

## 1998 HANCOCK LECTURE

### *Being and Nothing: Figuring Aboriginality in Australian Art History*

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Delivered at  
University of Sydney  
*11 November 1998*

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Figuring Aboriginality in Australian Art History***

*Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant.*

(Edward Said)<sup>1</sup>

Ten years ago the British critic, Paul Gilroy, made what he then considered 'the heretical suggestion that white audiences may be becoming more significant in the development of British black art than any black ones.'<sup>2</sup> This is a truism of colonial cultures. Aborigines have always played a very important part in the picturing of (white) Australian identity. Here they have traditionally had two roles: either, in imperial texts, as the figure of exclusion or oblivion, the nothing or negative term from which an identity can be made; or, in Aboriginalist texts, as the very being of the place. These two roles perform essentially the same function.<sup>3</sup> Is there, then, a third way?

### **Nothing**

The defining feature of Australian colonial art is not its landscape genre, but the gradual silencing of an Aboriginal presence. During the first hundred years of the colony we literally see, in the art of the time, Aborigines being displaced by the urban and pastoral environments of the encroaching colony. This silencing was complete by the end of the nineteenth century, and is nowhere more triumphant than in impressionist paintings. For most Australians, impressionism is the crowning achievement of this antipodean civilisation, and its most characteristic art. The academic discipline of art history has done its best to celebrate impressionism as the definitive moment of Australian art. Paradoxically, the art which most effectively pictures Australian identity shows a place without Aborigines.

Until the 1930s, the fate of the Aborigines caused little anxiety amongst most Australians. Not that they weren't worried. Being very few within a populous region of alien cultures, and a minority voice within a larger empire, (white) Australian discourses were anxious and, like most minority voices, dialogical in mode. That is, they were double-voiced, finding in the local not a new independent indigenous identity, but one which resonated with familiar but displaced metaphors of mainly English identities. This ambivalence was not easy to live with. The only thing that reassured Australians, it seems, was the colour of their skin. Indeed, the colour white had long been a justification for empire and colonisation. 'Among the

Australians', Keith Hancock wrote in 1930, 'pride of race counted far more than love of country.'<sup>4</sup> So when in 1961, Bernard Smith named the first chapter of his book *Australian Painting*, 'The First Artists', and in 1963, Rex and Thee Rienits titled their study of early colonial art, *Early Artists of Australia*, everyone knew what they meant.

In the settler colonial imagination the term white is unspoken, invisible. For those Australians and Americans who are not white, an appropriate adjective appears: Aboriginal Australians, or Afro- or native Americans. But for whites, just 'Australian' or 'American' will do. The cultures of these former settler colonies are about the 'construction of . . . a new white man.'<sup>5</sup> Thus in *Australian Painting* and *Early Artists of Australia*, no need was felt by the authors to explain why their discussions of Australian painting begin with the art of European explorers, and omit any mention of Aboriginal art. Both Smith and the Rienits's agreed: 'When compared with that of other nations the story of Australian art is a comparatively short one.'<sup>6</sup> Such omissions are not a momentary lapse, but symptomatic of an institutional racism. The great silence of Australian art history, built into the very grammar of its texts, is a limit or horizon which all authors worked within, and which only a few sometimes reach beyond. The forgetting is a national past-time, an essential and paradigmatic project in constructing a national identity in a colonial space. The racism is not the work of individual prejudice, but of structures of identity – a conceptual fixity repeated throughout institutional discourses. This is no better illustrated than in Smith's silence, precisely because he was one of few (white) Australians at the time who were agitated at both the plight of Aborigines, and their figurative uses in Aboriginalist discourses. More than any other art historian, he struggled with the grammar of empire (discussed below).

The first full account of Australian art, William Moore's *The Story of Australian Art* (1934), excluded Aboriginal art from history in a most direct way. The book's subtitle, 'From the earliest known art of the continent to the art of to-day', is misleading. Of its 480 pages, only three are devoted to Aboriginal art. These few pages argue that certain Aboriginal rock paintings in North West Australia (the Wandjina figures) were not painted by Aborigines, but by Japanese castaways before the 12th century. The rest of this sixty-nine page first chapter, titled 'The First Artists', is an account of colonial art. Its purpose is clear: to show that the first artists of Australia were not Aborigines.

Moore's book is little more than a chronicle. While his intent to de-Aboriginalise Australian art is plain enough, his mechanisms of exclusion are not built into the fabric of an argument or narrative. To understand the historians craft in manufacturing the great silence, we are better to turn to a

more widely read work by Australia's most respected historian of the mid-twentieth century, Hancock's *Australia*. Published four years before Moore's book, it includes a chapter on Australian art and literature. Brief as it is, it counts as one of the earliest *histories* of Australian art, that is, one which situates Australian art within a narrative of place and cultural identity, and in a larger argument about Australia and its quest for nationhood.

Hancock's argument is, in the terms of its day, imperialist rather than nativist; that is, it made a case for Australia being shaped by a European vision, and not one derived from the place itself. His aesthetic judgements are not original, and reiterate the opinions of critics such as Lionel Lindsay and J. S. MacDonald who, in several articles during the previous decade, had already sketched out a history of Australian art. Here they argued for impressionism as the first Australian art – an ideology which Hancock famously paraphrased: 'Streeton's landscapes are a national habit.'<sup>7</sup> If he felt that the Streetonian vision had become a cliché of the Australian imagination, this is because Streeton had already accomplished imaginatively what was yet to be achieved in fact: the Europeanisation of Australia. Here art was ahead of history.

Hancock employed two main narrative structures in his story of Australia, both of which were historicist and derived from his imperialist vision. The first located Australia in an imperial heritage; the second looked forward to the realisation of imperialism's colonial mission to occupy the land and, eventually, make a home here for English men and women. In the first instance, Hancock argued that Australia was not yet a nation, and hence its subjecthood was not secure. Being not yet a place in its own right, he pictured Australia with a double horizon, one local the other global. Against those nativist republicans who wanted a 'complete severance from the British Empire', a truly singular indigenous identity, Hancock argued for a re-tying or lacing of Australia back into empire. He described this lace as 'the crimson thread of kinship which ran through them all' – that is race. Australians, he said, were 'independent Australian Britons.'<sup>8</sup> Hence, he judged, 'if the Bush is "the real Australian Australia" it is not merely because the Bush is remote, but because it is "tethered to the world."' Australians, Hancock concluded, are 'in love with two soils.' Thus he suggested that Australian literature is 'Australian in the sense of being an individual contribution to English literature. It has not yet become wholly individual, because it is still engaged in the task of building its own tradition.'<sup>9</sup> In T.S. Eliot's words, colonial cultures are 'baffling alike and different from the parent culture.'

