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What the ASA is about.

The Aboriginal Studies Association - the ASA - is for everyone who is involved in Aboriginal Studies; who wants to be involved in Aboriginal Studies; and is interested in Aboriginal Studies and wants to know more. It is affiliated with the NSW Joint Council of Professional Teacher Associations, but we are not just an important teachers association, or just for teachers of Aboriginal Studies. The ASA is for teachers, students, parents and community - both Aboriginal and other Australian, tertiary educators, consultants and liaison staff and anyone who wants to know more or wants to share what they know about Aboriginal Studies.

Aboriginal Studies is all studies of Aboriginal Australia - history, heritage and issues now - in all education and training. We see Aboriginal Studies as both a subject in its own right and as perspectives across the curriculum. Our main objective is promoting Aboriginal Studies at all levels of education and across all sectors. One of the things the ASA is about is to help empower the many teachers who want to do the right thing in Aboriginal Education, but don't feel they know enough to do things the right way and avoid making mistakes.

The ASA is not an Aboriginal Education lobby group - that is the role of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs). The ASA supports AECGs and has always had a close relationship with the NSW AECG Inc.

The ASA is committed to Reconciliation and the role of education in Reconciliation. We are committed to Aboriginal Education as not only the appropriate education of Aboriginal students, but also and essentially educating all students, and all Australians, about Aboriginal Australia - history, cultures and issues now.

The aims of the ASA are to promote the teaching of Aboriginal Studies and perspectives at all levels of education; support the maintenance and transmission of Aboriginal cultures and history; provide opportunities for extending networks in Aboriginal Studies; increase teacher awareness of available material/human resources and teaching strategies; provide a forum for sharing ideas and resources; and provide opportunities to engage in professional and personal development related to Aboriginal Studies at all levels.

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New Age: New Orthodoxy—the institutional authorising of balderdash¹

Mitchell Rolls

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Over the last decade a growing number of publications propounding the utility for settler-Australians (and others) of Aboriginal spirituality, other cultural property and identity have emerged. This stream of material continues to widen and shows no sign of abating. The well publicised and documented concerns raised by some Aborigines have not constricted the flow. Nor have the various critiques of academics, literary critics, artists, journalists and a range of other concerned individuals. A reason for their concern is that much of the work advocating the usefulness to settler-Australians and others of Aboriginal non-material cultural property is engaged in the practice of exploitative appropriation, not mutually enriching cultural exchange. Various qualities are assigned to Aborigines according to whatever needs they are being asked to address. Their cultural property, wrenched from the context in which its meaning is gained, is disfigured into desirous attributes which are declared to be an essence of indigenous cultural authenticity.

Whilst one can point to a series of critiques of texts engaged in the practice of exploitative appropriation, it is important not to overstate the extent nor influence of this criticism. Rather, there is growing circumstantial evidence that the idealised portrayals of Aborigines carried in texts advocating the redemptive values of Aboriginal cultures, which typically pronounce the need for the West to regain this 'lost' knowledge and fundamental human essence in order to save either ourselves or the planet, are gaining the status of orthodoxy. In some instances such texts are regarded as credible ethnographies.

Besides the issue of appropriation, another problem with these texts is that many of them continue the practice of mediating what it is to be an Aborigine. An Aboriginal person falling outside the constructions propounded have their Aboriginality doubted. In the example of Robert Lawlor's (1991) fey primitivism, *Voices of the First Day*, Aborigines do not wear clothes, practice agriculture, read, write, live in houses, nor play competitive games. Nor are they homosexual.² In James Cowan's (1995) autobiographical *Two Men Dreaming* an ersatz Aboriginality is found in the poverty of a remote desert community. The further Cowan progresses into the desert the more authentic his indigenous experience. Real Aboriginality is finally encountered in the form of two 'nomads' living a 'traditional' life. Young Aborigines—those that watch television and drive Toyota four wheel drives, amongst other cultural transgressions—are dismissed as having lost their culture.³ As I will explain, both Lawlor and Cowan are credited with expertise in Aboriginal cultures.

