Gay Perspectives II

More Essays in Australian Gay Culture

Edited by

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with
The Australian Centre for Gay and Lesbian Research

University of Sydney

1994

Peopling the Empty Mirror

The Prospects for Lesbian and Gay Aboriginal History

Gays and Lesbians Aboriginal Alliance
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For almost four centuries, European (and European-Australian) writings about the indigenous peoples of Australia have been implicated in the practices of colonialism. Recognition of this fact has led, in recent years, to calls for a 'postcolonial writing of Aboriginal history'.[2]

The present paper, which results from the collaboration between five Aboriginal and two non-Aboriginal Australians, is a response to these calls, and necessarily experimental, since the practice of postcolonial writing, as it applies to Aboriginal history, is still not well developed. We would also argue that our topic - Aboriginal 'homosexualities' - is not incidental to this endeavour, but intrinsic to it, since 'the heterosexualization of society was ... a fundamental imperative of modern colonialism'.[3]

Our paper is divided into four main sections. In the Introduction, we discuss the neglect of the topic of Aboriginal homosexualities in the literature; the political considerations behind our collaboration; and the reasons why Aboriginal homosexualities are sometimes considered to be 'un-traditional'.

Part 1 is called 'Views of the Present', and deals with contemporary Aboriginal attitudes towards homosexuality; gay racism; and the tension between racial identity and sexual identity. It concludes with an account of what it is like to be 'out and Aboriginal'.

Part 2 is called 'A View of the Past', and reviews the older literature on Aboriginal homosexualities. It deals first with the question of the reliability of the sources, then with the information provided by those sources: homosexual practices among Aboriginal men; 'boy-wives'; the integration of homosexual relationships in the kinship structure of Aboriginal communities; variations in homosexual practices and in attitudes towards them; homosexual practices among Aboriginal women; and homosexuality in rituals. It concludes with a consideration of oral and written stories that deal with Aboriginal homosexualities. The fact that this section focuses largely on male homosexuality is not a result of selectivity on our part, but rather reflects the paucity of historical information available about Aboriginal lesbianism. This section makes generalized allusions to the religious life of Aboriginal men and women, but maintains respect for the secrecy of particular ritual practices.

In the Conclusion, we discuss the prospects for lesbian and gay Aboriginal history, and present various forward-looking perspectives that we have called 'With a View to the Future'.

Introduction: The Empty Mirror

The lesbian writer Adrienne Rich has observed that 'when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing'.[4] The empty mirror we are concerned with in this paper is the one that faces lesbian and gay Aboriginal people when they look for a reflection of their experience in Australian culture, particularly in the authority-fraught looking-glass of written texts.

Our purpose in this paper is to begin the process of peopling this empty mirror, as a first step towards the development of a field of lesbian and gay Aboriginal history. The writing of the paper has been an exercise in coalition-building, since we have different sexual and racial identities (four of us are gay men and three are lesbians, and two of us - Jim Wafer and Dino Hodge - are non-Aboriginal). We have therefore treated this paper not as an academic exercise, but as a social process through which, in spite of our widely separated geographical locations (Alice Springs, Darwin, Newcastle and Sydney), we have been engaged in

creating a new sense of solidarity.

As a reflection of this process, we have structured this paper as a dialogue. In some cases it actually contains conversations we have had with each other, mostly in the period from November 1992 to January 1993. In other cases, however, the dialogue consists of our individual contributions, or our responses to prior discussions with our fellow collaborators, as well as statements by other people who have spoken or written about the topic of 'Aboriginal homosexuality', threaded together in such a way that they form thematically cohesive prose.

We recognize that this approach may disconcert some readers more accustomed to a traditional narrative. But we ask such readers to consider the philosophical and methodological reasons for what we have done. The traditional narrative is a European genre convention that privileges a particular voice and a particular perspective, and it has been the typical textual strategy that Europeans and European-Australians have used to create a White man's[5] version of Aboriginal reality. What is worse, its stylistic familiarity tends to give it greater authority in the White man's world than what Aboriginal people themselves say about their reality.

In this paper we have tried to develop an alternative textual strategy that would be closer to the 'group discourse' characteristic of Aboriginal oral cultures. Kenneth Liberman describes this style of conversational interaction in the following way: 'Conversation proceeds not by paired addressors-addressees but in a serial fashion, with each contributor building upon the public formulations of previous contributors and thus assisting

the participants to arrive at a final account which becomes the consensus of the associating parties'.[6]

Collaboration, Power Sharing and the Effects of Colonization

JIM WAFER (in a teleconference with GARY LEE and DINO HODGE):[7] The exercise I think we can most usefully engage in ... is talking about how we see this collaboration as a way of developing a theory and practice of coalitionist politics, the premise being that, to date, I don't think that Aborigines and gays have seen themselves as having anything in common that they can use to create a struggle against the things that oppress both groups....

GARY: I think it is important that we do this because ... there aren't too many people around at the moment, and even less Aboriginal people, who are writing about homosexuality and Aboriginality.... I'm quite happy to put my neck on the line.... I think, in the end, people should be able to get the value out of what we do, Aboriginal or not.

MAUREEN FLETCHER (in a conversation with WENDY DUNN/HOLLAND and REA SAUNDERS):[8] As an Aboriginal lesbian woman, to me coalition politics is really important ... for our survival.... I think there are lots of examples of gay men and lesbian women working in Aboriginal communities and gay and lesbian Aboriginal people working in other communities. So that sort of coalition work has been happening, it has

been going on. I also think it is one of the most difficult things that anyone can ever do, because it takes a level of honesty about ourselves and a level of trust with each other that's pretty difficult to maintain....

Coalition work can be really scary, because sometimes you can be working with people, you can be working as an Aboriginal woman with a White man, and it's like, here you are, you are in this coalition together and, sure, you're trying to work together, but there are all these other issues like power. There is a history of men having power over women, and there is a history of colonization in this country, so it is very difficult when you are working in coalitions with people when there are power differences between you.

I also feel for coalitions to be successful, we have to have healing within our own communities, and that healing looks at the ways we have been damaged. We have been damaged by colonization, I mean, being colonized for two hundred years does something to people, as does the effects of alcoholism and addiction, not only in the Aboriginal community, gay and lesbian community, but society generally.

Personally, I have had to struggle to sort out what is the healthy stuff in my family, in relating within my family, within my Aboriginal family, and being part of that whole community, and to sift through that. What are the strong things for me that can help me to get well, and to participate in and be part of the process for change? What is the stuff that is really damaging, and will keep me away from other people because I am either frightened of them or angry at them? In working with other people, first of all I need to look at these

issues within myself. It helps if I'm working with people who are doing likewise....

WENDY: In looking at the impact of colonization on Aboriginal Australia, in terms of race, sex and class, the oppressors are also damaged in the process of oppressing others. I don't think we've anything to lose by working together, particularly around issues that affect Aboriginal people, for example, racism.

There is a tendency among some feminist women to remain separatists, and while I appreciate that there is a need for people in the front line to push things to their limit in order to break new ground, for me as an Aboriginal woman, a feminist and lesbian, I choose not to separate myself from Aboriginal communities. Our communities are made up of men, women and children, old people, fair-skinned, dark-skinned, disabled, heterosexual and homosexual. I think it is extremely important that in working to empower ourselves and each other that there be a preparedness to work together despite our differences.

As Aboriginal people and as lesbians we do seem to be marginalized a fair bit, and I think it is really important to look to our allies, to our brothers and sisters out there, who do share similar views of the world, and to look to ways of trying to make those views of the world more practical, for change within our communities.... There is a lot of healing that needs to go on in our communities....

REA: I feel that coalition politics is important, but first we need to have an understanding and acceptance

of differences. We have to confront honestly our own racism, sexism, homophobia and classism and acknowledge the differences between us. Only then can we work together towards a real sense of coalition. Coalition politics can only be effective if all people involved are on an equal level. I mean, I am not interested in coalition politics where men still run things.

I think it's a lot harder being an Aboriginal gay or lesbian because you have to live in two worlds and then you also have to create a third one of your own. You have to find a cultural, sexual and personal identity in the face of multiple forms of discrimination, and you have to find your own self-esteem even when there are no role models.

Rationale: Demythologizing 'the White Man's Disease'

REA: One of the reasons I decided to get involved in this project is because I believe it is important that there be literature available in relation to sexuality for other people, in particular Aboriginal people, to access. I think we need to approach these extremely sensitive and important issues on some academic level. There are a lot of older Aboriginal people these days, like our mothers and aunts, that are going off to university and are studying, and they, like us, haven't got anything to read or know about in terms of Aboriginal gay/lesbian issues. And surely this approach will contribute to changing society's attitudes toward Aboriginal gay and lesbian people.

JIM (from correspondence with the other collaborators): The experience of lesbian and gay Aboriginal people raises the most troubling and therefore the most interesting questions not just about what it means to be lesbian or gay or Aboriginal, but also about what it means to be any kind of citizen in the supposedly pluralist liberal democracy we call Australia, today and in the future. It challenges simultaneously the racism of the gay community, the homophobia of the Aboriginal community, and the Eurocentrism and heterocentrism of White Australia.

These issues are particularly pertinent at the present time, when Aboriginal self-government is on the political agenda.[9] Whatever form self-government takes, it will be underpinned by a legal framework that needs to take into consideration the rights of minorities within Aboriginal communities. I am concerned that the matter of equal opportunity for lesbian and gay Aborigines may be overlooked on the quite spurious grounds that homosexuality is 'not traditional' in Aboriginal culture, that it is a 'White man's disease'.

REA: I get that all the time, 'it's a White man's disease'.... As far as I know, homosexuality has existed here for a long time, it's not a White man's disease - it's probably the only thing we didn't catch off the White man!

JIM: If homosexuality is seen as 'a White man's disease', this is also true, and perhaps even more so, of HIV and AIDS.

GARY: The biggest problem I find ... up here [in

Darwin] is educating Aboriginal people and the mob about HIV and trying to get across that it is not just - it can't just be separated and labelled a White man's disease. It's like this big conspiracy that the minute you step out of your community there are people out there waiting to dump this HIV thing on you.

