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Australian Psychoses

Women's madness and colonial psychosis

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ABSTRACT

Representations of madwomen in fiction written by women have engaged feminist theorising since the 1970s. Within the terms of that engagement, critical madness discourse has located patriarchy as formative in the construction of women's madness. Themes of women's madness and patriarchal oppression resonate in works by prominent Australian writers Christina Stead and Kate Grenville. Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940) and Grenville's companion novels *Lilian's Story* (1985) and *Dark Places* (1996) are linked by themes of incest, madness and violent family dysfunction. Both writers intervene into the politics of women's madness, locating it as a product of the patriarchal family. The family is emblematic of the Australian nation as the site for the production of gender norms and gender relations of power. In addition, Australian patriarchy has been shaped by colonialism and colonial forms of nation-building and national meaning-making that position whiteness and maleness as the privileged forms of national identity. I argue that the exclusion of women from narratives of national identity constitutes a form of colonial paranoia that circulates in the national Imaginary of 'settler' societies, to structure the rigid gender and racial divisions that characterise Australian national formation. Discourses of 'race' and Eugenics used by *The Man Who Loved Children's* Sam Pollitt, and Albion Gidley Singer, the abusive father of *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places*, to rationalise their mistreatment of women and children are symptoms of colonial psychosis. This is played out on the bodies of the women who challenge it, with devastating effects for Louie who in *The Man Who Loved*

Children, attempts to murder both her parents, and for Lilian, who is incarcerated in a mental asylum for ten years. In situating women's madness as a product of the madness of the fathers who govern them, I intervene in a critical absence in the theorising of women's madness, locating the production of Australian masculinity as a site for colonial psychosis.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed

Date

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INTRODUCTION: MADE MAD: WOMEN, MADNESS AND NATIONAL CULTURE

'An ugly childhood is a bad preparation for success', Kate Grenville, *Lilian's Story*

Introduction: Women and Madness

What is a madwoman? Is it a Crazy Jane, a suicidal Ophelia, a deserted lover? More likely, a prostitute, drinker, drug user. Or a bag lady. Almost certainly a witch, even a midwife. Possibly a dissident, or a feminist—so *angry*, feminists. In Western culture, images of madwomen abound, in art as in literature, in psychoanalytic, philosophical and medical discourse. Madness is such a common plot in literature that it is accorded position 16 in Georges Polti's list of *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations,* testifying to its durability as a motif for writers interested in interrogating the social, cultural and political processes that produce 'outsiders'. Writers, both men and women, have used madness as a catalyst for dramatic action, from Shakespeare's play of political intrigue, *Hamlet*, to works as varied as *Madame Bovary* (1856), *Jude the Obscure* (1895), *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), *Jane Eyre* (1847), and in the twentieth century, novels by Virginia Woolf, Janet Frame, Sylvia Plath and Jean Rhys.[1] Madness, of course, has a history. It emerges at a particular historical moment

[1] For example, Virginia Woolf critiques the treatment of mental illness in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Janet Frame's novel, *Faces in the Water* (1961) is a fictional recount of Frame's experiences in psychiatric hospitals. She was scheduled to undergo a lobotomy, but when news broke that her first book of short stories, *The Lagoon and Other Stories* (1951), had won the prestigious Hubert Church Memorial Award, her doctors re-thought her diagnosis. Her three-volume autobiography has been published posthumously as a single volume under the title of Jane Campion's film about Frame, *An Angel at my Table* (London: Virago, 2008). Sylvia Plath's only novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963) is a semi-autobiographical account of a mental breakdown, and was published a month before Plath committed suicide. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) takes up the story of Bertha Rochester, the

in the nineteenth century, at the intersections of the emergent disciplines of medicine, science, and psychoanalysis, through the discourse of hysteria which linked madness to the female body. The uterus, the *hystera* that apparently floated around unfettered inside the female body, giving rise to female instability (Showalter, *Hystories*, 15) is the code-word by which madness speaks its name. Within the gendered terms of that naming, the *hystera* inscribes femaleness as Otherness, against which the male body was produced as the stable, orderly, rational Self. So enmeshed is the female body within the signifying chains of that discursive production of madness as Otherness, and so gendered is the production of madness, that it has engaged both women writers and feminist critics keen to dismantle its correlation with women. As madness became increasingly culturally coded as feminised, feminist theorising radically called into question the cultural politics that surround madness. Madness and other forms of female disorder have come to be widely interpreted in feminist literature since the 1970s as forms of embodied protest against oppressive 'feminine' ideals that delimit women's possibilities for experience as human, rather than gendered subjects.[2] Foucault's proposition in *Madness and Civilization* that madness is what has been philosophically, politically and socially repressed, and that this amounts to a cultural silencing that is also political, is echoed in the feminist project. His contention that 'the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness' (274) finds its corollary in the feminist project that forces the world to question itself and the gendered assumptions that underpin its social, political, and philosophical structures. Within feminist theorising, the trope of madness is linked to a cultural politics of gender, in which

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madwoman in the attic of *Jane Eyre*, to critique Charlotte Brontë's construction of madness as the product of a racialised Otherness.

[2] For important analyses of this, see Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*; Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*; Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*; Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture*.

women writers and critics use madness to interrogate the very terms of the culture they find themselves in, and the place women are accorded within those cultures. The various images of 'mad' women that open this chapter, the range in the types of women who can be named mad, attest to the ways that madwomen inhabit and resist categorisation by any single discursive formation, suggesting that the *meanings* of women's madness are both culturally and historically constructed. In using the term 'madness', then, I recognise that the psychiatric profession has tended to ignore the 'social, political and historical roots' of madness, resisting feminist critical approaches that take up R.D Laing's position that madness is a 'perfectly rational adjustment to an insane world' (Ussher, 6, 12).[3] This approach follows Jane M Ussher, who argues in *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (1991), that:

> Madness is no more a simple set of symptoms or problems—an individual difficulty or illness experienced by each "interesting case"—than any individual women's history can be seen entirely independently of the history of *all* women. As we cannot hope to understand an individual woman without looking at the meaning of what it is to be 'woman' in a patriarchal society, so we cannot understand the pain and agony which makes up "madness" without looking at the meaning of this very concept …
>
> To use the term "madness" is to recognize the meaning attached to the perception of illness or dysfunction in the psychological domain—the stigma attached—and to avoid entering into the discourse of the experts wherein these classificatory systems are deemed to exist as entities in themselves, as illnesses which *cause* the disturbance in function in the first place … But … to look beyond any individual diagnostic category: to look at the function and experience of madness itself, especially what function it serves in society, and

[3] Ussher further notes that senior male clinicians have 'pathologised' her, labelling her as 'neurotic' or 'hysterical' for offering such critiques, 6.

> what it means for the individual woman. For madness acts as a signifier, clearly positioning woman as Other. (6, 11)

Ussher's definition of madness situates individual women's experiences of madness within their historical, social and political contexts: as responses to patriarchy and an unjust social order that confers meanings of mental illness upon women who refuse to take up socially ordained roles circumscribed by patriarchal constructions of femininity. To use the term 'madness' is therefore to refuse to enter into the taxonomy of mental illness that has pathologised women by individualising women's madness, and in effect, naturalised the positioning of women as secondary citizens, supplementary to men.

Madness is now considered to be an old topic for feminist literary criticism, a node of critical inquiry that had its heyday in the 1980s, but has outlived its political and theoretical usefulness, because it has tended to reify the same old 'patriarchal and authoritarian dead-end' (Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 69). Moi argues that popular use of non-linear narratives to signify the fragmented female subject of patriarchy runs the risk of 'reinscribing the 'terrifying chaos of the female genitals' implied by patriarchal aesthetic values (67), which only reifies the correlation of women with madness. But, if madness is so self-defeating that the legitimacy of women's speech and writing is called into question, why does it have so much currency? Why do women writers return again and again to madness as a theme for expressing women's experience? Indeed, madness has for so long been a central theme in women's literary production that it has been anchored to a female literary tradition in which madness can begin to 'speak' of, and for, women's experience in patriarchal cultures (Showalter, *Female Malady*; Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*). Leaving aside for the moment critical debates about the *effectiveness* of madness as a strategy deployed by women writers, I propose that novels of women's

madness operate as texts of culture to interrogate the production of patriarchy circulating within specific national and cultural frames.

Women's Madness: Texts of Culture

In Australia, as elsewhere, women are accorded marginal positions within the nation and the national culture produced by patriarchy.[4] Australian patriarchy has a particular quality that has been shaped by the history of imperialism, convictism and colonial violence, its unique inflections originating in the transplantation of British imperial values to the colonial structure that produced and continues to structure Australian national life and character. As Anne Summers argued in *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975), the gender imbalance created by penal colonialism produced women as a 'colonised sex' (198). In *The Real Matilda* (1975), Miriam Dixson argues the brutish nature of convictism produced such distorted gender ideals that Australian women came close to occupying the title of 'Doormats of the Western World' (11). Australian women were marginal to the production of national identity and national culture, but the origins of this marginalisation were linked to the brutal history of colonialism. As the colonial gave way to the national in the late 1800s, the construction of a 'national identity' and a 'national character' became a form of 'national obsession' as moves toward Federation gained momentum (Richard White, viii). The geo-political formation of Australia traces the movement from a set of colonies owned and operated by the British Empire since 1770 to the establishment of the Australian nation through Federation in 1901. The production of Australian identity accompanying this comprises both the symbolic construction of 'national identity' and the cultural context in which 'Australians' are constituted and

[4] While patriarchy usefully encapsulates the dimensions of male-dominated national structures, it does not therefore follow that masculinity is equivalent to patriarchy. Rather, patriarchal formations produce a set of legitimate ways of being men and women, encoding gender as a set of cultural fictions and ideals, a set of templates against which men and women model their performances of gender.

produced. The concept of national identity is multiple, in the sense that there is no one identity that captures Australianness, and resistant in its singularity, as dominant myths of whiteness and maleness continue to structure Australian identity (Benedict Anderson, 5-7). David Carter notes that characterisations of the Australian national space relied on representations of a 'young, vigorous, cheerful and *manly* [nation] with a culture as wholesome as its climate' ('Critics, writers intellectuals', 265). Masculinity was normalised as the exemplary cultural condition of Australianness, inscribed in discourses of male 'discovery' and 'exploration', 'pioneering masculinity' and 'conquest' (of the bush, nature, and Aboriginal resistance). These grand narratives consigned women to a location as fringe-dwellers in the margins of the national project by centralising men's contributions, and men's stories. These are particular stories, and particular ways of telling stories, that nuance Australian national life. As Carter puts it:

> Men could fully occupy the symbolic space of nationality in a way that was unavailable to women. The nation as a symbolic space or community could not be imagined without men, but it *could* be imagined without women. (*Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity*, 384)

Nations are not merely spaces, sites of geo-political construction, but systems of cultural inscription. The cultural processes and inscriptions that construct the national 'identity' and 'character' operate as forms of national myth-making and invention (Richard White, viii). Nationality was culturally coded as masculine, both produced, and shored up by, patriarchal structures that not only institute the national, but also constitute the gendered formation by which women have been consigned to the periphery, neither wholly within nor wholly outside the national structure. It was therefore white males who were imaginatively and actively connected to the processes of nation-building. The 'bush legend' of the 1890s yoked the landscape to

the national, establishing a point of difference between Australia and England that exemplified the ‘national character’. The shearer, the drover, the frontier hero rigorously policing and establishing the boundaries of the white nation against the threatening, uncivilised wilderness established a discourse of bush heroism which was mythologised by writers such as Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson and took on the status of folk legend. The constructions of national manliness central to the Australian symbolic also constructed appropriate sexual identities. The images of the bushman gave way in the early twentieth century to images of the digger as symbolic of an Australian Anzac tradition of mateship and an egalitarian ethos that eroded class differences. In all of these images, it was a heterosexual male who was inscribed. This reflected the white man’s status as protector of white women, his duty to spread European civilisation across the globe as part of the civilising imperative enshrined in the colonial imperative. Therefore ‘racial fitness’ was also encoded as a male heterosexual imperative in the discourse of aggressive racial imperialism. (David Carter, *Dispossession*, 385). Manliness in the national context was unarguably heterosexual, virile, tough and commanding, (Carter 386-387) and other forms of masculinity were disallowed and abjected, indeed un-Australian.[5] Gender codes of ideal femininity circulated alongside these codes of masculinity sanctioned in the production of colonial, and later, Australian ‘types’ (Carter, ‘Colonial Identities’, *Dispossession,* 43-63).

Australian women writers have intervened into this cultural politics, recognising that ‘Australia’ is not so much a place as a set of ideas, an Australian symbolic that constitutes a national Imaginary. The set of ideas that constitutes this symbolic framework emanates from a peculiarly Western political, intellectual and

[5] Patrick White’s fiction intervenes into these constructions, and he notes in *Flaws in the Glass* that gay men and artists are particularly un-Australian in the limited pantheon of Australian masculinities.

philosophical tradition that privileges masculinity and naturalises unequal power relations of gender in the formation of the nation-state. Women writers turned to stories of their own to demonstrate the myth-making properties of the stories that Australia tells itself and the world. Within the terms of this intervention, the trope of madness is deployed to explore the construction of women as Other within the discursive production of 'Australia'. As Shoshana Felman notes, madness calls into question the cultural politics that demarcate what is outside and what is inside a culture:

> The fact that madness has currently become a *common* discursive *place* is not the least of its paradoxes. Madness usually occupies a position of *exclusion*; it is the *outside* of a culture. But madness that is a *common* place occupies a position of *inclusion* and becomes the *inside* of a culture ... the inside, paradoxically, to the extent that it is supposed to "be" the outside. (*Writing and Madness*, 13: emphasis Felman's)

This is important for an understanding of madness in the colonial cultural context because women occupy a similar paradoxical location, being sometimes symbolically included in, and at other times symbolically excluded from, the dominant culture.

Women Writing Madness: Australian Landmarks

Madness remains central in the production of a distinctively Australian female tradition that intervenes into male-stream[6] constructions of the nation. From the first novel about Australia written by a woman, *Clara Morison: a Tale of South Australia*

[6] The term 'malestream' is common in feminist sociological approaches, and refers to the tendency within traditionally male disciplines, practices and discourses of situating male perspectives as both 'mainstream' and 'usual' while paying little attention to the operations of gender in systems and institutions, and relegating feminist knowledges to a ghetto within broader, apparently more objective or ideologically neutral discipline. See Pamela Abbott, Claire Wallace and Melissa Tyler, *An Introduction to Sociology: Feminist Perspectives,* 115.

during the Gold Fever (1854) by suffragette Catherine Helen Spence, women writers have intervened into the symbolic exclusion of women from the nation. As the Australian bush was yoked to the national as a site for the production of the discourse of bush heroism, Barbara Baynton's critical investigation of women's exclusion and isolation emerged with the publication of *Bush Studies* (1902). It not only articulated a feminist politics about male brutality, but also drew on a convention of the colonial Imaginary that linked the Australian bush to terror as the frontier of the white nation inscribing itself against a terrifying racialised Otherness. The politics of 'race' were pivotal in the colonial Imaginary, as white 'settlers' battled unseen forces in the colonial project to render the 'Land' productive. The nation was constituted through acts of 'settlement' that also acted as processes of inscription, rewriting the unfamiliar landscape through colonial frames and vocabularies. The 'Land' was feminised as symbolically penetrable, unknowable, far from the civilised world, constituting a 'Great Emptiness' which was paradoxically potentially full of threats, terrors and dangers. These cultural fictions underpinned the powerful correlation between the penetrable landscape as both the archaic Mother of post-Freudian psychoanalysis and the unknown, unsymbolised and unnamed space upon which colonisation (and by extension, civilisation) would inscribe its lasting imprint (Rutherford, 31). As Kay Schaffer argues, the terms of this inscription, in which the bush was configured as resolutely feminine, yet 'no place for a woman', (102) constructed the *national* symbolic as a *masculine* symbolic. Women peopled the space, but the Australian symbolic was aggressively, and heterosexually, masculine. It was equally aggressively white. In *Coonardoo* (1929), Katherine Susannah Prichard locates madness as an affliction experienced by the male protagonist Hugh Watt, whose affair with the young Aboriginal woman, Coonardoo, precipitates family breakdown and the loss of his property to his brutal rival for Coonardoo's

affections, Sam Geary. Hugh's white wife, Mollie, takes her five daughters to live in the city, while Hugh's racial anxiety plays out in physical violence towards Coonardoo as his psychic state unravels. Possession and fear of dispossession, racial anxiety, claustrophobia, terror and a sense of defamiliarisation were common themes in early Australian writing, speaking to and of a colonial unease that has come to be understood as the production of an Australian Uncanny (Gelder and Jacobs). As white colonisation expanded, the threat signified by the bush was increasingly represented as a form of *Unheimlichkeit*, of being distinctly not-at-home, yet uncannily in a place quite like home (Gelder and Jacobs, 23). Freud's notion of the uncanny as sinister testifies to the tenor of the relationship Australians had with the unfamiliar land they found themselves in, and it is important to note that Freud situates it in the order of repression, which in the Australian colonial context, testifies to colonial processes of subjugation and control. The sense of colonial unease was increasingly brought under control by the attempt to recreate Australian space in England's image. This was, of course, a practical response to the situation, as the aim was to establish white 'settlements'[7] modelled on and through the colonial frame. But the project to render the space more 'familiar' was also ontological, as it eased the settlers' sense of being 'out of place' by supplanting traces of Indigenous occupation and creating new spaces that were legible and intelligible in the colonial worldview. Within the terms of this production of colonial space, a tradition of Australian colonial Gothic writing emerged to give voice to the experience of white 'settlement' (Gelder and Weaver).

Australian women writers engaged with these literary modes, increasingly resorting to the domestic or female Gothic to represent the psychological tenor of

[7] The notion that Australia was 'settled' implies that this was a peaceful process. This is highly contested within the fields of Australian Studies, Feminist Studies, Postcolonial Studies and History, which have both taken up and resisted the growing body of Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) critical interventions into the dominant narratives that construct official versions of Australia.

Australian family life distorted by patriarchal control, as the threat signified by the Australian bush was relocated to the Australian home. The Gothic mode, with its emphasis on terror, imprisonment, and abnormal psychological states, became a way for women writers of the twentieth century to evoke and interrogate the qualities of Australian patriarchy. Elizabeth Harrower's *The Watch Tower* (1966) provides a disturbing portrait of two sisters entrapped through one sister's marriage to the brutal Felix Shaw, a man of petty rages and violent outbursts whose alcoholism and homophobia mask a mental illness, a disorder that is linked to the deformed cultural context in which male power is enacted as a form of tyranny. Barbara Hanrahan's *The Scent of Eucalyptus* (1973) provides a further portrait of the young woman alienated from the nation in an Adelaide landscape more 'English than England' whose underside comprises an oppressive and sinister milieu for women, especially artists. The Gothic motif of imprisonment is translated to the relegation of women to a location on the outskirts of culture in Elizabeth Jolley's *The Well* (1987) and *Palomino* (1980). Both novels evoke the isolation of women living together in farmhouses, set against the backdrop of a beautiful but vast West Australian landscape, where they are threatened by forces natural and unnatural. *The Well*'s narrative of threatening masculinity resides in the possibility that an intruder who has stolen Hester's money is the body concealed in the well of the title. *Palomino* is a narrative of transgressive desire and lesbian sexuality, in which the lonely older protagonist falls in obsessive love with a young woman whose sexuality has been shaped by an incestuous relationship with her brother. Together, these novels situate women's madness against the backdrop of an Australian culture which produces their psychic fragmentation as a result of their isolation, alienation, and exclusion. In Australian women's writing, madness operates against a backdrop of gender relations that distorts and limits women's experience and opportunities. Madness remains an

important theme in the works of women writers informed by politics of gender. However, these gender politics are also the product of colonialism, as Gail Jones makes clear in her novel, *Sorry* (2007), which features a depressed mother and a traumatised daughter damaged by the system of race relations that operates alongside gender relations. Jones links depression and trauma to an Australian cultural context framed by former Prime Minister John Howard's refusal to apologise to Aboriginal people removed from their families under formal Assimilation policies and Protection laws. These writers and these texts have been important in the development of an Australian women's literary tradition, linking women's madness to the colonial production of 'Australia' and to the processes of gender and racial exclusion that underpin the national formation. The colonial dimensions of Australian patriarchy are founded on both routine physical brutality in the control of women and female sexuality, and symbolic violence in the exclusionary gendered terms that structure the Australian nation.

It is against this backdrop that I locate my investigation of three novels of women's madness. Acclaimed Australian writers Christina Stead and Kate Grenville both contribute and respond to the traditions that mark Australian women's writing, investigating the production of women's marginality within Australian culture, and connecting marginality to the production of women's madness. Christina Stead (1902–1983) lived and worked overseas for forty years from 1928, producing fifteen novels and four collections of short stories over her lifetime. She was rejected for the Britannica-Australia Award on the grounds of her expatriate status after returning to live in Australia in 1968, but has latterly been re-instated into the Australian literary landscape as a result of increasing recognition of her contribution to literature (Franzen). Kate Grenville's reputation as a writer was forged when she won the Australian Vogel Literary Award in 1984 for the manuscript of *Lilian's Story*, having

come runner-up with *Dreamhouse* the year before. Some of her other works include a collection of short stories, *Bearded Ladies* (1984), *Joan Makes History* (1988) and *Dark Places* (1995), the companion novel to *Lilian's Story*. Read together, these texts constitute a feminist oeuvre concerned with the ways women have been excluded from national histories. Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* (1940), and Grenville's companion novels and counter-narratives, *Lilian's Story* (1985) and *Dark Places* (1995), offer vivid critiques of Australian national culture and dysfunctional family life in the first decades after Federation in 1901. The novels are linked by their common themes of madness, violence, and incest. In *The Man Who Loved Children*, incest is only hinted at, relegated to the shadows and the dark places of family and cultural life, visible only in the subtext. In each of Grenville's novels, madness charts the unspeakable and the unsayable nature of incest. Incest is unsayable, because the culture refuses to believe it, notwithstanding a large body of research on child sexual abuse, and unspeakable, because the crime is so heinous. In selecting these writers and these texts, I am guided by Gina Mercer, who first pointed to the parallels between Grenville and Stead, locating similarities in their treatment of 'strong, independent heroines, whose fathers unsuccessfully seek to dominate and manipulate their daughters—with strong overtones of incest', but arguing too that Grenville could make explicit writing in the 1980s what Stead only hinted at forty years before (300).[8] The novels situate women's madness within the same literary terrain. The men and women of these families both reproduce and resist the cultural codes of gender and sexuality normalised in the production of social relations as relations of gendered power and oppression. Both novelists foreground and respond

[8] Mercer is referring to Stead's later novel, *For Love Alone*, but the assertion is also true of *The Man Who Loved Children*.

to this context, so that their fictional works can be read as a form of 'writing back'[9] that is a feature of both postcolonial and feminist intervention.

Made mad: women's madness in novels by Christina Stead and Kate Grenville

The Man Who Loved Children charts the impact on children of living within the daily skirmishes and conflicts of a marriage in ruins, governed by the family tyrant, Sam Pollitt, whose inflated sense of masculine entitlement and conviction in his own centrality drives his wife, Henny, to suicide, and his daughter, Louie, to attempted murder. Louie vacillates between murder and suicide, choosing finally to attempt to kill both her parents to escape the 'civil war' (70) that is her parents' marriage, and which regulates daily life in the family home. Exemplifying the extreme measures that women need to take to escape male tyranny and delusion, Louie is driven to enact the Kristevan injunction 'matricide is our vital necessity' (*Black Sun*, 27) to escape the violence of her family. Louie succeeds only in poisoning Henny, while Sam escapes the death she has plotted. Although Louie escapes her damaging family of origin, the other children are left behind to be brought up by Sam alone, suggesting that it is impossible to entirely escape the patriarchal structures that enclose women and children within them. Clearly, the narrative of the dysfunctional Pollitt family intersects with the dysfunction of the Singer family, and indeed, the relationship between Sam Pollitt, who dominates his household with talk, and Albion Singer, whose voice drowns out Lilian's and whose story overwrites hers, locates the novels in the same tradition. The narrative of women colonised by the demands of the men in their lives, and the possibilities for escaping those men, connects Stead's work with Grenville's. Furthermore, the theme of incest, submerged as it is in

[9] I take the term from Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*.

Stead's novel, links the two novels so that *The Man Who Loved Children* speaks directly to, and informs, both *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places*.[10]

Grenville's vision of the Australian family, and the damage it inflicts, is addressed in *Lilian's Story*, a narrative that both amplifies and recasts Stead's bleak vision. Lilian's experience of being raped by her father, Albion, and then constructed by him as mad, offers a vivid commentary on the Australian context of gendered power. Lilian is incarcerated in an asylum both as punishment for her refusal to submit to Albion's domination, and as a means to ensure her silence, for even if she does speak of his abuse, no one listens to a madwoman. The ten years she spends in the asylum confirms the 'diagnosis'. Albion recasts Lilian's experience as nothing more than a 'story'. And stories are invented, made-up, unreliable. *Lies,* even. Lilian becomes a bag lady who insists on a speaking position and takes this up as 'a bodily act' of resistance (Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 10) after years of incarceration and silencing within an asylum. The extent to which Albion constructs his version of events as 'rational' is dissected in the counter-narrative, *Dark Places* (1996), which retraces *Lilian's Story* from Albion's perspective, to demonstrate how the male patriarch who rapes his daughter rewrites history in order to justify his misdeeds, supplanting Lilian's version of events.

It is an inexorable logic of misogyny that is charted in these novels, in which fear and hatred of women is normalised by the male characters whose dominion is the home. The men who 'love' children in these novels both hate women, and their love for children is a distorted and deformed love. The novels suggest that women are *made* mad by their experiences within dangerous, violent and incestuous families. Louie and Lilian both react against male attempts to quell and silence them, with

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[10] Indeed, the title of *Dark Places* recalls Stead's novel of English mining poverty in *Cotter's England*, published in America as *Dark Places of the Heart*. Grenville's allusion therefore invites comparisons between her work and Stead's.

devastating consequences. These are women in extremity, daughters so damaged by their formative experiences in the regulatory and normalising environment of their deforming families of origin that they are willing to commit murder or to languish in asylums. The extremity of these families of origin, and the gendered codes of power that bind women to them, suggest the mutation from an inexorable logic of patriarchy to the inextricable. However, Stead and Grenville liberate their young heroines from damaging and deforming families of origin, in partial and limited ways, so that the figure of the madwoman acts in their work to indict the family as the unit in which gender relations are (de)formed. Finding a way to survive outside the patriarchal schemata, each is unconventional and eccentric enough to be labelled 'mad'.[11] Both women resist the strictures of patriarchal tyranny—at their peril, certainly—to take up positions that may be mad and marginal, but which also carve out discursive spaces for alternative ways of being women. Damaged they may be, but the madwomen of these novels are in revolt against patriarchal and misogynistic control.

Both Grenville and Stead have identified their writing as political, and both have, to some extent, been influenced by feminist theory and critical debate. The feminist critical reception of these works has primarily acted to locate the novels as feminist critiques of Australian patriarchal formations. Although Stead resisted the label *feminist*, because the women's movement of her times seemed to her to be middle class and 'fanatical', as a socialist, she was interested in power and the impacts of economic dependence and oppression (Sheridan, *Christina Stead*, 1). Stead argued that her writing was a more broadly political intervention, a 'philosophical' analysis of society, remarking that her writing was 'on the side of

[11] The use of scare quotes here signifies, following Jacqueline Rose, the 'awkwardness and hesitancy' as well as the dangers of 'imperial naming' inherent in accepting the term 'madness' as emblematic of each protagonist's struggle. See Jaqueline Rose, 'On the "universality" of madness', 401.

those who have suffered oppression, injustice, coercion, prejudice, and have been harried from birth' (Gribble, 4, 2). While she has stated categorically that her 'object was by no means to write for women, or to discuss feminine problems', she has elsewhere aligned women with the oppressed: 'the slave, the woman, the dark-skinned alien' (Sheridan, 4, 9).[12] Stead was pertinently aware of the danger that writing about women's lives might relegate her fiction to the diminished category of 'women's writing' rather than serious literary fiction, but expressed a desire to represent 'society as it was' (Sheridan, 5-6). The novel exposes the inequities of gendered power and the relations of domination and oppression that comprise that form of power in its representation of 'society as it is'. As a representation of society in microcosm and as a site of culture in which to scrutinise those relations, the terminally dysfunctional family of her novel operates as a cell of the social organism that enacts the power relations between men and women (Sheridan, 1, 25). Her analysis of society as it occurs in *The Man Who Loved Children* suggests there are great costs for wives and daughters bound to the family through relations of supposed biological weakness (of the female) and economic oppression (imposed by the socio-cultural). The novel is as much about the political economy of being a woman as it about the role of the family in perpetuating social, economic and patriarchal relations of power.

Feminists share Stead's concerns about the lives of women, even if she resisted being aligned with feminism as a political movement *per se*. Feminism is not simply a textual resonance or residue, but a political position and a discursive space outside of the text, a space in which to make meaning. For example, Catherine Belsey notes

[12] The oppression of white women under patriarchy in no way resembles the oppression of colonised women. Women in Australia are implicated in the discursive formation of race through their relationship to colonisation even as they are oppressed by the discursive operations of gendered power. Colonised women are subjected to multiple layers of subjugation, including their subjugation by white women.

that 'reading is a transaction, a relation between the cultural vocabulary of the text and the cultural vocabulary of the reader' (*Critical Practice*, 31). We read from particular (ideological, political and historical) positions that are already determined or in process before the reading of a literary text begins. For Elizabeth Grosz, as for a number of other feminist critics, 'any text can be read from a feminist point of view, that is, from the point of view that brings out a text's alignment with, participation in, and subversion of patriarchal norms' (*Space, Time and Perversion*, 16). *The Man Who Loved Children* can be read productively from a feminist position, which is always a political position.

A range of feminist and psychoanalytic readings have been mobilised by critics keen to connect the critique of the family to a broader critique of patriarchal power. *The Man Who Loved Children* has been read variously but not exclusively as a female *Bildungsroman,* albeit with a shift in focus from the individual to a scrutiny of the family in which that individual is formed (Sheridan, 25). It has also often been read as an autobiographical novel, as it charts the woman writer's emergence from the family in the figure of Louie. Stead has acknowledged that the novel was autobiographical in genesis, claiming 'I have written my biography in all my books' (Jennifer Gribble, 2; Diana Brydon, 11). Stead has categorically stated that Sam Pollitt was 'a portrait of [her] father' (Sheridan, 15), intimating that Louie's poisoning of Henny also had its basis in fact, at least in terms of thinking about such an act, so that some critics have read it as an example of domestic Gothic because of its theme of domestic terror (Lidoff, 21, 38). Terry Sturm situates the novel as a socio-cultural critique of socio-economic relations, the patriarchal family and the institution of marriage, arguing that Stead's rendition of family life illustrates Engel's proposition that the family is the 'cellular form of civilised society', through which the nature of 'the oppositions and contradictions fully active in that society

can be studied' (101). Gender analyses occur in psychoanalytic readings of the novel's elaboration of the incest taboo that structures psychological development (Walker, 117-132; Judith Kegan Gardiner, *Rhys, Stead, Lessing* 52-56; Boone, 525). Several critics have offered psychoanalytic readings of *The Man Who Loved Children* based on an elaboration of the Oedipus complex, or, more precisely, its refusal. Susan Sheridan argues that Louie escapes the patriarchal family through a feminine Oedipus resolution (24-54). Teresa Petersen argues that Louie is an anti-oedipal subject (164-165), and that her resistance to Sam and his unusually prurient interest in her sexuality masks a hidden lesbian desire (19-24). Petersen argues that Stead's works not only 'explode the Oedipal myth', but also weave 'the lesbian signifier into the seams of her texts, masked by the overt façade of heterosexuality' (20). Judith Kegan Gardiner reads Louie's narrative as one that 'revises both Freudian and Christian models of female development, since she abjures the destiny of marriage and motherhood to which God sentences the Biblical Eve, and Freud the normal woman' ('Male narcissism', 147). To think about the *normal* woman, though, requires thinking about what is constituted as normal *for* women, and to examine the male-authored discourses that construct these zones of normality. Refusing the discursive constructions that position women *as* madness, several critics have focused on the narrative of *male* madness that runs through the novel.

For example, Kegan Gardiner argues that Sam has been 'derailed' in his psychological development and exhibits features of a 'narcissistic personality' disorder (149, 151). Shirley Walker contends that 'Sam's speech has lost touch with reality' (121). Joseph Boone points to the mass of elisions, exaggerations, textual and temporal 'distortions', and discontinuities of plot which reveal Sam's distorted version of reality, so that 'images from the familiar domestic world combine with the grotesque to evoke a surreal hallucinatory landscape', functioning as 'rents in Sam's

paternal narrative' (522, 524). Boone reads Louie's trajectory as both a 'brilliant revision of the psychosexual dynamics assumed to be constitutive of oedipal narrative', and 'a step-by-step inversion of the constitutive elements of the Oedipus story, creating too precise a reversal … to be unintentional' (537). Within this tradition, the patriarchal family 'romance' encoded by the Oedipus myth of male psychoanalysis is interrogated for naturalising gendered inequality. Such readings foreground the gendered power relations of the patriarchal family. While Louie's escape from the family has been read as a form of the Nietzschean will-to-power and a critique of the Social Darwinism espoused by Sam Pollitt (Ken Stewart, (135-144; Walker 117-132), there have been few postcolonial approaches to the text that have connected the psychic Imaginary of patriarchy to the colonial Imaginary of 'race' and degeneracy. Partly, this is because the novel displaces the Australian context to an American setting. Its status as an Australian novel is disputed,[13] as Stead 'grafts American onto Australian subject matter' in the process of translating the content to its American locale (Yelin, *From the Margins of Empire* 19). However, Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra note in one of the few postcolonial readings of the novel that its subject is the 'pathology of *Australian* families' (*Dark Side of the Dream* 214, emphasis mine). As Louise Yelin noted in 1990, the racial narrative of Australian colonisation is repressed or displaced in both the novel and the critical commentary, requiring new readings that 're-place *The Man Who Loved Children* in the history that it has in the past fifty years displaced' ('Fifty years of reading' 496). Taking up readings that consider Sam's madness, I offer a postcolonial interrogation of Stead's critique of eugenics as embodied by Sam Pollitt. Connecting the abuses of patriarchy

[13] Most critics agree that the novel was set in America at the request of Stead's Washington publishers, and that the re-location of the novel to an American setting was strategic, enabling her to get the novel published. However, Diana Brydon suggests the reason Christina Stead set the novel in America was to shield her family, as it offered an autobiographical portrait of her father and her childhood in Australia, *Christina Stead,* 11.

to the abuses of the colonial enterprise, I locate Sam as a representative of a distinctively Australian colonial psychosis.

Both *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places* have primarily been read as examples of Grenville's feminist politics. For a range of literary critics, Grenville writes fiction as a political act, creating unconventional heroines who are not fooled by patriarchal injunctions to conform to the prevailing ideas of what an ideal woman is, or should be, in order to take up their subjugated position in the gender order. Most critics have acknowledged and responded to these aspects of her work, reading Lilian's madness as a strategy to contest male power (Gelder and Salzman, *The New Diversity* 77-78). The novel has also been read as an example of the female Gothic, due to its metaphors of female entrapment encoded most visibly in Lilian's incarceration (Haynes, 69). It has also been read as an 'anti-female *Bildungsroman*' (Susan Midalia, 257) in its central narrative of female resistance to patriarchy (Delys Bird, 187). Gina Mercer suggests that a primary concern in Grenville's work is the lack of a speaking position for women, noting that in *Bearded Ladies* Grenville directs her 'justifiably angry pen at the men who refuse to listen to these women, trying to speak their difference', but that in *Lilian's Story*, Grenville creates a character 'who will not be negated, will not go unheard' (295, 296). Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman identify Grenville as a writer 'most dramatically concerned to challenge gender stereotyping', reading Lilian as resisting the 'most oppressive manifestations of patriarchy by subverting notions of appropriate female behaviour', while Albion acts as a 'literal representative of patriarchy whose tyranny over Lilian culminates in rape' (*The New Diversity* 77, 78). Ruth Barcan reads the rape as precipitating Lilian's sense of dissociation, arguing that this demonstrates a wider sense in which women are alienated from their own bodies (96). Kate Livett develops this reading further to suggest that the sense of incoherence and alienation expressed in madness illustrates

women's symbolic 'homelessness' in patriarchal cultures (119). Such readings are invited by Grenville's strong identification with feminism. Grenville started writing 'for revenge', sparked by a desire to read about her 'own experiences, the experiences of a woman of my generation' to intervene in a 'huge gap in women's fiction' that she felt did not reflect her 'confusion and uncertainty' and 'anger' (in Jennifer Ellison, 164, 160). She acknowledges that the critical reception locates her early work as either 'too "furious", too "angry" [or] not sufficiently "feminist"' (Pam Gilbert, 27). Yet, Grenville's literary success has led critics such as Don Anderson and Pam Gilbert to assert that she 'has comfortably and competently appeased the critics in bridging the gulf seen to exist between feminist polemic and imaginative artistic creation' (25). This points to a tension for feminist writers whose fiction foregrounds a critique of male domination, as such writing apparently runs the risk of its politics threatening and overriding, and indeed, tainting its artistic concerns. Angry—or more precisely, feminist—writing, writing that explicitly locates the mistreatment of women within patriarchal cultures, is always (already and still) interrogated for whatever artistic merit remains after its politics have been dissected. *Dark Places*, for its part, remains relatively unanalysed. While there are multiple reviews of the novel, few critical essays exist.[14]

Lilian's Story appeared in the literary landscape at a time when writers were moving away from the realist orthodoxy of 'platitudinous humanism', a genre as 'mindlessly' and 'formally conservative' as it was 'ideologically so' (Don Anderson, *Transgressions*, ix). As Gelder and Salzman note, the tenor of Australian writing of the 1980s was marked by a refusal to reproduce the 'conservative' *Bildungsroman* form of the novel (*The New Diversity*, 23). Don Anderson notes there was a further

[14] Helen Thompson's essay is a notable exception, linking madness to the postcolonial context, in 'Madness as a postcolonial strategy of national identity', 172-180.

refusal to mythologise 'The Land' as the site for the production of national identity (*Transgressions*, ix). Gelder and Salzman suggest that the postmodern anti-realist writing of the 1980s was 'pessimistic' in tone, exploring an 'ethics of representation', especially with regard to the historical legacy of the colonial era (*The New Diversity*, 132). Australia in the 1980s, when *Lilian's Story* was written, was gearing up for the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988, that festival of nationalism that re-created English 'discovery' and 'settlement', alongside a rising tide of Aboriginal protest and dissent. The 'Celebration' was marked by Aboriginal protest marches, notably in Canberra, disrupting the re-enactment of Cook's journey that centralised the narrative of 'discovery' as the dominant narrative of nation. Furthermore, there was an explosion of Aboriginal life writing in the 1980s, as Aboriginal missions and reserves were closed and Assimilation policy was abolished. Aboriginal writers documented their experiences of removal and forced labour, and these 'new' narratives posed challenges to the celebratory narratives of nation-building that circulated in the white Imaginary. At the same time, gender relations were being reconfigured with the appointment of the first *Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the introduction of affirmative action policies to the workplace in 1986, and changes to traditional family structures as more women went to work. However, mass unemployment, an increase in wage inequality, rising numbers of Australians dependent on welfare and high rates of single-parent families were the outcomes of changes designed to produce greater social justice and inclusivity. Women's increasing economic power challenged the hegemonic gender order. Lilian's challenge to colonial patriarchy by standing up to Albion to assert her own precarious identity reflects not only the limited roles assigned to women in occupying the symbolic space of nationality at Federation in 1901, but also the

fracturing of the gender order that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. It is against this backdrop that *Lilian's Story* operates.

Grenville's over-arching theme is history. Her fiction traces the shift from a feminist understanding of Australian history as a narrative from which women were excluded, or at least marginalised and displaced, to a contemporary understanding of the colonial history of Australia as a politics of 'knowing and not-knowing' that displaces the racial politics of the colonial enterprise ('Unsettling the settler'). Grenville's writing has become more intentionally and directly postcolonial with the publication of the controversial *The Secret River* (2005), which interrogates the impact on Aboriginal people of the colonising force of convicts 'settling' frontier Australia. *The Lieutenant* (2008) describes the efforts of astronomer Daniel Rooke to create a dictionary of the Indigenous language with a young Aboriginal girl, Taragan. The overt treatment of Aboriginal rights as developed in these later works means it is possible to situate her as a political writer addressing broader themes of social justice, women's rights and the legacy of colonialism that has suppressed Indigenous rights, and postcolonial interpretations have been mobilised in response to these novels. *Lilian's Story* has been read as postcolonial in readings such as Bill Ashcroft's that situate the female body as the submerged landscape upon which patriarchy writes itself (Ashcroft, 'Madness and power', 68). Reading the rape narrative as evidence that Lilian is colonised by patriarchal norms, Ashcroft argues that Lilian's resistance to Albion's violent subjugation is a strategy of decolonisation (71). The process by which Lilian rejects the codes of patriarchy mirrors the processes by which Australia extricated itself from the relationship with Britain as imperial host, suggesting Grenville's feminist politics also articulated postcolonial concerns. While reading Lilian as the submerged landscape upon which patriarchy writes itself is a common enough metaphor in feminist and postcolonial theorising,

this reaffirms patriarchy as the condition that women must extricate themselves from, while eliding the context of white colonialism in which patriarchy is installed. Foregrounding white women's subordination under patriarchy produces a colonised female that ignores colonial practices of white racism. Few critics question the white politics of reading this as a 'postcolonial' critique.[15] However, Alice Healy argues that Lilian's scenes of 'impossible speech' are translated from a feminist politics in the novel to a suppressed Indigenous cultural memory in the 1995 film version, suggesting ways forward for postcolonial approaches to the text (148). There are few analyses of *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places* that connect the brutality of Australian patriarchy embodied in the figure of Albion Gidley Singer to the brutality of the colonial enterprise. Consequently, Grenville's critique of women's resistance to Australian patriarchy demands a consideration of the relationship of patriarchy to the formative structure of colonialism.

Locations: Women's Madness and Cultural Psychosis

Feminism has offered important critiques of the family as a site for the formation and reproduction of gendered codes of power. The novels locate physical and sexual violence within the family, the unit of society that is supposed to provide protection, shelter and nurturance to its members, suggesting that something has gone dreadfully awry within the family structure. The family is a trope for the wider social context, acting as a unit of society in microcosm, a space that can yield important insights for

[15] Gelder and Salzman note in *The New Diversity* that the need to establish Australian writing as a national literature, celebrating what is 'unique' in Australia, against the desire to have Australian literature judged 'by the same standards' as any other kind of writing has long been a concern for Australian writers, 81-82. This constitutes a major strand in the argument that Australian literature is postcolonial. Yet the assertion is troubling, as the extent to which Australia can be considered postcolonial celebrates understandings of the colonies breaking away from Britain as the imperial host at the moment of Federation, while ignoring Indigenous arguments that Australia continues to be a colonising structure. Mishra and Hodge argue that much postcolonial writing operates as a white politics and ethics of representation, because 'the pen, metonymically, is the displaced colonial phallus', while the white settler colonies operate as 'fragments of the metropolitan centre', which is 'not the imperial centre, but the Mother Country' itself, Britain, in 'What is post(-)colonialism?', 38-39.

feminism about the role of the family in the reproduction and regulation of gendered and sexual 'norms'. However, the family is also a site for the production of 'national' culture, and productive of wider social relations of inclusion and exclusion. The individual family acts as a symbol for the 'national family', and the projection of the trope of the 'natural' patriarchal family onto the nation was a feature of the imperial project. As Anne McClintock argues, the trope of filial relations 'would take an increasingly imperial shape as the image of the evolutionary family was projected onto the imperial nation and colonial bureaucracies as their natural, legitimizing shape' (*Imperial Leather*, 45). She goes on to argue:

> The power and importance of the family trope was twofold. First, the family offered an indispensable figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests. Because the subordination of woman to man and child to adult were deemed natural facts, other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social *difference* as a category of nature. The family came to figure *hierarchy within unity* as an organic element of historical progress, and thus became indispensable for legitimizing exclusion and hierarchy within nonfamilial social forms such as nationalism, liberal individualism and imperialism. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial thus depended on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children. (45: emphasis McClintock's)

The construction of a patriarchal imperial hierarchy as a 'natural' fact was instrumental in the project by which *difference* as a social category came to explain, and conceal, real social relations of race and gender. As women have been marginalised within the project of national formation, narratives about dysfunctional families operate as a means for women to interrogate the cultural politics of who

belongs to the national family, and how the cultural politics of gender are played out within national and familial structures.

It is important to note here that Stead and Grenville offer portraits of violent family patriarchs framed against the backdrop of white colonialism. Both novelists de-naturalise the family by making colonial relations visible as a form of epistemological and ontological violence. The texture of colonial violence frames the familial structure. Both Sam Pollitt and Albion Gidley Singer harness imperialist and nationalist discourses of racial contamination and female degeneracy that circulate in the Australian symbolic to legitimise 'white patriarchal sovereignty' and control (Moreton-Robinson, 'The possessive logic of white patriarchal sovereignty'). For Sam Pollitt, women's 'natural' inferiority is explained through evolutionary and hierarchical theories of the development of the species, discourses he mobilises to legitimise his cruelty to women. Albion not only echoes and amplifies Sam Pollitt's views of women enshrined within discourses of social Darwinism, but wields rape as the weapon by which white patriarchal sovereignty establishes itself in the colonial context. Racist ideologies intersect with gender ideologies to legitimise male violence, patriarchal control, and in Albion's case, sexual abuse. It is no accident that discourses of 'race' and Eugenics circulate in the novels to position masculinity as the self-proclaimed province of reason and rationality, while femininity is relegated in that self-same logic to the province of infirmity and pathology. The male characters of the novels, as patriarchal inheritors of the colonial project, claim the right to control and police feminine identities and sexualities. In taking up this self-proclaimed entitlement to justify their abuses, their brutality echoes the violence of patriarchal colonialism, in which imperialist, nationalist, and racist discourse converge in the female body as the site for racial anxiety. Reading the incest narratives as a symbol for the abuses of power meted out under colonialism, I concur

with Kylie Thomas's assertion that 'the diseased nature of colonial and apartheid societies' is elaborated within the sexual abuse narratives to signify the 'pathology of the places they describe' (2). Connecting the pathology of the family to the pathology of the nation forged by the violence of white colonialism, I propose that these are novels about the madness of the colonial project, and of the discourses that sustain and justify it. I argue therefore that the trope of madness operates to interrogate the nation's genesis, rooted in violence as an 'overall early cultural presence' (Dixson, *The Imaginary Australian*, 121). This suggests that madness is not the exclusive province of women, that these are not novels of *women's* madness at all, but rather that they operate as critical investigations of a wider 'cultural pathology' (Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 204) that circulates in the Australian cultural context to position women as the locus of and for abjection (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*). Kristeva's theory of abjection has been used to establish *social* and *cultural* processes by which certain categories of people (women, gay men and lesbian women, the insane, the disabled) are classified as outsiders.

In arguing that the control of women is tied to racial anxiety, I offer a feminist reading of the novels shaped by understandings of the Australian cultural milieu in which gender relations operate alongside discourses of 'racial purity' to subjugate women. By reading these three novels of women's madness against the colonial frame, I intervene in a gap in the literature to recognise that the pathology of colonial societies remains an under-theorised preserve of feminist theorising in the terrain of women's madness. Misogyny in the novels is deliberately located against the backdrop of white colonialism, suggesting that the madwoman dramatises the cultural politics of gender within the colonial context. The production of Australian patriarchy in its colonial and national incarnations can be productively read against

theoretical elaborations of the workings of colonial paranoia. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra argue in *Dark Side of the Dream*: *Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* (1992) that colonial paranoia was a structure of Australian national formation inflected by racial anxiety (212-217). Anne McClintock contends in *Imperial Leather: Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995) that colonial societies shaped by colonial paranoia about miscegenation are highly regulatory of women's sexuality. She argues that the feminising of colonial space operates as 'the visible trace of paranoia' (24). Structures of colonial paranoia underpin the construction of colonial masculinity and the formation of national codes of gender and culture. I argue that the madness of the daughters is provoked by a colonial psychosis enacted by the family despot and that the narratives of madness, violence and incest illustrate the *psychotic* dimensions of the patriarchal family. Colonial paranoia surfaces in the novels through an excessive logic and rationality on the part of the male characters that constitutes a form of over-determination. These are symptoms of psychosis, an Australian cultural psychosis that over-arches the mistreatment of women in colony Australia.[16] Colonial psychosis in its paranoiac, hebephrenic,[17] and schizophrenic dimensions can be traced through the novels' representations of male violence. In their prurient surveillance and control of wayward daughters, the fathers verge on the psychotic, enacting codes of colonial paranoia about racial contamination and degeneracy that circulate in the Australian Imaginary to sustain their delusions. The violent families of the novels operate as sites for the construction and reproduction of colonial psychosis, reflecting a wider Australian pathology that circulates and is normalised in the culture.

[16] In adopting the term 'colony Australia' here, I wish to highlight the extent to which Australia remains a colonising structure rather than a post-colonial nation, an argument that is developed further in Chapter Two.

[17] Hebephrenia is a subtype of schizophrenia characterised by 'flattened affect' and 'denial'. See Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 217.

In Chapter One, I trace the production of three icons in the terrain of women's madness: the female suicide, the hysteric and the unruly woman. I demonstrate how the female body came to be saturated with pathology in the disciplines of philosophy, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis. This cultural coding occurs even in feminist challenges to the masculinist discursive apparatus, and has therefore troubled feminist theorising. In recognition of this, I link the production of the gendered body to systems of cultural inscription that produce a culturally legible body in Chapter Two. I investigate the ways that madness 'writes' itself upon the bodies of women against a set of patriarchal codes that madwomen either enact or resist, linking the psychoanalytic construction of women as the abjected outside of a culture to the operations of colonial paranoia in the institution of Australian gender relations. By situating the novels as narratives of colonial psychosis, I take up McClintock's call for a 'decolonizing of psychoanalysis and a psychoanalyzing of colonialism' (74) as the over-arching cultural framework structuring the Australian context of gendered relations of power.

In Chapter Three, I read *The Man Who Loved Children* as a narrative of colonial psychosis. Applying Kristeva's theory of abjection, I locate sperm as a bodily fluid that pollutes, bringing Henny into discourses of maternity that rely on patriarchal psychoanalytic discourses of femininity that connect women to colonial 'dirt'. Reading Henny's suicide against the literature on the female suicide, I argue that Stead rewrites the dominant narrative of female suicide that circulates in the male literary imagination. Locating madness as an affliction experienced also by Sam Pollitt as family despot, whose recourse to discourses of Eugenics betrays a particularly brutal form of colonial psychosis, I argue that Sam's obsessive and prurient interest in Louie's sexuality marks a psychotic inability to distinguish the boundary between self and Other.

