mascot for their larrikinism. Colonial discourse gave a subversive nature to the dingo which appealed to the larrikin as they recognised its ability to disrupt the economy, to avoid constraint, to defy the rules. Larrikins had supported Ned Kelly because of his actions as "a social bandit." Holding up the train, shooting the policemen and appearing in a metal outfit were acts which had "the

sympathy and support of his own social group” (Seal 163). The larrikin was never the evil and depraved hooligan so crossly described by the editor of the 1881 *Bulletin*. Sanders considered the “ ‘sympathy for the dingo’ movement” existed partly as a refusal to accept the dingo as a scapegoat but equally “as a protest against injustice” (178). The dingoes’ redemptive features lie in its ability to inhabit the space between “criminality and political protest” which Graham Seal calls “the grey area” (163). The dingo of colonial discourse is at home in the grey area, hooning around in the forbidden space, standing “as a metaphor for thieves [. . .] rather than as murderer” (Sanders 178). The grey area lacks the sharpness of black or white. It has a shabby dinginess, quite repellent to neat housewives such as Lindy Chamberlain who writes: “Some people just like a tidy home” (679). Sally Dingo, a white woman married to the actor Ernie Dingo, describes the “recoil with evident distaste” when “whitefellas” hear her name.

It is as if it is too harsh, obscene even, as if the name carried the threat of violence and the stigma of the native dog itself. Fox, Hawke or Peacock are names so much easier on the ear. And acceptable after centuries of use. Dingo instead speaks of an animal which refuses to toe the line. (5-6)

A review of the opera *Lindy* begins: “It was the dingoes that almost brought *Lindy* unstuck.” It continues with descriptions of outraged subscribers and “sniggers in the corridors of the company.” Three directors refused the opportunity to direct *Lindy* and

the opera only progressed when the dingoes, in the shape of a furry Greek chorus, were removed (Cosic 17).

The gossip and rumours, the jokes and “hoon” behaviour were, like the sniggers and the recoil in distaste, physical manifestations of an inarticulate but recognisable discourse. The larrikins’ bullying of the Chamberlains, their desire to see them brought down, signified a need for recognition. Always on the receiving end of “the hidden injuries of class” (Metcalf 118), the larrikins as in 1881 “demonstratively display their evil propensities and outrageous proclivities in full public view” in order to assert themselves. By championing the dingo, they challenged the graziers’ heavy stamp of control, the pest legislation, the Vermin Acts and Bounty Acts, the pages of “ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements” which Foucault has identified as the source of power in society (*Power/Knowledge* 133). For two centuries the graziers have built up a strong case for *their* right to prosperity and power, for the working bush man’s limited rights and for the dingoes’ lack of any rights at all. Each new act of legislation strengthens and justifies an authoritative position of security and prosperity. By challenging the Chamberlains’ moral code of hard work, restraint and upward mobility, by snarling and lunging, drinking and swearing, slamming into each other, roaring into deepening ruts in the sand, the larrikin and his dingo run amok in the disciplined space. They bite back.

Long before the trial began the dingo, in its representative state of larrikin, had strolled over to join its mates on the winning side. The battle lines of the Chamberlain trial were drawn up behind the two contenders, with Lindy Chamberlain on one side and the dingo on the other. If it could be proved that the dingo had taken the baby, then Lindy Chamberlain was a tragic and wronged mother. If the dingo had not taken the baby, its innocence made Lindy guilty of the murder of her child. Somehow it was decided that Lindy the wowser, a deeply religious, painfully honest, morally principled female, would occupy a lonely position out there in the cold and dark, while the dingo, in its larrikin role, would sit basking in the warmth of the noisy group around the great barbecue of life, accepted, Australian, masculine and in control.

*Masculine versus feminine.*

“The typical Australian is a practical man; rough and ready in his manners [. . .] a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority” and who “swears hard and constantly, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion” (Ward 2). Russel Ward’s typical Australian was the forerunner of the bush larrikin. Ward’s automatic assumption of a masculine legend has been criticised in hindsight, but the exclusion of women from the dominant discourse remains valid. Julie Marcus stated in 1991: “the bearer of authentically Australian values and skills” is found in “a

universalizing form of masculine equality” (“The Journey Out to the Centre” 257). Ward’s legendary Australian was a bush worker, and masculinity and the bush are irrevocably linked. As Marcus states: “It is in the outback that one finds the real Australian” (“The Journey Out to the Centre” 257). The linking of bush and masculinity in the larrikin myth has particular relevance for Ayers Rock and the entire Northern Territory, where there are ten square kilometres of outback for each person.

The story of Lindy Chamberlain begins with a woman putting her baby to bed in a tent in the wilderness. Lindy’s feminine intrusion of the domestic into the masculine world of the bush defines her in opposition to the dominant myth and marks the first attempts to pull her over into the chilly world of “other.” In the setting of the Northern Territory the dominant discourse was defined by what it was not. The wilderness around Ayers Rock was no place for a woman and her baby. It was a man’s world.