Even Marlo Morgan's (1994) egregious *Mutant Message Down Under* has been read as legitimate ethnography. Morgan, the 1968 Mrs Kansas, chiropractor, acupuncturist and alternative health care

advocate (Wyndham 1994, 26,28,54), would have us believe that a group of Aborigines—‘the tribe of Divine Oneness Real People’—effectively kidnapped her so that she could accompany them on a four month trek across the desert. It is this ‘experience’ that is recounted in *Mutant Message*.

It is a work of obvious ficto-fantasy. For example, Aborigines do not die. Rather, at the age of 120 or 130, ‘when a person gets excited about returning to *forever* ... [they sit] down in the sand and ... [i]n less than two minutes they are gone’ (153-54). Broken legs—so severe that bones protrude through the flesh—heal overnight. Food always appears when needed, for animals and plants choose to self-sacrifice in the interests of the greater good. It needs to be emphasised that Morgan claims these are factual accounts of her experiences with the ‘Real People’ and that similar fanciful absurdities are littered throughout the text. Absurdities that one might think would not find purchase within universities. Sadly this is not the case. Professor Gareth Griffiths (1996) of the English department, University of Western Australia, recalls a 1992 dinner party in Kansas City. His friend David Ray—a poet and editor—had organised a dinner that included amongst its guests the Chairman of the University of Missouri English department, whose interest is Afro-American writing, and another writer and editor. The guests were intelligent, presumably widely read, and, according to Griffiths, ‘relatively well-travelled and well-informed people’ (78).

Marlo Morgan was also a guest. She was invited on the strength of her text (still a self-published phenomenon at that stage), the considerable air-play she was being given on a local radio station, and her popular local lectures discussing her journey with the ‘tribe.’ Although one would not suspect the credulity of Morgan’s fellow diners, Griffiths’ explains there was genuine interest in rather than scepticism of her claimed experiences. His mild questioning of Morgan about some of these experiences did raise doubts in the other guest’s minds as to the authenticity of her stories, but as he states, ‘it is significant that until that evening these ... people had entertained the story, and had given it considerable credence’ (78).

I also first became aware of *Mutant Message* at a dinner, but in rural Boorowa, New South Wales, in late January 1994. A final year drama student from California was spending her vacation as a nanny on the host’s property. Morgan’s text had been placed on the syllabus of her course for reasons that she did not make clear, but it had something to do with assisting the students reach their inner selves and infuse their daily and forthcoming professional lives with a palpable spirituality. The student enthused over this text which I had not yet seen, as did her fellow students apparently, and described Morgan in the details she wrote out for me as ‘Dr. Morgan, Anthropologist.’⁴ (At this stage Morgan was claiming two PhDs in Biochemistry).

Upon subsequently reading *Mutant Message* I dismissed this conversation as an aberration, perhaps an embellishment on the student’s part—could it really be true it was on a university syllabus as a respected source and, that students were actually receptive to its ‘message’? Unfortunately the answer

is yes. Whilst lecturing at Guelph University, Ontario, Griffiths was approached by a Native American graduate Cultural Studies student seeking his opinion on *Mutant Message*. He writes that he

was appalled to hear that this intelligent and well-read woman had been introduced to the book [Mutant Message] by another graduate student, also Native American Indian, who had recommended it highly as a vivid, and true portrait of an Australian Aboriginal tribe and as an accurate reflection of indigenous people's cultures in Australia (Griffiths 1996, 81,80-1).

Certainly many North American students who enrol in Aboriginal Studies courses at the University of Tasmania arrive with *Mutant Message* in their bags and who, not finding Morgan's Aborigines in Tasmania or in the courses we teach, tentatively approach their lecturers and tutors to enquire as to their whereabouts. There is anecdotal evidence that tourists too in Central and Northern Australia seek Morgan's apparitions.