Discourses of race and female degeneracy position my reading of *Lilian's Story* in Chapter Four, which considers the role of abjection, colonial dirt and colonial paranoia in structuring the colonial project in terms of feminine sexuality and racial purity. I first trace Norah's experience as Albion's wife against the literature of hysteria, demonstrating that not only was this a culturally sanctioned form of being a woman, but also that the terms of colonial patriarchy demanded women's passivity and subjugation to patriarchal control. I argue that Lilian's refusal to conform to patriarchal discourses of genteel femininity that circulate in the colonial context contests the production of national identity. Refusing to accede to the dictates of colonial patriarchy, Lilian signifies the violent operations of patriarchal control through her grotesque body, operating as an unruly woman who is disorderly, rather than disordered.

Turning to the operations of colonial psychosis in *Dark Places*, I argue in Chapter Five that Albion's profoundly misogynistic attitudes about women enact a deeper Australian pathology. I investigate the parallels between national formation and subject formation to analyse Albion's state of mind. His construction of a peculiarly Australian colonial masculinity is sustained by an excess of rationality that shores up his precarious identity as sovereign white male of the colonial fantasy. Albion's rape of Lilian is testament to the operation of *his* psychosis, visible in the logic of over-coding and hyper-rationality that he uses to defend and re-write his sexual crimes against Lilian, justified by disturbing fantasies of male power that sustain his psychotic fictions of colonial family life.

Chapter Six considers the implications of situating women's madness at the intersections between gendered power and colonialism. If the psychotic family drama of patriarchal control and desire is a model for the social and symbolic field, the

pathology of the imperial enterprise encodes gendered relations of power in the Australian cultural context. Colonial psychosis is central to the nation's foundational pathology.

I turn now to Chapter One, which provides the theoretical underpinnings that provoke these critical re-readings of women's madness as a projection of colonial psychosis.

CHAPTER ONE: THE INTELLIGIBLE MADWOMAN

'The hysterics are my sisters', Hélène Cixous

> It is colonization that causes Oedipus to exist, but an Oedipus that is taken for what it is, a pure oppression ... in effect, Oedipus begins in the mind of the father ... But already, if it appears Oedipus is an effect, this is because it forms an aggregate of destination (the family become microcosm) on which capitalist production and reproduction fall back ... Consequently the capitalist formation of sovereignty will need an intimate colonial formation that corresponds to it, to which it will be applied ...
>
> The earth becomes a madhouse. (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattarì, *Anti-Oedipus* (212, 213)

Introduction: The Feminisation of Madness

The wives and daughters of Stead's and Grenville's novels are damaged, made mad by their experiences in psychotic families manned by dangerously abusive and controlling fathers, who are the patriarchal inheritors and beneficiaries of the imperial project. The family is a metaphor for the society that produces it, and the men and women of these families therefore represent in microcosm the wider relations of social power that give rise to the production of the 'national family', and who is excluded from it. In different ways, both Stead and Grenville indict the family as the unit in which social relations of power and oppression are formed. As I outline in the Introduction, the politics of colonialism structure the formation of Australian patriarchy that Stead and Grenville both foreground and respond to. Therefore I

proposed that the madwomen of the novels fictionalise the politics of being women within prevailing discourses of femininity that circulate in the Australian context of white patriarchal colonialism. The readings I offer are not concerned solely with women's madness, then, but with the pathology of the imperial enterprise embodied by the male characters as its inheritors and representatives. My interest lies in how Stead and Grenville respond to and subvert the dominant constructions of femininity—let us call them patriarchal fantasies, or founding myths of Australian culture—in their representation of young women characters mal-formed and misshapen by psychotic family dynamics, oedipal distortions and incestuous and abusive beginnings.

A located feminist approach is necessary to advance this argument. Feminist inquiry in the area of women's madness has influenced Australian feminisms through a process of transnational dialogue and exchange. As Susan Sheridan points out in *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, Australian feminism has been a site for the importation and transplantation of US, UK and French feminist ideas and discourses, but also has its own features and concerns, to function as a '*rewriting*' of these discourses, rather than simply providing an Australian inflection or commentary on events that take place in the rest of the world (1). In this sense, then, Australian feminism is grafted on to the rootstock of international feminisms, but has particular concerns of its own. The particularly colonial patriarchal texture of Australian national life, which has ascribed Otherness to women through the intersections between power relations of gender and the history of colonialism, has been recognised within Australian feminist investigation since 1975 with the publication of Anne Summers' *Damned Whores and God's Police* and Miriam Dixson's *The Real Matilda*. Feminist publications such as Marilyn Lake's *Getting Equal* (1999) and Kay Schaffer's *Women and the Bush* (1988) have documented the ways that

women have been symbolically excluded from the nation, to argue that the production of the nation took place within a masculinist cultural politics of gender. This cultural politics of gender was also a cultural politics of 'race' and whiteness, as the nation was recognised as a sovereign power founded in 1901 by constitutive acts that de-territorialised Aboriginal peoples. These acts were reinforced by the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* to establish Australia as a white space and to restrict non-white immigration. The recognition of this marks part of the paradigm shift in which increasingly marginalised literary feminisms sought to 'redirect and expand feminist theory' from the old binary of masculine/feminine towards the operation of discursive power within the specifically Australian cultural context of colonisation (Sheridan, *Grafts*, 4). Ann Vickery and Margaret Henderson argue that since 1988, there has been a shift towards feminist cultural studies in the analysis of women's writing and literary culture marked by a 'decentring of the nation as an analytical category' (9).

Discourses of 'race' and gender collide in the construction of Australian patriarchy, as colonial paranoia about racial 'contamination' and 'degeneracy' took hold in the national Imaginary, producing a distinctly Australian symbolic in which images of the female body and its capacity for reproduction were rigorously controlled and policed in the effort to establish the white nation. This has led to a particular temporal and social construction of gender informed as much by racial anxieties about a White Australia as about a patriarchal order. The extent to which masculinist discourse and dominant ideologies of 'femininity' have been shaped by constructions of the Other in scientific, medical, and psychoanalytic discourse, is both rooted in, and indeed, operates as the justification for, the violent colonial enterprise from which 'Australia' was born. Women in colonial settings such as Australia have held a privileged relation to racial purity because of their reproductive

capacity, so that gender discourse in colonial settings has been bound up with a colonial paranoia about women's sexuality, and a strict policing of the boundaries between Self and Other, white and black, man and woman. Australian gender relations are marked by the brutal history of penal colonialism and dispossession of Aboriginal peoples that occurred in its wake as 'Australia' began to form, first as an idea of Empire, and then as a geo-political construction to bring that idea into being as a sovereign nation-state in 1901. The discourse of nationalism that accompanies the establishment of the nation-state figures as a form of 'neurosis' in Benedict Anderson's formulation, a type of 'pathology' intrinsic to its development (citing Tom Nairn, 5). This was culturally located in anxieties about racial annihilation, and carried out in a 'continued cultural policing of the traits that metonymically carry the stain of difference' to reinforce whiteness as the dominant strain of Australian identity (Rutherford, 12). The formation of the nation therefore occurred as an acting-out of colonial paranoia, whereby the effort to establish Australia as a white nation relied on a series of localised wars against Aboriginal people and attempts at racial extermination (Reynolds, *Frontier*). These were justified through a discourse of racial anxiety which was actually a discourse of colonial paranoia. Women were targeted within this colonial Imaginary as Mothers of the White Nation or vessels of racial purity in need of protection against the threat of racial degeneracy (Jennifer Rutherford, 13). There is an historical and epistemological connection between the pathology of the nation-state emerging out of the colonial structure and the production of women's madness, as both arose out of the sorts of anxieties about difference provoked by the experience of imperial expansion.

Structures of national formation began to take place at the same time that the discursive production of gender and sexuality was forming in Western Europe, to 'saturate' women's bodies with an ungovernable sexuality that was pathologised and

hystericised, establishing the link between women's bodies and women's madness (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 104.) The discipline of psychoanalysis was gaining intellectual currency, with the publication of Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895, influenced by Freud's work with Jean-Martin Charcôt at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris in the 1880s. Alongside this, the discourse of scientific racism developed after the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859 based on his studies of flora and fauna which brought him to Australia aboard the *Beagle* in the 1830s. As theories of 'natural' selection and 'survival of the fittest' took hold, the construction of the racialised Other began to circulate in the Western Imaginary alongside constructions of the sexualised Other. The Self to this Other was always the white male, so that when Frantz Fanon claimed 'the black is not a man', he was describing the processes by which the racialised Other was both dehumanised and feminised within the colonial project (cited in Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 13). In the nineteenth century philosophical imagination, the otherness of the Other was linked to the female and to the black body as both site of, and tool for, conceptual mapping in the development of medical, scientific, and psychoanalytic discourses.

Women were pivotal to the production of madness as an object of critical inquiry, as it was argued that madness emerged through biological reproduction. As Michel Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality* (1976), the nineteenth century produced a 'hysterization of women's bodies' in the form of:

> a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analysed—qualified and disqualified—as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason of *a pathology intrinsic to it*; whereby, finally it was placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family

> space (of which it had to be a substantial and functional element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biologico-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children's education): the Mother, with her negative image of "nervous woman", constituted the most visible form of this hysterization. (104: emphasis mine)

The production of an hystericised feminine body that could contaminate children and the social order was central to the correlation of madness and femininity and femininity *as* madness. The woman who suffered from 'nervous' complaints that were 'intrinsic' and therefore internal to a pathology arising from the female body was not only 'saturated' with sexuality, but exhibited a moral corruption and a propensity for contagion through her capacity for reproduction, which was increasingly 'medicalised' and 'sexualised'. Certain sexual practices were considered 'unnatural' within this increasingly psychiatrised discourse of the normal and the abnormal, as 'sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness' (36). However, the regulation of sexual activity as a form of procreation that safeguarded the social order and promoted morality also defended racial purity. Foucault argues that this was in part because the bourgeoisie operated within a political economy and a semiotics of 'blood', in which bloodlines, castes, orders, and lines of descent were integral to the production of the social order and the species itself (123). Women of course had a privileged relation to the semiotics of blood, as it was their leaky bodies, their flows of blood that linked them to this political economy of furthering the (racially pure) species. Thus, sexuality became a means for ensuring the 'race' did not become the site of degeneracy, and women's sexuality was increasingly patrolled and policed. Indeed, 'family planning' was introduced in Australia as principally a form of 'racial hygiene' by which the survival of the racially pure

species could be ensured (Anne Summers, 556; David Carter, *Dispossession*, 390).[18] The female body operated as the site for the reproduction of whiteness so important to the construction of the nation, so that female sexuality acts as the imprimatur for the regulation of racial hygiene. The female body therefore became the site for racial anxiety in the colonial imagination as discourses of female and racial purity converged in the production of colonial Australian gentility. This has a particular resonance for my analysis of women's madness in the novels.

(Post)Colonial Frames: Notes Towards a Feminist Analysis

In recognising that women hold a privileged relationship to madness and racial purity in the Australian context, this thesis addresses and engages with the under-theorising in the critical literature of the pathology of colonialism foregrounded in the novels. This reading practice aims to disinter the racial processes central to the production of Australian patriarchy that are repressed and displaced in the critical commentary. My analysis is informed by critical debates within the disciplines of cultural studies, feminist literary theory, postcolonial theory, and feminist psychoanalytic theory, reflecting the heterogeneity of madness as a node of critical inquiry. Such an approach also requires a particular type of feminist analysis, which is also both historically and contextually located, rooted in postcolonial and anti-colonial cultural critiques that inquire into the very legitimacy of the founding of the nation (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, 14-17).[19] Postcolonial theory encompasses vigorous debates about what, exactly, it stands for (Anne

[18] Indeed, the Racial Hygiene Association of the early decades of the twentieth century grew into the Family Planning Association in the 1960s. Thus control of women's sexuality was directly connected to the eugenics movement in Australia.
[19] Anti-colonialism is theorised as a distinctly Indigenous mode of critical theory, 14-17. Broadly, postcolonialism refers to 'the effects of colonization on cultures and societies' (186), and therefore encompasses vigorous debates about whether, in the 'settler nation' context, colonisation continues in the contemporary legacies of colonialism and race relations that produce and structure Indigenous equality. This is particularly pertinent in the Australian context.

McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress', 84-98). The debates about and within postcolonial theory range from the debates about the hyphenated prefix 'post', which tends to suggest that the period of colonisation has finished (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts* 187), to the wide use of the term 'to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies' (186). I use the unhyphenated version of the term to signify the ongoing legacy of colonialism. In Australia, the term *postcolonial* has been used to situate and celebrate the emergence of a 'national' literature, unshackled from the wider body of 'English' literature, as well as a theoretical intervention into the privileging of non-Indigenous narratives, histories and founding myths that constitute a continuing Australian neo-colonialism. A feminist postcolonial reading practice is both deconstructive and productive, as it draws on and re-reads literary works—and their dominant critical interpretations—to 'draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization', demonstrate contradictions in their 'underlying assumptions (civilisation, justice, aesthetics, sensibility, race)', and reveal their '(often unwitting) colonialist ideologies and processes' (192). Postcolonial strategies, like feminist strategies, are oppositional, as they operate as forms of 'writing back' to challenge and unsettle the normalising of patriarchal and colonial power. Adopting a postcolonial feminist strategy draws from, and critiques, interpretations of the fictional madwoman that have been foundational to the development of feminist literary criticism from the 1970s onwards. My aim in outlining these critical debates is to uncouple the historical correlation of madness with femininity within the history of women's madness, a history that is rather a *genealogy*, to echo Foucault, of the feminisation of madness in psychoanalytic and philosophical discourse.

In mobilising these methodological underpinnings at this juncture, I acknowledge that it might seem strange to start a postcolonial interrogation of the

production of women's madness in Australia with a survey of feminist theorising emanating from the shores of Empire. But my purpose is to trace the historical development of critical madness discourse to consider its relevance and usefulness within the body of Australian feminist cultural critique informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches to the present day. My object, therefore, is to *make it* strange, an approach that resonates within the body of critical race and whiteness studies, and informs my critical project (Dyer, *White,* 4). Whiteness theory underwrites a postcolonial feminist reading strategy, reflecting my understanding that white women's location in the colonial enterprise as schizoid 'settler/invader' subjects has resulted in us being historically positioned outside the coloniser/ colonised relationship due to our marginal status within the patriarchal power structures that have dominated the white Australian cultural context (Whitlock, 'Australian literature: points for departure', 152; Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, 166). To interrogate the feminist argument that women have been excluded from hegemonic definitions of Australianness is to recognise that white women have not only been accommodated by these definitions, but also that we have often actively 'accepted the terms and conditions of this inclusion' (Whitlock 152). Calling into question the ways in which women are implicated in the scene of race relations while remaining oppressed within the scene of gendered power relations provides for provocative re-readings of the novels.

The sections that follow provide notes towards an Australian feminist politics of studying women's madness. I examine three iconic figures in the landscape of women's madness: the female suicide, the hysteric, and the unruly woman, as these figures not only circulate and are contested within the female literary tradition, but also inform representations of women's madness in *The Man Who Loved Children* and *Lilian's Story*. Although the madwoman has been enshrined as a feminist

prototype, the terms of this inscription have sparked critical debates, tensions and divisions about whether madness leads to a theoretical dead-end for feminist interpretation. I survey these debates to suggest some ways that the madwoman in literature has contributed to the critical project to uncouple the discursive correlation of madness with women.

Critical Madness Discourse: The Roots of Feminist Inquiry

Critical interest in the figure of the madwoman has been a contributing feature in the development of feminist literary criticism, and in the canon of women's madness that informs this important work. Feminist literary scholarship is not a body of work emerging out of a unified interpretive community, but rather a range of approaches to literary texts informed by the broader feminist critical project, moving across and between disciplines such as philosophy, psychoanalysis and postcolonial theory. The branch of feminist theorising that deals with women and madness is the field of critical madness discourse. Critical madness discourse constitutes a 'theoretically and disciplinarily heterogeneous body of texts that emphasise the construction of femininity as madness and simultaneously appropriate the madwoman as a figure of denaturalization' (Schlichter, 310). The field encompasses studies of madwomen in literature, feminist critiques of hysteria and psychoanalysis, cultural histories of madness, and philosophical interventions into the correlation of femininity with the irrational in Western cultural constructions of gender. In the study of literature, critical madness scholarship has interrogated texts of women's madness produced by the male literary and artistic imagination, as well as feminist re-tellings and responses. Figures such as Shakespeare's Ophelia, Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary, and Tolstoy's Anna Karenina on the one hand, and figures such as the unnamed narrator of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte

Brontë's Bertha Rochester, and Emily Brontë's Catherine of *Wuthering Heights* on the other circulate in this Imaginary. In the twentieth century, 'autobiographical' texts dramatising women's mental breakdowns, such as Janet Frame's *Faces in the Water*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* emerged in the 1960s. These provide a 'herstory' of women's madness, while Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* begins the postcolonial project of retelling women's madness and forms part of the challenge to white Western 'doxa' troubling the broader feminist project. Literature is a field in which texts operate 'within a maze of other texts', either consciously 'speaking' to each other, as *Wide Sargasso Sea* speaks to *Jane Eyre*, or being read against each other within comparative approaches (Saunders, 54-55). These dialogues occur across genre boundaries, with feminist analyses of texts of women's madness informing the work of women writers who use madness as a theme to critique patriarchal constructions of madness within psychoanalysis as originating from, and contaminating, the female body.

The madwomen of feminist literary inquiry can be grouped into three distinct strands: the female suicide, exemplified by Ophelia; the female hysteric, exemplified by Dora in Freudian psychology; and the unruly woman, exemplified by Bertha Rochester as a figure of monstrous and racialised Otherness. These iconic figures in the canon of women's madness form a set of templates or literary progenitors for women writers to appropriate and subvert in the project to denaturalise the mid-nineteenth century construction of femininity as madness. From the mid-1800s onwards, women writers began to challenge the over-determination of madness and femininity and the fetishisation of melancholic or monstrous femininity. It is possible to trace a shift in representations of women's madness from the melancholic, female suicide of the nineteenth-century imagination to the unruly woman, symbolised first by the hysteric as a prototype of feminist (out)rage and protest, and later by the

unconventional and eccentric women who form the ‘eccentric subjects’, to coin Teresa de Lauretis’s phrase, of fiction written by women in the twentieth century. Stead and Grenville belong in this literary terrain, as their representations of young women driven mad give voice to this feminist politics of women’s madness. Portraits of the female suicide, the hysteric, and the unruly woman are simultaneously deployed and re-cast in *The Man Who Loved Children* and *Lilian’s Story*, so that the novels can be read as interventions into the construction of women’s madness. In *The Man Who Loved Children*, Henny’s death rewrites the narrative of female suicide as the outcome of a supposedly intrinsic melancholic femininity imputed to women through patriarchal discourse. Louie takes up a location outside the patriarchal family, prefiguring the unruly woman as a figure of early feminist resistance. In *Lilian’s Story*, the figure of the female hysteric, embodied in Norah, gives way to the figure of the grotesque woman embodied by Lilian, growing increasingly fat and unlovely. Women like Lilian, who make spectacles of themselves, challenge patriarchal codes of femininity that make women like her mother, Norah, withdraw to her bedroom. The novels trace and echo the shift from dominant understandings of the madwoman as ‘disordered’ to her provocative repositioning as ‘disorderly’, refusing patriarchal dictates.

Theorising Madness: Suicides, Hysterics, and Unruly Women

Key texts in the literary production of women’s madness and in feminist critiques that respond to this have been influential in the feminist critical project to decolonise psychoanalysis of patriarchal assumptions about the production of gender ‘norms’. Critical madness discourse has brought madness out of the prison-house of psychoanalysis in its insistence that madness is culturally and historically constructed. Literature plays a significant role in articulating this cultural politics, as

'the sole channel by which madness has been able throughout history to speak in its own name ... with relative freedom', giving voice to the madness silenced by a cultural politics of repression (Felman, *Writing and Madness*, 15). The relationship between literature and psychoanalysis is an important one. In 'fathering' psychoanalysis, Freud used case studies from literature to shape his theories, as the discipline had no clear precedents. For Kevin Brophy, psychoanalysis may be read as a 'discourse living off (unacknowledged) literary models—a melange of literary and sub-literary genres masquerading as a science' (Brophy, 59). This calls into question the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. Shoshana Felman contends that psychoanalysis occupies a privileged location in this relationship as a body of knowledge, because the 'and' between the two terms enacts a relationship of subordination. Literature, as a body of words, is the mere object 'submitted to the authority, the prestige' of psychoanalytic interpretation, the devalued other to psychoanalysis (*Literature and Psychoanalysis*, 5). But literary interpretation also resembles the psychoanalytic endeavour. Literature and psychoanalysis are disciplines with a profound interest in words: the analytic setting is about the dialogue between analyst and analysand, while literature assumes a dialogue between the text and the reader. Literary criticism runs the risk of reducing the text to an object to be explicated, a series of figures, tropes, metaphors and metonyms to be decoded in order for an interpretive schema to be advanced from a disinterested critical standpoint. This reproduces the power imbalance of the psychoanalytic relationship. This is, of course, a certain *type* of relationship: the feminist critic acts as the arbiter of knowledge about the literary madwoman, decoding her 'madness', explicating it, deconstructing it, and linking it to the over-arching socio-cultural framework in which women's madness has been produced and reproduced. Therefore, in reading women's madness, I am aware of the dangers of *applying*

psychoanalysis to the scene of literary deconstruction and interpretation, as this reinforces the primacy of psychoanalysis in the interpretive enterprise. Following Felman, I seek rather to *implicate* and *involve* psychoanalysis in critical readings of gender, madness and colonialism, to act as a 'go-between' to generate and critically explore the implications between literature and psychoanalytic accounts of gender identification (8-9).

I turn first to *Hamlet*, which foregrounds themes of insanity, as it has been extremely influential in the development of psychoanalysis. Both Freud and Jacques Lacan have offered readings of Hamlet's oedipal identification with Gertrude, suggesting that Hamlet is riven by repressed sexual desires, guilt, and fantasy, and Lacan arguing that he experiences both melancholia and psychosis (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 367-368; Lacan, 'Desire and the interpretation of desire 11-52). If Hamlet provides an early template for male insanity, Ophelia forms a template for representations and performances of women's madness in the visual and dramatic arts from the 1700s onwards. Lynn M. Voskuil documents the British actress Ellen Terry's 1878 visit to a lunatic asylum to research the role of Ophelia, noting that she rejected most of the madwomen she encountered there as being without beauty, pity, or nature, until she found an 'ideal' Ophelia who 'sped across the room like a swallow ... She was very thin, very pathetic, very young, and the movement was as poignant as it was beautiful' ('Acts of madness', np). In this search for an 'authentic' madness that Terry can dramatically represent, she focuses on qualities such as beauty and ethereality, qualities far removed from the disturbingly 'too theatrical' displays of 'empirical' madness she had rejected in the madwomen she first encountered. Voskuil argues that the qualities Terry settled on to legibly represent Ophelia's madness and subsequent suicide as the act of the 'lovelorn' woman echoed dominant middle-class constructions of Victorian femininity. These

qualities have contributed to dominant readings of Ophelia's suicide as an emblem of feminine victimhood. Such readings enclose Ophelia in the long silence of death that canonises her passivity and connects it to her femininity, consigning her to the category of victim and love-struck maiden. This is a proposition that feminist critics have both drawn on and resisted,[20] noting that Ophelia's canonical status as victim illustrates the marriage-or-death gridlock women have been assigned to in the male literary imagination, in which the female suicide is saturated by a cultural coding that links femininity to pathology and death.

The *dénouement* of Shakespearean tragic convention invites sympathetic readings of Hamlet's death as the inevitable but unintended fatal calamity that attends the tragic hero's error (or 'tragic flaw'), so that his death is commonly read as a disproportionate punishment for his political failings (Baldick, 226-227). In these readings, Ophelia's death functions either as one of those unintended tragic consequences arising out of Hamlet's cruelty and thoughtlessness in his conduct towards her, or acts as a mere plot device to further the *real* dramatic action.[21] By contrast, Hamlet's death results from his actions, no matter how politically suicidal these may be, so that his death is connected to the *agency* befitting the tragic hero. Ophelia's suicide not only demonstrates her *lack* of agency and dependence upon Hamlet as potentate and husband-to-be, but also her lack of *heroism*. That the protagonists' deaths invite such dramatically different readings indicates an unequal burden of meaning attached to their respective deaths, reflecting a politics of

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[20] There is not the space here to address the huge volume of Shakespeare scholarship, other than to flag some important feminist readings of the play. See, for example, Catherine Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* (London: Methuen, 1985). See also R.S. White, 'Jeptha's Daughters: Men's Constructions of Women in Hamlet', in *Constructing Gender: Feminism in Literary Studies,* eds Hilary Fraser and R.S. White (Nedlands, Western Australia: U of Western Australia P, 1994) 73-89. See also Elaine Showalter, 'Representing Ophelia: women, madness, and the responsibilities of feminist criticism', in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartmann (New York and London: Methuen Press, 1985) 77-94.

[21] For example, Lacan refers to Ophelia as 'that piece of bait' who functions as the pivot for Hamlet's action in 'Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*', 11-12.

representation and interpretation that is actually a politics of gender. This brings us back to the question of why it is *women's* madness that is unintelligible and self-defeating, against Hamlet's madness, which is read as a viable political strategy that misfires, with tragic consequences. Ophelia's 'mad' scenes are constructed by a multi-vocal and discontinuous text that signifies her unintelligibility, so that it is *her* words that perform 'a document in madness' (4, v, 175). If the lady protests too much, then her madness becomes the basis of discounting what she says. Few readings focus on the alternative, that 'she may strew/ Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds' (4, v, 14-15) and pose a threat to Hamlet's supposedly viable *political* strategy of *feigning* madness and his political machinations to take the throne amid the thuggery-muggery of the court. Hamlet's 'mad' scenes are marked by a melancholic introspection and desire for suicide in his soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 2:

> O, that this too sallied flesh would melt
>
> Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
>
> Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
>
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
>
> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
>
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
>
> Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
>
> That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature
>
> Possess it merely. (lines 129-137)

As Catherine Belsey notes, Hamlet's speech and actions are marked by discordance, dissonance, and incoherencies testifying to his mental instability and

real rather than feigned madness, (*The Subject of Tragedy*, 41). Further indicators of his madness are to be found in the regular visions he experiences of Old Hamlet, now dead, configured and explained away as ghostly visitations and manifestations of the supernatural, but which can also be read as hallucinations. Following Lucy Potter, who argues that 'the play relocates the irrational in Ophelia, shifting an inconsistency in the representation of Hamlet's subjectivity on to the woman' (27), I contend that Hamlet is just as discontinuous and erratic as Ophelia is said to be. In addition, a more challenging reading of Hamlet's 'tragic' death is to locate it as one of the earliest examples of what contemporary culture describes as 'suicide-by-cop'.[22] His death is predicated on a lust for power and an inflated sense of masculine entitlement that are pathologically patriarchal, while his attempt to ascend to the throne as 'rightful' heir is justified by misuse of patriarchal structures such as the 'Divine Right' of kings. Accordingly, Hamlet's actions can be read as attempts to impose a disorder, rather than attempting to restore a 'rightful' monarchic order. I read Ophelia's death as a refusal to be subjected to Hamlet's attempts to control her, and a recognition of his growing misogyny, delivered in his injunction to: 'Get thee to a / nunnery, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry/ a fool for wise men know well enough what monsters/ you make of them' (3, i: 136-139). Hamlet offers Ophelia three choices here, because the word 'nunnery' holds the secondary meaning 'brothel': she can cloister herself in a convent, offer sexual services to men as a prostitute, or marry someone else. Ophelia's possibilities for action are circumscribed by the gendered relations of familial and sexual bonds. Hamlet's distrust of women, directed initially at Gertrude who thwarts his ambition to be king by marrying her dead husband's brother, is displaced on to Ophelia, who resists his

[22] Suicide-by-cop is a term used to describe a suicidal person deliberately acting in a threatening way to provoke an armed officer to shoot in response, and was first adopted in research into 'police-assisted homicide' in the 1980s.

misogynistic constructions of femininity. Reading Ophelia's death as a refusal of feminine subjection to male control restores agency to Ophelia's actions and legibility to her mad text. Ophelia's mad scenes therefore act as a text of gender and culture, indicting Hamlet and the Court. This reading informs my examination of Henny's suicide in *The Man Who Loved Children*.

Ophelia's suicide haunts feminist literary criticism and narratives of women's suicide written by women. Ophelia's text of madness has provided the template for subsequent narratives of female melancholia and suicide, narratives so popular that the nineteenth century can be considered to have produced an 'Ophelia complex' that encodes silence, suicide, and passivity as 'qualities' of femininity. The Ophelia complex, particularly in works authored by men, acted to connect the female suicide to 'dissolution of the self, [from] fragmentation to flow' in a process that imaginatively and materially linked madness to the female body (Higonnet, 71). An idealised Victorian femininity had begun to be highly coded as melancholic, with durable motifs recurring in representations of the ideal woman as the self-sacrificing Angel in the House. The dominant counterpart to this image, the *femme fatale* or 'fallen woman' of male-authored fiction such as *Anna Karenina* (1877) and *Madame Bovary* (1856), is punished in scenes of violent suicide: Anna throws herself under a train, while Emma dies an agonising death after taking arsenic. In 'Speaking silences: Women's suicide', Margaret Higonnet shows that a significant over-determination exists in narratives of women's suicide written by men. Whereas classical women's suicides, such as those of Antigone and Cleopatra, were 'perceived as masculine' and linked to heroic self-sacrifice, during the nineteenth century, women's suicides were depoliticised, medicalised and feminised (70, 71). Women's suicide became associated with 'a set of increasingly *feminine* symptoms' including a supposed orientation towards 'love, passive self-surrender, and illness'

(70-71: emphasis Higonnet's). The woman suicide's motives were relocated in the emotions, so that her complaints, as well as her motives, seemed to result from an interior and 'contaminated' femininity, rather than from an external social or political reality (71). Higonnet concedes that suicide consigns women to a cultural location of silence, which is a marker of disempowerment, but argues that women were already politically silenced through the external cultural, social, political and economic structures. She contends that female suicide needs to be rethought as a text or 'performative utterance', because to 'take one's life is to force others to read one's death' (68). This bears on feminist hermeneutics, as readings of the female suicide in texts authored by women need to investigate the political and economic dimensions of suicide, deconstructing dominant readings that locate it as a problem of gendered pathology.

In fiction, women writers had already recognised the need to investigate the cultural climate of rigid gender codes that linked suicide to the female body. One of the classic examples is Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) which appropriates and subverts the narrative of female suicide exemplified by Ophelia as *the* icon of melancholic femininity.[23] In Australia, Henry Handel Richardson's *Maurice Guest* consciously interrupts the feminisation of suicide: it is the rejected male protagonist of the title, Maurice Guest, who commits suicide (Lever, 44). Louise, the sexually adventurous and unconventional woman on whom Maurice projects his romantic and erotic fantasies, survives her love affairs. Susan Lever notes that this marks an

[23] *The Awakening* details the unhappily married Edna Pointellier's struggle to conform to the demands of marriage and maternity and to Victorian ideals of women as Angels in the House. Edna perceives her children as 'antagonists who had overcome her ... and sought to drag her into the soul's slavery for the rest of her days' (175). Realising that her affair with another man will only enclose her anew in the bonds of gendered power, Edna takes her own life. The story closes with an image of Edna swimming. Or is she drowning? By replacing finality with ambiguity, Chopin writes back to and reconfigures Ophelia's suicide. Chopin clearly intends this as a political strategy, as her title suggests the awakening recognition that marriage and maternity represent a prison-house of domestic routines that compete with the woman artist's creative demands.

important departure from the conventions of nineteenth-century realist or naturalist fiction, in which the 'sexually promiscuous' or 'amoral' woman is killed off as *femme fatale* (49). Texts of women's suicide in works by nineteenth-century women writers explore the social and psychological costs borne by women within the oppressive social order that inscribed patriarchal constructions of femininity upon the female body, and consigned limiting gender roles for women based on these understandings. Accordingly, women's narratives of female suicide both respond to and contest the dominant narratives of the nineteenth-century male imagination, reclaiming suicide from its associations with melancholic femininity and recasting it as a (limited) form of agency and self-determination.

A compelling narrative of female madness and suicide appears in Bertha Rochester, one of the earliest and most controversial prototypes of the madwoman written by women: locked up by her husband in the attic like a caged animal, she ends her confinement by plunging to her death. Published in 1847, *Jane Eyre* is not only a *Bildungsroman* that traces the protagonist Jane Eyre's development from unloved ward to married independent woman, but also an exemplar of the Gothic mode in its themes of madness, incarceration, and female subordination. Jane escapes, but Bertha does not. Textually, Bertha functions as the disavowed 'Other' to the 'civilised' and genteel figures of Jane Eyre and Rochester. Her behaviour, defined by Rochester as excessive, depraved and debauched, is configured in ways that link her madness to her sexuality, alongside questions about her racial purity, and a corresponding untamed femininity that troubles the social order. As Jane's double, she represents what must be disavowed in taking up a socially sanctioned femininity (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic*, 360).[24] For critics such as

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[24] Bertha, within this schema, not only functions as Jane's double, but also as the double for the author, expressing something of Brontë's own confinement within the parsonage at Haworth. Gilbert

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, Bertha destabilises the correlation of melancholia and femininity. She is the antithesis of the silenced melancholic in her instability, linguistic excess, and in the need for her to be contained to ensure her own, and others', safety. An important commentary on *The Madwoman in the Attic* is provided by Valerie Beattie, who argues that Gilbert and Gubar recast Bertha in the role of evil Other, by configuring Jane as a 'sane' version of her. In this, they undermine their own charter, by doing little more than 'replicate ideologically problematic attitudes to it' through a range of 'ideological blindspots', in the form of 'race and class blindness' and a concept of patriarchy as 'all-encompassing' (494). While the argument that women—and women writers—were consigned to the margins of nineteenth-century culture was an important one in its day, the ideological blindspot of 'race' as a product of that century's imagination and practices remained relatively under-theorised until the emergence of postcolonial feminisms in the 1990s began to draw critical attention to colonised and Black women's writing, challenging the race politics of universalising female hysteria. It is important that Bertha Rochester appears on the literary stage at a time when Jane E. Kromm notes female asylum inmates first began to outnumber men, and madness became both increasingly feminised and increasingly sexualised. Kromm argues that there is a corresponding shift in visual typologies of Ophelia from 'lovestruck melancholic maiden', to a figure approaching the 'erotomaniac', dominated by images of a dishevelled, 'haphazardly dressed' Ophelia with 'loose, tumbledown' hair (n.p.). These increasingly common tropes for sexual availability thus rendered madness as a site for feminine sexual display, enacting a set of representational processes that reflected fears about the growing empowerment of women in post-Revolutionary Europe that culminated in anxieties about the role of the New Woman towards the end of the

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and Gubar reconfigure the madwoman as the symbol of the silenced female voice, arguing that culture, defined as patriarchal, positions women on its margins.

Victorian age. Bertha's dangerous sexuality, her escapes from the attic, her violence and her unintelligibility reflect this shift in the representation of women's madness. As I outlined above, the discursive construction of madness as a female complaint occurred in the emergent disciplines of medical science and psychoanalysis, in which the hystericised female body was connected to discourses about the need to regulate and control female sexuality, particularly in the context of colonialism where sexual purity was linked to racial purity. Bertha Rochester reflects anxieties about the dilution of English values transplanted to the wild, colonial frontiers as imperial expansion resulted in the West taking occupation of more than nine-tenths of the globe. As Robert C. Young puts it, the exportation of a British culture to a colonial elsewhere was never:

> a simple process of the production of a new mimesis ... A culture never repeats itself perfectly away from home. Any exported culture will in some way run amok, go phut or threaten to turn into mumbo-jumbo as it dissolves in the heterogeneity of the elsewhere. (174).

Bertha's Otherness is inscribed as a cultural product of this elsewhere, linking questions of gender, sexuality and race to both feminine and colonial disorder. The madness of the colonial subject is notably recast in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, in which Antoinette's madness is defended as a product of Rochester's imperialism and colonial anxiety about racial purity. His renaming of her as Bertha is emblematic of the colonial project. Therefore, Bertha Rochester is an important figure in the critical readings I offer of women's madness in Stead's and Grenville's work, as she performs a text of madness that speaks out of the interstices between British colonialism and the forms of patriarchal power that took effect in the colonies.

The control of women, whether in terms of their sexual desire, or their desire for a location outside of the family and the home that their gender apparently

bequeathed them, was taken up by women writers concerned to challenge the production of hysteria by the medical and psychiatric professions. These texts emerge at the dawn of the twentieth century, when women writers began to write of their experiences of madness, exclusion, and treatment at the hands of male physicians seduced by, and 'trained' in, the emerging field of psychoanalysis. In 1890, Charlotte Perkins Gilman published *The Yellow Wallpaper*, her indictment of Silas Weir Mitchell's rest 'cure', deploying madness as a metaphor for women's confinement by patriarchal codes of femininity, and challenging the gendered assumptions that underpinned her 'treatment'. *The Yellow Wallpaper* is commonly read as the archetypal text of the hysteric, for whom disorder symbolises the *malaise* (encompassing both the sense of unease and the sense of dis-ease) of women enclosed in the grand narratives of nineteenth-century middle class femininity. The nameless heroine is prescribed rest for a postnatal depression by her physician husband, and descends into a netherworld where her identity beyond the roles of wife and mother is effaced. The protagonist's very namelessness implies *every*woman, so that she stands in for all women who rage or protest against the confines that the culture places on the female body. The story is narrated with curt, short sentences and brief paragraphs that demonstrate the narrator's taut mental state. The room where she is forced to remain is a former nursery decorated with the peeling wallpaper of the title that symbolises her progressively deteriorating mindscape. She is prohibited from working (3, 5), because her husband, John, 'hates to have me write a word' (5). He concludes that her 'imaginative power and habit of story-making' (7) are the product of a fanciful temperament (15) that gives rise to 'nervous weakness' (7). His sister, Mary, also believes that 'it is the writing which made me sick' (15).The prohibition from working makes the narrator 'unreasonably angry' (4), a state she links to the ugly yellow wallpaper. Its pattern takes on the form of 'two

bulbous eyes' (7) that seem to watch her, revealing 'a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design' (8). The wallpaper represents not only the unreasonable surveillance that the patient experiences, but also the cultural overlay that insists women must be invisible, relegated to the private sphere of the home. This 'sub-pattern' she finds 'particularly irritating' (8), for it is visible only in certain lights. This suggests the insidious and subtle coercions through which patriarchal cultures reinforce and maintain gendered relations of power. The figures that lurk beneath the wallpaper also suggest that women who take their place beneath the cultural overlay that prescribes feminine roles collude with patriarchal models of femininity, a distrust she directs towards her sister-in-law, Mary, who colludes with her husband's 'diagnosis'. Her distrust of physicians is directed also towards Mitchell, the colleague of her physician husband. However, the two figures are conflated: 'John' functions as the name for every*man*, establishing a metonymic chain that connects Mitchell with the husband as agents of patriarchal control:

> John is a physician, and perhaps … that is one reason I do not get well faster.
>
> You see he does not believe I am sick. And what can one do? If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do? (3)

This passage demonstrates the power imbalance between professional men and domestic women, and between doctor and patient. Nervous disorders and mental illness brought women patients back into the binary logic of the medical model, which cast women as the helpless, passive and dependent patients, while male psychiatrists and physicians were invested with both authority and knowledge in their powers of diagnosis and treatment.

Powerful myths of patriarchal femininity structured medical interventions into hysteria. Women were locked symbolically into the prevailing medical belief that the 'instability of the female nervous and reproductive systems made women more vulnerable to derangement than men', (Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 73) a view that arose out of (male) scientific models, but that took hold politically and culturally. Mitchell believed that it was the 'great physiological revolutions of a woman's life' associated with the female body and reproduction, such as menstruation, menopause, lactation and pregnancy, that gave rise to the nervous disorders hysteria and neurasthenia (in Bassuk, 146). In *Doctor and Patient* (1888), Mitchell suggests these disorders were caused by 'irritation' in the ovaries or uterus that was then 'transmitted electrically' to the brain (Bassuk, 145). This no doubt derived from the earlier view that the uterus, or *hystera*, floated around the woman's body, causing her to be, at best, 'airy', and at worst, like her uterus, unhinged (Showalter, *Hystories*, 15). Men, by contrast, were 'grounded' in rationality. Mental illness in women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was conceived of as having an organic cause. That cause was the female body. For S. Weir Mitchell, women with intellectual, artistic or literary aspirations were 'making mischief', even to the point of causing the hysteria by their 'profoundly selfish and tyrannical' refusal to take on the meanings of an adult female role (Bassuk, 146, 143). The 'treatment' he provided demonstrates the gendered assumptions about what an adult female role actually meant. During the cure, women were put to bed for six weeks to two months, in total seclusion from their families and responsibilities. Nurses moved their arms and legs, and performed their ablutions, administering enemas. Patients were given tonics, stimulants and nutritional supplements to enrich their diet, which consisted of milk administered in four-ounce doses every two hours (141-143). This treatment reduced women to a state of

complete dependence and submissiveness, confining them to the status of the babies their sexed bodies were supposed to produce. A peculiarly circular logic is at work here: the hysterical woman, who, through her symptoms, contests her imposed passivity and dependence is re-educated into accepting these very conditions by undertaking a treatment that infantilises her. This second infancy is considered to cure her of her resistance to the responsibilities she must take up as wife and mother, and indeed, of her complaints that her domestic responsibilities curtail her responsibilities to herself as writer or artist (150). Madness appears as both the cause for, and the explication of, women's refusal to conform to discourses of patriarchal femininity in which women are expected to be subjugated and to enjoy their subjugation. But it was not, as male 'physicians' were so keen to demonstrate in their propagation of the new medical knowledges, the female body that was the *cause* of mental illness. As Jane Gallop points out, the psychoanalytic injunction required women to 'adjust' to patriarchal regimes of power that are themselves unjust (xii). Gilman's metaphors of imprisonment and confinement indicate a profound discontent with the predicaments that models of patriarchal femininity impose on women as women and as women writers. *The Yellow Wallpaper* testifies to the exacerbating effects of the so-called 'cure' upon Gilman's state of mind, prefiguring Freud's analysis of Ida Bauer, and paving the way for subsequent feminist critiques.[25] The hysteric who will not be silenced and who rejects the cure imposed by this rudimentary psychoanalysis is emblematic of a realignment in the politics of representing women's madness, as she begins to be reconfigured as a figure of transgression against patriarchal control. Madness came to be aligned with a feminist

[25] Sigmund Freud's famous interpretation and treatment of Ida Bauer, whom he renamed Dora, is recounted in 'Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', first published 1901. Dora's rejection of treatment under Freud attests to the inability of emergent psychoanalysis to 'cure' women of their desires for a more equal social order. This has been taken up in feminist and anti-psychiatry circles, with important analyses including Hélène Cixous's *Portrait of Dora*. Similar critiques include Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane, eds, *In Dora's case: Freud, Hysteria*, *Feminism* and Jeffrey Moussaief Masson, *Against Therapy*.

politics, as hysterics gave way to unruly women in the landscape of women's madness.

The unruly woman is aligned with the grotesque bodies of the pregnant hag in Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, to symbolise ambivalence, transgression and disorder. The figure of the female grotesque is loaded with both patriarchal and feminist interpretations, signifying the locus of ambivalence that she occupies within postmodern theorising (Russo, 325-326; Rowe, 34). Mary Russo contends that 'women and their bodies, certain bodies, in certain public framings, are always already transgressive—dangerous and in danger' due to a cultural politics that positions the female body simultaneously in terms of purity and danger (323). Because societies impose order by relegating and abjecting what is impure, such as dirt, pollution and the unclean to the realm of the taboo, women have been aligned with what constitutes danger to a society because their bodies are correlated with menstruation and parturition, and therefore beyond 'control' (319). Women are therefore understood *a priori* to inhabit grotesque bodies, which must be subjected to strategies of purification (326). Strategies of purity imposed to control women include 'radical negation, silence, withdrawal, and invisibility', constructing a cultural politics of femininity that requires compliance and submission to patriarchal strictures, which psychoanalysis 'will insist is femininity par excellence' (319, 321). Kathleen Rowe shows, citing Cixous, that when women take up the positions of 'divine composure' allocated to them by patriarchal constructions, they demonstrate their compliance with these models and are read as 'well-adjusted', but at the price of also being 'silent, static, invisible' and separated from 'social power' (31). By contrast, unruly women refuse to be invisible, bringing themselves dangerously into visibility through 'bold affirmations of feminine performance, imposture and masquerade' (Russo, 319). The body of the unruly woman is marked by excessive

garrulousness, size, and appetite, operating as symbols of the grotesque. The lips of the mouth and the lips of the vagina are metonymically aligned, so that a failure to conform to requirements to be small, graceful, composed, demure, and contained acts as a conscious defiance of the codes that govern and control female sexuality and behaviour (Rowe, 37). In other words, unruly women and female grotesques make 'spectacles' of themselves, performing femininity on their own terms, even and especially where these performances disturb codes of demure femininity. Unruly women defiantly transgress dominant ideologies of gender, so that the female grotesque functions as a strategy of liberation, to take up a location outside the social and symbolic systems designed to keep women 'in their place'. Theories of the female grotesque re-position women's madness as a subversion of the patriarchal order. The recuperation of the madwoman from disordered to disorderly will be important to my reading of *Lilian's Story*, as Lilian's body represents the deformation of women under highly codified regimes of patriarchal femininity. Lilian operates as a female *flâneur* figure, inserting herself into the streets to take up a position from which women are 'excluded a priori', being part of the spectacle to which the male *flâneur* subjects his wandering gaze (Bowlby, 6). Her refusal to be shut away in the private sphere of the home, and her insistence that a woman could walk the streets without being a streetwalker, subverts the codes of genteel femininity that her status as a member of the respectable middle classes imposes upon her. However, risks attend these performances of femininity on the woman's own terms. The unruly woman remains 'vulnerable to pollution taboos because by definition she transgresses boundaries and steps out of her proper place' (Rowe, 42). Furthermore, pollution taboos attached to unruly women 'take on a sexual cast' (42) in the form of fear of degeneracy, miscegenation, and colonial dirt.

This is central to my readings of Lilian and Louie, who both resist male

attempts to subjugate them through their emerging sexuality. I contend that patriarchal control is legitimated through a cultural politics of gender that assigns women to the borders or outside of a culture, reading women's madness as a trope for marginality. The contention is also contentious. While feminists broadly agree that women occupy marginal locations in patriarchal cultures, they are divided on the merits of using madness as a feminist strategy. The danger is that reading madness as marginality not only reifies the correlation of women *with* madness, it also reinscribes the very proposition that feminist intervention sought to disrupt: the production of women *as* madness.

The Intelligible Madwoman: Feminist Debates

Fiery debates have erupted within critical madness discourse to assert that the incoherence of madness also positions the madwoman as unintelligible, whether madwomen are silenced or linguistically excessive. Several of the early works in the critical madness project tended initially to celebrate madness as a strategy of feminist protest. Emblematic of this trend, Gilbert and Gubar's landmark work in the critical madness project, *The Madwoman in The Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, argues that dominant discourses of Victorian femininity positioned women as chaste Madonna or seductive Eve, angels or whores, so that women either conformed to the dominant models of femininity available, taking up their prescribed positions as dutiful daughters, loving mothers and obedient wives, or they resisted, and like Bertha Rochester, they went mad.[26] Gilbert and Gubar argued that passive acceptance of these unequal power relations

[26] This corresponds to Sigmund Freud's view that hysteria was an inevitable product of patriarchy. Juliet Mitchell, in her defence of Freudian psychoanalysis, argues that Freud was aware of the 'cultural "making" of men and women' (404), contending that 'his analysis of the psychology of women … takes place within an analysis of patriarchy' that offers 'the beginnings of an explanation of the inferiorised and "alternative" (second sex) psychology of women under patriarchy' (*Psychoanalysis and Feminism,* 402).

could be read as an adroit negotiation of the terms of women's existence, in which the taking up of a responsible adult femininity conforms to (male) cultural expectations. To refuse the compliant feminine model was to take up instead the deviant model, as madness was a form of feminine rage and resistance to the limiting terms of patriarchal femininity. The reading of madness as a form of feminist protest was taken up by French feminists,[27] with Hélène Cixous celebrating women's madness as celebratory and redemptive, considering the fragmented discourse of the hysteric as an assault upon (male) language and patriarchal cultural constructions of femininity, to position hysterical symptoms as a means to contest the meanings and confines of femininity within the patriarchal order. The madwoman had become a theatre for the construction and contestation of gender. By 1975, when Cixous claimed the hysterics as her sisters, and went on to ask: 'What woman is not Dora?', the female hysteric had come to symbolise unruliness, disorder and resistance to patriarchal power ('Sorties', 99, 147). Diane Price Herndl points out that 'hysteria has come to figure as a type of rudimentary feminism, and feminism as a kind of articulate hysteria' (in *Hystories*, 10). This rhetorical move reproduced the correlation of madness with femininity. The politics of naming this femininity as disordered seemed initially to have escaped some feminist theorists in their rush to celebrate the hysteric as 'symbolic of women's silencing in the institutions of language, culture and psychoanalysis' (Showalter, *Hystories,* 56). Almost from the moment it appeared, the thesis that women's madness enacted a form of feminist protest provoked critical re-readings.

