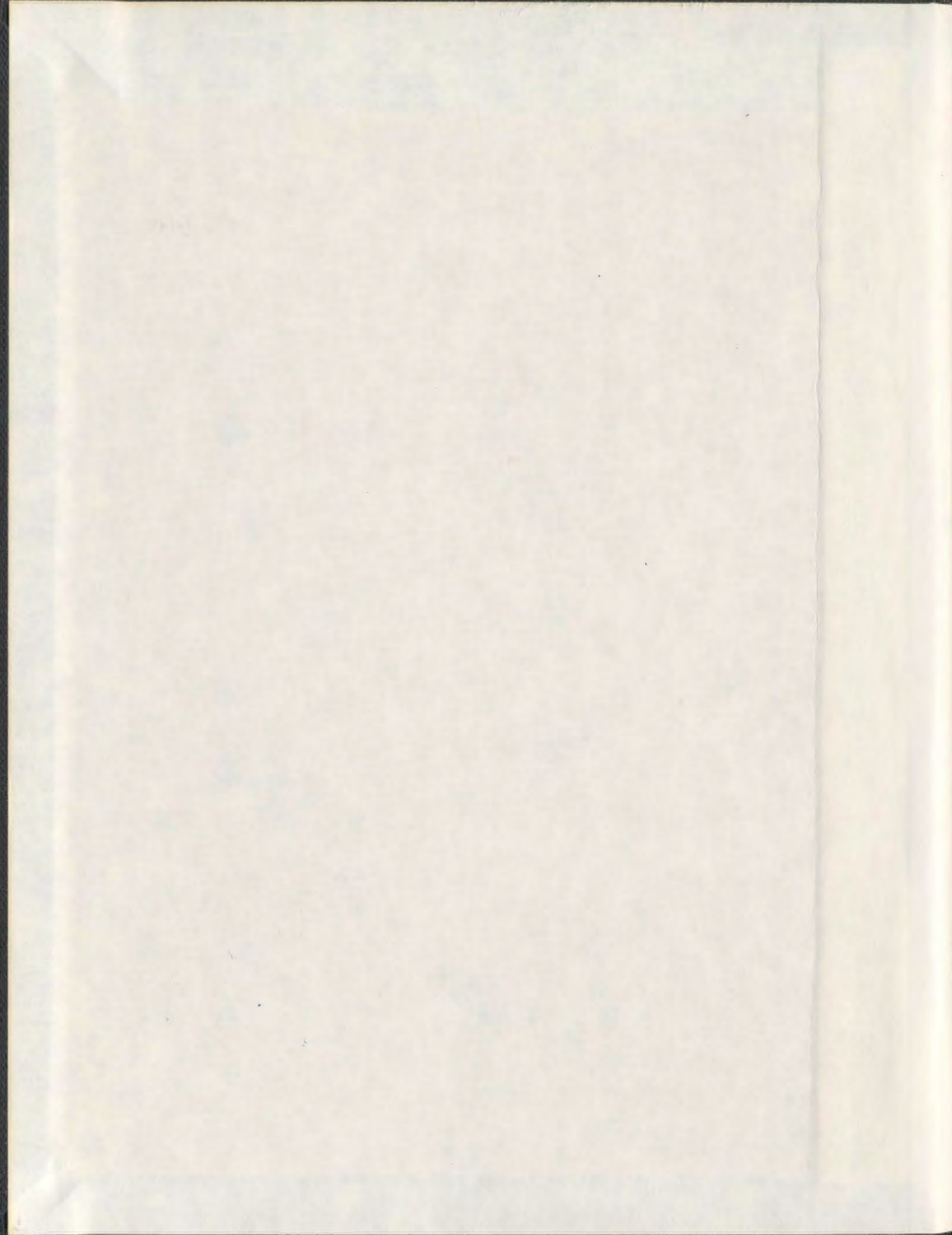


PIONEER OR INVADER?
SITUATIONAL METAFICTION IN THE SETTLER NATIONS

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**Pioneer or Invader?
Situational Metafiction in the Settler Nations**