Homi Bhabha, quoting Eliot, saw in the ambivalence of (post)colonial cultures a structural unhomely partiality that escaped the fixity of imperialism's monological texts.<sup>10</sup> Hancock, however, saw only an immaturity which

time would, with the right tuition and hard work, overcome. This overcoming was Hancock's second trope. With it he told a story of conquest in which the place, by which he meant the land, was assimilated into the European imagination. Here, he felt, the painters had been more successful than the writers. They have, he said, 'revealed Australia to Australians'. 'The landscape artists have done a good deal to carry Australian patriotism beyond the modified racial self-consciousness implied in the phrase "Independent Australian Britons."' By their discoveries they have stimulated a love of country and a patriotism of place.' However, he emphasised, this was the singular achievement of the impressionists, and indeed, of one impressionist: 'Through Streeton, the Australians discovered their country, suddenly, as if by revelation.'<sup>11</sup>

Streeton's picturing of the country accords with one of Hancock's major tropes of empire: the capture and occupation of the land. His first chapter, 'The Invasion of Australia', did not, as the title might suggest, chronicle the clash of armies, but a battle with the land. The taming of nature by pastoralists became the means of forgetting the history of Aboriginal contact. Here the land was not a resource, but an enemy to be defeated as in any other invasion. Thus, he writes:

The explorers were scouts thrown out by the advancing army of pastoralists . . . Far away on the fringes . . . adventurous pastoralists skirmished with drought and raided the desert . . .

The story of these brave assaults upon the interior of Australia . . . that adventurous race of men who first dared, with their flocks and herds, to invade the unknown interior of the continent.<sup>12</sup>

The land and not the Aborigines were invaded and defeated. The Aborigines were not conquered because they had never conquered the land. The Aborigines were not defeated but dispossessed – which is why his opening sentence, 'the British peoples have alone possessed her', immediately writes Aboriginal texts out of the picture without even needing to account for or name them. The Aborigines have no role in the making of Hancock's Australia – that is, they have the role of oblivion. And this is why Hancock, along with contemporary critics such as Lindsay and MacDonald, eulogised Streeton above all others. He was the first artist to pictorially 'possess' the land for the white race. In 1919 Lindsay wrote:

We in Australia waited long for our national painter, whilst he was among us we failed to recognise this aspect of his genius. Twenty-five years have given us, however, a sense of perspective, and today we can see in the landscapes of Arthur Streeton . . . a quality of race, the inspired vision of the native born.<sup>13</sup>

According to MacDonald, Streeton's paintings struck 'the national chord':

they point to the way life should be lived in Australia, with the maximum of flocks and the minimum of factories . . . we can yet be the elect of the world, the last of the pastoralists, the true thoroughbred Aryans in all their nobility.<sup>14</sup>

## **Being**

At the very moment Streeton's triumph was being so loudly trumpeted, the burden of representing or performing 'Australia' was rapidly shifting from white to black Australians. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, things Aboriginal entered the consciousness of (white) Australians in significant ways. Nativism not imperialism gained the upper hand – in the popular imagination at least. Here history, or at least Hancock's history, seems to fail us. If Hancock and others such as Lindsay and MacDonald sought to appease colonial anxiety through locating it within an English and even Aryan diaspora, in the inter-war years a new generation discovered an indigenous identity for themselves – a white aboriginality. No longer speaking as a minority within a larger empire, but as independent (white) Australians, they claimed the Aboriginal as their own other, and articulated it in their discourses of identity.

Hancock was the first to admit that his book had quickly dated.<sup>15</sup> It summed up the end of an era rather than sketched the dawning Aboriginalist Australia which is still with us. This did not mean that the great silence was lifted. In most though not all official histories of Australia, the silence remained into the 1970s. However at an everyday level, in newspapers, in journals such as *Walkabout*, and in numerous novels and books which went through many editions, Aboriginalism was triumphant. Even many artists, poets and novelists, and a few historians, were won over. Art historians, however, remained unmoved. Artists and anthropologists, not art historians, took the lead in imagining an Aboriginalist art history.

Aboriginalism is a *nationalist* nativism, and the first ideology which attempted to imagine a nationalist discourse outside of empire. In the mid-twentieth century Russell Ward, along with fellow historian Marjorie Barnard, argued for a (white) Australian identity founded on 'indigenous influences [which], of necessity, were most potent on the expanding frontier of settlement.' Here developed the prototype of a *new* person, a white Aborigine – in Ward's words, 'the outback ethos' and the 'nomad tribe' of bushmen being formed by 'the struggle to assimilate' to 'the brute facts of Australian geography'.<sup>16</sup> If Barnard conceded that 'Australia belongs in culture, outlook, and way of life with the European', she claimed that 'the

bush asks other qualities of men than does the English countryside': the Australian colonial 'fell into a rough copy of the aboriginal way of life. He became a nomad.'<sup>17</sup>

Hancock was not unaware that a new vision of landscape was emerging as he wrote *Australia*. He mentions Hans Heysen's current desert paintings, but does not foresee their significance. 'Quite recently', wrote Hancock, Heysen 'left little farms and forests and travelled north to a vivid and primitive country of Arabian landscapes and Arabian names – Arkaba, Wilpena, Brachina, Edina.'<sup>18</sup> Hancock avoids the obvious: these were not pictures of the Middle East, but of Australia, and manifestly of Aboriginal Australia, not the occupied pastoral plains of the Streetonian Bush. Lindsay, however, did make the leap to the obvious:

here, before this nakedness of the Earth, I was conscious of a curious innocence of composition – a directness of approach . . . This mountainous country gives the sensation of an unalterable landscape, old and young as Time – a landscape of fundamentals, austerely Biblical, and yet for us intimately associated with our aboriginal stone age . . .<sup>19</sup>