Lindy, heating milk on the barbecue, wrapping up the baby to keep out the cold night air, is represented at her most female and maternal, as a new mother. Women may transcend their assigned role of “other” and achieve limited acceptance in the dominant myth of the typical Australian. However, success in this game involves an adherence to rules and Lindy refused to play. She showed no grief in public and considered tears to be a private weakness: “I did cry a little during the interview though, much to my disgust as I don’t like crying in public” (Chamberlain 63). She dressed “too well (and sexily)” according to the male reporters (Higgins 140). She broke the rules at the beginning of the game, for by taking her young baby into the

dangerous wilderness of Ayers Rock she behaved irresponsibly, performing “a reversal of the mythic theme created through the ‘lost child’ literature” (Marcus 16). For her failure to conform to the construction of bush mother Lindy was firmly pushed out into the realms of “other” and as Higgins states: “Once constructed as “other”, it is an easy step to being represented as non-human, monster-like or witch-like” (140).

The larrikin dingo in this story is firmly represented as male. The promiscuous female dingo of colonial discourse is forgotten, and the possibility of a female dingo taking the baby in order to feed her pups is ignored. Lindy Chamberlain describes the dingo which she observed “emerging through the tent flap” as “he” in a recorded interview with police the following day (Crispin 47) and as “it” in an account written a few weeks later (Chamberlain 37). Carol Adams discusses the fluctuating pronouns of “it,” “he,” and “she” for animals in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. While “it” removes any need to identify the animal, the “she” in the cry “There she blows” during whale hunting for example, represents “a vanquished power, a soon-to-be-killed powerless animal.” “He” represents an animal, whatever its size, which is “an active power and a possible danger” (72). Certainly, whether “he” or “it,” the wild dingo acts a metaphor for masculinity and is gendered as male. The maleness of the dingo is a vital component in a discourse which subordinates women to men through a masculine conquest of a female-gendered wilderness (Marcus, “Prisoner of Discourse” 17). The notion of sacrifice is a component of the literary bush discourse of Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton. Their struggling women of the bush, so out of place and “other,” resemble sacrificial victims.

Rumours of the small baby sacrificed to the male dingo have their roots in a misplaced interpretation of Kalpunya, a mythical Aboriginal dingo which travelled to Ayers Rock. (Such rumours linked in with accounts of Seventh Day Adventism and the name Azaria as evidence of child sacrifice). There are elements too of the victim in the dingo's stalking of females in a wilderness which is situated far from the safe domestic zone. After a young boy was killed by dingoes on Fraser Island, several attacks on women were reported. The relative smallness of women, their vulnerability when accompanied by children, and their gender, were presented as factors in the attacks. A woman commented that females were in more danger from the dingo during menstruation: "They used to hunt us into the sea, particularly the women, when they were in their time of the month. They seemed to really hassle us around that time" (Dunn 2). A male resident believes women visitors to the island should be warned they are at a greater risk of attack when they are menstruating: "They're never told that" (Doneman 5).

The maleness of the dingo becomes linked with the gendered vulnerability of the women. The dingo's identification with the signifiers of masculinity helps to explain its easy incorporation into the discourse of the larrikin group. It also explains the success of attempts to push Lindy into the "other" space, for when larrikinism is examined for "what it is not," her status as female in the wilderness stands in intrusive opposition to the larrikins.

### *Beer versus cocoa*

Michael and Lindy Chamberlain never drink alcohol. They are members of the Seventh Day Adventist Church; Michael was a pastor in the church at the time of his baby's death, and Lindy is the daughter of a pastor. Michael has the unfortunate habit of reminding people of his position in the church and asking strangers to pray with him. Crispin comments: "We all feel a little uncomfortable around saints" (63). Their religion not only forbids them to drink alcohol, but discourages the use of tea, coffee and coca cola. When a fellow camper offered Michael a can of beer at the camp barbecue, Lindy advised the man "that a drinker ought to be concerned not only with his own future health, but also the future welfare of his wife and children" (Chamberlain 34). In his book *Evil Angels*, John Bryson, perhaps unintentionally, equates drinking with masculinity, and abstinence with a feminine type of wowsersism: "While Michael made fussy preparations for cooking, Greg stood back gripping a beer-can with tough and spiky fingers" (35). The Chamberlains fitted easily into the despised role of wowsers. Worse, they were active wowsers, each conforming to the definition, "A censorious person; a killjoy" ("wowsers" Def.1), compelled by their religious beliefs to impart their disapproval of larrikin behaviour. The use of the theory of opposition allows the dominant myth of the larrikin to be defined by the difference of the wowsers "other." Manning Clark describes larrikinism as a backlash against "mindless wowsersism" (38) and Lindy's polarised beliefs help to define the drinking, swearing, irreligious larrikin.