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iv
INTRODUCTION	
Theoretical Overview: The Settler Nations, Situational Metafiction, and Historiographic Metafiction.....	1
SECTION ONE	
Settler Situational Metafiction	
Chapter One	
The Example of Coetzee and Attwell.....	36
Chapter Two	
Folklore with Footnotes: Peter Carey's Ned Kelly.....	81
Chapter Three	
Shadbolt's Bent: Settler Mythology as Situational Metafiction.....	137
Chapter Four	
Wolfe and the MacDonalds: Alistair MacLeod's <i>No Great Mischief</i>	184
SECTION TWO	
Indigenous Situational Metafiction	
Chapter Five	
Our Home on Natives' Land: Thomas King's <i>Green Grass, Running Water</i>	215
Chapter Six	
<i>Benang</i> : The Interrogation of A. O. Neville.....	247
Chapter Seven	
False Prophecy and the Politics of Recall: Zakes Mda's <i>The Heart of Redness</i>	281
CONCLUSION	
330	
WORKS CITED	
333	

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Abstract

The settler nations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa represent an overlooked area of postcolonial theory. The fact that three of these four countries were among the only four to reject the United Nations Declaration on Aboriginal Rights (September 13, 2007) highlights the unresolved political natures of these “invader-settler nations.” Stephen Slemon suggests in his essay “The English Side of the Lawn” that this area of postcolonial theory requires detailed historical and cultural analysis (283). My thesis undertakes this project, by examining the use of historical figures and events in the contemporary fiction of the settler nations, looking at the work of writers from both indigenous and settler traditions.

My research challenges the applicability of Linda Hutcheon’s seminal postmodern work *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, to the contemporary historiographic novel of the settler nations. These novels are often written in an aesthetic that corresponds to Hutcheon’s category of *historiographic metafiction*. While much of Hutcheon’s work is compelling and continues to be useful in defining postmodernism, her overarching definition of historiographic metafiction threatens to subsume much politically driven writing under the apolitical umbrella of postmodernism: “[Historiographic metafiction’s] use of history is not a modernist look to the “authorizing past” for legitimation. It is a questioning of any such authority as the basis of knowledge—and power” (*Poetics* 185). My thesis demonstrates that the application of this construct of postmodern theory to the contemporary historiographic novel of the settler nations is misleading. While clearly and

demonstrably partaking of the aesthetic that Hutcheon delineates for the postmodern novel (marked by the conscious use of parody, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, a questioning of the status of the historical referent, and a general scepticism toward meta-narratives) the contemporary historical novel of the settler nations, *uses* this supposedly apolitical aesthetic in a bifurcated and deeply dialectical fashion, problematizing “public” history and unproblematically *asserting* a subaltern history. These novels cannot be called postmodern in Hutcheon’s terms as they present a clear dialectic. This dialectic (as will be demonstrated) is, in most cases, either settler versus mother country or indigene versus settler. The texts studied in this thesis represent an area of overlap between postmodernism and postcolonialism, an area that is unacknowledged by current theoretical constructs in both fields. This overlap is a rich area of study, which has ramifications for the development of both postmodern and postcolonial theory.

My work, through literary, historical, and political analysis, elucidates the moral/political vectors of these novels. This new and hybrid form of writing is defined by David Attwell, in his book *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, as *situational metafiction*: “a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation. Of course, all these things have a regional and temporal specificity” (*J. M. Coetzee* 20). This thesis applies Attwell’s category to the contemporary historiographic novel of the settler nations, where situational metafiction has become a widespread and influential form of political writing.

INTRODUCTION

Situational Metafiction in the Settler Nations

The “settler nations” (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) are all former dominions; the political result of mass emigration from Britain in the nineteenth century.¹ The settlers left home, sometimes by choice, as free labourers hoping for a better start; or sometimes by force, driven off their land, transported as convicts, or exiled as political criminals. While often (inadvertently) providing a fresh start and better opportunities for many of the migrants, this movement dispossessed large portions of the indigenous populations of their land. Postcolonial theory, in focusing on former “raw goods” colonies (i.e., sugar from the Caribbean, rubber from the Congo, and tea from India) that have achieved independence from Great Britain, has neglected the study of these settler nations, which were “fundamentally different” as Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman elucidate in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*:

That these were not simply colonies was formally recognized at the time by Britain in granting them Dominion status. Economically and politically, their relation to the metropolitan center bore little resemblance to that of the actual colonies. They were not subject to the same sort of

¹ The term “settler nations” or “invader/settler nations” is used by Donna Bennett, Stephen Slemon, Terry Goldie, Christopher Gittings, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin to refer to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This thesis argues for South Africa to be included in this grouping.

coercive measures that were the lot of the colonies and their ethnic stratification was fundamentally different.² (4)

The lack of academic work on the invader-settler heritage represents an oversight in postcolonial theory. Fortunately, contemporary historiographic novels offer a retrospective portal into this overlooked territory.

