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Russell/Boundary Writing

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Lynette Russell

This book explores the desire to categorize individuals and collectivities into racial, ethnic, gender, and sexuality categories of black and white; men and women; gay and straight; and so on, which is a feature of most Western societies. At its core are the intersecting concepts of indigeneity, race, gender, and sex as seen from an Australian perspective. As the title alludes, it is the boundaries and edges of these categories and concepts that are under analysis. The chapters that follow reveal that such dichotomous either/or categories are often too restrictive. Through a series of case studies the contributors consider how these overlap, coincide, and at times conflict, and they will explore the tension between these classifications that in turn produce individual speaking positions. Many Australians (indigenous, Anglo-settler, recent migrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds, queer) occupy an “in-between position” that is neither one thing nor another, but both. It is often, however, an unstable position, strategically shifting with the social, political, and economic circumstances of the individual. From this initial overview, the reader will journey through the various complex permutations of identity and, in particular, the ways in which Indigeneity, race, sex, and gender interact with and even counteract one another.

An oft-repeated contemporary concern is that, as a consequence of globalization and the emergence of virtual cultures, there will be a decrease in cultural diversity concomitant with increased homogenization or Americanization. This volume seeks to demonstrate that this oversimplification denies the reality that, within Australia (and elsewhere), there is greater space for cultural diversity than ever before. Ironically, access to information has seen growth in cultures and communities as diverse as indigenous groups; gays/lesbians; queers; transsex-
uals/shemales; Goths (gothics); wiccans and pagans. This diversity is explored and consideration given to the categories imposed upon various identities while explicitly asking whether the rigidity of the labeling hampers our capacity to understand. Importantly and uniquely, many of the case studies have at their basis ethnographic research, all have at their core an exploration and analysis of binaries and how these function within Australia. A key aspect of this book is that cultural theorists, as well as advocates and activists, have contributed chapters. This enables the reader to explore intersecting issues of practice and intellectualism while simultaneously juxtaposing “politics” and “theory” to see where these overlap and how the tension between them in turn produces the experience of a third space.2

A cultural politics has emerged in contemporary Australia that is concentrated and contested around the binary opposition of the colonized indigenous (or more commonly Aboriginal) and the colonizing diasporic white newcomer or settler.3 Needless to say, this binary is both oversimplified and essentialized. These dichotomous categories alarmingly extended to “us/them” and “either/or” are increasingly used by both sides of the equation, at times resulting in an antagonistic polarization premised on exclusion and notions of purity. Such a polarity offers little hope to the conceptualization of indigenous/nonindigenous relationships where there can be a multitude of subject positions, desires, similarities, and differences developing out of ongoing interaction and exchange. For this reason Boundary Writing, has a far greater focus on indigenous issues than other markers of identity such as gender, sexuality, and so on. This is a reflection of the way in which Australian scholarship in this area has emerged.

Australian identity studies are often positioned as considerations of native and nonnative engagements, yet by and large the Australian nation has failed to reconcile adequately the historical circumstances of European-colonialism. These ongoing interactions are at the core of contemporary debates, both within the academic and popular spheres, over the empirical content and meaning of Australian history. Historical matters taken as factual for generations, including that Aboriginal people were murdered and massacred, are now openly denied by many.4 There has been no reconciliation beyond authorized government discourse. Within Boundary Writing, an emphasis on indigenous issues is to be expected even though relationships and identities within contemporary Australia are influenced by various considerations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, political persuasion, and geographic location (e.g., urban/rural). The following chapters develop more critical perspectives and offer reconceptualized assumptions about notions of identity moving from an
“us/them” “either/or” duality to a common sense\(^4\) of “both/and,” which acknowledges and negotiates difference, contestation, similarities, and affinity.

Postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha, in his influential book *Location of Culture*, explores the conceptual and theoretical possibilities of hybridity or third space.\(^5\) The third space is derived from the notion that there is a disjuncture between the “subject of a proposition” and “the subject of enunciation.”\(^6\) He states,

> The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People. . . . It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or purity of cultures are untenable.\(^7\)

Historically hybridity, as both term and concept, has been a source of abuse and prejudice particularly as it was applied to people of mixed race heritage(s). It is permeated with images of eugenics and scientific or doctrinal racism.\(^8\) Drawing on the work of Bhabha, however, Australian scholar Nikos Papastergiadis suggests that this contentious past should not preclude the term’s contemporary use, arguing that the repossession, repositioning, and representation of negative terms can offer liberatory moments and spaces. He questions, “Should we use only words with a pure and inoffensive history, or should we challenge essentialist models of identity by taking on and then subverting their own vocabulary?\(^9\)” Whether acknowledged or not, hybridity plays an important—if not central—role in Australian postcolonial discourse, identity studies, and notions of nationhood.

For Bhabha, the third space is a type of dialogue; that is, a means for describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space or encounter. The potential for production means that this is an “interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative” space where new ways of being and innovative kinds of cultural meaning can be brought into existence. It is a productive space also, where there is of necessity a blurring of existing boundaries and binaristic identities. The usefulness of the concept of the third space should not be underestimated, because it enables
the analysis of various forms of enunciation, rupture, transgression, and subversion of binaristic dualities, thus providing the opportunity to go beyond the realm of colonial dichotomies and oppositional posturings. The third space “initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation.” 11 Within the third space, as Papastergiadis notes, is the potential for a hybrid identity to function as a “lubricant” for easing cultural friction. 12

This book is an attempt to engage with the challenges of third spaces and hybridity within the geopolitical specificity of contemporary Australia. The settler-colony Australia presents an ideal locale in which to consider the issues of boundaries of race (especially Indigeneity), class, and gender and the possibilities of understanding these through the lens of Bhabha’s notion of a third space. 13 There has been little attempt to move beyond the labeling and the binarisms of identity, because historically the Australian nation has struggled to understand and accommodate those who deviated from the imposed, colonially constructed normative position of white-Anglo-middle-class and male. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, white Australian society has been concerned to define and delimit what constitutes Australian-ness. It is frequently observed among Australians that, in stark contrast to Americans, there is a poorly developed sense of national identity; that is, it is impossible to describe what Australian-ness is in terms other than what it is not. As the chapters that follow demonstrate, however, the identity of a people or a nation is premised on, and constructed out of, the discourses of otherness, and within these discourses there is the possibility for third space(s).

Australia prior to European contact was made up of some six hundred different indigenous groups—distinct entities that in the face of the onslaught of European dispossession simply became the oppositional Aborigines. Elsewhere I have written extensively on what I describe as the homogeneity paradigm in which the diverse cultures of indigenous Australia became interpolated by the colonizers to become the collective “Aborigines.” 14 The contemporary need to identify as indigenous—or in the most common vernacular as Koori, Murri, or Noongar—has no meaning except in the face of colonialism. 15 Prior to colonization, Aboriginal people declared themselves to be members of their various tribes: Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri, Wotjabaluk, Gunditjmara, Pitjantjatjara, Aranda, Tiwi, Eualyhi, or Badjilta, to name a few. The majority of the population of the modern Australian nation consists of people who arrived through the post–World War II emigration/immigration policies of successive governments (both conservative and progressive). Settler Australians make up 98 percent of the population with indigenous people relegated to the remainder. Contemporary Australian governments have instigated and politically enacted policies that
build on unproblematic notions of “pluralism” and “multiculturalism.” Despite the political desire for Australia to be populated with people who are first and foremost Australian, people are routinely defined by ethnic or locational origins outside of the contemporary nation-state—Anglo-Australians, Italian-Australians, Turkish-Australians, and so on.

Within the nation, however, there are those who do not define themselves with regard to an external location, but whose origins are occurring within the modern Australian geopolitical boundary. These are the First people, the original people, the indigenous peoples, the Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Indigenous Australians stand apart from, but are contained within, Australia and generally define themselves as separate on the basis of shared history, culture, experience, and ethnicity. Unlike other Australians, they do not define themselves through hyphenated hybrid terms (with external referents), but rather through their tribal affiliation or simply as the generic terms Koori, Murri, or Noongar. These contemporary ascriptions of indigenous identity are generally constructed as binaristic; that is, they are constructed in conscious opposition to the identity of Euro-Australians, immigrants, colonizers, invaders, or newcomers.