By 1996 *Mutant Message Down Under*, rights to which had been purchased by HarperCollins for a reported \$A2.3 million, had been published in over twenty countries and translated into a similar number of languages. United Artists reputedly paid \$A1.8 million for the film rights (Hay 1994, 8; Wyndham 1994, 26; Valant-Siebelts 1996; see also Eggington 1996, 74). Morgan became a celebrity speaker on the European and American lecture circuit and television talk-show guest, including an appearance on a 'Books that Changed Your Life' segment on the Oprah Winfrey show, where she was described as 'an expert on Aboriginal culture' (Shoemaker 1995, 88). Although being challenged by Aboriginal spokespeople who travelled to the United States in well-publicised attempts to expose the text as fictional and alert readers to the detrimental impact it could have on Aborigines and their cultures (see Egan 1995; Eggington 1996), Morgan continued publicly to declare the veracity of her account, notably in a nine-city lecture tour of Japan in April 1997. Robert Eggington of the Perth-based Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation, in his continuing effort to dislodge the text from the shelves and Morgan from the lecture circuit, interrupted at least one of her lectures in Japan with a short statement of his own. 'Stop this hurt,' Eggington pleaded, before the 1,000 people in Tokyo who had paid US\$30 to hear Morgan's tale (ABC 1997; see also Garran 1997, 3).⁵

Before the protests, however, and in time for its inclusion in the text, Morgan was able to secure a letter of endorsement from the prominent Aboriginal activist Burnum Burnum (included in Morgan 1994, 189). He declared that having 'read every word,' the book 'is a classic [that] ... portrays our value systems and esoteric insights in such a way as to make me feel extremely proud of my heritage.' He also appeared with Morgan at some of her lectures in the United States. In early 1996, however, he retracted his endorsement (see Burnum Burnum 1997). But even without the retraction, Burnum Burnum's endorsement of Morgan's fabrications is not particularly significant in what it tells us about the text. In seeking explanations as to why some Aborigines might feel it appropriate to support such a text, the veracity or otherwise of the endorsed account need not necessarily be an issue. There are historical and contemporary social, political and cultural issues concerning the past and present

relationship between black and white that function for some Aborigines to make an account's sincerity in its depiction of them a secondary consideration, or perhaps not even a consideration at all. To give but one example, it could be politically efficacious to support a text that ostensibly holds Aborigines in high esteem in the interests of countering the many pejorative but equally fictitious descriptions being circulated (Thomas 1994, 172). Thus the explanation for such an endorsement is to be found in the wider context of the colonial legacy, not necessarily within the pages of the text itself.

Nevertheless, as outlined, despite well publicised protests over the content of the text, *Mutant Message* does appear to be finding its way into the academy as a work of genuine ethnography. For others, ethnographic impositions are overlooked in favour of the 'message' itself. 'Fact or fantasy,' it is the message that matters, Tina Valant-Siebelts (1996,3) informs us. The anthropologist Dianne Bell states that even when people are informed that the story is 'geographically, physically, ethnographically impossible, they still want to hold on to what they take to be a "beautiful message" ' (cited in Laurie 1995, 38). In the narcissistic playground of the do-it-yourself *Pleiades Book Review* (1997) site on the World Wide Web which features a special page for responses to *Mutant Message*, many readers who are aware of the contention urge us not to be concerned but to listen instead to the spiritually uplifting message of living in worshipful harmony with nature and the cosmos and knowing and trusting our inner selves.