Stephen Slemon suggests the importance of such work in "Afterword: The English Side of the Lawn." Slemon states:

My thesis for this afterword . . . is that the question of invader-settler cultures in Canada, variously grounded as they are to a confused, contradictory, and deeply *ambivalent* position within the circulations of colonialist power and anti-colonialist affect, present significant and enormously difficult problems for the field of postcolonial critical studies, and they are ones that the field, at some point, will simply have to engage. (283)

Slemon's words about Canada are applicable to each of the settler nations. One place he suggests this engagement should take place is in the area of detailed historical and cultural analysis. A meaningful examination of historiographic fiction requires this type of detailed narrative analysis in the areas of literature, history, and theory. This is the work my thesis has undertaken.

² Williams and Chrisman's conclusion from this insight is that the settler nations should not be considered in a postcolonial mode. While accurately describing a sub-group of postcolonial study, they make the mistake of ignoring the specificity of this grouping by considering it a "metropolitan mode" (4).

The common elements in the genesis and subsequent development of these settler nations provide instructive parallels in their narratives. These elements reflect the complex cultural interminglings and moral ambiguities involved in what postcolonial theorists, such as Slemon and Christopher Gittings, label an “invader-settler” heritage, seen by many as an overlooked area of postcolonial theory. The current relevance of the settler tradition in these four national literatures is reflected in the prevalence of contemporary historiographic fiction written in a reflexive intertextual mode. The use of actual events and historical figures are defining characteristics of this type of narrative. In “Crossing Borders and Blurring Genres: Towards a Typology and Poetics of Postmodernist Historical Fiction in England since the 1960s” Ansgar Nünning points out that “since 1969 no less than ten such postmodernist historical novels have been awarded the prestigious Booker Prize for Fiction, [which] testifies to the reawakened interest in historical fiction” (217). There are a variety of competing categorizations for this type of writing, the most accepted (and in my view the most problematic) being Linda Hutcheon’s category of “historiographic metafiction” as defined in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. This thesis presents and takes issue with her definition.

Graham Huggan in *The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* points out the Booker Prize committee’s repeated tendency to reward particular themes:

One such theme, sometimes considered to be a gauge of the Booker’s postcolonial leanings, is *revisionist history*. More than half of the prizewinning novels to date [2001] investigate aspects of, primarily

colonial, history or present a counter-memory to the official historical record. (111)

All of the novels dealt with in this thesis can be described as revisionist histories of the settler nations, but as will be shown, while these novels fit Hutcheon's description of historiographic metafiction, none are accurately theorized by this category: a category that needs to be reassessed if it is to remain useful.

These "counter memories" were anticipated by François Lyotard's concept of *petits récits* and by Michel Foucault's concept of "rupture" as described in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*:

At about the same time, in the disciplines that we call the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, and the history of literature . . . attention has been turned . . . away from vast unities like "periods" or "centuries" to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity. (4)

These ruptures:

suspend the continuous accumulation of knowledge, interrupt its slow development . . . cleanse it of its imaginary complicities; they direct historical analysis away from the search for silent beginnings, and the never-ending tracing back to the original precursors, towards the search for a new type of rationality and its various effects. (4)

An overt emphasis on this “new type of rationality” is strongly manifested in contemporary historical fiction; both as a manifestation of and response to postmodern theory.

For both Lyotard and Foucault, postmodern counter-narratives are a corrective to oppressive social structures. In his book, *The Post-Modern Condition*, Lyotard’s postmodern prescription is presented as follows:

The postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unrepresentable in the presentation itself; that which denies itself the solace of good forms . . . that which searches for new presentations, not in order to enjoy them but in order to impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable. A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules. . . . The rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. (81)

Postmodern literature, while searching for Lyotard’s “rules and categories,” often focuses on a philosophical interrogation of history through self-reflexive, intertextual and ironic works of art.

