



Radical Hope, or Death by a Thousand Cuts?

The Future for Indigenous Australians

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An optimist might argue that the end of the Howard era in Australian politics opens the door to new possibilities for Indigenous Australians. The recent apology offered by the Rudd administration to Australia's stolen generations could also be taken as a harbinger of change to come. I remain pessimistic, however. Unless there is acknowledgement of the need for a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between white Australia and Australia's Indigenous communities, I see little cause for optimism. As the artfully titled *Coercive Reconciliation* makes clear,¹ if underneath the forthcoming apology and any new policy initiatives there is any coercive or assimilationist intent, then it is simply old wine in new bottles and the current demoralising status quo will prevail. My purpose in this article is to present an analysis of some of the circumstances in the lives of some Indigenous Australians, circumstances that have been documented at length

1. J. Altman and M. Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia*, Melbourne, Arena Publications, 2007.

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and at great expense in a seemingly endless stream of official reports and commentaries.² My reading of these circumstances will suggest that a radical, perhaps even revolutionary change in policy is called for if those groups suffering the most are to have what Jonathan Lear terms 'radical hope' for authentically better lives.³

My argument here focuses on one dimension of the experience of indigenous peoples around the world, namely the effect of mass trauma on groups of people over extended periods of time. Two caveats are in order. First, this is only a single detail in the overall picture, and scholars are producing complementary arguments from other fields of scholarly studies.⁴ More critically, since my analysis draws primarily from psychoanalysis and psychological studies of trauma, the Eurocentric, racist and lamentable history of psychology and psychoanalysis must be acknowledged and reckoned with.⁵ Psychology has played a major role both in the development of racial classification schemes, particularly the conceptualization of non-white 'others' as primitive, and in conceptualizing subjectivity in the terms of the autonomous,

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2. See, for example, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families, *Bringing Them Home*, Sydney, Sterling Press, 1997; S. Gordon, K. Hallahan, and D. Henry, *Putting the Picture Together: Inquiry into Response by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities*, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Western Australia, 2002; J. Stanley, *Child Sexual Abuse in Indigenous Communities*, paper presented at the Child Sexual Abuse: Justice Response or Alternative Resolution Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology, Adelaide, 1-2 May, 2003; National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), *What's Needed to Improve Child Abuse/Family Violence in a Social and Emotional Well Being Framework in Aboriginal Communities*, NACCHO Position Paper, June 2006; *New South Wales Interagency Plan to Tackle Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities 2006-2011*, New South Wales Government, 2007; Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, *Ampu Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle, 'Little Children are Sacred'*, Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, Darwin, Northern Territory Government, 2007.
 3. J. Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2006. I wish to thank an anonymous *Arena Journal* reviewer for bringing Lear's work to my attention.
 4. For a discussion of the vital issue of land rights, and the ways in which normalization of land tenure undermines collective ownership and thereby undermines the fundamental connection of Aboriginal peoples with their ancestral lands, see, for example, D. Dalrymple, 'The Abnormalisation of Land Tenure', and M. Dillon, 'Patent Medicine and the Elixir of Home Ownership', both in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*. Another piece of the picture is to be found in postcolonial scholarship. See, for example, J. Smith, 'Postcultural Hospitality: Settler-Native-Migrant Encounters', *Arena Journal*, no. 28, 2007, pp. 65-86, and S. Turner, "'Inclusive Exclusion": Managing Identity for the Nation's Sake', *Arena Journal*, no. 28, 2007, pp. 87-106 for a postcolonial analysis in the Aotearoa/New Zealand context.
 5. This argument is abstracted from a companion paper, M. O'Loughlin, 'Recreating the Social Link between Indigenous Children and their Histories: The Power of Story as a Decolonising Strategy', in M. O'Loughlin, *The Subject of Childhood*, New York, Peter Lang Publishing, in press.

essentialized self.⁶ Psychoanalysis, too, has focused on individual change, and has valorized rationality, verbal ability, autonomy, individual experience and, indeed, the experience of being middle class. Nevertheless, psychoanalysis has been blessed with schisms and splits that reveal its resistance to totalization and its continually resurgent transgressive potential.⁷ For all its limitations, psychoanalysis gives us a vocabulary for speaking about loss and creativity through conceptualizing the unconscious, and it offers mechanisms for conceptualizing individual and collective responses to pain and suffering. Lacanian psychoanalysis, which I invoke here, is particularly relevant because of its focus on understanding the relationship between language and culture, the individual and the social, the external and the internal. Nevertheless, I am fully aware that I, an outsider, am bringing in an outside frame of reference, and it will ultimately be for readers to judge whether these insights offer emancipatory and inclusionary possibilities for re-imagining indigenous experience or whether this undertaking is yet one more example of colonial myopia.

The End of History: Catastrophe or Radical Hope?

In *Radical Hope* Jonathan Lear raises profound questions about what happens to a people that is confronted with annihilation; with the end of life as they know it. Lear bases his study on the life of Plenty Coups, a Crow chief who was head of his tribe at the time of the westward settler expansion in North America. Lear uses as his source a book by Frank Linderman, in which Plenty Coups muses

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6. For an overview of the legacy of psychology in this area, see M. Adams, *The Multicultural Imagination: Race, Color and the Unconscious*, New York and London, Routledge, 1996; J. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails: Recreating SongLines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, North Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 2002; E. Duran, and B. Duran, *Native American Post-colonial Psychology*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1995; M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell, and L. Wong (eds), *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*, New York and London, Routledge, 1996; R. Guthrie, *Even the Rat Was White: A Historical View of Psychology*, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 2003; C. Lane, *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998; M. O'Loughlin, 'Is a Socially Responsible and Critical Psychology of Difference Possible?', *Race, Gender & Class Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 175-92, 2002; W. Rezendes, *Ka lania kukui — Hawaiian Psychology: An introduction*, Honolulu, A'ali'i Books, 1996. Referring to psychoanalysis, Jacques Derrida noted: '[T]here is practically no psychoanalysis in Asia, or in the South Seas. These are among those parts of "the rest of the world" where psychoanalysis has never set foot, or in any case where it has never taken off its European shoes', in "'Geopsychoanalysis" ... And the Rest of the World', in Lane, *The Psychoanalysis of Race*, p. 69.
 7. A. Molino, *Culture, Subject, Psyche: Dialogues in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2004.

about the meaning of the elimination of the buffalo herds on the plains.⁸ Plenty Coups summarized the moment this way: 'But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened. There was little singing anywhere'.⁹

Lear goes on to explain how human subjectivity is taken up through group members becoming a certain way in a particular cultural context. For young men in Crow society, this identity was that of a warrior. What befell them when that warrior identification, with the status and identity it bestowed, was rendered obsolete? Lear says that for the young people who managed to survive poverty, geographic dislocation and settler diseases, the loss of tribal identity resulted in a massive sense of disorientation.¹⁰ Elaborating further, Lear argues that participation in creating narratives is crucial to the construction of individual and collective subjectivity. The US Federal government intervention, in particular the prohibition on intertribal warfare, denied young Crow warriors the capacity to become what they imagined. As Lear notes, they lacked a point of view or concept from which individual or collective identity might be forged.¹¹ The Crow lost a way of life. They lost their ritual dances and ceremonies, and they lost the very purpose of their existence.