Ward states that the typical Australian “drinks deeply” (2), and according to Annette Hamilton, author of “Beer and Being,” they drink the deepest in the Northern Territory: “Men who drink as constantly and as much in the southern States are likely to be considered alcoholics; in the Northern Territory they are the norm” (21). The dingo doesn’t drink beer and can survive in the desert without drinking water, absorbing liquid from the bodily fluids of its prey. However it has in the past obliged *Bulletin* poets in their linking of the “stinking, slinking dingo” with “grog and stingo” for the sake of a rhyme scheme. Now the dingo and beer, the adoption of the dingo as a mascot combined with excessive drinking of beer, express the larrikin’s personal narrative. Heavy drinking is one part of a discourse of masculinity, in which anti-social behaviour is practiced with pride *because* it makes larrikins a nuisance. Metcalfe explains the “doubly scandalous response” of larrikins to people like the Chamberlains in which a mocking of respectable values simultaneously celebrates “the very behaviour that draws bourgeois condemnation.” Even the ostentatious waste of money on excess beer is “an aggravation to bourgeois observers” (Metcalfe 77). Larrikin and dingo discourse exist in opposition to the rules of a respectable and authoritative society. The larrikin, fighting and swearing in public, swaying drunkenly in the back of the utility on Rainbow Beach, and the dingo, slipping into the paddock at night, chasing and maiming a dozen sheep and only eating a small part of one are both an affront to bourgeois society. For the larrikin, subversive behaviour is a defiant response to the constraints of a conformist society. For the dingo, subversive behaviour is unavoidable when every hand is raised against it. The larrikin performs

yet one more human manipulation of the over-worked dingo, pushing its colonial representation as an anti-social, subversive menace into the face of the nervous wowsers.

### *Noise versus quiet*

With howls and hoots, loud laughter at each new dingo joke and the “Ode to Azaria” belted out as a pub song, the noise of the larrikins filled the hotels and streets of Darwin during Lindy’s trial. The first inquest had found Lindy Chamberlain innocent of the murder of her child and had left the dingo shouldering the blame and suffering the consequent penalties. Seal described the outrage at this decision and the way in which a larrikin section of the public, with the assistance of the mass media expressed their anger and disapproval of the Chamberlains (87). He writes of the *charivari* or “rough music” of Europe, when significant numbers of the public would confront the supposed perpetrator of a moral crime (83). One of the characteristics of *charivari* is noise; the banging of kettles and saucepan lids, the shriek of tin whistles which frighten and threaten through noise. Seal describes other characteristics: “ritualistic aspects of the *charivari* that involved crowd confrontation of the malefactor, and the parading, hanging, or burning of effigies” (87). Lindy writes of *her* experience as a public malefactor as she left the court after her conviction for murder:

There was a car waiting there instead of the paddy waggon. I was told later that they thought I would be more comfortable in that. I'm sure they didn't think at all. A paddy waggon couldn't be seen into, but the car sure could. We were informed that there were crowds lining the driveway out of the back entrance to the court. [. . .] The roll-a-door went up and there was a roar from the outside. (285)

Bryson describes the doll, "headless" and "gory" which someone had put in a baby's bassinet and placed on the steps of the court-house the morning after Darwin's annual ball (476). The theme of the ball was "Bad Taste," and the doll, in very "Bad Taste," took the place of the *charivari's* effigy display.

The larrikins were confronting "the malefactor" on behalf of the one she had allegedly maligned, the larrikin dingo. The representation of an "innocent" larrikin dingo asserted itself, running amok in the public space, noisily declaring its public outrage. By contrast the images of the other "guilty" dingo, the child killer, were growing fainter every day. Always quietly unobtrusive and unacknowledged, it was unable to prosper in the rarified atmosphere of the court. The mighty weight of the words and opinions of "experts" who favoured the "innocent" larrikin dingo, overwhelmed the evidence of those who believed a dingo could take and kill a child. The representations of a "guilty" dingo began to fade away. Les Harris, president of the Dingo Foundation gave his evidence at the second inquest to a seemingly indifferent court and he quickly noticed the dwindling of the "guilty" dingo. Using empirical observations as a basis for his belief, Harris confirmed that a dingo had almost certainly carried off the baby.

He described the dingo's ability to bite through material as cleanly as a knife or scissors; he gave evidence of the strength of its neck muscles and its ability to easily carry a heavy weight without dragging it on the ground. He explained how a dingo, like the wolf, can disarticulate its jaw and run with the entire head of its prey in its mouth (Chamberlain 266-7). Harris considered his evidence to be extremely important but the court seemed more interested in the academic opinions of various professors, some of whom had never seen a live dingo or entered the Australian bush. Harris wrote angrily in his diary: "The case, which began two years ago with a single claim that a dingo took the baby, is now only 0.01% dingo" (Bryson 487).