Postmodern fiction, rather than “telling history,” questions our ability to know history. Interrogating the status of the historical referent is perhaps the major dominant of this body of writing. One foundational work of postmodern fiction, E. L. Doctorow’s *Ragtime*, questions the grand narrative style of history through invention contiguous with what seems to be conventional historical fiction. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung ride

together through the Tunnel of Love in Coney Island. Doctorow writes Harry Houdini's secret internal history, having him interact with real and fictional characters without distinguishing the two. The philosophy being emphasized is that of Lyotard and Foucault; that history, like fiction, is narrative and is subject to the individual bias of the historian. The idea that we can know "what happened" is itself a fiction; the distance between the sign and the signifier is incommensurable.

Later theorists such as Brian McHale, Linda Hutcheon, and Fredric Jameson appear to have drawn heavily from Lyotard's work. In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* Fredric Jameson describes the postmodern attitude toward the simulacrum: "the past as 'referent' finds itself gradually bracketed, and then effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts" (18).³ Of Doctorow's *Ragtime*, Jameson states, "it is organized systematically and formally to short circuit an older type of social and historical interpretation" (23), and "this historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only 'represent' our ideas and stereotypes about the past" (25). This description finds support in the work of Brian McHale: in *Constructing Postmodernism* he describes the modernist novels of James Joyce and Marcel Proust as "epistemological" and the postmodern novel as "ontological" (206). McHale compares the modernist novel to the detective novel, where answers are possible and narrative authority is not an issue. The postmodern novel is compared to science fiction, a form which he sees as interrogating the nature of being.

³ Jameson borrows this term from Jean Baudrillard, who seems to have applied his own terminology to the idea of Plato's cave.

In the *Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, Steven Connor writes: "Literary postmodernism has tended to be focused on one kind of writing, namely, narrative fiction. The most influential books on literary postmodernism, such as Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* and Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction*, are devoted to postmodern fiction" (62). This quotation helps establish the position of McHale and Hutcheon in theorizing postmodernism. In his review of Amy Elias' book *Sublime Desire: History and Post 1960s Fiction*, McHale says of the category of historiographic metafiction: "Hutcheon's great contribution was to identify and describe a characteristic genre of postmodernist fiction—perhaps *the* characteristic genre—and to coin a name for it: 'historiographic metafiction'" (151). McHale testifies to the enduring quality of Hutcheon's category and explains how Elias' approach has given historiographic metafiction "new 'legs'" ("History Itself?" 151).

Historiographic metafiction is, for Hutcheon, a lesson in historiography: "Within the discipline of history, there is also a growing concern with redefining intellectual history as 'the study of social meaning as historically constituted.' This is exactly what historiographic metafiction is doing" (*Poetics* 15). Hutcheon identifies historiographic metafiction as a form that does not "aspire to tell the truth" as much as to question "*whose* truth gets told" (*Poetics* 123). Self-reflexivity (which causes the reader to reflect on the nature of production of the text) and ironic use of historical referents (which causes the reader to reflect on the provisional nature of recorded history) are key indicators of historiographic metafiction. Intertextuality and a new attention to the "enunciating entity [that] has been suppressed . . . [in] the form of overt textual emphasis

on the narrating 'I' and the reading 'you'" (*Poetics* 76) are for Hutcheon, postmodern signposts. All are characterized by a general scepticism toward meta-narratives.

While Hutcheon admits that there is a type of "ideology" to postmodernism, it is a strangely unified "anti-totalizing ideology" (*Poetics* 231) found in canonical postmodern works such as *Midnight's Children*, *Shame*, *Famous Last Words*, *Waterland*, *Flaubert's Parrot*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The White Hotel*, and *Foe*. Hutcheon's study of these novels led her to assert: "There is no dialectic in the postmodern: the self-reflexive remains distinct from its traditionally accepted contrary—the historico-political context in which it is embedded" (*Poetics* x). Much postmodern fiction does indeed function in this way, and this phenomenon has been well-documented and articulated by Hutcheon, who has done important work *toward* a poetics of postmodernism. That being said, her observations are ironically limited by their totalizing assumptions about the "anti-totalizing" objectives of works that employ her "postmodern" aesthetic.