MAUREEN: I think this business about homosexuality being a White man's disease is just not true, it's basically a lie. I think there are lots of examples in Aboriginal societies of people expressing their sexuality in a lot of different ways. People don't go around saying that Christian Aboriginal people are not part of the Aboriginal community, they don't say, 'You know that's a White man's disease', therefore they are not Aboriginal. They are Aboriginal and they are Christians. There are some Aboriginal people who are Buddhists! You know what I mean - there's a lot of variety within our Aboriginal communities, people express their Aboriginality in different ways and their sexuality in different ways. That doesn't mean that they are not part of the Aboriginal community.

Part 1: Views of the Present: Cats, Moolgoos, Wirguls[10] and Others

JIM: Since the early 1980s, two significant social changes have taken place that are relevant to the present paper. One is that lesbian and gay scholars have established the cross-cultural study of homosexuality as a serious field of academic endeavour. The other is that

lesbian and gay Aborigines have begun to make their own voices heard.

So far these changes have not produced any extended treatments of homosexuality in the literature on or by Aborigines - comparable to, say, the work of scholars dealing with homosexuality in Melanesia or among North American Indians,[11] or to anthologies such as *Living the Spirit* and *This Bridge Called My Back*, containing, respectively, writings by gay and lesbian American Indians and radical women of colour.[12] There have, however, been several short summaries of the literature on Aboriginal homosexualities, by Herdt, Adam, Greenberg, Johnston and Johnston, Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg and Murray.[13] Lesbian and gay Aborigines themselves have written for several periodicals, as well as featuring in the television documentary 'Double Trouble', first screened in Australia in February 1992.[14] They also made a significant contribution to the first National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference, held in Alice Springs from 2-4 March, 1992.[15] In addition to the activities that have produced oral or written texts, lesbian and gay Aborigines have begun to develop a significant cultural profile through their participation in Sydney's annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, beginning with the appearance of a gay Aboriginal man dressed as Captain Cook at the head of the parade in 1988, and culminating in a highly acclaimed 'Koori Celebration' at the 1993 Mardi Gras.[16]

Perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of extended written treatments of Aboriginal homosexuality is that the issue is a sensitive one in Aboriginal communities,

with some members being intolerant of their gay and lesbian fellows, including those living with HIV or AIDS, and others being supportive.

Contemporary Aboriginal Attitudes towards Homosexuality

John Newfong: The imposition of the Judaeo-Christian ethic has brought in a lot of homophobia, but one needn't be a church-goer to pick this up - it's now societal conditioning. A lot of urban Aboriginal people, however radical and however bellicosely Black they may be, in fact have adopted White, working-class values towards sexuality, and those White, working-class values, in this country, are Catholic.[17]

MAUREEN: A strong thread of my lesbian identity is about women in my family and my connection with them, and that connection is not necessarily sexual, but it is strong, I tell you, it is strong. I'm sure a lot of my stuff about identification in terms of being a lesbian is that I feel very connected with other women - it is a source of strength and also my greatest source of pain. Nothing can hurt me as much as my connection with other women, my connection with other Aboriginal women. So doing this is part of creating an image in the mirror too. That's our image, not somebody else's, not what somebody else tells us we should be like or should look like, walk like, or think like. Any of those things, it's about what is real from our experience, and being able to express that. And letting it grow stronger all the time.

Luke Close: Being gay in an Aboriginal community is

the same as being black in a white community. You are not accepted and in some cases forced to leave. Teenagers head for the cities to be themselves because they cannot at home.[18]

Larissa Behrendt: Aboriginal homosexuals feel excluded from their society. Several gay men [at the first National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference] spoke of how this exclusion led them to leave their communities even when they would have preferred to stay.[19]

Malcolm Cole (asking an ice-breaking question at the first National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference): What I heard from the last health conference is that everything we spoke on was just 'having sex with a woman' and 'what happens when you go out and have a woman' and whatever - nothing [that] dealt with homosexuality.[20]

Iris Smith: People now have to accept that homosexuality and bisexuality are real issues and that they do exist in the Black community, as is the case across all cultures and throughout history.... Since bisexuality is such a touchy subject I try to inject some humour [in my work with women]. So I say things like: 'When he says, "Darling, I never once touched another woman", he may be telling you the truth. Because when he says that he was only out with the boys, he was out with the boys alright but in a way that many may not want to know about'.[21]

Wilo Muwadda: [My family] told me, they said, 'Look, there's no worries with you being a queenie; you

can be that, and you can be Black too'.[22]

Marie Andrews: When I've taken my lover back home, they've reacted to it in a very positive way, and my brothers and sisters call her *umini*, which is 'sister-in-law' in Bardi. My family is making a land claim on our traditional land, for our family land, and my brother, when talking about the project, has said to me, you know, 'Oh, this is where we'll live - you'll live here with your woman, and we'll live here, and ... ' - so they regard it as quite normal.[23]

GARY: I find that most gays, Aboriginal gays of Darwin, know all the other Aboriginal gays who are HIV. And I suppose we try to help out in our way, but one factor which is in favour of Aboriginal people up here is that they have - the ones that I know who are HIV positive - they have large extended family networks, and what support they don't get from the White homosexual community or places like the AIDS Council they seem to get from their families.... Somehow,... culturally,... it is not so difficult for Aboriginal families to deal with AIDS. I suppose maybe they don't view it as having the same stigma.... The Aboriginal gays up here, we have our own gay network, and we have our own gay nights, we have Black gay awards, and we have great fun.

MAUREEN: I really want to pick up on the issue of healing myself. I want to talk a bit more about that, because I think it is important to talk about things like HIV in the Aboriginal community, sexuality in the Aboriginal community, identity in the community, how is the community defined, who decides who's part of the community and who isn't.... I think it is important to talk

about these things because it is part of the healing, and we have to look at the prejudice in Aboriginal communities against gay men/lesbians, and, say, against people that are HIV positive, and it is really destructive to the whole community, and that's why it is important for us to learn about that, and to understand what our prejudices are toward each other.

JIM: While homophobia is clearly not universal within Aboriginal communities, it is prevalent enough to force some Aboriginal people to attempt to find a life for themselves in the communities that have been developed by gays and lesbians. But the racism they confront there is often as bad as the homophobia they were trying to escape from.

Gay Racism

GARY: 'Anyone for a Black Velvet?' I looked in the direction of the remark and saw two White guys leaning back on the bar, staring at me. Instinctively I realized that they weren't referring to any *cocktail* drink.

As an Aboriginal man growing up in the Northern Territory the term 'Black Velvet' was long familiar to me. I'd heard it many times being directed from the mouths of heterosexual White males towards any Aboriginal females unfortunate enough to be in the same vicinity. As a put-down, the term 'Black Velvet' quickly acquired its current derogatory status, and in the Sydney bar I was surprised to hear it in a gay environment. Just another level of racism, I thought.

A Koori colleague of mine once remarked that being gay in society was 'bad' enough, but being Aboriginal as well was even worse. We both laughed at this statement and the irony - or was it truth - which we recognized within it. We both knew that the old stereotype that all homosexuals are non-racist was just a crock of shit. In fact, what we knew, and what just about every Aboriginal lesbian or gay knew, was that it wasn't only heterosexuals who have the handle on racism.

Back in the Sydney bar, with the sound of 'Black Velvet' ringing in my ears, I took it as a racial comment even though I knew it was delivered with sexual overtones. The insidiousness lay behind the loaded assumptions that all Black men are 'hot sex', 'easy roots', 'good fucks', 'have big dicks', or that they can never resist a White man'. I could see that there really was not much difference between White gay attitudes in Sydney or Darwin, the place of my birth.

As an Aborigine growing up in Darwin in the 60s and 70s I became aware of my attraction to men at around eight years of age. The men and other boys I was noticing came from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. This was not surprising given the cosmopolitan make-up of Darwin, which is still evident today. I noticed not only White but other Aboriginal, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Malaysian or Indonesian males, to mention but a few.

The incidence of racism as an adolescent never really seemed to be an issue. One reason for this could be because White boys were in the minority most of the time, so the Black and ethnic boys generally had the upper hand. Any racist remarks could be dealt with

without too much bother, generally with physical actions or threats, as kids are wont to do.

Discovering my sexuality in my teenage years was exciting yet somehow disappointing to a degree. The excitement came from experimenting with different men, and the disappointment came with the rising incidence of racism that I was recognizing more readily. What made it worse was that most of the racism was coming from White gay males. It soon became apparent that, while some White guys would not hesitate to fuck with you, that didn't mean they had to say g'day to you in the street - which is exactly how most of them acted.

Is it any wonder that, by the time I reached my twenties, I would make a concerted effort to avoid sexual encounters with Anglo-Australian males wherever possible? In my politicized twenties I specifically chose never to have sex with any White man, preferring other Aboriginal men.

On one level I recognized that I too was being racist in choosing, for political reasons, never to sleep with White guys, but this never bothered me. Aboriginal colleagues and I used to discuss racist White guys and their sick attitudes with a certain amount of assuredness. After all, we'd all had a lot of experience to draw upon.

We would relate similar shared experiences and came up with some generalizations about White gay guys. The most obvious one centred around the White man's fantasy about the Black man. We concluded that there were many White gays who would not, as mentioned previously, be seen walking down the street with an Aboriginal guy, yet these same men wouldn't hesitate to

accept a black dick up their arse.

In stating this I leave myself open to criticisms about my (Aboriginal) biases. With a formal university education behind me, these generalizations based upon my own, and other Aboriginal gays', experiences are now put into a broader perspective whereby our objectification by White gay males is part of a wider diversity of objectifications.

Whatever terms or names you use, whatever slice of the 'big picture' you are after, my ability to 'objectively' criticize racism towards Aborigines cannot overlook these primary life experiences that form my generalizations about White gay males. Of course it would be better not to generalize, but when you are Aboriginal and gay it is hard not to do the same that is done to you twice over. Given these limitations it is still necessary that my voice as an Aborigine should be heard because it has been silenced for so long and because so little about being Aboriginal and gay has ever been tackled by Aborigines before.

Historically, the Aboriginal man has always been marginalized in Australia. The tired old myths placing us in the 'dirty', 'savage' category still retain their currency in this country. The Aborigine is still perceived as a 'primitive' in a 'degenerative' culture, of not much use except as a cheap resource (including the sex industry) or convenient easy lay. With White gay males, such a 'heterosexist' viewpoint takes on more sinister overtones.