The sociopolitical complexity of the formulation and maintenance of a distinctly indigenous identity takes place within a framework where the status of Aboriginal people is determined to be a minority racial or ethnic group within the dominant colonial state. As such, Aboriginal identity forms through interaction with the dominant (hegemonic) Australian society, as well the individual’s personal immediate and familial Aboriginal cultural context. As is demonstrated in many of the chapters that follow, this acquired identity developed from each society’s conceptions and often emerged as conflicting and inconsistent. This has been exacerbated by the shifting nature of settler society’s government policies relating to indigenous people, for this has ensured that the identity offered by white society has been neither predictable nor stable. The colonizing group, throughout history, has required, imposed and authorized different and shifting identities for Aboriginal people. In the 1950s and 1960s, Aboriginal people were to assimilate into white society, thus becoming subjects with certain cultural and behavioral expectations determined by the white authorities. What appeared to be a more enlightened attitude developed in the 1970s and 1980s, when State and Federal governments articulated a concern for self-determination and self-management for Aboriginal people. As a result, there came a need to identify with “their own people,” which required indigenous Australians to construct quite a different set of attributes by which they could be claimed and identified as Aboriginal.
Throughout the decades since the 1967 referendum there has been extensive public debate over the possibility of reconciliation between white and black Australia, which has acknowledged and incorporated issues such as the stolen generations and Aboriginal deaths in custody. Within these debates the meaning of indigeneity has received broad acceptance and widely divergent and different histories and experiences are accepted as part of the processes by which an Aboriginal person acquires and develops an Aboriginal identity. This is an inherently personal experience, individual and discrete. It is by allowing for this diversity of experience that the children removed from their families—and, by extension, their culture—as the result of government assimilation policies can be accommodated in discussions of Aboriginality. For the most part, however, the capacity to belong is contingent on choosing one or another identity rather than being allowed to live across the boundaries.

This notion of discrete and separate identities was brought home to me when, in 1998, I attended a small symposium on indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing held at Deakin University. At the commencement of proceedings, the participants were seated around a table and, in turn, each spoke of his or her background, identity, and affiliations. An Aboriginal woman from Northern Victoria stated that she was Yorta Yorta and that along with this heritage she had other “unwelcome blood” in her. The ferocity of her assertion and the disgust she clearly held for her “white” ancestors was palpable. She went on to describe her settler ancestors as good but misguided men, unconscious thieves of her tribal lands and her grandmothers (both of whom were Aboriginal) as duped by believing that these newcomers offered a better way of life. My turn to speak followed, and the contrast could not have been greater. I stated that I was not an Aboriginal person per se, but I did have Aboriginal ancestors and I chose to celebrate all of my heritages and welcomed the mosaic of identities that this afforded me. The discussion that followed was fascinating and at times heated and ultimately led me on a journey through the literature of “race critical theory.”

For generations, Australia has been divided into Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal categories, even when both groups have existed within the one family. Historically mainstream white society almost universally assumed that these racial categories were intertwined with gender categories: with white men marrying Aboriginal women and the (at least popular) assumption was that the reverse rarely occurred. It is important to recognize that the political process of colonialism forced people with Aboriginal heritage to choose to be either one or the other and therefore by extension reject their other heritages. The difficulties of
this required binarism has led many Aboriginal people to describe their white ancestors as their “unwanted blood.”