Nationalistic fiction that falls within (sometimes intentionally, as I will demonstrate) Hutcheon's postmodern aesthetic is abundantly present in the contemporary historiographic fiction of the settler nations, but it is in works that display a clear "dialectic"—one that is demonstrably referential to its "historico-political context" (*Poetics* x). The dialectic in these novels is either that of a subaltern settler population (Irish, Scottish, lower-class British), or a subaltern indigenous population. As this thesis will demonstrate, this nationalist tendency is exacerbated by the unresolved and bifurcated statuses (indigene/settler) of these young nations.

Hutcheon's faith in postmodernism's ability to police itself is optimistic and superficial. She views postmodernism as an organic movement that has somehow evolved a corrective impulse against the totalizing grand narrative impulse:

Postmodernism teaches that all cultural practices have an ideological subtext which determines the conditions of the very possibility of their production of meaning. And, in art, it does so by *leaving overt* [italics mine] the contradictions between its self-reflexivity and its historical grounding. (*Poetics* xii-xiii)

This is a creative theory, and, in many notable cases, it works. There are, however, ruptures in any grand narrative. This thesis focuses on the nationalist ruptures in Hutcheon's grand narrative of historiographic metafiction. Many historiographic metafiction suffer from exactly what Jameson warns as "the illusion of critical distance" (qtd. in Hutcheon, *Politics* 15).

The central position of historiographic metafiction in the field of postmodernism is asserted by Hutcheon:

In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative—be it literature, history, or theory—that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs . . . is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (*Poetics* 5)

Hutcheon sees the contradictions inherent in historiographic metafiction as being emblematic of postmodernism, suggesting that as a form it:

is *always* [italics mine] careful to “situate” itself in its discursive context and then uses that situating to problematize the very notion of knowledge—historical, social, ideological. Its use of history is not a modernist look to the “authorizing past” for legitimation. It is a questioning of any such authority as the basis of knowledge—and power.

(*Poetics* 185)

Totalizing statements suggesting an entire mode of fiction “always” behaves in a particular fashion are oversimplified.

In contrast to Hutcheon’s apolitical poetics based on the concept of historiographic metafiction, Catherine Bernard’s paper “Coming to Terms with the Present: The Paradoxical Truth Claims of British Postmodernism” suggests that “one indeed should not overlook the inherently political . . . stance of writers trying to make sense of the present by reassessing our cultural modes of processing the past and our situation within a historical and cultural continuum” (136). Hutcheon’s poetics has other detractors. Nünning observes that “the ways in which genre conventions are blurred in contemporary fiction are so multifarious it does not make much sense to subsume all the novels in question under one label, be it ‘historiographic metafiction’ or ‘the postmodernist revisionist historical novel’” (“Crossing Borders” 219). The conclusions of this thesis strongly support this statement.

Nünning adds:

There are several other objections to be made against the way in which postmodernism is constructed as amounting to nothing but historiographic metafiction . . . such a construct leads to unwarranted assumptions of homogeneity, and does not do justice to the diversity, breadth, and scope of innovative developments in contemporary historical fiction or in other forms of postmodernist (meta) fiction, let alone other genres or arts. (219-220)

Totalizing models run the risk of falsifying the “pluralizing impulse of postmodernist writing” and of establishing a “homogenizing metanarrative of the ‘development’ of postmodernism as a movement” (220). Nünning’s concern is “where to draw the line between historiographic metafiction and other narratives of generic modes for presenting past and present reality in fiction” (220). He suggests that Hutcheon “conflates devices and subgenres that require clear differentiation” and that “what is needed is a more systematic typology and more finely nuanced poetics of the various modes for presenting history in fiction” (220). My thesis undertakes this work.