Aboriginalism had so penetrated the fabric of Australia by the 1950s, that the future of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians seemed linked to a common fate, even though the consequences for each were radically different. No one phenomenon epitomised this more than that of Albert Namatjira. He was the first Aboriginal artist to receive the honour and burden of representing (white) Australia. With him, 'Australia's desire to know itself through Aboriginal culture',<sup>20</sup> became conscious and transparent. Perhaps, mused the artist Rex Battarbee, his tutor and ardent supporter,

we can learn something from our Aboriginal artists. At present there are several white artists trying to show us an Australian aboriginal form of art which is too forced to be of much value. . . . The Arunta artists are painting in our medium . . . [and] may be nearer [to] a real Australian art than anyone has ever been in the past.<sup>21</sup>

We must be careful not to exaggerate the shift in consciousness which occurred with Aboriginalism, or to confuse Aboriginalism with Aboriginality. Namatjira's popularity, for example, rested on his perceived disavowal of Aboriginality – with him becoming the icon of an assimilationist ideology that legitimised the new white nation. The Australian artist and curator, Tony Tuckson, astutely commented that 'Namatjira gained greater recognition than any of the others [of the Hermannsburg group], because in Western eyes his work was the least Aboriginal.'<sup>22</sup> Namatjira's Aboriginalist supporters and

detractors agreed on the success of his assimilation, and judged him accordingly. Detractors, mainly modernist artists who were enthusiastic about Aboriginal art, spurned him as a turn-coat who had betrayed the 'sensibility, the pure expression of art' 'latent' in Aborigines.<sup>23</sup> Supporters, such as the anthropologists C. P. Mountford and T. G. H. Strehlow, praised Namatjira's genius of imitation. Strehlow, then the foremost Western authority on the Aranda people, called his book on the Namatjira school: *Rex Battarbee: Artist and Founder of the Aboriginal Art Movement in Central Australia*. According to Strehlow: 'The new art of the foreign intruder . . . was worth emulating' because the old art and culture 'is dead as far as the Central Australian natives are concerned.' Today 'the young Aranda native . . . generally despises these things as trash belonging to a defunct age.'<sup>24</sup> Namatjira's art only confirmed, for Strehlow and many other (white) Australians, that the fate of Aboriginal culture was oblivion. Whether the *being* or *nothing* of Australian identity, Aborigines were given essentially the same role.

### **A Third Way**

Bernard Smith was the first art critic and historian to seek a third way. If he did not always escape the horizon of coloniality, he did not subscribe to imperial metaphors of race. He discerned in Australia's history not the blind imprint of empire but negotiated settlements in which local differences forced their claims, and forced them within the parameters of empire. Smith began writing in the mid-twentieth century when Aboriginalism was a rising star in Australian criticism – a fashion which he disparaged. Nevertheless, he eventually found in the unsettling plight of Aborigines a theme which might galvanise a new understanding of Australian art.

If Smith's Marxist approach subscribed to a dialectical vision which kept him alert to the dualisms and contradictions of society, he remained wary of drawing any grand synthesis. In Smith's histories, the (European) centre does not just duplicate itself on the periphery, the periphery also subversively reinscribed itself on the centre, challenging its long established mores. The 'European experience of the Pacific', said Smith, 'is not without significance for the history of European art and ideas',<sup>25</sup> and he argued, instigated the eventual defeat of the very neo-classical tropes which had structured traditional European art. If Smith here contributes significantly to an anti-imperialist historiography, some of his most barbed attacks were saved for Aboriginalists, seeing in them the silhouette of Naziism and the limited vision of parochialism. For Smith Aboriginalist nativism and imperialism were the twin arms of the same historical tendency.

Smith's ambition to understand Western art in Europe and its colonies in terms of imperialism determined the course of his life's work. His major



insight is both the formative (rather than reflective) and ambivalent nature of colonial cultures. It caused him to reject the imperialist/nativist schema, and to trust only historical analysis. Smith saw in some colonised cultures distinctive and positive virtues. 'In spite of the enslavement of the native Mexicans, during the beginnings of settlement,' he wrote in 1945, Mexican art 'is an example of the development of a vigorous living art with its own distinctive qualities, from the blending of two ethnic types.' On the other hand, he wrote:

aboriginal culture will not affect Australian art [in this vigorous way] unless the slow physical extermination of the aborigines by our own predatory culture is arrested . . . [when we] are prepared to see the aboriginal, not as an idealised figure symbolic of the perfect cultural amity of man and his environment, but as a contemporary of our own with very real problems who has never even had the semblance of a fair deal.<sup>26</sup>

Smith's refusal of both nativist and imperial positions was more strategic than ideological. Because he believed that the (white) Australian 'is a permanently displaced person whether he sits under the gum tree or walks upon the *Pont Neuf*,'<sup>27</sup> Smith saw no other alternative than to negotiate contingent positions which opposed any fixed ideology, be it nativist or imperialist. In 1945, when nativism was a dominant discourse in Australia, he assumed an anti-nativist stance. Fifteen years later when an internationalist late modernism bore down upon Australia in the form of US imperialism, Smith appeared to embrace nativism, becoming the propagandist of the group of artists which he called the 'Antipodeans'. Australian culture, he argued, was a borderline affair, its course lying 'between the Scylla of national parochialism and the Charybdis of complete exoticism that while worshipping the *Zeitgeist* spurns the *genius loci*.' Hence Smith's belief that the evolution of Australian art 'arises from the gradual assimilation of many overseas tendencies as they react upon the local conditions of the country'<sup>28</sup> did not, as Ian Burn (et al.) maintained, 'endorse dependency as the dominant'<sup>29</sup> mode of Australian art. Rather, Smith wrote in 1945, his study 'is largely concerned with the *mutations* which have occurred in styles and fashions originating overseas as they have been assimilated into [local] conditions' (*my emphasis*). If he vehemently attacked the idea of 'a purely national art', he believed that 'a national tradition in Australian art should be sought for', not in the hopeless endeavour to create an *art-form* peculiar to this continent . . . but an art the nature of which will grow from the features of a changing Australian society.'<sup>30</sup>