The myth that White gay men are meant to be more critical of society's values, and recognize that Aborigines

have been marginalized by that society, has no foundation when it comes to racial issues. Just as their White parents, who have been indoctrinated with and who indoctrinate the notion that Aborigines are inferior 'savages', many White Australian gays continue to live out such attitudes.

White gay Australians have formed their own network which practises the very same marginalization that brought them into being. The status that White gay culture foists onto Black men is not so different from the status that broader White society accords gays themselves.

The fact that White gay culture represents such a thriving consumerist market in a fiercely consumerist society is an obvious sign of the situation where a subculture embraces and magnifies the values of the larger society which seems to reject it. The status that Black men have in gay culture (and indeed in straight culture, for the supposed exclusive benefit of women) is reserved for a certain kind of Black - not the Aborigine, but the more exotic and alluring type of male, that is, the African-American 'Negro'.

So being Aboriginal in White gay culture exposes me to various levels of racial discrimination. Being Black makes me more desirable but objectified nonetheless. One way in which Aboriginal gays have dealt with this is through the creation of a small 'dicktionary' of terms which give some humour to this situation.

For example, 'chocolate queens' are those White gay males who specifically hunt for Black or 'coloured' men. I believe the American equivalent is 'dinge queen'. A

'wallet' is an affluent gay male who uses money to attract Black men. A 'fossil' is an older gay guy or chocolate queen, and the term is usually applied to someone over fifty years of age. A 'mutton' is an older gay guy who dresses as a much younger man. Women who hang around Black gay guys are known as 'fruit bats'. And dickhead gays are known as 'skin backs' - as in wanker (the foreskin is jerked back and forth). And last but not least, what these types all have in common is their avaricious pursuit of some 'culture stick' - or Aboriginal penis.

Racial Identity and Sexual Identity

JIM: Just as Aboriginal communities are changing in relation to issues of sexuality, the gay and lesbian communities may be changing in relation to issues of race. One of the signs of this is the formation, in recent years, of various groups committed to fighting gay and lesbian racism. In Sydney, for example, there exists a group called Gays and Lesbians Against Racism (GLAR), in which gay and lesbian Aboriginal people participate. Koori Wirguls (a group of lesbian Aboriginal women from Sydney) led the GLAR contingent in the 1992 Mardi Gras parade.

Still, the continuing existence of racism in the gay community and homophobia in the Aboriginal community presents gay and lesbian Aboriginal people with an obvious dilemma in reconciling racial and sexual allegiances. This dilemma is resolved in various ways.

GARY: I was Aboriginal long before I was gay - at least, long before I was aware. My Aboriginality is a stronger part of my identity than my gayness.

Malcolm Mitchell: You spend your life being black, then all of a sudden you're gay too. And so you deal with your gay issue and lifestyle and put aside being black for a while.[24]

WENDY: There are many things that make up each of us as individuals, like sexuality is just one part of our being. For me, certainly, in terms of being part of a broader lesbian community, which is predominantly made up of Anglo-Celtic women, there's been pressure to be really separatist, to only associate with women. It's really difficult when issues like racism affect lots of Aboriginal people, men and women, whether straight or gay/lesbian. In most instances my support group has often been women who are politically active, whether they be Aboriginal and/or non-Aboriginal, who may or may not be lesbian.

REA: I think one thing a lot of people overlook is: when you are an Aboriginal person, you don't necessarily look through the eyes of sexuality. You look through the eyes of a Black person; you see this country and what's happening and what's affecting us as Black people on a community level. So when issues come up - like homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, etc. - they may seem minor in terms of looking at us as a whole race of people. Of course, these issues are still relevant, because they are affecting Aboriginal people more and more each day. But when they get overlooked, it's because we are still fighting for our survival.

JIM: I think one of the most interesting developments we will see in the future is that gay and lesbian Aboriginal people will begin to tell their own life stories in greater detail. (A forthcoming publication by Dino Hodge will contain two such stories, along with other accounts of the experience of being gay in Darwin.[25]) This will provide important insights into the different ways that race and sexuality intersect in this country, the different meanings that the coming-out process has for lesbian and gay Aboriginal people, and the different modes of combining Black activism with gay/lesbian activism.

Out and Aboriginal: A Nunga Activist in Adelaide

E. J. MILERA:[26] My mother is from the Coorong area, Ngarrindjeri people, and my father is Narrunga, Kaurna Plains, which they inhabited - Adelaide and Yorke Peninsula. And my parents actually met when they were living at Point Pearce in Yorke Peninsula.... My great grandmother ... used to sing Ngarrindjeri lullabies, and talk Ngarrindjeri, and teach me Ngarrindjeri language, talk about the old days - and this goes back to the late 1800s, when she was a little girl living in the Coorong....

It was ... around Christmas time ... that we went back to Point Pearce, and ... spent the holidays with our relatives.... It wasn't until, say, around about twelve, thirteen, that I started becoming aware of - well, there were a couple of guys over at Point Pearce that were known as 'cats' in those days....

I don't recall reading about homosexuality.... Growing

up in the Aboriginal community, all I really knew was you grow up, you get married, and you have children. And basically, homosexuality was just not on. A phrase which is thrown around quite a lot these days is: 'It's not part of our culture'. And that's installed into your mind as a child, and I think that's why I repressed a lot of my homosexuality....

We use the term 'cat' or 'moolgoo'.... But 'cat' was basically the most common. I think that's probably where I just picked it up, in knowing what a 'cat' was - you know, it was two guys fucking each other....

A position came up with the *New Look Nunga News*.... I started as the Assistant Editor, doing reporting, photography and ... layout, and then taking it to the printers.... I initiated some homosexual stories and HIV/AIDS virus and stuff through the *New Look Nunga News*; I actually put my poem in there, *'Moolgoo'*, and got some positive feedback, as well as quite a lot of negative feedback....

My cousin ... and I felt that for far too long we were being shunned by both the Aboriginal community and the White gay community, as in the sense of services provided for gay people.... There were no support mechanisms ... which we could go to and seek help, such as the coming-out period.... We threw the idea around with all the gay guys and lesbians in Adelaide, and all the guys were very interested - we got some positive feedback from the lesbians, but not a great deal of involvement from the great majority of them. So we formed our group, we called ourselves the Nungays, and we were going to come under the auspices of the AIDS

Council so we could become an incorporated body to raise money....

What we felt we needed to do at the beginning was to get all the gay guys around together, sit down and discuss a lot of the things that we felt were wrong.... We talked about racism, and I mean that's not being given entry into some of the gay bars; the racism that you put up with in the bars, the smart comments and stuff like that; the discrimination we got from Aboriginal services; Aboriginal housing we talked about.... The confidentiality side of it ... was probably our major concern, like with the medical services.... We felt we couldn't really access that service to be tested for STDs or HIV because the fear of confidentiality would leak. So we looked at things like that, and ways that we can try to approach these services and work out some strategy in which we could ensure that confidentiality would stay....

In South Australia, or where we are from, we call ourselves 'Nungas', which just means 'Aboriginals', and we just put a 'y' on the end and we thought it was quite apt in saying 'Nungays'. The name did cause some controversy within the community because of the thing of linking homosexuality with Aboriginality, therefore people will think that *all* Aboriginals are homosexuals. So, there was that sort of shit going around, and some people were saying that we weren't allowed to use that name and that. We just basically said: 'Look, just shut your mouths, we are Nungas, we are part of this community, we do live a different lifestyle, we have every right to use the name'....

We met once a month, usually on a Sunday afternoon,

and we had barbecues.... I'd say up to about twenty gay men would rock up.... Partners of Aboriginal men as well. Then we threw the hat in the ring by saying whether or not we would like to invite family members - brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles, grandmas, whatever. Everybody had agreed to that and we thought it would be really great because then there would be more understanding within our families, to sit down and talk with us, and listen to basically all the crap that we go through in day-to-day life. Then slowly family members were turning up, and then it actually became quite popular.....

Throughout the formation of the Nungays group I was actually going to try and do some studies of my own, and look into the lifestyles of the other Aboriginal gay men, and try to focus on some similarities.... What I wanted to try and find out was whether there was a pattern of being an Aboriginal and being gay.... [It] may be of some benefit, I hope, for future Aboriginal gay men that come out, and maybe as a guide or reference that they can look at. Well basically, I suppose, so that they don't come to the same pitfalls that we did....

[Nungays started] probably around '80, '81. We did go for about a year and a half, two years, but ... it wasn't until about '88 that me and another friend of mine ... started it up again. We were going to try to obtain funding to send a contingent of Aboriginal guys to the Gay Olympics[27] in Canada.... It would have been really great because we've heard so much of the ties between the North American Indians and the Aboriginal mob here in Australia, and it would have been a great

opportunity to go over and meet some Indian gay men....

I've got Aboriginal gay friends up and down the east coast as far as Cairns. I've got friends there, I've got friends in Sydney, Melbourne, Gippsland - you know, country areas.... Quite a few from Adelaide, because a lot of people came there to Task, you know, to study at the Aboriginal Task Force in the Adelaide Uni[versity]....

I think ultimately, hopefully, in the end a lot of people will start accepting homosexuality as another subculture of the Aboriginal lifestyle.... My parents grew up on a predominantly Church of England mission, and I think that happened all around Australia, that Christians, the missionaries, got to the Aboriginal mob first. There was even the days of you couldn't speak your language.... So a lot of the homophobia stems from Christianity, it seems - 'proper morals'....

But I think nowadays people are becoming more liberal minded and confronting a lot of these issues, and I think HIV/AIDS is an issue which is bringing a lot of these things to the surface. So I think there has been a gradual change as in speaking out, and talking about it.... I think it's just making us gay boys stand up on our own two feet and say: 'Look, we're not going to put up with this crap any more. Fair enough, if you don't like it you don't have to be a part of it, but just let us be'....

Part 2: A View of the Past: 'Beastly and Un-Christian'

JIM: The view that homosexuality is not 'traditional' in Aboriginal culture is one that has received support from some White researchers - for example, Ivor Jones ('Nor have we found any homosexuality among full blood people in whom tribal lore is maintained'[28]) and David Moore ('I never heard of homosexuality among Aborigines'[29]). So the purpose of this section of the paper is to analyze the considerable body of evidence that suggests this view is mistaken, and to show that homosexuality is not a 'White man's disease'.