Like Dreaming maps sketched on the earth, the footprints of the child-killing dingo and the soft, knitted impressions where the baby touched the ground, remained only briefly. Soon the desert sand crumbled inwards and covered the clues. The Aboriginal trackers were unable to bring back the presence of this dingo through their verbal accounts. The lawyers asked questions about taboo subjects which could not be answered, and they disbelieved Nipper Winmarti, the male tracker, when he used his right to speak on behalf of a tribal member as if he had been there himself. The court chose a female interpreter for Winmarti and Lindy noticed his reluctance to speak:

Sensing some sort of hidden inhibition in Nipper, I went to quite a deal of trouble to make inquiries as to what the problem might be. I learned that what the court did not realise was that a woman interpreting for a tribal elder was not the done thing. It was actually an insult. (152)

The female trackers also found it difficult to give a voice to the “guilty” dingo. “The women were unable to speak freely away from their tribal ground” (Chamberlain 153), and gradually the idea of a dingo which was capable of killing a child faded from the court proceedings and was silenced. Soon other people who were sympathetic towards the Chamberlains and who believed their story were neglecting the child-killing dingo. John Bryson experienced difficulties in sustaining a dingo presence in *Evil Angels* according to Peter Pierce: “the purported role of the dingo is a part of Bryson’s story that, understandably, he finds intractable” (175). Fred Schepisi, director of the film version of *Evil Angels*, concentrated on the human larrikins and allowed the other players in the tragedy, including the dingo, to “disappear from view” (Pierce 177). The director of the opera *Lindy* would not accept the three singing “dingoes” which made up the chorus and they were replaced with “humans.” Even the pivotal line “A dingo’s got my baby” was cut. Moya Henderson the composer of *Lindy* claimed: “Prospective directors dropped the score on reading those words” (Cosic 18). After her first panicking screams even the mother seemed unable to bring back the child-killing dingo by speaking the accusing words out loud. When all hope of their baby’s survival had gone, the Chamberlains packed up their car and began the journey home. They called in at the Ayers Rock store and noticed the visitor’s book. Lindy wanted to warn others about the dangers of the dingo, but found instead: “When I went to write my comments I could think of nothing direct enough to say which was adequate warning, so I simply put, ‘The dingo took my baby’ ” (Chamberlain 67). It seemed that the mother could only write out her accusations with a biro. According to

Sanders, her use of the word “took” implies the actions of a thief rather than a murderer ; a larrikin rather than a child-killer (178).

All types of evidence of a child-killing dingo were gradually being removed from the records. Aggressive dingoes which made themselves visible around the Ayers Rock campsite were shot by park rangers and in their place the representation of a larrikin dingo fills the public space, symbolically serving as the unjustly treated scapegoat dingo—not guilty, in fact incapable, of killing a child. Such a representation ensured the “communal condemnation” and “ritual humiliation and expulsion (through imprisonment)” of Lindy Chamberlain (Seal 87).

*What runs around Ayers Rock on its back legs with its arms in the air? A dingo doing a victory lap.*

The great tug-of-war had been won by the larrikin element of the Australian public, by the prosecution in the Chamberlain trial and by the Australian dingo in the role of bush larrikin— performing acceptable acts of rebellion against authority, yet stopping short at murder. But the price of victory was costly for many who believed in decent and fair treatment for all Australians and for the growing number who wished to properly understand the nature of wild dingoes. If the larrikin element, described by senior counsel John Winneke as “a lusting and disbelieving community” (Crispin 303), had triumphed, it followed that their discourse had also triumphed. The physical language

of the larrikins had bullied and overpowered the quiet empirical testimonies of the defence. The noisy violence of the larrikins defined the dominant Australian discourse. They tapped into an emotive yearning to be on the back of that ute at Rainbow Beach, celebrating youth and alcohol and irresponsible cynicism. The alternative was to deny the larrikin discourse, to believe the Chamberlains' story, when every other larrikin was denying it— to identify with authoritarian fools and wowsers. Metcalfe explains the great drawback in the larrikin's discourse: "To safeguard present dignity, larrikins systematically dressed imposition in the garb of free choice" (85). Ward states that a typical Australian "will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong" (2). Metcalfe explains the conformity and cowardice which is contained in such definitions of larrikinism and mateship. He cites a mine-manager's description of the larrikin miners as:

the greatest cowards on earth. I've seen it happen at pit-top meetings. I've seen everybody looking around. And the fellow next to him puts his hand up and the next one puts his hand up . . . and so this one puts his hand up. And he's quite aggressive about it once he's made his mind up. (87)

The prosecution counsel in the Chamberlain case encouraged the idea that a child-eating dingo was a joke. Long after the evidence that a dingo *could* steal a baby had become overwhelming, the cynical discourse of jokes and cartoons continued. Noel Sanders describes an "incontinent, excessive discourse that subverted the official attempts at closure" (54). Discourse made a joke of Lindy's claim that a dingo had

taken her baby. Norman Young states: “What is a laugh outside the court is doomed to be ‘laughed out of court’ ” (26). The larrikins had no choice but to continue to laugh, to dress their imposition in the garb of free choice, to stick by their mate, the “innocent” dingo, long after they privately suspected “he” might be guilty.

One of the tragedies of the Chamberlain case is that a discourse which is universally admired and which proudly announces its beliefs in free thinking individualism, is in reality, so restrictive and narrow and so intolerant of “other” points of view. When applied to humans such as Lindy Chamberlain, the cynicism, masculine aggression and group conformity of larrikinism can be devastating.