Certain rituals such as the domestic ritual of meal preparation and homemaking appeared to continue on as before. However, while the activities continued as before, the meaning of those activities was fundamentally changed. Lear cites, for example, the case of women preparing a meal for men who were about to go into battle or on an avenging raid and how this differed existentially from preparing the same meal merely to keep body and soul together. It was not the activities, as such, that mattered but the larger existential meaning with which they were invested. An initiative, therefore, to restore ritual dances or tribal patterns to a group, or an assessment of the cultural wellbeing of a group by observing the presence or absence of certain culturally sanctioned routines, is likely to be meaningless unless we understand the extent to which such activities are embedded in an indigenous concept of culture that has ancestral and historical continuity.

8. F. Linderman, *Plenty-Coups: Chief of the Crows*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1962.

9. Quoted in Lear, *Radical Hope*, p. 2.

10. Lear, *Radical Hope*, p. 27.

11. Lear, *Radical Hope*, p. 32.

Framing the issue in the context of the destruction of Crow cultural identity, Lear poses a question that has to be the litmus test of the health of any indigenous culture: 'All in all, by 1940 one could raise a question that would have been incomprehensible in 1840: *Among the Crow, is there a Crow?*'¹²

In effect Lear makes the case that the catastrophic collapse of Crow way of life led to a collapse of the possibilities of Crow subjectivity. The question, then, of course, is whether something new can arise from the ashes of the ruins of a civilization. The worst case scenario, Lear suggests, is that this limbo produces anomie. Quoting from an interview Frank Linderman held with a Crow medicine woman, Pretty Shield, in 1931,¹³ Lear states:

And Pretty Shield related a poignant event. In traditional upbringing, she said, 'We talked to our children, told them things they needed to know, but we never struck a child, never.' Then she paused. 'Lately I did strike a child,' she said grimly. 'There seemed to be nothing else to do. Times and children have changed so. One of my grand-daughters ran off to a dance with a bad young man ... I brought her home to my place and used a saddle strap on her. I struck hard, Sign-talker. I hope it helped her, and yet I felt ashamed of striking my grandchild.'¹⁴

In addressing the issue of how people can face catastrophic cultural collapse, Lear ultimately argues, using Plenty Coups as his example, that the crisis can be averted, at least to an extent, by creative adaptation to changed circumstances by the group. I think Lear may be over-optimistic, particularly looking at the plight of so many North American indigenous groups today, including the Crow people. However, I will leave that judgement to the reader. For my purpose, the importance of Lear's book is in posing the question that is in the title of this article: Is it possible for indigenous groups such as the many Aboriginal groups in Australia to reinvent their subjectivities and experience radical hope? Or have we created circumstances that are leading inexorably to cultural annihilation, despair and death by a thousand cuts? I believe the first is possible and the latter eminently

12. Lear, *Radical Hope*, p. 46.

13. F. Linderman, *Pretty Shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1974.

14. Lear, *Radical Hope*, p. 61.

avoidable. However, for a future to be possible for Aboriginal peoples, a fundamental shift in Australian societal attitudes and official policies toward Aboriginal groups will have to occur. An apology, however artfully worded, or social policy or land reform initiatives however well-intended, that are embedded in a fundamentally assimilative worldview do not offer grounds for radical hope.

Intergenerational and Collective Trauma

The term 'trauma', which originated in physical medicine, has taken on increasing currency in psychology and psychiatry. Individual trauma refers to the exposure of individuals either as victims or observers of traumatizing events. Sexual assaults, violent attacks, being taken hostage, participating in combat, and so on, typically produce symptoms of trauma, of which post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the most severe.¹⁵ Considering the suffering indigenous people have undergone worldwide at the hands of colonizing powers and settler communities, it is reasonable to expect that many have suffered severe trauma symptoms. There are two aspects of trauma, however, which are of particular interest when it comes to understanding the lived experiences of groups of people who have been through catastrophic experiences. First, there is the issue of what happens to individual trauma if it is not processed so that some kind of healing or resolution is achieved. There appears to be a consensus in the literature, much of it derived from the considerable literature around the experiences of Shoah survivors,¹⁶ that individual trauma that is not addressed is transmitted across generations. Ancestral trauma continues to wreak havoc until a healing process is put in place. Second, as Kai Erikson notes, we also need to pay attention to potential damage to the collective fabric of communities that can result from a systemic assault on a people of the kind that befell the Crow nation.¹⁷ Since community offers

15. See J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, New York, Basic Books, 1997 for a definitive overview of the most current psychiatric view. For definitions of PTSD, see *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, DSM-IV-TR*, Arlington, Virginia, American Psychiatric Association, 2000.

16. See C. Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; S. Felman and D. Laub (eds), *Testimony: Crises of Witness in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992. For transnational discussion see Y. Danieli (ed.), *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, New York, Plenum, 1998.

17. K. Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community,' in Caruth, *Trauma*.

people means for dealing with pain, building contexts for intimacy, and for preserving rituals and traditions, damage to community is likely to be highly consequential.¹⁸ Drawing on his earlier writing, Erikson offers the following definition:

By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with 'trauma'. But it is a form of shock all the same, a gradual realization that the community no longer exists as an effective source of support and that an important part of the self has disappeared ...¹⁹

Mechanisms of Trauma Transmission

In a classic article, *Ghosts in the Nursery*,²⁰ Selma Fraiberg and colleagues offer compelling evidence as to how trauma in one generation has profound effects on the emotional lives not only of the children of the next generation, but even of descendants six or ten generations hence. Fraiberg et al. speak of families that are 'possessed by their ghosts', intruders that 'have been present at the christening for two or more generations. While no one has issued an invitation, the ghosts take up residence and conduct the rehearsal of the family tragedy from a tattered script'.²¹ They offer a clinical case study of a mother who was unable to respond emotionally to her child. This woman was incapable of narrating her own life story, such was her emotional constriction. Eventually the authors learned that she herself had been abandoned as a child, and that she had come from a family whose lives were etched in poverty and desperation. As to the effect of this deprivation on her mothering capacities, Fraiberg et al. note that 'the sad and distant face of the mother was mirrored in the sad and distant face of the baby. The room was crowded with ghosts'.²² This mother appeared

18. Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', p. 188.