Elaine Showalter, in her study of women's madness and the female literary

[27] French feminism is broadly considered to encompass the common interests of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and Hélène Cixous. However, I do not intend to suggest that their common interests are *shared*, as there are contradictory approaches and disagreements across the broad field of French feminism. Each in her own way both uses and subverts the dominant male psychoanalytic models, while taking up positions that are neither outside them, nor wholly within them.

imagination, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980*, argues that some feminist critics 'analyzed and illuminated a cultural tradition that represents "woman" *as* madness and that uses images of the female body ... to stand for madness in general', but warns against the dangers of 'romanticizing and endorsing madness as a desirable form of rebellion' (4, 5). Similarly, Felman argues that madness is 'quite the opposite of rebellion. Madness is the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation' ('Woman and madness', 2). Patricia Meyer Spacks argues that the equation of madness with the oppression of women functions, like Blake's 'mind-forg'd manacles', to enclose women anew in the role of passive dependency, that, presumably, their experience of madness both inscribes and resists (34-36). She insists that there are many more possible interpretations for women's madness, and problematises the notion of interpretation itself, while remaining mindful that the relationships between femininity and madness are not easily uncoupled. Many of these critiques were directed against supposedly disruptive and subversive strategies of *écriture féminine* which posed a conceptual problem for feminist interpretation. Problems of unreadability attend experimental writing that has used hysterical discourse or other *écriture féminine* strategies. Although madness is celebrated, and hysterical discourse is appropriated to subject the gendered assumptions of psychoanalysis to rigorous feminist analysis, *otherness* is linguistically re-inscribed in the madwoman's rejection of linguistic structures and forms, particularly if the madwoman's texts are discontinuous and multi-vocal (Baym, 199-213). The oppositional counter-discourse that women's madness was supposed to enact drifted into the realm of non-sense. Women's madness seemed to confirm, rather than contest, the correlation of madness and femininity with unintelligibility. Luce Irigaray points out in *This Sex Which Is Not One* that glorifying madness worked

against women and did little to create a discursive space for women to speak out of: 'Does the hysteric speak? Isn't hysteria a privileged place for preserving ... that which does not speak?' (136). Marked by either lack (silence) or excess (disorder and fragmentation), the speech of the madwoman seemed doomed to re-articulate notions of madness as difference in which sexual difference is the primary sign, and madness is the signified, collapsed into the term femininity. The figure of the madwoman comes to symbolise the lack of a speaking position (incarceration, silence, suicide, unintelligibility) that mirrors, rather than subverts, the psychoanalytic construction of femininity. The deconstruction of the madwoman as signifier through a range of tensions, divisions and splits in feminist theory echoes the very fragmentation of identity that occurs in hysteria. These tensions, Showalter has argued, can be read as a 'hystericisation of feminism' that has 'produced a widespread critical hysterisation of women's stories', but has also consigned hysteria to the 'wastebasket category of literary criticism' (56, 91). By the end of the twentieth century, the theoretical problem of unintelligibility in mad discourse had enclosed the madwoman anew, this time in an attic of feminist interpretation. This led to arguments that women's madness is 'untenable' in contemporary culture and feminist theorising (French, 247), and 'absolutely antithetical, at a fundamental level, to feminism' (Caminero-Santangelo, 179). Madness, then, is a failed protest, and a failed feminism. It does not work. It does not contribute to understanding. It gives up.

The figure of the madwoman so troubled interpretation that by the mid-1980s, it had led to a theoretical dead-end for feminist criticism. However, to offer a way out of this impasse, I want to make two important points. Firstly, I argue that women's madness does not signify a refusal or failure of communication, but rather a refusal of the codes of gender and power that culturally construct and delimit

normative femininity. In destabilising these codes, the madwoman's text reveals their very bipolarity. Furthermore, in the subjection of hysteria to rigorous feminist analysis, the critical madness project has delivered an important insight: the recognition that the signs and symptoms 'written' on the mad body contest oppressive meanings about femininity discursively produced by a sexist culture (Hunter 272). This has led to new ways of theorising the female body as a text of culture, which I turn to in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORISING THE MADWOMAN: GENDER, MADNESS AND COLONIALISM

Rethinking Gender: The Female Body as Text of Culture

When Simone de Beauvoir argued that 'one is not born, but rather becomes a woman', she pointed to the ways that being born female required women to produce an embodiment that could be universally 'read' as feminine (295). Constructions of femininity rest upon the mind/body opposition in Western philosophy, which feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz shows in *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* is predicated on the opposition between male and female. Poststructuralist feminist approaches have made the female body the object of sustained critical inquiry to identify and dismantle the powerful social codes and laws that incorporate and are incorporated by it (Weedon, 22-25). The terms of this intervention have been necessarily broad-based. As Felman has asserted, not only has madness 'preoccupied many different disciplines, but it has *caused them to converge, thus subverting their boundaries*' (*Writing and Madness*, 12: emphasis Felman's). Poststructuralists mobilise the argument that the under-theorising of gender in the discursive machinery of philosophy, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, science, sociology, political science, and history enacts the 'disciplinary practice' of patriarchal power (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*). The body has become *the* site of contestation in the intellectual project of feminist struggle, which is always (already) political, economic, and legal. The assignment of the female body to the position of devalued other is connected to the discursive formation of patriarchal power. Within patriarchal, or more precisely, misogynist, schemata, man is associated with mind, reason and rationality, while women are relegated to the

province of the body because they are ‘somehow *more* biological, *more* corporeal, and *more* natural than men’ (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies,* 14: Grosz’s emphasis). Importantly, constructions of the female body as *more* corporeal, *less* ‘clean and proper’, are not ‘natural’ products of the difference between the sexes, but of the meanings of these differences, and of how they have come to bear these meanings (107). It is important to note here that biological femaleness and maleness are separate and distinguishable from culturally constructed notions of masculinity or femininity, but that questions of ‘sex’ also shape constructions of gender. Therefore, while ‘sex’ is biological, gender is cultural, and sexual difference refers to the cultural meanings of anatomical differences in which sexual organs function as signs and signifiers of sexual difference (Grosz, *Space Time and Perversion*, 36; *Sexual Subversions*, 20). Furthermore, these constructions always take place in language, through a process in which a term is defined against that-which-it-is-not, and in reference also to another term. Grosz argues that dichotomous thinking not only structures the mind/body opposition, but also:

> necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace; the primary term defines itself by expelling its other and in this process establishes its own boundaries and borders to create an identity for itself. Body is thus what is not mind, what is distinct from and other than the privileged term. It is what the mind must expel in order to retain its “integrity”. It is implicitly defined as unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgment. (*Volatile Bodies*, 3)

Bodies, in opposition to minds, are ‘represented, even constructed, as frail, imperfect, unruly and unreliable, subject to various intrusions which are not under

conscious control', and it is this process of '(pseudo) biological' inscription, composed partly of essentialism, and partly of naturalism, that encodes femininity with and as corporeality, to justify women's secondary social positioning (13, 14). As Grosz points out in *Space, Time and Perversion*, feminist conceptions of body and psyche include the recognition that the body is 'always already sexually coded' and that 'the social and psychical significance of sexual differences are signified to it long before the Oedipus complex' (36).That is, the body is inscribed from the outside, and is accorded certain meanings based on its biological 'maleness' or 'femaleness'. Bodies can be understood as 'objects of power and sites of social inscription that are densely inhabited by psychic and social meaning', so that the process of social inscription 'produces subjects as *subjects of a particular kind*' while the meanings that bodies bear are culturally constructed in discourse (37, 32: Grosz's emphasis). The body is a textual, cultural and social 'thing', rather than simply a corporeal, biological 'thing', a text that speaks of its subjection and its incorporation of, and interpellation by, external laws and social scripts:

> The body becomes a text, a system of signs to be deciphered, read, and read into. While social law is incarnate, "corporealized", correlatively, bodies are textualized, "read" by others as *expressive* of a subject's interior ... Bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideas become incarnated. (34-35)

The female body is therefore a signifying and signified object that textualises the social codes that bind it within systems of patriarchal exchange at the same time that it is the site for resistance against these social codes. Following Grosz, who argues that there is no 'real' body that exists outside of historical and cultural

representations of the body, I understand the body as a sexed body produced by and within representation, and marked by cultural inscription in line with pre-existing cultural scripts and fictions that both constitute it and determine its meanings (*Volatile Bodies*, x).

In reconfiguring the body as a semiotic process and a signifying practice, feminist critics have opened up the intersections between body, nature and culture, to show how sexual difference is articulated by and articulates the discourses, codes, and laws of gender that construct it. Michel Foucault's contention in *Madness and Civilization* that 'the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness'(274) is mobilised in the feminist project that forces the world to question itself, and the gendered assumptions that underpin its social, political, and philosophical structures. Femininity, as Sandra Lee Bartky notes in 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power', is a set of regulatory practices encoded in a 'disciplinary project' that marks femininity both as a 'set-up' and an 'artifice, an achievement' that women master (139, 132).· This occurs through 'a mode of enacting and re-enacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh' (citing Butler, 132). Gender identity is understood as a theatre for producing culturally coded and sanctioned styles of 'femininity' that act as cultural scripts or fictions for women as gendered subjects to follow. Accordingly, as Judith Butler makes clear, gender is not hard-wired to the brains and minds of human subjects, but rather re-written through repetitive postures, practices, styles, and even costumes that constitute a bodily performance that consolidates into a gender over time, as a 'legacy of sedimented acts' that correspond to prevailing cultural ideas about what femininity is ('Performative Acts', 406). In 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', Butler argues that gender is an 'act' in accordance with a pre-existing social 'script' that has

always already been ‘rehearsed’, so that the repeated acts, stylistics, practices and expressions of gender establish and sustain a sedimentation of gender identity to produce an exteriority that aligns with and constructs the ‘social fiction of its own psychological interiority’ (410, 412). For Butler, gender is a ‘tenuous’ identity sustained by a ‘compelling illusion’ that only gives the ‘*appearance of substance*’, while the repetition of bodily acts that express femininity produces subjects as ‘authors’ of their gender, so ‘entranced’ by their productions that they cannot see them for the fictions and illusions that they are (402: emphasis Butler’s, 405). Producing a coherent gender identity comprises both a semiotic performance and a signifying practice that results in a more or less stable gender being discursively assigned to a particular body (*Gender Trouble*, 184). In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues that gender identity is ‘rule-bound’, gender being one of the sets of rules by which a ‘culturally intelligible subject’ is produced, with punishments and penalties attending people who reject these codes, scripts and rules (23, 178). In *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), Butler draws on Foucault’s theory of power to argue that subjectivity is also a form of subjection to these pre-existing scripts of gender and sex (87).[28] Where Foucault shows that power is exercised through a set of regulatory norms and disciplinary practices that people both internalise and enact, this disguises the extent to which people are *subjected* to the ‘micro-physics’ of power that operate upon human subjects (*Discipline and Punish*, 30). Power, in Foucault’s conception, is not simply power *over* bodies—that is, regimes of coercion to which bodies are violently subjected—but rather the proliferation of ideologies into which the human body is interpellated.[29] Ideologies of gender so saturate the

[28] Butler asserts that Foucault maintains the notion of the body as a materiality that exists prior to signification as a site upon which culture writes itself, *Gender Trouble*, 165-166. Following Butler, Elizabeth Grosz argues ‘it is problematic to see the body as a blank, passive page, a neutral “medium” or signifier for the inscription of a text’, *Volatile Bodies,* 156.
[29] I am drawing here on accounts of ideology in Althusserian Marxism.

human body that conforming to them appears 'normal' and 'natural', while the relations of power in which they are immersed remain largely invisible. As Antonio Gramsci would say, domination occurs by consent (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies*, 116). Susan Bordo contends that 'so much depends on the seemingly willing acceptance of various norms and practices' rather than on a repressive regime of gender norms to which women are forced to submit (92).[30] While some feminists have argued that Foucault's account does not account for the effects of patriarchal power (Bartky 146), contemporary feminist theorising has drawn on Butler's ideas about gender as a set of representational practices, showing how a Foucaultian theorising of power allows for an analysis of the realm of femininity as *constitutive* of female subjectivities. Bordo's essay, 'The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity', draws parallels between the production of female disorder and normative femininity, suggesting that the disorders to which women are vulnerable are both 'gender-related and historically localized', while their symptoms are forms of 'textuality' which have '*political* meaning': in each of these categories of female disorder, 'the body of the sufferer [is] deeply inscribed with an ideological construction of femininity emblematic of the period in question'(93). The disorders that women experience are culturally and historically specific, so that hysteria was a production of nineteenth-century conceptions of femininity, while eating disorders are a product of twentieth century conceptions. Accordingly, for Bordo:

> Strikingly, in these disorders, the construction of femininity is written in disturbingly concrete, hyperbolic terms: exaggerated, extremely literal, at times virtually caricatured presentations of the ruling feminine mystique. The bodies of disordered women … offer themselves as an aggressively graphic text for the

[30] The processes by which people 'willingly' consent to dominant ideologies and values are to do with the operations of power, which are both hidden and so widely institutionalised and normalised that they conceal their ideological origins.

> interpreter—a text that insists, actually demands, that it be read as a cultural statement, a statement about gender. (94)

If symptoms are a form of textuality, if female pathology is a strike against conventional and highly constricted modes for expressing the selfhood of people who happen to inhabit female bodies, then the mad body is a text. Disorder that writes itself upon the body of the madwoman both represents and testifies to the violence of the dominant ideology of gender that circulates in that particular historical and cultural moment. Gender writes itself upon the bodies of women, and for women accused of disorder, in languages of 'horrible suffering … as though these bodies are speaking to us of the pathology and violence that lurks just around the corner, waiting at the horizon of "normal" femininity' (Bordo, 97). Feminist psychoanalysis therefore decodes these languages of suffering, as well as the dominant codes of gender that the mad body simultaneously enacts and resists. Phyllis Chesler argues that insanity is a label that penalises woman 'for *being* "female" as well as for desiring or daring *not* to be' (in *The Female Malady*, 4). In addition, feminists recognise that disorders most commonly ascribed to women, such as 'histrionic', 'hysterical', or 'dependent' personality disorder approximate the expectations that attach to women's roles and constructions of feminine behaviour (Russell, 30).[31] Accordingly, a 'double standard of mental health for men and women' is reified by the medical-psychiatric profession and reinforced by 'patriarchal myths about femininity' (115). These sociological investigations of madness for 'real' women have led to important understandings that the categories themselves of 'women' and 'madness' are culturally, socially and discursively constructed, and that these cultural fictions take place in language. As Teresa de Lauretis pointed out in 1984, what constitutes understandings of *woman* is 'a fictional construct, a distillate from

[31] In *Women, Madness and Medicine*, Russell argues 'what in the West is generally regarded as the woman's role happens to coincide with what is regarded as mentally unhealthy', 30.

diverse, but congruent discourses dominant in Western culture', but women as material and historical beings 'cannot yet be defined outside of those discursive formations' (*Alice Doesn't*, 5). However, bodies are not to be understood as *tabula rasa* upon which discourses of power and gender are written, as bodies are also sites of resistance against the flows of social forces. Nor is it productive to assert that the subject is the author of the ideology or discourse that the body speaks. It is more useful to consider inscription as a two-way process: rather than gender simply being inscribed upon bodies, the body writes itself into those models that already circulate within the culture. This has unsettling implications for the construction of the subject as it is outlined in both (male) psychoanalytic theory and the feminist poststructuralist re-thinking of this.

Psychoanalytic Frames: Reading Abjection and Psychosis

Feminism intervened at the level of language, subjecting literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis to critical scrutiny to posit that the discursive construction of patriarchy was built upon women's absence or elision from the meta-narratives of male theorising,[32] except in psychoanalysis, where women provided Sigmund Freud's first human case studies. Elizabeth Grosz points to the development of psychoanalysis as a process in which 'Freud was indebted to a vocal if hysterical femininity', while 'Lacan's earliest researches in psychoanalysis relied on the fascinating discourse of "madwomen"—psychotics, paranoiacs, hysterics, mystics' (*Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*, 5-6).

[32] As Luce Irigaray notes in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 'Any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the "masculine" ', resulting in the female body being constructed 'as an object: of representation, of discourse, of desire', 133. Similarly, Cixous argues in *The Newly Born Woman*: 'Woman has always functioned "within" man's discourse, a signifier referring always to the opposing signifier that annihilates its particular energy'. Cixous, 'Sorties: Out and Out', 95.

Freud's work contributed to theories of the social production of subjectivity and therefore forms a useful point of intervention for feminists interested in the construction of gender and 'normative' femininity. Psychoanalysis takes the family as the crucible where identity is forged, and asserts that subjectivity is achieved upon the resolution of the Oedipus complex and the acquisition of language (Lacan, *Écrits*, 1-8). In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the 'universal' human subject is male: it is male infants who separate from the mother's body by recognising sexual difference, or at least by recognising sexual organs as *symbols* of difference, and positioning the mother's body as the 'other'.[33] Because the mother's body can no longer satisfy all the infant's needs, the child is impelled to speak its needs, and for Lacan, this takes place through the installation of the incest taboo and the imposition of the Law of the Father. Lacan further proposes that all identity is founded on a radical split between subject and object.[34] This recognition by the child of its image in the mirror installs a logic of difference in which the child understands its separateness in grammatical terms: 'I see myself'. Clearly, language is crucial in this process, even if the understanding is not yet expressed in speech. This logic of othering is not verbal, but rather a cognitive and sensory perception that occurs in the imaginary realm. The transition to the Symbolic order of language will solidify this perception and make it more concrete.

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[33] Lacan argues that *all* subjects inhabit a fragmented body in 'The mirror stage', but universalises the experience as a *male* infant's experience. Feminists critique Lacan's theory because it does not account for the female infant's processes of separation from the (m)other's body. Kristeva argues in *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, that the 'tremendous psychic, intellectual and affective effort a woman must make in order to find the other sex as erotic object' is far 'greater than what is demanded of the male sex', 30. Elizabeth Grosz argues the acquisition of language is structured on a phallic exchange as Lacan's third term is the phallic signifier. Grosz, *Sexual Subversions,* 15-20.

[34] Further experiences of splitting in the identity formation stages centre on the difference between the illusory image of wholeness that the child sees in the mirror, which is at odds with its own fragmented experience of its body as a 'body-in-bits-and pieces'. This is because infantile development is centred on different parts of the body at different times: for example, on the mouth (when feeding), or on the hands (when grasping a rattle).

The uses of Lacanian psychoanalysis for feminist theorising of subjectivity lie in his proposition that *all* identity is fragmented. Precisely because psychoanalytic approaches to subjectivity and identity are predicated upon literary models and devices, and on grammar, signs and symbols, feminist psychoanalysts have intervened in the role of language in constructing gendered identity. Feminists read the account of the oedipal struggle and its resolution as a *description* of the social and psychic process whereby the 'power relations of patriarchal authority, symbolized in the father, reproduce themselves in each new generation as a subjective sense of self is constructed' (Morris, 97). Much of this scrutiny is directed against the tendency in post-Freudian and post-Lacanian theorising to mark the feminine as pre-oedipal by situating the mother-infant dyad pre-borders, pre-language, and hovering on the edge of psychosis.[35] This logic turns on particularly patriarchal constructions of the feminine that align femininity with monstrosity, castration, and annihilation. For Irigaray, Lacanian psychoanalytic constructions reduce women to 'notions of void, of absence, of hole, of abyss, of nothing' ('The language of man', 142).[36] Margaret Whitford suggests in *The Irigaray Reader* that psychoanalysis 'perpetuates the most atrocious and primitive phantasies—woman as devouring monster threatening madness and death—that are an unanalysed hatred from which women as a group suffer culturally, bound into archaic projections which belong to the male imaginary' (25). This has been taken up in a range of feminist critiques. Butler explains that for men, the 'terror of being construed as feminine, feminized, of no longer being properly a man, of being a "failed" man, or being in

[35] This is particularly true not only of Lacan, but also of Julia Kristeva, who argues that women's separation processes are different because they separate from an object that is the same, and this poses 'psychotic risks' for female development, in 'A question of subjectivity—an interview', 136.
[36] Margaret Whitford argues that Irigaray's aim is to deconstruct psychoanalytic constructions of the figure of the mother as the catch-all precondition for femininity and the resulting 'obliteration of women *as women*', in *The Irigaray Reader*, 27. Similarly, Julia Kristeva contends in 'Stabat Mater' that femininity is collapsed into the term maternity and, in turn, into the category of Virgin Mother within Western Judeo-Christian traditions, so that women are locked into an impossible situation where male-defined femininity is unattainable, 99-118.

some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection' is installed in the 'logic' of the oedipal phase so that the repudiation of femininity acts as a precondition for the 'heterosexualization of sexual desire' (*Psychic Life*, 136, 135). For Butler, male heterosexual desire is characterised by a 'fundamental ambivalence' structured on the repudiation of the feminine that is simultaneously the object of his desire:

> Indeed, the desire for the feminine is marked by that repudiation: he wants the woman he would never be. He wouldn't be caught dead being her: therefore he wants her. She is his repudiated identification (a repudiation he sustains as at once identification and the object of his desire). One of the most anxious aims of his desire will be to elaborate the difference between him and her and install proof of that difference. His wanting will be haunted by a dread of being what he wants, so that his wanting will also always be a kind of dread. (137)

Within psychoanalytic frameworks, femininity is disavowed and relegated to a spectral space of abjection and repudiation. As Jessica Benjamin explains, gender differences in psychoanalytic models are established within a logic of disavowal and splitting off from the feminine that naturalises man's 'dread' of woman:

> It is not … that I dread her; it is that *she* herself is malignant, capable of any crime, a beast of prey, a vampire, a witch, insatiable in her desires. *She is* the very personification of what is sinister. (86: emphasis Benjamin's)

For Benjamin, the symbolic equation 'she is' rather than 'she represents' attests to a collapse of the boundaries between fantasy and reality, a collapse that signifies a psychotic inability to perceive the distinctions between reality and fantasy. Thus, patriarchal logic bears something of a psychotic taint, as the spectral image of castration, despite its claim to exist only at the level of representation and

signification, haunts male psychoanalytic accounts and spills over into the everyday lived experience of women.[37]

Psychosis is understood in psychoanalysis to constitute a collapse of borders between self and other, inside and outside, and a collapse of meaning. Psychotic states can be transient or acute and prolonged, but it is generally agreed that psychosis features hallucinations, delusions, and severe behavioural abnormalities such as paranoia.[38] Psychotic states feature disruptions in thinking and in the ability to use the linguistic code, such as an inability to correctly decode signs and symbols, or the over-determination of linguistic terms. The paranoid's 'logic' is testament to this. The notable feature of paranoia is the way that a delusional misreading can count for evidence of a 'truth', even though the assumptions that make up the theory, rules, and evidence that count for paranoid logic are understood 'from outside the space of paranoia, to which the paranoid is blind' to be blatantly false (Lucy, 13). In this way, the irrational is mobilised as 'evidence' that the paranoid's experience is 'real'. Meaning collapses under the weight of this over-coding, forcing conjunctions between signifier and signified. These linguistic disruptions testify to the psychotic's inability to distinguish the boundaries between self and other set up by the imposition of the incest taboo, so that the psychotic exists in a state of intolerable ambiguity in

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[37]Irigaray argues that male psychoanalysis attributes to women a desire that is interpreted and 'feared' as insatiable and voracious, circulating in the male Imaginary as a form of *vagina dentata*. This forms part of the largely insidious and invidious machinery of patriarchy, which remains un-interrogated in male psychoanalytic theory. Irigaray argues that psychoanalysis takes place in an 'empire of the Phallus' which forms a 'latent substratum' of 'the establishment of a society based on patriarchal power', in 'The poverty of psychoanalysis', 222, 219.

[38] World Health Organisation, *ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (Geneva, WHO: 1992). Psychosis is not a disorder in itself, but a feature of a range of mental illnesses, including schizophrenia and its sub-types, depressive disorders, bi-polar disorder and other mood disorders, and post-traumatic stress. Psychosis can also be brought on by alcohol or drug use, or withdrawal from these substances. It is identified primarily in the form of persistent delusions or hallucinations, such as the belief that one can control the weather, but also includes severe disturbances of mood such as intense paranoia. See entries F1x5 through to F44.9, 10-128, available: http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/bluebook.pdf While there are notorious problems of diagnosis and interpretation of symptoms inherent in such a guide, and in the most recent *Diagnostic and Statistician's Manual* (*DSM-V*) planned for release in 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association, my intention here is simply to arrive at a broadly agreed definition of what psychosis encompasses.

which boundaries simultaneously merge and dissolve, exist and are denied. This is particularly pertinent to the thematic lodestone of father-daughter incest that is alluded to in *The Man Who Loved Children*, but made overt in Grenville's works. Both Sam Pollitt and Albion Gidley Singer express a fear and dread of the feminine, suggesting that the masculine identity they uphold as 'natural' inheritors of patriarchal power is precarious and open to fragmentation. Both men use violent measures to subjugate women, and both men naturalise misogynistic constructions of the feminine, particularly by attributing voracious and uncontrollable sexual desires to women. The incest narratives in the three novels can be productively read against feminist psychoanalytic understandings of psychosis.

Psychosis is particularly important in the poststructuralist feminist project to appropriate and disrupt patriarchal assumptions that form the disciplinary practice of psychoanalysis. Theorising by Irigaray and Julia Kristeva in the area of psychosis, and in the possibilities and limitations for feminine subjectivities afforded by the deconstruction of the incest taboo, offer some ways forward. Irigaray's work on the idiolect of schizophrenics in *To Speak Is Never Neutral* takes up Freud's theory of the linguistic strategies of condensation and displacement in expressing manifest and latent content of dreams, which Lacan hitches to the rhetorical strategy of metaphor and metonym in his theory that the unconscious expresses itself like a grammar. In her analysis of linguistic strategies that reveal psychotic states, Irigaray situates the sign of the hymen in place of Lacan's phallic signifier. She argues that the hymen circulates within a 'frozen metonymy' that connects it to silence, or more precisely, silencing. Irigaray's use of the hymen seems an interesting way of proceeding with an investigation into silence as a disordered speech act given the contention that women have been silenced in Western culture. Irigaray further argues that linguistic disruption can 'represent a displacement of the hymen. It even presupposes that

displacement can become its unique placement' ('Sex as sign', 142). There is a correspondence between psychosis and the linguistic strategy of displacement, or metonym. Metonymy fuses meanings and concepts, acting as a structure of contiguity that obliterates difference, while metaphor maintains the separation between concepts. Irigaray's institution of the hymen in the psychic Imaginary offers a useful strategy to interpret the madwomen in these three novels as subjected to a political silencing through tactics deployed against them, such as incarceration in asylums, or more innocuously, in the Pollitt household, being constantly ignored, dismissed or drowned out by the domination of Sam Pollitt's constant speech.

Silence is not simply a lack or emptiness, but a space that shivers with the unsayable. It can be productively interpreted as a disordered speech act that contains and represses signs of sexual abuse which operate as its unspeakable unsayable 'content'. To locate the signifier of the hymen in a frozen linguistic economy of silence, however, ignores a second more important point underscored in Irigaray's contention that the hymen circulates in the order of metonymy. As I outlined above, metonymy is a feature of the psychotic's linguistic economy, in which meaning is so over-coded that the series signifier/signified collapses under the burden of disordered interpretation. The psychotic linguistic economy is manifest in linguistic excess, so it is tempting to read excessive speech as expressive of psychotic states. Henny's volubility and suicidal despair means it is possible to situate her in the realm of depressive psychosis.[39] Lilian's speech becomes increasingly disordered after her release from the asylum, so that her inability to use the linguistic system to correctly decode signs and symbols to interpret and order her world can be interpreted as symbolising a psychotic break with reality. Irigaray's reinsertion of the hymen into

[39] Psychosis in depressive disorders can precipitate suicide. It is observable (although likely to be concealed) in patients with depressive disorder who exhibit strong feelings that they deserve to be punished, and experience pathological guilt and intense feelings of worthlessness.

the Imaginary offers seductive ways to interpret women's madness, but it has a particular resonance for reading *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places*. The altered state that Lilian enters is caused by sexual abuse, a literal rupture of the borders between self and other, the breach of the hymen enacting a disturbing refusal of the incest taboo. The hymen here acts as a symbol of rupture, signifying the collapse of the borders between inside and outside mobilised in the psychotic economy. Albion's silencing of Lilian echoes both the rupture and the block of the vaginal lips, metonymically aligned with the lips of the mouth.

There are two ways forward here. Lilian's silence acts as a simultaneous refusal to avow the incest and as a signal to its presence and therefore signifies the collapse of boundaries that indicate psychosis, while the linguistic disturbances encoded in the restoration of her speech attest to a psychosis engendered by sexual abuse. However, a second and more productive reading of psychosis is also offered in Irigaray's deployment of the hymen. Albion's rape of Lilian refuses the borders that structure relations between self and other, between father and daughter. The breach of the incest taboo symbolises *his* inability to resolve the disjunctions inherent in infant-separation processes. He over-writes Lilian's version of events, having her committed to an asylum to provide the documentary evidence to support his construction of her as mad. Albion mobilises these 'facts' to testify that *nothing* happened. These facts stand in for, replacing and *in place of,* the intolerable reality of incest that threatens his dissolution, comprising a metonymic strategy that functions in the order of psychosis. By writing Lilian into madness, he displaces and projects it onto Lilian through a process of disavowal. Disavowal is implicated in the structures of psychosis, because it functions as a structure of simultaneous recognition and rejection: a spectral recognition that is repressed at the moment of its irruption,

comprising strategies of seeing and not-seeing, knowing and not-knowing, a form of haunting that threatens to un-do the subject if it is admitted into representation.

This has some parallels in Kristeva's theory of abjection, which advances a model for subjectivity that also regards *all* identity as 'provisional, and open to breakdown and instability' (Gross, 86). Her theory of abjection aims to re-situate the repressed maternal that is displaced in Lacan's account of the Law of the Father. The abject is defined 'as something rejected from which one does not part', but also 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules' (*Powers of Horror*, 4). Abjection is to do with bodily wastes and fluids, threatening the dissolution of borders because it is something from the inside expelled into the outside. Kristeva draws in part from Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger*: *An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, in which menstruation is aligned with defilement and 'dirt', while sperm, the specifically male sexual flow, is elevated to the status of non-polluting bodily fluid (cited in Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 205-206). Douglas argues:

> Dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt. It exists in the eye of the beholder. If we shun dirt, it is not because of craven fear, still less dread or holy terror. Nor do our ideas about disease account for the range of our behaviour in cleaning or avoiding dirt. Dirt offends against order'. (Grosz, 227, note 5)

Abjection underscores the tenuous illusion of stable subjectivity, as it is the process by which the subject constructs a reassuring perception that it inhabits a 'clean and proper body', but this requires constant reconstruction as it takes place against daily bodily reminders of the wastes that threaten bodily integrity (*Powers of Horror*, 3). The psychic process involved to sustain this sense of an orderly self is always threatened by a horror of dissolution that it must repress for its own survival.

While abjection structures all subject-formation, the model is predicated on the idea that 'psychotic risks' are more likely for women, a proposition that has been difficult for feminists ('A question of subjectivity', 135).[40] Kristeva is clear that the abject is 'above all ambiguity' (*Powers of Horror*, 9) yet women also occupy a privileged relation to the abject, and by extension, to the category of 'dirt'. As Grosz contends, Kristeva's theory of abjection:

> necessarily marks womanhood, whatever else it may mean for particular women, as outside itself, outside its time (the time of a self-contained adulthood) and place (the place definitively within its own skin, as a self-identical being) and thus a paradoxical entity, on the very border between infancy and adulthood, nature and culture, subject and object, rational being and irrational animal. (*Volatile Bodies*, 205)

While there is a tendency in Kristeva's theory to imprint women as the abject outside of a culture because they hover on the boundary between reason and unreason, 'on the edge of non-existence and hallucination', there are nevertheless some productive uses for feminist analysis (*Powers of Horror*, 2). Abjection draws from and echoes Freud's notion of the Uncanny, the psychic space of repression and banishment. The inscription of abjection onto women also inscribes a location that is a dis-location, a form of homelessness, a de-territorialisation: abjection is cultural (*Powers of Horror*, 2).

Parallels between the psychoanalytic account of gendered subjectivity and national formation processes can be drawn if we accept that women's oppression

[40] There are a number of problems for feminist theorising in accepting an increased danger of psychotic risks because it comes close to reinscribing the relation of femininity with madness and the body. Kristeva seems to reify this when she states that madness is 'an attempt by the subject to escape society and communication by taking refuge in a mystical state that can be extremely regressive and narcissistic', a state that she links to the repressed maternal. Judith Butler contends that Kristeva 'safeguards the notion of culture as a paternal structure and delimits maternity as an essentially pre-cultural reality' in *Gender Trouble,* 103. Both madness and the maternal in Kristevan theory *are* configured as pre-cultural, because they relegate women to a space outside, or at the limits, of communication.

within patriarchal cultures is the result of cultural encodings that imprint abjection upon the female body. This requires readings of abjection that unshackle it from a purely psychoanalytic injunction to recognise the ways that abjection functions culturally and socially to create categories of outsiders, such as women, the insane, convicts, the poor, or the colonised (Anne McClintock, 72).[41] In the discursive production of women's madness, and in the colonial production of 'race' as justification for the colonial enterprise, women imprinted with 'madness' and colonised people marked by 'race' have been consigned to categories of less-than-human and less-than-legible: in short, 'unpeople' (Chomsky, 'Unpeople'). In *Undoing Gender*, Butler elaborates on how these publicly available schemes of recognition act as a 'precondition for the production and maintenance of legible humanity', arguing that such schemes can 'undo' those who are not recognised, conferring upon them the status of not-human, or less-than-human. These readings of people as *un-human* (as opposed to inhuman) encompass 'race' and sexuality, and are 'bound up with the question of power and with the problem of who qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not' (11, 2). Such readings rely on a binary demarcation between knower and known as subjects and objects of discourse, reflecting and disseminating theories of 'race' that operate as enactments of white Western power relations between coloniser and colonised, and between men and women.

Anne McClintock's important work, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, investigates the relationship between 'race' and gender which was linked by ideas about degeneracy during the age of imperial

[41] McClintock argues that abjection 'is that liminal state that hovers on the threshold of the body and the body politic—and thus on the boundary between psychoanalysis and material history', 72. Furthermore, she argues that psychoanalysis seeks to 'expunge' certain elements from the family romance, including political formations, class, economics and female sexuality, therefore situating a dematerialised and a-historical self as the object of psychoanalytic inquiry.

expansion. She argues that fears of ‘contagion’ and ‘degeneracy’ were located in the female body as ‘the central transmitter of racial and hence cultural contagion’ (46, 47). Furthermore, the rhetoric of race collapsed into class and gender distinctions which were linked through a symbolic economy of ‘deviance’ in the imperial imagination (52-56). McClintock argues that these conflations are visible in Lacanian psychoanalysis, which not only dooms women to ‘remain in the Imaginary’ which is ‘to become psychotic, the condition of the madwoman, hair wild’, but also results in the ‘glamorization of Woman as primitive’ in the work of French feminists (193, 194). Discourses of ‘race’ and degeneracy contribute to this positioning, inflecting both the colonial enterprise and the contemporary theorising of madness. The mad were referred to as ‘idiots’, ‘imbeciles’, ‘lunatics’ and the ‘mentally defective’, with little distinction between intellectual disability and mental illness in the language of the day (Lee, 188-195). The nineteenth-century discourse of psychoanalysis was inflected by imperialist racial discourse in its conception of the Other, as both ‘sciences’ emerged out of the same moment in the post-Enlightenment Western intellectual tradition. For McClintock, Lacanian psychoanalysis of the mid-twentieth century ‘bears an uneasy affinity to the nineteenth-century discourse on degeneration, which figured women as bereft of language, exiled from reason and properly inhabiting the prehistory of the race’ (192-193). The languages of ‘race’ and the languages of gender converge in a discourse of ‘psychiatric Darwinism’ (Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 99). This iconography of ‘race’ comprises a textual silence alongside Lacan’s failure to analyse gender relations as power relations that engender male social privilege. McClintock contends that the relegation of women to the pre-Oedipal or ‘primitive’ zones of culture occurs within patriarchal codes of power that are intrinsic to the imperial enterprise:

> Pre-oedipal space (the space of domesticity) is naturalised by figuring it as anachronistic space: out of time and prior to symbolic history. Women's *historically* gendered relation to *power* is represented as a *formally* different relation to *time*: the imperial gesture itself. (193, emphasis McClintock's)

Importantly, McClintock notes that the 'formative aspect of modern industrial imperialism' is abjection, because the establishment of the colonial nation relies on the expelled groups (the colonised, prostitutes, slaves, convicts, the insane) which it simultaneously rejects, 'but cannot do without'(72). The psychoanalytic construction of women as the abjected outside of Western culture is also noted by Edward Said, who argues in *Orientalism* that discourses of race and biological determinism constructed the Orient as 'backward, degenerate, uncivilized and retarded' in a signifying economy that connected it to the abjected elements of Western society, identified in parentheses as 'delinquents, the insane, women, the poor' (207). Said's use of parentheses demonstrates the extent to which Western discourses of 'femininity' symbolically locate women as outside the nation in the signifying economy of exclusion and abjection.

The argument that imperialism encodes the psychoanalytic project, 'naturalising' race representation,[42] has a particular resonance for Australia. The historical constitution (and institution) of the nation is not only encoded as male, but also specifically encodes white men as the arbiters of nationality. The discursive production of national culture has abjected women by privileging 'national' narratives of pioneering masculinity, progress, 'exploration' and 'settlement'. These grand narratives of nation enact a politics of dislocation and un-belonging, an

[42] Far from being apolitical, psychoanalysis has been deeply implicated in gendering and racialising discourses, and therefore its 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' has been called into question, as has its silence on matters 'political'. An important critique of this is to be found in Indigenous theorist Jennifer Baker's work, 'Consciousness, Abjection and the Colonised Subject', *Theorising Survival,* 73-102 .

Unheimlichkeit that continues to haunt the national psyche. In the discursive frames and accompanying practices that produce the national, women have been located somewhere beyond its fringes. In the colonial context, where the female body is inscribed as the locus for anxieties about colonial dirt as the potentially penetrable site through which racial 'contamination' threatens the white nation, abjection is inscribed upon women through a discourse of colonial paranoia that is a discourse of white racism. This paranoia takes the form of a cultural psychosis that is enacted through the 'race' politics that structure national formation. These politics call the very legitimacy of the nation into question. Furthermore, there are significant differences between raced and unraced women in the intersections between 'race' and gender. The subordinated woman of white feminist theorising is not the subaltern of anti-colonial feminist theorising taking place in former or existing colonies (Spivak, 24-28). Colonised or First Nations women have problems that are to do with white women *as* colonisers beyond any problems of gender oppression that they might share within colonial patriarchal frameworks (Sheridan, *Along the Faultlines*, 166-168; Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the White Woman*, 180). Women in Australia are implicated in the discursive formation of 'race' through their relationship to colonisation, even as they are oppressed by the discursive operations of gendered power. Such insights require Australian feminisms that are willing to locate Australian patriarchy within the colonial project of white racial violence, bringing white women's implication in the scene of race relations into view.

Repression and the National: Australian Patriarchy and Colonial Psychosis

By taking up McClintock's call for a situated psychoanalysis (72) that aims to de-naturalise the family, I aim to make colonial relations visible in the production of a

white Australian patriarchy that takes place within the construction of an Australian symbolic. In recognising that the construction of an Australian symbolic is a white symbolic, Jennifer Rutherford argues there is a need to bear witness to the 'tyranny, the discursive privation, the symbolic limitations that have marked the white Australian relation to self' (206). The fantasies of nation, whiteness, and 'a continued cultural policing of the traits that metonymically carry the stain of difference', located in the culturally constructed categories of race and gender, frame Australian identity (Rutherford, 12). Australian identity comprises both the construction of national identity and the cultural context in which 'Australians' are constituted and produced. With this in mind, I turn to Anne Brewster's important insight that cultural 'amnesia' and an 'unspeakable' colonial memory of genocide form the repressed underside of the dominant fantasies and myths that frame contemporary understandings of Australian culture (2-3). The myths and fantasies of the white nation are central to my readings, for colonialism is the imprimatur of masculinist ideologies of gender that shape the experience of Australian women living to various degrees in a postcolonial patriarchal frontier culture. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra's important work in *The Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind* argues that women writers such as Stead, alongside feminist and Aboriginal critics, offer oppositional readings of the Australian dream (217-218). They argue that 'the dark side of the dream is the domain of repression. It is in that side—the forbidden, suppressed and "unspeakable"—that another cultural history is played out' (204). Hodge and Mishra contend that Australia's colonial history and the 'relations of domination' formed in that history comprise the 'unacknowledged secret' of the Australian dream, arguing that this can be read 'symptomatically' in texts. Therefore, feminist postcolonial psychoanalysis can be used productively to decode the project of the postcolonial enterprise and to uncover the repressed, split-

off aspects of Australian colonial history that constitute the 'Great Australian Silence' (Stanner, 198-248). As I argue in Chapter Three, these processes of repression contribute to the 'schizmogenic' character of Australian culture, whereby the violence of imperialism is simultaneously recognised and denied (Hodge and Mishra, 216). The 'shadow of a deep and complex secret that conceals and in this way constructs the true identity of Australians' is reconfigured as a 'cultural blank' that stands in for, and in place of, the 'presence' of real relations of gendered and racial domination, producing a schizophrenic Australian subject (217). This cultural blank covers over the presence of Aboriginal people, and allowed the legal and cultural fiction of Terra Nullius to proceed until 1992. Hodge and Mishra's noteworthy contribution is their argument that paranoiac and hebephrenic strategies are deployed in these processes, and that these can be traced in literary texts that oppose the production of the Australian dream (216-219).[43] While warning against mounting the sorts of readings that would reduce colonialism to 'a single, overwhelming force in Australian society, a universal meta-meaning lurking behind every text', they argue that writing such as Stead's charts a peculiarly Australian form of 'cultural pathology' in its challenge to the production of Australian patriarchy (217-218). Arguing that the charge of pathology does not mean that the nation 'should be declared insane' (217), they suggest that feminist writers link the construction of gender ideals proffered by the 'Australian legend' to this pathology: 'There is a double pathology here: pathologically deformed men and women. Pathologically unable to see that they are not as deformed as they think they ought to be' (212). Works of fiction by women writers re-work the Australian dream as

[43] One of the features of paranoia is a disturbance in the ability to correctly interpret the texts of others, so that hidden messages, which may only be visible to the receiver, are taken for 'fact'. Paranoiacs read deep and usually hostile hidden messages in subtexts of others, while the hebephrenic refuse to acknowledge any but the most superficial or literal meaning, so that a defining feature of hebephrenia is denial.

nightmare, resulting in characters ‘so traumatised by the catastrophe of being Australian that they cannot think or feel’, but this works to challenge dominant representations that position ‘the nightmare as normal’ (217, 218). In works by Stead and Grenville, the nightmare is projected onto the family as the bastion of all things ‘normal’.

Both Stead and Grenville chart the pathology of the family in different ways, and link them to the cultural politics of being Australian. Stead’s novel is displaced to an American setting, but nevertheless engages in a cultural critique of Australian gender and colonial politics. The pathology of the family is located in Sam Pollitt, whose distorted politics of world peace and world love in which he casts himself as the paternalistic father of all ‘races’ find their corollary in his resort to evolutionary theory to shore up his belief that women are inferior. In its critique of Eugenics embodied in the figure of Sam, the novel suggests that Louie’s murderous impulses are the logical outcome of a theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ applied to women. Grenville, in situating Lilian’s birth in 1901 at the formation of Australia as a federated sovereign nation, uses Lilian’s experience to engage in a wider cultural critique about women’s exclusion from the cultural histories privileged in official narratives of nation. The narrative of sexual violence that Grenville charts in *Lilian’s Story* and re-tells from Albion’s perspective in *Dark Places* offers a searing critique of gendered power in Australia, exploding the myths of colonial gentility enacted by the pathologically dysfunctional Singer family. Albion incarcerates Lilian to physically abject her as the reminder of an unpalatable reality that he cannot bear to admit, as this threatens his own psychological fragmentation. His personal psychosis is therefore emblematic of a wider cultural pathology in which misogyny circulates alongside racism as the nightmarish underside of the white Australian patriarchal fantasy.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that the novels counter the production of Australian national identity by framing male pathology in the pathology of colonial society. I trace the operations of colonial paranoia as a hyper-rational logic mobilised by Sam Pollitt and Albion Gidley Singer through discourses of eugenics and racial purity. Eugenics had taken currency in the American, European and Australian racial imagination, and exponents were keen to expound its benefits to deal with 'social problems', including homosexuality, disability, and mental illness. It found its home, of course, in the Holocaust of Nazi Germany, which began with state-sanctioned murder of the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill, and progressed to the attempted extinction of Jewish people, the 'ethnic cleansing' of Poland, and the attempted extermination of homosexual men and women. In Australia, the discourse of eugenics was applied to the 'problem' of Aboriginal people (Dodson 25-42), with the Assimilation project dreamed up in 1937 at the Native Welfare Conference establishing the goal to 'breed out' Aboriginality in three to five generations (Manne, 'The Stolen Generations', 53-63; Read, *The Stolen Generations*; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission).[44] The male characters of the novels act as proponents of eugenics, projecting their colonial paranoia onto the female body as the potentially penetrable site for racial contamination. The young women of the novels counter their fathers' tyranny by mobilising discourses of their own. These operate as *women's* discourses that both Sam and Albion try to drown out, trumpeting the 'facts' and 'logic' of their supposedly empirical and objective knowledges against any logical challenges the young women raise. The competing languages the daughters mobilise in the face of male power sustained by faulty male 'knowledge' are continually shouted down by fathers who resort to violent strategies

[44] Manne details the project of 'constructive miscegenation' to breed out the 'half-castes', who represented a site of considerable anxiety for the white nation. This led to formal policies of 'Assimilation' implemented by the so-called State Protectors of Aborigines, notably by the architect of the policy, Western Australia's 'protector', A. O Neville.

of patriarchal control to subjugate their daughters. Such tactics drown out women's voices, suggesting the limited cultural space available for women. The women's competing languages comprise *anti-languages* that operate as oppositional tactics against structures of patriarchal domination by which misogyny is sanctioned under the terms of the colonial enterprise. These languages not only symbolise the relations between dominant and subordinated groups, but are also 'emblematic of the cultural strategies of postcolonialism', occurring 'to express a new function: to express a continuing sense of otherness, which otherwise can exist only as a paranoiac projection outside the official version of the language and the nation' (Hodge and Mishra, *Dark Side of the Dream*, 205, 211). Postcolonial opposition is signified in the literary text through the evolution of anti-languages and anti-cultures that 'express and negotiate opposition'; a 'typical pattern in family life, marked by double forms, double messages and double-think'; and a 'paranoiac' consciousness that has a 'characteristic way of constructing and interpreting meanings' (204). These conceptual underpinnings offer new ways of understanding the texts, linking colonial paranoia in the national context to colonial psychosis in the individual context. This structures my analysis of *The Man Who Loved Children* in Chapter Three as a narrative that contests national identity through its critique of the Australian cultural formation of patriarchy.

CHAPTER THREE: NARRATIVES OF NATION: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND COLONIAL PARANOIA IN *THE MAN WHO LOVED CHILDREN*

> 'If I were autocrat of all nations,' with 'supreme power, the lives of all, the life of the world in my hands,' he told them what he would do. For example, he might arrange the killing off of nine-tenths of mankind in order to make room for the fit. 'This would be done by gas attacks on people living ignorant of their fate in selected areas, a type of eugenic concentration camp.'
>
> *The Man Who Loved Children*, 380

Introduction: The Postcolonial Christina Stead

Christina Stead's *The Man Who Loved Children* charts the ruin of the Pollitt family, trapped in marital bonds, subject to a tyrannical father and husband, the parents engaged in a bitter 'civil war', in a home that functions as a 'torture chamber'(45, 388). Culminating in a murder/suicide, the family exists in a 'terminal state of malfunction', operating as one of the 'seedbeds of pathology' that characterise all the families of Stead's fiction (Angela Carter, 256). Manipulation, depression, delusion, and family violence expressed in murderous impulses and suicide: this is Stead's bleak vision of the family, redolent in the vapours of the boiling marlin that foul the air and give the novel its particular flavour. Set in Washington and Baltimore between 1936 and 1938, the novel traces the rise and fall and rise of Sam Pollitt, elevated from the ignominious Baltimore slums to a position as functionary in the Maryland Conservation Council. Sam, a widower with a young daughter, Louie, embarks upon a disastrous second marriage to Henny Collyer, whose father is a

member of the Washington establishment. His career undergoes a meteoric rise when he becomes self-proclaimed 'leader' of the Anthropological Mission to the Pacific as a result of his society connections. His strategy of self-aggrandisement culminates in his sacking, and the family is forced to move from its 'lovely suburb' of Georgetown in Washington DC, to Maryland and the wrong side of Annapolis, where their new house at Spa Creek sits atop the stinking Eastport mud-flats. This circular trajectory is also a downward trajectory, as the family descends from shabby genteel respectability to increasingly squalid unemployment, amid increasingly vicious screaming rows. This escalating marital conflict precipitates Louie's attempted murder of her parents, rationalised through taking up Sam's discourse of Eugenics as a form of 'natural' selection to ensure the 'survival of the fittest'. Henny's constant threats to kill all the children or to kill herself are finally enacted, as she knowingly drinks the cyanide-laced tea Louie has prepared for both her parents, and dies, writhing in agony on the kitchen floor. These are women in extremity: one is driven mad, while the other refuses to be. The novel is about the madness of the everyday, as Randall Jarrell's famous introduction makes clear: it makes us 'willing to admit the normality of the abnormal—willing to admit that we never understand the normal better than when it has been allowed to reach its full growth and become the abnormal'(6). Gothic in tenor, gargantuan in scope, grotesque in its representation of the skewed dimensions of nuclear family life, and tragic in outcomes, Stead's novel is in many ways about the madness of and in the patriarchal family, and about what options exist for women to resist it and escape it. For Henny, it is suicide; for Louie, it is matricide.

The Man Who Loved Children's vivid portrait of a decaying marriage is structured by a loose, episodic framework that represents the texture of daily family life through a series of scenes: where marital tensions erupt as Henny defends herself

against Sam with a breadknife (176); where Sam forces the children to listen to Henny giving birth (303); where Louie tunes out during one of Sam's pontificating 'lectures', filling her notebook with exhortations for him to 'shut up, shut up, shut up' (372). Sam and Henny only ever directly address each other in tirades of rage, using their children as intermediaries to 'speak' for them in the lull between the violent storms that punctuate their daily lives. The novel reads like a concerto for raised voices, in which Sam and Henny shout each other down, each insisting that their version of reality is the real one. Arguments simmer throughout the novel, escalating into vicious quarrels, suggesting the cyclical nature of family violence. The characters are composed through dramatic monologues, their various languages acting as versions of competing ideologies, claims and counter-claims, as the marriage degenerates into a bitter power struggle. These techniques convey the psychological tenor of family dysfunction through a series of impressions that coheres into a formal realism (Angela Carter, 257), creating a textural (and textual) imprint that readers conceivably accept as bearing some direct relation to reality. These formal elements posed problems for critics and readers, leading Randall Jarrell to assert in his introduction to the text that it had been a 'failure both with critics and with the public' at the time of its publication in 1940 (36). This was in part because reviewers relegated it to the literary ghetto of domestic fiction, but many critics noted how difficult it was to read, with one reviewer commenting that it 'violates the decorum of women's novels, organic unity, and verisimilitude alike'(Margaret Harris, 'Christina Stead and her critics',11). While critics are divided about whether Stead's novel is realist, expressionist or naturalist in form and technique, there is agreement that the novel's form echoes the 'shape' of nineteenth-century realist novels, which were initially published in instalments in literary periodicals, resulting in their notorious reputation as loose baggy monsters. For example, Jennifer

Gribble's review of the critical literature points out that many readers have described Stead's fiction as linguistically 'excessive' and structurally 'formless' (3). As Angela Carter notes in her famous essay, 'Unhappy families', Stead was both 'a great novelist … and a bad writer':

> [As] a composer of narrative, she can be amazingly slipshod … Her narrative is almost *tachiste*: she composes it like a blind man throwing paint against a wall. Her novels shape themselves, as our lives seem to do. (255).