The humanities and social sciences—including history, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, and gender studies—tend to be dominated with binaristic terminology including the apparently simple male and female, men and women, native and newcomer, settler and indigene, invader and traditional owner, victim and victor, and so on. These oppositional pairings seamlessly enable the development of interpretive paradigms within which the normative position (white/straight/male and so on) is unquestioned, unreflected, and—despite being invested with hegemony—invisible.21 Binaries and dichotomies are reassuring—they categorize the world into a black and white comprehensible pseudoreality, by simplifying and homogenizing complexity, variability, and uncertainty. One of the consequences of this is that those deemed to be other (e.g., gays, women, indigenous people) are always perceived to be reactionary; that is, they are reacting to colonial or hegemonic impositions and rarely as historically effective and active agents. Jacques Derrida reminds us there is an alternative to the either/or binarisms. Dichotomies are programmable and formalizable—to break free of their hold, we can opt for another view that of “undecidability.”22 Undecidability refers to the (im)possibility of deciding between discrepant and often contradictory orders of meaning, and yet it should not be confused with indecision. In Derrida’s terms, historical actors can be either/or and simultaneously be neither/nor.

The authors in this book suggest that binarisms fail to recognize the emergence of social formations born out of encounter that are much greater than the sum of their constituent elements. Since the advent of the great sociopolitical (and counterculture) movements that took hold in the 1960s, which included second-wave feminism, the indigenous-rights movement, and the “sexual revolution,” many people now occupy what can be regarded as the ambivalent third space. Here the third space is neither one nor another of these binaristic categories, but is often also both. Ambivalence in gender/sexuality studies is an important concept, particularly as the case studies of Moore (chapter 2) and McDonald (chapter 3) demonstrate. The theoretical constructions of gender and sexuality and concepts of race and indigeneity emerge as interconnected and interdependent. This should not come as a surprise, however, as Donna Haraway reminds us:

Gender and race have never existed separately and never were about preformed subjects endowed with funny genitals and curious colors. Race and gender are
about entwined barely analytically separable, highly protean, relational categories. Racial, class, sexual, and gender formations (not essences) were, from the start, dangerous and rickety machines for guarding the chief fictions and powers of European civil manhood. To be unmanly is to be uncivil, to be dark is to be unruly: These metaphors have mattered enormously in the constitution of what may count for knowledge.23

Gender as an analytical category has received significant attention within academic discourse over the past thirty years. Much of this material has grown out of the second wave of feminism and was underpinned by a concern with the role of women in society. Over the past few years, women’s studies departments in universities across the country have switched their focus to an interest in the way gender operates across society both historical and contemporary; changing their names to gender studies in the process. This shift is reflected in this volume, especially in chapters by Moore, McDonald, and Reed (chapter 6). The discussion of gender issues here is informed by the philosophical and historical work of Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Anne McClintock.24 It is important to note that gender is not used as a descriptive or prescriptive term for a series of binarisms with male being counterpoised against female. Within this volume gender is “always a relationship, not a preformed category of beings or a possession that one can have. Gender does not pertain more to women than men. Gender is the relation between variously constituted categories of men and women (and variously arrayed tropes), differentiated by nation, generation, class, lineage, color, and much else.”25

Thus, it becomes clear that understanding gender and sexuality as cultural concepts cannot be based on an assumption of chromosomal sex, but on the social constructions of the categories male and female. As Sedgwick argues, “‘Sex’...[or] ‘chromosomal sex’—is seen as the relatively minimal raw material on which is then based the social construction of gender. Gender, then, is the far more elaborated, more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and behaviors—of male and female persons—in a cultural system for which ‘male/female’ functions as a primary and perhaps binary model...whose apparent connection to chromosomal sex will often be exiguous or nonexistent.”26 Similar arguments, denying essentialism, can be and are made for the social construction of race or ethnicity, black and white, native and newcomer. The entangled nature of these categories is explicated by McClintock, who in avoiding the perpetuation of antagonistic or oppositional binarisms notes that “race, gender and class are not distinct realms
of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence in and through relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways."

Understanding how these categories play out in the Australian settler nation provides a theoretical and discursive space to explore the limits and possibilities of binarisms and living undecided across the boundaries of race, class, and gender. The third space or hybrid space is shown to be a locale where binarisms are resisted and rejected. The research that emerges in this volume is enmeshed in and engaged with the theoretical writings of Derrida, Foucault, Spivak, and—perhaps most important—Bhabha, yet at all times the contributors are also keenly critical and seek alternate views that challenge and disrupt the idea that identities must be exclusionist, essentialized (pure), or dichotomous. Along with the rejection of binarisms and dichotomies, the authors offer new models that account for the complexities of identity be it class, race, gender, or sexual identity. In doing so, they provide nuanced understandings of the ambiguities of cross-cultural and cross-gender encounters and the unbounded identities that can emerge from them.