This thesis focuses on several postcolonial authors: Peter Carey (Australia), J. M. Coetzee (South Africa), Maurice Shadbolt (New Zealand), Thomas King (Canada), Zakes Mda (South Africa), Alistair MacLeod (Canada) and Kim Scott (Australia). All of these selected authors write in styles that partake of the postmodern aesthetic Hutcheon has called historiographic metafiction. They all use a “theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs [as] the grounds for . . . rethinking and reworking . . . the forms and contents of the past” (*Poetics* 5). Conversely they all “look to the authorizing

past” to legitimize their particular nationalism whether it is settler nationalism or indigenous nationalism (*Poetics* 185). In the more polemical of these novels, the interrogation of history is a narrative technique confined to the histories of the opponents: the British Empire for the settler nationalists, both the settlers and the empire for the indigenous nationalists.⁴

Herb Wyile’s book *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* describes the position of contemporary Canadian historical novelists as having “the somewhat paradoxical dual task of making their history and questioning it too” (253). Wyile quotes Tony Tremblay about Rudy Wiebe’s *A Discovery of Strangers* who says that “such revisionist histories, although intended to critique colonial ideology, are unreflexive about their own practices . . .” (43). Tremblay’s words are well applied to the novels examined in this thesis. In “Modernism’s Last Post,” Slemon argues for the “discursive specificity” of contemporary historical fiction, when framed in a postcolonial mode: “Whereas a post-modernist criticism would want to argue that literary practices such as [intertextual parody] expose the constructedness of *all* textuality . . . an *interested* post-colonial critical practice would want to allow for the positive production of oppositional truth-claims in these texts” (5). Slemon admits that this dual postcolonial agenda is “perhaps theoretically contradictory” (6), but asserts that “Western post-modernist readings can so overvalue the anti-referential or deconstructive energetics of postcolonial texts that they efface the important recuperative work that is also going on within them” (7). This thesis will show evidence of this “recuperative”

⁴ In all my reading, I did not see any indigenous writer acknowledge any separation between the settler and the empire, a separation repeatedly asserted by white writers of the settler nations.

work, in the contemporary historiographic fiction of the settler nations as well as evidence of nationalism, present in this form that is meant to have “no dialectic” (*Poetics* x).

My thesis relies on David Attwell’s construct of “situational metafiction” to account for these political uses of the postmodern novel. Attwell’s *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* explores the political aspects of the writing of J. M. Coetzee, even in such paradigmatic postmodern works as *Foe*.⁵ Attwell begins by comparing historical discourse and fiction: “In historical discourse, the existence of the referent is not questioned; in the case of fiction, reference is present, simply, in a qualified form: ‘it is *split or cleft reference* . . . ’” (18). Attwell builds on Paul Ricoeur’s concept of fictional reference, adding that “even a posed, deliberate *suspension* of reference falls under the shadow of referentiality” (18). While not denying Hutcheon’s category of historiographic metafiction, Attwell maintains that it does not account for all forms, in particular postcolonial forms, of the postmodern novel, which are often referential *in particular and local ways* not explained by Hutcheon’s poetics of postmodernism.

Attwell compares the postcolonial situation of South Africa with that of Australia and New Zealand, with reference to the work of Simon During, Helen Tiffin, and Slemon who have “developed an interesting critical discussion of the specificities of postcolonial literary practices, partly in response to what they see as a lack of regional sensitivity within Euro-American versions of the postmodernist debate” (*J. M. Coetzee* 22). Slemon

⁵ It owes its status as a “paradigm” of postmodern fiction largely to Hutcheon’s work.

further this argument, pointing out that a great deal of the work being done in the name of postmodern literary studies remains unaware of the “socially and politically grounded” strategies of “de-essentialization” present in postcolonial literature (8); this ignorance of postcolonial literatures “is perhaps contributive to postmodernism’s overwhelming tendency to present itself . . . as a crisis, a contradiction, ‘an apotheosis of negativity’” (“Modernism” 9). This thesis interrogates the boundary between postmodernism and postcolonialism, with the goal of understanding more about both areas of study.

In his introduction, Attwell discusses the history of Coetzee criticism in South Africa, asserting that:

we now have a considerably oversimplified polarization between, on the one hand, those registering the claims of political resistance and historical representation (who argue that Coetzee has little to offer) and on the other, those responsive to postmodernism and poststructuralism, to whom Coetzee, most notably in *Foe*, seems to have much to provide.

(*J. M. Coetzee* 2)

Hutcheon, with her extensive theoretical use of *Foe*, is strongly of the latter camp. Teresa Dovey rejects this binary as “discourses emerging from diverse contexts, and exhibiting different formal assumptions, may produce different forms of historical engagement” (5). Attwell strongly recommends this position: “Indeed, one of the major premises of [his] study is that Coetzee’s novels are located in the nexus of history and text; that they explore the *tension* between these polarities” (*J. M. Coetzee* 2-3). This statement is true of all of the novels in this study.