Lending more weight to the argument that texts of this nature are becoming the new orthodoxy on Aboriginal cultures is the fact that authors of similar texts are called in as 'experts' by those seeking to debunk particular works. For example, Robert Lawlor is called in as an 'expert' by those debunking *Mutant Message*. Yet Lawlor's (1991) *Voices of the First Day*—an unrestrained primitivist delve into Aboriginal cultures—is almost if not equally as fanciful and contrived as Morgan's story, but the bluff of its scholarly pretence appears to have succeeded (see Rolls 2000a). For instance, Elaine Adams, a staff writer for the *Kansas City Star* who was one of the first to question the veracity of Morgan's claimed experiences, cites Lawlor as a scoffing 'expert,' and describes him as the 'author of a highly acclaimed book on Aborigines' (Adams 1992, A13; see also Wyndham 1994, 53). Even Gareth Griffiths, remembering that he is a professor in the English Department of UWA, accepts Lawlor as an informed critic of Morgan's text, citing approvingly Lawlor's criticism of the work (see Griffiths 1996, 79).

To cite a more local example. When a University of Tasmania staff member noticed Lawlor amongst a clutch of texts a first year student was carrying she advised the necessity of critical appraisal. A fellow senior academic with whom she was talking contributed that critical appraisal should be extended to all works, not just Lawlor.⁶ Whilst such advice is sound, in the context of the initial comment to the student it served to place *Voices of the First Day* in the same field as more respected sources. The inference was that it too is worthy of being read and assessed, in the same way as any other text peculiar to this field, and in the same way as all those other texts you are carrying.

The point is that each time Lawlor is taken as a serious and knowledgeable contributor to the debate about Marlo Morgan's textual fantasy, or his work is lumped indiscriminately with that collection of texts that we hope our students browse if not read, the reputation of his specious account of Aborigines and their cultures is enhanced. This can only aid in imbuing other fanciful and idealised accounts of Aborigines with the status of ethnographic authority too. The fact that such accounts are mutually reinforcing exacerbates the problem. For example, James Cowan's (1992) *Mysteries of the Dream-time*, yet another text arguing that Aborigines are the bearers of primordial truths once shared by all humankind, is acknowledged as a reference by Lawlor (see 1991) amongst many other authors of similar texts and essays.⁷ As for Cowan himself, a man who contrives his autobiography—*Two Men Dreaming*—in such a way that he emerges as the last of the true Pintubi, the *Warner Books' Author's Corner* (1998) web site describes him as 'an internationally respected authority on Australian Aborigines and other indigenous peoples.' Even Marlo Morgan's *Mutant Message* is used as a reference by those penning what they would have their readers believe are authoritative accounts of Aborigines and/or their cultures. For example, Anne Wilson Schaefer used Morgan's *Mutant Message* to help bring her readers the 'unmediated' and 'authentic' voices of Aborigines in her *Native Wisdom for White Minds* (1995).

This is another of the texts that culturally effaces Aborigines by placing them into the category of an undifferentiated native Other. From the United States, Schaefer has published several books on issues such as healing, co-dependence and another bearing the title of *Meditations for Women Who Do Too Much*. Informing us that she has been 'well trained in academia' (10)—thus distinguishing her at once from Marlo Morgan—and is the holder of a doctorate, Schaefer now teaches something she calls 'Living Process System' which is 'based on a Native worldview' (10).⁸ Her academic qualifications, however, do not result in a more sophisticated, informed or sensitive appropriation of indigenous cultural property. What they do mean is that simplistic notions of an idealised primitivism not only carry greater authority, but might also appeal to a wider readership.

Native Wisdom for White Minds is in diary format. Each day of the year has a separate page that begins with a quote allegedly made by a representative of one of the world's 'Native cultures' or by someone observing them. Aborigines are but one of the many cultures featured.⁹ Schaefer follows each daily quotation with a brief commentary, often explaining what she thinks it is saying and asking the reader to contemplate how things could be different if only we responded to such wisdom. Then in italics she entreats us with a pithy rejoinder to the original quote, a final comment upon which the reader can ponder. In this way the wisdom of the 'Woman from Peru' (March 19), the 'Maori Elder' (March 4), 'Aunt Millie' (April 18), and every other 'Native person' included is removed from the context in which its meaning should be viewed and in the space of a few sentences transformed into a global precept that is meant to resound with significance for the Western self. For the benefit of non-Native peoples, Schaefer has gone on a global cultural shopping spree and collected those aspects of 'Native wisdom' of appeal, but, as we learn nothing about the cultures or context from and in which the saws

have been wrenched, we are left with nothing so much as trite verbal trinkets that are meant to profoundly enrich our lives.