The verdict which sentenced Lindy Chamberlain to life imprisonment, had tragic outcomes for dingoes too. A not guilty verdict for the larrikin dingo did not mean a reprieve for any of them and thousands of dingoes were killed around Ayers Rock and throughout the country. The verdict, reminiscent of medieval courts which placed animals on trial, underlines the traditional inability to judge the dingo without human bias. Bryson gives an excellent example of the prejudiced slant of most human enquiries into animal behaviour. The evening after Azaria Chamberlain’s disappearance, a journalist and some of the investigative policemen involved in the case sat drinking in the bar of the Red Sands Motel. To convince the others that a dingo could not have “lifted the baby, took it out of the tent, and got halfway up the hill before any part of the body touches the ground,” Sergeant Lincoln filled a plastic bucket with ten pounds (the baby’s weight) of red sand and held the handle between

his teeth. He supported the weight for less than a minute (79-80). The idea of the dingo as physically incapable of carrying a baby clear of the ground fulfills the usual expectations of contemporary humans who define animals in terms of themselves. Their conclusions, like the conclusions of the colonisers and the tourists, take no account of the subjective animal and perpetuates only an anthropocentric illusion of the dingo inside the man.

In a discussion of sharks, Helen Tiffin has called for a greater understanding of the way in which we have projected our feelings on to animals and “the often complex and convoluted reasons for these projections” (“Shadow of the Shark” 120). The Azaria Chamberlain inquiry should have been a time for questions about our objective treatment of the dingo; an attempt to clear away our human projections and misunderstanding and a chance to understand the dingo as a versatile predator whose behaviour exceeds our limited human imaginings. One episode at Ayers Rock stands in stark contrast to the sergeant’s experiments with a bucket of sand and reveals our ignorance about the dingo’s mental capabilities. Lindy describes the moments leading up to her baby’s disappearance in detail. She takes the sleeping baby and her son to the tent and tucks the baby into a carry basket. Her small son is still hungry and he and Lindy run back to the barbecue to heat up some baked beans. Lindy writes: “*I didn’t zip up the tent again as I was planning to come back fairly quickly*” (35) (my italics). The sound of a tent zipper opening or closing pierces a quiet campsite like a scream. An intelligent human standing outside the tent in the dark, would be aware that the zipper had sounded only once—it had opened but not closed. Would an intelligent

dingo make the same observation and seize its opportunity to enter the tent? Why does such an idea seem ludicrous? Throughout the trial and afterwards, no one questioned the facts of our traditional “projections” or examined what fears and fancies drive humans to misrepresent dingoes as incapable of planning, anticipation and reason. Why are we unable to entertain the idea of a dingo registering and acting on the sound of a tent zipper which opens but does not close?

Naming the dingo as a larrikin proclaimed it as innocent and incapable of committing a major crime and so future attempts to properly understand a wild animal and to deal sensibly with its interaction with humans were effectively closed. Culling would continue as an alternative to thoughtful dialogue, and, for another twenty years until the killing of Clinton Gage, tourists would be encouraged to visit the wild dingo without any knowledge of its potential danger.

## *A PRE-CONCLUSION*

*“at the last possible moment”* (Dixon, *Dyirbal Song Poetry* xvii)

The dingo has trodden a difficult path in the last two hundred years, busily negotiating the traps of discourses which change and twist and are as inconsistent as the humans who create them. Perhaps, like Ruby Langford Ginibi, the Aboriginal woman who became weary of holding together her fragmented group of humans, the dingo is getting tired. But there is no time to rest, because the purebred dingo, which has retreated to the most isolated and barren regions, now faces its biggest challenge. It stands metaphorically as well as physically on one of the rocky cliffs which are found in its habitat. The final push which will send the purebred dingo (still scrabbling to regain a foothold no doubt) over the chasm and into extinction, is the threat of hybridity.

Scholtmeijer states what should be obvious to humans: “Animals do not want to die.” Instead they claim life “as a right owed to a being who has its own courses in life” (296). Since the arrival of the colonisers and their dogs, hybridity, the result of cross breeding between dingo and dog, has represented one of the desperate ways the dingo could seize its right to life. Hybridity is one more version of the hole in the fence, or the quick snatch of a sandwich, or perhaps a distortion of the shape-changing powers of the Dreaming Dingo. The most recent survival rates of the purebred dingo were

reported on a television science programme during March, 2005 so it is no secret to Australians that eighty percent of all dingoes are now hybrids; that there is only a core of about one hundred and twenty pure dingoes on Fraser Island, and that during the filming of the programme two more dingoes which showed aggression or were habituated to tourists were shot (“The Last Stand”).