Gender and sexuality are explored in the chapters by Clive Moore and Myfanwy McDonald. Moore, focusing on questions of sexuality, demonstrates that gay/lesbian and queer interactions no longer take place in what have traditionally been labeled private or public spaces (beats), but in new third spaces, of which the Internet offers a multitude of permutations. Moore’s third space is beyond mere geography but simultaneously conceptual, ethereal, and tangible. In her chapter, McDonald explores “the nonsurgical option” to what the medical profession pathologize as gender identity disorders and the condition known as ambivalent genitalia. She questions the relationship between biological sex, gender ascriptions, and transitive behaviors and rejects the binaries between male and female and extends this to a dismantling of the assumed connection between gender and sex. For McDonald, being born male does not determine gender; intelligible gender is chosen from an array of options. The dichotomy of male and female looks more like a continuum, with male and female merely the end points. In McDonald’s third space, the sociocultural and medical constructions of gender identity collide, sometimes passionately and violently. Read together Moore and McDonald’s contributions suggest that our understandings of sex, sexuality, gender, and gender identity provide an exciting arena within which to explore epistemological issues and constructions of knowledge.

Liz Reed also examines issues of gender, including her own when she sit-
uates herself as a raced, gendered, and classed researcher. Reed seeks to incorporate awareness of those multiple “identities” into her work as she explores how indigenous rock music (broadly defined, and recognized as such, by the researcher) can be responded to as if speaking to nonindigenous listeners, thereby creating a third space within which researchers can respond and interact. Engagement in this third space is neither easy nor comfortable, because the researcher is consistently negotiating her relationship to the producers of the music (and the colonizer other more generally). Embedded within this process, the researcher is also reconfiguring and reconceptualizing his or her own subject position. Through an analysis of the music of Aboriginal rock bands NoK-TuRNAL, New Senate, Tiddas, and others, Reed explores, disentangles, and moves beyond the definitional (and ontological) limitations of the essentializing categories of race, gender, and class.

Race and ethnicity are the key concerns of Erez Cohen’s work (chapter 4), in which he considers what he calls the third side of the black/white divide, the non-Anglo and non-Aboriginal Australians. Using as a case study a Latin American community living in the South Australian city of Adelaide, Cohen examines the relationship between the migratory experience and sense of (indigenous) belonging in Australia and asks how they contribute to the understanding of indigeneity in Australia. He is concerned particularly with the political motivations of such a relationship and the role played by left-wing politics. Furthermore, he contemplates how such affiliations are regarded in relation to the white/Aboriginal divide and attempts at recognition and reconciliation. Cohen’s work illustrates the complexity of contemporary Australia, where being simply designated as native or not is always useful or productive. Accordingly, the social relationships and political activities of left-wing Latin American immigrants and Aboriginal community members and activists testify that the epistemological categories of the “migrant,” “non-Anglo,” and nonindigenous are much less stable and absolute than popular discourse might suggest.

Binaristic categories of knowledge and identity are explored and shattered in the chapter by Aaron Corn and Neparrŋa Gumbula (chapter 9). This chapter is an extension of the collaborative work between Gumbula, a scholarly Yolŋu elder and leader, and Corn, a musicologist and university-trained academic. This chapter not only deals effectively with binaries as these exist in Yolŋu intellectual traditions, but also is itself an intercultural dialogue that is not merely bicultural but biintellectual. Corn and Gumbula argue that self-consciously biintellectual-discourses such as theirs offer an undeniable advance both for indigenous peoples who strive to support and maintain the continuation of traditions and concomitantly for researchers and others who look for knowledgeable, accurate,
and authorized information about them. This chapter makes extensive use of the visual primers that Gumbula has developed for teaching purposes.