As with Lawlor and Morgan, Schaeff pounds Aboriginal and other indigenous cultures into a univocal entity so as to contrast it with a similarly homogenised and contained Western culture. She informs her readers that 'Native people know that white minds see, conceptualise the world, and think differently than Native minds' (2). The irony of this statement given the following argument that white people see life in black or white, either/or terms, is apparently not realised (2-3). The point that one is *either* of white *or* native mind underpins the rationale of the book. Her aim is to open up the white 'closed-system thinking' (2) through incursions of native wisdom.

In the familiar claim to be bringing 'authentic' natives to her readers in order to achieve this aim, Schaeff informs us that she has 'not tampered' with the quoted words included in her diary. This is said to present a rare 'opportunity to hear Native voices not modified for white ears' (7-8). The absurdity of this statement in the light of what is offered almost defies belief. Is she simply relying on her readers to ignore its manifest untruthfulness or does she really believe that the learned English spoken by nearly all is the universal native tongue, just as her Christian interpretation of a God is *the* God of and for all? Furthermore, each of the brief 'Native' quotations included float in space above a page of Schaeff's interpretative attempts to facilitate 'the opportunity to move from white minds to global minds' (4). The significance of the context in which each voice has spoken is totally erased. Even the index lists no cultures or peoples, but instead the subjects of the daily wisdom, such as 'Being in the world'; 'Interconnectedness'; and 'Oneness.' The world's disparate indigenous peoples become as one, their 'unmodified' voices conjoined naturally into a telluric choir singing in perfect harmony the unsighted songs written by Schaeff.

However, it is not only the context nor the use of the 'voices' that is of issue, but at least some of the 'voices' themselves. To this end Schaeff claims that with the exception of those from the people of Ladakh, all the 'daily reflections' have come from peoples with whom she has had contact in one form or another, including through literature. She does not consult the work of anthropologists though, for she holds that 'most of their material has been interpreted from a Western cultural perspective' (9), and therefore is not suitable for her purposes. Besides the fact that this is the very perspective that Schaeff brings to her interpretations—would it be possible to be anything other?—what are we to make of such a statement when we discover that part of her 'contact' with Aboriginal culture is through the writings of Marlo Morgan,¹⁰ who, like Schaeff, is clearly articulating her 'interpretations' of Aboriginal culture through a Western cultural perspective? What has happened to the promised 'rare opportunity' to hear 'Native voices' that have not been tampered with when what Schaeff actually presents as Aboriginal voices is another white American woman's 'recollections' of a demonstrably fictional event? This is not 'Native peoples' talking to 'us,' but needy middle-aged white people talking to themselves through their constructions of the Other. It is nothing less than ventriloquism.

The salient point here is the extent to which this genre of literature is mutually reinforcing. As already discussed, even in criticism academics and investigative journalists turn to other works within the genre to substantiate their queries and complaints. This might cast doubt over the claimed veracity of particular accounts—though there is no evidence to vouch for the efficaciousness of such critiques—but more alarmingly, it bestows upon the genre an ill-deserving and unwarranted legitimacy.

Writers too, find reason to support this growing body of work. Some hold that publications depicting Aborigines in the guise of fantasised primal saviours point to a way that mutual understandings could be reached between disparate cultures. In a seminar at the 1996 Adelaide Festival Writers' Week, the writer Barry Lopez argued this case. He 'authenticated' *Mutant Message Down Under* as a 'postcolonial' text ... which showed how we could create a unity beneath cultural differences' (cited in Griffiths 1996, 83). Such pronouncements lend these texts further institutional authority, and help obscure the ethnographic fallacies they propound. It certainly makes their contestation more difficult.