The old colonial discourse is evolving into a dangerous new form, as cunning and vicious as the dingo it supposedly represents. A newspaper article describes the situation near the Snowy Mountains National Park: “Former hunting dogs” mixed with dingoes have formed “packs of wild superdogs,” which “roam the park in packs of up to 20 animals” and “launch into a ‘feeding frenzy’ in farming communities” (Scala 16). The government and the sheep-farming lobby have voiced their determination to destroy all hybrids and to make *no distinction* “between dingoes and the hybrid wild dogs which are much more common today” (“no distinction” 1). The Queensland Minister for the Environment reinforces such discourse: “unless you get something like 95 per cent of the ferals you do not eliminate them from a particular site—whether you are talking about wild dogs or wild dingoes” (Wells, “ferals” 1). A language which deliberately confuses feral hybrids and pure dingoes is powerful and emotive, for no sensible Australian would oppose the destruction of such “wild superdogs.” Like the dingo, the discourse has doubled back and evaded those who oppose it. Now the it reappears, fresh and adaptable and ready to fight with new tactics.

Meanwhile the Queensland Government continues to encourage thousands of tourists to visit Fraser Island, “solving” the problem of interaction by a continuous culling of the dwindling purebreds. All the escape routes for groups of surviving purebred dingoes, whether in isolated ranges or on so-called protected National Parks and islands are closing. The conclusions from my research into the discourse of the dingo are shaped by this knowledge that the dingo, as a purebred, is on the final stage of a journey into almost inevitable extinction.

## ***CONCLUSIONS***

Throughout my thesis I have used the tool of discourse to track down the dingo, to hunt the animal which hides in colonial texts, in Aboriginal myths and in three contemporary modes of communication. Having caught a variety of specimens in my discourse trap, it follows that an analysis of the dingo's past and present situation in our society, and suggestions for the future of the dingo must also be conducted through the medium of discourse.

### ***A SUMMARY OF FINDINGS IN EACH SECTION.***

#### ***The colonial dingo.***

Foucault states: "The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than of a language" (*Power/Knowledge* 114), and Bacon the trapper, chose a battle genre for his manual on how to kill a dingo. His chapter titles include: "Getting to Know the Enemy," "Attacking the Main Camp" and "Future Defences." The construction of a colonial discourse about the dingo is similar in power and effectiveness to the methods used by the army. The same appeal to the conscience is

made, the same emotive beliefs are exploited. The killing of dingoes or enemy combatants is encouraged by a strong discourse which links such aggressive acts with love of one's country, manhood, bravery, pride and ambition. However, the most powerful reason for the implementation of the dingo discourse is an economic one. The dingo threatens the great wealth of the sheep industry more than it threatens the noble and honourable feelings of men. An inexorable mix of emotion and legislation encourages and forces men to kill.

The wisdom and insight of Foucault's theories of discourse are thoroughly proved by the actions of the colonists towards the dingo. Foucault accurately predicted in *Power/Knowledge* the mixture of articulations of "the public right" and the "closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions" which are the components of the colonial discourse of the dingo. Alternately pushing with legislation and pulling with emotive calls, the sheep-farmers and the government have probed the anxieties of Australian males and persuaded the public for two centuries that the extermination of the dingo is a thoroughly worthwhile Australian act.

But the success of such discourse is heavily dependent on the ethnocentric belief that the natural environment exists "for men's well-being only" (Noske 40-41). Army commanders are always on the alert for traitors and the sheep industry identifies the "conscientious objectors" who attempt to subvert the discourse by offering some subjectivity to the dingo. The *Bulletin* writers who identify with the "underdog," the hardened trapper's grudging admiration for the dingo's stamina and beauty, reveal an

often unintentional subversion. None of their texts deny the priority of sheep, but by opening up holes in rigid and oppressive representations, they offer the dingo a chance to run off into the wilderness.

### *The Dreaming Dingo*

A study of Dreaming myths reveals that traditional Aborigines had no trouble with the concept that dingoes and humans shared similar natures and social systems. Their culture was unhampered by ethnocentric beliefs which traditionally interpret “humanness” as “a negation of animal features” (Noske 40). Instead they stood side by side with the dingo, sharing a position in the environment which accepts and uses similarities to teach, warn and to take pleasure in. There is no “sharp dividing line between human and non-human” in Aboriginal discourse (Noske 40). As ancestors of humans and dingoes, the “shape-changing” Dreaming Dingo blurs the boundaries between animal and human, inhabiting the bodies and spirits of both. In the society of traditional Aborigines, the environment was well cared for. When there is no “other” to be exploited and manipulated, the destruction of whole forests, the attempted extermination of an entire species is unthinkable. Destroying the dingo would involve destroying oneself.

Once more Foucault’s theories of the connection between discourse and truth and power are proved. The code of the traditional Aborigines could have provided a

sensible and useful blueprint for the colonists. The careful Aboriginal protection of the environment contained elements which might have been beneficially adapted into European farming plans. But an Aboriginal discourse based on sensible environmental practices was ignored by the colonists or mocked as primitive “myths.” The Dreaming Dingo discourse had no power which could convince the newcomers, no immediate wealth to offer and no truths which could be fitted into the colonists’ “ ‘general politics’ of truth” (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 131).

### ***Contemporary Configurations.***

An animal which is imagined through discourse is dependent on the uncertainties of its human creators. Like unskilled potters playing with a lump of clay, humans shape the dingo into flawed, inadequate copies of its wild self. People create a contemporary dingo according to their own various needs, imposing their vague spiritual urges, their estrangement from nature or their dissatisfaction with society onto something they perceive as a shapeless object. Under the rough hands of the human creator, the dingo becomes a Romantic dream, a wildness eager to be tamed, or a punch on the nose of conformity.