Stephen Pritchard (chapter 6) is also concerned with issues of authority in “Cultural Property and Exchange in Contemporary-Indigenous Art.” Pritchard explores contemporary indigenous art and cultural property and examines the relationship between the construction of indigenous culture in ethnographic and art theory discourses. Pritchard sees that notions of cultural production and issues of authority, ownership, and self-determination are key aspects of this space of enunciation. The central concern is with the characterization of cultural exchange, negotiation, and contestation of the traditional binaries indigenous/settler and indigenous/“Western” and the naming of “indigenous” in “nontraditional” and “contemporary” contexts.

Bruno David is similarly concerned with issues of authenticity, authority, ownership, and rights (chapter 7). According to David, to be an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander with legitimate indigenous rights to places and resources means that one is largely measured by a contemporary Australia that recognizes the authenticity of eighteenth- to early twentieth-century cultural practices at the expense of contemporary ones. That is, the recognition is based on the survival of land ownership legitimated by clan-based ceremonies and totemic rituals. This desire to categorize indigeneity through the binarism of being or not being of the past—being or not being “traditional”—is effectively a public, political, and judicial resistance to the recognition of an authentic indigeneity and of authentic indigenous rights outside the frame of the historically situated primitivist constructions of unchanging Aborigines. This functions as a tool for maintaining the status quo, in which indigenous people are disadvantaged and disempowered. Within this paradigm, indigeneity is recognized only to the degree that Aboriginal Islander peoples can change of their own accord, unaided or uninfluenced by the presence of newcomers. This chapter traces pre-European culture change in Aboriginal Australia, to argue that Aboriginal cultures have always changed and developed in response to new influences. Recognition of the historicity of indigenous societies should ensure that indigenous rights are not affected by virtue of the fact that Aboriginal culture has changed under colonialism. David demonstrates the inappropriateness of constructing notions of contemporary indigeneity around the binarism of being or not being of the essential cultural past.

Michele Grossman describes a distinction between the past and present, traditional and contemporary ways of being and expressing Aboriginality in her essay (chapter 8). Grossman considers the history of binary distinctions between “orality” and “literacy” that have set up and been authorized by social anthro-
pology. She explores the cultural and political consequences of the “great divide theory” that has characterized this area. The chapter then reflects on a range of collaboratively produced indigenous texts that confront this divide. These constructions first challenge and destabilize and then reform knowledge of both orality and writing in the process. To investigate both the understandings and formations, Grossman examines the collaborative work of Aboriginal narrator Paddy Roe and postcolonial theorist Stephen Muecke. She examines the limits and possibilities brought into play by Muecke’s use of Deleuze and Guattari in his attempt to undermine the text/talk binarism and create a third space, a productive place of indigenous textual production.

Boundary Writing offers a new look at the roles that race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender play in contemporary Australian identity. There is a distinct desire to blur the boundaries and write in ways that engage with and perpetuate the tensions that surround these competing forms of identification. Each of the contributing authors work with an explicit subject position, often from within a defined third space, which is recognized to be simultaneously both liberating and limiting. Binaries, such as black and white, male and female, gay and straight are shown to be overly restrictive. Throughout the volume, it is clear that there exists a desire for fluidity, for labels to be removed. In so doing, the conceptual frameworks offered to us by notions of hybridity and third space contribute to the dismantling of binaries and facilitates the theorization of inclusionary (rather than exclusionary) and multifaceted (rather than dualistic) models of cultural interaction.

