Aboriginal Women's Autobiographical Narratives and the Politics of Collaboration

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In
Gender Studies, Department of Social Inquiry
Adelaide University
October 2001
Contents

List of abbreviations
List of illustrations
List of tables and diagrams
Abstract
Acknowledgements
Declaration

Chapter One: Introduction
Sally Morgan's My Place and the eclipsing of Aboriginal women's foundational autobiographical narratives

Chapter Two: Methodology
Situating myself and this research

Section I
Re-membering Karobran by Monica Clare

Chapter Three: Literary links
Monica Clare and left wing politics

Chapter Four: Invisible workers
Invisible workers leave a mark: Editing Karobran

Section II
Re-membering If Everyone Cared by Margaret Tucker

Chapter Five: Contesting memory
The contested memory of Margaret Tucker

Chapter Six: God's Guidance
Editing according to the guidance of God
Section III
Re-remembering Stradbroke Dreamtime by Oodgeroo of
the Tribe Noonuccal, Custodian of the Land Minjerriba

Chapter Seven: Publishing and Politics 137
Political activism and the writing life: From poetry and
pan-Aboriginal politics to children's prose and cultural education

Chapter Eight: The Mythologised Indigene 174
The resurrection of the mythologised indigene

Section IV
Re-remembering foundational Aboriginal women writers

Chapter Nine: Reading Other-wise 229
Reading Other-wise: Colonial mimicry and editorial double mimesis

Chapter Ten: Conclusion 260

Appendices

Appendix I 264
Extracts from the original Karobran manuscript with editorial corrections

Appendix II 266
Extracts from the original hand-written manuscript and typescript
of Everyone Cared

Appendix III 269
Extracts from the original hand-written manuscript and typescript
of Stradbroke Dreamtime

Bibliography 273
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAF</td>
<td>Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSCHOL</td>
<td>National Union of Australian Students Aboriginal Scholarship Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>Australian Conservation Foundation</td>
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<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>Australian Mutual Provident</td>
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<tr>
<td>APB</td>
<td>Aborigines Protection Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APCOL</td>
<td>Alternative Publishing Co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;R</td>
<td>Angus and Robertson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIO</td>
<td>Australian Securities Intelligence Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAITC</td>
<td>Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Tribal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Communist Party of Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCAATSI</td>
<td>Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRA</td>
<td>Moral Re-Armament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTC</td>
<td>National Tribal Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAAL</td>
<td>Queensland Aboriginal Advancement League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QCAATSI</td>
<td>Queensland Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAAL</td>
<td>Victorian Aborigines Advancement League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEA</td>
<td>Workers Education Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPSQ</td>
<td>Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Figure 1
Stradbroke Dreamtime, first edition (1972)

Figure 2

Figure 3
Stradbroke Dreamtime, third edition (1992)

Figure 4

Figure 5
"The Beginning of Life", manuscript version

Figure 6
"Burr-Nong: Bora Ring", manuscript version

Figure 7
"The Midden", manuscript version

Figure 8
"The Midden" first edition
Tables

Table 1  
Instances of editorial intervention to Karobran manuscript

Table 2  
Significant alterations to Karobran manuscript

Table 3  
Section titles from Margaret Tucker’s original manuscript

Table 4  
Instances of editorial intervention to If Everyone Cared manuscript

Table 5  
Significant alterations to If Everyone Cared manuscript

Table 6  
Tally: ‘Stories from Stradbroke’

Table 7  
Tally: ‘Stories from the Old and New Dreamtime’