So too, do the libraries responsible for providing the prefatory Cataloguing-in-Publication data—for books published in the United States the Library of Congress and in Australia the National Library—and the vagaries of the Dewey classification system used in most Humanities and general collection libraries. Inadvertently, we find many of the sort of texts I have been discussing on the same shelf as more credible ethnographic and anthropologic texts.¹¹ The simple act of classifying credible texts with New Age fantasies assists in lending credence as works of ethnography to texts whose varied agenda are manifestly not in explicating the nature of Aboriginal religions and cultures, but in tying the author's understanding of them to other purposes and motives.

It is also not unusual to find New Age accounts of Aboriginal life and cultures—such as Lawlor's (1991) *Voices of the First Day*—in the Australian and/or Aboriginal sections in bookshops, and, perversely, texts such as the new editions of James Frazer's (1998) *The Golden Bough* and Elkin's (1993) *Aboriginal Men of High Degree* in the New Age/Self Help sections. Nor is it unusual to see New Age accounts of Aborigines and Aboriginal cultures in the shops associated with state museums. There amongst Josephine Flood's (1983; 1993; 1997) archaeological studies, and an assortment on bush tucker and artwork, we often find the New Age primitivist fantasy well represented. The significance of this is that it would be easy to assume that texts sold in shops located in museums do in some way or another bear the imprimatur of the museum. The sandstone, granite and marble weight of the old and the manifest architectural significance of the new bears down upon the merchandise. 'I bought this book at the museum' lends if not presupposes some form of institutional authority to the text. A purchaser could reasonably expect that the weight and solidity of the museum as a repository of knowledge about Aborigines presses its stamp of approval upon the pages, perhaps even influencing the decision to buy.

Almost wherever one turns one finds balderdash concerning Aborigines and their cultures being authorised, both directly and indirectly. Bookshops, shops in ethnographic museums, in the work of investigative journalists, writers, writers' festivals, libraries, academics and students. The discovery in a bookshop of key anthropologic texts in the New Age/Self Help section and primitivist fantasies in the Aboriginal section is no aberration. It reflects what is happening elsewhere. It reflects not only what and how our students are reading, but in some instances what they are also being taught. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that many indigenous Australians are now articulating their identity and/or cultural attributes through the very constructions I am challenging here. The reasons why some Aborigines are doing this can be readily explained, yet there is more glib acceptance of them than attempts to unravel the context in which they are made. Aborigines can only lose through shackling their identity to New Age fantasies, and a few indigenous academics and intellectuals have, finally, begun to fret away at these constructions.

The endorsement, however, of various New Age texts by Aboriginal academic staff is less easily explained. For example, a number of former Aboriginal Studies students at the University of Tasmania have reported that in first year their then Aboriginal lecturer would commence each lecture with the reading for the day from Schaefer's (1995) *Native Wisdom for White Minds*. The suggestion that this might somehow or other have been done with ironic intent solicited the response that the stated purpose—although not in these words—was to contrast the richness and profundity of indigenous natural wisdom with the sterile impoverishment of western theoretical artifice.¹²

Although the beliefs and agendas to which New Age devotees incorporate Aboriginal religious concepts and cultural particularities vary considerably, they have a common potential to seriously undermine Aboriginal interests. Firstly, for the indigenous peoples from whom they unashamedly poach ideas, they provide two options only. One is to become a fellow devotee of whatever body of beliefs are being articulated. Whilst there is no reason at all why Aborigines, like anyone else, should not be able to explore whatever spiritual and psychic dimensions they desire, one needs to be aware of the differences in power, the range of options available, and the peculiar historical and social circumstances in which such options are embraced. As Carpenter (1973, 98) comments, there are situations in which 'the subject becomes an eager victim. People who have long been denied public identity, or cast in degrading roles, now rush on stage, costumed according to our whims' (see also hooks 1992, 26; Hountondji 1983, 170; Pearson 1984, 48; Memmi 1990, 12). Each example discussed in this paper enjoys Aboriginal support. This may suggest a tremendous diversity of contemporary non-orthodox beliefs amongst Aborigines. It may also suggest, and the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that as a direct consequence of continuing inequalities and marginalisation there is a willingness on the part of some to perform in roles for which they will be accorded at least some respect (see hooks 1992, 26). Being a highly valued member of a spiritual troupe may also facilitate travel opportunities which might not otherwise be available.