Despite the varied criticisms of Stead's stylistic techniques, Margaret Harris in her introduction to *The Magic Phrase* contends that *The Man Who Loved Children* did receive acclaim and qualified praise from critics who recognised the 'scale of its achievement' as a 'study in the drama of family life', with one reviewer reading it as 'a novelisation of Engels' *Origin of the Family'* (11), picking up on Stead's communist politics. Terry Sturm reads it as a political novel, foregrounding its critique of the social and economic relations that structure the institution of marriage (89-116). Feminist criticism has pointed out the political, social, economic, and cultural critiques that mark Stead's work, noting that her concern with oppression and injustice is really a concern with power, and the power relations that govern the social, economic and political relations between men and women is patriarchy. In all Stead's fiction, the female characters rebel against patriarchal discourses of femininity: Catherine in *Seven Poor Men of Sydney*, who commits herself to an asylum; Tessa in *I'm Dying Laughing*, grotesquely fat and out of control, laughing in the face of death; and Henny Pollitt, ceaselessly ranting against her lot in life. Each of these characters is outside 'normative' femininity in some way, challenging bourgeois codes of gender. By 1972, *Time* reviewer Martha Duffy noted *The Man Who Loved Children* was a 'lonely precursor of the new irate accent in fiction', constituting 'one of the most virulent portraits of male delusion and domestic agony

ever created' (in Harris, 20). Its theme of domestic tyranny has led to it being situated as an example of the female or domestic Gothic, partly due to its imagery of the grotesque, but within a broadly realist tradition influenced by nineteenth-century forms of the novel (Lidoff, 23). It has also been positioned as a subversion of the female *Bildungsroman* due to its critique of marriage and the family (Kegan Gardiner, 'Male narcissism', 145-162). Such readings mark the beginning of a feminist reclamation of Stead, and a re-visioning of her work, particularly after her death in 1983, culminating with the *Journal of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature's* special issue in 2003 of critical essays to mark the centenary of Stead's birth in 1902. Such critical re-assessments of Stead's work led Jonathan Franzen to assert in his famous essay of 2010, 'Re-reading *The Man Who Loved Children*', that it was especially 'confounding' that the novel 'has failed to become a core text in every women's studies program in the country' (np).

While few critics have read *The Man Who Loved Children* as a novel of women's madness, feminist critics such as Susan Sheridan have demonstrated that Stead's central concern is with 'disorderly' women, 'social rebels and outlaws', the sorts of women Virginia Woolf might have called 'eccentrics' (Sheridan, 8). Stead herself felt that:

> behind the concept of women's strangeness is the idea that a woman may do anything; she is below society, not bound by its law, unpredictable; an attribute given to every member of the league of the unfortunate. (in Sheridan, 9)

If the social contract centralises and naturalises patriarchal oppression, it also imprints women as 'outsiders', locating women at the periphery. This does not mean that the marginalised are wholly powerless, because as bell hooks argues, positions on the fringes make power visible in new and different ways (xvi). Such locations are also locations of possibility, the possibility to resist, to challenge, and to disrupt the

operations of power. By refusing the terms through which patriarchal authority installs itself as a 'natural' feature of the social 'order', Henny and Louie are both outlaws of a kind, disorderly subjects who refuse to be interpellated into social relations of gendered power. In seeing that the novel questions the psychology and 'logic' of the patriarchal order, many critics have advanced readings of the psychopathology of the oedipal family 'romance' as the basis by which gendered relations of power conceal their ideological origins. Psychoanalytic interpretations of the novel variously position Louie as taking up a feminine oedipal resolution, or refusing an oedipalised position of female subjection, (Boone, 537; Ken Stewart, 117-132), culminating in Teresa Petersen's contention that Louie operates as an anti-Oedipus figure of resistance to patriarchal dictates sanctioning compulsory heterosexuality(20).[45] Psychoanalytic critics recognise the damage inflicted by the patriarchal family on its most vulnerable members, the women and children who are tied to it by marital, sexual, and filial bonds. For example, Angela Carter argues that Stead's articulation of family life represents:

> families in a terminal state of malfunction, families you must flee to preserve your sanity, families it is criminal folly to perpetuate—and, on the whole, Stead's women eschew motherhood like the plague ... These are degenerated, cannibal families, in which the very sacrament of family life, the communal meal when all are gathered together, is a Barmecide feast at which some family member, wife or child, is on the emotional menu. (252-253).

[45] Petersen draws on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattarì's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which posits the schizophrenic subject as the most resistant to the effects of power, arguing that 'the psychotic is the one incapable of being oedipalised, even and especially by psychoanalysis', as Mark Seem's Introduction makes clear, xxiii. However, Deleuze and Guattarì's tendency to glorify schizophrenia as a form of political protest and disruption of the totalising power of the state also deracinates it from actual material, social, political, and historical roots. Their glorification of madness re-inscribes it as province of the female in culture because their universalising of an unsexed Becoming-Woman figure ignores the power relations of gender and how these play out on the bodies and lived experience of actual women.

Cannibalism is visible firstly through the submerged incest narrative, with Sam's increasingly controlling incursions into Louie's room, her private thoughts, and her psyche operating as a strategy of 'incestuous engulfment'(Kegan Gardiner, 150). Joseph Boone argues that Sam's attempts to control Louie take on an 'increasingly sexualised' tenor of 'erotic domination' (525). Secondly, Sam's linguistic strategies also operate as metaphors for cannibalism: he 'devours' the children by focusing on their faults, or attempts to seduce them into taking his side against their mother by deploying child-like registers to ensnare them in his world-view (Carter, 256; Walker, 122), or simply dominates the household with his incessant 'talk, talk, talk, talk, talk' (171). These strategies enact forms of cannibalism because their excessive reach engulfs the household.

The conflicts between Sam and Henny and between Sam and Louie occur through a narrative movement of rhetoric and rebuttal, linguistic ploy and counter-ploy, so that, for many critics, the recognition that various languages figure in the novel, but none feature common speakers, has been a useful node of critical inquiry. For example, Sam 'called a spade the predecessor of modern agriculture, [Henny] called it a muck dig: they had no words between them intelligible' (167). These are languages that have to be learned, decoded, and interpreted. The characters are either drawn into other people's linguistic fields to become complicit in their constructions, or forced to create counter-languages of their own to resist them. Most critics read Louie's languages as a strategy of resistance to Sam's increasingly derailed attempts to control her. For example, Kegan Gardiner proposes that Louie's rejection of her father's 'seduction' is 'empowering', as she appropriates 'patriarchal language and literary tradition to her own needs'(156), while Shirley Walker considers Louie's ideas and speeches as 'directly antithetical to Sam's point of view'(127). Several critics have focused on these linguistic strategies to shed light on the narrative of

male madness that runs through the novel. Judith Kegan Gardiner argues that Sam's slippage into and out of child-like registers shows that his 'psyche is still embroiled in the developmental tasks of infancy', concluding that he exhibits features of a 'narcissistic personality disorder'(151). Shirley Walker excavates Sam's various languages of sentiment, artifice, tirade, and philosophical abstraction to argue that he seduces his children into taking his side against Henny, and that the movement between registers indicates the extent to which his speech has lost touch with reality (125). Sturm points out that Sam has 'two distinct personalities that are ultimately incompatible' (99), suggesting that the contours of mental illness reside in this split. Joseph Boone considers the elisions, distortions and interruptions in Sam's speech that reveal his 'distorted' and 'hallucinatory' view of reality (522, 523). Others consider Henny's state of mind as revealed by her linguistic strategies. Walker argues that Henny's language marks her as 'excessive' and 'histrionic' (120), linking her to popular constructions of women's madness in which feminist rage is reconfigured as depression and despair, a rage turned inward against the self. Sturm disputes any suggestion that Henny's speech reveals a victim-mentality (100), arguing that she resorts to aggressive verbal counter-attack as a measure to retain some autonomy in the face of Sam's 'consuming' egotism (101). Tellingly, Carter argues that the terrifying families of Stead's fiction are 'killers', a 'gallery of monsters' so violent that they:

> precipitate suicide and madness in those who come close to them … The mouths of these grotesque nodding carnival heads are moving all the time as they rage, bluster, cajole, provoke, enlightening us to what bad faith does. (258)

Jane Smiley concurs, proposing that both Sam and Henny 'grow beyond dysfunctional, neurotic and even psychotic until they eventually become simply, irreducibly, hugely themselves, as beyond help or even diagnosis as King Lear or

Prometheus' ('Dangerous excess'). Such readings have situated the novel primarily as a feminist critique of the patriarchal family and the processes by which it naturalises and normalises unequal gendered relations of power, paying scant attention to the Australian practices and discourses of white racism that underpin Sam's pathology. In part, as Louise Yelin notes, this is because Stead's decades of expatriation emerge in her work, marking her as a writer of 'exile' and 'displacement', rather than a writer working at the intersections of the 'colonial and postcolonial' condition that mark the 'post-imperial' moment of Australian federation after 1901 (*From the Margins of Empire*, 3, 1).[46] Yelin suggests that the uneasy and multiple sites of national identification that emerge in Stead's fiction have posed conceptual problems for critics who have struggled to place it either within an American or an Australian women's literary tradition, and that as a consequence, its racial politics have remained under-theorised ('Fifty years of reading', 496).[47] However, new readings of the novel can be mobilised in response to cultural and historical shifts, those 'accidents of geography and history' that provoke new understandings of Australian writing (Yelin, 474). While her subject is certainly the 'pathology of Australian families' (Hodge and Mishra, 214), I argue that Stead lays bare the pathology of the family as a metaphor for the violence of the colonial enterprise, connecting it to the postcolonial condition.

[46] Yelin suggests that Stead's national identity, marked by decades of expatriation, meant she was considered neither American or British, nor Australian. This emerges in her work, marking her as a writer who holds multiple categories of unstable national identity. Yelin recognises that the marginalisation of white women within the framework of patriarchy in the former colonies nevertheless implicates them in the colonial order of race relations, 5.

[47] This continues, despite readings such as Shirley Walker's that consider Sam's embodiment of Social Darwinism. Walker argues, problematically, that Henny's suicide enacts and dramatises Sam's discourse of social Darwinism, and this demonstrates her recognition that she is 'unfit' to survive, in 'Language, Art and Ideas', 131, 121.

Postcolonial Theorising and the Pathological Family

Reading *The Man Who Loved Children* as a metaphor for a deep-seated pathology at the heart of Australian cultural constructions of patriarchy inflected by discourses of racial and female degeneracy is made more complex because the novel is set in America. Whether at the request of her publishers, or whether to shield Stead's family from the novel's autobiographical content (Brydon, 11), the displacement to America poses a problem for a postcolonial psychoanalytic reading. However, the novel is also deeply autobiographical, recounting Stead's difficult childhood growing up in Sydney in a large step-family. Accordingly, it is informed by and comments on the Australian cultural context of the first two decades of Federation, even as it displaces the setting to America in the 1930s (Yelin, *From the Margins of Empire*, 19). The discourse of 'race' that underpins Sam Pollitt's worldview also reflects a concern with Australian applications of eugenics, and connects the two nations, which were engaged in assimilationist projects at similar times and informed by similarly eugenicist theories. Both nations had federated and instituted the break from the imperial host. Furthermore, both nations were concerned as 'settler' nations to establish a national presence that overwrote indigenous[48] occupation, although in the United States, slavery had also created a Black American population that was subjected to different regimes of racial oppression and subjugation. Australia, however, had its own forms of slavery, through the 'blackbirding' project which stole indigenous people from Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and other islands in proximity to develop the cane sugar industry on the East coast. However, the terms by which this was constructed, coming after the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, was that people stolen from the islands were placed into a form of 'indentured

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[48] I use the non-capitalised term 'indigenous' to signify the global context, in accordance with contemporary Australian protocol, which recommends that 'Indigenous' with a capital 'I' should be used to refer to Aboriginal communities in Australia.

labour', trading their labour for their keep. Furthermore, under the State Protection Acts which were in place from the 1860s until the 1970s in Australia, Aboriginal people were removed from families and communities to work in the Australian pastoral industry, with many girls being placed in white homes as domestic servants, while young boys were placed on stations as stockmen. Again, this was organised as a form of 'indentured labour', with payment consisting of rations of tea, flour, sugar, and tobacco, with monies held 'in trust' by the State Protection boards and state authorities such as the Queensland Department for Native Affairs. Few Aboriginal people ever saw these monies, as the 2006 Stolen Wages Inquiry found (Rosalind Kidd).[49] Stead's relocation of the story to America in the 1930s need not necessarily pose a problem for reading the novel as a critique of Australian culture, as patriarchal colonialism took similar forms, and racial politics were played out in similar ways in both nations. Reading the novel as a critique of Australian nationalisms, and the particular gendered formations that arose out of these cultural nationalisms provides for a provocative re-reading of the novel that disinters these repressed racial politics. In order to advance this reading, it is important to theorise the emergence of the Australian nation as a set of cultural inscriptions.

Benedict Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities' illuminates the extent to which taking up, or having, a nationality is founded upon building a set of identifications with the nation, culminating in a sense of belonging to it. Anderson's proposition that the nation is imaginatively constructed as a 'deep, horizontal comradeship' suggests that the nation accords citizenship along similar lines to familial relationships (16). However, the unifying image of the 'national family' elides inequalities in power and belonging for those presumed to have a weaker

[49] The Senate Inquiry into Stolen Wages produced the report Unfinished Business: Indigenous Stolen Wages in December 2006, finding that fraud, mismanagement and theft had occurred and the funds were misused to fund state infrastructure, especially in Queensland.

identification to it: those not born here, those who do not share in its Anglo-Celtic origins, those who exist at the periphery. Anderson's conceptualisation of the nation as a 'fraternity' also suggests that nationality is a gendered concept, constructed on the centralisation of maleness (16). The processes by which constructions of national identity in Australia have symbolically excluded women have been demonstrated by numerous feminist critics, who have suggested that Australia was both a gendered idea and a site for the performance of gender, through which national identity is imagined and brought into being as male. Having, or doing, a nationality centralises the relationship of white men to the nation, constituting women and the colonised as ex-centred and extrinsic to it. Nationalism therefore figures as a form of 'neurosis' in Anderson's formulation, a form of 'pathology' in the development of the nation-state, as the terms by which this 'national family' is constructed are underpinned by processes of abjection and exclusion (5-7). Furthermore, as Anne Brewster makes clear, dominant constructions of nation have relied on a cultural 'amnesia' and an 'unspeakable' colonial memory of genocide that is the repressed underside of these dominant fantasies and myths of Australian culture (Brewster, 2-3).

Postcolonial theorising in Australia has suggested the contours of a 'cultural pathology' by which non-Indigenous Australians privilege narratives of 'settlement' while denying the race-based violence of colonialism (Hodge and Mishra, 214). These narratives have persisted as powerful cultural fantasies of national unity, despite legal and political debates about the legitimacy of Australia established in and by the imperial enterprise which have raged since 1788 (Reynolds; David Carter, *Dispossession*, 12). I trace the emergence of this pathology, showing how it constitutes a particular kind of Australian subjectivity that can be traced in the literary text. The founding moment of nationality in place of the former colonies is haunted by a series of spectral displacements in the movement from colonial to

national. The occupation of the territories that became ‘Australia’ by the colonial subject displaces, radically removes, and erases the prior occupation of the Aboriginal peoples as the original inhabitants. The logic of colonialism proceeded as if Australia were an ‘empty land’, while the prior claims of Aboriginal peoples and the realities of frontier violence were ‘actively “disremembered” and suppressed’ (Carter, *Dispossession*, 70). Aboriginal people were the presence that was reframed as an absence in the foundational fiction of *terra nullius* that persisted until 1992.[50] A heightened paranoid logic was mobilised in the discourse of colonialism, in which Australia was configured as the *vacant* site for the introduction and transplantation of British imperial values in the form of colonial subjects. These subjects had to protect the emergent nation from a potential racial annihilation emanating from *inside* its borders in the form of a supposedly militarised Aboriginal people, who did not officially exist under the fiction of *terra nullius*. Policies of ‘Protection’ and Segregation were instituted to suppress the ‘threat’ posed by Aboriginal people, culminating in the project to ‘breed out’ Aboriginal people altogether under the euphemistic banner of Assimilation. Under the auspices of various State Protection Acts, Assimilation policy targeted ‘mixed race’ children whose Aboriginality was already diluted—and ‘improved’—by the introduction of white blood (Read; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission). Thus, eugenicist practices were normalised through a discourse of colonial paranoia.

[50] The 1967 Referendum granted Aboriginal people the right to be counted in the Census, thereby conferring a form of Australian citizenship and statehood upon Indigenous Australians, but also had the effect of diluting claims to Aboriginal sovereignty, which was never ceded in the absence of formal Treaty documents. Aboriginal sovereignty remains a contested zone of Australian nationhood. Limited legal recognition of Native Title has been established by some claimants in the lead-up to, and in the wake of, the 1992 High Court *Mabo* decision which extinguished the legal fiction of *terra nullius*. The *Mabo* case recognised Eddie Koiki Mabo’s claim that that the Meriam people’s traditional ownership of Mer Island in the Torres Strait had not been extinguished by non-Indigenous settlement.

Colonial paranoia was also projected onto Australia's neighbours. In part, this occurs, as Walker argues, because Australian nationhood is characterised by a schizophrenic split between its cultural formation as an outpost of British imperial culture and its geographical location in the Southern seas, surrounded by 'Asian' neighbours who threaten the (white) nation with 'invasion' and 'racial annihilation' (David Walker, 5, 4). The first Act of the Australian Parliament in 1901 was to ensure that non-white migrants were actively prevented from gaining entry to the nation, a situation that persisted until the abolition of the White Australia policy in 1972.[51] These strategies constitute a 'rite of passage into a genuine Australian identity which is marked by endemic paranoia' (Hodge and Mishra, 218). This paranoia underpins the operations of an Australian cultural pathology that can be traced in *The Man Who Loved Children*. There are obvious parallels between the dominant narrative of national formation, which turns on the nascent Australia struggling to break free of Britain as coloniser, and the literary conventions of the *Bildungsroman* form of the novel. The *Bildungsroman* traces the protagonist's 'troubled quest for identity' from childhood to adulthood (Baldick, 24) offering a useful strategy for analysing the processes by which national identity is constructed. The construction of national identity does not simply consist of geopolitical acts of demarcation, but also comprises processes of cultural inscription that use literary modes, techniques and devices. These forms of meaning-making comprise official histories, myths of origin, and national 'characters' that represent the Australian 'spirit' (Carter, *Dispossession*, 3-22). Furthermore, as the *Bildungsroman* fictionalises the psychoanalytic account of identity formation, it can be used to trace the moments where normative development goes awry. In the hands of political writers like Christina Stead, the *Bildungsroman* form is appropriated and subverted

[51] The White Australia Policy is the name by which the *Immigration Restriction Act* (C'lth) 1901 was informally known.

to suggest the correlations between the family and the nation as sites for the proliferation of a distorted national culture predicated on a psychology of abjection and repudiation.

The distortions inherent in a nationalising culture are charted by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra, who contend that the postcolonial condition in Australia, instituted with Federation in 1901 with the break from England as imperial host, is marked by internal fissures. These fissures are the repressed underside of the unified state, the repudiated spectres of colonial violence upon which the nation is brought into being. With Federation, the moment of inscribing an Australian *national* identity independent of the former *colonial* frame also produced a recurring motif of a postcolonial Australia, as the former colonies were transformed through new national frames. It is important to note here that the national relationship to imperialism does not disappear in the split generated by the break from Britain as imperial host in 1901, but remains as its repudiated abjection, the repressed underside of official national culture threatening to irrupt into consciousness. A totalising fantasy—the nation—is projected as an illusory phantasm of unity, much like in the Lacanian account of subject formation, where the integrity of the subject is haunted by the spectral possibility of its own fragmentation. The psychoanalytic account of subjectivity as a totalising fantasy sustained by repressive strategies mirrors the unifying strategies of the nation-state. The 'steady state' attempts to neutralise and contain internal conflicts through a range of 'schizmogenic' repressive ideologies and unifying practices mobilised to repress counter-forces that threaten its dissolution into a schizophrenic modality (Hodge and Mishra, 216). The various legal and political challenges that have been mobilised to contest the legitimacy of white Australian possession demonstrate the extent to which Australia as a

nationalising structure is riven by internal fissures.[52] In the nation forged in colonisation, these take the form of oppositional forces, *anti-colonial* forces that must be contained for the fantasy of white possession to be sustained as a unifying practice. Thus, national identity hinges on a 'trick of continuity' projected against cultural forces that haunt the Australian national psyche (Hodge and Mishra, 218). The pathological contours of this naturalising trick can be identified by paying attention to the strategies of repression required to sustain the fantasy of national unity. Hodge and Mishra suggest repression is the 'dark side' of the Australian dream:

> The dark side of a dream is the domain of repression. It is in that side—the forbidden, suppressed and "unspeakable"—that another cultural history is played out ... An unacknowledged secret that recurs throughout this "dream" ... is Australia's colonial history and the relations of domination formed within that history. [T]his pervasive fact ... helps to account for many otherwise inexplicable regularities of Australian cultural forms. These regularities provide the basis for delineating something that is characteristic and identifiable as 'Australian', at the same time as we recognise that there is no unique essence of Australianness, but a set of qualities which are found, in some form, in many other postcolonial societies. (204)

These qualities include paranoiac and hebephrenic strategies, which can be traced in Australian cultural forms, particularly in narratives of the dysfunctional family, where 'power [is exercised] through a system of double messages mingling the punitive with kinds of repressive tolerance in an indistinguishable mix' (218). The 'characteristic Australian paranoia' produces a troubling 'excess'

[52] For example, the Letters Patent of 1836 to establish the colony of South Australia contains detailed instructions about the rights of Aboriginal people to continue to occupy their lands, and precludes them from sale as public, that is Crown, lands. Furthermore, it provided for compensation to be paid to Aboriginal people in return for any lands claimed by the Crown. See Henry Reynolds, 'The Rights of the Soil', *Frontier*, 146-147.

by reframing Australians' worst fears as glowing ideals (218, 217), particularly through the use of double messages that construct the eugenicist intentions of Assimilation as 'protection'. In addition, white Australians have 'vested interests' in wilfully refusing to see through these double messages to acknowledge the injustices inflicted on Aboriginal people, adopting a 'rigorous policy' of hebephrenic denial (218). Hodge and Mishra argue that these schizophrenic cultural forces produce an identifiable Australian subjectivity, shaped by 'contradictions', 'polarisations' and 'dangerous ambiguities', while the family normalises the pathological strategies that allow for socialisation into the Australian dream (216).

Hodge and Mishra argue that Stead's use of 'antilanguages and anticultures' to contest the dominant culture, a pattern of family life marked by 'double forms, double messages and double-think', and the mobilisation of a 'paranoiac' consciousness connect the novel to the postcolonial condition (204). Refusing the terms by which the dream is constituted as 'normal', Australian writers such as Stead rework it as an Australian 'nightmare' projected onto the family, the dysfunction of the pathological family enacting the 'skewed' and 'distorted' mechanisms by which Australian subjectivity is constructed (218). Australian subjects so 'traumatised by being Australian that they cannot think or feel', who exhibit 'flattened affect', paranoia, and hebephrenia, enact symptoms of the wider cultural pathology played out on the national stage, including the gendered and racial formations which symbolically excise women and Aboriginal people from the national frame (217). I argue that *The Man Who Loved Children* locates the repressed 'dark side' of the Australian dream within the family, both representing the 'nightmare as normal' and questioning the psychopathology that renders it so.

The deforming family of origin stands as an emblem for the psychopathology of the imperial enterprise.

Locating the pathology of the family of Australian women's literary culture as a symptom of the psychopathology of the imperial enterprise offers a way forward, if the family is read as a site for the reproduction of Australian values. The family is figuratively aligned with the nation through the domestication of colonial space and the construction of a new Motherland for the colonial inheritors of the imperial project. As I argued in the Introduction, the Australian symbolic emerges as a figurative familial order, compressing and projecting nationalism onto the family as the trope for the social order (McClintock, 357). Anne McClintock argues that the iconography of the family was instrumental to national formation processes:

> Since the subordination of woman to man and adult to child was deemed a natural fact, hierarchies within the nation could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. The metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial—the "national family", the global "family of nations", the colony as a "family of black children ruled over by a white father" depended in this way on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children within the domestic sphere. (357-358)

She further argues that women are constructed within these emergent nationalisms as 'inert, backward-looking and natural', figuring as 'nationalism's conservative principle of continuity' so that nationalism is 'managed as a natural relation to gender' (359). In other words, gender and race relations of power are disguised as natural facts in the production of colonial patriarchies which install men as the regulators of social order. In this way, the (white) family's privileged relation to national/colonial relations of power depends on constructions of the colonised as 'child races' in need of paternal control, while women as vessels for the furthering of

the white nation are subjected to rigorous policing of their sexuality through their confinement to domestic space. In addition, women's political relation to the nation occurred only indirectly through their social relation to men through the institution of marriage, leading to the particularly skewed constructions of women within official Australian narratives of nation as passive, partial and supplementary to men as its active agents, its builders. The intersections of nationalism, colonialism and sexism proliferate in the uneven distribution of power in which women are marginalised to maternal and reproductive roles in the nation-building project.

This encodes the gendered performance of national identity which, as Judith Butler would argue, is effected through the 'naturalising trick' of gender (Lennon, Section 5.1, 'Performativity and the materiality of the body'). The gender regime within Australian culture has been reinforced by the construction of an 'Australian legend', which, as Miriam Dixson has made clear, constitutes a myth of national identity that relies upon a 'special style of masculinity ... that reeks of womanlessness' (*The Real Matilda*, 24). These myths of origins not only abject women from the symbolic landscape, but also encode certain performances of masculinity and femininity as normative. This contributes to a particular construction of manliness that has its origins in the Australian colonial context, producing a hegemonic masculinity that men are interpellated into in order to be read as authentically male. These sanctioned ways of being men turn on the production of a masculinist mythology in which male pioneering, frontier heroism, and a democratic spirit of egalitarianism are elevated to a set of national values in the figure of the larrikin as the protector of the white nation, as Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend*

makes visible.[53] The white nation in the colonising context is always already threatened with annihilation by a racialised other, a threat that emanates from both within and without Australian borders. The control men exercise over women is reframed as the 'duty' white men are burdened with to ensure the protection of white women in the wilds of the colonial frontier (Carter, *Dispossession,* 385). Thus, women's powerlessness is inscribed as a form of idealised femininity against which colonial manliness and control of women's sexuality is reframed as protective paternalism. As Dixson points out, these normative performances of gender comprise a 'con' played out against both men and women, in which authentic ways of being *people* are encoded as authentic ways of being *men* (*The Real Matilda*, 15). These colonial cultural norms produce 'pathologically deformed' gender ideals that are replicated within the family structure (Hodge and Mishra, 216). For Hodge and Mishra, the sorts of 'double messages' and 'double-think' about power and identity inscribed within this masculinist legend are symptoms of a 'cultural pathology' played out from the macro- to the micro-levels of the social strata (218). The cultural pathology of the Australian colonial framework is relocated and compressed into the zone of the family, inflecting the patriarchal family structure in which men are invested with excessive power as the patriarchal inheritors of the colonial project. The family as the unit of Australian national formation acts as the site where the gendered relationship to white national identity is performed.

Taken together, these theoretical underpinnings offer the beginnings of a theory of the operations of colonial psychosis in the production of national identity. Working in the post-Apology environment in which Australia stumbles in its

[53] Numerous feminist critiques exist alongside Miriam Dixson's in *The Real Matilda*. For example, see Ann Curthoys, 'Mythologies', where she argues that the production of these myths and legends displaces Aboriginal narratives of survival.

progress towards Reconciliation,[54] I argue that the novel situates madness as an emblem for colonial disorder. Taking up Hodge and Mishra's argument that Stead opens up the discourse of colonialism by using 'anti-languages' as 'instrument[s] of resistance'(215, 209), I argue that the women characters not only oppose patriarchal forms of power and subjection, but also contest the discursive production of national identity. Louie and Henny use language to resist patriarchal codes of representation, while Sam distorts discourses of natural selection that position white men as the figurative embodiment of civilised humanity. These different languages and ways of speaking reveal a particular shaping of gender and 'race' relations. Sam's language is encoded by the sorts of eugenicist 'double-talk' and 'double-think' circulating in the 1930s Australian Imaginary, linking him to a psychotic linguistic economy of over-determination. His abuse of women and children is rationalised in the high-flown rhetoric and brute indifference of Eugenics through which he introjects the paranoid fantasies that underwrite Australian processes of national formation. I go further than other feminist critics who have considered Sam as unstable by arguing that he enacts a distinctively *colonial* form of psychosis. His conviction that he can telepathically access Louie's thoughts, that he can control the weather (313), and that his work in radio broadcasting marks him as a 'second Christ' (371) are emblems for the excessive power men are endowed with in the colonising context. His relegation of women 'into the slime' (161) of abjection, his fear of the female body and its capacity for reproduction, his prurient interest in Louie's emerging sexuality, and his

[54] Prime Minister Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations on behalf of all Australians on 13 February 2008 to recognise past wrongs committed by successive Australian Governments is undermined by the Northern Territory Intervention, which suspended the *Racial Discrimination Act* (C'lth 1975) on its inception by the former Liberal Government in 2007 under the auspices of the *Northern Territory Emergency Response Act* (C'lth 2007). The incoming Labor Government allowed the Intervention to continue despite international condemnation. The policy has been reframed under Labor's Close the Gap initiatives, but opinion is still sharply polarised in Australia about the extent to which such policy can be seen to support Australia's 2009 signing of the United Nations International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Important critiques of the progress towards Reconciliation in Australia can be found in *Coercive Reconciliation*.

construction of Henny as a 'hysteric' (72) are forms of colonial misogyny sustained through constructions of women in the discourse of colonial paranoia as the abjected underside of culture. Henny's language, vivid and vile, connects her to the abject, suggesting the ways that women internalise these patriarchal fantasies. This reading offers a critical re-assessment of existing readings of the narrative of male madness in *The Man Who Loved Children* that locate Sam as an agent of patriarchal control. The operations of colonial paranoia leach into the familial context of *The Man Who Loved Children*, forcing Louie to take extreme action to escape the nuclear family holocaust.

Who's Afraid of Marriage? Colonial Gender Ideals and The Abjected Feminine

Stead vividly represents the implications for women trapped in destructive marriages through their corporeality and their inscription into cultural performances of gender. Henny's narrative trajectory both replicates and subverts dominant constructions of the hystericised female body, culminating in her wilful suicide. Henny is Sam's second wife and Louie's stepmother, has five other children, and will become pregnant again in the course of the novel's events. It is Henny's role as a mother that defines and encloses her, as her position as household drudge and child-bearing machine connects her to the maternal function. She is referred to by the children as 'Mothering': her identity is writ large in the present continuous form of the verb 'to mother', suggesting that her work is never done. This role, the active engagement in tasks related to caring for children, is separate from Henny, the woman, whose desires are thwarted. The family lives at Tohoga House, which represents the patriarchal order as it is leased from her father. Henny understands that although 'she was a prisoner in it, she possessed it. She and it were her marriage' (45). The

marriage is described in a language of extremity, its 'flesh' 'heavily veiled' by 'living cancers of insult, leprosies of disillusion, abscesses of grudge, gangrene of nevermore, quintan fevers of divorce, and all the proliferating miseries, the running scores and thick scabs' that form the 'thousand storms of [Henny's] confined life' (45). It takes a vivid language to represent an extreme experience, and Henny's marriage is certainly that. The household exists in a state of raging 'torment, an endless conflict' (58), in which Henny is 'condemned' to live out a 'life sentence' (45). The following passage is representative of the marital conflict, escalating to the point where Sam strikes her, and Henny retaliates by slashing Sam with a breadknife:

> You took me and maltreated me and starved me half to death because you couldn't make a living and sponged off my father and used his influence, hoisting yourself up on all my aches and miseries … boasting and blowing about your success when all the time it was me, my poor body that was what you took your success out of. You were breaking my bones and spirit and forcing your beastly love on me: a brute, a savage, a wild Indian wouldn't do what you did, slobbering around me and calling it love and filling me with children month after month and year after year while I hated and detested you and screamed in your ears to get away from me. (170-171)

Exploited and abused, diminished to the degraded status of child-bearer and household slave, she feels that marriage and maternity have delivered her into a 'torture cell' (119). This way of viewing the world is directly connected to all women's experience: 'it was not Henny alone who went through this inferno, but every woman' (47), situating Henny as the site for a critique of gendered relations of power. Henny is under no illusions about life and what it means for women, and her willingness to see the world clearly, in all its misery and squalor, is marked by a sense of realism:

> Henny was beautifully, wholeheartedly vile: she asked no quarter and gave none to the foul world, and when she told her children tales of the villainies they could understand, it was not to corrupt them, but because for her, the world was really so. How could their father, said she, so fool them with his lies and nonsense? (48)

Henny is aware that Sam's world differs markedly from her own because his is shored up by patriarchal fictions which construct power as democratically shared between 'good' men and 'good' women:

> Sam their father, had endless tales of friends, enemies, but most often they were good citizens, married to good wives, with good children (though untaught), but never did Sam meet anyone out of Henny's world, grotesque, foul, loud-voiced, rude, uneducated and insinuating, full of scandal, slander, and filth, financially deplorable and physically revolting, dubiously born, and going awry to a desquamating end (48).

Archetypes come into play in this polarised world. Sam constructs Henny as 'witch' (50), 'outlaw' (72), and 'half-mad tyrant' (71), explaining away her complaints as the inexplicable rantings of a 'hysteric' (72). Henny represents Sam as the 'Great I-am' (191), a 'dirty, bloodless hypocrite'(497), and a 'fanatic' (77) full of 'insane puritanical ideas'(384), whose appeals to natural science and philosophy disguise a profound determination to uphold male privilege by placing women in the biological service of the species:

> He talks about human equality, the rights of man, nothing but that. How about the rights of woman, I'd like to scream at him. It's fine to be a great democrat when you've a slave to rub your boots on (123).

The children are pawns in this miserable game: Ernie reads adults as 'irrational', caught up in a 'strange Punch-and-Judy show' (71) where each parent

tries to get the children onside. Louie understands that Henny was once ‘a beautiful, dark, thin young lady’ dressed in ruffled silk (70), who has degenerated into the ‘half-mad tyrant’ of Sam’s construction, but concedes that ‘perhaps there was something to say on Henny’s side’ (71). The children recognise that:

> their father was the tables of the law, but their mother was natural law; Sam was household czar by divine right, but Henny was the czar’s everlasting adversary, household anarchist by divine right (70-71).

This family constitutes the perfect storm for women entrapped by sexual and marital bonds, its violence normalised, its everyday terrors confusing and damaging for children who must negotiate a minefield that threatens to explode into physical violence at any moment.

Henny shrieks, complains, laments and rails against the injustice and oppression of her situation. Her speech is vivid and vile, marked by an imagery of the grotesque that links her to the world of the body and of defilement. The effects are achieved through a sensorium of smells: ‘over-scented, stinking’ girls who ‘smell like a tannery’, or look ‘like a lily’, but smell like ‘skunk cabbage’, and workmen who stink of ‘sweat’ (47). Henny is resolutely part of this bestial world, reptilian in her appearance, her face ‘burnt olive’ with a ‘huge eyeball in its glove of flesh, deep-sunk in the wrinkled skull hole’ (44) and yet apart from it, detached and observing. For Henny, the world is peopled by characters like the:

> dirty shrimp of a man with a fishy expression who purposely leaned over me and pressed my bust, and a common vulgar woman beside him, an ogress, big as a hippopotamus, with her bottom sticking out, who grinned like a shark (46).

Outside the house is ‘a moral, high-minded world’ for men, and a ‘stinking’ world full of ‘fish-eyes’ and ‘crocodile grins’ and ‘mean men crawling with

maggots' for women (47). Henny's imagery of squalor and abjection suggest how jaundiced her experience of being a woman has made her, experience that is located in the body. For Henny, a woman's lot, tied in as it is with childbearing, constitutes the 'darn muck of existence' (155). Henny's correlation of her daughters to animality, slime and filth acts as a commentary on the destiny of women to end up as breeders and bearers of children, a prospect that is associated with foulness. Many of her tirades are directed against Louie, whom she describes as a 'sullen beast', who looks like a 'boiled owl', with 'a fat belly' and a 'dirty dress', a slovenly 'beast' who 'reeks with her slime and filth' (125), fit only to 'marry a drunkard' (52). This signifying economy applies also to her 'general servant' Aunt Jo, 'a great blond beast, deaf, dumb and blind to all but self, self, self' (132). There is an element of disgust in this relegation of women to the body and the effects that it is capable of producing. This is what has enslaved Henny, after all. Although she thinks of marriage for the girls, she also views femininity as 'rotten luck. Isn't everything in life rotten luck? When I see what happens to girls, I'd like to throttle my two, or send them out on the streets and get it over with' (194). She says this at Monocracy, where the women's talk in the kitchen is of women who have got into 'trouble', and then found that the men will not marry them or help them to procure an abortion: Barry's cast-off mistress drinks iodine in a suicide attempt; Henny's father abandons his wife and fourteen children to take up with a mistress; her lover Bert abandons her; Sam exploits her. For Henny, 'all men are dogs' (192). Henny then outlines the many ways she has thought of to kill herself in a passage reminiscent of Dorothy Parker's 'Gas Smells Awful', which suggests 'you might as well live', even if it does mean another fifty years of the 'Great I-am', Sam, who she fears will 'try to talk [her] to death' (191). Henny knows that it is men 'holding all the aces' (72) in a world she reads through a lens of filth and foulness.

Henny's grotesque imagery locates her firmly within Kristeva's notion of the abject maternal. Abjection is what is repressed within the processes of subjectivity, 'ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated' (*Powers of Horror*, 1). It is not outside identity formation, but foundational to it. Abjection 'disturbs identity, system, order', operating as a threat of dissolution that must be repressed to preserve the fiction of bodily integrity (4). Abjection hovers at the borders of psychosis to circulate within the psyche as a form of spectral haunting. Kristeva argues that women are represented as a form of abjection in the oedipal structure of identity, because abjection is to do with bodily wastes and fluids. Bodily fluids threaten the subject's sense of wholeness, because they emanate from the borders of the body, moving between inside and outside. Thus they remind the subject of its bodily threshold, and of the possibility of dissolution. The subject is therefore haunted by a dread that it is a 'waste', an excremental or 'menstrual' object jettisoned from the maternal body, something from the inside expelled into the outside (53, 77). Some of these bodily fluids, such as pus, phlegm, or menstrual blood, represent 'dirt', 'dangers, sites of possible pollution and contamination', while others, such as tears or breast milk, are 'clean' or purifying (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 195). Kristeva argues that in the Biblical framework, which acts as one of the foundational myths for the production of Western cultural conceptions of gender and identity, 'man's defilement' is incurred 'by what *emanates* from him, rather than by what enters', and is associated with 'guilt' (Kristeva, 117: emphasis Kristeva's). Following Sartre, she contends that 'sperm', although belonging to the borders of the body, has no 'polluting value', unlike menstrual blood or excrement, and therefore it is not associated with shame belonging to defilement or impurity (71). It is not contaminating. Thus men have a privileged relation to the 'clean and proper' body because women are regarded as 'a

kind of sponge or conduit of *other men's* "dirt"' (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 197). The correlation of women with abjection as both the source for and the site of impurity and defilement hinges on the penetrability of the female body, its very permeability posing dangers.

These take on a cultural dimension in colonial patriarchal societies, because the female body's capacity for regeneration also casts doubt on the 'gestative status' of the father, whose contribution is 'uncertain and fleeting' (McClintock, 29). The only means possible to compensate for this uncertainty is to reduce women to the status of 'vessels and machines—mere bearers' of children, while elevating patrimony, the power to name, as the guarantee of fatherhood through 'surrogate birthing rituals' such as baptism: 'the child must be born again and named, by men' (29). The female body is signified as the *imprimatur* of abjection that must be purified by men:

> if someone personifies abjection without assurance of purification, it is a woman, "any woman", the "woman as a whole"; as far as he is concerned, man exposes abjection by knowing it, and through that very act, purifies it.
> (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 85)

Within this logic of sexual difference, abjection exists at the outer limits of culture as the fragile and unstable border against which identity stakes its claim. Women are installed in the locus of abjection as a 'radical evil that is to be suppressed', an 'asymmetrical, irrational, wily uncontrollable power' that 'male phallic power' must protect itself against (70). Phallic power regulates and controls female sexuality by sanctioning heterosexual marriage as the site for the practice of sexuality that would promote the social order (Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 103-111). In the Australian context, this is particularly necessary as women are inscribed with an overdetermined relation to racial hygiene through their symbolic relationship to blood and bloodlines. Abjection is doubly imprinted onto women as the locus for

potential racial contamination, so that racial anxiety converges upon the female body as a target and anchorage point for the operations of colonial paranoia, resulting in a particular coding of women as doubly on the side of dirt. These encodings structure Australian patriarchal forms of power, in which women are symbolically excluded as the repressed abjected underside of official national culture.

For Kristeva, locating woman as the site of abjection is a representational process, and is not enacted in the sexual relation. However, it is problematic to suggest that sperm is purifying. As Elizabeth Grosz notes, this relies on a gendered cultural codification:

> It is not the case that men's bodily fluids are regarded as polluting and contaminating for women in the same way or to the same extent as women's are for men. It is women and what men consider to be their inherent capacity for contagion, their draining, demanding bodily processes that have figured so strongly in cultural representations, and that have emerged so strongly as a problem for social control. (*Volatile Bodies*, 197)

Therefore, I propose that the process by which women come to be aligned with abjection, and as its locus, takes place within the sexual act. I argue that because sperm is jettisoned from the body, it is a corporeal waste, an excess, and it is therefore abject, rather than purifying. In the sexual act, men ejaculate an abject into an abject, so that women both embody abjection, and receive men's abjected sperm. Correspondingly, the process by which the terms 'impurity and defilement' are attributed 'to the mother and to women in general' (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 100) is connected to the process by which women receive men's shame, guilt and defilement. The process by which men institute fear of the female body is the process by which men project their abjection onto—and into—the female body. Kristeva here offers the beginnings of an explanation for women's secondary positioning in

patriarchal cultures, but like Mary Douglas, does not take into account the gendered models and templates that structure the account of women being associated with dirt and waste.

I argue that Henny is aware of these gendered templates that align women with the abject, and that she both embodies and internalises the Australian cultural positioning of women as abjection. For Henny, sperm pollutes: it brings children, who represent squalor and filth through the drain on her resources and the family finances, consigning Henny's body and her life to the reproductive role ordained in the biologically determined 'rotten luck' of being born a woman at a time before oral contraception allowed women some control over their bodies. For Henny, biology really is destiny. Furthermore, her own language reflects her relegation to the zone of abjection, concerned as it is with the 'muck' of women's existence signified by blood and babies that connects the female body to 'slime'. Henny's speech is fuelled by an alternately murderous or suicidal rhetoric, threats of 'infanticide, suicide or arson' (82). Her common refrain is 'I ought to put us all out of our misery' (57), but she also threatens infanticide: 'I'm going to kill them all, I'll kill them all tonight, I'll pour that stinking oil on fire down your throat and kill my children, you won't get them' (497). Divorce is not an option, as children are viewed in the contemporary legal framework as the property of the father, and Henny's sense of entrapment revolves around this power imbalance: if she leaves, she loses the children. For Henny, there is no way out. Clearly driven to her own demise by the fear that she really cannot 'bear the daily misery' (410) that her married life inflicts on her, Henny knowingly drinks the poison Louie has prepared for her, in a passage that resonates with images of vengeance. This makes Henny a willing accomplice in her own murder, rather than a suicide:

> Then she said slowly, "You beast, you pair of beasts, my womb is torn to pieces with you—the oil is everywhere and your dirty sheets falling on to me to suffocate me with the sweat, I can't stand it anymore—she's not to blame, she's got guts, she was going to do it—she's not to blame, if she were to go stark staring mad—your daughter is out of her mind—" Sam looked at Henny with hatred. "All right," said Henny, "damn you all".
>
> She snatched the cup and drank it quickly, a look of horror filling her as if she would have stopped herself but could not arrest the motion. (504-505)

The narrative of Henny's suicide revises the dominant narrative of female suicide of the nineteenth-century imagination as the product of a lovelorn melancholic femininity. In Stead's hands, the female suicide is a logical if tragic outcome of a ceaseless power struggle between men and women, borne in the female body enslaved by the generative powers of reproduction that Sam has forced upon her. Although Stead implicates Louie in the narrative of interrupted parricide, the narrative of women's madness usually symbolised by the female suicide is displaced on to the madness of patriarchal power, and the excess of rationality and delusional sense of masculine entitlement that upholds it. Stead therefore relocates the female suicide in the tradition of Antigone and Cleopatra as a *political* act of heroic self-sacrifice, rather than simply the depoliticised act of a care-worn woman suffering a depressive mental illness.

Henny's suicide recalls Irigaray's reading of Clytemnestra, which she argues demonstrates the extent to which Western cultural structures of patriarchy are built on the sacrifices of wives and daughters (in Whitford, *The Irigaray Reader*, 25). Stead therefore connects the lived experience of women in the domestic sphere to the structures of patriarchal power that are enacted upon the bodies of women. She resists the psychoanalytic construction of the female hysteric, whose powerlessness

finds its expression through a body language of resistance, the only resistance available to her in the gendered confines of the culture. Unlike Norah in Grenville's fiction, who resembles the female hysteric in her listlessness, increasingly fading into paleness and silence under Albion's tyranny and sexual cruelty to finally vapourise, Henny actively and knowingly drinks the poison, knowing this is her only way out of the daily hell that is her marriage. While Henny internalises and embodies the relegation of women to the abjected zones of culture, Louie will resist these colonial patriarchal injunctions through her enactment of the Kristevan imperative 'matricide is our vital necessity' (Kristeva, *Black Sun*, 27). Although Henny kills herself, Louie is the catalyst for her suicide: it is she who puts the cyanide in Henny's way. By performing such an act, Louie refuses the social norms and mores that constitute the accepted form of compliant femininity in 1930s America and Australia, as she has learnt from Henny the price to be paid for being a woman under these restrictive gender regimes. In this, she resists the dominant form of patriarchal sovereignty that structures national identity as a province of white male superiority and control.

The 'Natural' Order: 'Race', White Supremacy, and Colonial Disorder

The novel contests national identity by linking the Pollitt family to the polity, the body politic that constitutes the nation. Sam is a career bureaucrat, a biologist who is connected to the operations of the polity through his job as a government biologist. He is a 'careful, fearful' man, 'all for health, sanity, success and human love' (82), who wishes for a 'moral, high-minded world' (47) in which dominion over women and children is a product of men's 'natural' authority. His worldview is dominated by images of men as autocrats in a lineage that upholds masculine authority all the way back to God and in God's image, Adam, conflating the religious discourse he rejects as a believer in evolutionary biology with a discourse of God-given masculine

entitlement enshrined also in biology. He believes that he embodies the principles of evolution and that his rise to a government position from his humble beginnings as a bricklayer's son has been gained by virtue of hard work and superior intellect (54). Sam is the archetypal patriarch whose tyranny, based in 'facts' and 'truths' of his own devising, creates a delusional alternative reality in which he rules, positioning himself variously as God (245), the Great White Father (105), and Uncle Sam (515). He elevates himself to these positions of masculine authority because he enjoys wielding power, and when he is appointed to the Anthropological Mission to Malaya, not by virtue of his achievements, but through being connected to Henny's father, David Collyer, he experiences it in terms of power: '"By Gemini", he thought, 'this is how men feel who take advantage of their power' (54). His ultimate desire, however, is 'to taste supreme power' (54), expressed later in the text through totalitarian ideals to be the sort of 'natural leader' embodied by 'a Stalin or Hitler' (361).

Sam's self-imposed place in the 'natural' order of white male power is supported by lofty pronouncements, sinuous and elliptical leaps of logic, and a Darwinian rhetoric of biological weakness which he mobilises to shore up his belief in male power. Men are installed in their 'rightful' positions as the 'natural' inheritors of the colonial enterprise. Sam internalises the racial logic of colonialism to position himself as the embodiment of white male superiority. His racism expresses itself through his desire to:

> penetrate into the hearts of dark, yellow, red, tawny and tattooed man [so that] they can be brought together … by their more advanced brothers into a world fellowship, in which all differences of nationality, creed, or education shall be respected and gradually smoothed out (84).

This is actually a discourse of white male supremacy, in which white men are configured in the racial hierarchy as more 'advanced'. Sam's desire to obliterate the differences between peoples of the Earth by breeding out these differences connects him to the Australian project of Assimilation. Australian 'race' relations have been marked by a paternalistic discourse of 'Protection', in which Aboriginal people were removed to missions and reserves, based on a belief that they would, by virtue of a supposedly inherent racial inferiority, die out. The 'extinction' of the Aboriginal 'race' was apparently an inevitable outcome of biological and racial evolution and survival of the fittest (Reynolds, 'Savages', 121-126). The discourse of scientific racism reframes colonial violence as 'natural' selection, while ignoring the extent to which natural selection was artificially assisted, often at the point of a gun, and furthermore in the poisoning of waterholes and rations. It was therefore the duty of the civilised white man to 'smooth the dying pillow', a common refrain that is echoed in Sam's text. However, scientific racism gave way to the eugenicist program of social Darwinism because, far from dying out, the Aboriginal population was growing in a way that gave fuel to fears about miscegenation and racial 'contamination'. Racial hygiene was a 'problem' for late nineteenth and twentieth century Australia, and was marked by efforts to control women's sexuality and reproduction in the conflation of family planning, social policy and eugenics. Therefore, fears of white racial 'suicide' drove government policy as the Protectors of each State, influenced by eugenics, argued for an Assimilation policy to control the Aboriginal population. This became official government policy at the Native Welfare Conference of 1937, although its implementation was delayed until the late 1940s by the advent of World War Two. This policy attempted to achieve what natural selection had failed to bring about: extinction. It was therefore attempted genocide, framed by a discourse of paternalism, and activated under an institutional

regime of Protection.[55] The discourse of kindness, love and good intentions that marks the defence of the Assimilation project by some sectors of the critical commentariat in Australia constitutes a hebephrenic strategy of 'double-think' to reframe racial violence as a form of 'tolerance'. This wilful misrecognition of the shared history of colonial violence against Aboriginal people is a strategy of colonial psychosis, in which the real story is over-written and reframed to position whiteness as virtue. Sam reframes the violence of the eugenicist project through a hyper-logic of good intentions, situating eugenics as 'for the good of the genus, indeed of the natural order' (84). By this logic, Sam naturalises the racial violence of white supremacy. His relationship to national identity therefore marks him with the stain of imperial violence, which is both epistemic in its construction of other 'races' as less 'advanced', and ontological in its aim to make other 'races' 'un-be' (W.H. Stanner, in Manne, *Whitewash*, 2).