This thesis has attempted to position dingoes as separate beings which live rich and complex lives without the interference and representation of human discourse. Despite a growing awareness of the need to accept animals as more than mere projections of

our own discourses, the contemporary dingo is still exiled to the other side of the species boundary. Powerful discourses create a human representation of the dingo. *Our* beliefs—confused, ignorant and alienated as they are—continue to form the benchmarks by which we measure the dingo.

Like the sheep industry, tourism generates wealth for the country and the government. Foucault's theories of power and the "push and pull" of personal beliefs and coercive discipline apply equally well to the tourism industry (*Power/Knowledge* 133). The dreams of the tourists bring them to Fraser Island on a quest. Legislation provides the infrastructure which helps those dreams to come true, which pushes them into the pristine wilderness to hunt down the dingo. There seems little hope for the protected dingo which still lies trapped and objectified in the muddled discourses of human beings.

## ***THE FUTURE OF THE DINGO.***

### ***Hopes for the colonial dingo***

While there have been well-publicized moves to protect dingoes in National Parks, the “unprotected” dingo which lives in sheep-farming areas is still declared a pest in most states. The same colonial legislation, including the rarely used payment of bounty, remains in place. There has been some tinkering around the edges of the existing policies. A more humane trap has been introduced which doesn’t break the animal’s leg in two places, but the dingo must still lie in the trap without shade or water until the trapper arrives to shoot it. At a recent symposium the various ways of “controlling” dingoes were described (dingo discourse is filled with such euphemisms). Current methods include: “baiting using 1080-poisoned meat baits (aerial and ground baiting), trapping with soft-jawed traps and exclusion (barrier fencing)” (Fleming 43). Running through such descriptions, in what Foucault describes as the “very grain” of discourse, is the socially acceptable assumption that those dingoes which kill sheep are pests.

There have been a few challenges to the usual assumption that stock has priority over native animals. In *The Dingo in Australia and Asia*, Laurie Corbett explained ways in which cattle farmers could accommodate the presence of dingoes (154), and in a paper given at the symposium he suggested that “perhaps it is possible to bring about some

kind of traded rights between both sides of the dingo argument”(29). Such trading might for example involve the conversion of farming land to buffer zones to separate dingo habitats from sheep farms. Roland Breckwoldt, another speaker at the symposium, examined the “very grain” of colonial dingo discourse in his conclusion to *A Very Elegant Animal: The Dingo*. Breckwoldt began with the need to recognise the dingo as a native animal and remove it from all state “noxious animal and vermin lists” (262). Next he questioned and challenged a discourse which always involves the survival of sheep and the killing of dingoes. He asked if it was possible to change the practices of the sheep industry and “the economic fabric of society” which “is based on value judgements of what is good and bad, right and wrong” (254).

Towards the end of the symposium, “a few minutes” were reserved for question time. Lindy Stacker who was sitting in the audience challenged the usual discourse of the dingo as a pest: “I think we’re looking at the wrong problem animal and that we’re the problem animal, so shouldn’t we be talking about that?” Stacker identified the traditional priority given to sheep farming: “We only look at the symptoms, not the cause” and she questioned the entrenched discourses which power contemporary legislation: “The dingo is still referred to as a pest, so we’ve got to change our language first” (Davis 47-48).

Lindy Stacker’s questions were not answered or even discussed because as a speaker explained: “I think we all would be here all day on this problem” and “I reckon we could devote more than just this one day to that issue” (Davis 47-48). Hopefully one

day soon there *will* be time to spend all day discussing Stacker's issues and following up Breckwoldt's suggestions. Speakers would challenge the "very grain" of discourse which endorses colonial beliefs in the extermination of the dingo. But first, as Stacker tries to explain to the panel of dingo experts, we must look at ourselves and our farming practices, at the whole concept of colonisation, to find the excessive killer—the real "problem animal."

### ***The future of the Dreaming Dingo***

Like the purebred dingo which is facing extinction, the Dreaming Dingo is fading from memory. Most white people have always been unaware of the beauty, spirituality and layers of meaning which are contained in the myths. Posters in a country town near my home advertise two days of healing ceremonies conducted by "Standing Bear" and "Raven." The people who seek help from such indigenous American totems seem unaware of the Dreaming teachers which spring from our own land. In place of a raven the ancient myths of our country give us Gaan-ga the "clever man" crow, who sings and nurtures his dead son back to life, offering us the hope, as a gift, that sometimes death can be circumvented (Mungu 363). In place of an American Bear, kangaroo, emu, wallaby, the rainbow snake and of course the Dreaming Dingo wait for their own revival.