By 1980 Smith sensed that Australia was at a turning point in its con-

ception of place and identity. Turning to Freud, he discerned an unconscious text in colonial culture which he dubbed 'the locked cupboard of our history'. Now, it seemed to Smith, that 'all the culture of old Europe were being brought upon our writers and artists in order to blot from their memories the crimes perpetrated upon Australia's first inhabitants.' The central problem of contemporary Australian culture, he said, is to redeem 'the guilty awareness' that this holocaust occurred 'at that very time when our own white Australian culture was being conceived and born.'<sup>31</sup> Thus Smith challenged the usual critical reception (including his own earlier writing) of the settler's melancholic sensibility towards the bush 'as a kind of nostalgia for England', arguing that it was 'more the product of fear and guilt.'<sup>32</sup>

Smith's 1980 re-reading of 'Australia' set the stage for a radical re-evaluation of Aboriginal art and of Aboriginality in the historical understanding of Australian art. The originality of Smith's earlier work was his argument that an Australian art history must deal productively with its origins in the colonial period, rather than relegate them to a pre-history or a pre-nationalism. His 1980 re-evaluation of Australian art did not disturb this fundamental point. Rather it only confirmed it. Now colonial art is important to a postcolonial vision not just because of the ways it challenged as much as it affirmed its imperial legacy, but because here the very formative structures of exclusion which silenced Aborigines are most visible.

Smith's argument, however, did not generally convince the New Left generation of artists, art historians and critics who felt the force of US imperialism in the region. For them it was difficult to see how imperialism might produce anything positive. In 1983 Terry Smith (a former student of Bernard Smith), who was searching for ways to include issues of Aboriginality and Aboriginal art into the history of Australian art within a larger and radical anti-imperial argument, protested that colonial art is, 'strictly speaking', not 'a period within the history of Australian art history' because it is manifestly concerned with extending the imperatives of English taste rather than searching for a local identity. Only the 'nationalism' of post-1880s', he argued, 'made Australian art perceptible.' While admitting that Bernard Smith did articulate a necessary dialectic between global and local discourses, in his history 'European tradition clearly predominates, implying a dependent, provincial, imitative character in most Australian art.'<sup>33</sup> There is some truth in this. Bernard Smith wrote in *Australian Painting*: 'the European art of Australia has continued to be a provincial art carried on for almost two centuries now in a south-east Asian situation far from such metropolitan source as London, Paris and, more recently, New York.' If he qualified his provincialist aesthetic, claiming that original art did develop 'not at the immediate point of impact of the novel metropolitan style upon

the slower moving provincial style, but later when the innovation has found a creative point of accommodation with the sluggish, provincial tradition'.<sup>34</sup> this was hardly satisfying. But this difficulty or dilemma of being a provincial culture – what Terry Smith famously dubbed the 'provincialism problem' – became the focus of the best Australian art criticism of the time.

Terry Smith had no answer to the dilemma. Australian artists, he said, are trapped between 'two antithetical terms: a defiant urge to localism . . . and a reluctant recognition that generative innovations . . . are determined externally'. He felt nailed by an intractable formula in which two equations crossed. First, 'because the [local] traditions are . . . hybrids, the mixture grows weaker.' Second, the colonial 'artist is not himself the agent of significant change. Larger forces control the shape of his development'.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, Ian Burn (also an Australian living in New York at the time) wrote:

A provincial context may be internally defining, but what defines the context as 'provincial' is significantly externally determined. That is, in order to study a provincial contest one has to look for external factors – as the well as the internal reasons – to explain its internal structure.

Burn struggled to articulate a way beyond the 'cultural impotence for artists of provincial contexts', making the pathetic plea to accept 'other contexts for what they are', and signalling his ambition 'to conceive of the game as no longer containing the trick which enables America to win . . . to conceive of it as a whole new game'.<sup>36</sup>

The rules of this 'whole new game' which would exceed colonialism (here US imperialism) were not immediately forthcoming. Terry Smith called for a Foucauldian study of the 'micro-circulation of power; the sometimes strident, sometimes muffled, yet incessant struggle for the *power to represent*, to have a "voice", to *appear*.' Then, he argued, 'new subjects become visible, new questions become pressing' – the most obvious, he believed, being the story of Aborigines and their representation in Australian art. However, he bemoaned, such work 'has been, and still is, a rather slow and painful process'.<sup>37</sup> If in the 1980s a new generation of artists, cultural historians and critics were wary of hypostatizing 'place', and if they no longer narrated a crimson thread of race, the provincialism problem remained unsolved. Examples include Tim Bonyhady's *Images in Opposition* (1985) which, despite its excellent historical scholarship of regional motives in Australian art, fails to question the imperialist assumption which have long coloured attitudes to Australia's colonial art, to the cultural studies of Ross Gibson which, despite its astute semiotic analysis, fails to exceed the colonialism it deconstructs.

Gibson and Bonyhady write colonialist histories because the relations they posit between the global and the local are monological and predetermined, not dialogical and ambivalent. That is, they accept provincialism as a starting point and limit which can not be exceeded. While, in nativist fashion, Bonyhady thoroughly documents 'the Australian background and response' to colonial paintings, 'rather than their European inheritance', his repeating rather than interrogation of the colonial culture in the oppositions which structure his study (eg. an Aboriginal/pastoral Arcadia; the familiar/melancholy landscape) is, he admits, an uncritical acceptance 'that nearly all nineteenth century Australian landscapes fell directly within European artistic traditions',<sup>38</sup> rather than troubled these traditions.