Sam's paternalism is also expressed in his desire to be the father of all races, wishing he 'had a black baby too. A tan one, a Chinese one—every kind of baby. I am sorry that the kind of father I can be is limited' (237-238). That this is a doctrine of white racism is revealed when he suggests to Naden that his people are 'children', who must be 'taught', affirming his belief in his own racial and cultural superiority. Naden replies that light-coloured people may think themselves 'Heaven-born', but it is the white man who is 'a child', an 'accident' who appeared from 'some little crack in the earth'(241). Naden undercuts Sam's racism, but this does not stop Sam feeling

[55] The genocide argument has precipitated a virulent debate, known as the History Wars, led by Keith Windschuttle and Geoffrey Blainey, who have attacked Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics, historians and political scientists of the Left for having a 'black arm-band' view of Australian history. This has prompted Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics to respond that Australian history is marked by 'white blindfolds' and a concerted attempt to 'whitewash' Australia's history of racial and colonial violence. Key texts of the debate include Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803-184,* and *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History, Volume Three: The Stolen Generations 1881-2008*. Counter-texts include Robert Manne, ed., *Whitewash,* and Bain Attwood, *Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History*.

that 'these childhearted people took him for something next to a god' (245). Evidently, the blind spot in his vision reaffirms him in his belief in his 'natural' authority and superiority as a 'civilised' white man, deployed to Singapore to retrieve the local people from their backwardness. As father of all 'races', his dominion would be absolute. The eugenicist theories that frame Sam's sense of himself as the paternal obliterator of all 'races', spreading 'world peace, world love, world understanding based on science' (84), disguise the genocidal violence by which he seeks to bring the world together as one undifferentiated white fellowship. This is the man who loves children, both his own, and the 'child' 'races' he believes his black brothers and sisters to be. His discourse of 'love' is a perversion that lodges him firmly in the terrain of colonial pathology.

Not only does Sam internalise the discourses of colonial paranoia, he exhibits psychoses of his own. These are suggested by Sam's distorted belief in his racial, cultural, and masculine superiority. The pathological dimensions of this deluded self-belief are revealed in the text by his strategy of self-aggrandisement. Grandiosity is a symptom of psychosis, signifying the delusional self-belief Sam invests in his career. Far from having delusions of grandeur, Sam suffers delusions of adequacy. His vanity is such that he connects himself to great men, claiming that their discoveries were his first: 'The theory of the expanding universe … it came to me by myself … And very often I have an idea and then find, months, years later, that a man like the very great Woodrow Wilson or Lloyd George or Einstein has had it too' (106). He misrepresents his place in the expedition to Malaya, which brings him into conflict with Colonel Willets in Singapore, who plots his demise just as soon as Henny's well-connected father David Collyer, the 'great pillar of his career', dies (320). So convinced is Sam that he has 'had no support at all in his life but had hewn his way through the granite of official indifference and public ignorance' (322), that he

cannot recognise the nepotism that kept him in his job in the first place. He constructs himself as captain of his own destiny, despite the nepotism that stabilises his career as a bureaucrat, and despite the financial assistance given by Henny's family. Willets reports to Washington that Sam has abused his position and brought disrepute to the Malaya mission. Sam refuses to face the reality of this situation, discounting it as a plot by 'vague enemies' and 'evil ones' (330), convincing himself that it will come to nothing and he will be vindicated. His failure to acknowledge his incompetence is shored up by a 'glorious, messianic belief in himself' (324), the extent of which is revealed in the crackpot scheme he hatches to create a Supreme Conservation Council, composed of intricate federal and state councils and sub-councils in a model of 'Imperial Government' which he proposes to head at Franklin D. Roosevelt's certain forthcoming invitation (328). He supports his rabid self-belief by over-coding the birth of baby Charles Franklin, born with a caul upon his return from the Malaya Expedition, as a portent of good fortune (316). This is despite the fact that baby Chappy is almost certainly not his child, but the progeny of Henny's ill-fated liaison with Bert. Relying on this lucky sign, he refuses to answer any of the charges against him, including 'inefficiency' and 'pusillanimity' (321). Nothing, of course, comes of this, and he is suspended pending the findings of an inquiry into his conduct, which culminates in his sacking as head of the Conservation Bureau, and the loss of his salary and his pension. The family is driven to take up residence in a large 'tumble-down' residence on the wrong side of Eastport Bridge at Spa Creek after being evicted from Tohoga House, sold to finalise David Collyer's estate. The 'withering walls', 'leprous sink', and 'wormy floor' of the 'rat-eaten' Spa House signify Sam's corruption (333). They also signify the dissolution of identity that threatens Sam throughout the text. His relentlessly destructive refusal to countenance the dismaying reality of his conduct and the dire financial straits he has pitched his

family into is replicated in the project to rebuild the decaying house. Recalling TS Eliot's 1922 poem, *The Wasteland*, these are the 'fragments' Sam shores 'against his ruins' (line 430).

The 'Natural Order': Patriarchal Fantasies of Gender

The most sinister aspect of Sam's madness is that, much like Albion in *Dark Places*, his insanity is countenanced by the cultural constructions that affirm and install patriarchal power as an inexorable 'fact' of nature. Sam shores up his own male power by internalising the patriarchal fictions of gender as a figurative 'natural order' into which he attempts to interpellate the children. These patriarchal fictions justify the way he wields power, as his social Darwinist views allow him to align women with supposedly weaker 'races' through a discourse of biological superiority that is actually a discourse of white male supremacy. Women, for Sam, are 'much like slaves' brought up 'to lie' (96), and aligned with 'nature … licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman' (475). He sustains his patriarchal fictions of the 'natural' order in which white men are endowed with power through a polarised view of women in which 'race' and gender converge as the site of treacherous otherness. As he tells Ernie, this requires men to control women, much as plantation owners had to rigorously police slaves: 'Women is trouble; women is cussed; you have got to learn to run women, boy' (473). In Sam's view, Henny has been brought up by her wealthy Baltimore family to be sold on the marriage market just as a slave would be sold on the slavery market:

> "Not only did all these silk-skirted 'great ladies' (as they liked to call themselves, though they were silly little chits) breed slaves and sell them down to horror and hell, but they were themselves bred for marriage to wealthy men from abroad and from home, too, I am sorry to say." (339)

For Sam, women are fit only for domestic and reproductive roles, as they have had no education and therefore are incapable of reaching Sam's high-minded appreciation of politics, social matters, or the natural world. He forbids novels, dirty jokes, dancing, drinking, and smoking, indeed any kind of fun that is outside of the zoo, the aquaria, and other hobbies he creates for the children to steep them in the natural sciences that provide the conditions and explanations for human existence and the inequalities between people (122). This belief in biological science underpins his rationalisation of the gendered division of labour. In Sam's schema, women are born to serve men: 'Yes, the Mormings [Mormons] had the right idea altogether: fifty women and their children and no work for the old man' (83). Women and children are to work to ensure the comfort and ease of men.

In Sam's world, wifehood is subjection and a woman's natural role is that of 'kitchenmaid and body servant' (173). These are the rigorous divisions between masculinity and femininity that structure power relations in the world outside the house, as well as inside it. These take place through the 'naturalising trick' of gender which Sam uses to explain women's secondary positioning. For example, Sam counters Jo's assertion that women should be in the state legislature with the response:

> If I had my way no crazy shemales would so much as git the vote! Becaze why? Becaze they is crazy! Becaze they know nuffin! Becaze if they ain't got childer, they need childer to keep 'em from goin' crazy; en if they have childer the childer drive 'em crazy (48).

He rationalises this through a discourse of evolutionary science, in which women are biological and corporeal and therefore somehow less human, less rational, than men. Sam proselytises and lectures, puffing himself up with science to explain away Henny's complaints as part of her gender, reducing them to

'psychological storms and passions which poor Henny must go through' (440), *because* she is a 'crazy shemale' (143) and 'a guilty wife' (437). He, by contrast, believes himself to be 'an innocent father' (437) in the face of Henny's alleged affairs, and denies his own indiscretions. He perverts the discourse of 'natural' selection to explain that his failures are the result of having selected the wrong wife: 'if I could have had the right wife, what a great man I would have been' (480). Sam tells himself stories that he believes, constructing himself as a 'dreamer in realities' (159) who has 'never told a lie' (160) in his life. Yet it is obvious that this is a strategy to over-write the real story with a more sympathetic account, as Saul notes: 'when you talk, you know you create a world' (325). Sam believes his own creations, and his rhetoric drowns out the voices of women and children. Thus, Sam imposes a *false* order, investing women with a wily power that threatens his own. Sam is constantly assailed by the notion that the 'cabal of women' in his household challenge his natural male authority, that women are 'in league' against him, like the servant Hazel Moore, planted in his household to operate as 'enemy and spy' (161). Together, Louie and Henny represent a threat that must be violently contained, by beatings if necessary:

> Against him, the intuitions of stepmother and stepdaughter came together and procreated, began to put on carnality, feel blood and form bone, and a heart and brain were coming to the offspring. This creature that was forming against the gay-hearted, generous, eloquent goodfellow was bristly, foul, a hyena, hater of woman the house-jailed and child-chained against the keycarrier, childnamer and riot-haver (72).

These 'natural' forces of the supposedly biologically weaker life-form have somehow conspired against him, rendering him a victim of female treachery. His

sense of male power is unstable, threatened by the machinations of women to remove him from his self-appointed seat of family power.

Sam's natural order is one he seems unable to order. His relegation of women to the natural world veers into the supernatural, suggesting the unreality of his logic. To Sam, Henny is a 'witch' and 'vixen possum' (50) who undermines him in his quest for power. He believes himself to be a man of intellect and science, who rejects religious belief as an appeal to a supernatural force, yet he aligns Henny with malign supernatural forces. Thus he rationalises his treatment of the threat women pose to his authority through a series of logical leaps that comprise an excess of rationality and connect him to the paranoid subject of the Australian national formation. He is constantly in danger of coming apart at the seams, a disturbing prospect that he avoids by establishing a regime of increasingly controlling incursions into the lives of women and children to assert himself in his belief in his own power. This takes the form of physical and sexual violence against Henny, and manipulation of the children, accompanied by beatings if they withstand his deceitful machinations.

Although Henny constitutes the text of *women's* madness that runs through the novel, there are numerous signals that Sam is unstable: the different voices he uses, the fictions he concocts to stand in for the reality that he cannot deal with, his disregard for and violence towards Henny, his cruelty to children, the discourse of 'love' he uses to sanction eugenicist practices that aim to eliminate whole 'races'. His speech is excessive, not only because it oppresses the family with its sheer volume, but because of its grandiosity and abstraction. Together, these constitute the kind of deforming double-talk and double-think that overwhelms the family, the poison that leaches throughout the whole messy, nasty tale of sexual and physical violence and brute indifference that forms its 'natural' laws. This is visible in Sam's

two distinct voices: the language of lofty abstraction he uses to make the pronouncements that apparently mark his higher-order thinking, and the child-voice he swerves into when he talks to the children: coffee becomes 'cawf', Louie becomes 'Looloo-dirl', and he refers to himself as 'poor little Sam' in an effort to make the children identify with him and take his side. This child-like register affirms Sam's sense of his own powerlessness, but he also uses it to seduce the children into taking on his ideas as the right ones. His God-given sense of his own power is evident in his cruelty to his children. One of the most vivid examples is the scene where Little-Sam throws up, so affected is he by the requirement to dispose of the putrid remains of the marlin. When Sam forces him to continue, Little-Sam defies him, only for Sam to throw a ladleful of fish guts over him to cure of him of his 'hysteria' (490) and 'abhorrence' (492). When Henny intervenes, Sam becomes incensed that she has dared undermine his authority, reframing her concern as 'sabotage' (490).When he beats Louie for some minor naughtiness, Louie protests that it was for 'no reason', and that she would 'never understand and never forgive' him (73). Sam aims to 'break [Louie's] miserable dogged spirit' (480), but continually asserts that he is just, demonstrating his belief in the rightness of his actions. Sam rationalises his cruelty through an appeal to the logic of evolutionary biology. He considers that the children's experience of his marriage will be character-building and enable them to achieve the elevated levels of 'human understanding' he believes he has reached (59). This inexorable logic disregards the possibility that these negative experiences will cause long-lasting damage. As Henny notes, Sam is immovable once he has formed an opinion, so despite purporting to believe in the scientific process, he simply discounts any evidence that might contradict his beliefs (219). He is less a 'Sam-the-Bold' figure than he is driven by 'Monomania' (85), as Louie points out, that blinds him to everything but his own needs and desires. The best way to

maintain his dominion, Sam insists, is to keep his 'children, forever children' (325). Therefore, he tries to retard their development. Several times in the text, Sam tries to prevent the children attending school, arguing that he can teach the children everything they need to know, so they 'need no school' (338). The boys would build houses, and the girls would cook and sew, confirming his sense of the rightness of the gendered division of labour. After all, as children grow up, they challenge the knowledge he wishes to impart, dramatised by Louie's increasingly open revolt.

Colonial Desire: Fear of the Feminine as Colonial Psychosis

For all his love of nature and the natural sciences, Sam comes unstuck when faced with Louie's emerging sexuality. His unusually prurient interest in his daughter's sexuality suggests the ways that he can be located textually as the actual site of familial and colonial pathology. He exhibits features of psychosis in that he cannot distinguish the borders between himself and Louie. Not only does this reveal the dimensions of his distorted sense of reality, it also connects him to the broader realm of colonial psychosis, as the need for punitive control is justified by threats both imaginary and real that circulate in the order of colonial paranoia. Women represent the dimensions of these threatening forces as the zone of abjection that can be contaminated and contaminate through the permeability of their bodies. Thus the patriarch legitimises control of women's sexuality through appeals to imagined and imaginary threats. The narrative of incest, submerged as it is in *The Man Who Loved Children*, suggests the extent to which patriarchal control functions as an attempt to obliterate sexual difference by annihilating women's claims to (national) identity which compete against men's constructions of women and the nation, and the space reserved for women within the nation. Women represent for Sam the threat of being 'dragged down into the earth—no, into the slime' from the pure 'regions of thought'

(161) through their connection to the body and to reproduction. The correlation of women with ‘dirt’ is a feature of colonial paranoia, testifying to the power of women to threaten annihilation through a return to the archaic mother of the patriarchal imagination, and to bring down the nation through their capacity for racial regeneration and degeneration typified in the colonial imagination. Therefore, there are both patriarchal and colonial dimensions to this in Sam’s thinking, polluted as it is by the discourses of masculine and racial superiority that circulate in his ‘scientific’ view of the world through evolutionary biology and his rationalisation of eugenics and social Darwinism.

The incest narrative is repressed in the text. Indeed the only overt reference to incest concerns a newspaper report about a man charged for getting his daughter pregnant (386). Sam immediately leaps to the man’s defence, ‘flaming with temper’ and ‘shouting with rage’, that the perpetrator has been set up, attacked in the private dominion of ‘his own home’ (386). Here the domestic sphere is constructed as a site where men have the right to conduct themselves with impunity. He discounts as ‘unspeakable’ any suggestion that the man has been sexually abusing his daughter, arguing that the ‘child has been taught to say this by a wicked lawyer’ to cover up the scandal of finding herself ‘in trouble’ (387). Sam not only displaces voracious and unnatural sexual desires onto the twelve-year-old daughter, but aligns himself with the perpetrator as fellow victims in an unjust conspiracy: ‘That is why they got rid of me too: they feared me, for wickedness fears Truth’ (387). The incident occurs after Sam has begun snooping around Louie, reading her notes and journals, following her when she is unaware she is being watched, with ‘mental lip-licking’ (340). This surveillance becomes increasingly febrile, as Sam’s repressed sexual feelings for his daughter threaten to overwhelm him. He is fascinated and repelled by Louie’s transformation from child to woman at the age of fourteen: the ‘swelling thighs and

broad hips and stout breasts and fat cheeks of Louisa's years … were repugnant to Sam: he wanted a slim, recessive girl whose sex was ashamed' (340). Louie 'was his first adolescent, too: he was full of the mysteries of female adolescence of which, in his prim boyhood, he had been ignorant' (340). His censorship of her extends to her speech, which 'was too wild, too passionate, too suggestive', and when she uses words like 'the quick and the dead', or 'passionate', he finds himself 'shivering with shame' (340). The process by which men project their disgust and shame on to the female body takes place through the psychic economy of abjection, whereby women become the receivers of men's shame. Sam's fear of women's sexuality precipitates his psychic fragmentation, impelled by Louie's impending womanhood and adult female sexuality. This is signified in the text by the inability to order his thoughts when he tries to talk to Louie about sex. His abstracted speech collapses into ellipses:

> I heard you mention something which, I might say, had a venereal implication—symbols, examples, words, which—of the meaning of which you are doubtless not quite cognizant as yet—whatever you feel like, Looloo, and I leave that all to you (477).

His embarrassment turns on the notion that sex is one of the 'abuses of instinct' leading to waste of the 'finer feelings, or indiscriminate recourse to members of the other sex, upon which follows venereal disease' (478), and his attempt to explain to Louie that she must not have sex without marriage falters again: 'if you must ever go with a man or a boy, Looloo—I leave it to you, it seems inadvisable to me' (478). The man who engulfs the household with his everlasting talk retreats into a silence that suggests the dimensions of his sexual guilt and shame.

Sam fragments into a psychotic state of dissolution and merging. This is explicit in the closing pages of the novel when he tells Louie: 'I am going to watch every book you read, every thought you have' (520), so that his policing of her will

take on an increasingly telepathic tenor. His inability to distinguish between self and other is suggested in several scenes of merging that signify a psychotic collapse of borders, of structure, and of meaning: the scene where Henny gives birth, but it is Sam who is 'red with delight and success' (303); the scene where he tries to force chewed-up banana into Louie's mouth (92); and the scene where he insists to Louie: 'You are myself' (164). In her analysis of narcissism, Grosz proposes that the narcissist 'loves an object according to its resemblance, identity or connection with the self' (*Space, Time and Perversion*, 150), and this is apparent in Sam's exhortations that Louie must be like him. Judith Kegan Gardiner has proposed that this is evidence that Sam suffers from a narcissistic personality disorder ('Male narcissism', 151). However, I go further than Kegan Gardiner to argue that Sam's behaviour is more complicated than narcissism, veering into psychosis. His injunction to Louie, 'you and I must cleave together' (479), reveals an incestuous and eroticised desire to obliterate the threat that Louie poses to his own sense of self. The collapse of boundaries by which he correlates Louie to himself attests to a psychotic failure of representation. Psychosis, for Grosz, involves a 'failure' in representation and is predicated upon repudiation or foreclosure as a mechanism of psychic defence:

> It is a failure to register an impression, involving a rejection of or detachment from a piece of reality [resulting in] the return of the Real that has never been signified [so that] what is internally obliterated reappears … in hallucinatory … form. (*Space, Time and Perversion*, 148)

This failure to register an impression is Sam's failure to distinguish the borders between himself and Louie. It is the psychotic operation of non-separation that marks his incestuous desire for Louie. Indeed, he seems unable to distinguish between Henny and Louie in his sexual desires. When Henny wakes shortly after the scene of

marital rape (438), screaming that she ‘couldn’t stand the streams of blood that poured from [Louie’s] fat belly’, Sam is ‘frightened but licking his lips’ in the face of this tirade (442). The imagery suggests not only that he enjoys precipitating and provoking these scenes, but that he has an unusually prurient interest in his daughter’s sexuality. The image repeats the earlier scene during which he pries into Louie’s affairs, looking for evidence of her sexual awareness or activity, licking his lips, suggesting the degree to which Louie has collapsed into the figure of Henny in Sam’s mind, and the degree to which his sexual desire for Louie perverts the natural laws he lives by.

Sam is ‘horrified’ by women’s sexuality, which he construes as ‘Satan’s invisible world’ (340), and therefore he represses his own sexual feelings. He creates an Edenic world, populated by animals and children, in which he figures as Adam. He subscribes also to the myth of the Fall, so that women’s sexuality is what tempts him and reduces him to the world of the body and sinful, shameful sexual desire: ‘We men are all weak as water before the primitive devices of Eve’ (160). Here his discourse of evolutionary biology collapses into a Western Christian paradigm where women are constructed as the temptresses responsible for man’s exile from Paradise. This is further evidence of the instability of his logic. Sam’s correlation of women with ‘slime’ is evidence of his shame and disgust, for sexuality connects him to defilement, recalling Kristeva’s argument that in the psychic economy of abjection, men project onto women their fear of engulfment, contamination, madness, and death. This is a structure of patriarchy. Grosz argues that patriarchy incorporates and normalises structures of abjection, contending that this sustains the secondary cultural positioning of women within the patriarchal schemata (*Space, Time and Perversion*, 121). She suggests that it ‘is not surprising, given the massive disavowal necessary to sustain men’s vicarious containment of and living from women’s

energies, that it is seeped in hostility, resentment, and aggression' (123). Sam's behaviour routinely features such hostility and aggression in his domination of women and women's bodies. His sexuality is marked by a barely concealed violence, revealing the extent of his hatred of women. This extends to a scene of marital rape, in which Louie wakes to hear a 'sort of scuffling' (437), after which 'Henny gave a fretful hysterical laugh, "Oh, leave me alone, you make me sick", and there was again a violent struggle, and then she heard Sam groan' (438). Sam's violence against Henny expresses the misogyny of Australian culture, where women are conflated with the abject, relegated to the underside of culture. The paranoiac projection of a threatening Otherness onto women establishes the dimensions of colonial patriarchy, through which the violent subjugation of women is sanctioned through a discourse that constructs women as a threat to the 'natural' social order of phallic power.

States of Mind: Contesting National Fictions

The novel positions Louie as the resistant subject of colonial patriarchy. Louie contests patriarchal control as the normalising practice of gender in the colonial context. As a motherless daughter, neglected and mistreated by the miserable Henny, and ignored or controlled by Sam, she is the clumsy 'ugly duckling', who knows that if she escapes, she will never return (93). Unwanted and unhappy, and wondering if she might have turned out differently if her mother had lived, she affects 'contempt' (93) for those around her. She sees the differences between her parents clearly: 'Henrietta screamed and Sam scolded: Henny daily revealed the hypocrisy of Sam, and Sam found it his painful duty to say that Henny was a born liar' (69). Louie's identification with Henny is explained by an intuitive sympathy between women: 'Henny was one of those women who secretly sympathize with all women against all

men: life was a rotten deal, with men holding all the aces' (72). As a young girl who is 'almost a woman', the alliance between Henny and Louie has to do with 'the irresistible call of sex' (72), and Louie sees in Henny a 'distorted sympathy for her' (73). Home is for her as it is for Henny 'a torture chamber' (388), her life a daily 'misery' that 'degrades' her (370). Louie also aligns herself with Henny in understanding that Sam's speech threatens to engulf them. Just as Henny screams that she has had to put up with Sam's 'everlasting talk, talk, talk, talk, talk … boring me, filling my ears with talk' (171), Louie responds to Sam's lecture on the power of radio where he wishes to figure as the voice of America, in a typically self-aggrandising proposition that connects him with 'a second Christ … speaking to all mankind' (371), by scribbling *'Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, I can't stand your gassing, oh what a windbag, what will shut you up, shut up, shut up*' (372) to Sam's eternal surprise that she has not been taking notes. Far from being 'nearly of an age to begin to understand' (161) her father, Louie actively resists his fascist-like tyranny, refusing to obey him in increasingly 'open revolt' (140). Louie's rejection of Sam's patriarchal authority insists upon the correlation of the daughter with the artist who writes and speaks herself into existence and autonomy. For Louie, Sam is 'a giant in his weakness', and she attacks him with a quotation from Byron's 'Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte: '*The desolator desolate/ The tyrant overthrown /The arbiter of other's fate/ A suppliant for his own'* (298). Louie's linguistic strategies are a means to speak and write back to her father who acts as arbiter of gender ideologies and regimes, and she actively resists his attempts to interpellate her into his ideological frame. To Sam's dictate, 'You are myself: I know you cannot go astray', Louie responds determinedly: 'I won't be like you, Dad' (164). When he complains that he entered marriage to Henny out of thought for her, a marriage that constituted for him 'torture', 'mental rot and spiritual death', Louie responds: 'I

heard it too much … I heard it too often; I can't stand it anymore' (441). Louie has apprehended that Sam's models of femininity and prescriptions about what a woman's destiny must be are reflected in the outside world: Sam is not the Law of the Father, but he mouths it, and reproduces the patriarchal ideologies that imprison all women.

The school community offers Louie another version of the world, a space outside the family home where 'there are people not like us, not muddleheaded like us, better than us' (314). The school represents a homosocial community of women artists and writers. Louie forms alliances with women and girls, growing in 'self-confidence' (346), and her friendship with Clare has all the hallmarks of a crush: Clare writes 'I'll kiss thy foot; I'll swear myself thy subject' (349). Her desire to compose the Aiden cycle, a 'poem of every conceivable form and also every conceivable metre in the English language … in honour of Miss Aiden' (350), illustrates both her artistic ambitions and her adolescent crush on and desire for her teacher. These artistic ambitions impress others, notably Miss Aiden and her friend Clare, countering the reaction at home, where her poems are dismissed as the excessive outpourings of an adolescent crush. It is this community of women that provides the impetus for Louie to write herself into existence. Louie develops strategies to negotiate both her parents' complex ways of articulating the world by composing her own codes and languages, finding and subverting meaning in the texts of the literary canon. She begins to compose a play, *Herpes Rom*: *Tragedy of the Snake-Man, or Father*, inventing a new language to express feminine experience.

The play is written in a code of Louie's own devising, as she is aware that Sam has been making incursions into her room to read her private diaries. The language is impenetrable to Sam, who must be given a translation to understand it. It recounts the

oppressive relationship between father and daughter as Sam ceaselessly polices her through increasingly eroticised relations of domination. Megara, the tragic hero of the play, is strangled to death by her father Anteios, characterised as a 'snake' (408). The phallic symbolism is obvious. The fantasy of strangulation by the father reflects Sam's attempts to engulf Louie, to violently incorporate her into himself. The images of suffocation—'choking', 'strangling' and the hate that 'would make your eyes bulge out'(407-408)—are redolent of oppression on one hand, and of the Freudian 'erotogenic displacement' of the sexual organs that marks one of the signs of sexual trauma in hysteria (*Grosz, Space, Time and Perversion*, 151). Such a displacement, by which the hysteric 'phallicizes a hysterical zone' (151) to displace her sexuality, in this case onto the throat, reads as an allegory of father-daughter incest that reverses the gendered position of the subject of the Oedipal myth. The play also points to the powerlessness of women under the father's law, as the mother of the play fails to intervene to rescue her daughter. The play both responds to and makes visible the domestic violence between Sam and Henny in the violent scene earlier in the novel where Henny slashes Sam with a breadknife after he has slapped her across the face (170-172). It replicates, even as it displaces, Sam's violence towards Henny, so that Louie stands in for Henny in the play's dramatisation of the events. It also prefigures the scene of marital rape that so disturbs Louie later in the novel (437-438). The play articulates hatred towards Sam, expressing Louie's most fervent wish: to become a 'she-devil' who would 'hunt you out like the daughters of King Lear' (408), revealing the extremity of the familial conflict that can only be escaped by a corresponding extremity of action.

The images of strangulation illustrate Louie's sense of being silenced within the dominant patriarchal ideology that her father's language voices. This takes place

in the father's creation of counter-languages to reposition the murder as a loving embrace:

> MEGARA: (shrieking) I am dying. You are the stranger. You are killing me. Murderer! Murderer! Mother!
>
> ANTEIOS: I am only embracing you. My beloved daughter. (But he hisses.) (408)

Anteios counters Megara's understanding, concocting a psychotic fiction of paternal love that stands in for the destructive and violent reality. This attempt to over-write Megara's claims dramatises the double-talk and double-think that Sam's languages express. Sam concocts rationalisations for his violent abuse, but Louie puts his claim to be the exemplar of sanity and rationality to the test. This is the dilemma Louie faces in the novel. She must negotiate the tensions that divide her parents and decode the double-talk and double messages that she receives from her father, whose tyranny is represented as a form of paternal kindness.

The play represents Louie's worst fears. Her family is so destructive that Louie is afraid that she 'will go mad' (439) if she stays, and her impetus is towards freeing herself from the bonds of her family. Yet, Louie is not mad. As her friend Clare tells her, she 'would give the top of [her] head to have the madness of your little finger' (439). Louie considers herself something of a 'genius', or else she 'would die: why live?'(87). Yet, she doubts herself, wondering if she has 'dementia praecox' or is simply one of those 'glittering sham-talents' who 'sometimes suicides … around forty' (501). Louie's genius comes to the fore through the 'terrifying' realisation that the play was only a rehearsal, and that it is not enough to simply counter Sam's hyper-logic. Rather, she must use his own logic against him if she is to survive.

As the family degenerates further, she draws on Sam's perverted belief in eugenics to rationalise 'countenanced murder' through the scientific aim to ensure the 'survival of the fittest':

> Murder of the unfit, incurable and insane should be permitted. Children born mentally deficient or diseased should be murdered, and none of these murders would really be a crime, for the community was benefited, and the good of the whole was the aim of all, or should be.
>
> "Murder might be beautiful, a self-sacrifice, a sacrifice of someone near and dear, for the good of others—I can conceive of such a thing, Looloo! The extinction of one life, when many are threatened, or when future generations might suffer … Why, we might murder thousands—not indiscriminately as in war now—but picking out the unfit and putting them painlessly into the lethal chamber. This alone would benefit mankind by clearing the way for a eugenic race. I am glad to say some of our states have already passed laws which seem to point to a really scientific view of these things, in the near future." (163-164)

The passage indicates that Sam's violence is not limited to the physical abuse he metes out to Henny and Louie, but also to the violence of eugenics, which frames his 'scientific view' of the world. This is what drives Louie to poison both her parents, to 'sacrifice' them for the 'good' of the children. Louie is painfully aware that 'her life and their lives were wasted in this contest and that the quarrel between Henny and Sam was ruining their moral natures' (343). From the moment they move to Spa House, Louie begins to think about how to escape this violent, terrifying situation. She will use Sam's view that 'murder depends on the meridian' (162) against him. Louie acts, prepared to kill to ensure her own freedom. When she confesses to Sam the enormity of her actions, he explains it away as a 'silly' girl's fantasy, precipitated by an 'adolescent crisis' (521). He wilfully concocts a fiction to

stand in for an unpalatable reality. That Sam survives suggests that women are not able to escape to a place outside patriarchy. Because patriarchy naturalises itself, makes it seem that this is how it is, and that women have to participate in it according to gender norms and roles, its political and ideological dimensions are obscured in the process. Women are interpellated into it, and into its relations of economic dependency on men, through which patriarchy further reinforces itself as the 'natural' order of being for both men and women. Louie has refused the call.

At the end of the novel, Louie heads to Harpers Ferry, a community of loving female relatives, a merry place despite housing grandfather Israel. He is the family patriarch who is Sam's double, a man who 'despised his own children' but who is also silenced, with 'no opportunity to rave, storm and cry woe' (184). Harpers Ferry must also be read as a deliberate connection to the narrative of abolitionist John Brown. For some critics, Brown was the father of US terrorism, while for others he remains an important progenitor of the Black civil rights movement (cf. Ken Chowder, 'The father of American terrorism', 81-91, and Paul Finkelman, 'John Brown: America's first terrorist?' 16-27). Brown's armed insurrection at Harpers Ferry in protest at slavery precipitated the American Civil War, and he was later hanged for his involvement. There are parallels here. Louie has committed an extreme act, just as John Brown had. Furthermore, she has escaped 'slavery' in attempting to murder both her parents. Although in a sense she has 'failed', Stead seems to be suggesting that Louie, as a daughter of patriarchy, is a representative of enslaved womanhood, for whom only extreme action can bring about release. Just as John Brown was partially successful, so Louie's escape is only partially a success. In contesting Sam's domination, Louie contests the ideological frames of patriarchy and colonialism that structure national identity. The text of madness that is prominent in the novel is not Louie's attempt to kill her parents to free herself from the destructive

bonds of the family that kills, as it almost has her brother Ernie, whose suicidal ideation takes form when he hangs an effigy of himself (495). Nor is it Henny's suicide, but Sam's hyper-logic which reveals the extent to which he has introjected and is prepared to enact the violent paranoid fantasies by which the white nation sanctions its abuses. I take up this strand of argument in Chapter Four, where I examine Albion's patriarchal fantasies of femininity as violent and paranoid forms of colonial desire.

CHAPTER FOUR: CANNIBALISM AND COLONIALISM: COLONIAL DESIRE IN *LILIAN'S STORY*

> *Lilian,* he said, as if reminding me who I was. *Lilian, you are an example of the degeneracy of the white races.* I must have stood blinking in my surprise and Father hissed, so that the creeping cousin stared, *You are sterile and degenerate, and as corrupt as a snake* ('A Friend Gone', 178-179).

Introduction: Women's Madness and Cultural Pathology

Lilian's Story is the portrait of a young woman's destruction at the hands of her despotic father, Albion Gidley Singer. Born in 1901 to a wealthy family in Sydney's waterfront suburbs, Lilian is a tomboy who wants to make something of her intelligence by going to university to become a doctor, a scientist, an explorer, or an aviator. These ambitions do not align with the gendered codes of colonial gentility that frame women's lives. From a very young age, Lilian is made aware that she is expected to become the sort of young 'lady' a well-to-do man will find 'charming' enough to marry, just as her father Albion found Norah, a lady of 'lilacs and lavenders' who smells of 'flowers' (5). Norah provides the template for genteel femininity that Lilian will have to live up to. Ladies pick baskets of flowers, 'glide' soundlessly through the house, and take tea with other ladies where they can practice the lost art of polite conversation (5, 9). Maids, on the other hand, are not ladies, but tidy up after ladies' families. These are the class and gender divisions that structure Australian respectability at the turn of the twentieth century. Lilian is required to take up her place as the 'daughter of a gentleman' within this colonial gender order to become, like her friend Ursula, one of the 'lovelies' swishing gracefully around the

family parties in silks and sashes, 'fragrant, slim and good enough to eat' (74). Lilian, however, grows fat and plain, a 'grubby little tomboy' (29), who climbs trees, collects frogs and other dead things, playing rough to impress the boys with her daring feats. In this she compensates for the weakness of her brother, John, a frightened boy who wears glasses, his ambition to become deaf (22) or even dead (141) to escape his father's incessant domination of the household. John is unable to perform the dominant codes of masculinity valued in the emerging national culture.

It is Albion who represents adherence to these disfiguring and disfigured forms of colonial maleness. Albion is a bully who dominates the household with his 'facts' to ceaselessly assert his intellectual value, his voice bouncing off the walls (20), terrorising his family with a suppressed rage that escalates into inexplicable violence. A 'disappointed man' who works in the family business, he has ambitions of becoming a writer (29, 33), but nothing will ever come of this, as the newspaper clippings that form the research for his book moulder in the study. The contours of his inadequacy become increasingly visible inside his affluent community, leading Rick, the school bully Lilian is so desperate to impress, to point out that Albion is a 'no-hoper' (34) and a 'loony' (41). As Australia enters World War One and Rick's father becomes a general, exemplifying the hyper-masculinity encoded in the Australian Anzac legend, 'beating the Hun' (41), Albion has a breakdown. He emerges from his 'nervous prostration' (41) like an 'angry cobra' (70) with a renewed vigour, increasingly directed against Lilian. Their conflict takes on an increasingly sexualised tenor as he resorts to beating her naked buttocks to bring her into line. 'Dangerous' and 'afraid of nothing' (44), Lilian refuses to conform to the gender ideals of this distorted colonial order, taking up an increasingly masculine posture to over-compensate for the deforming masculinities her father and brother signify within her cultural milieu. As Lilian's sexuality begins to emerge, and the

routine beatings he inflicts make Lilian increasingly defiant, Albion's violence escalates, culminating in rape. In a further act of political silencing, he then has Lilian incarcerated in an asylum. It is Albion's alcoholic sister Kitty who secures Lilian's release after ten long years in the madhouse, blackmailing Albion by threatening to spread stories of his 'mad wife and daughter' (162). Kitty has apprehended the dark secret of her brother Albion's relationship with Lilian, because she has lived with his perverted sexual desires,[56] and knows him for the 'bully' (160) he truly is.

This is the text of women's madness in *Lilian's Story*, explicitly framed within the madness of misogyny and male sexual cruelty. Lilian's story is really Albion's story, and of the paranoid fantasies of gender that sustain male delusion. *Lilian's Story* records what happens to a woman who rejects these gender ideals, who makes herself fat to make her body bear the signs of her monstrous experience of patriarchal control and sexual violence. The novel's themes of madness, violence and incest directly recall the themes of *The Man Who Loved Children*. As a vivid portrait of male delusion and brutality, *Lilian's Story* intersects with the 'cannibal families' of Stead's fiction, operating as a more vicious and disturbing example of Australian families as 'seedbeds of pathology' (Angela Carter, 253) forged in the violence of the colonial project. This pathology infects all members of the Singer family to differing degrees. Subversive, hysteric, alcoholic, deluded, or paranoid: madness takes many forms in this novel, but all the characters represent the 'catastrophe of being Australian' in the social order normalised by Australian patriarchy (Hodge and Mishra, 217). Lilian's trajectory from brilliant young woman to bag lady, shrieking Shakespeare through the inner-city streets of Kings Cross after her release from the asylum, offers a vivid commentary on the family as the site where a skewed

[56] This is only ever alluded to in the text of *Lilian's Story*, but becomes more visible in *Dark Places*.

Australian identity is produced. The novel therefore displaces the pathology of a young woman constructed as mad onto the family as the site in which the 'pathology of the normal' and the 'normality of the pathological' is reproduced (Hodge and Mishra, 217).

Patriarchy, Colonialism and Misogyny

The brutal male sexual violence that Albion deploys to violently subjugate Lilian is commonly read as a feminist critique of 'pathologically deformed' gender ideals produced by Australian misogyny, with Albion as its exemplar (Hodge and Mishra, 217). *Lilian's Story* has predominantly been read as a critique of Australian gender relations within a culture that most critics have recognised has been shaped by male domination and has structured power relationships 'between women and men, women and language, women and the patriarchal state' (Gilbert, *Coming out from Under,* 28). As I demonstrated in the Introduction , most critics have read *Lilian's Story* as a feminist critique of women's violent subjugation, connecting Lilian's madness to a refusal to conform to bourgeois patriarchal conventions regulating codes of genteel femininity and sexuality. In one of the few postcolonial analyses, Bill Ashcroft suggests the rape signifies Albion's attempt to colonise Lilian with patriarchal norms ('Madness and power', 71). He takes up a common feminist metaphor, suggesting the ways that patriarchy seeks to interpellate women into its ideological frames. However, connecting women's experience of patriarchal oppression to the experience of the colonised runs the risk of suggesting an undifferentiated oppression, unmitigated by power relations of 'race' within the white colonial enterprise. In part, such readings proceed because Grenville's decision to frame the relationship between Albion and Lilian in colonial terms was influenced by Anne Summers, who had demonstrated the parallels between women as a

'colonised sex' and Australia as a 'colonised nation' in *Damned Whores and God's Police* (Turcotte, 'Daughters of Albion', 31).

Grenville records that the colonial relationship was a useful narrative device because it is:

> a metaphor for many kinds of relationships, of which, of course, the parent-child one is the most obvious. The father in *Lilian's Story* is called Albion, naturally, because he is in that oppressive imperial/colonial relationship with his daughter. (in Turcotte, 'Telling those untold stories', 293)

Two questions immediately arise: what are the politics of such a strategy, and how does the trope of the colonised (white) female signify these other relationships for which colonisation acts as a 'metaphor'? Albion, the oldest known name for the British Isles, derives from the Old Celtic *Alba*, the name for Scotland, and the Latin *albus*, meaning white. The connection between Australia and Britain is strengthened as the Celtic term signifies an earthly place of sunshine and light in direct contrast to a dark underworld. This not only signifies Australia's history as the colonial outpost of British imperialism, but also alludes to the dark places that remain concealed and repressed in Australia's psyche. The colonial relationship is textually represented through Lilian's experience of school, where the patriarchal histories of the British monarchy are privileged, while Joan of Arc's anti-English rebellion is glossed over, and Boadicea is just a 'witch in woad' (30). This curriculum, and its repressions, celebrates the birth of an Australia steeped in English imperialism. In *Lilian's Story* the colonial structure serves only as a backdrop, providing the context in which Australian patriarchy is installed. However, the violence of white male colonialism gives Australian misogyny its brutish character. The violence of colonialism constitutes both 'physical and psychical violence' located in Australian convictism and race relations, so that the context of colonialism testifies to 'the reality of

violence as an overall early cultural presence' (Dixson, *The Imaginary Australians*, 118, 121). Indeed, anyone who has seen the American gold rush drama *Deadwood* understands that the colonial project is imprinted by pervasive lawlessness and brutality, as colonial towns took the form of fiefdoms headed by crime-lords whose wealth accrues from prostitution, corruption and grog. In Australia, the violence of the colonial project is inscribed in the institution of brutal penal colonies and the massacres of Aboriginal people (see Reynolds, *Frontier*; Rachel Perkins and Beck Cole [dir], *The First Australians*). These relations of imperialism remain under-theorised in responses to the novel, despite a range of postcolonial approaches to the text. Most postcolonial readings celebrate the narrative of Australia becoming a nation by extricating itself from the colonial frame, emblazoning the nation with a 'post'-colonial status through its rupture from the imperial host. Any assertion that Australia is postcolonial is over-determined, marking the contours of a white fantasy of possession that stand in for Indigenous dispossession. As the contribution of Indigenous feminisms make clear, ongoing and systemic practices of white occupation normalised through the continual projection of this white fantasy continue to structure relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as relations of colonialism. Such understandings of 'colony' Australia have also implicated women in the relations of colonialism, despite their marginalised status in national culture (Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman*, 180).

Grenville's later novels, particularly *The Secret River*, show a concern not only with the place women are accorded within the nation, but also in the relationship of white women to colonisation. Her emerging realisation of white women's implication in the scene of race relations is detailed in *Searching for the Secret River*, where Indigenous academic and novelist Melissa Lucashenko challenges Grenville to rethink the 'unquestionable' family history 'formula' that she uses to explain that her

convict ancestor 'took up' land on the Hawkesbury. Lucashenko's response—'What do you mean "took up"?' ... 'He took'—forces Grenville to recognise the discursive 'trick' underlying the common set of euphemisms that naturalise white colonialism in Australia (*Searching for the Secret River*, 28, 29). The place of white women in the nation demands a consideration of Grenville's re-visioning of history to accord Lilian, as both representative and resistant white woman, a place, however marginalised, in the white male colonial context. I take up Gerry Turcotte's argument that the colonial metaphor works:

> not only in respect to women's history and literature, but also in regard to other forms of cultural oppression, at the personal and the group level, and at the national and international level ... her depiction of oppression almost as a speech/rape metaphor suggests a type of imperialism, which threatens not only women, but also races, outcasts and societies. Grenville's fiction is wide in scope, and is a topical and complex examination of political silencing. She represents these acts of political aggression as violent acts against language, an idea which culminates as a rape metaphor in *Lilian's Story*. ('"The Ultimate Oppression"', 64)

Women's oppression under patriarchy is connected here to imperialism, yet there are few feminist analyses that take up his argument that *Lilian's Story* dramatises the power relations of imperialism. Is this because race relations are not made visible or overt in the text, and therefore they are not important to the discussion of male power? Or, indeed, is it that many such interpretations preceded the release of a number of National Inquiries and Royal Commissions that have contributed to new ways of theorising the nation as constructed within raced relations

of power? [57] The novel's structuring metaphor of women as a colonised sex demands interrogation. I argue that the rape narrative also acts to critique the colonial norms encoded in the construction of Australian patriarchy, and that the novel's multiple texts of madness operate as the *imprimatur* of a suppressed colonial disorder.

In the Introduction, I explain that I deploy Jane Ussher's definition of madness as serving a function in society, that is, to highlight the cultural context and constraints of gendered power relations. For Ussher, *women's* 'madness is *more* than a set of symptoms, a diagnostic category' and needs to be deconstructed at the cultural level, rather than within the psychiatric classificatory systems (11: emphasis Ussher's). White male power in the colonial context is one of those social relations in which definitions, discourses, and practices associated with madness are produced. Grenville locates her themes of madness and incest against a backdrop of deforming colonial gentility that disguises and over-writes the more immediate violence of the colonial project. As I argue in Chapter Two, the colonial enterprise positions white men as the protectors of both the white nation, and of white women. Thus sexual violence enacted against white women is situated 'outside of the larger history of colonialism … because white men, as the protectors of white women, could not simultaneously be defined as a sexual threat towards them' (Kylie Thomas, 6). The failure to link the violence of white men against white women to the practices of white racism embedded in the colonial enterprise enacts a textual silence in the feminist critical reception of the novel. To recognise that Lilian is also invaded by forms of *white* male sexual violence and misogyny that characterise the formation of the Australian nation offers a way forward. Therefore, I resist reading madness in *Lilian's Story* as the site for women's alterity against a centred *patriarchal* power, as

[57] These inquiries include the National Inquiry into Racial Violence 1991; the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991; and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (now the Australian Human Rights Commission), *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (1997).

this does little to problematise the shifting and contradictory theoretical positions that white women inhabit within the white *colonial* space.

Gillian Whitlock contends that the location of the female subject 'as a site of differences' in Australian women's writing demonstrates the 'complex cultural context' in which gender relations are structured, noting that 'women at different moments in history have been both oppressed and oppressive, submissive and subversive, victim and agent, allies and enemies both of men and one another' ('Graftworks', 242). At the intersection of colonial and gender relations, women can inhabit both the centre and the margins of the colonial context. The colonial woman inhabits the schizophrenic simultaneity of settler/invader and victim/oppressor subject. Lilian's story of not fitting in, of rejecting and being rejected by bourgeois colonial society, dramatises white women's anxieties about belonging to a culture that is itself founded on Aboriginal dispossession and politically engineered un-belonging. The ethics of representation at work in the text demand a critical examination informed both by feminist psychoanalytic and postcolonial strategies, linking the mad body and the body politic. A critical examination of Lilian's madness as an aspect of this schizophrenic positioning is required to proceed with a reading that attempts to decolonise psychoanalysis and to psychoanalyse colonialism. To decolonise our minds requires that we make whiteness visible, and confront 'the ways in which the settler colony is marked by a history of colonial violence and attempt to come to terms with the violence implicit in the formation of colonial white identities' (Thomas, 7). My reading of *Lilian's Story* deconstructs whiteness and maleness as the discursive sites of Australian colonialism and colonial violence and interrogates the construction of white Australian femininity as the site for colonial anxieties about racial and sexual purity. Therefore, it also takes up South African academic Kylie Thomas's argument that 'sexual abuse is used as a trope to signify

the pathology of the place [it describes] and the rape of children is used to signify the diseased nature of colonial and apartheid societies' (2). Thomas links South Africa's regime of apartheid to the establishment of colonial Australia, reading white male sexual violence as a practice of white racism and colonial violence. The question I pursue is not *whether* Lilian is mad, but rather *how and why* the regimes of patriarchy, misogyny, white male colonialism and sexual violence shape Lilian's experience, and *what* this suggests about the place of women in Australian culture. As I show in Chapter Two, women are located in the place of abjection in post-Lacanian theorising and this corresponds to their correlation with colonial dirt in postcolonial theorising. I advance my reading through an analytical frame that combines theories of colonial paranoia, abjection and the unruly woman to argue that, as a form of *disorder*, madness enacts a critique of colonial *order*, and that Lilian's resistance to these deforming myths of gender functions as an attempt to disrupt the dominant myths of Australian identity provided by history.

Madness and the Pathologised Female of Colonial Culture

Madness is signified as endemic to the nation in the opening pages of the novel, which link the birth of Lilian, complete with the lucky sign of the caul, to the birth of the nation in 1901: 'It was a wild night in the year of Federation that the birth took place. Horses kicked down their stables. Pigs flew, figs grew thorns' (3). The Gothic overtones are immediately apparent (Gelder and Salzman, *The New Diversity*, 78). The domestic or female Gothic mode deploys metaphors of entrapment both to illustrate and subvert the socially sanctioned modes of gender oppression that women experience as female subjects, so that it is commonly read as a drama of female subjection (Fleenor, *The Female Gothic*). Qualities that make *Lilian's Story* an exercise in the female Gothic include its focus on terror, menace, physical and sexual

violence, disorder and the irrational. The omniscient narrative viewpoint, the ironic tone, the use of passive voice, and the unnamed characters act as distancing techniques, achieving a hallucinogenic quality that situates the novel outside the realist tradition (Roslynn D Haynes, 69). Right from the opening sentence, the birth of the 'Lucky Country' is constructed as stormy and violent, while its gendered exclusionary practices are signalled in the father's response: '*A girl*? The father exclaimed, outside in the waiting room, tiled as if for horrible emergencies. This was a contingency he was not prepared for' (3). The naming of Albion is significant, as it not only encodes him as a white imperialist as I argue above, but also alludes to William Blake's poem, 'Visions of the Daughters of Albion'. The female protagonist, Oothoon, is configured as the soul of America, the imperial frontier embodying the promise of new ways of living and being, free from restrictive British class and sexual mores. However, she is violently raped by Bromion, after which the man she loves cannot bear to be with her, bound as he is to the conventions of sexual morality. All the characters are enslaved by the social relations that govern their sexual desires and experience (in Woodcock, 227-230). The poem provides an important subtext for Albion's rape of Lilian, if Lilian is understood as the soul of Australia. Lilian's status as daughter of Albion signifies the imperial relationship between Britain and Australia.