Preliminary Considerations: Reliability of the Sources

There are accounts of homosexual *practices* among Aboriginal people 'in whom tribal lore is maintained' that date back as far as 1888, but they are problematic in a number of a ways. The earlier reports were not written by trained observers, but by pioneers, missionaries and early settlers, all of them White and male, who, as John Newfong puts it, 'reacted to what they saw as beastly, un-Christian practices with shocked excitement'.[30] Their accounts are suspect for a number of reasons. Often they are based on hearsay, and it is difficult to know to what extent the intermediary informants (also, no doubt, White and male) had fabricated their evidence in the interest of colonial politics - that is, for the purpose of justifying their treatment of Aborigines on the grounds

that the latter were 'beastly and un-Christian'.

It is also necessary to take into consideration the possibility that the Aboriginal people who were the original sources of the data may have deliberately provided misleading information, by, for example, giving exaggerated or fabricated accounts of practices they knew were shocking to Europeans, or by concealing particular kinds of knowledge.

There is a noticeable paucity of information about Aboriginal lesbianism, and Aboriginal women's sexuality in general, in the earlier literature. This is partly explained by the fact that most of the observers were male, and would therefore have had difficulty in gaining access to such information. But one is also left with the impression of a distinct androcentrism on the part of the observers, who seem to have regarded Aboriginal women and their sexuality as being, at best, of secondary interest.

The situation did not improve greatly when trained anthropologists began to enter the field, since many of them shared the wider society's prejudice against homosexuality. R. M. and C. H. Berndt, for example, discuss homosexual practices in western Arnhem Land as instances of 'sexual abnormality' and 'perversion'.[31] Moreover, as Stephen Murray observes, 'even those fieldworkers with a personal interest in homosexuality were reluctant to investigate the topic...'. He goes on to suggest that research on homosexuality was further complicated by the fact that 'the natives screened what they thought white outsiders abhorred'.[32]

Another reason for being suspicious of the early (and

some later) writers is that the data they provide about Aboriginal homosexual practices are sometimes so similar, in both content and expression, that it is hard not to wonder whether they are simply repeating what previous writers had said, which may even have become 'common knowledge' in colonial Australia.

In spite of these qualifications, the sheer *number* of early reports of homosexual practices in Aboriginal societies suggests that, however distorted our picture of them may be, such practices did in fact occur. But the early accounts fail to provide a cultural context that would give us some insight into what these practices meant to the Aboriginal people concerned, so it is hard to know how and to what extent the Aboriginal understanding of these practices corresponds to our contemporary notion of 'homosexuality'. John Newfong may well be right when he says that 'Aboriginal society, being a society of continuum rather than a dichotomy, the debate of homosexuality versus heterosexuality really had no place'.[33]

What this means, of course, is that the apparent absence of homosexual identities and sub-cultures in 'traditional' Aboriginal Australia is not sufficient reason to assume, as Tim Rowse does, that 'the sexual culture of Aboriginal people ... is heterosexual'.[34] It is more likely, as Barry Adam suggests, that at least some Aboriginal societies had - and may still have - a sexual culture similar to that of parts of Melanesia, where 'the kinship code functions successfully to create categories of the attractive and the erotic.... Sexual interest does arise at the prescribed structural locations and prescribed

categories of people, regardless of gender, are eroticized. The structural code allows sexual, and, indeed, homosexual interests to come about for virtually all men...'.[35]

In some Australian societies, there are indications that the same may have been true for women. However, as mentioned above, the information on Aboriginal women's sexuality in general, and lesbianism in particular, is, unfortunately, very scant. The few texts that deal with Aboriginal lesbian practices are discussed later in this paper.

It is important to note that there was, and still is, a great deal of cultural variation in Aboriginal Australia, which is no doubt one of the reasons why some of the accounts of Aboriginal attitudes towards homosexual practices appear to be contradictory. To quote John Newfong again, 'There is no single Aboriginal response to homosexuality, because in traditional society sexual mores varied considerably between different language groups'.[36] One could add that sexual mores also vary in urban Aboriginal Australia, no doubt partly as a result of differing responses to the homophobia of the dominant White culture.

There is one final preliminary matter to be dealt with before turning to an analysis of the content of the early texts. Some of these texts deal with aspects of ritual life that are regarded as secret in parts of Aboriginal Australia. Out of respect for Aboriginal traditions, I[37] have made only general allusions to those parts of the texts that appear to deal with secret rituals, and omitted any information that could cause offence if it were

republished in this paper.

Early Accounts of Homosexual Practices among Aboriginal Men

If one were to believe Albert Harrasser,[38] the earliest published European reference to an Aboriginal sexual practice involving two people of the same gender would be in George Grey's account of his expeditions in Western Australia, published in 1841.[39] However, it seems clear that Harrasser has misread as sexual a practice that was, at most, 'homosocial'. According to Grey:

> When a native and his wives enter an encampment of friends whom they have not seen for some time ... the nearest blood relation of any individual who has died since the stranger visited his friends, advances to him with a measured pace, and without speaking, seats himself cross-legged on his thighs, under which he places his hands, at the same time pressing his breast to the stranger's....[40]

Grey describes this practice twice, and the second time notes that it occurs when 'the natives swear amity to one another, or pledge themselves to aid one another in avenging a death'.[41]

Harrasser has apparently - and unjustifiably - linked this practice to one, later described by Klaatsch,[42] that seems to be unequivocally sexual: a boy who is not yet subincised places his erect penis inside the gap in the erect penis of a subincised older male, holds both penises in his hand, and stimulates them to ejaculation.

For the reader who is unfamiliar with the literature

on Aboriginal Australia, the term 'subincision' may require some explanation. The practice of subincision is still widespread in Aboriginal communities of central, western, northern and north-western Australia,[43] and the operation itself is carried out in a ritual context, so it would not be appropriate to provide details here. However, the effect of subincision is, for obvious reasons (such as that men sleep with their wives), no secret to uninitiated members of the community: the underside of the penis is split along the urethra, sometimes for the whole of its length, sometimes for only part of its length, depending on local custom. For a male, subincision is a necessary sign of the transition from childhood to adulthood.

There are several accounts of the sexual practice referred to above, which I shall call 'subincision intercourse', in the early literature. It is mentioned separately by Purcell,[44] Paterson[45] and Klaatsch[46] (who provides the most detailed description of the practice, tastefully couched in Latin). Their accounts *appear* to be independent, in that they purport to be providing original data, not based on earlier sources; and two of the accounts use different terminology from the relevant Aboriginal languages. (Purcell says the un-subincised boys are called *Mullawongah*,[47] while Klaatsch says that in the Niel-Niel language they are called *Walebel*.) Purcell and Paterson do not indicate the sources of their information, but Klaatsch's account is probably as close to first-hand as we are ever likely to get. He says:

> When I asked what method of masturbation there was between the Wamba [subincised male] and the Walebel, a certain native, a not unintelligent man from the East Kimberley, gave me a demonstration.[48]

The fact that all three accounts also refer to Aboriginal peoples of the same region - the Kimberley District - suggests that, on balance, there is probably enough evidence for us to entertain the possibility that subincision intercourse did occur there.[49] But there is no evidence I am aware of that it occurred anywhere else, and thus no support for the opinion, incorrectly attributed by Harrasser to Grey, that the purpose of subincision is to make subincision intercourse possible. Even in relation to the Kimberley, I would be inclined to take the view put forward by Karsch-Haack, in the only early attempt at a comprehensive review of the literature on Aboriginal homosexualities (most of which deals with the practices of circumcision and subincision), that 'there can be no doubt that homosexual acts are only an *occasional result* of the *Mika*-operation [i.e., subincision] and in no way its purpose'.[50]

'Boy-Wives'

However, there is another aspect of the homosexual practice described by these writers that does appear to have been widespread outside the Kimberley, and that is the institutionalized relationship between two males, one of whom is often older and subincised, and the other younger and un-subincised. Among the Niel-Niel, according to Klaatsch, the Wamba and the Walebel prepared their daily meals for each other.

> This arrangement between two males appears to be no different from a marriage that can be dissolved after a certain

> time, for example, after [the Walebel] ceases to be a boy and has his penis incised, [when] he would have the name Wamba.[51]

Klaatsch adds the following observation:

> The mayor of Broome, Mr. Warden, who has lived there for 17 years, informed me that great jealousy is showed by the Wambas regarding their boys, and that more of the fights which are very common amongst the black people of Broome have their origins in the boys than in the women.[52]

There are numbers of early reports of similar relationships from various parts of Aboriginal Australia. The earliest of these, by Hardman, which also appears to be the oldest account of any kind of a sexual relationship between Aboriginal people of the same gender, introduces the term 'boy-wife' for the younger partner.[53] Other relevant reports are those by Ravenscroft, Mathews, Roth, Strehlow, Basedow, Spencer and Gillen, Róheim, Kaberry and Meggitt.[54] There is also a recently published contribution by Pilling, based on his fieldwork in 1953-54.[55] While these accounts may not be as colourful as Klaatsch's, most of them do add an important additional piece of information: the relationship between the two partners is based on specific ties of kinship.

With the exception of the reports by Roth and Pilling, all of these accounts refer to the area in which subincision is also practised.[56] Roth's account also differs from most of the others in that the relationship he describes is viewed negatively by the community concerned: 'On the Tully River, a husband, during the absence of his wife, has bestial rights over her younger

brother, but such conduct is despised'.[57] Pilling's report refers to the non-subincising Tiwi, and is exceptional in a different respect: there is no mention of any age difference between the partners, whose relationships lasted from before puberty into the early years of marriage. It is also worth mentioning that the relationships between Tiwi boys apparently did not include the marriage-like domestic arrangements mentioned by Klaatsch for the Niel-Niel: 'The boys slept the night ... paired. However, in the morning, each had his meals at his mother's nearby hearth'.[58]

The age difference between the partners is another point of divergence between these various accounts. In most of the records, the senior partner is initiated but not yet married. The exceptions occur in the reports by Ravenscroft, Basedow and Róheim.[59] Ravenscroft indicates that, among the Chingalee, the senior partners were old men. According to Basedow, the same was true of the people of the Port George IV district. Róheim does not mention the age of the senior partner among the Nambutji, but says that he was the circumcisor and future father-in-law of his 'boy-wife'. It is evident from other ethnographic reports on the Nambutji (who call themselves 'Warlpiri'[60]) that the circumcisor is usually a senior man.