Gibson proposes a more troubled account of Australian colonial culture than Bonyhady, but it is one founded on a similar assumption. 'The Antipodes' said Gibson, is 'a mirror to European aspirations and anxieties . . . Long before the English discovery, the Southern Continent was being written into Western culture.' While recognising the ambivalences and contradictions of these mirror images, he saw the mark of a triumphant determinist imperialism rather than the limits and blind spots of colonialism. Instead of locating the ambivalences of Australian identity in the liminal experiences of the colonised and the dilemmas of parochialism, in a speaking back, Gibson discerned the unalterable stamp of a Eurocentric philosophy and history. When the actual experience of Australia was tested against these classical mythologies, he argued that the imperatives (tropes) of classicism prevailed even amongst the more empirically minded. Writing of Australian explorers, Gibson observed: 'In many respects they were mapping out the terrain of their own [classical] desires and ambitions.'<sup>39</sup> Even contemporary Australia remains, for Gibson, a colonialist text:

Australia is now clearly bifurcated. It is both a long way from the world (as it always has been) and is nowhere in particular, in the swirl of electronic information and entertainment. It is 'poised' now as a conundrum for the West – recognisable yet chimeral, present yet exotic: a depot and a clearing house for the world's matter.<sup>40</sup>

Paul Carter's *The Road to Botany Bay* (1987) is the first book to outline what a cultural history of Australia might look like in which the dilemma of provincialism is a solution, not a problem. If in 1974 Terry Smith had diagnosed an incurable melancholy in Australian art which was "'obsessed with the problem of what its identity ought to be'",<sup>41</sup> Carter proposed a cure, or what he called 'a third position' that makes from the 'movement' between here and there 'a mode of being in the world.'<sup>42</sup> 'It is', he said, 'out of an oscillation between positions and perspectives that contemporary, post-

colonial cultures must weave the fabric of their identity; anything less than the “counter-energy” of a consciously hybridising “internationalism” condemns us to recapitulate the disastrous “them and us” demonologies of imperialism.’<sup>43</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha meant much the same thing when she called for ‘a constant to-and-fro-movement between the same and the other’;<sup>44</sup> as did Gayatri Spivak when she described the ‘shuttling predicament’ of the colonised as being ‘between this sort of Narcissus and that sort of Echo.’<sup>45</sup> Here the hybrid art of colonial societies is not, as Terry Smith once feared, intrinsically a weaker art, but a liminal one that invariably exceeds the limits of its coloniality and antipodality to fashion an identity as authentic and historically viable as any other. This, too, was Burn’s final position. While Australian ‘artists [and critics] have consistently used a commitment in terms of style as a means of declaring an allegiance or affiliation to an “international” movement, and of disenfranchising themselves from specific local practices’, he argued (in 1988) that the

amalgamations of received styles can serve to obscure, even deliberately distance, a dependence on sources. . . . Within such mixes, the strategies of overlapping, of slippages and gaps can be exploited for different ends and contradictions played off against each other. Thus complex hybrids and transgressions of ‘pure’ styles have been self-consciously developed, an approach which has given rise to a lot of the more distinctive art produced in this country.<sup>46</sup>

Such a postcolonial paradigm makes possible a new reception of Aboriginal art, especially the hybrid practices of contemporary Aboriginal art – be they traditional or urban. Suddenly there is a new stage that is neither imperialist or Aboriginalist, upon which Aboriginality could be performed. The question which remains to be answered is: did this post-colonial stage allow Aboriginality to exceed its former roles as the nothing or being of Australian identity? Does it provide a third way?

### **The Postcolonial Stage**

One thing is certain: the postcolonial stage has proved immensely productive for Aboriginal art. ‘In world terms,’ Terry Smith wrote in his updated additional chapters to Bernard Smith’s *Australian Painting*, ‘the impact of contemporary Aboriginal painting matches [the impact of] Neo-Expressionism in Europe and Postmodernism in the USA.’<sup>47</sup> His thesis contrasts with Bernard Smith’s claim, earlier in the book, that ‘the Aboriginal art of Australia . . . is an art which has evolved in isolation from the rest of world art.’<sup>48</sup> The reason for this radical shift, said Terry Smith, was a global crisis that occurred in the 1970s which shook Australian art ‘to its roots’.<sup>49</sup>

The crisis went deeper than a cynicism towards the transcendent powers of painting. A world-wide post-war loss of faith in the European project provided a window of opportunity for indigenous and minority groups around the world. Despite the success of capitalism in the post-war period, and the increasing Westernisation of the world, there remained a deep set ambivalence to its values – an ambivalence fuelled by postcolonial wars in Asia, Africa and South America, and the successful promotion of identity politics by minority groups. In Australia, the simultaneous development of Aboriginal and feminist movements within the context of the Vietnam war and Springbok tours, combined with an influential international New Left populism whose heroes included many Asians and Afro-Americans, produced, for the first time, a generation for whom the mythology of a white Australia was anachronistic. Further, the appeal to a primitivist ethic in which artists imagined themselves as shamans, magicians and alchemists had, by the late 1970s, become a dominate trend in Western art. This was the context of the 1979 Sydney Biennale *European Dialogue* – that for the first time included Aboriginal art in its display – and of Bernard Smith's Boyer lectures the following year.

Calling for a 'cultural convergence', Smith sketched a framework with which issues of Aboriginality might be included in the history of Australian art without regressing to the 'archaism' of Aboriginalism. However, not many were convinced – or not immediately at least. A few artists, such as John Wolseley and Tim Johnson, were already practising a type of convergence between Western and Aboriginal art, and Western Desert and Northern bark paintings were beginning to be shown in contemporary art exhibitions. However many artists and critics, especially those associated with the emerging avant-gardism of the postmodern scene, were sceptical. Seeing just another Aboriginalism, they retained the traditional reticence of academia to things Aboriginal.<sup>50</sup> Academics Colin Symes and Bob Lingard argued that the notion of cultural convergence 'carries atavistic overtones of assimilation', and instead argued for a 'cultural divergence' . . . which would see 'the proliferation of highly localised and culturally differential types of art production.'<sup>51</sup> Paul Taylor, who edited the new postmodern journal, *Art & Text*, wrote: 'I refute the stupid notion that Australians are going to "naturally" use Aboriginal motifs and are going to draw on the cultures of South East Asia and this kind of rubbish.'<sup>52</sup> The painter (and associate of the Taylor circle), Imants Tillers, provided the most telling critique of cultural convergence. He dismissed it as a fashionable and expedient way to absolve 'the deep guilt underlying Australian culture' without at first rectifying the 'political and economic inequalities'. According to Tillers,

'Cultural convergence' is attractive as an idea because it offers a painless way to expiate our collective guilt . . . while simultaneously suggesting an easy solution to the more mundane but nevertheless pressing problem of finding a uniquely Australian content to our art in an international climate sympathetic to the notion of 'regional' art.<sup>53</sup>

Further, Tillers objected to the ways in which Aboriginality de-contextualised what he believed to be the real issues of contemporary society: 'the re-emergence of a strong urban-based art, orientated towards mimicry and deconstruction of the codes and signs of consumerism.'<sup>54</sup>