Acknowledgments

In compiling and editing this collection, I have incurred significant debts. First, to each of the contributors who were set a vague task to explore binaries and think about third space in an Australian context. It is testament to their great intellect and talent that they produced such fine pieces out of such minimal instruction. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for feedback and engagement. Special thanks to Phillip Darby, of the Institute for Postcolonial Studies, for the opportunity to put the collection to the editorial committee and Anne Maxwell, who was charged with seeing it to production. My appreciation also to Melissa Castan, Marcia Langton, Zane Ma Rhea, Ian McNiven, Tim Russell-Cook, Myles Russell-Cook, and Patrick Wolfe, for intellectual and personal sustenance and helping me disentangle my ideas. The use of “Indigenous,” with an uppercase I is commonplace practice in Australia. In deference to the University of Hawai‘i Press’ standard style, the lowercase is used in this book.
Notes

1. My interest in binaries is both personal and professional. Elsewhere I have discussed at length how establishing my own Aboriginal heritage created a new and entirely uncertain identity. This is an identity that states emphatically I am neither one thing nor another. For me, the binaries of indigenous/nonindigenous, native/newcomer are meaningless. Instead, I have found myself reaching for the possibility of another space or, perhaps, two (or more) spaces, each mutually occupying the same locale. This question of binaries as these relate to identity was further developed a number of years ago when I attended a family funeral and met my father’s cousins. Like my father, these men were of Aboriginal and European descent; their maternal great-grandmother was a Pallawah (Aboriginal Tasmanian) woman who lived on the Bass Strait Islands and undertook sealing activities with her European “husband.” I was quick to characterize her as a victim of the colonial encounter, a virtual slave. This, however, was not the view of her descendants, who pointed out that such a characterization disempowered her and ascribed the moniker of slave owner to their great-grandfather. For further discussion, see my Savage Imaginings: Historical and Contemporary Constructions of Australian Aboriginalities (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishers, 2001); also see “Introduction,” in Lynette Russell, ed., Colonial Frontiers: Cross Cultural Interactions in Settler Colonies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); and Lynette Russell, “The Instrument Brings on Voices: Life Story Narratives and Family History,” Meanjin, Vol. 3 (2001): 145–152, and A Little Bird Told Me: Family Secrets, Necessary Lies (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2002). The position I articulate, which draws extensively on the work of Homi K. Bhabha and others, has received mixed responses. I have encountered scholars who embrace and celebrate the liberatory nature of such a position and others who condemn it. For example, Mark Minchinton, in a paper delivered at the Dialogues across Cultures conference, November 2004, discussed his web-based writing project, Void: Kellerberrin Walking, and stated that he shared my concerns about labeling identity, and, consequently, he too was neither Aboriginal nor non-Aboriginal. Using the either/or, neither/nor framework Minchinton noted he was also both. A quite different view, though, was generated by white academic Jennifer Jones in her review article “Indigenous Life Stories,” Life Writing, Vol. 2 (2004). Jones inexplicably considered my concern for this particular way of framing my subject position to be an implicit statement of loss rather than an assertion of recovery.


3. The use of the term white here is not intended to exclude the many immigrants to Australia who are not white per se. The term is instead used as a referent...
to whiteness studies in which the (ongoing) privileged position of nonnative peoples within the Australian Nation is examined and critiqued. For example, see Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s “Duggaibah, or “place of whiteness”: Australian feminists and race,” in Belinda McKay, ed., Unmasking Whiteness: Race Relations and Reconciliation (St. Lucia: Queensland Studies Centre, Griffith University, Nathan, 2000), and see also her monograph, Talkin’ Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2000).


5. I use common sense here, very deliberately, because I mean common sense in terms that such concepts must be mutual (shared) and popular as well as common-sense, because this is both a rational and logical way forward for race relations and identity studies.

6. The term “postcolonial” is quite contentious within Australia, especially among indigenous activists who do not regard the period of colonialism to have ended. My use of the term “postcolonial” does not assume that colonialism is over, but rather that Australia is composed of diasporic settlers who are here to stay (and in many instances are embedded within indigenous communities); therefore, there exists an imperative for negotiation. On this matter, I have been influenced by the definitional challenges proposed by Christine Sylvester and Phillip Darby. See Christine Sylvester, “Development Studies and Postcolonial Studies: Desperate Tales of the ‘Third World,’” Third World Quarterly, Vol. 20, no. 4 (1999): 703–721, and Phillip Darby, The Fiction of Imperialism: Reading between International Relations and Postcolonialism (London: Cassell, 1998).