As for the junior partner, he may be as young as five, according to Purcell (referring to the Kimberley),[61] or as old as fourteen, according to Strehlow (referring to Central Australia). Strehlow also maintains that the junior partner was 'neither circumcised nor subincised'.[62] Meggitt's data on the Walbiri, however, suggest that the

younger male may be 'the object of homosexual practices' in the ritual seclusion that occurs both before and *after* his circumcision.[63]

Kinship and Homosexual Relationships

Many of these accounts specify a particular kinship relationship between the partners. In most cases, the two males were classificatory brothers-in-law - that is, they belonged to the kinship categories that made them potential husbands for each other's sisters. This is reported for the peoples of north-western Australia by Mathews, for the Tully River people by Roth, for the Aranda, western Loritja, Katitja, Ilpira and Warramunga by Strehlow, for the people of the Port George IV district by Basedow, for the Arunta (i.e., Aranda) by Spencer and Gillen (although it should be mentioned that these authors do not claim that the relationship between the partners is sexual), for the Aranda, again, by Róheim, for the Walbiri by Meggitt, and for the Tiwi by Pilling.[64] In some cases, there was a preference for one partner to be the actual or future husband of the other's sister. Such a preference occurs in the accounts by Mathews, Roth, and Pilling.

There is an exception to this general pattern in the work of Róheim, who says that, among the Nambutji, 'every young man acts as "boy-wife" to the man who has circumcised him and who is also his future father-in-law'.[65] It is difficult to know how much credence to give to this statement, since it is at variance with other reports on the same language group. Róheim's

'Nambutji' are the same people referred to by Strehlow as 'Ilpira' and by Meggitt as 'Walbiri', and known today as 'Warlpiri' (cf. note 60 above). Both of the latter writers mention that, in this language group, sexual relationships take place between classificatory brothers-in- law. Moreover, a man and his father-in-law belong to opposite generation levels (sometimes called 'generation moieties'), and the literature on Warlpiri kinship makes it clear that heterosexual relationships between members of opposite generation levels are forbidden. While it is possible that, among the Warlpiri, the kinship rules governing homosexual relationships are different from those that apply to heterosexual relationships, the information available about other areas of Aboriginal Australia suggests that they are usually the same.[66]

Several writers mention casual homosexual practices, engaged in by boys or young men, that do not appear to be constrained by the kinship structure - although it is possible that the authors were simply not aware of the kinship relationships involved. There are accounts by Berndt and Berndt for the Ooldea region, by Berndt and Berndt for western Arnhem Land, and by Money *et al.* for eastern Arnhem Land.[67] These writers, as well as Brain, all espouse the idea that homosexual relationships among Aboriginal males were part of a passing adolescent phase, *faute de mieux*, as Brain puts it.[68] This ignores the data, summarized above, which suggest that, in some parts of Australia, old men engaged in sexual relationships with younger ones. While it is possible that these old men could not obtain women, there is no more reason, given the lack of relevant data, to support this

hypothesis than the alternative - that the old men simply preferred boys.

Variations in Homosexual Practices and Attitudes Towards Them

Apart from subincision intercourse, mentioned above, the range of sexual practices that occurred between Aboriginal males apparently included mutual masturbation,[69] masturbation of one partner by the other,[70] interfemoral intercourse[71] and anal intercourse (often called 'sodomy' or 'pederasty' in the literature).[72] To my knowledge, Róheim is the only writer to mention fellatio and cunnilingus as Aboriginal sexual practices, and to hint at the occurrence of analingus, but he does not specify whether these practices were homosexual or heterosexual or both.[73]

The question of cross-gender or mixed gender categories does not appear to be mentioned at all in the earlier literature, and this is probably because such categories were not present in Aboriginal Australia. In a recent work, Pilling reports that, among the Tiwi, even the presence of pseudo-hermaphrodites 'had led to no separate social category'.[74] There are no accounts of secular transvestism (except in contemporary urban contexts[75]), and the male ritual cross-dressing described in a recent study by Avery[76] is connected with the transition from childhood to adulthood, not with an enduring cross-gender status. A case of female transvestism occurs in a Nunggubuyu myth recorded by van der Leeden,[77] but it does not appear to reflect actual

social behaviour.

If there is enough evidence in the literature to justify the assumption that sexual relationships between males of different age categories were to some extent institutionalized in Aboriginal Australia, it could in fact be expected that the kind of homosexual relationship in which one partner belongs to a mixed gender category would be absent. Studies of other cultures suggest that 'these two styles of institutionalized homosexuality ... never coexist'.[78]

Most of the accounts either do not mention attitudes towards homosexual relationships or suggest that such attitudes were very matter-of-fact. Kaberry, whose work focuses on the Kimberley District, provides us with what is probably the best first-hand account of conversations with Aboriginal people about the matter:

> The youths of 17 or 18 who were still unmarried would take boys of 10 or 11 as lovers. The women had no hesitation in discussing the matter with me, did not regard it as shameful, gave the names of different boys, and seemed to regard the practice as a temporary substitute for marriage.[79]

Negative or ambivalent attitudes are reported for the Tully River people by Roth, for the Aranda by Róheim, and for the Walbiri by Meggitt. Hardman mentions a 'horror' of sodomy among the peoples of the Kimberley.[80]

Homosexual Practices among Aboriginal Women

The only accounts of sexual relationships between Aboriginal women that I am aware of occur in the works

of Strehlow, Róheim and Kaberry. Strehlow writes:

> The unnatural vice of the women, *woiatakerama* (carried out using a little stick bound with string, called *iminta* [=Loritja: iminti], by two women, one of whom performs the role of the man), is practised by the eastern and western Aranda [and] occurs also among the western Loritja, the Yumu and Waiangara in the west, and among the Katitja, Ilpara, Warramunga etc., who live north of the McDonnell Ranges. The Loritja call this vice: *nambia pungañi*.[81]

Róheim, also writing about the Aranda, mentions the same practice, and adds several others, such as 'mutual onanism', and using a yam root instead of the *iminta*. He also mentions intimacies between women in the context of love magic rites. His other contribution is the observation that the two women involved are 'usually cross-cousins (*ilchila*), for the cross-cousin is the proper person for all kinds of sexual intimacy'.[82] However, it is difficult to understand why the *ilchila* ('first cross-cousin') is the preferred partner in these contexts when, as Róheim himself recognizes, it is a more distant kind of cross-cousin who is the 'proper person' for heterosexual relationships.[83]

Blackwood summarizes Kaberry's contribution as follows: 'The lesbian relationships of Australian women were an acknowledged part of their sexual behavior and were included in ritual activities'.[84]

Homosexuality in Rituals

There are a small number of original accounts, by Mathews, Basedow, and Berndt and Berndt,[85] of

simulated intercourse between men taking place in rituals, but, for reasons mentioned earlier, it would not be appropriate to give details here. None of the writers suggests that actual intercourse takes place, although Mathews says that 'some of the old head-men told me that the vice [sodomy] was perpetrated in former times during ... the Bora ceremonies'.[86] In a more recent account, Avery mentions being told the same thing about initiation ceremonies among the Yanyuwa.[87] Róheim also reports the occurrence of masturbation in ritual contexts.[88]

Dundes's psychoanalytic interpretation of male initiation rituals makes reference to the older material on Aboriginal Australia, but is largely based on the more extensive data from Melanesia.[89] Brain asserts that ritual sodomy occurs among Aborigines, in the context of the 'symbolic birth of initiates through the anuses of their elders',[90] but his observations appear to be based on a misreading of Dundes. Róheim makes the more modest generalization that 'homoerotic components of the libido ... are to be utilized [in Aboriginal rituals] as the unconscious sensual basis of good fellowship between those of the same sex and as mitigators of heteroerotic rivalry'.[91]

Stories

So far I have concentrated on European or European-Australian representations of Aboriginal homosexualities, and on representations that purport to be factual. To conclude the second part of this paper,

however, I want to focus briefly on stories, whether told by Aboriginal or non- Aboriginal people.

Róheim provides us with the only two items of Aboriginal oral literature I have encountered that deal explicitly with homoerotic themes. In one story he has summarized, two men who are inept hunters tell each other they have big penises (which is apparently a form of teasing in Central Australia), then engage in mutual masturbation and reciprocal anal intercourse.[92] Róheim also translates an *ilpindja* ('love magic') song that includes verses in which women show their labia to each other. In his interpretation of this song, he remarks that 'in actuality, when two girls become excited, they often manipulate each other's genitals'. However, he adds the qualification that this happens 'if they cannot find a man to satisfy them'.[93]

Róheim interprets a number of rituals and stories in terms of such Freudian notions as the anal complex, or the homoerotic version of the Oedipus complex, or the phallic mother, but in these cases the homoerotic content is less explicit.[94]

In the written literature of Australia, there are, as far as I am aware, no works, whether composed by Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people, that deal with homosexual relationships between Aboriginal men or Aboriginal women. However, there are at least a couple of works, by White writers, that touch on homosexual, or at least homosocial, relationships between Aboriginal males and White males.

One of these is Patrick White's novel *Riders in the Chariot*, in which the Aboriginal boy Alf Dubbo, who

subsequently becomes a visionary painter, is seduced by the Reverend Timothy Calderon.[95] The other is Colin Thiele's children's book *Storm-boy*[96] (which was made into a movie of the same name). This work takes as its theme an intense romantic friendship between a White boy and an Aboriginal youth, which is reminiscent of the relationship between Huckleberry Finn and Nigger Jim in Mark Twain's famous novel.

Leslie Fiedler reads *Huckleberry Finn* and several other classics of American literature, such as *Moby Dick*, *Two Years Before the Mast* and *The Last of the Mohicans*, as celebrating 'the mutual love of *a white man and a colored*'.[97] *This theme is not as well developed in* Australian literature; but Fiedler's interpretation of it applies probably as well to Australia as it does to the United States: 'Behind the white [man's] nightmare that someday, no longer tourist, inheritor, or liberator, he will be rejected, refused, he dreams of his acceptance at the breast he has most utterly offended'.[98]

Conclusion: The Prospects for (a Postcolonial Rewriting of) Lesbian and Gay Aboriginal History

JIM: In his article 'Fear of a Queer Planet', Michael Warner maintains that 'modernity has entailed the globalization of a new and exacting sexual order, so that the regime of sexuality that first transformed Europe has now been registered not only in the New World but in all

the reaches of modern colonialism'.[99] There is some evidence for this contention in the present paper.