Despite Tillers' objections to cultural convergence, his critique had the effect of producing a type of convergence – thus confirming Smith's point. For example, Tillers compared the dots of Western Desert acrylics with the dot screen of photographically reproduced images, arguing that the 'Papunya paintings have a very strong conceptual aspect . . . [that] can be identified with the dematerialised aspects of the Australian conceptual art of the early 1970s'. Also, he pointed out, they shared 'exactly the same historical period in Australia as conceptual art.' Thus Papunya paintings were not Aboriginal art, but, he declared, "post-conceptual." He admitted that 'there is a supreme irony in this since it is an attitude convergent with the art of 'White Aborigines' – Australian 'unexpresssionists' [like himself] – those who embrace the 'dot-screen' of mechanical reproduction either directly or through its agent – photography.'<sup>55</sup>

What, in the early 1980s, Tillers had seen as ironical, others read as actual. The anthropologist Eric Michaels was its most influential exponent. In 1989 he commented: 'you can pick up a Yuendumu canvas directly from its site of production (these politically grotesque, post-colonial, depressed, third world desert camps and settlements) and drop it straight into any contemporary New York, Cologne or Paris gallery and, without any explanation, documentation or apology, it will "work" in these settings.' This is because, he insisted, Aboriginal artists are critically engaging with postmodernism, rather than being incorporated by its agenda: 'Aboriginal painters now match the postmodern methodologies of appropriation with their own counter-appropriative strategies.' Not only are 'Western Desert Acrylic paintings . . . not exempted from the postmodern condition', but says Michaels, 'they respond to and comment on it every bit as much as Tillers, and [Tim] Johnson and others do, and the style has become attractive to us now for precisely this reason.'<sup>56</sup>

On every front, it seemed, Aboriginal art and the issues it foregrounded, such as cultural identity, had emerged as the main focus of interest in

Australian contemporary art. Thus the most significant new paradigm to emerge in Australian art since the late 1970s was not the new urbanism espoused by Tillers, but, as Terry Smith claimed, the contemporaneity of Aboriginal art (ie its convergence with white Australian art). By the end of the 1980s Bernard Smith's call ten years earlier for a cultural convergence was not only vindicated, it seemed prophetic – and no more so than in the publicly funded exhibitions of Australian art, especially contemporary art.

Curators, more than historians or critics, led the way in investigating and instigating cultural convergence. Previously art historians and curators had never paid much attention to Aboriginal art, and had left the field to anthropologists. They adopted unquestioningly the traditional anthropological concept of authenticity. Even Daniel Thomas, who regretted the long curatorial silence on Aboriginal art since the 1960s, and did more than any other curator in the early 1980s to include Aboriginal art in the explication of Australian art, nevertheless believed then that Aboriginal art was tribal and unhistorical: 'a chronological display [of Australian Aboriginal art]', he wrote, 'is inappropriate, as it is for other tribal art'.<sup>57</sup> Hence enthusiasm and desire for cultural convergence was ahead of its realisation. Vivien Johnson's comment on the 1986 Sydney Biennale was generally true of all such occasions: 'it was the radical incommensurability of artistic strategies with all the other exhibitors which most characterised the contemporary practice of Aboriginal art'.<sup>58</sup> The Australian bicentenary year of 1988 was a watershed in the exhibition of Australian art. Djon Mundine, Australia's first Aboriginal curator, organised an exhibition of 200 burial poles from Arnhem Land for the 1988 Sydney Biennale. In the mind of Nick Waterlow, the Biennale's director, it was the first time that Aboriginal art was made the centre of the Biennale. The burial poles, said Waterlow, were 'the single most important statement in this Biennale'. And, he continued, 'the Aboriginal presence is the most civilising and creatively challenging element in our world.' Waterlow's musings that 'it is the Aboriginal spirit which [today] nourishes our [Australian] spirit',<sup>59</sup> reflected widespread opinion engendered by the bicentenary, and marked a turning point in the reception of Aboriginal art in the (white) Australian art community. Daniel Thomas was equally enthusiastic: 'The Aboriginal people are re-conquering the minds of their invaders, as the Greek re-conquered the ancient Romans.'<sup>60</sup>

How do we assess the triumph of the Aboriginal art movement? On one level Thomas's and Waterlow's enthusiasm, which are typical of academic responses today, suggest the return of Aboriginalism. In this era of cultural convergence the term Aboriginal has taken on sacred and transcendental connotations which go to the heart of Australian identity. Now Aboriginality



is proclaimed and applauded by many as the very *being* of the new multi-cultural republic, despite some rear guard actions at official and populist levels. Maybe Tillers' concerns about cultural convergence were right after all. Perhaps these radical shifts have only occurred on the surface, and, to paraphrase Said, hide a fixed unchanging 'latent' 'unconscious' content which keeps intact the separateness of Aboriginality.

If Tillers lost the battle against the Aboriginalising of Australian art, maybe he won the war – because alongside and inside the Aboriginal art movement is a powerful critique of identity which recognises, after Foucault, that identities are discursive, not given or natural.<sup>61</sup> Such is the worry of some Aboriginal artists about the figure of Aboriginality in contemporary Australian discourses, that they resist the very category 'Aboriginal'. For them playing the role of the Greeks in the Roman empire – i.e. fashioning some nice art for the new palaces – is not only not enough, it brings with it a burden of representation and expectation that prolongs rather than subverts coloniality. Here the category 'Aboriginal' is too overdetermined to be escaped. When Aboriginal artists enter the field of representation, be it as artists, politicians etc., their speaking positions are rigidly circumscribed: they are made to speak as representatives of a particular, that is, Aboriginal community. And second, this speaking is today made an essential component of the main game, the formation of Australian identity – 'Australia's desire to know itself through Aboriginal culture.' (Batty)

While the gains made by and for Aboriginal artists in the 1980s produced powerful black subjectivities and strategically useful speaking positions, these liberatory gestures may have only repeated rather than subverted coloniality. Hence some Aboriginal artists have, during the 1990s, attempted to deconstruct this politics of representation – and in this respect are instrumental in re-conceptualising what an Australian art history might be. Indeed, to an extent rare in the history of art history, contemporary artists are, the world over, directly participating in and at times leading the production of a new art history. If Bernard Smith's 1980 Boyer lectures initiated a radical rethink of the history of Australian art, the main inspiration for the new postcolonial histories of Australian art have come from 'black' critics and artists working in First World countries. In Australia the most sustained of such critiques has been produced by Gordon Bennett who, like many artists in the 1980s, made art history the subject of his art. In other words, much of Bennett's art can be read as a re-picturing and re-theorising of the history of Australia and Australian art. For here, he argues, is the source of an Aboriginal subjectivity that urgently needs deconstructing.