Table 8  
Tally: both sections combined

Table 9  
Outcomes of editorial changes to Stradbroke Dreamtime

Diagrams

Diagram 1  
Margaret Tucker's symbolic numbering system
Abstract

Since their groundbreaking publication in the 1970s, foundational autobiographical texts by Aboriginal women writers have been the subject of little critical discussion and have failed to gain space in the public memory. Oodgeroo published *Stradbroke Dreamtime* (1972) in a children’s picture book format. Margaret Tucker’s *If Everyone Cared* (1977) was the first conventional autobiography. *Karobran* (1978) by Monica Clare, became the first autobiographical novel by an Aboriginal woman. These three Aboriginal women authors were outspoken, active and successful advocates of Aboriginal rights. The loss of status suffered by their foundational autobiographical narratives can be linked to each text’s overt political enunciation, uncompromising ideological stance or mobilisation of an unfashionable generic style. Monica Clare, Margaret Tucker and Oodgeroo were women of conviction, working within their Aboriginal communities, pan-Aboriginal lobby groups, religious and political organisations. These organisations included non-Aboriginal people who were sympathetic to the Aboriginal struggle. This thesis investigates the role of these ‘communities of commitment’ in the publication of their foundational autobiographical narratives. It considers how and why the Aboriginal woman elicited outside support and how the ideology of the group informed the epistemology of the text. My research highlights the role of collaborating white editors, drawn from a community of commitment or a professional editor, as crucial in influencing the style and content of the published piece. I quantify and describe the changes implemented by the editor by comparing the original manuscript of each text with the published edition. This comparison lays bare the hidden ideological work of the editor and the surviving Aboriginal subtext. Following Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha, I characterise the adoption of a white ideological artifice by the Aboriginal woman author as the white mask of colonial mimicry. I demonstrate how compromise in the editorial phase also becomes a site of potential political subversion. Significantly, my work discusses the outcomes of cross-cultural impersonation performed by the white editor. The editorial collaboration is the site of editorial double mimesis, the imposition of stereotyped representations of Aboriginality. This thesis accepts the scars of editorial effacement as evidence of struggle and celebrates the substantially unheralded achievements of these women.
Acknowledgements

This thesis has been written under the generous and skilled supervision of Associate Professor Kay Schaffer. Thank you for your innumerable attentions. My thanks also to Margaret Allen and Amanda Nettelbeck who acted as supervisors during Kay's absence. I appreciated your insight and encouragement.

Hearty thanks to David Gilbey who stood by his rash promise, reading and responding to a full draft of the thesis.

Every effort has been made to contact copyright owners and to obtain permission to reproduce copyright material. I acknowledge permission granted to reproduce manuscript material by the copyright owners: Jack Horner, Maxine Barr, Petrina Walker and the late Judith Wright.

I also acknowledge permission to reproduce material from interviews with Jack and Jean Horner, Mona Brand and Len Fox, Hilarie Lindsay, Fred Moore, Mavis Miller, Rita and Jim Coulter, Tom and Elizabeth Ramsey, Maxine Barr, Lorna White, Walda Blow, Dennis Mayor, Anne Ross and Catherine Good, the late Judith Wright, Kathie and Bob Cochrane, Barbara Ker Wilson, Allan and Ruth Doobov. I acknowledge email or telephone communications with John Bond, Beverly Symons and Irene Arrowsmith.

Several Interstate research trips were assisted by funds from the Karen Halley Trust administered by Gender Studies, Department of Social Inquiry, University of Adelaide.

Thanks to Sitarani Kerin who directed me to papers pertaining to Margaret Tucker's relationship with Anna Vroland, from the Papers of Anton Vroland, MS 3991, National Library of Australia.
My thanks to the staff of the manuscript reading rooms at the National Library of Australia and The Fryer Library at the University of Queensland. I also gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Jill Hooper, the Remote Students Librarian at the Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University.

I would like to thank staff members, administrative staff and fellow postgraduates in Gender Studies, Department of Social Inquiry at Adelaide University. Special thanks to my office mate Shannon Dowling for many conversations and challenges. Thanks also to Lara Palombo and Pam Papadelos for your encouragement over the years.

Finally, I acknowledge the essential companionship of friends and family. My children Thea, Ainsley and Julian have shared their formative years with this thesis. To Bryn, thank you for your unconditional love.
Declaration

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

I give consent to this copy of the thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Jennifer Jones, October 2001