19. Quoted in Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', p. 187.

20. S. Fraiberg, E. Adelson and V. Shapiro, 'Ghosts in the Nursery', *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, no. 14, pp. 387-421, 1975.

21. Fraiberg et al., 'Ghosts in the Nursery', p. 165.

22. Fraiberg et al., 'Ghosts in the Nursery', p. 172.

to have severed all connections with memories of separation and loss, and her attitude to her suffering — and her child's suffering — was apathetic and detached: 'Forget about it. You get used to it'.²³ Throughout the treatment, Fraiberg et al. had become convinced that this woman nursed a secret, and incest eventually emerged as her core trauma. In all probability the incest, too, was a symptom, a pointer to some more deeply buried ancestral trauma. The literature on trauma is replete with images of ghosts, phantoms and secrets.²⁴

Of particular relevance here is the notion of speakability: the capacity of sufferers to give voice to their trauma. In their study of the effects of the Holocaust on identity, for example, Rosenman and Handelsman focus on the nature of collective narrative, or, as they term it, 'group story'.²⁵ Just as Lear's discussion of the Crow illustrated, Rosenman and Handelsman suggest that the kind of collective narrative a group creates has a profound influence on the subjective sense of being of group members. If, after catastrophe, a group is unable to construct a coherent, forward-looking vision — a narrative of radical hope, in Lear's terms — then the prospects for the group are diminished and real danger emerges:

An unreal, garbled story tends to freeze the group in time; it impedes mourning over the losses and cathecting the humiliations suffered in past catastrophes. Corollarily, it gives a free pass to promptings from the repetition compulsion to redo the catastrophe; for instance, the disconnectedness of the story entices acting out as the group members restage the past in efforts to grasp it.²⁶

In her discussion of child Holocaust survivors, Louise Kaplan explores how muteness is the inevitable first response to massive trauma.²⁷ However, to the extent that this muteness becomes a

24. See E. Rashkin, *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992; N. Abraham and M. Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel Vol. 1*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994.

25. S. Rosenman and I. Handelsman, 'Identity as a Legacy of the Holocaust: Encountering a Survivor's narrative', *The Journal of Psychohistory*, vol. 18, no. 1, 1990, pp. 35–69. For related discussion, see M. Charles, 'The Intergenerational Transmission of Unresolved Mourning: Personal, Familial, and Cultural Factors,' *Samiksha: Journal of the Indian Psychoanalytic Society*, no. 54, 2003, pp. 65–80; N. Auerhahn and D. Laub, 'Intergenerational Memory of the Holocaust', in Danieli, *International Handbook*.

26. Rosenman and Handelsman, 'Identity as a Legacy', p. 38.

27. L. Kaplan, 'Images of Absence, Voices of Silence', in L. Kaplan, *No Voice is Ever Wholly Lost: An Exploration of the Everlasting Attachment Between Parent and Child*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

persistent silence, as it did for many Holocaust survivors, then, Kaplan says, 'the shelter of silence becomes a Holocaust monument that casts its shadow over the life of the child'.²⁸ Annie Rogers displayed this remarkably in her therapeutic work with Ellen, a Jewish girl in Boston whose step-aunt had been a victim of Gestapo brutality in Paris. Knowledge of the brutality had been purposely suppressed by Ellen's mother, ostensibly to protect her. Yet Ellen's personality became structured around the traumatic secret and, among other symptoms, she began to dream about Nazi raids. Secret or unspoken trauma, because of its unspeakability, is likely to manifest itself in acted out behaviour such as substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse and incest.²⁹ Silence, of course, is greatly exacerbated if society at large chooses to deny the catastrophic events that led to the traumatic consequences for a particular group. Certainly, this kind of conspiracy of silence was true after the Holocaust, and one could make an argument that this kind of denial is evident in Australia, even in what is perhaps the most enlightened and honest official discussion of the experience of Aboriginal people there.³⁰

Speaking of the kinds of symptoms one can expect from people carrying around frozen ancestral trauma, Kaplan lists many symptoms (symptoms, I should note, that in the absence of an understanding of the sociohistorical bases of collective trauma, are commonly regarded by society at large as symptoms of individual pathology, thereby providing a rationale for punitive, militaristic and coercive interventions of the kind recently carried out by the Howard government in Australia):

The most common symptoms among the children and adults

28. Kaplan, 'Images of Absence', p. 219.

29. A. Rogers, *The Unsayable: The Hidden Language of Trauma*, New York, Ballantine, 2007. See also the film concerning domestic violence among the Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand by L. Tamahori [Dir.], *Once Were Warriors*, New Line Home Video, 2003.

30. It is clear from a comment by the authors of *Little Children are Sacred* that, despite the apparent thoroughness with which they approached the task of conducting the inquiry, their terms of reference were severely delimited: 'This inquiry is, of course, concerned with the Northern Territory experience. It is not able to correct, or recommend corrections to, 200 years or 100 years of the disempowerment and institutional discrimination to which Aboriginal people have been subjected. Nor is the inquiry able to right the political and social wrongs that have led to the dysfunction which now exists to a considerable degree in the NT. The best it can hope to achieve is to present meaningful proposals that the government might adopt so that Aboriginal communities themselves, with support, can effectively prevent sexual abuse of their children' (p. 14). The cautious euphemistic language in which the brutalities of colonization are couched offers further evidence of the unwillingness of the authorities to go beyond symptoms to examine root causes or to take seriously Aboriginal trauma, memory, history or viewpoints.

we encountered were phobias — school phobias in the children and agoraphobia, a terror of leaving the house or walking in the streets, in the adults. Out of the blue, the child of a survivor would be overcome by bouts of inexplicable sadness, spells of uncontrollable weeping. A few were self-mutilators. Some sought relief from psychosomatic illnesses, such as colitis. All were beset by fears of bodily damage and illness. All complained of an eating disorder ... What made our experiences with children of survivors distinctly different was our own uncanny sensations of speaking with the dead.³¹

Kaplan notes that this trauma transmission has little to do with the conscious intentions of parents. As Rogers' study of Ellen, the second-generation survivor, clearly illustrates, most parents actually attempt to shield their children from the trauma narratives in the parents' own pasts.³² It is this very silence, this unspeakability, that causes the child to receive the trauma unconsciously. The experience of trauma has misshaped the parental psyche, and it is through interaction and identification with this misshapen psyche that the child develops a subjective sense of being that is shaped around trauma.³³