Since graduating from art school in 1988, his strategy for refusing the position of Aboriginality is to put his own subjectivity, along with the very

notion of a black subjectivity, in question. He pictures the historical economy of Australian subjectivities, not his own subject position. In order to make this point, Bennett prefers a performative to an expressionist style – that is, one that transparently acts out various roles rather than reclaims some inner centre or original lost identity. Bennett's key aesthetic strategy for achieving this is appropriation. What we literally see in his art is not his authentic voice, but the frozen gestures of other voices, fragments cut from the screen of Western art. He repeats their aesthetic postures, but eccentrically, in different and unexpected ways. In his recent series, *Home Decor* (Preston + *De Stijl* = *John Citizen*, Margaret Preston jives to the syncopated beat of Mondrian grids, creating a new and rich dialogical moment in which Australian meets European, and modernist utopianism meets modernist primitivism. In this respect his work is dialogical. By activating the multiple languages of modernity, Bennett is, to use Bakhtin's words, able 'to distance' himself from and 'complicate still further his relationship to the [dominant] . . . language of his time.'<sup>62</sup> The dialogic mode allows him to refract and fragment rather than reflect and focus his authorial voice, and so mitigate or disperse his enforced burden of representation for being 'Aboriginal'.

Bakhtin's description of what he calls the 'hybrid' style of dialogic discourse aptly summarises Bennett's methodology: 'it is stylised through and through, thoroughly premeditated, achieved, distanced,' and presumes 'a verbal and semantic decentring of the ideological world, a certain linguistic homelessness of literary consciousness, which no longer possesses a sacrosanct and unitary linguistic medium for containing ideological thought.' However, if Bakhtin insists that this decentring liberates language from myth 'as an absolute form of thought',<sup>63</sup> Bennett's art does not. Rather his work has a deconstructive turn; it re-stages various historical aesthetics within a Derridean logic of repression so that their monological certainties are dispersed into fluid, fragmented, anxious identities – what Bhabha calls 'a dangerous indeterminacy.'<sup>64</sup> If this returns us to Hancock's sense of an unformed and even dialogical Australian subjecthood, Bennett replaces Hancock's imperial stage for a deconstructive one – that is, one which echoes with the repetitions of coloniality. The crimson ribbon holding these fragments together is still race, or more properly racism, and it remains as slippery as blood.

If Bennett's art is emblematic of the postcolonial era of cultural convergence, his convergence brings with it a politics that deconstructs rather than annuls the expectations of Aboriginality and the fixity of imperial ideology. Bennett thinks, in Derrida's sense, at the 'limit' of Aboriginality,<sup>65</sup> rather than outside of it. To paraphrase Stuart Hall: while the logic of Aboriginality might no longer be serviceable or "good to think with", it has

'not been superseded dialectically.' Since 'there are no other, entirely different concepts with which to replace' it, 'there is nothing to do but to continue to think with' it in 'deconstructed forms'. In short, Bennett's postcolonialism does not take us beyond colonialism, but returns us to it, or more accurately, to its horizon and the horizon of its ideologies, including the ideology of Aboriginality. Bennett's postcolonialism then, is a double horizon which bends our vision of not just colonialism, but the imperial centre of its formation. Never has Bernard Smith's thesis been so vindicated in the practice of Australian art. At the same time it has been radically extended; transformed into a new paradigm of identity and place.

According to Bhabha, colonial identities are always at a limit rather than a centre. Here there is always a 'dangerous indeterminacy'. The limit is set by the imperial ideology which guarantees Western identity. In other words, in the colonies Western identity is, in Derrida's sense, already under erasure. The identifiatory mechanisms of imperial ideology are, as always, invisible, unconscious. Also (and because of this), argues Bhabha, they always produce, in the hyphenated colonised subject (Aboriginal-Australian, Afro-American, Australian-Briton), a delay – what he called the 'historical untimely', or a sense of always being too late.<sup>66</sup> Bernard Smith explained this structural belatedness – what he called 'time-lag'<sup>67</sup> – as the effect of distance between the colony and its parent. Terry Smith explained this 'provincialism problem' as an ideological effect of imperialism. Bhabha also understood it in terms of ideology, but focused on a psycho-politics of imperial ideology that diagnosed in its belatedness a return of the repressed. The time-lag, he explained, is like an echo of the other in the same – a heterology, or what Bakhtin calls the dialogic moment. In the indeterminate hybridity of the dialogic imagination are not naturalised models of identification, but identificatory processes whose very indeterminacy frees us from the determinist naturalism of ideology. If this is too utopian a vision, it promises a radical shift in consciousness that refuses the existential fixity of identity in which the only choice is *Being* or *Nothing*.

## Endnotes

*This paper is a revised version of the original lecture.*

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 206

<sup>2</sup> Paul Gilroy, 'Cruciality and the Frog's Perspective: An Agenda of Difficulties for the Black Arts Movement in Britain', 1989, quoted in Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?', *Basic Writings*, ed. David Krell, (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 108. See my article 'Postcolonial: return to sender' in the online *Australian Humanities Review*, December 1998. See <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/>.

<sup>4</sup> Keith Hancock, *Australia* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1930), pp. 56–58.

<sup>5</sup> As Toni Morrison said of US culture, in *Playing in the Dark* (London: Picador, 1993), p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Smith with Terry Smith, *Australian Painting* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. vi. The Rientis's made a similar statement on the first page of their book: *Early Artists of Australia* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Hancock, p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56–58, 237.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>10</sup> Homi Bhabha, 'Culture's In-Between', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1997), p. 54. The Eliot quote is from *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949), p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Hancock, pp. 253, 256.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Lionel Lindsay, 'Arthur Streeton's Australian Work', *The Art of Arthur Streeton*, (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1919), p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> J. S. MacDonald, 'Arthur Streeton', *Art in Australia*, 3, 40, 15 October 1931, pp. 22–23.