8. Bhabha, Location, p. 37.
12. Papastergiadis, Tracing, p. 251. Although I have stopped short of terming my own subjectivity (the either/or, neither/nor proposition) a hybrid identity, careful consideration leads me to suppose that my reluctance to use the word hybrid is based on
the term’s history. Although I am not yet in a position to reclaim and subvert its meaning, like Papastergiadis I am enthusiastic about the potential for the hybrid identity to function as an articulation (lubricant) between cultural groups.

13. Australia is both colony and colonizer. As a British settlement, and member of the British Commonwealth, Australia is indeed a colony; however, it is also colonizer as the dispossession of the original inhabitants was a key feature of British occupation after 1788.

14. See my Savage Imaginings, which owes a significant debt to the influential work of Bain Attwood, who has similarly observed that this homogenization of Aboriginal culture was both a conceptual and pragmatic shift. Accordingly, Attwood argues that this was both a factor of European colonization and a responses by Aboriginal people engaged in the process of “making themselves.” See Bain Attwood, The Making of the Aborigines (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), and also his “Making History: Imagining Aborigines and Australia,” in Tim Bonyhady and Tom Griffiths, eds, Prehistory to Politics: John Mulvaney, the Humanities, and the Public Intellectual ( Carlton South: Melbourne University Press, 1997). Also see Bain Attwood, “The Paradox of Australian Aboriginal History,” Thesis Eleven, Vol. 38 (1994): 118–137, especially pp. 126–127. Writing from an indigenous perspective, anthropologist Marcia Langton and writer Mudrooroo have described the (colonial) need for Aboriginal people to be seen (and perceive themselves) as belonging to the “one mob.” See Marcia Langton, Well I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television ( Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), p. 32, and Mudrooroo, Us Mob: History, Culture, Struggle: An Introduction to Indigenous Australia ( Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1995), p. 2.

15. Koori, Murri, and Noongar are regionally specific terms used by contemporary indigenous people to describe their ethnic identity.

16. Aboriginal people occupy the Australian mainland, Tasmania, and adjacent islands and seas. Torres Strait Islanders inhabit many of the islands and surrounding waters between mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea. They collectively claim a culturally and historically distinct identity belonging to particular islands and island groupings (e.g., Badulgal, Goemulgal, and so on).

17. Under the conservative coalition Federal governments of the past decade indigenous affairs has been subsumed within the government’s Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Perhaps no action in the history of Australia more aptly captures what is regarded as the normative position of white/Anglo Australia, as this conglomerate office is responsible for all people who deviate from this norm (i.e., immigrants; those who acknowledge their cultural or ethnic diversity; and Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders).

18. From the 1950s onward, there was increased interest and concern with
regard to Aboriginal peoples’ rights. A key player in this area was the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), which was founded in 1958. FCAATSI played a significant role in raising awareness of social justice issues. It also provided an important opportunity for indigenous and settler-Australian people to work together with the common goal of resolving prejudice and racism and publicizing the injustices that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians continued to experience. FCAATSI was dedicated to obtaining full Australian citizenship for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As a result of FCAATSI’s activism, in 1967 the Commonwealth government held a referendum to include Aborigines in the census and enable the federal government to control and legislate on indigenous matters. The referendum did not, as many believe, give Aboriginal people the vote. Enfranchisement occurred at various times in different states. See Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, in collaboration with Dale Edwards and Kath Schilling, The 1967 Referendum; or, When Aborigines Didn’t Get the Vote (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1997).


20. Race is a contentious and much abused term. Over the past ten to twenty years, physical and social anthropologists have argued over whether “race” has a physical (measurable) basis. The emergent position has been that race is a social construction, a category invented to explain what are otherwise trivial differences. This position, most famously espoused by Stephen Jay Gould, has been seriously reexamined by Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele in Race: The Reality of Human Differences (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 2002). For the purposes of my argument, the existence (or otherwise) of race is immaterial. I use the term “race”—and, by extension, racism—in its vernacular sense. Race therefore is equated with blood, lineage, and memory in myriad complex ways. For an interesting discussion of this, see the concluding chapter to Chadwick Allen’s Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).