Naming the baby Lilian Una is also significant: Lilian recalls the Lilith figure of the witch in Biblical tradition, while Una testifies to her status as the first, but also to a fantasy of unification, not only within the family, but also within the nation. The fantasy of national unification is ironically undercut by the structure of the novel, which uses a series of 'fragments' or vignettes framed by the the novel's three parts. Grenville centralises female identity, as the three parts correspond to female identity formation processes, framing Lilian's trajectory into adulthood: 'A Girl', 'A Young

Lady', 'A Woman'. This is located textually against the confining gender conventions that sustain Albion's claim to sovereign male power as white patriarch upholding the Law of the Father. But this is no ordinary *Bildungsroman*. The ordeals that Lilian undergoes are corporeal and gender specific, and intricately connected to the politics of male domination. The narrative of female 'development' is located against the narrative of madness, which both appropriates and undermines Kristeva's contention that there are 'psychotic risks' in the processes of female subjectivity ('A question of subjectivity', 136). As I argue in Chapter Two, there are a number of problems in situating women's madness solely within psychoanalytic frameworks. I therefore proposed that the mad body is a text to be read, situating it as the inscriptive surface upon which discourses and ideologies operate as part of the socio-cultural apparatus. The ways in which the body can be considered 'literary', by which I mean capable of bearing signs and meanings, owe a debt in poststructuralist theory to the work of Foucault, theories of the carnivalesque, and to feminist contestations of the body as universal, unsexed, inscriptive surface. Both feminist and postcolonial theorists have made use of such theories, which rely upon a Foucaultian analysis of the inscriptive power of discourses to brand or mark the subject. The production of a sign is enmeshed in the production of knowledge and discourse and occurs in the field of social relations, so that signs—and symptoms—are not merely biological or physical, but also signs of social relations 'disguised as natural things' (Ussher, 11). Discourses are the machinery itself of power, the technologies of power, but bodies are the sites upon which power is played out, so that the 'mad' body and the signs it produces, act as the field for an interrogation of white male patriarchal power and its abuses. Integral to this is the requirement to analyse linguistic disturbances as the codes by which madness speaks itself through the body. I therefore read madness as both a text of the body, and as a text of culture,

focusing on the semiotic performances of the body of the madwoman. To achieve this, I critically examine Lilian's 'madness' against her mother's, as Norah's illness is emblematic of the hysteric's protest, while Lilian refuses such a self-repudiating form of invalidism, making herself grotesque in order to escape the dictates of patriarchal femininity.

Norah is the first to succumb to madness, and provides the model that corresponds most closely to the literature on women's madness, and the hysteric as the representative of femininity. Giving birth results in the surprised 'mother' entering 'her long overlapping series of indispositions' (3). This is linked a few sentences later with hysteria: 'a kookaburra pealed in hysteria somewhere' (3). Norah is an insubstantial figure in the text, a 'woman of pale colours' (5) who suffers the nightly indignation of being forced to provide a son and heir for Albion. After forcing himself upon her, he claps 'waxed paper between her legs', commanding her: '*Don't move ... Keep it in*' (4). Norah takes on this injunction by becoming increasingly immobilised, and retreats into illness, suffering headaches in a darkened room, much like, but yet unlike, Henny: '*I am unwell*, *Albion*, I heard her tell Father from her prostration on the couch. *Too unwell. Later, please, Albion*' (15). Her silence is relieved by occasional sighs and flutters, as she obsessively watches the ferries pass by on the harbour, as if they offer escape. Images of Norah as 'pale', whispering, and pre-occupied with death recur throughout the text, so that by the time she is 'bullied into her cruise' as part of a 'rest' cure (119), she has become:

> a woman who lived behind a curtain drawn across her face, and she spoke most happily when she thought no one was listening. Between the dead, the stop-watch, and the pleasures of narrow escapes, she spent serene days in her chair on the flagstones. (77)

These images of motionlessness, far from signifying serenity, correspond to the images in the literature on the female hysteric, which Ussher links to the 'cult of female invalidism':

> With hysteria, the cult of female invalidism was carried to its logical conclusion. Society had assigned women to a life of confinement and inactivity, and medicine had justified this assignment by describing women as innately sick. In the epidemic of hysteria, women were both accepting their inherent "sickness" and finding a way to rebel against an intolerable social role. (Ehrenreich and English, cited in Ussher, 90-91)

The invalid is also in*valid*, occupying no productive place in culture. As hysteria is theorised as enacting through symptoms and on the body the aetiology of women's gendered exclusion, Norah's 'indispositions' testify to this. Accordingly, she represents in fictional form the well-documented feminist thesis on hysteria 'as a semiotic language which speaks to patriarchy in ways that cannot be expressed' (Showalter, cited in Ussher, 75). Norah cannot express her oppression by Albion in any other way, and consequently her 'madness' takes the form of hysteria. In Freudian conceptions of hysteria, symptoms comprise 'a pictographic script which has become intelligible after [his] discovery of a few bilingual inscriptions' (Hunter, 273). Hysteria is 'a self-repudiating form of feminine discourse in which the body signifies what social conditions make it impossible to state linguistically', and the hysteric functions as a 'psychodramatist' and 'speaker in tongues' performing a 'body language' in a process of 'making the unconscious conscious' (Hunter, 272, 273). For Norah, hysteria is a defence against Albion's sexual abuses, because imperial gentlemanly codes require him to leave her alone if she is indisposed. However, Norah's main speech act, the 'No' that constitutes her refusal of marital sexual duties, is ignored: '*Oh, Albion*, Mother complained from her room at night.

Oh Albion, and was stopped in the middle of saying, *No*' (12). For Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, hysteria sentenced the madwoman 'to imprisonment in the "infected" house of her own body' (Gilbert and Gubar, 92). Norah's only defence, if she is ignored, is to retreat into the 'illness', manufactured or not, of her female body. Femininity, in Victorian and turn-of-the-century masculinist discourse, is correlated with illness, as Ussher, citing the famous physician of hysteria, Silas Weir Mitchell, shows: 'The man who does not know sick women, does not know women' (90). Norah's long illness, signalled from the moment she becomes a mother, culminates in her death while Lilian is incarcerated in the asylum. This is, however, not the only form of madness that Grenville represents: she formulates alternative feminist strategies for Lilian against her father's misogyny, but these also act against the charges that women's madness is self-repudiating. The madness of mother and daughter takes significantly different forms.

The explication of Lilian's madness forms most of the novel, and the first assertion that Lilian is a 'loony' comes from her brother early in the novel, when John is aged seven, and Lilian is eleven (24). Her friend, Ursula, knows that people call Lilian a 'loony', but defends her, preferring to think of Lilian as a 'genius' (81). However, Lilian's intelligence is dismissed by her family and teachers, and her brother John, who, despite a 'rashly promising start', had 'gradually turned into a dunce' (79). He is jealous of Lilian's cleverness:

> *You are too clever*, John said and spat out the apple pip he had been sucking for an hour. *You are brilliant but unstable*, *Sir said*. John did not know whether to be proud of his sister or ashamed. (79)

Lilian's large body and her refusal of conventional femininity situate her outside the ordering structures of colonial gentility, and it is her refusal to become one of the 'lovelies' that produces this ambivalent mix of admiration and shame.

Lilian competes against John to be recognised as an intellectual, after his first word, 'astrakhan', results in his being conferred with the 'brains' she would like to be recognised for (15). She memorises big words, and recites 'great poetry' to impress the visiting ladies, but this is not received as evidence of intelligence (15). Rather, she is met with the imprecation to practise the feminine wiles of 'modesty' (15), by pretending to be too shy to take up a position in the limelight, as upstaging her brother eclipses his primogeniture. Such strategies, Lilian apprehends, are performative of the codes of genteel femininity: 'although I did not hear them comment on my brains, I knew that I had never forgotten my lines, and always remembered the appropriate gestures' (15). This establishes femininity as a set of codes to be adhered to, but Lilian's refusal to conform is an act of resistance and transgression. As Foucault has shown, there are penalties for failing to ascribe to the discursive templates of normative gender, and the charge of being a 'loony' is one of the ways by which other people mark Lilian as 'deviant'. Lilian is constantly told by other children that she is 'not bad for a girl' (27), that girls 'don't have gangs' (27), that she is 'just a girl' (25), so that the limitations of her gender are impressed upon her early. The 'ragamuffin' and 'grubby little tomboy' who is 'grime and filth' in the eyes of the 'ladies' who visit her family must be contained by lessons in how to be feminine: '*You must learn elegance*, Mother said, *and beauty*' (29). Lilian is constantly 'impeded' by pinafores and velvet dresses, and her tomboyish activities, her juggling, playing 'rough', hanging upside down from trees, her desire to be the 'loudest', speak to a desire to be seen and heard, not just as a girl, but as a person with 'ambitions' of being a hero (22). Lilian's fantasies of being a hero, rescuing the boy she admires, Rick, are fantasies of gender reversal that are foreclosed by the cultural constructions of gender of the time. Male figures such as Napoleon figure large in Lilian's pantheon of heroes, but it 'was easy to see that boys had all the fun'

(25). The realisation that she 'could not be a hero … except in [her] mind' (26) is explicitly linked to the codes of femininity that govern colonial patriarchal bourgeois society. Femininity is associated with prettiness, 'winsome dimples' (29) and the ability to curtsy, which allows Ursula to be excused from history lessons. Women are not to be valued for their intelligence, but rather, for their looks. Lilian is well aware that brains are no compensation for being beautiful, because the 'daughter of a gentleman' would 'have to marry money' (75) and rely on beauty and social graces to make her way in the world. Education for girls of good family is restricted to accomplishments, rather than mastery of knowledge and discourse. Lilian's mastery of Shakespeare, that signifier par excellence of English literary culture, establishes her as an artist figure, but that desire is thwarted by the conventions of colonial patriarchy: '*Women do not need education*, Father pronounced regularly over the leg of lamb. *Women's aptitudes lie in other directions*' (77-78). Her desire to take herself 'seriously', to be a doctor, scientist, explorer, philosopher—in short, a hero—comes at the price of being 'pretty', and Lilian plays on her family's adherence to genteel convention to get her own way. Lilian simply plants her 'trunk-like legs' further apart, insisting '[t]hen I will be going to university', to ensure there were no 'misunderstandings' (78). It is this desire that brings her into conflict with her father. The tyranny of Albion's expectations reflects the culture's inflexibility in assigning roles for women beyond those based on marriage and childbearing. The models of female madness in the novel illustrate a colonial politics and policing of femininity. If the compliant and archetypally 'feminine' characters such as Norah can be considered mad because they manifest disorders such as hysteria and female invalidism, and the resistant woman is also positioned as mad for failing to comply, then surely it is the logic of patriarchy that is itself mad. It is not women's madness that is Grenville's central theme, but the 'logic' of patriarchy which manifests in

extreme male violence and delusion in the scene of white colonial possession that forms the nation.

Colonial Psychosis: Fictions of Colonial Manliness

Albion, that representative of English imperialism, is a 'man of moustaches and shiny boots' (5), bringing the figure of Hitler to mind, a figure that recurs in Sylvia Plath's poem 'Daddy', and which, in my reading, links Albion textually to the fascism of the imperial enterprise. The associations are immediately evident to the reader (or writer) trained in the practice and analysis of literature. Masculine power is enshrined in Albion's positioning as 'master' of discourse, a position which Grenville destabilises early in the novel. In almost all of Albion's dialogue, he trumpets facts, as these are what he relies upon, and insists upon, to order, or impose order on, the world. This insistence is designed to shore up his position as head of the family and to represent his mastery of knowledge and of discourse: '*What is a fact, Lil*? John wanted to know. *It is all the things that Father knows*, I said, and wished I had a better answer' (20). Although Albion, in his role as the male and the father, represents language and the (symbolic) Law-of-the-Father, it is clear to Lilian that he does not have mastery over the language, and that, consequently, his power in the family is not sovereign. Albion complains:

> *My ideas are a terrible burden. I carry a weight of ideas that must be set down*. But [Lilian observes] however many slices of newspaper were cut out, however many headlines riffled through, there was never the squeak of a nib over paper when I crept up to listen. (29)

Albion is apparently a writer, but the 'facts' he attempts to document pile up in the corners of his study, yellowing with age, finally 'overwhelming' him (39). Lilian knows that Albion is 'silenced by facts' when he is struck down by a 'nervous'

illness (41). Albion's breakdown is precipitated by a storm of facts, but these are facts about women that he cannot seem to order:

> *Fifty-one percent of births are female*, Father trumpeted. *That is why there are old maids. But one female child out of four is dead by the age of three. The fact is they lack will* … So many facts were overwhelming Father, and he was becoming agitated. *Lilian, are you paying attention to me?* Mother made a noise like a parrot as Father's hand began to hit the tablecloth and the wineglasses danced. *Albion, Albion*, she called, but Father would not stop, the Japanese ladies shook on the wall in the storm of facts, Alma came in with junket and stood shivering against the wall, and finally it was Cook with her red face and mottled arms who ran in heavy-footed and flung water in Father's face while everyone screamed. (38)

Albion's episode concludes the section entitled 'Running in the Family', a clear indication that Grenville locates madness within the bourgeois family, but also within colonial society. It is the servant class who take control here, notwithstanding Alma's fear. The servants are paragons of common sense and practicality. As Ussher shows, hysteria and other disorders of 'frailty' afflicted middle-class women, as working-class women 'did not have time to be mad' (90). Yet, the servants are constructed as white, unmarked by 'race'. I note an absence here of Aboriginal women, who were removed from their families and 'trained' to take up positions as the servant class for white society under Protection Acts and Segregation policies, suggesting Grenville may have been unaware of these policies. Indeed, national awareness of the work patterns for Aboriginal people established under racist white policies and regimes really became well-known only in the 1990s, postdating the publication of *Lilian's Story*. Oral history projects such as 'White Aprons, Black Hands' by Aboriginal historian Jackie Huggins provide a new social history of

Australian practices of training Aboriginal women to become domestic servants in white kitchens, contributing to a more balanced public memory about Australia's official political culture of racism (Huggins, *Sister Girl*, 124).

Albion's nervous collapse is brought on by two incidents. The first is his growing awareness that the community of men he circulates in consider him a 'no-hoper' (34), finding his frustrated attempts to complete his book laughable. The second is the immense mental conflict he experiences in trying to sustain projections of himself as adequate and respectable, in the face of allegations raised by his sister, Kitty, that his brotherly relations with her have not been entirely appropriate. These allegations are implicit and coded, but threaten to surface at various points in the text (37, 162). After Albion hears that Norah has been visiting his sister, these threats begin to disturb him. Albion constructs Kitty as unstable, evidenced by her alcoholism, her eccentricities and her dishevelment, a state which connects her to inappropriate and scandalous eruptions of uncontrollable female sexuality in the colonial imagination. These constructions are the way he conceives of all women: '*The fact is, Kitty is the work of the devil*, Father called down the table to Mother. *It is a long-established fact that women are the familiars of Satan*' (38). In order to inflate himself, he must bring down women who threaten to unmask him. Albion uses 'facts' as a strategy for increasing his own power, questioning the credibility of women's experience, and constructing them all as either mad or evil. Kitty's 'knowledge' (in the Biblical sense) of Albion is a secret that penetrates Albion's screen of facts, and has the power to expose him. Albion's dialogue overwrites and protects him from Kitty's allegation. It is significant that it is Kitty's counter-knowledge and anti-language that precipitate Albion's illness and result in his temporary silencing. Kitty may be an alcoholic, but she is not without agency. It is she who will secure Lilian's release from the asylum later in the text, with threats of

blackmail (162). She therefore represents a limited form of female power. Albion's strategy of over-writing marks Lilian's early and tentative realisation that the relationship to knowledge and the social world is different for men than for women. As the French feminists Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous argue, language is central to the social contract that positions women as secondary citizens within culture, whether according to their maternal role or to their bodies. This relationship to systems of power, language and meaning, in which men are privileged, is integral to Albion's insistence that his sister Kitty, as a woman, is an unreliable witness. This reflects Albion's higher position in the order of discourse.

Albion's illness 'could not be defined', but is vaguely referred to as 'nervous prostration' by doctors brought in to treat him as he lies 'month after month in his darkened room, waiting to get better or die' (41). His breakdown returns the home to a pre-oedipal state, as it is at this point that Norah reveals her capacity to stop being 'ill'. Grenville suggests that Albion's hysterical illness has supplanted Norah's, but also that Norah's 'female' malady has a different aetiology: with Albion removed, she can take control of the house, replacing with new-found 'authority' the missing door to his room (41). The controlling panoptic consciousness of Albion as male is stopped by this simple action. There are several ways to read Albion's breakdown. Firstly, his illness replicates the 'nervous' disorder of the female hysteric. His illness marks a breakdown between denial and knowledge: his silence shivers with the untold 'facts' about incestuous and deforming sexual relationships with Kitty and Norah. Albion's retreat into silence recalls Kristeva's argument that both poetic writing and madness signify a return to the repressed maternal, and to the semiotic stages that exist pre-language or at its limits. For Kristeva, a flight into madness is 'an attempt by the subject to escape society and communication by taking refuge in a mystical state that can be extremely regressive and narcissistic' (Kristeva, 'A

question of subjectivity', 136). Albion's breakdown consists of just such a retreat and refusal. His escape into silence is a refusal to submit to the order of communication, and he retreats into unintelligibility. While there are problems in accepting pre-oedipal space as maternal, mystical, and before speech, reading Albion as silenced and powerless within that space is a political act. That silence is considered a failure of language and a retreat into unintelligibility correlated with femininity in psychoanalysis is a problem for psychoanalysis and its naturalisation of gendered power relations. Silence resonates with the unspoken, so it can be read as a speech act too, because silence is not an empty space, but brimful with shimmering unsayables. It can operate as a sign of what it is culturally impermissible to say, as it does for Lilian. For Albion, though, his nervous prostration is an indicator that he has lost his nerve. Albion's failure to assemble the disparate facts that will make up his book is an emblem of the precarious masculinity he embodies. The 'naming' of reality that the book attempts to explore reveals his frustrated desire not only to wield the Law of the Father, but also to insert his ideas into the symbolic economy of patriarchal discourse as a writer of repute. This fantasy will never be realised, as the depths of his madness unfold, pitching him and the family into greater danger.

This offers another way forward in interpreting Albion's madness. His illness shivers with the untold 'facts' about incestuous and deforming sexual relationships with Kitty and Norah. If we read silencing as Irigaray does, as a metaphorical reinsertion of the hymen into the Imaginary, then Albion's silencing functions both as a rupture and a block, which can be understood as a simultaneous refusal to avow the incest and as a signal to its presence (Luce Irigaray, 'Sex as sign', 142). This places him in the order of psychosis, as disavowal is governed both by the 'acceptance of reality and its simultaneous refusal', sustaining opposing but co-existing attitudes to save the subject from psychotic collapse (Grosz, *Space, Time*

and Perversion, 148). The hostile messages he decodes in Kitty's texts betray the suspicion characteristic of paranoid 'logic' which forces a delusional misreading to count for evidence of a 'truth', even though the rules and evidence that structure this misreading are understood 'from outside the space of paranoia, to which the paranoid is blind' to be blatantly false (Lucy, 13). In this way, irrational fears are mobilised as 'evidence' that the paranoid's experience is 'real'. In this sense, his use of language may be understood as a form of hyper-logic marked by over-coding and over-determination, particularly in his distorted constructions of women. Albion overwrites facts with his own distorted interpretations, to conceal the truth by projecting a more palatable version of events. This conforms to the adoption of hebephrenic strategies (Hodge and Mishra, 217) to wilfully refuse, misrecognise and re-present reality by composing 'innocent' counter-versions of reality, a strategy that becomes increasingly visible in his construction of Lilian as mad later in the novel. His creation of psychotic fictions, metonymic worlds to stand in for the terrible truth of his relationships with women, is fuelled by intense mental conflict. The mental energy required to produce and maintain this fictional world comes at a cost. For Albion, the cost is breakdown, as the two irreconcilable realities struggle for psychic dominion.

It functions only as a caesura, however, as Albion enjoys over-determined relationships to language and power that allow him to rationalise away his faults. His re-instatement as family patriarch occurs when he rises from his breakdown to dominate the home once again with his facts. Like Lazarus rising from the ashes (again recalling Plath's 'Lady Lazarus'), he recovers, and his 'voice was all around us in the house again' (66). His recovery is marked by a retreat from facts to 'insistent question after question' (69), and a renewed bullying of his children, especially the more vulnerable John. At this point, Grenville likens Albion to an

'angry cobra', marking the end of the Edenic period where the family was governed by Norah, and a re-insertion into the Law of the Father. This period also marks a post-colonial consciousness, as facts are replaced by questions, while the previous male colonial order is opened to deeper questioning.

The Grotesque Body: Countering Colonial Disorder

The signifiers of postcolonial society traced by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra (204) can also be traced in *Lilian's Story*. There is a dysfunctional family life marked by 'double messages' about what it means to be a respectable family. This circulates against a paranoia about gender norms that manifests in the ugly rape that Albion uses to (re)establish his domination of women and children. Lilian adopts 'anti-languages' to survive her father's abuses, as she sees through Albion's strategy of over-writing women's speech, and develops linguistic strategies of her own to counter her father's power. Her father's tyranny is encoded in scenes where Albion resorts to violence to teach Lilian to obey the strictures of feminine decorum. These episodes are emblematic of sadomasochistic sexual practices, with Lilian forced to present her naked buttocks to Albion, while he beats her with a belt. He first beats Lilian when she overhears him crying in despair that his sister Kitty 'shame[s]' him and 'hate[s]' him, but Lilian resists this by dissociating from the experience and externalising her body: '*It is only skin*, I told myself … I was laughing to feel the belt singe my skin' (17-18). For her 'crimes', Lilian must be punished, so that the beatings become a 'familiar' part of the family routine (19). The first beating is followed by the section entitled 'Leviathan' which opens with the details of Lilian's growing appetite. By choosing to eat, Lilian asserts her bulk as a weapon against her father's cruelty: 'Now I was fat. *I am a fat girl*, I whispered in bed … I had grown big and could knock people down if I took a run at them, and block doorways, and

there was too much flesh now for Father' (18-19). Fatness is associated a few pages later with the metaphor of crustaceans, whose shell signifies armature and protection against external predators, and is juxtaposed with John's refusal of food. The development of eating disorders by both children are responses to Albion's bullying, with John refusing to eat anything but loud and crunchy vegetables that drown out his father's voice, and his ambition to be 'a deaf man' underscores this (21-22). Later in the novel, skin is explicitly identified as a form of 'armour' after Lilian's feet harden from her many barefoot walks to the beach at night: 'My feet renewed themselves endlessly. Such hide was enviable. I wondered if it could be encouraged to form all over a body such as mine, that had such need of armour' (138). This strategy situates her outside the conventions of colonial femininity normalised within her cultural milieu. Ursula concerns herself with Lilian's fatness, offering advice, a dressmaker, and the pronouncement: 'You do not have to be the way you are' (80), to which Lilian responds that she 'would be a mediocre pretty girl' and was 'too arrogant to be mediocre' (81). This sequence occurs in the vignette entitled 'Choices I Have Made', suggesting that Lilian's rejection of the social mores of colonial femininity is freely chosen. Lilian wears her fatness like an emblem of the social codes she rejects, for her size takes her out of the marriage market, making university a real possibility.

Lilian's refusal to conform to colonial codes of femininity, signified by her obese body, can also be read as a linguistic strategy, if we read the body as a textual body. At this point in the text, she conforms to models of the female grotesque, which consider images of fat women as 'apt expressions of colonial or post-colonial opposition to imperialism' (Dorothy Jones, 'The post-colonial belly laugh', 20). The desire for women to conform to a colonial ideal of gentility and frailty hinges upon the control of appetite and the body, so that middle and upper-class colonial women

were required to embody the docile female bodies that corresponded to the prevailing currency of ideas about femininity in the masculinist scientific imagination: corseted and insipid. Against these patriarchal norms, the grotesque woman takes up a posture of unruliness:

> characterised by excessive size, excessive garrulousness, or both … That the unruly woman eats too much and speaks too much is no coincidence; both involve failure to control the mouth. Nor are such connotations of excess innocent when they are attached to the *female* mouth. They suggest that the voracious and shrewish female mouth, the mouth that both consumes (food) and produces (speech) to excess, is a more generalised version of that other, more ambivalently conceived female orifice, the vagina. Together they imply an intrinsic relation among female fatness, female garrulousness, and female sexuality. (Kathleen Rowe, *The Unruly Woman*, 36-37: emphasis Rowe's)

The grotesque body acts as a semiotic refusal of the symbolic and cultural constraints of femininity, offering alternative models of femininity as transgressive, unruly and disorderly. Lilian certainly operates as an example of the unruly woman, both through her fatness and her excessive speech, demonstrating the unruly woman's refusal to be either silent or silenced. Lilian's performance of the grotesque therefore operates as a language of the body that signifies the contestation of national codes of gender.

Kathleen Rowe argues that the grotesque woman violates the 'natural' order of male authority, effecting 'gender inversion' to take up a position as 'woman-on-top': 'her fatness, pregnancy, age, or loose behaviour' act as emblems of disorderliness by giving 'rein to the "wild" lower part of herself' (34-35). Her rebelliousness and unruliness refuse the codes of hegemonic femininity prevailing in colonial and patriarchal cultures. Dorothy Jones argues in 'The post-colonial belly laugh' that

'images of large bodied women and devouring women' act as 'powerfully transgressive' protests against patriarchy, rejecting the 'confining limits imposed on female behaviour and desire in a male dominated culture' (20). In 'Female Grotesques', Mary Russo argues that the grotesque body performs as spectacle to refuse a 'cultural politics for women' located in 'radical negation, silence, withdrawal, and invisibility' and therefore operates as a powerful symbol of transgression (319). Lilian's fatness is a sign of this at work in the colonial project. It is strategic, in that it allows her to move outside the constricting zones of patriarchal colonial femininity.

There are some limits to an analysis of Lilian as the unruly woman of female grotesque theory, however. Connecting fatness and excessive speech to the unruly woman can also reinscribe loss of control, so that disorderliness can be re-positioned as madness. As Rowe notes:

> The grotesque body is above all the female body, the maternal body, which, through menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation, participates uniquely in the carnivalesque drama of "becoming", of inside-out and outside-in, death-in-life and life-in-death. (33-34)

Women are always already marked by their relationship to the (grotesque) body, because the female body is situated on thresholds between life and death, especially in their regenerative capacity of giving birth. In Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the carnivalesque, the grotesque is marked by the bodily processes of 'eating, drinking, defecating, copulating', rhetorically aligning the female body with the grotesque body (Rowe, 33). Women therefore occupy a privileged location to the grotesque body that is fraught with misogyny. For Rowe, 'men transgress in their actions; women transgress in their being, through the very nature of their bodies, not as subjects' (34). More problematically, the tradition also defines such women as

'pig-women', who destabilise the border between animal and human through their 'grossness':

> the pig's semiotic status, especially its proverbial dirtiness, arises less from its actual habits than from its symbolic location in a place of ambiguity, its association with a *liminality* close to the symbolic boundaries that order social experience and mark the frontiers between nature and culture … The liminality that accounts for the pig's status is also the source of the power the unruly woman taps into—the power to destabilise old frameworks and create new ones. (Rowe, 41: emphasis Rowe's)

Thus, the unruly woman is culturally imprinted with abjection, making her 'especially vulnerable to pollution taboos because by definition she transgresses boundaries and steps out of her proper place', residing 'neither where she belongs nor in any other legitimate position' (Rowe, 42-43). The unruly woman's refusal to take up her 'proper place' has resulted in punishments including accusations of witchcraft, hysteria and madness. As Russo warns, theories of the female grotesque are essentially conservative and linked to the 'political history of domination', as images of the carnivalesque woman provide 'symbolic models of transgression' which can simultaneously reinforce as well as undermine the existing social order. The rituals, inversions, status reversal and 'topsy-turvy or time out' signified by the carnival are 'inevitably set right and on course', therefore acting as evidence of 'the reinforcement of social structure, hierarchy and order' to 'redefine social frames' (320-321).

Although Lilian can be read as an unruly woman who deploys her bulk as a defence against her father's abuses, it is her refusal of the docile, elegant body of bourgeois convention that first marks her as mad. Lilian's resistance to the social structures that govern the performance of femininity in the colonial context will have

serious repercussions as Albion seeks to re-impose his Law as literal Father and as representative and inheritor of white patriarchal sovereignty through physical and sexual violence. This misogynistic desire to control the 'untamed' female takes the form of rape, followed by committal to an insane asylum. Thus, Lilian's disorderliness is 'set right' and the colonial order is re-established through Albion's acts of violent repression. A further problem is that reading the fat body as a mode of opposition to patriarchal control of the untamed female also tends to limit appetite to the domain of food. Appetite is a metaphor for other kinds of desire, including sexual desire. Therefore Lilian's relationship to food also signifies, at least for Albion, an excess that metonymically connects the mouth with the vagina, and the food she puts into her body with the insertion of the penis. Through the discourse of colonial paranoia, Albion distorts Lilian's hunger for life, for intellectual activity, for experience, to an uncontrollable and voracious female sexuality.

In the colonial context, constructions of gender are inflected by discourses of colonial paranoia about race and female sexual purity. Men occupy such a privileged relation to Australian identity, that masculinity is constructed not only as the representative quality of Australianness, but also as a *national* condition (David Carter, *Dispossession*, 384). As I argue in Chapter Two, the construction of colonial 'manliness' defines femininity as the repudiated and disavowed spectre from which men have to split off to sustain their masculine identities. In a signifying economy of abjection, femininity represents the fear of colonial 'dirt' as the realm where white fears about racial purity circulate. Discourses of race and discourses of gender intersect in these constructions, as colonial anxieties about racial purity are defined against anxieties about the female body as the site for degeneracy. Sexual desire in the imperial context is highly regulated, as fears of miscegenation and anxieties about racial purity are located in the female body as generative and reproductive site

for the furthering of the nation. Hence, imperialism requires a certain type of colonial manliness, in which aggressive imperialism and racial 'fitness', integral to the civilising imperative that constitutes the white man's burden, constructed white men as protectors not only of white women, but of the white nation itself. This invests men with excessive power to regulate female sexuality and to police white women in establishing the patriarchal order. Imperialism also requires a racial hierarchy to justify the abuses involved in the building of the white nation, against which women and Aboriginal peoples are positioned as a threatening Otherness. As I argue throughout this thesis, the projection of 'the nation' as a totalising unity requires the construction of an abjected threatening Other that the fantasy of unification seeks to simultaneously incorporate and suppress. The normalising of colonial paranoia demonstrates the problem that images of grotesque women pose for theorising the postcolonial, as women are 'burdened by a twice-disabling discourse: the disabling master discourse of colonialism is then redirected against women in an exact duplication of the coloniser's own use of that discourse *vis á vis* the colonised in the first instance' (Mishra and Hodge, 'What is post(-) colonialism?', 39).

Throughout the text, these colonial discourses are visible in the ways that Albion justifies his control of Lilian, conflating discourses of racial and sexual purity. Several times in the text, he associates Lilian's wildness with fears of racial contagion. The first occurs in the section entitled 'Running Wild':

> My feet have always been broad. *Nigger's feet,* Father said suddenly one day, seeing them up on a chair, and looked shocked. Later he felt it necessary to apologise. *It just slipped out, Lilian. We are all human.* His smile looked tortured. (137)

Albion tells Lilian that she is 'an example of the degeneracy of the white races' (178), linking fears of racial degeneracy to female sexuality. The language of racism

and the language of misogyny collide in Lilian's body as the site for an exported culture starting to 'run amok' in the colonial wilds (Young, *Colonial Desire*, 174).

Cannibalism and Colonialism: Rape and the Fantasy of Colonial Possession

Albion's madness takes the form of increasingly controlling incursions into Lilian's life, escalating into sexual violence and its denial. His decreasing hold on Lilian coincides with her entry into university, a symbolic entry into sexual representation where she meets boys with whom she has romantic, and indeed sexual, interludes. Albion reacts to his daughter's impending journey into womanhood 'excitedly', deriding Lilian's boyfriends, Duncan and FJ Stroud, as 'feeble lads' and '[w]ordless oafs' who do not embody the qualities of hegemonic white male colonial masculinity: the 'real men' of Australian folklore that Albion believes his own masculinity personifies (117). Lilian is sharing her body and its secrets with Duncan, kissing him at night on the beach, 'hungry for each next step, each new shape of skin', but the prohibition on female sexual desire is everywhere. '*You should not let me do this*,' Duncan admonishes, configuring Lilian as 'crazy', a 'devil', 'egging [him] on' (111). His pronouncement that Lilian is 'a mate' and a 'person of class' results in confusion, followed almost immediately by a 'silence' that 'began to congeal, and something cold crept up my spine' (111). Sexual feelings are accompanied by shame, because if Lilian is allowing Duncan to kiss her, then she must be allowing other men to do so, too, as Duncan makes clear. The sexual double standard is at work in these scenes, which challenge dominant constructions of women's sexuality. Women's desire is what they should not have, and Lilian's desire to explore her sexuality is regarded by the men around her as unnatural and unseemly. The only other man interested in Lilian is FJ Stroud, who would have

'been welcome to' explore Lilian's sexuality, but 'he had never tried' (110). Constructions of feminine sexuality in the white male Imaginary are challenged in these scenes, because if men want it, that is normal, but when women want it, they are not behaving according to the codes of femininity and respectability that they should adhere to. Male sexual desire is seen as the province of the human, while female sexual desire is 'unnatural'. Furthermore, Lilian's relationship with Joan, her university friend, dramatises a repressed lesbian sexuality in the scene on the boat where Joan removes Lilian's clothes and kisses the salt from her mouth (112-113). The sexual content of this event renders Lilian speechless: 'I could not tell what was happening, but knew that there had never been anyone like Joan before' (113-114). This repression of lesbian desire as an unacknowledged but pleasurable secret suggests another possibility for Lilian's sexuality, but it is foreclosed in the text.

Lilian's hunger for sexual experience threatens Albion's grip on patriarchal order. His suspicion that Lilian is 'getting up' to something with these boys forms one of the most powerful scenes of counter-discourse in the novel. Lilian's response that she gets up to nothing more than reciting Shakespeare with her friend Duncan is met with scorn and disbelief. Albion's 'laughter filled the room, flattening the roses, beating at the window to get out' (99). In response, Lilian recites Shakespeare in an attempt to drown out Albion's laughter:

> I did not look at him as I recited, but at the window where a branch swung backwards and forwards, applauding. Father did not stop laughing. *Oh, Lilian*, he crowed. *You are like one of those apes, taught to do things*. Then I could not stop, but felt my mouth shaping word after word, faster and faster, and on those hated pink roses saw page after page slipping over, thick with words. *Stop, Lilian, stop!* I heard Father shouting, and felt his hands on my shoulders. *Shut up, Lilian*. His voice was only a distant interruption to the words it was vital to

> keep reading to the roses. When he slapped my face I saw startled points of light before my eyes and a great ringing began in my ear. (99)

Far from being a performing monkey, Lilian has the power in language to challenge Albion's interpretation and to counter-pose her own experience and interpretations. Albion's strategy of overwriting the speech of women is defenceless against Lilian's strong voice, which fills up the room and drowns out his own. Lilian uses Albion's strategies against him. In this way, she can be considered to have mastered—and exceeded—the uses of language that symbolise masculine power. Although Lilian's words combat Albion's derision, she expresses here a sense of slipping away from herself. In escaping into the words of the master (Shakespeare), Lilian constructs a space for herself, albeit a dissociated space within her own psyche. Language has the capacity to fill up spaces in the room, and to overlay the roses, but it expresses an inner state of alienation and dissociation. This fluidity suggests the collapse of boundaries that is a marked feature of disordered states, but it also demonstrates the instability of the linguistic system, and its inability to order violent or aberrant experience. It is significant that Lilian's behaviour is explained away by her mother, Norah, as having been brought on by 'her time of the month' (99). Any challenge to paternal (and therefore patriarchal) authority must be constructed as an assault of disordered femininity upon rational sense: it is as if Lilian's reason has been hijacked by her hormones.

Albion's control of Lilian takes on a quality of erotic domination, as his interactions with her betray increasingly sado-masochistic impulses. '*You are a tight little vixen*, Father said as if his teeth were clenched on the words. *A tight and seamy vixen*' (117). Lilian, unable to 'move', remains at her desk 'feeling the blood pound in my face, and a great heat and congestion radiating from Father with his dark hidden trousers at eye level' (117). Albion's sexual arousal, heat, and engorgement

are mixed here with Lilian's shame, prefiguring the scene of the rape that comes a few pages later. For Albion, sexual behaviour is part of the bestial, as evidenced in his family outing to the Easter Show, in which he expresses the desire to '*remember the animal in us*' (121). Lilian manages to stay behind, to 'penetrate' the house's secrets, and it is this refusal to obey her father's dictates that results in Albion's return, and the act of rape that marks Lilian's body as the territory for male sexual control. Albion's loss of control over Lilian's body as she becomes a sexual being is the trigger for his re-assertion of that control through her body in the act of rape. It is significant that Lilian is raped just at the moment of discovering sexual pleasure, masturbating alone in the house with her mother's corset across her body when Father returns. For Lilian, sexual pleasure, *jouissance*, is interrupted and forever deferred:

> But Father could not let me achieve that, and filled the doorway before I could break apart and fly free of my body. All sound was drawn away into the tiles and past the windows. I watched as everything else fled and Father and I were left with each other …
>
> In every room of the house, the air that I had stilled fled, and was replaced by trembling and fearful vibrations. I could hear my voice, a thin reedy cry like something choking and not being rescued. Father said nothing at all, but the sound of his breathing was like a thudding machine in the silence. All around us the house stood shocked, repelling the sounds we made. (125)

The act of rape is sparsely described, and the focus is externalised onto the walls and rooms of the house. The externalisation of the assault so that it is the house that is shocked signifies an evacuation of the body at the same time as it is filled. Lilian is outside her body, left to 'watch', signifying depersonalisation and dissociation, indicated by her consciousness floating into 'every room of the house'

throughout the rape. Her voice is reduced to a thin reedy cry, and a 'feeble piping sound' as she says 'No', echoing her mother's nightly refusals of sex. Grenville seems to indicate that in the crime of rape, the politics of consent mean women's voices go unheard. Albion drowns out her voice as a voice of opposition, and engulfs her, annihilating her body with his own.

Rape is a perversion of male sexual desire, for it is never simply a sexual act, but an act of power. Albion's act of violent incestuous rape places him inside the colonial symbolic economy, as rape can be read as a practice of writing, a textual practice in which his power over-writes Lilian's. Such a proposition relies upon a reading of the mad body, the grotesque body, as a textual body upon which the psychic wounds that accompany violent subjugation function as inscriptions upon the body: marks, signs, scars and symptoms that can be read. Lilian's obese body signifies her father's deformed and violent sexuality as it acts as a barrier against his physical abuses and beatings, as a form of armature in its creation of 'too much flesh'. But this is no protection against the act of sexual violence, in which Albion writes male power both on and inside Lilian's body. If we are to read Albion as the inheritor of sovereign masculine power, and his rape of Lilian as an act of both power and punishment, then Lilian's body produces its grotesque distortions as signs of Albion's grotesque acts of sexual violence against her. If Lilian is silenced by the crime of incest, then her body speaks for her. However, this reproduces the enduring trope of the colonised female as the territory upon which patriarchy writes itself.

A more productive way forward is to connect Albion to the signifying economy of colonialism as a form of cannibalism, which postcolonial theorising suggests is visible in strategies of devouring and engulfment. The act of devouring is a metaphor for the colonial project, in which white colonists can be read as

devouring all traces of Aboriginality, swallowing up the land, clearing it, and leaving signs of 'progress' characterised as white detritus, in its wake. These acts of devouring and engulfment comprise a form of cannibalism intrinsic to the practice of colonial power. Albion is a devouring figure, cannibalising his family with his sense of masculine entitlement, his regimes of marital rape, physical violence, and ultimately, in his rape of Lilian. Reading Albion's actions as a form of cannibalism also places them within the structures of colonial psychosis. The structures of colonial paranoia locate ungovernable female sexuality as the threat haunting the social order of colonial patriarchy, as the repressed underside of a masculinist culture that imprints women with abjection. Albion also imprints Lilian with abjection, as the site for colonial 'dirt' due to her 'unnatural' desire for sexual experiences. Lilian's sexual body functions as a site for the fantasy of white male colonial control that Albion seeks to impose upon her, as the textual surface upon which white male colonial patriarchy writes itself. She represents for Albion the repudiated feminine other from which he does not part, the abject into which, in his rape of her, he abjects himself. Thus, Albion's psychosis is not simply personal, not simply patriarchal, but an emblem of a wider colonial paranoia about women as the site for racial and sexual degeneracy. Lilian's body is a site for the inscription of the abuses of *colonial* power as well as *patriarchal* power.

Scrambling the Codes: Reframing the Eccentric

Reading Lilian's body as a text in this way encloses her inside the signifying economy of hysteria, where symptoms are read as 'pictographic' representations—signs—of what the body cannot speak. Lilian is silenced before she is committed, trying several times to tell her family what has happened, but she fails. Her estrangement from the linguistic system is expressed in metaphors of extreme

depersonalisation, as if language belongs to someone else, recalling Kristeva's suggestion that when women experience madness, they also question their relationship to language, and language itself as a logical exercise ('A question of subjectivity', 134-135).

> I tried to begin. *Mother*, I began, and stopped. I could not start the sentence that would tell her what had happened. My mouth and tongue were *someone else's* now [italics mine] and even the words that rose in my mind had nothing to do with me. Whatever had happened—and I would not ask myself just what that had been—had happened to a mass of flesh called Lilian, not to me. I cowered in that flesh, my self shrunk to the size of a pea, but still I tried to speak to Mother. Perhaps she would release me from it all, or take me over, or save me. So I began again. The sentence I had to say began with "Father..." so I tried to begin. *Father*, I said. (126)

Her mother responds with a joke: '*I am not Father, Lilian, I am Mother*'. This passage shimmers with the possibility that Norah might know something of what has happened to Lilian, as the two parental figures are conflated. Furthermore, John almost certainly knows: 'From behind his dull face, John's eyes watched me and almost knew what I had to say, but he did not want to hear me say it' (126). John's suppression of the facts, facts that admittedly threaten his own suicidal fragmentation—remember that he would like to be 'dead' (141)—correspond to a hebephrenic refusal to acknowledge the truth. Finally, when Lilian attempts to tell Kitty, she 'could not make the words come ... either' (126). All Lilian can utter is 'Father ...'. The elision stands in for the words she cannot find, because 'all the words I had ever learned did not seem enough, or the right ones' (127). Lilian's mastery of discourse collapses under the crisis of meaning and structure imposed by the rape. This would seem to confirm that she enters the state of psychosis that

Kristeva contends is characterised by crises of meaning, subject and structure that the subject is no longer able to order. Kristeva argues that madness is a mystical and regressive retreat to a pre-linguistic *disorder*, in which the symbolic order of language collapses. This is evident in Lilian's linguistic strategies of silence, which she experiences in the immediate aftermath of the rape, and in her strategy of excessive speech, characterised by metaphors of fluidity and an inability to correctly decode signs and symbols which occurs on her release from the asylum. I turn first to silence as it forms the ground for Lilian to be re-coded by Albion as mad, prefiguring her committal.

As I argue above, silence can be understood as a site of repression or suppression, a space that contains, or is overloaded with, meanings that the subject is unable to order or to express. In this sense, silence functions as the abjected spectre within language, a mystical space of refuge from realities that threaten the subject with annihilation. Lilian's silencing reflects this estrangement from the social world, her escape into an inner world. She is silenced also upon her release from the mental hospital, a release secured by Kitty's blackmail of Albion. As the negative counterpart to speech, silence can be considered a 'speech act' that expresses women's subjugation, articulating women's sense of being dis-articulated in the patriarchal signifying economy that reduces women to their sexual and procreative functions. In this sense, silence figures as a rejection of the signifying systems of patriarchal languages and systems that justify women's secondary positioning in culture. Dramatising women's powerlessness, silence can be read as a text of refusal. Lilian's years in the 'loony bin' also figure as a kind of silence in the text, as her experience there is recounted in less than 12 pages (149-162). This silence endures for a year, and Lilian reflects:

> I could not move just yet, although I knew that when Aunt Kitty had gone I would be able to send my being out beyond my flesh into the empty space of this room, and begin to fill it. Finally … I would be able to take a place in this larger world beyond the walls, but just now I had mislaid all my words and all the movements I could make, and was not used to having money in my hand, and a room of my own. (162)

The focus here is on Lilian being able to retrieve her lost self, and to fill it up again, a metaphor of fluidity that testifies to psychosis.

Psychosis is stylistically marked by metaphors of fluidity and depersonalisation. Numerous metaphors of fluidity occur throughout the text to suggest the order of psychosis: 'Cars were embracing' (218); 'Father's death made me weightless' (185); 'I felt myself expanding' (191). Lilian alternates between feeling shrunken and 'larger than life' (198), enjoying her status as a 'public figure' (201). Feelings of disassociation are externalised: she speaks *at* people, not *to* them (201); at her 'birthday' party, 'King Street stood and stared', and her 'guests' had no idea they were participating (219). Even the tram driver, who yells at Lilian to get out of the way, has a secret birthday message for Lilian which only she can decode. She accosts people like Lord Kitchener whom she wrongly believes is in love with her, is arrested, and makes a spectacle of herself. She becomes, in other people's eyes, 'mad'. The emphasis on Lilian's inability to decode the signs indicates the collapse of boundaries and the order of psychosis. This is first signalled in the text when at last Lilian 'dares to speak' again, bragging about the virginity she claims to possess: '*I will show you my hymen if you like,* I threatened. *It is rare, a collector's item* (166). Lilian's new relationship to language will be marked by an excess, signified by the rupture of the hymen during her rape by her father. Her insistence that her hymen has been reinstated recalls Irigaray's suggestion that the hymen

functions as the blocker or boundary set up by the imposition of the incest taboo. In *Lilian's Story*, the prohibition is removed during Albion's act of rape. The hymen circulates in the psychic Imaginary in the form of a 'frozen metonymy', but also comprises linguistic strategies of metaphor and metonymy which 'represent a displacement of the hymen. It even presupposes that displacement can become its unique placement' ('Sex as sign, 142). In *Lilian's Story*, the prohibition is removed during Albion's act of rape. Meaning becomes fluid and unstable, reflecting the dissolution of boundaries that is a marked feature of psychosis.[58] The hymen re-emerges in Lilian's external world where it structures a new and more palatable version of reality. In restoring her 'virginity', Lilian simultaneously affirms and disavows her experience of rape. Her insistence upon the presence of her hymen explains both the silence—in which Lilian's closed lips attest to the incest experience—and her excessive speech, which signals the rupture of the hymen and the breach of boundaries. Unlike Albion, Lilian is not in denial about the breaching of the hymen. Lilian's new relationship to language acknowledges the unspeakable crime her father has committed against her, leaching from her, even if it is displaced, re-coded, and scrambled. Lilian takes pleasure in her uses of excessive speech, using them to destabilise the codes of patriarchal colonial femininity that circumscribe her relation to the social world, and writing herself into the Sydney streetscape. Lilian's speeches on trams enact the possibility to be the storyteller she had always wanted to be (213), and although she knows that she is a comic figure, she revels in her role. She delights in the freedom that madness inscribes upon her, indulging not only in pleasures of the *flâneuse*, but also in the pleasures of *frottage*, where she rubs up against the policemen who arrest her:

[58] If silence is a frozen metonymy, then psychosis, in its insistence upon the instability of meaning, is a fluid metonymy. The inability to order or decode signs suggests that the linguistic system collapses when signs are over-burdened with meaning. When signs become so difficult to decode, then the order of language and representation has failed.

> I liked the feel of those strong arms around me, longed to be held even tighter, and struggled so that a second policeman had to be brought along, and finally I stood with the arms of two powerful men around me, and that was a kind of love, and consoled me. (187)

She refuses to be mad, but she enjoys being a maverick. There is something powerful in the 'ramblings of the asocial' and the 'rantings of the "psychotic"' that Lilian celebrates (Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 133). In escaping to the streets, in refusing to sleep inside, Lilian takes up her ex-centric place as a celebration of her eccentricity. This marks Lilian's 'recovery', as she takes up a location as disorderly, rather than disordered woman, imprinting herself into colonial memory. Lilian's strategy of disorderliness marks her as a figure of resistance to colonial as well as patriarchal control, as she places herself outside the hyper-rational logic of abjection by which the Law of the Father is reinscribed in the colonial context.

Schizoid Nation: The Colonial Fantasy and the Ex-Centric White Woman

The abjected zones that Lilian inhabits are the asylum, which stands as an emblem of patriarchal law, being the zone of abjection in which Lilian is confined. However, there are other zones of abjection that Lilian willingly retreats to: the streets where the prostitutes, male and female, offer Lilian a haven of sorts on her release from the asylum, secured by Kitty's 'blackmailing' of Albion (162), and the bush. In several sections after the rape, Lilian flees to these zones, which are located outside, or at the limits of, colonial patriarchal law. In 'Running Away' (129), Lilian ventures to a 'flat ochre town' in the country, while in 'Running Wild', she escapes the house at night to wander on the headland close to the house (137). In Grenville's hands, this works as an emblem of Lilian's resistance to patriarchal control. Grenville's engagement with nationalism and federation, and the establishment of a counter-history of

women's place within the nation, proceeds by placing Lilian outside the nation, and as extrinsic to colonial space and time. In this, she works to connect Lilian to the production of national identity, by inscribing the bush as a space for Lilian's belonging. Ross Gibson, discussing the use of the Australian landscape in Australian film in 'Camera Natura', contends that landscape is used as a cultural text to signify uniqueness, difference and a distinctly Australian identity, so that the landscape 'has been transmuted into an element of myth, into a sign of supra-social Australian-ness' (214). On her nightly walks on the headland, where the track becomes 'less and less certain', Lilian becomes 'more and more comfortable as it became harder to imagine that anyone had been here before' (137). By connecting Lilian to national identity through the trope of the bush, Grenville provides a feminist critique of women's symbolic homelessness in patriarchal cultures. By re-inserting Lilian into the 'natural world', she re-encodes the bush as a feminised space from which women have been notoriously absent in the construction of Australia's national myth-making. The bush is located as exterior to Australian patriarchy in this fantasy of otherness, signified by a detritus of mattresses, old bicycle wheels, and broken bottles on the track that mark it as uninscribed by colonial order.

In the white Imaginary, the bush and the beach are liminal zones, demarcating the rigid boundaries between nature and culture. Australian writing, as Kay Schaffer has shown, has inscribed the bush as feminised space, populated by dangerous forces, to signify the boundaries of the white nation (*Women and the Bush*, 102). In the white Australian Imaginary, the bush figures as woman, as a space to conquer, to violate, to possess. Jennifer Rutherford argues that Australian mythologising of the bush enacts a fantasy of 'the primal mother, the monstrous, devouring being that is ever-present, threatening to devour the explorer, the drover, the child', so that the institution of the Law of the Father to 'tame' this primal being justifies the

patriarchal and the colonial project (197). The bush is *the* iconic landscape of the Australian legend, in which white men as drovers, builders, and pioneers *penetrate* the interior. All this activity constructs the bush as passivity, linking it in the white Imaginary to a zone of 'empty' wilderness to be tamed, as a signifier of white male possession. Men also extend the frontiers of 'civilisation', so that Australia is understood to be constructed through a set of male 'birthing' rituals (McClintock, 29). The process of constructing Australia is as much a process of inventing it, and of yoking the landscape to a national identity on which a powerful social script and cultural fiction of Australianness can be written. David Carter argues that while the bush is represented as female in these processes of inscription, this constitutes a process of white male over-writing in which women and Aboriginal people are notably absent (*Dispossession*, 146).