Kaplan says that it is the lethal combination of the uncanny attunement that a child must have to parental emotional states in order to survive, coupled with the silence of a parent burdened either by shame, fear or loathing, or perhaps by ancestral phantoms of which they are not even aware, that produces the unspeakability in the child of their own emotional experiences that leads to the subsequent development of severe trauma symptoms.³⁴ Healing phantomically traumatized children, therefore, requires resuscitating the capacity for speech and the revivification of narrative capabilities in the adults of a traumatized community so that, ultimately, as parental ghosts are exorcised, their children can be freed of their ghostly burdens and become well. If this is not

31. Kaplan, 'Images of Absence', p. 222.

32. Rogers, *The Unsayable*.

33. See A. Green, *On Private Madness*, New York, International Universities Press, 1986 and G. Kohon (ed.), *The Dead Mother: The Work of André Green*, New York, Routledge, 1999, for discussion of the psychic processes by which children acquire adult emotional states through identification. See also Judith Kestenberg's discussion of transposition, her term for intergenerational trauma transmission, in J. Kestenberg and I. Brenner, *Last Witness: The Child Survivor of the Holocaust*, Arlington, American Psychiatric Publishing, 1996.

34. Kaplan, 'Images of Absence', p. 226.

done, we can expect the adults to act out their unconscious trauma and thereby perpetuate the damaging cycle of unprocessed trauma for another generation.³⁵

The Catastrophic Consequences of Severing Social Links

In *History Beyond Trauma* François Davoine and Jean-Max Gaudillière analyze this issue from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective.³⁶ They argue that disorders commonly considered psychiatric, such as schizophrenia and psychosis, may be induced through the severance of social links and the transmission across generations of unmetabolized trauma. They suggest that supposedly oppositional, pathological or deviant behaviours (for instance, symptoms publicly associated with some Aboriginal groups in Australia such as petrol sniffing, alcohol consumption, domestic violence, incest and sexual abuse) may well be unconscious responses to culturally transmitted trauma or to the *lack* produced in people whose subjectivities have been annihilated. People who have had their experience of their histories foreclosed through, for example, cultural genocide or geographic displacement, will live with lack, but are likely to be unaware of the causes of the absence within.

Davoine and Gaudillière argue that psychological symptoms of madness in our patients in the present provide important clues to ancestral trauma. 'Sometimes', they note, 'a fit of madness tells us more than all the news dispatches about the leftover facts that have no right to existence'.³⁷ Severe psychic symptoms in the present are potentially symptoms of frozen trauma desperately seeking to be voiced. In Lacanian terms, what is at issue here is the Real — that area of experience that lies unformulated in the unconscious. As Davoine and Gaudillière note, naming requires an acknowledgement of the unnameable within, a silent spectral realm of anguish. The therapist's responsibility, therefore, is to bring into the present that which is unspoken or even unspeakable. This occurs, Davoine and Gaudillière suggest, through a process in

35. See Tamahori, *Once Were Warriors*.

36. F. Davoine and J. Gaudillière, *History Beyond Trauma*, New York, Other Press, 2004. For additional clinical illustration of a Lacanian approach to treatment of severe symptoms see W. Apollon, D. Bergeron and L. Cantin, *After Lacan: Clinical Practice and the Subject of the Unconscious*, Albany, SUNY Press, 2002.

37. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. xxvii.

which therapists become acutely attuned listeners who struggle to hear in everyday speech signifiers that offer access points to the trauma in the unconscious:

Thus the stories we shall tell are those of descendants whose task it was to transmit, from generation to generation, pieces of frozen time. The problem is to recognize that these moments excised from history are actualized in the present of the analytic work.³⁸

From an analytic perspective, then, the question that the anguish of an individual or community raises is an archeological one. It pertains precisely to what in their history has led to the current breakdown in individual subjectivity and the group's capacity to construct a future-oriented collective narrative. How might we enable such groups to enter history and speak the unspoken that has so profoundly shaped their individual and collective experiences? In what way might the dead of our ancestral and spectral pasts live on within all of us?³⁹ Who is equipped and willing to take on the responsibility of serving as what Davoine and Gaudillière call a 'guarantor' of those ancestral experiences being given voice from now on?

Davoine and Gaudillière argue that 'dehistoricization of experience', for instance through geographic dislocations, forced removals and cultural genocide, is particularly traumatic as it causes people to lose the social link with their pasts. They suggest that we must assist such people in 'regaining a foothold in history'.⁴⁰ Drawing on Wittgenstein, they employ the concept of petrification, arguing that people's bodies can be so numbed by trauma that, as Wittgenstein said, 'I turn into stone and my pain goes on'.⁴¹ The authors note that children are particularly susceptible to noticing the blank affect of petrified adults and are likely to absorb that pain into themselves, 'becoming', as they note, 'the subject of the other's suffering'.⁴² This is how trauma is

38. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. xxix.

39. For larger discussion of this idea, often referred to as hauntology, see L. Blackman, *Hearing Voices: Embodiment and Experience*, London, Free Association Press, 2001; L. Blackman, 'A Psychophysics of the Imagination', in V. Walkerdine (ed.), *Challenging Subjects: Critical Psychology for a New Millennium*, New York, Palgrave, 2002; A. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1997; C. Venn, 'Refiguring Subjectivity after Modernity', in Walkerdine, *Challenging Subjects*.

40. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 47.

41. Quoted in Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 49.

42. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 49.

transmitted intergenerationally both within families and in whole communities. As to the psychosocial effects of such a calamity, Davoine and Gaudillière are very clear:

Our patients are perpetuating such a hell, one that continues on in the anesthesia of several generations ... these descendants may manifest only an omnipresent shame, unalloyed misfortune, a sense of radical injustice, and a global sadness, all these being signs of an imminent catastrophe that they can neither name nor dispel.⁴³

How might we address traumatic events that cannot be recounted because they were never recorded as past? How does one revitalize an individual or a community weighed down by events that, on a conscious level, they 'can neither name nor dispel'? The psychoanalytic answer is to assist the anguished person or community in turning these 'unthought knowns'⁴⁴ of their foreclosed history into narrative. This is not an easy task since the disturbing events have never been encoded in narrative memory. In psychoanalysis, in such cases — and Davoine and Gaudillière's book is replete with examples — analysts rely on their own unconscious to serve as a receptor for the patient's anguish, refracted back from the analyst's own memorial archive. The analyst gives voice to the previously unspeakable trauma and returns it to the patient in speakable form. The challenge for analysts, therefore, is to engage alienated sufferers in a revivifying experience that allows them to reconnect with strands of their history and hence to begin the process of constructing new narratives that have historical continuity.