On the basis of the data presented in the foregoing sections, let me propose a hypothetical three-stage scenario of the heterosexualization of Australia.

In the first stage, which corresponds to the period before Aboriginal people begin to feel the full effects of colonization, homosexual relationships were taken for granted, in at least some Aboriginal communities, as part of the life course of any man or woman. They were generally regulated by the kinship system, and did not entail the adoption of a distinct sexual identity.

In the second stage, as Whites set about destroying the economic, linguistic, religious and kinship bases of Aboriginal communities and institutionalizing Aboriginal people in missions and reserves, the social structures in which homosexual relationships were integrated began to collapse. Under pressure from the heterosexual imperative of the colonizers, Aboriginal people came to deride such relationships and, ultimately, to regard them as 'un-traditional'.

In the third stage, as Aboriginal people struggle to win back their autonomy, some of their members see this struggle as including a rebellion against compulsory heterosexuality, and begin to identify as gay and lesbian. Although they may recognize that the adoption of this minority sexual identity is just the obverse side of the heterosexualization their communities have suffered, this identity is also the most obvious option for them, since the old structures that enabled homosexual relationships to be an integral part of community life no

longer exist.

This scenario does not, of course, take into account local and individual variations, differences in the rate of colonization, time-warps, etc. Moreover, I am not suggesting that transition from one stage to the next is inevitable. There are many Aboriginal communities in parts of rural Australia where the way of life of the first stage may still exist. It is also possible that some Aboriginal communities where this stage is already a thing of the past may have created new modes of integrating homosexual relationships that are unknown to the outside world, or that they may create some alternative to the gay/lesbian option in the future.

My hypothetical scenario is presented here as one possible model of the heterosexualization of Australia, which may provide the impetus for future research into particular local cases, and for the development of alternative models.

It is clear from the sketchiness of the data in the present paper that more research is required. There are three particular areas in which the information presented here needs to be supplemented and refined. First, the 'view of the past' in this paper is based entirely on published sources, and it needs to be filled out with unpublished material concerning both Aboriginal women and Aboriginal men - letters, diaries, field notes, reports, archival material, etc. Second, there is virtually no information available about whether the sexual relationships described by the early writers cited in this paper still occur in Aboriginal Australia. It would help to dispel a number of misconceptions within both the

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities if this information could be up-dated and made more accurate. Third, there are hundreds, probably even thousands, of contemporary lesbian and gay Aboriginal people whose stories have not been told, and whose creative endeavours could provide material for an anthology similar to the book by gay and lesbian American Indians mentioned above.

It is worth stressing that the purpose of these exercises in 'peopling the empty mirror' should not be to collect information for its own sake, but to engage in a social process that will bring about change in this country. The task that is uppermost in the minds of lesbian and gay Aboriginal people is to make Australia less racist, less sexist, and less homophobic.

With a View to the Future: Seeing through the White Cloud

E. J. MILERA: I think it's vital as a part of Australian Aboriginal history that we've got books on every different Aboriginal group. We're coming out with heaps and heaps of Aboriginal literature and material, and I think this is just another part of the Aboriginal sub-culture.

WENDY: Aboriginal women, like White women, have virtually been written out of history until quite recently. For us as women, as Aboriginal lesbians, it's really important that we people that empty mirror. It's really important that our stories be told.

MAUREEN: As I was growing up, my grandmother

always used to talk to me about Aboriginal people living in two worlds, all the time she used to talk about it. She would talk about being Aboriginal and 'never forget where you came from'. And you know this idea of looking in a mirror, well, when I look in the mirror I see what society says is a White face, this is what society has told me about my identity, but there is a whole side of me that is about my connection with my family, about how I grew up and where I come from that's sort of like this other world. This is the world that exists inside me, and in some ways I feel that doing this sort of thing, sitting around talking like now, [is] being honest about who we are and creating our own image in the mirror.

WENDY: What we are looking at here ... is what it is like being an Aboriginal lesbian. This often creates conflict in Aboriginal communities. In our case we often cop that 'too many Aboriginal women are becoming feminists', the assumption being that this leads to lesbianism, which in some Aboriginal community people's view is not 'the Aboriginal way' - that feminism and lesbianism is a White woman's disease. It is as if we as Aboriginal women don't have minds of our own, to be able to make decisions about our individual choices or issues about sexuality. It is really sort of scary when people within your own community, who you presume understand racism, can turn around and dump on a person who is gay or lesbian....

Some Aboriginal people don't stop to consider how they have been affected by colonization. It's one thing to be oppressed by non-Aboriginal people, it's another when Aboriginal people are oppressing each other!

E. J. MILERA: When you're being shunned or disowned by your own community it really hurts. You do have people in your community that support you..., but I think it's basically ignorance, and people just really don't understand....

I think in the earlier days, like when my Dad was a young lad, I've since found out that there was a few married men that were known to be gay in the early days. There again, I think it wasn't talked about, but there was no mocking in those days, so it was sort of left alone.... Now, as we get to my generation and the next generation, I think it's becoming more vocal, getting it out in the community, talking about it....

There were some non-gay Aboriginal people at the conference[100] that supported us, mainly because they're grass roots community people, and what's affecting their community they want to be in the front line working with it. So we have a lot of supporters, I think, all around the country, both gay and non-gay.

WENDY: In the last few years since I have become more involved in the lesbian community..., I have come to recognize the diversity within this community. While I think it is important to celebrate 'difference', I find it rather difficult to have to confront the racism within the lesbian community. Not all lesbians are feminists with a commitment to unlearning their own racism, let alone working in ways to challenging the racism perpetrated by the dominant culture.

REA: I've started to realise just how the White cloud has affected my life and what I can do to change it. It will probably be a long process. When Aboriginal

people, whether they are gay/lesbian or heterosexual, start to really see through the White cloud and see themselves clearly, that is the beginning of a real healing process.

Endnotes

1. We wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance we have received from many quarters in the writing of this paper. In particular we want to thank John Austin, Tony Ayres, James Bennett, Francis Good, Les Hiatt, Di Lane, Glenys McIver, Barry Morris, Stephen Murray, Klaus Neumann, Tim Rowse, Yoichi Takayama, Godfrey Tanner, and the AIDS Education Section of the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.
2. This is the title of a paper by Klaus Neumann, 'A Postcolonial Writing of Aboriginal History', *Meanjin* 51:2 (1992), pp. 277-298.
3. On p. 7 of Michael Warner, 'Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet', *Social Text* 29 (1991), pp. 3-17. This point is developed further in the concluding section of the present paper.
4. Quoted in Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, 1989), p. ix.
5. We have followed the style guidelines of the American-based Association of Black Anthropologists in capitalizing both 'Black' and 'White' when these terms are used as designations of racial identity, except where we quote from printed texts in which the terms are not capitalized. We use the word 'man', in the present context, to mean 'male'.
6. Kenneth Liberman, *Understanding Interaction in Central Australia: An Ethnomethodological Study of Australian Aboriginal People* (Boston, 1985), p. 4.
7. The teleconference was recorded on 6 November 1992, and transcribed by Dino Hodge.
8. This conversation was recorded on 15 January 1993, and transcribed by Wendy Dunn/Holland.
9. See, for example, the following unpublished papers by Peter Jull, distributed by the North Australia Research Unit, Darwin: 'Aboriginal Self-Government: Realities and Possibilities' (1992); 'Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines: Participating in Australian Constitutional Renewal' (1992).
10. As will become evident later in this section, 'cat' and 'moolgoo' are terms used by some Aboriginal people in Adelaide and other parts of South Australia to refer to a gay male, and 'wirgul' is a term used by some Aboriginal people in Sydney to refer to a lesbian.
11. To give just two examples: Gilbert Herdt (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Berkeley, 1984), and Will Roscoe, *The Zuni Man-Woman* (Albuquerque, 1991).
12. Will Roscoe (ed.), *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (New York, 1988); Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (eds.), *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (New York, 1983).
13. Herdt, *Ritualized Homosexuality*, pp. 5-6; Barry Adam, 'Age, Structure, and Sexuality: Reflections on the Anthropological Evidence on Homosexual Relations', in Evelyn Blackwood (ed.), *Anthropology and Homosexual Behavior* (New York, 1986), pp. 19-33, esp. pp. 29-30; David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 35-36; Craig Johnston and Robert Johnston, 'The Making of Homosexual Men', in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia since 1788* (Melbourne, 1988), pp. 87-99, esp. pp. 89-90; Gisela Bleibtreu-Ehrenberg, 'Pederasty among Primitives: Institutionalized Initiation and Cultic Prostitution', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 20:1/2 (1990), pp. 13-30, esp. pp. 19-20; Stephen O. Murray, 'Age-Stratified Homosexuality: Introduction', in Stephen O. Murray (ed.), *Oceanic Homosexualities* (New York, 1992), pp. 3-23, esp. pp. 3-9.

One of the present authors, Jim Wafer, wrote a research paper called 'Steps towards an Anthropological Theory of Homosexuality: The Case of the Australian Aborigines' in 1983. Parts of this unpublished work have been incorporated into the present article.

Between them these studies, along with Ferdinand Karsch-

Haack's *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Naturvölker* (Munich, 1911; reprinted New York, 1975), which contains the only early attempt to review the literature on Aboriginal homosexual practices (pp. 65-90), provide a good guide to the current state of bibliographic knowledge about the older writings on the present topic. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies has also produced a short bibliography called 'Homosexuality among Australian Aborigines', the most recent version of which appears to be the update made in 1983 by Arnold Pilling.

14. 'Double Trouble', produced by Diane Hamer and directed by Tony Ayres; a Big and Little Production for Channel Four (UK) and SBS (Australia); copyright Channel Four 1991. See also Gary Dunne, 'Double Trouble: An Interview with Tony Ayres', *Outrage* 105 (February 1992), pp. 47-49.