<sup>15</sup> Hancock, Preface.

<sup>16</sup> Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978, 2nd edn), pp. 285–286, 32–34.

<sup>17</sup> Marjorie Barnard, *A History of Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1978), pp. 668–669, 650.

<sup>18</sup> Hancock, p. 255.

<sup>19</sup> Lionel Lindsay, quoted in C. Thiele, *Heysen of Hahndorf* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1968), pp. 203–204.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Batty, 'Saluting the dot spangled banner Aboriginal Culture, National Identity and the Australian Republic', *Art Link*, Vol. 17 No. 3, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Rex Battarbee, *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1951), p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Tony Tuckson in *Australian Aboriginal Art*, ed. R. M. Berndt (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964), p. 68.

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<sup>22</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 15.3.1945.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Sylvia Kleinert, 'The Critical Reaction to the Hermannsburg School', *Heritage of Namatjira*, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> R. G. H. Strehlow, *Rex Battarbee: Artist and Founder of the Aboriginal Art Movement in Central Australia* (Sydney: Legend Press, 1956), p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific 1768–1850* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989, 2nd edn), p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*, (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1945), p. 166.

<sup>27</sup> Bernard Smith, 'Paintings and Drawings', *The Arts Festival of the Olympic Games*, Melbourne, 1956, p. 18.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Burn et al, *The Necessity of Australian Art an essay about interpretation*, (Sydney: Power Publications, 1988), p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Smith, *Place, Taste and Tradition*, p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Bernard Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission Boyer Lectures, 1980), p. 10.

<sup>32</sup> He had, in fact, suggested such a displacement in his earlier writings on Augustus Earle's painting *A Bivouac of Travellers in Australia in a Cabbage Tree Forest, Day Break* (c. 1838) – though without making the Freudian leap: 'To replace the eighteenth century's black noble savage the nineteenth century produced a white: the noble frontiersman.' (See *European Vision*, p. 256; and *Australian Painting*, p. 28.)

<sup>33</sup> Terry Smith, 'Writing the History of Australian Art: Its Past, Present and Possible Future', *Australian Journal of Art*, Volume 3, 1983, pp. 12–13, 15.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, pp. 333–334.

<sup>35</sup> Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', *Art Forum*, 13, 1, September 1974, pp. 56, 58.

<sup>36</sup> Ian Burn, 'Art is what we do, culture is what we do to other artists', *Dialogue Writings in Art History* (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), pp. 135–136, 138–139.

<sup>37</sup> Terry Smith, 'Writing the History of Australian Art', pp. 24–25.

<sup>38</sup> Tim Bonyhady, *Images in Opposition Australian Landscape Painting 1801–1890* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. xii.

<sup>39</sup> Ross Gibson, 'Geography and Gender', *South of the West Postcolonialism and the Narrative Construction of Australia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 87, 96.

<sup>40</sup> Ross Gibson, 'Bearings . . . An Introduction', *South of the West*, p. xi.

<sup>41</sup> Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem', p. 56.

<sup>42</sup> Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), pp. 100–101.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Carter, 'Contrapuntal Perspectives', *Art and Asia Pacific*, 1,3,1994, p. 109.

<sup>44</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, 'Of Other Peoples: Beyond the "Salvage Paradigm"', in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, number 1, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Dia Art Foundation, Bay Press, 1987), p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Asked to Talk About Myself . . .', *Third Text*, 19, Summer 1992, p. 18.

- <sup>46</sup> Burn, 'The re-appropriation of influence', *Dialogue*, p. 212.
- <sup>47</sup> Terry Smith, in Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 495.
- <sup>48</sup> Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 333.
- <sup>49</sup> Terry Smith, in Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 458.
- <sup>50</sup> I outline in more detail the argument put at the time against cultural convergence in my *White Aborigines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 114–133.
- <sup>51</sup> Colin Symes and Bob Lingard, 'From the Ethnographic to the Aesthetic An Examination of the Relationship between Aboriginal and European Culture in Australian Art 1788–1988', *Island in the Stream*, p. 190.
- <sup>52</sup> Christina Davidson, 'Interview: Paul Taylor', *Art Network*, 10, Winter 1983, p. 47.
- <sup>53</sup> Imants Tillers, 'Locality Fails', *Art & Text*, 6, 1982, pp. 52–53.
- <sup>54</sup> Imants Tillers, 'In Perpetual Mourning', *Imants Tillers Venice Biennale* (Sydney: The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council, 1986; and Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 1986), pp. 17–18.
- <sup>55</sup> Imants Tillers 'Fear of Texture', *Art & Text*, 10, 1983, p. 18.
- <sup>56</sup> Eric Michaels, 'Postmodernism, Appropriation and Western Desert Acrylics', in *Postmodernism: A Consideration of the Appropriation of Aboriginal Imagery*, cd. Sue Cramer (Brisbane: Institute of Modern Art, 1989), pp. 27–33.
- <sup>57</sup> Daniel Thomas, 'Australian art', in *Australian National Gallery an Introduction*, ed. James Mollison and Laura Murray (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 1982), p. 194.
- <sup>58</sup> Vivien Johnson, 'The Unbounded Biennale Contemporary Aboriginal Art', *Art and Australia*, 31, 1, Spring 1993, p. 50.
- <sup>59</sup> Nick Waterlow, 'A View of World Art', *Australian Biennale From the Southern Cross: A World View of Art c. 1940–88* (Crows Nest: ABC Enterprises, 1988), pp. 11–12.
- <sup>60</sup> Daniel Thomas, 'The margins strike back: Australian art since the the 1960s', *Art and Australia*, 26, 1, Spring 1988, p. 71.
- <sup>61</sup> For a useful discussion of these theories, see Stuart Hall, 'Introduction "Who Needs Identity?"', *Questions of Cultural Identity*, pp. 1–17.
- <sup>62</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, translated Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p. 309.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 366–367.
- <sup>64</sup> Bhabha, p. 56.
- <sup>65</sup> See Hall, p. 1.
- <sup>66</sup> Bhabha, pp. 54–55.
- <sup>67</sup> Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting*, p. 333.