The written version of the Dreaming Dingo lies dustily in unread or out-of-print books, while the living myth, still stirring in the minds of a handful of old people is not given a chance of life. The myths about nonhumans have been discarded as Aborigines accept “the dominant judgement” on the form and deeds of mythic characters (Kolig, *Dreamtime Politics* 115). Kolig concluded in 1989 that the animal component of myths was treated with “incredulity and occasional ridicule” and rejected by many contemporary Aborigines (*Dreamtime Politics* 112). The “dominant judgement” of the dingo, the white Australian’s discourse, has contained a mixture of representations. The cunning, cowardly and promiscuous dingo of colonial discourse has trotted into contemporary times and changed its form, linking itself with the wilderness in an urban search for identity. The larrikins have recognised its subversive powers, its ability to circumvent authority, to (metaphorically) leave its droppings on the courthouse steps.

The dingo and the Aborigine have run side by side for five thousand years and the similarities between them are remarkable. They survived in the pre-colonial times, creating the world through their shared role in myths, accommodating each other even to the extent of moving in and out of each other’s bodies. They have both suffered from the colonists’ attempts to exterminate and displace them and both have experienced the denigrating discourse which justifies such acts. Importantly they have survived, the dingoes struggling through gaps in the fence; the Aboriginal people refusing the “dying pillow,” articulating instead Ruby Langford Ginibi’s defiant statement: “we are here and will always be here” (269).

White Australians have failed to recognise the importance of the Dreaming dingo and the other animal myths, turning instead to the indigenous myths of other countries. Now many younger Aborigines are rejecting the totemic parts of the Dreaming, especially the animal content. No doubt the dingo, more than any other animal, has contributed to the contemporary Aborigines' embarrassed rejection of parts of the Dreaming. Rather than criticize such hegemonic capitulation, positive suggestions are needed to return the Dreaming animals to the myths. Kolig suggests a symbolic reading of myths in which the nonhuman mythic beings represent abstract moral and creative forces. For converts to the Christian faith, he referred to the Aborigines at Fitzroy Crossing who "saw the Dreamtime beings as 'spirits' who had been dispatched by God to carry on with the world's creation" (*Dreamtime Politics* 114). Stephen Muecke has so many ideas that some are only sketched out. He suggests briefly that the myths should be read as poetry and I would like to develop this idea further. Poetry is the respected vehicle of abstract thought. It is not compelled to prove itself as true or derided if it is a fantasy. Poetry reveals itself slowly and allegorically after much thought and discussion. It inhabits a similar world to the Dreaming, revealing the hopes, dreams and spiritual aspirations of its listeners. Perhaps the nonhuman component of myths (especially the Dreaming dingoes) could be revived as poetry. Muecke perceives the Dreaming not as "a set of beliefs which is being lost because it is no longer valid" but rather as "a way of talking, of seeing, of knowing" (Benterrak, Muecke and Roe 14). If the Dreaming dingo must be removed from the myths it might regain a place in poetry. Importantly it should not be the poems of western

civilization, doomed like fading myths to be “neatly excluded” and “respectfully placed” in archives (Hamilton 180). The beautiful words of the dingo myths could be told again at Aboriginal celebrations and schools, or set to music and sung. I am sure the Dreaming dingo would prefer kicking up his heels at a wedding or a dance to lying immobile in an unread book. Perhaps eventually the dominant group will ask if they too can share the poetry and teachings of the Dreaming dingo. Then there will no longer be a need for “Standing Bear” and “Raven.”

*The future of dingoes on Fraser Island.*

Laurie Corbett spoke positively at the symposium about the survival of purebred dingoes on islands and well protected sanctuaries. Areas such as Fraser Island are large enough for dingoes to live and breed in natural conditions, but small enough for them to be screened and monitored effectively (18). A proportion of the dingoes on Fraser Island are hybrids which would have to be killed if the purebred strain is to be conserved. Dogs would be banned from the island (18) and humans, the “real problem animal,” would need to be strictly controlled! The Queensland Government is working hard to educate visitors to Fraser Island, providing extra rangers and pamphlets which advise the tourists how to behave towards dingoes. By July 2002 they had (officially) destroyed thirty dingoes which had become used to humans and were hoping that tourists would stop interacting with the remaining animals. But dingoes have continued to become habituated, to attack visitors and to be destroyed.

We need to strike at the “very grain” of anthropocentric belief that wild animals exist for our entertainment or redemption or as a justification of our behaviour. Shepard states: “The desire to hold the wild as we do our pets is acute” (*The Others* 145). Such a desire must be curbed by education in schools, and through children’s books and films which encourage an early awareness that wild animals are not pets, commodities or even signifiers but exist outside our imaginings. Before tourists reach the ferry and collect their leaflet they must reject the speciesism which makes wild animals the “ultimate Other” (Wolch and Jacque Emel 632). But since this new behaviour will take time to learn, Fraser Island tourists and hungry dingoes must be prevented from crossing the physical boundary between them by a large and long fence, which splits the island into two parts. The construction and wild-life management of such an artificial barrier will be filled with problems and will cost a great deal of money but Breckwoldt reminds us of how “pampered” the thylacine would be if a colony of them were found tomorrow in the Tasmanian bush (263). Unlike the thylacine it is not too late to save the purebred dingo from extinction. Let’s keep it that way.

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