Davoine and Gaudillière point out the harm that occurs when the therapist offers silence or shuts down the question when in fact a receptive response is needed to a trauma sufferer's unspoken question. In such cases, they note, 'the thread of speech may be radically cut' and the trauma will continue to maintain its icy grip.⁴⁵

Bearing Witness to Trauma

As to the elements involved in treating historical or ancestral trauma, Davoine and Gaudillière draw lessons from the Salmon

43. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 50.

44. C. Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1987.

45. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 71.

principles, a series of treatment principles articulated by Thomas Salmon to treat shell-shocked World War I soldiers.⁴⁶ These four principles offer a means for engaging in sympathetic conversation with the unspoken parts of individual or collective unconscious that are likely to harbour trauma. As the authors remind us, the goal of these conversations is 'to enable the patient to pass from the asphyxia of a lethal impasse to the respiration of words exchanged to name the unnamable'.⁴⁷

The first principle is 'proximity': We must find within ourselves the capacity to approach the hidden — possibly even dreadful — experience of the patient. What is needed is the sensibility to absorb from the patient the disguised emotion that will communicate 'the forbidden link to their ancestors'. It is by accepting the patient's experience that the invitation is given to non-existent parts of the subject to become present. As Davoine and Gaudillière note, the alive subjective presence of the therapist is vital, since a depersonalized experience will exacerbate the trauma. The therapist serves as a refractive mirror for the traumatized person's experience, thereby validating their fundamental existence as a human being. As Davoine and Gaudillière note, proximity creates what Winnicott refers to as a potential space, a safe place in which a person can allow unspoken or dead parts of themselves to come to be.⁴⁸ Quoting from the work of noted French child psychiatrist, Lionel Bailly, Davoine and Gaudillière sum up this process in children in the following way:

When 'children hear the voices of the dead' these are most often the voices of those who died without burial, without a rite. This brief hallucination will cease as soon as it is heard by a therapist in whom the voices of the dead can resonate instead of remaining a dead letter. If the voice finds no echo, he says, 'we have the seed of psychosis ...'⁴⁹

Davoine and Gaudillière emphasize that the therapist must be neither a passive observer nor an intrusive interlocutor. Rather, what is at issue with proximity is the receptivity of the professional listener, one who can, as Bailly suggests, 'exchange one's own

46. T. Salmon, *The Care and Treatment of Mental Diseases and War Neuroses (Shell Shock) in the British Army*, New York, War Work Committee of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, 1917.

47. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 118.

48. D. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, New York, Routledge, 1989.

49. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, pp. 145–6.

knowledge of catastrophes for the child's terrible knowledge, so that the child is not longer the only one holding it'.⁵⁰ Contrary to Western notions of childhood innocence, or even *tabula erasa*, the idea here is that too often the baby is burdened with excessive knowledge — unknowingly, of course — and our task, therefore, is to assist in naming this terrible knowledge. In responding to children we are not offering something new. We are merely returning to them what is already theirs, but now in a manner that increases their capacity to own their own histories. The situation with children is all the more poignant because of the probability of sensitive children assuming the psychic burdens of their families. In psychological jargon such children are often referred to as 'parentified'. Davoine and Gaudillière describe the process this way: 'As we have seen, a baby may be assigned the role of *therapôn*, keeper of the mind for its parents, the boundary of their irrationality, remaining welded to them by a bond that may prevent any attachment'.⁵¹ We thus need to be especially carefully attuned to the unthought knowns in the lives of infants and young children.⁵²

The second Salmon principle is 'immediacy'. Trauma theory suggests that traumatic experiences are best dealt with immediately. Davoine and Gaudillière, noting the timelessness of unconscious material that has not been turned into narrative, point out that whenever an attempt is made to communicate unconscious material we must strive to be immediately present to it. Irrespective of how often trauma attempts to make itself felt — for example, through aggression, withdrawal, emotional outbursts, sexual acting out, addiction — until trauma is truly named, each encounter should be considered a first encounter and treated with immediacy. Some people, burdened by such trauma, experience time as stopped, and are profoundly stuck in their lives. As Davoine and Gaudillière note, in a manner reminiscent of Lear's discussion of the despair experienced by Crow Chief Plenty Coups, sometimes, "'Once upon a time" becomes "Once upon no time"'.⁵³ Such persons experience being haunted by invisible ghosts. Their past is continually, albeit invisibly, present and they need our active

50. Bailly, quoted in Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 145.

51. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 157.

52. See A. Piontelli, *From Fetus to Child: An Observational and Psychoanalytic Study*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992 for illustrations of the workings of unconscious trauma in prenatal and postnatal infants.

53. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 179.

assistance in re-entering present time and imagining agentic futures for themselves.

'Expectancy', the third of the Salmon principles, expresses faith and hope. If a person comes to us expecting nothing, Davoine and Gaudillière suggest, our responsibility is to have expectations for them, and most important of all, to have a willingness to name the truth. The authors also warn against the dangers of intellectual detachment because, failing to provide a real human relationship will perpetuate 'a lesion in otherness',⁵⁴ thereby leaving the sufferer stuck with the anguish of an unnamed traumatic experience.

The final Salmon principle, 'simplicity', refers to the authenticity of the existential encounter between therapist and trauma sufferer. Davoine and Gaudillière pose the question rather elegantly: How is it possible to meet someone? For this not-so-simple existential encounter we must use simple, direct language. The goal is 'to be sensitive to fossil messages, apparently without origin or form, coming from worlds that have disappeared, uprooted from the conventional and contrived universes of reason'.⁵⁵

Trauma in Aboriginal Communities I: An Indigenous Canadian Perspective

The cumulative trauma suffered by indigenous peoples in the Americas has been well documented.⁵⁶ Knowing that North American and Australian indigenous peoples had suffered under very similar Anglophile regimes of colonization and conquest, and knowing that many of the same cataclysmic social consequences, including substance abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and an apparent breakdown of community, had occurred on both

54. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 328.