15. Information available about this conference includes the conference program (produced by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Services); a collection of reports and summaries of conference presentations in *National AIDS Bulletin*, 7:3 (April 1992), pp. 12-23; a newspaper article by Chips Mackinolty, 'Howe Urges Condoms in Jails', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 1992, p. 7; and a fifteen minute video of highlights from the conference, entitled 'First National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference: Everybody's Business', produced by CAAMA Productions and funded by the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services.

The *National AIDS Bulletin* featured a series of articles on 'Aborigines and AIDS' in its April 1989 issue (3:3, pp. 14-31), and has published related material in the period since then (e.g., 6:11 of December 1992/January 1993, p. 14 and pp. 38-39). The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies has collected a number of other publications on this topic, too numerous to list here.

16. Reference to the Captain Cook impersonator of 1988 is made by Fiona Harari, 'Politics on Parade', *The Weekend Australian*

(27-28 February 1993), p. 20. There is good coverage of Aboriginal participation in the 1991 Mardi Gras Parade in the documentary 'Double Trouble'. In 1992, the Gays and Lesbians Against Racism contingent in the Mardi Gras parade was led by Koori Wirguls, an organization of lesbian Aboriginal women, as reported in the newsletter *GLAR Report*, 9 (September 1992), p. 1. A photograph of the Bangarra Dancers' float in the 1993 parade appeared in *Capital Q*, 27 (5 March 1993), p. 10. The Koori Celebration took place at the Belvoir Street Theatre on 21 February 1993, and documentation includes the program and an article by Stephen Dunne called 'Stolen Property', in *Sydney Star Observer's* 'Mardi Gras Festival 1993', (update no. 2, 12 February 1993), p. 18. The Koori Celebration won the Mardi Gras Award for Outstanding Festival Event of 1993, as reported in *Sydney Star Observer*, 206 (2 April 1993), p. 7. An article by Tony Magnusson entitled 'Pride and Prejudice: Death by Discrimination', *Sydney Star Observer*, 203 (19 February 1993), p. 23, reports on the participation of a lesbian Aboriginal woman in the panel of speakers at the Mardi Gras and Community Forum held on 11 February 1993.

17. From the interview with John Newfong in the documentary 'Double Trouble'.

18. Luke Close, 'Gay, Aboriginal and Proud', *National AIDS Bulletin*, 7:3 (April 1992), p. 23.

19. On p. 14 of Larissa Behrendt, 'Everybody's Business: The First National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference', *National AIDS Bulletin*, 7:3 (April 1992), pp. 12-15.

20. On the video 'First National Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Conference'. Malcolm Cole's point was reinforced by the documentary 'Through Australian Eyes: *Mimi Pulka*', first screened in Australia on SBS television in December 1992. This film dealt with an AIDS education program carried out in rural Aboriginal communities by the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service. Homosexuality was not mentioned at all, and

the word gay was mentioned only once, in the sentence 'AIDS is not just a gay disease'. There is a report on this documentary in *National AIDS Bulletin*, 6:11 (December 1992/January 1993), pp. 38-39.

21. Iris Smith, 'Sexuality and HIV', *National AIDS Bulletin*, 7:3 (April 1992), pp. 19-20.
22. From the interview with Wilo Muwadda in the documentary 'Double Trouble'.
23. From the interview with Marie Andrews in the documentary 'Double Trouble'.
24. Quoted by Deb Collins in 'Performing in Tongues', *Capital Q* (11 September 1992), p. 7.
25. This work, entitled *Did You Meet Any Malagas?: A Homosexual History of Australia's Tropical Capital*, is in press, with a publication date of late 1993.
26. From an interview with E. J. Milera recorded by Jim Wafer on 12 January 1993.
27. Officially 'Gay *Games*'.
28. On p. 18 of 'Psychiatric Disorders among Desert and Kimberley Peoples', *Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies Newsletter*, 3:6 (1973), pp. 17-20 and erratum.
29. Quoted by David Harcourt, 'This Australia: What the Whites Don't Know about the Aborigines', *The Bulletin*, 93:4776 (9 October 1971), p. 46. Other writers expressing similar opinions are cited on p. 8 of Murray, 'Age-Stratified Homosexuality'.
30. From the interview with John Newfong in the documentary 'Double Trouble'.
31. R. M. Berndt and C. H. Berndt, *Sexual Behavior in Western Arnhem Land* (New York, 1951), p. 66.
32. Murray, 'Age-Stratified Homosexuality', p. 7.
33. From the interview with John Newfong in the documentary 'Double Trouble'.
34. 'Perspectives on the Cultures of Sexuality among Central Australian Aboriginal People'. Unpublished paper, 1992, p. 19. Obtainable from the Menzies School of Health Research, P.O. Box 8569, Alice Springs, NT 0871, Australia.
35. Adam, 'Age, Structure, and Sexuality', p. 29.
36. From the interview with John Newfong in the documentary 'Double Trouble'. It has been estimated that there were approximately two hundred distinct Aboriginal languages at the time of the colonization of Australia. Only about fifty have survived to the present as media of everyday communication. See R. M. W. Dixon, *The Languages of Australia* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1, 18. There is not space here to address the complex question of whether the differentiation of Aboriginal cultures is best understood in terms of linguistic distribution. The point is simply that Aboriginal cultures are not, and never have been, homogeneous.
37. Where the first person singular pronoun is used in this part of the paper, it refers to Jim Wafer.
38. *Die Rechtsverletzung bei den australischen Eingeborenen* (Stuttgart, 1936), supplement to *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechts-wissenschaft*, 50, p. 61.
39. *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North West and Western Australia* (London, 1841).
40. *Journals*, pp. 255-256.
41. *Journals*, pp. 342-343.
42. On pp. 581-582 of Hermann Klaatsch, 'Some Notes on Scientific Travel amongst the Black Population of Tropical Australia in 1904, 1905, 1906', in *Report of the Eleventh Meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science* (Adelaide, 1908), pp. 577-592.
43. A detailed account of the distribution of subincision may be found on pp. 131-134 of Herbert Basedow, 'Subincision and Kindred Rites of the Australian Aboriginal', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 57 (1927), pp. 123-156. Basedow also provides information on variations in the nature of the operation.
44. On p. 287 of B. H. Purcell, 'Rites and Customs of Australian Aborigines', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 25 (1893), pp. 286-289.
45. W. Paterson, 'Notes Referring to the Kimberley Natives',

incorporated (pp. 291-292) by Richard Helms into his article 'Anthropology', *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 16:3 (1896), pp. 237-332.

46. Klaatsch, 'Some Notes on Scientific Travel'.
47. Purcell does not specify the language in which this word occurs. His account makes clear, however, that it is a language of the Kimberley District.
48. Klaatsch, 'Some Notes on Scientific Travel', p. 581. Translated from Klaatsch's Latin.
49. However, it is necessary to take into consideration Basedow's objection in 'Subincision and Kindred Rites', p. 148. He believes the act described by Klaatsch to be 'physiologically more or less impossible', because the subincision groove disappears when the penis is erect.
50. Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben*, p. 79. Translated from Karsch-Haack's German.
51. Klaatsch, 'Some Notes on Scientific Travel', p. 581. Translated from Klaatsch's Latin.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 582.
53. On p. 74 of Edward T. Hardman, 'Notes on Some Habits and Customs of the Natives of the Kimberley District, Western Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 3rd series, 1 (1888), pp. 70-75.
54. G. B. Ravenscroft, 'Some Habits and Customs of the Chingalee Tribe, Northern Territory, S.A.', *Transactions and Proceedings and Report of the Royal Society of South Australia*, 15, part 2 (1892), pp. 121-122; Walter Edmund Roth, 'Notes on Government, Morals and Crime', *North Queensland Ethnography: Bulletin No. 8* (Brisbane, 1906), esp. p. 7; R. H. Mathews, 'Native Tribes of Western Australia', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 39 (1900), pp. 123-125, esp. p. 125; R. H. Mathews, 'Notes on the Arranda Tribe', *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, 41 (1907), pp. 146-153, esp. p. 158; Carl Strehlow, *Die Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme in Zentral-Australien* (Frankfurt a/M, 1907-1920), esp. vol. 4, part 1 (1913), p. 98; Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Arunta* (London, 1927), esp. p. 470; Phyllis Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman, Sacred and Profane* (London, 1939), esp. p. 257; Herbert Basedow, *The Australian Aboriginal* (Adelaide, 1955), esp. p. 65; Géza Róheim, *The Eternal Ones of the Dream: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Australian Myth and Ritual* (New York, 1945), esp. p. 122; Géza Róheim, *Children of the Desert: The Western Tribes of Central Australia* (New York, 1974), esp. p. 243; Mervyn Meggitt, *Gadjari among the Walbiri Aborigines* (Sydney, 1966), esp. p. 65.

55. 'Homosexuality among the Tiwi of North Australia', in Murray, *Oceanic Homosexualities*, pp. 25-31.
56. Other references to homosexual practices in the non-subincising area may be found in the works of R. H. Mathews, e.g., 'The Bora, or Initiation Ceremonies of the Kamilaroi Tribe, Part II', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 25 (1896), pp. 318-339, esp. pp. 333-334; and 'Phallic Rites and Initiation Ceremonies of the South Australian Aborigines', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 39 (1900), pp. 622-638, esp. p. 636. Mathews also collected words for sodomy and masturbation in a number of Australian languages, most of them from the non-subincising region. These are summarized in Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben*, pp. 84, 87, 89, 90. A more recent (passing) reference to homosexuality in the non- subincising region may be found in Aldo Massola, *The Aborigines of South-Eastern Australia as They Were* (Melbourne, 1971), p. 16.
57. Roth, 'Government, Morals, and Crime', p. 7.
58. Pilling, 'Homosexuality among the Tiwi', p. 29.
59. Ravenscroft, 'Chingalee Tribe', p. 122; Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 65; Róheim, *Eternal Ones*, p. 122, and *Children of the Desert*, p. 243.
60. The name 'Nambutji' is used for the Warlpiri by their Western Desert neighbours, and is derived from the Warlpiri word *nyampuju* ('this', 'here').