Grenville, I suggest, falls into these traps, because in re-inserting Lilian into these landscapes, she also re-inscribes the bush as a signifier of white Australian possession, so that Lilian occupies the 'empty' space of the colonial fantasy as the prop of a founding fantasy of *terra nullius*. The bush track to the beach figures as a dumping-ground of white Australian objects, or as a set of white middens, which signify 'progress' (137). Lilian needs these objects 'to steer [her] through' (137), because without these markers of white civilisation, the space would be uninscribed and terrifying. The track to the beach is also signified as Aboriginal space, unfolding 'like a dry snakeskin', to wander 'more and more like a tune someone was making up from moment to moment' (137-8), recalling both the Rainbow Serpent and the Songlines of the Aboriginal Dreamings. Gibson notes that landscape is used in Australian artistic production as 'the sign of nature, as opposed to the sign of a sign', so that the 'unsubjected outback', 'uncivilisable centre' and 'unknowable heartland' operate as 'gravitational' poles for the white colonial imagination, harnessing

identity as a form of 'self-definition' to a 'more "native" vision', 'waiting for the land of Dreamtime to stamp itself on the culture' (215, 220). The land has been mythologised within the *white* Australian Imaginary as a form of Dreaming, yoking Aboriginal ways of knowing and being to white Australian narratives of 'belonging'. However, notions of an *Australian* Dreaming are acts of white possession and cultural appropriation. Appropriation requires taking from Aboriginal culture and translating this to a white experience of dis/location and un/belonging, while simultaneously signifying the bush as a space which white Australia has lost in the process of constructing the nation. The Australian bush resonates in the white Imaginary as sacred space, but in ways that allow its secret meanings to nourish white Australians and un-settle Aboriginal people from the land.

Grenville's attempts to link Lilian to the mythologised 'bush' space, outside colonial order, in which she expresses her desire to be 'slim and black' (138), inscribe Aboriginality into the landscape, but in problematic ways. The desire that Lilian expresses to be black works as a form of cultural and ontological appropriation of Aboriginal claims to belonging. The white body of Lilian as colonial representative not only walks the space, but seeks to claim it. 'There had never been anyone but myself here on this road between scrub' (137). The colonial fantasy of *terra nullius* structures the work of an Australian writer who is otherwise concerned with questions of social justice. The imagery of an *un*populated landscape that is nevertheless deeply coded as Aboriginal speaks to a sense of the land as forming the uniquely Australian spirit, but it is a white Australian national spirit that is evoked. Lilian's obese body can therefore also be read as a metaphor for the devouring nature of the colonial enterprise, particularly on her nightly treks outside the family home that functions as the seat of colonial order and patriarchal control. Gender justice, as it is constructed in the practice of relegating Lilian to a space beyond the reach of the

colonial patriarchy, acts here to over-write and deterritorialise the injustice of Aboriginal dispossession.

The question of belonging to the nation results in an unsettling of Aboriginal narratives of belonging, because the bush is symbolically appropriated as an *Australian* Dreaming: 'Then I could sigh and lie back, feeling cool sand in my hair, and watch for the stars swinging low over me, until finally I was released from my flesh into dreams' (138). Grenville's appropriation arises from using a network of locations that are (dis)placed to a zone outside culture to signify the dislocation of women in the colony. This passage, with its metaphors of restfulness and escape from flesh, constitutes the bush space as mystical and spiritual, but in ways that over-write Aboriginal Australia's claims to space. It is only the signifiers of white 'progress' as detritus that recuperate the scene from a totalising fantasy of white possession, although these waste products operate to signify women as the abjected 'dirt' of patriarchy, rather than as a critique of the colonial project. Lilian works as a leitmotif for the devouring nature of the colonial enterprise, rather than against it. The notion that the fat woman, the devouring woman, is anti-colonial, as Jones would argue, is undone in Grenville's writing of the female colonial subject. Lilian is complicit in the colonial enterprise. Thus, women's relationship to colonisation is inscribed as a reclamation of gendered space.

By noting that Aboriginal people constitute an absence in this novel, I do not wish to suggest that Grenville's work is imperialist. Rather, I contend that the novel appears at a historical moment when a national consciousness of the treatment of Aboriginal people under Protection Acts and Assimilation policies was only beginning to emerge. In part, this was because Assimilation policies were abolished in some States as late as the early 1980s, and because Aboriginal writing as

discursive contestations of the white nation gained a 'critical mass' in the lead-up to the 1988 Bicentennial. This sparked a new national and historical consciousness about the strategies of exclusion and control by which the white nation was established, and *Lilian's Story* therefore pre-dates this. The strategies of exclusion, surveillance and control put in place to ensure that women did not pose a threat to the colonial order, which Grenville represents as violent repression in the form of rape, demonstrate a white feminist politics of writing place that Grenville consciously interrupts in her later postcolonial fictions. However, in *Lilian's Story*, it is white women's exclusion that is centralised. I suggest that Grenville reveals a white feminist politics that overlooks the ambivalent relationship that white women occupy in the colonial context as Mothers of Empire. Women as maternal imperialists are somehow excluded from the politics of colonialism, made 'innocent' by the casting of their experience of violent repression as victims or resistant subjects of patriarchy. Women's complicity in the imperial conquest is unrecognised. It is white women's place in the nation, their settlement or displacement, their belonging to or alienation from it, that are encoded in *Lilian's Story*. White imperialism is textually constructed as male, so that women as 'schizoid' settler/invader subjects escape the colonial frame. Grenville's later historical fiction engages more directly with these problems, as the women characters of *The Secret River* are implicated in the scene of race relations as the scene for the fantasy of white 'settlement'. This suggests that Australian fiction, even where it is concerned with relations of oppression and injustice, can still sketch the contours of a wider cultural pathology that covers over the traces of its violent colonial past.

Grenville's concern with the construction of Australian misogyny and the installation of patriarchy as the structure of national formation is addressed in *Dark Places*, which continues her investigation of the deformed gender ideals legitimised

in Australian culture. In Chapter Five, I turn to Albion as the representative of white colonial patriarchy, linking him to the abuses of the colonial project and the suppressed colonial memory that haunts the Australian nation.

CHAPTER FIVE: *DARK PLACES* AND THE WHITE NATION: COLONIAL MANLINESS AND NATIONAL FORMATIONS

> The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. (Psalm 74:20)

> Fathers have only to mistake effects for causes, believe in the reality of an "afterlife", or maintain the value of eternal truths, and the bodies of their children will suffer. (Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History')

> The despot is the paranoiac ... provided one sees in paranoia a type of investment of a social formation ... the imperial barbarian formation or the despotic machine ... a movement of deterritorialization that divides the earth as an object and subjects men to the new imperial inscription.
>
> The old inscription remains, but is bricked over by and in the inscription of the State. (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattarì, *Anti-Oedipus*, 212, 213)

Introduction: Founding Fathers: An Australian Patriarchy

In *Dark Places*, Kate Grenville offers a terrifying portrait of virulent misogyny in the figure of Albion Gidley Singer, to suggest that the forms of manhood sanctioned in Australian culture are pathologically disfigured. She maps Albion's development from his unhappy boyhood, shadowed by the conviction that he is a 'disappointment' (5) to his Father, through his adolescent sexual crises, to his taking up of violent manhood in his role as husband and father in the well-to-do suburbs of Sydney in the first decades after Federation. This trajectory follows Albion's transformation from a 'fat boy' (5) to a dessicated 'husk' of a man, 'waiting for decay' (327), who finally

atomises, returning to the 'void at the heart of self', 'that hissing whiteness that had always lain at the centre of all things', 'sucked out of himself like the marrow from a bone' (374). Albion covers up the emptiness that threatens to engulf him, taking up a hyper-masculine posture, as a blustering man whose 'rage' in the form of a 'toxic whiteness' fills him up (323). This is a dangerous man, ever 'coiled' like a snake, ready to 'spring' into action to quell those who humiliate him (323). It is of course Lilian who achieves this. Their battle of wills makes Albion feel that he is 'of no account' to her: he 'just did not feature in her map of the world' (325). She deflates him, making him feel small, 'shrunken' (321). Worse, Lilian challenges him, charging that his 'logic' may be 'flawless', but he is 'in the wrong' (290), as he has no feelings for those worse off than he is. Albion knows that Lilian finds him 'only ridiculous' (286). Threatened by Lilian's 'grandeur', 'authority' and power, he aims to reduce her 'to her proper size' (322-323) by 'screwing her humiliation into her' (289-90). This becomes the rationale for his increasingly sexualised domination of her, which not only involves voyeurism and sexual frustration as he stalks her on the nights he believes her to be 'running wild' (302), but also rifling through her underclothes (337) in a scene that recalls Sam Pollitt's incursions into Louie's room, with 'mental lip-licking' (*TMWLC*, 340). This culminates in the violent rape which precipitates Lilian's committal to an asylum, which Albion explains is necessary to cure Lilian of her 'madness' brought about by a voracious and unseemly sexual appetite. This is 'proven' when she is by arrested for parading herself naked through the streets of Tamworth, and escorted back to her family home in the company of two policemen (351).

This is the text of *Dark Places*, told in the claustrophobic first person from Albion's point of view. Albion had haunted Grenville for ten years, so that in *Dark Places*, which operates as a prequel to *Lilian's Story*, she attempts to exorcise him.

The voice that dominates *Lilian's Story*, but cannot be contained by it, spills over into a discrete text of its own, displacing the masculine and feminine voices into two distinct volumes, two versions of the same story. The novel was published as *Albion's Story* in the US, indicating the direct connections between the two texts, and the ways that Albion's story drowns out and over-writes Lilian's. The clash of competing voices and stories, the echoes from one novel to the next, and Albion's insistence that it is his voice we should listen to, never mind that he protests too much, demonstrates the links between *The Man Who Loved Children* and *Dark Places*. *Dark Places* not only echoes Stead's novel both structurally and thematically, but also acts as a counter-narrative to *Lilian's Story*, so that it operates within the postcolonial tradition of 'anti-languages' that I have detailed throughout this thesis. In Albion, Grenville offers a vivid portrait of Australian misogyny. Albion's position of governing consciousness privileges the mechanisms he will concoct to rationalise his abuses, the psychotic fictions he will generate to counter and reframe his daughter's story. These strategies situate him firmly in the terrain of colonial psychosis that he inherits as a representative of Australian colonial patriarchy.

Dark Places offers a searing indictment of the abusive nature of male domination naturalised by the system of Australian gender relations. However, there is an absence of critical interpretation of *Dark Places*, despite multiple reviews. Most critics concentrate on Grenville's broader theme of history and the exclusionary practices that located women to a footnote in the history of Australian nationalism (Helen Thompson, 172-180). Women are symbolically excluded from these inscriptions, despite playing important roles in the development of national intellectual, cultural and artistic traditions. Katerina Olijnk Arthur considers Grenville's work, especially *Joan Makes History*, as a 'recasting' of Australian

history (52-61). This is partly because Grenville intervenes so directly into women's exclusion from the historical and colonial record. Joan, a character who first appeared in *Lilian's Story*, reappears as an Australian everywoman to inscribe women's presence in the pages of Australian history. Lilian also reappears, accompanying Joan on her adventures. In 'The Novelist as Barbarian', Grenville argues:

> The interesting parts of history are probably always what's *not* there. My own special area of interest about what's not in history is the women. As you would all know, by and large they're sadly absent from the historical record. (np)

In *Joan Makes History*, Grenville's concern is with the absence of women from representation, which operates as a form of 'soft' power through the exercise of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 170; see also Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*). In *Dark Places*, Grenville turns to material violence. Sue Kossew considers *Dark Places* as an example of the 'representation of violence' and the 'violence of representation', arguing that it is emblematic of a trend in contemporary Australian women's writing linking violence within the family to a wider social and epistemic violence embedded in the formations of nationalism ('Writing, representing and reading violence', 14-15). In *Writing Woman, Writing Place,* Kossew connects Australian and South African women's writing, arguing that the masculinist nature of settler colonies conflates femininity with the raced Other through the exclusionary practices legitimised by imperialist discourse integral to national formation. Refusing to read white women as mere victims of the patriarchal structures underlying the nation, she locates women as maternal imperialists. Although Kossew focuses on women's exclusion from the nation and the problematic nature of identity and belonging in the settler society, she achieves this in an analysis of *The Idea of Perfection*. *Dark Places* does not appear.

In addition, the trope of Lilian colonised by patriarchal norms is continually reproduced in critiques of Grenville's representation of the Australian social order, privileging readings of the deformed gender regime produced by patriarchy (for example, in Bill Ashcroft's 'Madness and power'). Such readings take up Grenville's contention that the rape functions as a symbolic representation of the 'penetrating' power of patriarchy and the ways that it is internalised and incorporated as an ordering structure:

> It seemed to me that the physical part of it [rape] is only symbolic of what a patriarchal culture does, oppresses and removes power from the Other, and forces the Other to internalise the patriarchal culture's values. That's what the real violation is … having written *Lilian's Story* I was locked into certain plot directions, and one of the plot points was that there had to be an actual physical penetration of Lilian. It was a bit vague in *Lilian's Story*, but in *Dark Places* it's quite unambiguous. (in Michelle Weisz and Anna Bang, 'Interview', np)

Grenville locates Albion's rape of his daughter in a cultural context of misogyny used to justify and rationalise fear and hatred of women, misogyny so pervasive that it acts as a 'second language' for women. It is worth reproducing in full Grenville's explication of her strategy in writing *Dark Places*:

> Being in the psyche of such a misogynist was repulsive and scary. But it was also strangely easy. I frightened myself, finding that his voice—full of hatred and fear of women—came so easily.
>
> What was a woman doing ventriloquising such a man?
>
> Well, the fact of the matter (as Albion would say) is that women live in a culture still riddled with misogyny. From sensational rape-and-murder stories to sleazy ads, it's everywhere. It's hardly surprising that women are, as it were, bilingual: misogyny isn't our own language, but we understand it pretty well.

> We can speak it and we might even have internalised it to some extent. ('How to occupy the mind of a monster')

Grenville cites academic research that accuses her of defending father-daughter incest in attempting to make Albion as sexual monster 'intelligible' to readers ('Academic fictions'). Albion's story, with its hyper-rationalisation of sexual abuse, seems to be an uncomfortable area for feminist interpretation. Why is this? Is it that the narrative of misogyny and fear of women that Albion's character expresses is an uncomfortable one for feminists? Is it that the novel is told from Albion's perspective? Or is it that feminist theorising is concerned with women's experience, not men's?

In this chapter, I excavate the colonial dimensions of Australian misogyny represented in the figure of Albion. If, in *Lilian's Story*, Grenville charts the dangers for women of not conforming to gendered power relations, and the brutal consequences wreaked upon the daughters subsumed by Australian patriarchy, then in *Dark Places*, she examines the powers of the Australian legend to project disfiguring forms of Australian manliness as gender 'ideals' (Hodge and Mishra, 217). The processes by which men are interpellated into these distorted but valorised forms of masculinity, and of being legibly read as men through their adherence to the sanctioned performance of hegemonic masculinity, is the subject of the novel. As Catriona Elder shows, Australian male culture is built upon hierarchies of masculinities, with hegemonic masculinity operating as the structuring device upon which these hierarchies rest (*Being Australian*, 68). Yet, this has not been taken up in feminist analysis. This chapter aims to intervene in that critical absence.

Colonial Codes: Masculinity, Misogyny and Psychosis

Reading *Dark Places* is a disturbing and discomfiting experience, as Grenville attempts to get into the mind of a man who routinely commits sexual and physical violence in an attempt to disavow the repressed female within himself. It is this that Grenville investigates in *Dark Places*, the title of the novel signifying the 'secret corners' of Albion's psyche, as he constructs a male self out of, and also by denying, the forbidden female parts of himself. Indeed, Grenville has remarked on how gender stereotypes are policed, resulting in boys being 'victims' if they want to play like girls, and that these sanctions and injunctions to perform gender identity according to the rules require children to 'split off' and 'disown' the 'unacceptably' female or male parts of themselves, which do not just 'go away', but 'go toxic'; for Grenville, the important question was:

> what happens when such a man has a daughter? An echo of himself, but female, his own split-off aspect in bodily form: hated for being the forbidden other, but loved as well, for being the long-lost parts of himself. In the dream-logic of the psyche, to physically and literally join himself to her may seem like paradise regained, making him whole again. ('The mind of a monster')

Grenville's words here echo the psychoanalytic theories of gendered subject formation that I outline in Chapter Two. Psychoanalysis relies on a polarised view of sexual difference in which the male subject forms a gendered identity by repressing and disavowing the feminine. This takes place at the level of representation within the psychic formation processes of becoming a man. This is not to suggest, however, that these deep fears of the feminine only take place in representation, and that therefore, they are only metaphorical. Rather, these deep fears of the feminine as repressed, split-off and disavowed markers of the masculine are enacted in oppositional psychic structures, so that what-is-not feminine comes to be understood

and culturally coded as masculinity. This process betrays an anxiety about the possibilities for maintaining a stable, legible, and coherent masculinity.

Dark Places links the formation of male identity to deforming discourses of masculinity that (re)produce hatred and fear of women. The novel is structured in three parts, echoing the structure of *Lilian's Story*: 'A Son', 'A Husband', 'A Father'. It therefore ironically recalls, and undercuts, the structural device of *Lilian's Story*, pointing to the ways in which male voices are privileged in the genre of the male *Bildungsroman* as a novel of development. Grenville subverts and appropriates this form to demonstrate that masculine development is disfigured and deformed in the colonial setting in which *Dark Places* operates. She represents the pathology of masculine development by which men, as inheritors of the patriarchal enterprise, normalise and naturalise the operations of gendered power that install male privilege and female disadvantage.

The novel opens with a Prologue which proceeds by a series of oppositions and shifts in narrative point of view. Albion Gidley Singer is represented as a grown man in an empty house, a man constructed in metaphors of solidity and 'completeness', who has 'convinced the world, and himself' of his manliness and gentlemanliness (2). Albion wanders around the house, looking at his reflection in the mirror as if to convince himself of the 'fact' of his own existence, and filling up the silence with the sound of his 'squeaky nib' scratching across the blank pages of one of his endless notebooks that have never cohered into book form. His failure to achieve this in *Lilian's Story* led to his breakdown, but here in *Dark Places*, he has found a story: the story—or rather, the 'facts'—he constructs to reframe his relationship with his daughter, Lilian:

> Once upon a time, there was a man and his daughter, that was a definite fact, and nothing a man need be ashamed of. I have never been ashamed of any fact, and I am not a mumbler: I like the way my face vibrates with the resonance of my voice as I declare a fact, and my chest swells. My voice fills the room completely, corner to corner and up to the ceiling like a smell.
>
> I am in danger of becoming irrational … Grip yourself, Albion. Tell the story. (1)

This passage signals the distortions of the facts that Albion uses to rewrite history, to rationalise his behaviour towards Lilian as ‘nothing to be ashamed of’, but also signifies how the power of his voice will drown out other voices and therefore act as the authoritative source providing the ‘factual’ version of events. The passage also echoes the scene in *Lilian's Story* (99) where Lilian's voice fills the room as she recites Shakespeare to dissociate herself from first her father's derision and then his physical violence in the beating that follows. The fear that he is ‘becoming irrational’ haunts Albion throughout, and demonstrates the instability of his identity construction.

Albion is a man in constant danger of unravelling, of coming apart at the seams. The narrative point of view shifts between third and first person, magnifying the sense of displacement and dissociation that Grenville uses to construct his character. The first person declarations are definitive: ‘I was once long ago a fat boy … I knew I was a disappointment to Father’ (5), constructing Albion as a person whose ‘various skills and knowledges armoured him so that life could never flummox him’ (6), despite any doubts he holds about himself. The shift in narrative viewpoint to the third person demonstrates the instability and uncertainty of this construction of self:

> But Albion Gidley Singer was also a large and cumbersome suit of armour wheeled around the world, made to speak and smile and shake hands, by some other, very much punier person within: some ant-like being who did not know anything at all, an embattled and lonely atom whose existence seemed suspected by no one. (6)

This passage marks Albion as an empty husk of a man, despite his bulk. Echoing Lilian's varying accounts of herself as 'shrunken' and a pea inside a larger body, Albion's self is a puny, lonely, tiny atom. Albion's sense of self, shored up by facts, is riven by fissures of uncertainty, doubt, and a feeling that he is 'insubstantial' (7) and shaky despite his armature of solid 'muscle' (5). He oscillates between seeing himself as an 'I' and a 'he', between his own certainties and uncertainties.

The shifts between first and third-person demonstrate a profound sense of alienation and a radical split in the construction of a coherent self that complies with the psychotic modes and neo-codes that Luce Irigaray has identified in her study of the speech patterns and stylistic markers that characterise schizophrenic and hebephrenic linguistic strategies. Hebephrenia is a subtype of schizophrenia characterised by blunted emotional affect and distortions in reality, including fragmentary hallucinations and delusions (*Diagnostic and Statisticians Manual IV*, Code 295.10). It is differentiated from paranoid schizophrenia by the intermittent experience of delusions and hallucinations, and is often accompanied by a 'superficial and mannered' interest in philosophy, religion and other abstract themes, lofty thought and mannered speech, and inappropriate laughter (World Health Organisation, *ICD-10 Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (Geneva: WHO, 1992). Irigaray argues that hebephrenics substitute their own arbitrary neo-codes for the normal linguistic code, and that their communication strategies are stylistically marked by ambiguity, relativism, and failure to recognise oppositions

(*To Speak Is Never Neutral*, 30-37).[59] Irigaray also notes that the failure in the ability to distinguish between 'I' and 'you' in 'psychotic languages' and a marked tendency to use literary or elevated language to produce 'an "abstract" and apparently scientific discourse, at times in the third person' are features of dissociative psychosis (118). Albion's narrative of development can therefore be traced along the psychotic continuum for markers of paranoia and hebephrenia. Albion alternates between seeing himself as an 'I' and a 'he', and uses an elevated discourse marked by the sorts of rhetorical flourishes Grenville found in Charles Darwin's work:

> I read a lot of "dead fathers". One of the best places I went to for the voice was Charles Darwin, whose autobiography is written in something of this high-flown style. I felt that I was actually going right into the lion's den, taking what I wanted from the lion, and running back out with it for my own seditious aims. (in Weisz and Bang)

Grenville's strategy encapsulates some of the themes of this thesis: the relationship of patriarchy to colonialism, and the implications for women of being constructed through gender regimes linked to imperial discourses of feminine 'infirmity' and 'degeneracy'. The language of scientific abstraction Albion deploys to over-code his distorted perceptions of women link him to the psychotic linguistic economy.

Irigaray notes that psychotics distort reality by both refusing and excluding the utterance: for example, in seeking the response 'he did not eat oranges' as the negative transformation of 'he ate oranges', schizophrenics refuse the message altogether, responding 'he ate bananas' (*To Speak Is Never Neutral*, 157). Psychotics either 'refuse to, or cannot, emit or transmit a message. They refuse to, or cannot,

[59] Irigaray notes that when asked to give the opposite term for 'to be born', 100 percent of normal respondents selected 'to die'. Schizophrenics and hebephrenics responded 'I don't know' in 10 percent of cases, and others offered answers such as 'to be reborn', 'not to be', 'to disappear', 34-35.

communicate. What they say is a manipulation of the code itself' (167). Psychotic languages are marked by a refusal of the meaning assigned by the linguistic system in favour of a code which excludes others from its hidden operations and features, taking on an 'insane' character for people positioned outside the code. Psychotics manipulate the forms of discourse to conform to their own neo-codes, attempting to order 'reality' by distorting it. The pathology of these codes is revealed in the preference for connotations and over-determinations, signifying a breakdown between the signifier and the signified. In psychoanalytic discourse, this breakdown of borders marks the entry into psychosis signified by the collapse of meaning. In Julia Kristeva's theory, abjection is the locus of this breakdown, a border state where reality both exists and is denied. The opening pages link Albion to the order of psychosis, as he forces his own distorted interpretations to stand in for the real meanings generated by the linguistic system by instituting his own codes that allow him to discount and re-interpret the texts of others. *Dark Places* critiques the disfiguring masculinity that is sanctioned in the Australian colonial patriarchal context by appropriating and subverting the psychoanalytic accounts of identity formation which rely on a polarised view of sexual difference.

Masculinity and the Abject

Grenville reveals Albion's unhappy boyhood, which she maps through a series of crises and conflicts that illuminates his sense of preclusion from the world of male power. Albion's childhood desire to be with his Mother is disallowed in the framework of colonial gentility: it is impressed upon him early that 'a manly sort of boy does not wish to spend time with his mother' (9). Grenville characterises Albion's separation from the mother in which the only way to be a man is to deny himself: he must distance himself from the softness of maternal comfort and put

away childlike things. His mother brings 'comfort to his hollowness' (8), secretly bringing him cakes, and she figures as 'something [he] never seemed to get enough of, delicious but insubstantial like those cakes she offered' (8). This secret transaction of motherly love is also furtive and slightly shameful to Albion, who is aware that 'if sons wished to be near their mothers it seemed it could only happen in those private moments when the world had its back turned' (9). Albion's taking on of an acceptable masculinity structures his sense of himself as a separate being, but also testifies to the fear and sense of loneliness that underlies this process and practice of individuation. Albion's sense of being 'insubstantial' (7), a tiny 'speck' thrown into 'turmoil' (8) in the face of the vastness of the universe, must be differentiated from his mother's through taking up a distinctly male identity. Grenville describes Albion's institution of masculinity in a series of phallic metaphors: Albion 'straightened up and tried to please by being board-like in erectness and blankness of feature' (10). In *Lilian's Story*, he appears 'solid as onyx' (*LS*, 122), and later in *Dark Places*, he and Father take outings to the gentleman's club and the tailor that require them 'to be at our most wooden and gentlemanly' (46). The signifying chain by which Albion is constructed hovers between insubstantiality and erectitude. Albion complies with the dominant models of masculinity sanctioned by the culture. Boys are 'swashbuckling', jeering, noisy creatures who poke cats, as his reading of *Ripping Yarns* and *Boys' Own Annual* demonstrate to him (9). Albion can perform this form of masculinity, but:

> there were times he longed to be spared all that marble-winning, all the cat-poking, and all that swashbuckling, all that puffing-up of yourself like a frog, to impress the others with how big you were, how fierce, how fearless. (9)

These gender codes are contrasted with the normative narratives of femininity that structure his sister Kristabel's development.

Kristabel is an interesting choice of name, for it signifies the models of feminine beauty sanctioned in Western Judeo-Christian codes of gender: if we divide the name into its component parts, 'Krist' signifies Christian, while 'bel' signifies beauty as the shortened form of the French term *belle*.[60] Her naming is further broken down into the diminutive form, Kitty, as a euphemistic term for female sexuality through its association with the slang term for female genitalia, pussy. This codes Albion's perceptions of all women, as he reduces them to 'titty-bags' or other parts of the female sexual anatomy (236). Kitty is required to take up a pleasing femininity, but remains 'all sharp angles' and 'unalterably plain', with 'angular hips' and stubborn 'freckles' (11). She is a tomboyish sort of a girl, who can 'run and climb and jump' all day long (12), with no outward sign of her physical exertion beyond the 'wild' hair and rumpled skirts. Kitty succeeds at all the 'manly' things that boys can do, but she and Albion do not get on, because Albion, as a boy, is conferred with the male privileges of being sent to a top school to be groomed to take over the business (10). Albion reflects: 'Had we been a pair of brothers, Kristabel and I might have got on, for we were alike, but as it was she could not forgive me' (10). Kitty objects to Albion being able to do 'all the interesting things' (11) that her gender precludes her from, echoing and predating Lilian's trajectory in *Lilian's Story*. Albion judges this as 'perverse', because he resents Kitty's 'good fortune' (11) at being a girl, and projects this as her resentment of him in the first textual reference to the strategies he will use to rationalise his male privilege and to over-write women's experience with his own distorted ideas. Albion is a masculine inheritor of the patriarchal dividend, and operates from a position of entitlement, despite his sense that he is 'forever excluded' from the 'underworld of women' (12) that Kitty

[60] The ending 'bel' is common in English and Australian usage, shortening the French form 'belle', eg 'Annabelle' to Annabel.

and his Mother share. This 'freemasonry of femaleness' (13), with its mysteries and secrets, unsettles Albion.

Albion's masculinity is founded upon repressed female aspects of himself from which he must split off to be legible as male. Repression is implicated in psychoanalytic accounts of identity formation as the process by which the subject splits off from the other, through strategies of negation and exclusion. Thus masculinity is instituted by determining what-is-not-masculine and repudiating qualities aligned with the feminine. However, this would tend to indicate that taking up a gender identity is a simple process, in which the split-off aspects are negated, as if they simply go away. Yet it is more complicated than this logic of negation suggests, as the denied elements are not simply excluded, but repressed and disavowed. Repression is a defence mechanism by which painful thoughts and memories are banished from the conscious mind, but they do not disappear altogether. Rather, they haunt the conscious mind. Disavowal involves simultaneous recognition and rejection, so that the disavowed aspects and qualities associated with predicating a coherent, if illusory, stability of identity continue to threaten the subject with dissolution, as what is repressed threatens to return.

These psychic mechanisms occur in the representational order of abjection, which hovers at the border between animal and human, nature and culture, savagery and civilisation, and self and other. Kristeva argues that identity formation is always 'provisional' because it is predicated on abjection. Furthermore, abjection in the Kristevan schema is connected to filth, bodily wastes and disgust, acting as 'safeguards' and 'primers of ... culture' (*Powers of Horror*, 2). Women have a privileged relationship to the abject, which becomes a cultural location in a patriarchal and misogynistic culture. For Kristeva, the female body, because of its

relationship to blood, because of its capacity to blur the boundaries between outside and inside, reminds man of his 'debt to nature' and therefore threatens to collapse the boundaries between human and animal, nature and culture (102). The maternal body changes shape, lactates, and bleeds, signifying its penetrability and its relationship to the order of bodily wastes and fluids, against which the male body takes up a fantasy of being the 'clean and proper' body divorced from any relation to impurity and elevated to the status of exemplar of the symbolic order. Women's bodies therefore are constructed as the locus of abjection in the male Imaginary. Kristeva contends that the abject is:

> Something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.
>
> It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules ... The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist ... (4)

Kristeva distinguishes between the amoral and the immoral, arguing that abjection is 'immoral, sinister, scheming and shady: a terror that dissembles, a hatred that smiles' (4). Abjection has a privileged relation to psychosis, as it signifies the dissolution of boundaries, the simultaneous relation to and rejection of the maternal body, and the simultaneous experience of desire and disgust. These are not differentiated, but operate as contiguous structures of repression and recognition. Abjection is a complicated mechanism of repression, as a sustained strategy of disavowal is required to simultaneously excavate and re-inter the dread of the feminine that threatens the (male) subject's dissolution. Disavowal requires parallel and simultaneous psychic mechanisms of recognition and negation to suppress the threats posed by the feminine as the signifier of abjection.

Albion's performances of maleness coincide with a rejection of the secret world of women represented by Kitty and Mother: her cakes now made him 'gag', as they threaten to absorb him in an infantilised state that is both 'unmanly and unmanning' (51). Albion's establishment of a coherent masculine identity requires him to locate women and children in the zone of abjection. Albion's separation from the female world represented by his increasing and necessary distance from his mother catapults him into this psychic realm. He can be read as a figure of abjection, and a figure who relocates abjection onto the feminine. Albion physically dominates Kitty in tickling scenes that occur at moments of Kitty's 'indisposition', a euphemism for menstruation that Albion does not understand. Furthermore, the scenes shift from first-person narrative viewpoint to third-person, transposing Albion as perpetrator to a distanced outsider and observer:

> I could cause her complacency to crumble ... The calm and pallor of my skinny sister could always be transformed by her brother Albion, and Albion could deduce the certainty of his existence from his sister's frenzies under his fingers. (13)

It is significant that these scenes signify both dissociation and a means by which Albion can be sure of his own existence. Albion is at his most powerful when dominating women, recalling Virginia Woolf's suggestion that women are used by men to 'reflect the figure of man at twice its natural size' (*A Room of One's Own*, 35). He casts women as 'objects to be rescued' (9) in the world of men and boys, yet he aggrandises himself by committing acts of increasing brutality against women. Furthermore, the shift to the third person places Albion outside the scene, recalling Irigaray's proposition that psychotics cannot distinguish between 'I' and 'you', referring to themselves in the third person to create discourses marked by abstraction and scientific distance. Thus, Albion views what is happening from a dissociated

space, as if someone else is doing the molesting. In this way, he deploys a hyper-rationality to divert potential blame and responsibility onto another, a self divorced from him.

This is part of the linguistic strategy Albion uses to rewrite reality. The tickling scene is coded with sexual allusions that testify to Kitty's submerged incest narrative in *Lilian's Story*. Kitty's resistance is undermined in Albion's view by the 'passion' he hears in her voice that 'made a lie of her words', and she was 'wanton' with a 'red mouth full of teeth gasping for me' (13). Kitty's mouth appears to Albion as a fantasy of the *vagina dentata*, an image that will structure his ideas about women as he gains more experience of them, an image that will be impressed upon him by the boys at school a few pages later. What Kitty actually says is 'No! No, Albion, or I will tell' as he touches her under her clothes. He refuses to stop until her voice becomes 'reedy', a direct allusion to the rape scene in *Lilian's Story* where Lilian's voice is reduced to a 'thin reedy cry like something choking and not being rescued' (*LS*,125). He justifies his sexual molestation of Kitty by reading her as 'crazed with pleasure' and laughing at her 'game' of resistance:

> You love it, Kits, I whispered into her hot red ear. You love it more than anything. Kristabel would shake her head—No, no, no—and I would laugh at her game of pretending to hate it, and tickle more if I had energy to spare. She, the wanton, gasping and crying out, arching and writhing under my hands: it was her pleasantry to tell me it was no pleasure. (13)

Not only does Albion rewrite Kitty's 'no' as a 'yes', he will go on to wilfully misconstrue women's refusal of sex in his relationship with Norah, whose nightly 'no' in *Lilian's Story* echoes throughout the house. In *Dark Places*, Norah's indispositions, in which she takes refuge to avoid sex, were 'lewd and teasing' refusals that secretly mean 'yes' (154). This indicates the paranoid logic by which

Albion reads hidden meanings in the messages of others, and constructs his own codes to justify his deliberate misreading and misrecognition. Albion justifies his actions by over-writing the messages of others with his own codes of meaning. This strategy recodes and rewrites Kitty's protestations, conforming to Irigaray's proposition that psychotics refuse the linguistic code and distort reality by substituting their own hidden codes. It is also important to note, given Albion's subsequent taking up of the heterosexuality sanctioned by Australian culture, that Albion's first sexual feelings are for Kitty, who at this stage of her life, is a girl who looks like a boy. Not only is Albion's awakening sexuality perverted by these incestuous sexual feelings, but Albion's first feelings of love will take the form of homosexual attachments and longings for his teacher, Cargill, feelings that must be suppressed.

Albion's rewriting of women as voracious sexual objects also demonstrates a masculinist politics of consent: he constructs women's sexual desire as capricious because women are not supposed to *want* sex, but to submit to it, and to enjoy being sexually dominated. This will frame his subsequent and various sexual relationships with women. Like Sam Pollitt, who places women in the biological service of the species, Albion believes that women's 'bodies knew what their minds did not: ... the female in them was responding to the irresistible call of the male' (270). For Albion, women's role is to do 'what Nature intended for her: reproducing the species' (270). Albion's reduction of women to the status of 'a race apart' (35) and to a signifying economy of the bestial links him to the 'false' natural order that Sam Pollitt institutes to rationalise his abuses of women and children, in which 'survival of the species' operates as a discourse of male supremacy to shore up male power. Sam Pollitt is Albion's literary progenitor, but in Albion, Grenville re-crafts and amplifies Stead's narrative of distorted male sexual desire.

Heterosexuality and Colonial Manliness

The particularly 'toxic' masculinity Albion takes up occurs against the backdrop of national formation. Albion straddles two worlds: the colonial era and the era of Federation in 1901, which institutes a radical break with imperial Britain. He inhabits the pre-national and the post-national cultural milieu, shaped by dominant colonial discourses of 'race' and gender that circulate in the colonial Imaginary to inform Australian nationalisms. The cultural construction of Australian nationalism institutes certain forms of colonial manliness in the processes of national inscription. Masculinity is normalised as the exemplary cultural condition of Australianness, inscribed in discourses of male 'discovery' and 'exploration', 'pioneering' and 'conquest' (of the bush, nature, and Aboriginal resistance). The Australian symbolic constitutes a masculinist national Imaginary, in which codes of national manliness are anchored to the construction of appropriate sexual identities. The construction of the bush legend inscribes colonial masculinity as aggressively heterosexual. The 'duty' of white men to act as protectors of white women underpins the civilising imperative enshrined in the colonial project. Therefore 'racial fitness' was also encoded as a male heterosexual imperative in the discourse of aggressive racial imperialism (David Carter, *Dispossession*, 385). Unarguably heterosexual, virile, tough and commanding: this was the 'real' man of the Australian legend. The discourse of colonial manliness disallowed other forms of masculinity by constructing them as un-Australian.

Albion's manliness operates against this backdrop, as an illustration and a subversion of the powerful national fictions of colonial masculinity. His adoption of a masculinity which conforms to the values of the colonial gentility in which he lives is predicated on two distinct psychic processes: the process of splitting off from the

feminine, and the process of establishing a heterosexuality that is socially sanctioned and approved in the colonial patriarchal context. Albion constructs a 'bogus' manliness in the face of his terror of the feminine, arming his maleness in a great bank of 'facts' that operate as his cultural 'capital', but his intelligence is also bogus (44). He reads the newspapers that Father, George Augustus Singer, passes to him, safe in the knowledge that he will never have to comment or provide an intelligent answer, while Kitty's 'penetrating and intelligent' questions about the world are never dignified with a response. Albion perfects his performances of masculinity at University, where, as a 'young man in tweed doing his best to be like the others', he 'could act the man [he] wished to be, and perhaps if [he] acted the part for long enough, the act would become self' (53). Albion's taking up of manliness reflects Judith Butler's theory of gender as performative, as it is predicated upon a set of repeated acts that establish the illusion of a stable and legible gender. This also underpins his performance of sexuality, which he must also repress.

Albion oscillates between homosexual desire and homophobia. At school, Albion develops a crush on the new teacher, Cargill. Not only does Albion admire and 'adore' Cargill, he wants to be him, adopting his postures and gestures: 'I would not tell [Father], or even myself, that I was being Cargill, that I was trying out the skin of another being that I longed to be one with' (20). Falling in love with Cargill, he experiences his smile as 'a leaf caressing the sky', and his presence as a 'moment of warmth' (20) in which it 'felt acceptable to be Albion Gidley Singer' (21). Cargill's approval of Albion is juxtaposed with the 'disappointment' Albion knows himself to be to his father (5). He fantasises about Cargill's arms around him, inventing scenarios in which he rescues him from burning houses, drowning, and snakes (22), in an obvious metaphor of temptation and sexual desire. Cargill returns Albion's desire, but Albion responds to Cargill's approaches with violence,

assaulting him physically, and hurling ‘vile words like stones’ as he runs away (24). Albion’s sexual desire is frightening to him, for he risks ‘finding paradise and then being expelled from it’ (24) if Cargill moves on. Albion becomes flinty and ‘stony-hearted’ in the face of this love, which he experiences as an ‘ecstasy of anguish’ (24) that threatens to bring him ‘undone’ (25). Albion learns to repress his homosexual desires, but these re-emerge in homophobia later in the text. In the scene where he visits Lilian in the asylum, which he euphemistically reframes as a hospital, Albion is convinced the ‘mincing nurse’ is ‘lusting after’ him in ‘a quean’s leering way’ (353). The language he uses to describe the nurse is emblematic of a wider homophobic current in which homosexual men are feminised as ‘mincers’, but it also resembles the languages of misogyny he uses to diminish women. This process of repression and denial recalls Butler’s theory of subjectivity as a process in which individuals are subjected to regulatory ideals and discourses that legislate against homosexual attachments. One of Butler’s aims is to ‘depathologize’ so-called ‘deviant’ expressions of sexual identity such as homosexuality by showing how heterosexuality is normalised within discursive regimes that are saturated in power relations (*Psychic Life*, 93). Butler elaborates on how ‘normative’ sexual identity is presumed to follow from ‘having’ a particular gender. Subjectivity requires a ‘putting into place of a subject’, and while the processes of ‘securing and maintaining’ a relatively coherent identity produce the subject, the subject is subordinated and subjected to a requirement to take up the ‘normative and normalising’ ideal of heterosexuality (90-91). Butler develops Michel Foucault’s proposition in ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ that:

> the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. (83)

Accordingly, identity is but a fiction of unity in perpetual motion against its own disintegration. Moving from (and between) a Foucaultian and a Lacanian psychoanalytic account of the subject as fragmented, Butler argues that the discursive constitution of identity is impossible: 'Identity can never be fully totalised by the symbolic, for what it fails to order will emerge within the imaginary as a disorder, a site where identity is contested' (*Psychic Life*, 97). This applies to both gender and sexual identity, as both are normalising discourses that produce the body. For Butler, the:

> body is not a site on which a construction takes place; it is a destruction on the occasion of which a subject is formed. The formation of this body is at once the framing, subordination, and regulation of the body, and the mode in which that destruction is preserved (in the sense of sustained and embalmed) *in* normalization. (92)

Butler contends that gender is taken up in response to these normalising discourses as a kind of 'melancholy, or one of melancholy's effects' (132). She further argues that the prohibition on same-sex attachments installed in the psyche by the Oedipus triangulation of desire consists of an 'unresolved grief' for the lost object and an 'ungrievable loss' for the same-sex object (133, 135). In advancing this proposition, she draws on Sigmund Freud's position that 'gender is achieved and stabilised through heterosexual positioning', so that 'threats to heterosexuality' thus become 'threats to gender itself' (135). The heterosexual matrix in psychoanalysis is part of the cultural logic in which heterosexuality is normalised and homosexuality thus produces in men a 'terror of being construed as feminine, feminized, of no longer being properly a man, of being a failed man, or being in some sense a figure of monstrosity or abjection' (136). It is this logic that Albion establishes to assert a

stable male sexual identity that is intelligible to others as an expression of normative heterosexuality.

For Albion, male identity is predicated on disavowal and repression of the feminine, and heterosexual male identity follows from this establishment. Albion's homosexuality must be disavowed and violently repressed in order to conform to the regulatory ideals of colonial manliness inscribed in twentieth-century discourses of Australian identity. As Butler contends, the process by which a man becomes a 'man' is founded on 'the heterosexualization of sexual desire' (137). This complicated process of sexual identification relies on a desire 'marked by repudiation', so that ambivalence acts as the underside of heterosexual desire:

> He wants the woman he would never be. He wouldn't be caught dead being her. Therefore he wants her ... One of the most anxious aims of his desire will be to elaborate the difference between him and her, and he will seek to discover and install proof of that difference. His wanting will be haunted by a dread of being what he wants, so that his wanting will also always be a kind of dread. (137)

Taking up a heterosexual orientation not only requires men to repress any homosexual desire they may feel, but also to repress any kind of love for other men, as homosexuality is culturally prohibited.[61] Thus for Butler, gender and sexuality are consolidated by disavowed grief. Furthermore, the more 'hyperbolic and defensive' the posture of taking up heterosexual manliness is, the more it conceals the grief for the homosexual object that must be denied (139). For Albion, these repressed homosexual desires go toxic. I want to be very clear here: I am not suggesting that for gay men, being confronted with the cultural injunction against homosexuality and the heterosexual imperative to repress their homosexual desires leads to disordered

[61] This mirrors, and extends, the argument that Kristeva advances in her theory of female subjectification, in which women take up heterosexuality by suppressing desire for the maternal object, so that they carry around the image of the 'dead' mother in their psyches as a form of melancholic loss and incorporated grief.

psychic states or results in actual men enacting sexual violence against women. I am suggesting that in the textual field in which Grenville locates Albion as a dangerously irrational representative of deforming patriarchal discourses about manliness, this is what occurs for him. In order to take up a coherent colonial manliness, he must repress and redirect his frustrated homosexual desires. Albion transfers his shame about his frustrated homosexual desires to a hatred of women in his effort to assert a stable masculinity in the place of a tenuous sexual identity. This occurs against the social order of colonial patriarchy which sanctions certain forms of manliness.

Colonial Psychosis: Colonial Desire and the Abject Feminine

Albion considers women's sexuality as a mystifying secret he must penetrate, and it is at school that he learns that women 'had a gaping slit like a mouth. There was nothing there ... only a lack, a gap, a hole where any proper normal person had a thing you could hold in your hand' (17). Echoing the scene of his sexual molestation of Kitty, women's genitals are said to have 'teeth', an alarming proposition that constructs women's sexuality as 'insatiable' and consuming, but that also explains why women apparently feel 'superior' (18). This conforms to Kristeva's account of the abject maternal, as the space in psychic representation where the archaic and primal mother resides at the interstices between subject and object, self and other. The threat that the feminine poses to identity formation is an 'asymmetrical, irrational, wily, uncontrollable power' against which 'male phallic power' must protect itself (*Powers of Horror*, 53, 70). Within a phallic symbolic economy, the feminine 'becomes synonymous with a radical evil that is to be suppressed': phallic power is therefore haunted by a dread that it is a 'waste', an excremental or menstrual object, and fear of the 'archaic mother' turns out to be 'essentially fear of

her generative power'(70, 77). The return to the archaic mother, which is desired and repressed, therefore contains the promise of wholeness alongside the threat of annihilation and engulfment, hence the association with the *vagina dentata*. This operates to inscribe women as the personification of abjection, so it is not merely a phantasmic psychic process, but a practice of social inscription (68). Albion fears women as emblems of a *vagina dentata* that threatens to devour him, so he attempts to diminish the threat women pose to his manly bodily integrity through acts of physical and sexual domination. These are of course deliberate distortions that he uses to rationalise his conduct towards women, and reflect the deep-seated hatred and fear of the feminine that underpins misogyny. This is represented through Albion's coding of women through the signifying economy of abjection.

Abjection, as Kristeva has contended, signifies simultaneous attraction and repulsion, disgust and desire. This is located textually in the scene where Albion's heterosexuality is established by the prostitute Valmai, which turns on alternate moments of disgust—'there was nothing that made me want to bring up my dinner'—and desire: 'when I began ... actually to touch that flesh with my own, I surprised myself by finding it something I wished to do more of' (61). The scene takes place in a city restaurant where Albion and his university friends have spent a drunken evening, and prostitutes are 'smuggled' in to bring the night to an end (57). Urged on with 'cries of encouragement' from his friends, Albion's first sexual experience begins with a public display of groping, and ends in brutality as he retreats to a small private room where he has his first sexual experience (60). The prostitute Valmai corresponds to one of the 'fleshpots' of his adolescent fantasies, and he proceeds by 'twisting her arm in its socket', forcing her head back and locking her leg under his own (62). Valmai's 'bird-like' frame allows Albion to feel like a 'giant' (62), establishing the correlation of physical force and sexual arousal

that will inflect his subsequent sexual relations with women. This first sexual experience is also structured by Albion's sense of alienation from himself, so it is only at the moment of orgasm that his 'being expanded within the shell of Singer and filled all the space so that he and I were truly joined' (63). However, this sense of plenitude soon retracts, leaving Albion with the sense that both he and the experience he has just had were 'weary, stale, flat and unprofitable' (63), echoing the moment of Hamlet's depressive crisis. As the reality of this squalid sexual experience intrudes upon the fantasy, Albion experiences disgust at the 'flaccid' and 'dimpled flesh' that seemed now like 'so much dead meat' (63), but he leaves the restaurant convinced that Valmai's subsequent sexual transaction with Ogilvie is evidence of women's voracious sexuality: 'women could never get enough of it' (64). While he recognises the transactional nature of prostitution, he uses it to shore up his distorted perception of the 'true, strumpet-face of womanhood' (65). This projection of a voracious sexuality onto women through metaphors of engulfment and devouring links Albion to the economy of colonial desire, which, as I have argued in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, is symbolised through a signifying chain that connects cannibalism to colonialism.

It is these distorted patriarchal imaginings that he brings into the sexual life of his marriage, although his 'needs' are amply met elsewhere by prostitutes and the young female workers he sexually harasses at Singer Enterprises. The words he uses to describe Lilian as a 'tight and seamy vixen' (*LS*: 117), and the scenes of sexual molestation with Kitty return in the scenes when he forces himself upon Norah:

> You are a rutting creature in heat, I said as I took her there on the brocade. I loved the game and so did she ... She would keep up the fiction of her headache, or her backache, or her indisposition, as long as she could, lying unresponsive under me like a lumpy pillow.

> But I could not put up with that, for her limpness stole my manhood from me. Until she was alive and full of protest I was nothing more than a blunt tool questing and finding nothing. (111)

Albion requires violence for sexual gratification and rationalises these acts of marital rape by constructing Norah as 'a person so shallow', to whom 'nothing could do serious injury' (111). This scene not only echoes the nightly indignations of marital rape that Norah endures in Lilian's Story, but also recalls the scene of marital rape in *The Man Who Loved Children* where Sam's sexual desire for Henny collapses into the figure of Louie (438). The scene also prefigures Albion's rape of Lilian, foreshadowed in the text by a coded threat, where Albion transfigures his 'blunt tool' as the generative 'organ ... of the male pig', which is 'curved and sharp as a knife' to 'slice his way into his sow' (293). There is a deliberate association here between Lilian and the sow, recalling Kathleen Rowe's assertion that the 'unruly woman' is also aligned with the figure of the 'pig-woman' in patriarchal imaginings which position women at the borders between nature and culture, and between animal and human (*The Unruly Woman*, 41). Albion's need for sexual violence is amplified in the first sex scene of his affair with Dora, where Albion reflects that her failure to put up any resistance made him lose interest, because 'a man needs a difficulty or two, to make his satisfaction more piquant' (167).