55. Davoine and Gaudillière, *History*, p. 251.

56. See P. Allen, *Off the Reservation: Reflections on Boundary-busting, Border Crossing, Loose Canons*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1998; W. Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man*, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 2004; W. Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Struggle for the Land and Indians R Us*, San Francisco, City Lights Books, 1997; M. Crow Dog, *Lakota Woman*, New York, Harper Perennial, 1991; E. Duran, B. Duran, M. Yellow Horse Brave Heart and S. Yellow Horse-Davis, 'Healing the American Indian Soul Wound', in Danieli (ed.), *International Handbook*; S. Fournier and E. Crey, *Stolen From Our Embrace: The Abduction of First Nations Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*, Vancouver/Toronto, Douglas & McIntyre, 1997; M. Gagné, 'The Role of Dependency and Colonialism in Generating Trauma in First Nations Citizens', in Danieli (ed.), *International Handbook*; D. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993; M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987; H. Zinn, *People's History of the United States: 1492–Present*, New York, Harper Perennial, 2005.

continents, I decided to look at the North American situation. Being particularly interested in healing processes, I thought an indigenous perspective might be especially useful. This led me to Fournier and Crey's *Stolen From Our Embrace*. Fournier and Crey present a devastating portrait of the catastrophic consequences that ensued when the Canadian government removed the parenting rights of First Nations families.⁵⁷ This occurred initially through the residential schooling system, and later through a system in which children were involuntarily 'scooped' from their families and placed in anglophile foster families for the express purpose of forced assimilation. The slogan 'Kill the Indian to save the man' would appear to be an accurate description of the government's intent.

While I had expected some parallels in the experiences of Canadian and Australian indigenous peoples, I was astounded by the similarity not only in the patterns of physical and cultural genocide, but also the remarkable parallels in pathological outcome once cultural and community bonds had been severed and cultural transmission processes shattered. My second interest was in exploring ways in which Australian and Canadian indigenous communities have attempted to heal themselves using indigenous and Western mental health systems.

Fournier and Crey are clear from the outset that sexual and physical abuse 'lay at the center of aboriginal people's torment'.⁵⁸ Consider this one brief example of the ways in which physical and sexual trauma and the cultural genocide in the residential schools rendered the ensuing trauma unspeakable:

The last residential school in Canada closed its doors in 1984. Today, as more and more survivors break their silence about the physical, sexual and emotional abuse they suffered, it is clear that the traumatic impact of the schools will endure for many more decades. 'My hands are permanently injured from the beatings they inflicted on me,' Musqueam Nation former chief George Guerin says of his years at the Kuper Island school. 'Sister Marie Baptiste had a supply of sticks as long and thick as pool cues. When she heard me speak my language, she'd lift up her hands and bring the stick down on me. I've still got bumps and scars on my hands. I have to

57. Fournier and Crey use the terms *First Nations* and *Aboriginal* interchangeably when discussing Canada's indigenous peoples.

58. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 10

wear special gloves because the cold weather really hurts my hands. I tried very hard not to cry when I was being beaten and I can still just turn off my feelings. I still understand my language 150 percent, but I cannot speak it. I've even seen a psychologist to find out why I can't voice those words any more'.⁵⁹

A key point in Fournier and Crey's book is the role institutionalized paedophilia played in destroying the social fabric of families. They narrate how a British Columbia Supreme Court Justice, Douglas Hogarth, who presided over the trial of a sexual predator, stated: 'As far as the victims are concerned, the Indian residential school system was nothing more than institutionalised pedophilia ... Generations of children were wrenched from their families and were brought up to be ashamed to be Indians'.⁶⁰ Fournier and Crey point out that policies of cultural genocide in the residential schools, coupled with betrayal of trust by priests, nuns and others who were effectively *in loco parentis* for many generations of indigenous children, caused children to return to their communities 'as poorly educated, angry, abused strangers who had no experience in parenting'.⁶¹ Cinderina Williams, testifying to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1994, stated:

Perhaps the greatest tragedy was ... [by] not being brought up in a loving, caring, sharing, nurturing environment, they did not have these skills; as they are learned through observation, participation and interaction. Consequently, when these children became parents, and most did at an early age, they had no parenting skills. They did not have the capability to show affection. They sired and bred children but were unable to relate to them on any level.⁶²

The tragedy was compounded by cultural genocide that left returning generations of children ashamed of and utterly divorced from the languages, cultural norms, rituals and ceremonies of their cultures of origin. This, coupled with poverty and lack of economic opportunities, contributed to a sense of hopelessness, and powerlessness of the kind Lear discusses with respect to the Crow Nation. The cumulative effects of all of this, led no doubt to intergenerational trauma transmission⁶³ and to the kind of

59. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 62.

60. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 72.

61. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 82.

62. Quoted in Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 83.

catastrophic consequences all too familiar to Indigenous people in Australia. The events at Davis Inlet are illustrative:

Horrific television footage from Davis Inlet, Labrador, in early 1993 served as a dramatic wake-up call to Canadians about the hopeless lives endured by so many aboriginal children in the nation's North. The sight of seventeen Innu children huddled in a shack, high from sniffing gasoline fumes and crying out that they wanted to die was impossible to ignore. Viewers may have been shocked by the self-destructiveness of gasoline addiction, but it soon became apparent the children's despair had an underlying cause. As hordes of media personnel descended on their remote community, the children said they could see no other way to escape the torture of the sexual abuse they were enduring than to die.

The adults of Davis Inlet, demoralised, dispossessed of their traditional land base and their spirituality, sexually victimised themselves in church-run schools, were preying without mercy on their own children. Canadians learned that virtually no child in Davis Inlet reached adolescence sexually unmolested. Many had been violently raped by drunken adults, mostly their own relatives, and assaulted by older children crazed on gas fumes.⁶⁴

Fournier and Crey argue that the situation was compounded in Canada in the 1960s when the provinces received per capita payments for placing indigenous children in foster care. The number of children in custodial care ballooned and sexual abuse of these children continued unabated. Fournier and Crey conclude:

After several generations of invasive, inappropriate contact between substitute caregivers and aboriginal children, incest began to invade aboriginal homes in epidemic proportions. Violent sexuality was acted out primarily within the family or affinity group; aboriginal offenders seldom committed sexual offences against strangers.⁶⁵

With respect to solutions, Fournier and Crey are clear that repair

63. See Duran et al., 'Healing the American Indian Soul Wound', and Gagné, 'The Role of Dependency and Colonialism in Generating Trauma in First Nations Citizens', both in Danieli (ed.), *International Handbook*.

64. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 115.

65. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 123.

requires that indigenous people be reconnected with their cultural and social origins to restore a memorially anchored and culturally constituted sense of self and to mitigate shame. As one survivor told a therapist:

I came to understand it wasn't because of me that all these things happened, it was because this had happened to my aunt and uncle and grandfather and great-grandfather ... all the way back ... it was being collected from the point of European contact and being spilled out on the youngest generation each time.⁶⁶

The net result, these authors argue, is that the familial and community bonds through which culture is transmitted were almost irreparably shattered, and children, therefore, were left without identity, without hope, without protection.