61. Purcell, 'Rites and Customs', p. 287.
62. Strehlow, *Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme*, vol. IV, part 1, p. 98. Translated from Strehlow's German.
63. Meggitt, *Gadjari*, p. 65.
64. Mathews, 'Native Tribes of Western Australia', p. 125, and 'Notes on the Arranda Tribe', p. 158; Roth, 'Government, Morals, and Crime', p. 7; Strehlow, *Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme*, vol. IV, part 1, p. 98; Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 65; Spencer and Gillen, *Arunta*, p. 470 (cf. Baldwin Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* [London, 1899], p. 215 [footnote]); Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, pp. 242-243; Meggitt, *Gadjari*, p. 158; Pilling, 'Homosexuality among the Tiwi', p. 29.
65. *Eternal Ones*, p. 122; see also Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 243.
66. There is possibly indirect corroboration for Róheim's assertion in the work of Spencer and Gillen, who mention a type of heterosexual relationship among the 'Walpari' that parallels the homosexual relationship Róheim describes. Spencer and Gillen claim that, before a Warlpiri woman was married, she underwent a ritual operation equivalent to subincision (presumably introcision), which was performed by a classificatory 'father-in-law'. Those who had first sexual access to the woman after this operation were also her 'fathers-in-law' (Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes*, p. 95). While this appears to lend plausibility to the idea that a Warlpiri person, during his or her rites of passage into adulthood, may have had sexual relations with a 'father-in- law', which would otherwise have been prohibited by the rules of the kinship system, there are still grounds for scepticism. When Mervyn Meggitt spoke to Warlpiri men about Warlpiri women's introduction to sexual activity, the men denied 'that ritual defloration and vaginal introcision [were], or [had] been, Walbiri customs' (M. J. Meggitt, *Desert People: A Study of the Walbiri Aborigines of Central Australia* [Sydney, 1962], p. 269). Admittedly, Meggitt did his field work more than fifty years later than Spencer and Gillen, so it is possible that, by that time, the practices described by Spencer and Gillen had fallen into disuse.

67. R. M. Berndt and C. H. Berndt, *A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia* (Sydney, 1945), pp. 276-277; Berndt and Berndt, *Sexual Behavior*, pp. 66-67; J. Money, J. E. Cawte, G. N. Bianchi and B. Nurcombe, 'Sex Training and Traditions in Arnhem Land', in G. E. Kearney, P. R. de Lacey and G. R. Davidson (eds.), *The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians* (Sydney, 1970), pp. 395-416, esp. p. 410.
68. Robert Brain, *Rites, Black and White* (Melbourne, 1979), p. 179; cf. pp. 139-142 and 178-181.
69. For example, Klaatsch, 'Some Notes on Scientific Travel', p. 581, referring to the Kimberley; Berndt and Berndt, *Sexual Behavior*, p. 67, referring to Western Arnhem Land; Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 30, referring to Central Australia.
70. For example, Ravenscroft, 'Some Habits and Customs of the Chingalee', p. 122, referring to the Barkly region of the Northern Territory. Mathews collected words for masturbation from various Australian languages, but did not distinguish between solitary masturbation, mutual masturbation and masturbation of one partner by the other. These words are summarized by Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben*, pp. 84, 87, 89, 90.
71. For example, Money *et al.*, 'Sex Training', p. 410, referring to eastern Arnhem Land.
72. In 1900 Mathews stated that 'among all the aboriginal tribes with which I am acquainted masturbation and sodomy are practiced on certain occasions' ('Phallic Rites', p. 636), and that boys are 'used for the purposes of masturbation and sodomy' ('Native Tribes of Western Australia', p. 125). However, by 1907 he had changed his mind, saying that the institution of boy-wives 'has given rise to a widespread belief among the white population that paederasty is practiced; but from very careful inquiries made by friends at my request, I am led to the conclusion that the vice indulged in between the man and the

boy is a form of masturbation only' ('Notes on the Arranda Tribe', p. 158). Mathews did, however, collect words for sodomy in various Aboriginal languages (summarized in Karsch-Haack, *Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben*, pp. 84, 87, 89, 90), which suggests that the practice did indeed occur. Strehlow maintains that pederasty was 'known' among the Aranda, and had a 'more extended distribution' among the western Loritja, Katitja, Ilpira and Warramunga. It is not clear whether he is referring to homosexual practices in general, to anal intercourse, or to the relationship between a man and a boy. Róheim's 1932 account of the 'boy-wife' relationship in Central Australia makes it fairly clear that anal intercourse is involved (Géza Róheim, 'Psychoanalysis of Primitive Cultural Types', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 13 [1932], p. 251). Cf. also Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 243. Berndt and Berndt believe that 'anus insertion' takes place 'rarely' in western Arnhem Land (*Sexual Behavior*, p. 67). Meggitt mentions a man who was 'suspected' of sodomy among the Walbiri, and beaten as a result (Meggitt, *Desert People*, p. 183).

73. Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 246.
74. Pilling, 'Homosexuality among the Tiwi', p. 27.
75. See, for example, the documentary 'Double Trouble'. E. J. Milera also refers to Aboriginal drag-queens in the full text of the interview from which his contribution to this paper is taken.
76. John Avery, 'The Law People: History, Society and Initiation in the Borroloola Area of the Northern Territory' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sydney, 1985), pp. 245-247, 250.
77. On pp. 88-91 of A. C. van der Leeden, 'Thundering Gecko and Emu: Mythological Structuring of Nunggubuyu Patrimoieties', in L. R. Hiatt (ed.), *Australian Aboriginal Mythology* (Canberra, 1975), pp. 46-101.
78. On p. 83 of Harriet Whitehead, 'The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America', in Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (eds.), *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 80-115.
79. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman*, p. 257.
80. Roth, 'Government, Morals, and Crime', p. 7; Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 243; Meggitt, *Desert People*, p. 183, and *Gadjari*, p. 65; Hardman, 'Notes on Some Habits', p. 74.
81. Strehlow, *Aranda- und Loritja-Stämme*, vol. IV, part 1, p. 98. Translated from Strehlow's German. The words in round brackets are a footnote in the original.
82. Géza Róheim, 'Women and their Life in Central Australia', *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 58 (1933), pp. 207-265. The passages referred to are on pp. 219, 226, 238.
83. For example, in *Children of the Desert*, p. 8, Róheim explains how, even among those Aranda people with a four-class system, where cross-cousins and potential spouses belong to the same class, there is a clear conceptual distinction between the two categories, so that, for a man, the preferred spouse is not a first cousin ('mother's brother's daughter'), but a 'mother's mother's brother's daughter's daughter', who is called by a different kinship term.
84. On p. 12 of Evelyn Blackwood, 'Breaking the Mirror: The Construction of Lesbianism and the Anthropological Discourse on Homosexuality', in Blackwood (ed.), *Anthropology and Homosexual Behavior*, pp. 1-17. The reference is to Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman*. For a more contemporary account, see Betty Stewart, 'I am a Woman, I am a Koori, and I am a Lesbian', in Lavender (ed.), for the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW, *What is Lesbian Discrimination?* (Sydney, 1990), pp. 11-13.
85. Mathews, 'The Bora', pp. 333-334, and 'Phallic Rites', p. 636; Basedow, *Australian Aboriginal*, p. 289; Berndt and Berndt, *Sexual Behavior*, p. 67. Cf. also Wilhelm Schmidt, 'Sexualismus, Mythologie und Religion in Nord-Australien', *Anthropos*, 48 (1953), 899-924, esp. pp. 916-918.
86. Mathews, 'Phallic Rites', p. 636.
87. Avery, 'The Law People', p. 250.

88. Róheim, *Eternal Ones*, pp. 94-95.
89. Alan Dundes, 'A Psychoanalytic Study of the Bullroarer', *Man*, (NS) 2:2 (1976), pp. 220-238, esp. pp. 233-236.
90. *Rites, Black and White*, p. 139; cf. pp. 140-142 and 178-181.
91. Géza Róheim, *Australian Totemism: A Psycho-Analytic Study in Anthropology* (London, 1971), p. 227; cf. p. 230.
92. Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, p. 243; cf. p. 251; cf. also *Eternal Ones*, pp. 94-95.
93. Róheim, *Children of the Desert*, pp. 183-184; cf. Róheim, 'Women and their Life', pp. 219, 226.
94. See, for example, Róheim, *Australian Totemism*, pp. 158, 227, 230, 303; *Children of the Desert*, p. 247. In this regard, see also van der Leeden, 'Thundering Gecko', p. 92.
95. Patrick White, *Riders in the Chariot* (London, 1961), p. 372.
96. Colin Thiele, *Storm-boy* (Adelaide, 1974).
97. On p. 146 of 'Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey', in Leslie Fiedler, *An End to Innocence: Essays on Culture and Politics* (Boston, 1955), pp. 142-151. The same theme occurs in other literatures, for example, in the Brazilian novel *Bom-Crioulo*, by Adolfo Caminha (first published in 1895, republished in Rio de Janeiro in 1966, and translated into English by E. A. Lacey as *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy* [San Francisco, 1982]). For interpretations, see Peter Fry, 'Léonie, Pombinha, Amaro e Aleixo: Prostituição, Homossexualidade e Raça em Dois Romances Naturalistas', in Carlos Vogt (ed.), *Caminhos Cruzados* (São Paulo, 1982), pp. 33-51, and João S. Trevisan, *Perverts in Paradise* (London, 1986), pp. 103-105.
98. Fiedler, 'Come Back to the Raft', p. 151.
99. Warner, 'Queer Planet', p. 7.
100. The fifth National Conference on AIDS, held in Sydney in November 1992. *See National AIDS Bulletin*, 6:11 (December 1992/January 1993), pp. 12-37. A photograph of the Aboriginal protest at the conference appears on p. 14.

A Charge of Something Unnatural

A Brief History from the Records of Australia's Earliest Known 'Homosexual' Convict

Bob Hay

In his book *The Fatal Shore*, Robert Hughes raised again the issue of homosexual sex, particularly among convicts, in the early history of Australia.[1] He demonstrated that sexual behaviour of this kind was far more pervasive at the time than had been generally acknowledged. He also suggested that it could have had an important effect upon the development of some aspects of Australian culture.

Hughes, however, concentrated on only two kinds of homosexuality. One, commonly called 'situational homosexuality', occurs among primarily heterosexual men when there are insufficient or no women available. This was very much the case in the early days of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land when, at one point, men outnumbered women 4 to 1 in Sydney and by as much as 20 to 1 in the bush. Early administrators recognized this because there were repeated demands