Thus Burnum Burnum tours with Marlo Morgan in the United States and Guboo Ted Thomas of the Yuin people from south east Australia happily shares a stage with other indigenous and non-indigenous people in Ojai California who are interested in fusing the world's shamanistic traditions into one. Speaking of the phenomenal telepathic powers that Aborigines allegedly enjoy, Guboo spoke of them having no need for telephones for telepathy was its everyday equal. He declared that irrespective of distance, 'that's how we keep in touch with our people' (cited in Grossinger 1986, 112). In a later interview he claimed he could also telepathically 'tune into other countries, all over the world' (in Grossinger 1986, 112). He also spoke of conducting a morning ceremonial to which the birds and animals all listened, sharing love with trees, and of being able to read everyone's mind (in Grossinger 1986, 113-14).

To take another example, Lynn Andrews (1987), author of *Crystal Woman: The Sisters of the Dreamtime*, claims an Aboriginal woman—Ginevee—is a member of the occult women's shamanistic group calling themselves 'Sisterhood of the Shields.' They allegedly meet periodically in the American wilderness to display their shields in order to indicate their 'position within shaman reality' (Andrews 1987, xvi).

The participation of Aborigines in such eclectic movements, however, does not necessarily lend the movements the unqualified endorsement nor hallmark of tribal or primal authenticity that is claimed or implied. Nor does an individual's embrace of an alien belief system speak on behalf of a specific language group, or, as is more usually taken to be the case, on behalf of all Aborigines. Furthermore, as bell hooks (1992, 26) argues, black peoples participating in stereotyped depictions of the primitive as being at one with nature and as living in communal harmony, contributes to 'white western conceptions of the dark Other, not to a radical questioning of those representations.'

As alluded to, any Aborigine participating in the New Age agenda is still expected to be an exemplar of traditionalism, but only in so far as this does not render Aboriginal culture incommensurate with the overarching beliefs into which selected traits are to be incorporated. This leads to cultural petrification as the option other than participation left open to Aborigines by New Age devotees. They are to eschew the opportunities available in the dominant culture and cease making changes within their own. This is recommended so that the West will always have available a source of supposed primal wisdom from which it can sup, an uncontaminated 'seed stock' as Lawlor (1991, 6-9) puts it, from which civilisations can be regenerated. However, the pre-colonial Aboriginal life as imagined by many in the New Age, and certainly all those discussed here without exception, is something that has never existed. They lock Aborigines into a past they never had, a past created according to the desires, longings, needs and belief systems of the creators.

In each of the texts discussed Aboriginal cultures are homogenised, simplified and shaped so that they fit the agendas they are being asked to serve. Aborigines are placed in the position of being unable to

either define their own religiosity or protect it against exploitation. Subscribers to the New Age become the guardians of an Aboriginality realised in their own interests and made the requisite property of us all. For some this involves 'insert[ing] settler Australians into the very heart of that secret Aboriginal knowledge on which their only recognised claim to land rests' (Marcus 1998, 268). Others are interested in employing Aborigines and the cultures they bear as healing technologies for the allegedly wounded Western self and the supposedly suffering Mother Earth. All see Aborigines and their cultural mechanisms as providing a means to spiritual fulfilment and the methods needed to access an imagined universal primal spiritualism and/or some other omnipotent force.