A key mechanism in the promotion of healing in some Canadian First Nations communities has been the promotion of sobriety and re-engagement with ancestral rituals and ceremonies. Establishing sobriety had been a difficult and demanding task as it requires confronting accumulated pain and shame instead of fleeing from it. In what would appear to be a notable difference from the official government position in Australia, in 1996 the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples acknowledged the devastating effects of cultural genocide on indigenous Canadians:

They are the current generation paying the price of cultural genocide, racism and poverty, suffering the effects of hundreds of years of colonialist public policies. It's as though an earthquake has ruptured their world from one end to another, opening a deep rift that separates them from their past, their history and their culture. They have seen parents and peers fall into this chasm, into patterns of despair, listlessness and self-destruction.⁶⁷

Despite these words, of course, indigenous Canadians continue to suffer tremendously from poverty, alcoholism, racism, geographic dislocation and loss of cultural connection, all of which are carefully documented by Fournier and Crey. Nevertheless, the authors offer hopeful illustrations of sobriety movements and indigenous and conventional healing circles that are beginning to

66. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 139.

67. Quoted in Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 207.

show promise in some indigenous communities. What keeps such efforts going, the authors conclude, is the knowledge that somewhere in the collective memory of First Nations bands are memories of 'wise child-rearing ways'.⁶⁸ Reconnection both to child-rearing traditions based on an ethic of care and to larger ancestral traditions and ritual appears to be vital if the cycle is to be interrupted.

Trauma in Aboriginal Communities II: An Indigenous Australian Perspective

In *Trauma Trails* Judy Atkinson addresses the complex needs of Aboriginal communities in her native country.⁶⁹ Early in the work Atkinson rather matter-of-factly informs readers of an encounter with a Queensland Aboriginal Affairs bureaucrat. When she told him of her work he 'told me I was wasting my time. He informed me "the solution is clear ... just stop them from breeding"'.⁷⁰ Atkinson lays out in great detail some of the central tenets of Aboriginal epistemology, including the key idea of 'spiritual continuity between present and past'.⁷¹ Studies in the area of white privilege suggest that white dominant postcolonial cultures are predominantly presentist and materialist in orientation — there is often total amnesia in relation to prior ethnic heritage and collective cultural memory.⁷² Indigenous cultures are very different in that the past is valued as an anchor for the present and a harbinger for the future. To understand the significance of the cultural excision of ancestral memory in Indigenous people's lives it is essential, Atkinson argues, to grasp the importance of "The "Time Before Morning" or "The Dreamings", and the ancestral beings who were active in that past'.⁷³ The consequences of the eradication of this continuity is clearly stated by Atkinson:

The willful denigration and destruction of Aboriginal ceremonial responsibilities and processes by the colonisers has therefore had profound transgenerational effects on the

68. Fournier and Crey, *Stolen from our Embrace*, p. 236.

69. J. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails: Recreating Song lines: The Transgenerational Effects of Trauma in Indigenous Australia*, North Melbourne, Spinifex Press, 2002.

70. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 8.

71. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 33.

72. Fine et al., *Off White*; R. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, New York, Routledge, 2003.

73. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 33.

people of this land. Aboriginal people have been prevented from engaging in ceremonial processes for healing from trauma. The distressed feelings that accompany loss, death, and devastation remain as destructive forces within the land and the people.⁷⁴

Atkinson speaks of lore as the wisdom that passes down through generations and suggests that the trauma of colonization and the institutionalized bureaucratization of Indigenous people's lives have led to the collapse of lore — a 'lorelessness' that leaves Indigenous people adrift, without history, memory, or wellbeing.⁷⁵ Drawing on Kai Erikson's writings, Atkinson argues that violation of the boundaries of family and place opens the door to the collapse of the social infrastructure, a collapse that then leads to alcohol and violence and to further deterioration of the social fabric. She cites the specific example of the occupants of the Grassy Narrows Reserve who were removed from their native lands in 1963 after an international papermaking company poisoned the lakes and rivers with methyl mercury. This displacement had profound consequences for the group:

These now-poisoned waters had represented both the life support and spiritual identity of the people. Within a short period following relocation, sexual assault, child neglect and abuse, extreme alcohol abuse, petrol-sniffing and death through violence became epidemic within the community. Men beat women and abused children, women discarded dependent infants and abused children, and older children beat and raped younger children. Hierarchies of power abuse and misdirected pain and anger were expressed in community violence. Old people could remember 'the time before'; in their shame at the 'time present', they felt powerless to effectively intervene. In fact, they were often victims of violence themselves. Abuse became transgenerational.⁷⁶

Atkinson outlines the cruelty, humiliation, degradation and dislocations that occurred under the auspices of the police, euphemistically named 'protectors' of Aboriginal people. In a mirror-image of the Canadian government's approach, the

74. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 35.

75. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 45.

76. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, pp. 54-5.

Australian government created conditions that sought to induce in Aboriginal people a state of powerlessness, cultural erosion and humiliation that foreshortened their futures and led them towards paths of self-destruction which, when criminalized, led to further enmeshment in regimes of pathologization and incarceration by State and Territory governments. The dislocations of wounded people — so aptly named in one US instance as *The Trail of Tears* — led to what Atkinson calls *trauma trails* — trails of disaster, pain and dislocation that can be traced across time and people.⁷⁷ Perhaps what is most ironic about these trauma trails is their invisibility to the Aboriginal people themselves, who are suffering such great losses. This very invisibility of the sociohistorical links to cultural memory is what makes this kind of suffering so profoundly damaging to individual and collective psyches, as noted above.

We should not be surprised perhaps, that an apparatus of government that relied on forced removals, incarceration and pathologization to address the psychic consequences of its own dis-owned actions, would also enlist the repressive powers of psychiatric diagnosis. Atkinson's book contains examples of survivors explaining how they were diagnosed as schizophrenic, exposed to electric shock treatments, given psychotropic medications, and so on for their symptoms. Referring to the experiences of one Aboriginal survivor named Don, Atkinson notes:

Don provided a number of instances when what could be called 'psychotic' episodes appeared to have links to the traumatic experiences of previous family members, which he said at the time he had not previously known about. At times he appeared to be acting out other people's trauma, or other people's trauma enmeshed with his own. Aboriginal traditional healers who were present at one episode said he was living 'too much in the past ... he's back with old people, and he has to come back here'. Much more work has to be done on this for it to be discussed in any depth. It is necessary, as this book clearly demonstrates, to voice a caution before diagnosing any Aboriginal person from a Western medical psychiatric paradigm.⁷⁸

77. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 88.

78. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 183.