White Patriarchal Imaginings and the Colony: Discursive Distortions

Albion rationalises his misogyny by naturalising and normalising it. For Grenville, the 'Albions of this world tell themselves a story that makes it perfectly all right to do what they do. It would never occur to Albion that he was a monster' ('The mind of a monster'). Indeed, Albion trumpets throughout the text that he is a 'man of the scientific age', who forms his 'conclusions' by considering all the 'facts' (79-80) that

uphold his worldview. Albion is infected with the master-narratives of the age, the scientific discourses of evolutionary biology that circulated in the colonial Imaginary of the time, which he uses to characterise women's sexuality as coarsely animalistic:

> I was a study in scientific detachment as I told my wife, Norah, may I remind you that a gentleman's wife does not trumpet her daughter's intimate particulars from the rooftops. Lilian is biologically ready to mate now, like any dog or monkey coming on heat. That is simply all there is to it. (243)

The correlation here between women and dogs or monkeys reduces Lilian to the status of the bestial. The simile form acts to obliterate difference here, rather than to establish a metaphoric logic by which human sexuality can be likened to animal sexuality. Accordingly, Albion inscribes Lilian in the locus of animality. In this schema, it is easy for Albion to install himself in the locus of the human, because women are linked in his consciousness as less than human, so that their status as more corporeal reduces them to objects. For Albion, women are 'a race apart', not human in the way that he feels himself to be human (35). Therefore, the threat that women pose to his sense of humanity is diminished by reducing them to objects: women are 'interchangeable' because they are 'all just flesh' (89). Not only do women not need brains (80), their only role is to 'entice' and excite the men they need to propagate the species. He consigns women to the order of 'slime' (135) as a result of their reproductive capacities. He explains his aggression towards women as the 'mechanism by which the fit prospered, and the weak went under' (80). He bullies Norah constantly, visits prostitutes regularly, and imposes himself on the housemaid, Alma. Even Dora Gibbs is 'just another trollop' (167). His male friends confirm his distorted ideas about women's voracious sexuality. As Morrison tells him: 'It is a scientific fact ... Big tits mean they love it' (236). His sexualisation of women extends to his contention that Lilian as a new-born baby is 'lewd'(132) in her

nakedness, and a 'flirt' as a one-year-old, provoking his sexual arousal, which he explains away by projecting it on to her: 'Titillation of a male seemed to come as the earliest instinct, before speech, before locomotion, almost before thought' (137).

Albion's constructions of women show that misogyny has a deep and entrenched status in Australian culture, as what is taken for 'normal' masculinity is predicated upon a deep fear and violent repression of the female by reducing women to sexual objects. However, these constructions also betray an anxiety beneath his construction of a manliness shored up by misogyny. Despite recognising that Lilian is 'no other', but an 'echo' of himself (203), Albion is shaken by a feeling that siring a daughter betrays some sort of inferiority on his part. When Norah finally gives birth to a son, he looks forward to instilling in him the values of masculinity:

> How I looked forward to storing the mind of a male child full of facts! I felt myself at this moment to be ready to seize a son and fill his spirit with all that was admirable from my own. I began to plan how I might best oversee the growth of a well-equipped mind, free from any cant or delusion, and of a body trained to the harmonious domination of dogs, horses and women. (140)

Marked by grandiosity and delusion, this passage demonstrates the distorted version of reality Albion creates for himself to shore up the world and his place in it. Grenville challenges scientific male rationality by characterising Albion's precarious hold on reality as exceeding rationality.

As the site where the languages of misogyny and the languages of racism converge in violence against women, Albion is an extension of Sam Pollitt. Sam's distorted vision of women as biologically inferior, which is actually a discourse of male supremacy in which women are aligned with 'nature, licking at his feet like a slave, like a woman' (*TMWLC*, 475) is echoed in Albion's assertion that women

'needed to entice, for otherwise the race would not continue, so they were supplied with various mechanisms of enticement: pink lips, fleshy bulges, and a thousand bolstering ways with a man' (80). Just as Sam subscribes to an understanding of gender inflected by Social Darwinist views about the 'survival of the fittest', by which logic men are 'naturally' superior, so Albion views women as lesser beings, more like animals. In his studies of sexual behaviour in animals, Albion correlates human sexuality with the survival of the species. This involves 'ruthless rituals of selection', but the 'flamboyant behaviour' decreed by the 'romantic novels' he reads to assist him in the social rituals of selecting a wife was merely a human form of the 'enticing tendrils of slime' that animals use to attract a mate (80-81). For Albion, 'the business of men and women was beautifully logical' (79), yet as Lilian has apprehended, his 'flawless' logic is often completely 'wrong'. Grenville's ironic undercutting demonstrates the fatuous nature of Albion's 'logic'. Albion looks at the business between men and women 'rationally', considering 'all the facts' to arrive at his conclusions (80): he 'took stock of the realities as a rational man does, and armed [himself] with a supply of romantic novels' (81). *This* is Albion's scientific methodology. As a man of the 'scientific age' (79), Albion mimics the discourses of 'natural selection' and 'survival of the fittest' that circulate in the colonial context. Like Sam Pollitt, Albion's worldview is framed by social Darwinist 'sciences' such as phrenology and the science of skulls, which attempted to establish a racial hierarchy through the Great Chain of Being. The 'science' also located women's smaller skulls as 'evidence' of their diminished intellectual capacities, placing women closer to 'animality' in the hierarchy of patriarchal colonialism.

He insists that the relations between men and women, rich and poor, are relations of 'natural' superiority and inferiority, upheld by social Darwinism posing as the rationality of the scientific age. The theory of 'natural' selection is used to

explain the social divisions between rich and poor, and between raced and unraced. Albion avoids the Chinese quarter of the city, fearing that he might be a tempting and delectable morsel for a Chinese dinner (29). When he encounters a ravenous woman on the streets, he projects his shame at being a well-fed member of the colonial gentility against her, abjecting her to the order of 'shameful bodily function' (30). His father explains the 'inexorable and impersonal logic' of class to him, contending that workers ask too much for their labour, and therefore cannot find work, and the consequence of their greed is that they go hungry (33). Here the nineteenth-century discourse of class poverty also illuminates the 1990s climate of economic rationalism, in which unemployment rose sharply throughout the late 1980s, creating ghettoes of welfare dependency.

Colonial Memory: Histories and Hauntings

The languages of misogyny, racism, and class privilege coincide in Albion as the site for privileged forms of Australian whiteness and maleness. Irigaray's assertion that psychotic languages are marked by an abstract and apparently scientific discourse links Albion to the operations of colonial paranoia, as his 'scientific' discourse adopts a hyper-rationality that was also used to create and suppress the threats posed in the construction of the colonial regime. Albion's construction of a masculine subjectivity relies upon a paranoid logic and a system of exclusions and repressions that reside in the realm of colonial psychosis. These are mirrored in the colonial process of national formation, which circulate in the colonial Imaginary as a fear about the strangeness and dangers posed by arriving in unknown locales, far from the civilised world of 'home'. Linking the Gothic architecture of *Dark Places* to the production of the Australian Gothic within colonial imagining, I suggest Grenville employs the Gothic as a metaphor for colonial space. Grenville enjoys the Gothic

mode for its 'playful' qualities, allowing her to 'illuminate the contemporary world' through a machinery of the 'grotesque and unreal' (in Turcotte, '"A Shocking Bad Book to be Sure, Sir"', 210). The Gothic tenor of *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places* is most commonly read as a feminist critique of patriarchal abuses of power through the grotesque narrative of rape. But as Gerry Turcotte notes, Australia figured in the colonial Imaginary long before the imperial project began as a 'grotesque space ... peopled by monsters', 'Gothic par excellence', revealing 'the dark subconscious of Britain' which represented it and peopled it as the 'dungeon of the world' ('Australian Gothic', 10). Through the discourse of imperialism, Australia was always already configured in Gothic terms, and this was reflected in Australian literary production. By locating Albion as a representative of the masculinist *racist* Imaginary structuring Australian colonial society, *Dark Places* both revisits and revises these motifs, inscribing Albion as one of the 'monsters' inhabiting the space of a national culture made grotesque through the imperial enterprise. The affluent harbourside suburbs of Sydney where Albion's story is set operate as an urban Gothic motif for the Australian *establishment*, illustrating the classed, gendered, and racialised social architecture of a nationalising culture steeped in colonialism. Thus, the Gothic machinery of the novel frames the colonial modality.

The Australian Gothic has some unique features, as the unique qualities of Australian landscapes become motifs for Australian mindscapes, representing a broader Australian psyche riven with tensions and conflicts about belonging. From Barbara Baynton's *Bush Studies* onwards, Gothic modes of articulating the colonial experience have been instrumental in the Australian literary imagination, linking the threat signified by the colonial experience of being in the bush with a sense of un-belonging that reveals the operations of an Australian Uncanny. Indeed, as Kathleen Steele notes in 'Fear and Loathing in the Australian Bush', the vast unknown

qualities of the Australian landscape inscribe the bush as a site where 'the Uncanny remains unchallenged' (35). The Uncanny incorporates the sense in which what is strange recalls the familiar, but also the ways that what is familiar can be experienced as strange. Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs note that it is the simultaneity of the experience that characterises the Uncanny, as the colonial encounter is marked by the sense of 'being in place, and being "out of place" simultaneously' (*Uncanny Australia*, 23). The unfamiliar and strange conditions the Anglo-Celts met upon their arrival were tied to a melancholic longing for a home they had left, and a desire to belong in the 'new' lands they traversed. The Australian space, with its upside-down seasons, its black swans, its platypus, was emblematic of the *Unheimlichkeit* that circulated in cultural imaginings of the Antipodes long before the imperial project even took place. Once the land began to be populated, the colonisers discovered that the cultural frames and colonial vocabulary they brought with them could not encapsulate the strangeness of the landscapes. Australia came to be characterised as a 'monotonous' or 'melancholy waste', a wilderness empty of the signs or symbols that would allow the land to be 'read' (David Carter, *Dispossession*, 138). This melancholy poetics articulated a sense of longing for home against a fear of not belonging in the new lands, of putting down roots against a sense of having been deracinated. These colonial frames established the early trope of a 'disappointing, or deceptive land' (Elizabeth Webby, 'Colonial writers and readers', 51), connecting the Australian Uncanny to colonial space through a particular set of anxieties that suggest a cultural pathology is at work.

Reading the land as empty also constructed it as a 'blank page' upon which new colonial meanings could be inscribed (Carter, *Dispossession*, 138; Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye*, 9-11). In *The Gauche Intruder*, Jennifer Rutherford argues that the construction of a cultural symbolic in the place of a 'continent already spoken,

imagined and peopled' requires both a 'literal and imagined emptying for the colonial fantasy to unfold' (32). In the processes by which the imagined emptiness was made literal, the undeniable Aboriginal presence had to be excised. Henry Reynolds argues that Australia's frontier 'conflict' took the form of a blood-soaked series of imperial 'wars' and acts of violent 'terrorism' as regional 'skirmishes' broke out as the frontier advanced to swallow up all traces of Aboriginal occupation (*Frontier*, 7, 66, 4). The justification for these acts of warfare was to represent Aboriginal people as 'savages' and 'brutes' threatening the colonies with armed 'attack', which conveniently overlooked the power imbalance between guns and spears (99, 118-119). The land had to be wrested from its Aboriginal possessors through a policy of 'dispersal', to use the official language of the day. This was code for the wholesale slaughter of Aboriginal people who got in the way. These skirmishes lasted for 150 years, from the moment of colonial 'settlement' when Aboriginal people were made subjects of Britain and subject to its laws, yet were denied many citizenship and civil and political rights until 1967. The colonial vocabularies that construct white occupation as narratives of 'expansion' and 'settlement' disguise the brutal processes by which the colonial establishment was instituted. It was Aboriginal people who were the terrorists, not the other way around. This language, and the language that recodes the incarceration of Aboriginal people in missions and reserves as a policy of 'protection', testifies to the operations of pathological neo-codes that legitimise the colonial project. Segregation is recoded as 'paternal' concern in a discourse of 'philanthropy' that was more concerned with the 'salvation' of white souls (Reynolds, 85, 84). The logical chain by which Aboriginal people were mobilised as a threat testifies to a colonial pathology which rests on paranoid strategies of over-determination: the spectral dangers associated with Aboriginal people in the colonial Imaginary had to be made 'real' to justify

colonial reprisals. This suggests a colonial delusion of persecution and a paranoiac strategy by which the imaginary threat is made real to justify the paranoiac subject's subsequent actions. Thus, discourses in support of Australia's national interests contain the 'alibi' for the 'harshness' in which the nation was formed (Graeme Turner, *National Fictions*, 107).

The processes by which Australia was made national, to coin Graeme Turner's phrase, relied on the negation of prior forms of occupation, and positioning both the 'empty' space and the (undeniable) presence of Aboriginal people as a cultural blank to be written over (*Making It National*). Imperial naming was an attempt to render the land legible and intelligible within the colonial representational frames, to make it fit into a colonial symbolic that it both exceeded and resisted. This inscription would take the form of attempts to transform Australian space in the image of a 'new England'. Echoes of Britain exist in the names that the 'explorers' gave to the territories they 'discovered': Victoria after Queen Victoria, Adelaide after Queen Adelaide, King William Street after King William, Elizabeth, Salisbury, Kew, Brighton, an endless list of names that yoke the land to the imperial Mother. Imperial naming and claiming relies on both metaphoric and metonymic strategies, naming sites 'as if' they were British, and imposing an imperial Britain 'in place of' an Aboriginal presence. This attributes a set of British associations to 'a recognisable if unknown landscape on which the agents of European colonisation enact the process of cultural construction' (Jennifer Rutherford, 31). Within this colonial symbolic, the land represents both the archaic Mother of post-Freudian psychoanalysis and the unknown, unsymbolised and unnamed space upon which colonisation (and by extension, civilisation) would inscribe its lasting imprint (Rutherford, 31). This recoding of colonial space is also a rewriting that imposes new vocabularies—patrimonies—in place of the names already written into the landscapes by tens of

thousands of years of Aboriginal sovereignty and belonging. [62] These constructions not only recode Australian *space* as imperial *place*, but reframe the sacred as a terrifying, unknowable and uninscribed emptiness in the white Imaginary.

The colonial symbolic recodes the land as a feminised space, a penetrable site in which the colonial project would be born. As Kay Schaffer argues, this colonial symbolic also articulates a patriarchal politics, as the bush was symbolically feminine, but it was also 'no place for a woman' (*Women and the Bush*, 102). The construction of Aboriginal people as the face of a terror threatening the newcomers articulates both a peculiarly *Australian* and a distinctively *white* anxiety borne unequally by colonial men as the protectors of white women, and white women as the site where these threats are most likely to be directed. A politics of anxiety about miscegenation and dilution of the white 'race', which was supposedly racially superior in the discourse of aggressive imperialism, testifies to a lingering doubt and suspicion about the capacity of the white inheritors of the colonial project to sustain their dominance. These anxieties were inflected by imperial fears about whether the 'race in its transplantation to Australian soil retains undiminished the vigour and fire and stamina of the strong old stock of which it remains an offshoot' (Richard White, *Inventing Australia*, 70). As Marilyn Lake notes, for the 'white man in turn-of-the-century Australia, anxiety was the "affect" central to his tie with the homeland and to a representation of a self which seemed in danger of annihilation' ('On being a white man', 110). This anxiety was expressed in the acts of nation-building that strove to nullify external threats of engulfment by regional Asian populations, and to suppress internal threats to the 'white race' as fears of racial 'contamination' took root in the white Imaginary against the growing 'mixed race' Aboriginal population. The

[62] I resist placing a limit on Aboriginal occupation of the territories we now call Australia, other than to note that it is estimated to have endured for 40000 to 70000 years, meaning that Australian Aboriginal cultures comprise the oldest living cultures in the world.

'terrors' posed by the Aboriginal Other are recoded as threats to the spaces that white 'possession' has sought to rewrite, signalling the operations of a colonial paranoia about the 'raced' Other. Colonial paranoia was the logic by which the nation constructed itself against a racialised and feminised Other that had to be contained and violently suppressed. Rutherford argues that the process of signification enacted by imprinting the land with British signs is symptomatic of 'a traumatic encounter at the level of both meaning and subjectivity' (*The Gauche Intruder*, 31). This occurs because British systems of nomenclature could not incorporate the strangeness of the landscape and the flora and fauna that inhabited it, and therefore broke down in the face of a set of unknowns that resisted existing systems of signification (29-30).

The processes of national formation mirror psychoanalytic processes of individual identity formation, as national identity is 'continually being fractured, questioned, and redefined' (Richard White, x). The stability and legitimacy of the geo-political national formation is always in flux, constructing itself through a set of mechanisms against a force field that it attempts to contain and neutralise. Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra contend that a schizmogenic strategy is required to project the illusory phantasm of the 'steady state', as nations are always already riven by internal conflicts and tensions held in check against potential 'fissures' that threaten to escalate into social collapse (216). In Australia, these tensions are amplified by the colonising nature of the steady state. Thus the construction of a national identity relies on psychoanalytic models of identity construction, because processes of national formation always contain within them, and simultaneously repress, the possibilities for dissolution that structure the psychoanalytic account of psychosis. Women and Aboriginal peoples, in different ways, exist at the margins of the national which centres on white male power. Accordingly, differences in relationships of power to the white male centre create marginalities, so that sexual

and racial differences are 'lived in the peripheral nation' that operates within a national framework that attempts to totalise and contain tensions, rifts and political divisions voiced by minorities (Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory*, 152). Indigenous academic Tony Birch contends that the history of national formation relies on 'official denial and a collective and complicit amnesia' to produce a palatable and 'sanitised' colonial memory (in Sarah Maddison, *Black Politics*, 214). This amounts to a form of 'pathology' that 'denies the legal and human presence' of Indigenous Australians (Birch, 'Whitefella Jump Up'). This mirrors the strategy of wilful denial and misrecognition that Albion adopts to tell himself that 'nothing' happened between himself and Lilian, at least 'nothing that a man need be ashamed of' (2). Yet, something *did* happen, despite Albion's re-writing of history.

Colonial Desire and the Cannibal Father

Albion uses 'facts' as part of his weaponry to construct himself as a 'rational man' (314) when he begins to stalk Lilian. As he follows her on her outing with Duncan, he tells himself that his fantasies of Lilian having sex have a basis in reality, as he convinces himself that he will catch them in *flagrante delicto*. As he attempts to make this coalesce into fact, despite the evidence of his own eyes that the outing is innocent, he loses his grip on time, being unable to order the events and sequence of his internal imaginings and his external fantasies and projections. This sense of being outside the ordering principle of time marks the dissolution of identity that he will attempt to correct by reimposing his dominion over Lilian and reinstating control.

Women figure in Albion's mind, and in the world that he creates to rationalise the workings of that mind, as mere objects in mauve and blue dresses, reduced to lusting mouths, holes, vaginas 'longing for male flesh but unfulfilled' (335),

particularly in the ferry scene before he rapes Lilian. This is preceded in the text by a dream from which he has awoken in which Lilian's 'lust was made manifest' (328). Albion's incestuous desire for Lilian is consciously projected as *her* desire for *him*, and the rape is premeditated: 'I ... knew that before darkness fell on the world again, I would have joined myself to my echo and become whole' (329). Returning to the house in secret, Albion watches mesmerised as Lilian's 'bold-eyed, alien' and 'unabashed' naked body is replicated to him in three mirrors (338). She appears to him 'majestic' and gigantic', her genitalia 'lush' and 'feral' (339) as she masturbates. Albion lashes her with words, calling her 'vile and degenerate', as he forces himself upon her (341). But who here is the vile and degenerate one? The rape takes place in a series of metaphors of wholeness and fusion that transform the 'nameless secret speck of being' that was Albion Gidley Singer into 'a colossus straddling this moment of history [in] the language of action' (343). As Lilian, that 'cranky, obdurate, insolent thorn in my flesh' withdraws into the 'shell' of herself, Albion's fantasy of wholeness engulfs him:

> It seemed that Albion Gidley Singer and myself had undergone some type of fusion. No longer was it necessary to issue curt commands to the shell that I inhabited: the shell and the self were now blessedly one and the same ... There was only solid Albion Gidley Singer, Albion Gidley Singer all the way through. (344-345)

As Albion takes on the over-blown dimensions of a colossus, he reduces Lilian to something less than human, referring to her by the impersonal pronoun 'it', which reveals her status as an object: '"You want it", I reminded it' (342). The rape happens only to 'the flesh', as the figure of Lilian recedes in metaphors of depersonalisation, signifying Albion's capacity for abstraction and denial of reality. Albion's sense of wholeness can only occur through the annihilation of others. This

is more than incestuous engulfment: he not only actualises his earlier desire to 'screw her into her humiliation' (290), but monsters her, devours her. Here, Albion becomes the cannibal father of the colonising culture.

Lilian's subsequent withdrawal into silence is constructed as 'sulking' (347), and the physicians are brought in, diagnosing Lilian with '*overstimulation of the cerebellum*' (349) in a reference to the nineteenth-century discourse of hysteria, in which women were thought to suffer nervous disorders as a result of failing to attend to their womanly duties in favour of male intellectual pursuits. However, Lilian resists these interventions, running away to the bush, until she is finally brought back from Tamworth by two policemen (351) for having paraded naked. The episode demonstrates her defiant rejection of the codes of respectability in *Lilian's Story* (*LS*, 130-132), sending ripples of shock through the 'flat ochre town', and culminating in Lilian's further retreat into the relative safety offered by the isolation of the bush. Upon her return, Albion summons the 'best man for this sort of thing' to have Lilian committed.[63] Albion's creation of 'facts' to counter the truth of Lilian's story of violent subjugation in the form of rape are distortions, none more so than the factitious diagnosis of madness he concocts, in collaboration with other powerful male inheritors of the diseased nature of colonial patriarchy.

Lilian's removal from the house coincides with a period in which Albion perceives himself to be 'solid' and 'authoritative' as his crustacean armature falls away. The notion of armature recalls the strategies by which Lilian grows fat to protect herself from her father's beatings. 'Scales fell from me', Albion exults (351). Grenville's comic irony is on display here: the sentence recalls the saying 'scales fell from my eyes', which suggests a new ability to see clearly. However, Albion will

[63] Grenville may refer here to Margaret Coombs' novel critiquing a Harley Street psychiatrist's treatment of the protagonist's post-natal depression, *The Best Man For This Sort Of Thing*. Grenville's review of the novel appears in excerpt on the back cover.

never clearly see the 'facts' of his relationship with his daughter. He was, after all, 'provoked' (350) by Lilian's voracious sexuality and defiant refusal to submit to the order of patriarchal authority. As he rewrites the facts of the story, he sees 'that she had always been unstable, and had never fitted in with what was expected'(352). Furthermore, because she has been 'officially certified to be insane' (352), the documents support the 'facts' Albion constructs to disguise the real story. These strategies reveal the pathological contours of his violence. Albion is clearly mad.

Yet, Grenville has warned against simply reading Albion as mad, because:

> I felt from the beginning that Albion was not mad, I felt it would be a cop-out to make him crazy, as I felt I had in *Lilian's Story*—if he was just crazy you could discount him. What I wanted to do with his story was accept the challenge of saying "okay, this is not just a madman, there is a logic to his behaviour, and I want to find out what that logic is". (in Weisz and Bang, 'Interview', np)

However, paranoid logic is evident in Albion's linguistic strategies. As reality collapses under the burden of over-coding, Albion's hyper-logic increasingly signifies psychosis. This 'logic' finds its rationalisation in misogyny, in the ways that fear of the feminine is suppressed by abjecting women to the order of slime in a discourse of colonial paranoia. He generates a metonymic world to stand in for the unspeakable incestuous violence he has used against his daughter. He rationalises this violence by generating psychotic fictions to explain away his actions. These strategies lodge him firmly in the terrain of the paranoiac consciousness that Hodge and Mishra suggest governs the Australian colonial context (204-234). The paranoid subject deploys an excess of logic to force conjunctions between the message and the meaning to explain its actions. Hebephrenia is in the order of paranoia, but is constituted by strategies of denial and repression, and a wilful refusal to acknowledge reality (217). Albion oscillates between the two poles of hebephrenia

and paranoia, between denial and the creation of psychotic fictions to over-write the reality of his abuses and violence. These 'facts' he deploys to distort the deforming realities of gross sexual violence upon his daughter, and his sister, Kitty. Thus, Albion rewrites—and overwrites—history.

Grenville's theme in *Dark Places* is 'history as smokescreen' and about the ways that Albion 'willfully misread[s]' and 'distorts' the facts of his relationship with his wife and daughter, and the pathological justifications he invents to rationalise his deep-seated misogyny ('The novelist as barbarian'). The charting of Albion's pathology, I have argued, can be read as a critique of the wider 'cultural pathology' that circulates in Australian culture, conflating the 'normality of the pathological' with the 'pathology of the normal' (Hodge and Mishra, 217). The contours of this cultural pathology can be traced through the narrative of 'history as smokescreen' that Albion constructs to reframe and rationalise his incestuous violence, if it is read as a metaphor for the repression of the memory of colonial violence from which the nation was born.

In Australia, the Law of the Father is colonialism, as it is established on the orders of the King and the colonial bureaucracies in both nations to officiate the colony's progress (Reynolds, 3-31).[64] Men, as the official enactors of the law, are both the patriarchal architects and inheritors of the colonial project, whose work to bring first the colonies, and then the nation into being, constitutes a '*male* birthing ritual', configuring nationhood as a form of national paternity (McClintock, 29). The notion of paternity, and patrimonial certainty, is important in the cultural context of

[64] Henry Reynolds discusses the role of these colonial institutions, arguing that as 'common law arrived with the First Fleet, the Aborigines became instant subjects of the King, amenable to, and in theory protected by, that law', 4. The instrumentalities that established the imperial project were located both in Britain and within the colonies, and included such judicial bodies and offices as the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the various Governorships installed in the colonies, and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, all of whom were charged with issuing legal orders and carrying out the King's decree, and all of whom were established by 1789.

the colony becoming the nation-state. As the Law of the Father is established in colonial settings, patrimonial strategies are used to rename and reinscribe colonial space, in a metonymic signifying chain that creates the space in the name of England. This naming is also a claiming, by which the colonial architects sought to establish the legitimacy of the colonising structures they *erected*. Thus the Law of the Father, the law of colonialism, takes place in a figurative circulation of the phallus of Lacanian theorising as the emblem of that Law. The anxiously male presence that was established in this signifying economy was an attempt to establish paternity in the name of the King, and, by claiming the territories in a set of imperial laws issued from a cultural elsewhere, to dismiss counter-claims or challenges to the legitimacy of these practices. These foundational documents constitute a white male politics of legitimacy—ownership—as a symbolic, indeed *fictional*, discursive practice. Questions about national *illegitimacy* still haunt the national psyche. Indeed, the legal fiction of *terra nullius* which resonated in the national Imaginary as a powerful cultural fiction of belonging until the *Mabo* decision of 1992, suggests that 'Australia' as a signifier constitutes an over-determined relationship to its signified. The history of colonial violence that is 'actively "disremembered" or repressed' (Carter, *Dispossession*, 70) in Australian public memory is rather *suppressed* and radically *dismembered* through the colonial project.

Although I argue in Chapter Four that the narrative of colonial imperialism is repressed in *Lilian's Story*, I have made these racial politics visible here. This reading contributes to an absence in the feminist and postcolonial critical literature in response to *Dark Places*. The disfigured masculinity Albion adopts reflects the distorted nationalising discourses that privilege the story of the white male birthing of Australia. By locating Albion as the white patriarchal inheritor of the violent colonial enterprise that underpins Australian nationhood, I have shown that the rape

metaphor stands for the cannibalistic nature of colonialism. The dark places of Albion's psyche are the dark places of the Australian psyche, and the pathology afflicting Albion is the pathology intrinsic to the new national spaces legitimised by the violence of the colonial project. This manifests, for Albion, in scenes of sexual violence against women who represent a terrifying unknown continent on which masculinity imprints and inscribes itself. The 'diseased' nature of Albion's sexual desire for Lilian signifies 'the diseased nature of colonial and apartheid societies' established in racial and sexual violence (Kylie Thomas, 2).

Inscriptions and Deformations

The processes by which Australia was instituted as a national formation have been processes of transformation and deformation. The narrative of 'history as smokescreen' that dominates Albion's re-constructions and re-tellings of what happened with his supposedly mad daughter demands re-reading Albion as the figurative embodiment of disfiguring narratives of colonising manliness in the processes of Australian national formation. The re-constructions of official history, the re-tellings of the Australian story as the birth of a powerful white nation, the silencing of counter-narratives of racial and sexual violence in this formation, position official white history as 'lies'. In *Dark Places*, the dark corners of Albion's disordered psyche are located in the Australian cultural construction of the white nation. Just as processes of national formation conceal and disguise the violent acts of transformation and deformation that constitute the 'dark places' of Australian history, so too does Albion conceal his violent pathology. The processes by which Albion constructs a male identity in relation to normative regimes of white patriarchal power lodge him in the terrain of colonial psychosis. Albion's paranoid fantasies about female sexuality, and the way he uses facts, hyper-logic and

excessive rationality shows him to be an inheritor of the colonial project. Albion's deformed notions of colonial manliness are framed by the wider discourse of colonial paranoia that creates imaginary 'threats' to justify the colonial violence that establishes the white nation. Albion's story is an emblem for the madness of the colonial project, and the operation of white patriarchy in structuring the 'diseased' nature of colonial societies.

Albion's storying is also a metaphor for the ways that Australia's 'official' history rewrites and over-writes the realities of colonial violence. The story Albion tells himself, the story that stands in for the facts, the story that he rewrites to ensure his own survival, the story that he has to believe in if he is to continue to exist, is a perversion of the discourse of colonial gentility that is established in the formation of the nation. Albion's psychosis replicates the wider Australian cultural psychosis, as the discursive strategies he uses to found his toxic masculinity are replicated in the discursive strategies that inscribe a nation into being. His normalisation of sexual violence is achieved through the creation of psychotic fictions that he must believe to legitimise his violent practices. This is a pathological exercise. Albion's story is not just a story of a man and his daughter, but a metaphor for the colonial project itself. His attempts to annihilate Lilian, to engulf her, are strategies by which he monsters her. These strategies link him to decisively to cannibalism, which acts as a metaphor for the colonial project which swallows up all prior texts and traces to assert and establish an identity in place of the identities that are already spoken, already written in the landscape. The psychotic family of *Lilian's Story* and *Dark Places* acts as an emblem for the wider epistemic and colonial violence of the nation, as violence within the family testifies to the wider violence instituted and embedded in the processes of national formation. *Dark Places* indicts the brutality of the colonial context in which patriarchy operates, and offers an early indication of the directions

for Grenville's subsequent fiction, which provides a deeper and more immediately postcolonial interrogation of Australia's colonial histories.

The postcolonial consciousness is signalled in the closing pages of the novel, where Albion senses that he is losing his grip on 'facts', which now appear to have changed. New scientific discourses of the atomic age demonstrate that 'things' are 'composed of millions of tiny particles of absolutely nothing at all' (341). The realisation that his scientific rationales have been superseded is accompanied by a sense that both the world he 'understands' and he himself are 'breaking down into the constituent parts of their nothingness' (341). As the silence and emptiness around him become increasingly more pervasive and 'toxic' (373), Albion becomes increasingly 'hollow' (372). The closing image of the novel recalls and undercuts Lilian's death, in which she seeks to be 'one with the sky' (*LS*, 227) in an image of fusion. Albion's death fuses images of the 'void' within joining 'the nothingness without' (374-375), an image of fragmentation symbolised by the 'empty husk collapsing into itself' (375). The fragmentation signifies the end of the old order and the emergence of a postcolonial consciousness, as facts give way to uncertainties, and old certainties dissolve.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS: AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOSES

What do these characters tell us about being men and women, about being Australian, about family, about home? Why is the Australian 'home' such a site for terror? From colonial prison farm, war zone, loonybin,[65] to a fragile veneer of 'civilised' colonial gentility that papers over the cracks of the disavowed colonial past, Australia resonates in the white Imaginary as a site for terror. Lilian, Henny, Norah, Sam, John and Albion: out of their minds, out of their heads, jumping out of their skins, beside themselves. The men desperately clutch at 'theories', at 'discourses' to assure themselves that who they are and what they do is intelligible, legitimised by 'rational' orthodoxies that pass for 'normal'. If Sam and Albion take up the hyper-masculinity that is culturally encoded as normative in a colonial culture that is saturated with paranoia, violence, misogyny and bloody misdeeds, then John, poor John, Lilian's feckless brother, grows to emulate Norah in his ability to blend into the background as an insurance company's drone, to be wilfully deaf and blind to the reality of his father's cruelty. So flattened in affect is he, so traumatised, that his mind is numb. His denial is co-extensive with the reality he has learned to shut out so completely that he resembles those paper cut-outs of his childhood —legless, armless cut-outs whose disfigurement screams 'I can't stand it', 'I can't handle it': immobilised.

If John's masculinity is disfigured and diminished, then what of the deforming masculinity his fictional father performs, as a symbolic father within the patriarchal enterprise of white colonialism? This figure in shiny boots and moustaches, this despot? It is no accident that Grenville represents him as the phallus, solid as onyx,

[65] The idea derives from a character in PJ Hogan's new film, *Mental*, who has a 'theory' that Australia was the place to which Britain sent its mad, a giant insane asylum at the other end of the world. See Evan Williams, 'Deeply, Madly'.

his erectitude papering over the fearful, cowardly husk that threatens ever to atomise, to reveal the nothingness that he secretly knows himself to be. And Sam, vainglorious Sam? What of his gender and 'race' politics? His perversion of the discourse of love through a eugenicist program of sanctioned mass killings? What kind of 'love' is this? What deformed notion of white male power allows him to delude himself that he has the right to play God to destroy the lives of others? These are the forms of lunacy charted by the novels, which provide a searing critique of the construction of Australian masculinities. If characters like Sam Pollitt and Albion Gidley Singer are representative of Australian male subjectivity, what pathological underpinnings give rise to their delusions, their psychoses? And where does women's madness sit in relation to these?

Madness may be an old topic for feminist literary criticism, but this thesis aims to recuperate it from the impasse provided by 1980s theorising. I resist reading madness as the province of women, arguing that the historical and social production of women's madness takes place in a given temporal and cultural context. These novels, I have suggested, call Australian culture into question. Women's madness acts as a text of culture, to shed light on the cultural constructions—those psychotic fictions—that position women as mad because they subvert the cultural norms that make up Australian 'femininity', and because they reject too the nationalist discourses of masculinity and whiteness as the barometer of 'civilisation' that make up 'Australia'.

My readings of madness have traced the institution of colonial paranoia, the ascription of colonial dirt to the abjected outsiders of the colonial culture, and the hebephrenic character of the Australian psyche embodied by the masculine inheritors of the colonial enterprise. I have shown how madness speaks to, and of, culture in the

formation of colonial societies. The discourses of colonial paranoia are etched upon the landscape and the female body, providing men with a set of paranoid and hebephrenic strategies through which they rationalise their fears, and therefore their abuses. It is colonialism's politics of paranoia that creates the zones of abjection inhabited both by disorderly women, but also by the excluded and repudiated Others, those 'threats' to an imaginary national integrity founded on notions of whiteness as racial purity. Others who must be treated like so much colonial 'dirt' to preserve and police the colonial boundaries between self and Other, between citizen and 'stranger', between inheritors of the colonial enterprise and those dispossessed of that inheritance. This constitutes a haunting at the heart of the Australian psyche, its originary and founding trauma that replays and is re-enacted against ever-new 'strangers', whether in the form of 'strange' women, or Aboriginal people, non-white immigrants, or, more recently, those 'unlawful non-citizens' in John Howard's parlance that make up the 17 million new dispossessed and displaced peoples of the world. Dirt characterises the 'stranger', dirt that must be cleaned up, excised, treated, sanitised, wiped away, hidden from public view. In asylums, in missions and reserves, or their contemporary counterparts, the town camps, homelands and outstations, in detention centres—the setting changes, the disallowed take a different form, but ever the nation re-constitutes itself, re-aligns against those who threaten its integrity.

The madness of these novels, then, is the madness of the colonial project. The real text of madness is the text of colonial psychosis, the psychotic languages men harness to justify the excessive power they are accorded within it. In tracing the production of colonial psychosis, I have argued that nations have psyches, just as people do. Nations police their borders to establish national and territorial integrity and separation, just as people do. Nations establish zones of abjection and both re-

and dis-locate people to these zones for failing to conform, failing to comply, failing to be orderly, failing to maintain the clean and proper boundaries that demarcate and jettison the abject from the body (politic). The body of the psychoanalytic subject is recoded as the body politic. Tracing women's madness as the product of a cultural pathology that operates as a deep-seated colonial psychosis about the dangerous feminine and 'raced' Other that the colonising nation constructs as a threat to the installation of white colonialism, I have argued that women's madness is a construction of colonial practices. Men, as the architects and legislators of white colonialism, use excessive logic to shore up their patriarchal, misogynist, and racist fantasies of power. The patriarchs of the novels delude themselves that they are the biologically and intellectually 'superior' embodiment of white progress and civilisation legislated by the imperial enterprise, reflecting their location of over-entitlement in the social order of white patriarchy. This is not a 'natural' order at all, but a social disorder that governs the colonial context. This is the text of a culture where it is men, not women, who 'run amok' (Young, *Colonial Desire*, 174).

Mad, sad, or bad, the women of these novels resist the terms by which they are inscribed as the locus of abjection and the site for racial anxiety. Disordered and disorderly, these fictional madwomen refuse the terms by which colonial patriarchy seeks to normalise itself and its violent subjugation of women and other Others in colonial space. Women's refusal to accept the terms of national formation that privilege whiteness and maleness, which constitutes a normal response to an *abnormal* situation for women or colonised peoples, is reframed as a pathological response. This is achieved through the hyper-logic of patriarchal colonialism, which situates women's resistance as an emblem of a pathology that resides in, and indeed emanates from, the female body. For women like Henny and Norah, this resistance is rewritten by the violent family patriarchs who rule the psychotic family as evidence

of their latent instability. Louie and Lilian resist violent incestuous incursions into their lives, their minds, and their bodies by taking up female subjectivities that pit them into dangerous conflict with their psychotic fathers, but they survive. Eccentric, and ex-centric, they escape their deforming families of origin. Louie escapes to a place outside the patriarchal structure, the extended community of women relatives who reside at Harpers Ferry. Lilian inscribes herself into colonial memory, refusing ex-centricity by performing eccentricity. But the madwomen of the novels are not mad at all. They are only constructed as mad, *made* mad, through the discourse of colonial psychosis.

Both Louie and Lilian refuse to take up skewed and distorted Australian subjectivities that are reframed as normal in the discursive operations of colonial paranoia. In their refusal to deny the violence of the psychotic family which reproduces and normalises the dominant but deformed gender ideals of national formation, Louie and Lilian refuse to take up the hebephrenic response required of them. They know the damage the family causes, and they will not go along with psychotic fictions that ‘nothing happened’. Their refusal to normalise paranoid logic makes them resistant subjects of and to colonial patriarchy. This also codes them as resistant national subjects, as they counter the dominant fictions of national identity their fathers reproduce.

The deforming family of origin that these fictional madwomen escape demonstrates the cultural politics for women of being abjected and repressed in national culture. These politics encode women’s invisibility and symbolic homelessness as the normative location for women. In the context of white Australian patriarchy, it is significant that women’s cultural homelessness is achieved by signifying the home as the site where women belong. There is a double

logic here: women's place is in the home, but women's belonging to the nation is 'out of place'. As a site for the formation of 'race' and gender, the Australian home signified in these novels rests on a sense of the *unheimlich*, of not being at home, or more precisely, of being out of place, characteristic of the Australian Uncanny of postcolonial theorising. This sense of *Unheimlichkeit* has many parallels in the patterns of immigration and 'settlement' that constituted the Australian nation as a site for the initial reproduction of Empire as a formation of British colonialism, as a site of 'home' displaced to the furthest Antipodean reaches of Empire. The Australia depicted in these novels, and the place of women as daughters—and mothers—of white colonial patriarchal sovereignty suggest a deep unease with discourses of 'settlement', with taking up one's dutiful and rightful place in a 'home' country modelled upon, but far from, the Mother Country of Britain that shapes Australian nationalism. The brutishness of Britishness is manifest in the male characters of Albion and (Uncle) Sam, as representatives of a displaced Britain and a displaced Australia holding firm to discourses and practices of colonising nationalism, enacting a sense of entitlement borne of their whiteness alongside an ugly but unquestioning acceptance of discourses of 'race' and Eugenics to determine who is inside the Australian nation and who is outside it. That women occupy a marginalised place within the Australian nation as members in it, but not wholly of it, reflects the wider exclusion of women that has attracted nuanced and detailed criticism in the re-visioning of Australian history in the fields of feminist, cultural and postcolonial studies, and of the nation as 'space' both in terms of Aboriginal presence and absence, as well as in terms of a potential 'place' for imperial naming and claiming.

Each novel investigates the politics of being a woman, an Australian woman, in the early twentieth century. Each of these novels provides insights into how being Australian shapes being a woman. Each of these novels interrogates the production

of the Australian gender ideal provided by Miriam Dixson in 1975, in which a woman was required to be 'so colourless that she seems mentally backwards' in counterpart to the 'insensitive and blockish' Australian male gender 'ideal' (Dixson, *The Real Matilda*, 12). Dixson's characterisation of the production of Australian maleness as driven by 'dominance, competitiveness, restlessness, status-obsession, insensitivity and lack of inwardness' also characterises the domination of men in the institutions of 'Western and Westernising societies' as contributing to the 'con' played out against women (but also men) that if this is the only 'authentic' way to be male, then it is also the 'authentic way of being *people*', consigning women to a position in which they are not fully human, 'not female human beings, but *feminine* human beings' (15: emphasis Dixson's). Of course, these are ideals, not realities. But the system of gender relations as a system of power relying upon both internalised reception and acceptance of, and externalised compliance with, such ideals, imposes sanctions against those who do not manifest or enact and embody such discourses correctly, as Michel Foucault has shown (Foucault, 'Docile bodies',179-187). There is of course both power and agency in refusing to 'do' one's gender in accordance with such rigid discursive regimes of gender, but also a price to be paid for locating oneself as resistant to and outside the dominant discourse. This is how 'ideals' become ideologies, and how active subscription to such ideologies produces forms of domination that appear to take place by consent. Obviously, there are no gender police, nor is there a need for such Orwellian figures, as the policing is self-imposed within the processes of interpellation. Most people actively subscribe to the dominant cultural scripts and fictions that inscribe and signify the cultural, ontological and epistemological processes that comprise being a 'woman' or a 'man'.

For the women characters created by Christina Stead and Kate Grenville, though, such subscriptions, and their resultant inscriptions and encoding, are not

tenable. Lilian and Louie reject the dominant cultural codes of femininity and must pay the price. It is a high price for each of them: Louie commits matricide to ensure her escape, while her father himself escapes Louie's murderous intentions. Henny pays the highest price by knowingly drinking the poison Louie has prepared with the intention of murdering both her parents. Suicide or matricide? There is an undecidability about this: in Henny's action, there is a re-appropriation of the figure of the female suicide of the male artistic imagination, yet there is also a liberation for Louie from the enclosing strictures of family life as a form of tyranny and civil war. There is no *Heimlichkeit* for Louie if she is to remain in the bosom of the psychotic family. There is no family that constitutes a sense of home, a sense of place. There is only a young woman who leaves, seeking a place in which to carve out a discursive space for herself. For her part, Lilian is incarcerated in an asylum for ten years, and the novel culminates in her death in a park after years of being a 'bag lady'. She is both homeless and not homeless, having taken up residence in one of the seedier suburbs of Sydney, one of those zones of abjection populated by the drug users, prostitutes and trans-gender figures that constitute colonial 'filth'.

Are Louie and Lilian mad? Against the male figures that constitute a true psychosis, marked by an inability to separate themselves from their daughters, and the dissolution of the male self, the answer must be that neither is mad. They are misconstrued as mad, they are treated by their families as if they are mad, with all the powers of metaphorical displacement that the qualifying 'as if' confers. It is the men of these families who are truly mad, men who displace their own madness onto their daughters, men who exhibit a grossly distorted sense of masculine entitlement to police their daughters' emergent sexuality. Albion exceeds the boundaries Sam imposes against his perverted sexual interest in his daughter. Where Sam only surveys and spies on Louie, and is unable to exert his so-called God-given right of

masculine authority, Albion monsters Lilian in the rape scene where he acts with the intention to annihilate her. Brutal, masculinist, sexually violent: this is the barometer and benchmark of colonial 'civilisation'? But history, as Albion shows, is written and re-written, told and re-told, until it takes on mythical proportions, the dominant voice drowning out the voice of the vanquished. Sanitised, cleaned up, 'actively dis-remembered' and suppressed, silenced, these are the 'dark places' within the Australian psyche, places for the untold stories, places shimmering with silences, brimful with the unsayable, the unspeakable.

This inquiry into women's madness has revealed the contours of a colonial madness that is foundational to the concept of 'Australia'. Any nation, as Benedict Anderson showed in his theory of 'imagined community', is overwhelmingly imagined in the form of a fantasy of unification. The tensions, splits and divisions that constitute this community both echo and find their parallel in the spectral and Imaginary work of the subject-in- process of psychoanalytic theory, particularly within feminist psychoanalysis. Therefore, my inquiry into women's madness has remained aware of Anne McClintock's important assertion that psychoanalysis is a Western construction arising out of, and at the same time as, pseudo-scientific discourses of imperialism, colonial conquest, and 'race', that relies upon much the same language in its discussion of women as Other that these discourses relied upon in their constructions of the racial Other. To 'decolonise psychoanalysis' is therefore to 'psychoanalyse colonialism' itself (McClintock, 74).

Women do not comprise a universal category under regimes of patriarchal oppression. Women may be to a greater or lesser extent oppressed, or may indeed share something of the spoils of the colonial project, but the terms of white women's oppression do not and cannot equal the terms under which indigenous women,

colonised women, are oppressed. Psychoanalysis universalises human experience as a form of cultural imperialism, just as it homogenises women's experience of oppression under patriarchy as unreal and imagined, because it exists purely in symbolic terms, occurring principally in relation to the Oedipal framework which only *symbolically* governs the operation of gender differentiation. Male psychoanalysis therefore has historically discounted (repudiated?) the preserve of masculine interests that encodes and perpetuates gendered relations as a system of power that privileges men. However, the real effects of gendered and raced relations of power, both symbolic and material, in both their epistemological and ontological dimensions, are violent. Louie and Lilian are fictional characters, but they speak to, and of, women who suffer—in the original meaning of the word, which signifies to undergo, which means therefore, simply, to experience—the effects and abuses of power (up)held by white colonial patriarchs as inheritors and enactors of the colonial enterprise. This experience takes place in relation to—and against—the experience of men.

The arguments presented here have been shaped by the novels, and by the themes of madness, incest, and white male sexual violence that link them. Limiting my readings of madness to an examination of fiction by two novelists of ideas, women writers who demonstrate a political concern with Australian myths of nation and gender, has been necessary to refine my argument. The attempted colonisation of daughters by despotic fathers through routine acts of violent domination functions as an emblem for the cultural framework that governs Australian gender relations, within the context of white Australian patriarchal colonialism. Different novels could have resulted in different directions for critical inquiry. Reading Aboriginal women's writing could have traced race relations of power and gender in productive ways, but also in ways that are difficult for me to reconcile as a non-Indigenous feminist

working (and teaching) in the fields of literature, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies, including Indigenous Studies. What speaking position is appropriate for a white scholar to write about Indigenous women's life narratives and fictions (Alexis Wright, 'The politics of writing')? Is being conscious of whiteness as systems, processes, and institutions conferring unearned advantages and white race privileges enough? How to proceed, in a long-held tradition that has produced Aboriginal people as something a little more, or a little less, than 'native informant', without cannibalising Indigenous writing and critical theory (Anita Heiss, 'Writing about Indigenous Australia')? What ethical considerations might an inquiry of Aboriginal women's madness engender? If embarking on a reading of Alexis Wright's *Plains of Promise*, is self-immolation reducible to an analysis of the female suicide in literature? And what might be the implications of reading Aboriginal women's life narratives, especially related to the Stolen Generations, if grief were to be read as 'complicated' grief—now a proposed 'mental illness' under the DSM-V provisions? These fraught but helpful questions determined my resolution to critically examine the works of white Australian women writers interested in the politics of women's madness, but also to excavate them for critiques of 'race', nationalism and colonialism.

Further useful directions include comparative approaches between Australian and South African fiction, as the countries share more similarities than most Australians are willing to admit. There are strong similarities in the establishment of Protection, Segregation and Assimilation Acts and policies in Australia since the 1860s and the institution of the Apartheid policy in South Africa in 1948. The madness of colonialism can be fruitfully studied through a comparison of South African and Australian literature, particularly the differences between so-called post-Reconciliation societies willing to acknowledge the abuses of our colonial pasts.

These remain, for Australian feminisms, important questions about the role white women play in colonial contexts, as settlers and invaders. Feminist critiques of women's oppression within patriarchal regimes of gender must also take into account the unequal relations of power in which 'raced' women as colonised subjects of Australia are oppressed by white women.

The institution of the nation as a federated entity marks the break from the imperial relationship with Britain, a 'postcolonial' moment that is celebrated in Australian theorising through efforts to define the national character, create a national identity, and develop a uniquely Australian artistic tradition. This implies that Federation and the creation of a unified national entity constitute a nation no longer considered colonial, as colonies give way to States. The processes by which Australia was made national incorporate a break from the imperial relationship, but the colonial context has not given way if it is understood to incorporate and structure the relationship between coloniser and colonised. A postcolonial Australia does not equal a post-Federation state, and state here refers to both senses of the term, as a nation-state, and as a situation within the nation-state. There are limitations to how far, or indeed, whether Australia can be understood as postcolonial. The postcolonial state imputed by the break between imperial centre and peripheral colony in Australia does not mirror the post-Independence break between colonial occupier and colonised subjects as, for example, has occurred in India and, arguably, in South Africa. There is no sense in which the experiences of the former 'settler' colonies are 'analogously postcolonial' to the formerly colonised nations of Asia and Africa (Milner and Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory*, 149-50). As Andrew Milner and Jeff Browitt contend:

> colonies of white settlement are not postcolonial in any sense other than that posited by a strict periodisation between pre-independence and post-

> independence periods. In every other respect they are instances of a continuing colonisation in which the descendants of the original colonists remain dominant over the colonised indigenous peoples. (150)

The 'settler' states of Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Australia inhabit differing zones of ambivalence in their claims to postcoloniality. There are substantial differences between the liberated white colonial subject of and to imperial Britain, and the colonised Indigenous Australian peoples subject to a white Australian national relationship which continues the legacy of colonialism. The imperial is both incorporated by, and instituted in, the national framework which structures and governs relationships between the colonial inheritors of the imperialist enterprise and the Aboriginal peoples dispossessed by it. Therefore, the national in the Australian context does not imply postcolonial, as the relationships of Australians to Indigenous Australians are framed by the power relations of continuing colonisation.

Non-Indigenous Australians operate in post-coloniser relationships with Aboriginal people, in which colonialism is framed by, and continues to structure, national relations. The ongoing debates about Australia's relationship to Indigenous Australians, and the resistance to accept that white Australians benefit from the abuses of our colonial past remains a contested zone of nationhood. Colonial psychosis, in both its paranoid and hebephrenic forms, continues to structure the (mis)recognitions and denials that project a sanitised colonial memory onto Australian national space. To decode these powerful cultural fictions: Australian dreams degenerate into Australian nightmares. The white Australian sense of being 'at home' and 'in place' is riven by fantasies and fears, hauntings and hallucinations, against the intruding but sustained disavowal of the sense that there is another reality,

that this is not really ‘our’ place at all, that we are *unheimlich*, maybe even *Unmensch*, fiends, brutes, monsters, cannibals. And colonisers.

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