It could be argued that the texts discussed here are easy targets and, in many ways they are. All the more remarkable then that these are the very texts, amongst others, finding their way into ethnographic orthodoxy. The summary dismissal of them as being of no consequence means there are too few analyses canvassing their significance and alerting us to the fact that this absence is furthering their anthropologic legitimacy. For the reasons outlined throughout this paper, amongst many others, the institutional authorising of New Age fantasies about what it is to be an Aborigine is of concern. Unfortunately, academics—indigenous too—share complicity in the process of authorisation.

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¹ A version of this paper was first presented to the Cultural Studies Association of Australia 'What's Left of Theory Conference', University of Tasmania, 8-10 December, 2001.

² For a critique of this text see Mitchell Rolls (2000a).

³ For a critique of Cowan's 'Aboriginal' oeuvre, including *Two Men Dreaming*, see Mitchell Rolls (2001).

⁴ Pers. Comm. 28 January 1994.

⁵ Before commencing their three year campaign, the Dumbartung Aboriginal Corporation sent abstracts of Morgan's text to all the remote communities that, according to her geographical descriptions, could have encountered Morgan. None had and all were similarly concerned over her claims. They also commissioned an anthropologist—John Stanton—to assess the text. His report concluded that it 'seriously insults the religious beliefs of desert Aborigines ... [and] is condescending in the extreme' (cited in Laurie 1995, 38; see also Eggington 1996, 73).

⁶ Pers. Comm. 18 August 1999.

⁷ See for example M Furlong (1996) *Flight of the Kingfisher*; and the Jungian E Cain (1991), 'To Sacred Origins—Through Symbol and Story. For a critique of Furlong's *Flight of the Kingfisher* see Mitchell Rolls (1998).

⁸ An article in New Zealand's *Sunday Star Times* in February of 2001 raised serious allegations and concerns over Schaeff's 'Living Process System' workshops, her qualifications and the legal difficulties she has faced in the United States arising from her workshops. Since the early 1990s, Schaeff has been running her workshops in New Zealand too. Complaints led immigration officials to deny her a work visa in 2000. In 2001 pressure was being exerted to have Schaeff banned from New Zealand altogether. See L Ferguson, 'Minister Urged to Ban "Destructive" US Therapist', *Sunday Star Times*, 25 February 2001, p.A3; for more information on the allegations against Schaeff see website <http://www.consumeralertannewilsons.homestead.com> (6 October 2001). (My thanks to Warren Smith for alerting me to Schaeff's activities in New Zealand, media coverage and the existence of the website).

⁹ See January 6,11,28; February 12,27; March 7,11,18; April 11,18,23; May 9,25,26; June 1,10,20; July 4,9, 22; August 1,2,16,28; September 5,20,24; October 3,8,12,30; November 3,15,26,30; December 5,13,19,25.

¹⁰ July 22; August 28; September 5. The 'Westerner observing the practices of Australian Aborigines' on January 28 is also most probably Marlo Morgan (see Morgan, 1994, 52). The information about

Aborigines being able to communicate telepathically for they 'have nothing to hide' on August 16 is similarly most probably taken from Morgan (1994, 63).

¹¹ For example, the Matheson Library at Monash University, Clayton, houses on the shelf bearing the Dewey number corresponding with the category 'Religion of other origin' Max Charlesworth's (*et al's*) (1984) *Religion in Aboriginal Australia*, Ian Keen's (1994) *Knowledge and Secrecy in an Aboriginal Religion*, several of James Cowan's self-indulgent studies of Aboriginal beliefs and cultures, Harvey Arden's (1994) *Dreamkeepers*, an offensive primitivist romp through the Kimberley and, Lawlor's (1991) *Voices of the First Day*. Such cataloguing is the norm, for it corresponds with the assigned Dewey classification. For a critical reading of Arden's text see Mitchell Rolls (2000b).

¹² Pers. Comm. 31 July 2001. A number of former (and continuing) students have raised this matter.

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