With respect to solutions, Atkinson invokes the Aboriginal concept of *dadirri*, a restorative form of listening that creates something that might be considered equivalent to the healing circles described in the Canadian context by Fournier and Crey. Atkinson summarizes *dadirri* this way:

The principles and functions of *dadirri* are: a knowledge and consideration of community and the diversity and unique nature that each individual brings to community; ways of relating and acting within community; a non-intrusive observation, or quietly aware watching; a deep listening and hearing with more than the ears; a reflective non-judgmental consideration of what is being seen and heard; and having learnt from the listening, a purposeful plan to act, with actions informed by learning, wisdom, and the informed responsibility that comes with knowledge.⁷⁹

What is distinctive about this approach, which Atkinson illustrates with copious examples of heart-breaking narratives of suffering, as well as hopeful paths toward healing, is an emphasis on community and ancestral memory, which, for the most part, is conspicuously absent from Western therapeutic regimes. Atkinson advocates using reflective discussion and 'storytelling, drawing, writing, dancing and drama, and Aboriginal cultural tools for healing'.⁸⁰ Atkinson also underlines the importance of group process in which people work collectively to make sense of their experiences. However, in addition to the conventional strategies of group therapy, Atkinson emphasizes the importance of the sociohistorical aspect of the work — that is, helping

participants locate their own trauma within the network of global colonisations and histories — seeking answers to questions about why colonisers needed to leave their own countries, to colonise and subordinate other groups.⁸¹

79. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 16.

80. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 238.

81. Atkinson, *Trauma Trails*, p. 249.

Among the Aborigines, can there be an Aborigine? Creating Space for Radical Hope in Indigenous Communities

In this article I have been concerned with what happens to a community when meaningful life comes to an end. While there is tremendous diversity in the life experiences of different Aboriginal groups in Australia, the evidence suggests that many Aboriginal people are facing a crisis of hope. If the very purpose and meaning of the group ceases to exist, how are young people to construct visions of what Jonathan Lear calls radical hope? In this article, arguing from a trauma theory perspective, I have emphasized the importance of recuperating ancestral narrative and facilitating the construction of new group narratives by Aboriginal people. Such narratives will allow different Aboriginal groups to embrace their Indigenous roots and mourn the depredations wrought by colonization, residential schooling, disenfranchisement and all of their allied social maladies. Judy Atkinson makes an eloquent plea to 'give our people the confidence to dream again',⁸² and her work, and that of her colleagues at Gnibi — the College of Indigenous Australian Peoples Southern Cross University,⁸³ in training helping professionals in trauma theory and Indigenous modes of healing is profoundly hopeful. Hopeful, too, is Gregory Phillips' vision of an approach to public policy with regard to Aboriginal people that is built on respect and takes an integrative approach to physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.⁸⁴ Phillips understands full well the catastrophic consequences when narrative is ruptured, and takes seriously the need to build a collaborative, Indigenously grounded healing process for and with Aboriginal people in their local communities.

The challenge of the question in my title, however, is whether Australia can make the kind of grand commitment that truly seeks the recuperation of Aboriginal people as people with a future within the kind of society Australia is coming to be. Many people have grave doubts, and I believe that the resolution of this question by the Australian people will provide a moral bellwether as to the prospects for Australia becoming a society of genuine equals, or a

82. J. Atkinson, 'Indigenous Approaches to Child Abuse,' in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.

83. See <www.scu.edu.au/gnibi/>.

84. G. Phillips, 'Healing and Public Policy', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.

land in which white Australia triumphantly and guiltily forces the subservient group to choose between the Scylla of assimilation and the Charybdis of the end of civilization as they have known it.⁸⁵ I think perhaps the unkindest cut of all would be for Australia to offer this terrible choice dressed up in neo-liberal health, welfare and educational initiatives, which, if rejected by Aboriginal people, then allowed white Australia to blame them for their ingratitude and supposed dysfunctionality.

Among the Aborigines, Can there Really be an Aboriginal? Political and Structural Considerations

The challenge of this question is whether Australia is genuinely ready to make the extraordinary gestures needed to allow a new kind of Australia to emerge. If white Australia shares former Prime Minister Howard's belief that the dominant cultural pattern should continue to be 'Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment, and the institutions and values of British political culture',⁸⁶ then any number of paternalistic apologies or programs will not alter the fundamentally assimilative intent of Australian federal or territorial government policy. There are other complex issues too. Guy Rundle suggests that imposing a Westernized market economy, which mandates the living of a materialist, consumer self, is antithetical to Aboriginal kinship relations and thereby damaging to the collective narrative or group identity of Aboriginal groups.⁸⁷ Rundle also raises the thorny issue of self-determination and warns of the danger in advocating therapeutic discourses that ultimately lead to adjustment therapies rather than authentic social change. Then there is the issue of land tenure and the fundamental fear that the move toward individual ownership is a Trojan horse for the erasure of the spiritual connection of Aboriginal people with their lands.⁸⁸ Ernest Hunter states the policy choice bluntly as one between paternalism and autonomy.

85. See R. Gaita, 'The Moral Force of Reconciliation', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.

86. Speech by Prime Minister Howard to the National Press Club, 25 January 2006, quoted in M. Mansell, 'The Political Vulnerability of the Unrepresented', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*, p. 75.

87. G. Rundle, 'Military Humanitarianism in Australia's North', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*. See also J. Hinkson, 'The "Innocence" of the Settler Imagination', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.

88. See Rundle, 'Military Humanitarianism'; Dalrymple, 'Abnormalisation of Land Tenure'; and Dillon, 'Patent Medicine', all in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.

He cites a Canadian example of attempting to address symptoms like sexual abuse through restoring Indigenous community: allowing communities to control their own destinies and providing opportunities to reconnect with ancestral memory, especially through constructing new narratives grounded in indigenous traditions and aspirations. A similar experiment did not work in Australia, Hunter informs us, because 'REAL control — of means of production, resources, services, and policy — are illusory in the Australian context, at least for socially and economically marginalized, discrete Aboriginal communities'.⁸⁹

If, as it would appear, many Aboriginal people in Australia are experiencing the end of life as they know it; if they are faced with the prospects of slow death through cultural annihilation and the systemic withholding of basic services in health, education and opportunity,⁹⁰ then it would appear that Australia is confronted with a moral dilemma, one that is effectively concealed in the discourse of 'reconciliation'. The symptoms we see are the death throes of Indigenous cultures and ways of life.

If I were to see a person lying seriously wounded on the street and I had a choice of patting the injured person on the head or taking drastic action to save their life I hope I would make the right moral choice. Hopefully a groundswell will develop in Australia to push the country's leaders to make the right moral choice for everybody's sake, but most particularly so that Aboriginal Australians continue to have the possibility of being Aborigines.

89. E. Hunter, "'Little Children' and Big Sticks', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*, p. 126.

90. See M. Dodson, 'Bully in the Playground: A New Stolen Generation', in Altman and Hinkson, *Coercive Reconciliation*.