Attwell's contention leads him to assert a new category; one that can be reconciled with a refined definition of historiographic metafiction: "situational metafiction." Attwell asserts that situational metafiction:

would be a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation. Of course, all these things have a regional and temporal specificity. (*J. M. Coetzee* 20)

The situational metafiction of the settler nations are referential in ways not accounted for by Hutcheon's construct of postmodernism. All of the novels I address are political in the sense that they are *directly* referential to specific historical characters and events, and are sympathetic to particular historically located narratives of national identity. All of these novels are shown to make nationalistic statements based on these historical referents. These referents, which are interrogated in postmodern fashion, acquire an uncharacteristic stability (in postmodern terms) when the author's moral/political position is in need of support—this is what I have called *bifurcated problematizing*. All of these novels "draw attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within them" and "to the interpretive process" (*J. M. Coetzee* 20). Finally, all address specific historical events in terms of "regional and temporal specificity" (20). Attwell's construct refines Hutcheon's more global construct in local and particular terms. My work expands on that of Attwell, borrowing the term situational metafiction to describe contemporary historiographic novels from the settler nations of Canada, Australia, New

Zealand and South Africa. What Attwell has identified as a phenomenon in the work of Coetzee, I have found to accurately describe a larger literary tendency that is found around the globe.

Both Attwell's category of situational metafiction and its application in this thesis help account for postmodern novels whose engagement with the historical referent is polemical, and not merely philosophically ironic, about the nature of meaning. Coetzee's *Dusklands* is directly referential, drawing directly from the journals of the pioneer Jacobus Coetzee. While this novel is "appropriately" postmodern in its invocation of *Bouvard and Pécuchet*, "Ce qu'il y a d'important, c'est la philosophie de l'Histoire" (*J. M. Coetzee* 45), Attwell clearly shows that "Coetzee's use of sources . . . would seem to be directly related to his critical intentions with respect to white nationalism . . ." (45). One of the primary observations of this study is that the use of historical sources in the situational metafiction of the settler nations is related to a political intention; the assertion of a particular subaltern (or arguably subaltern) nationalism. Coetzee provides a strong example of how parody, self-reflexivity, intertextuality and historical reference can be used to assert a particular political message beyond the idea that the distance between the historical sign and signifier is incommensurable, in his case, a particular South African anti-settler aesthetic. *These* revisionist histories, these situational metafictions, unlike those described by McHale and Hutcheon, revise with nationalistic intentions. They do not simply question the possibility of historical knowledge, as Hutcheon's theory would have them do.

Historiographic metafiction wilfully blends fact with invention, and has become, according to Huggan, politically and literarily sanctified (*Post-Colonial Exotic* 111). Problematically, historiographic fictions are prone, by their very form, to perpetuate the same type of cultural assumptions their work is ostensibly meant to rectify. Hutcheon points out that the “deconstruction theory often, in its very unmasking of rhetorical strategies, itself still lays claim to ‘theoretical knowledge’ Most postmodern theory, however, realizes this paradox or contradiction” (*Poetics* 13). Recognition of a problem is different from finding its solution; labelling the problem a paradox is not a solution. In the situational metafiction of the settler nations there is without exception “theoretical knowledge,” in the form of history that is meant *as history*—not as an examination of our inability to refer to the past in a meaningful way. Hutcheon’s contention that “there is no dialectic in the postmodern: the self-reflexive remains distinct from its traditionally accepted contrary—the historico-political context in which it is embedded” may be correct for a particular school of postmodern writing (*Poetics* x), but it will be shown to contribute to a misreading of the extensive and influential genre of situational metafiction.

Many situational metafiction assert a type of exclusionary nationalism. For example, this thesis argues that Peter Carey and Maurice Shadbolt apply their situational metafiction to speak to (and endorse) white settler nationalism in their respective Antipodean nations. Furthermore, Thomas King asserts a native nationalism that is overtly exclusionary. But do these authors want to avoid nationalism? And *should* they? As Edward Said suggests in *Culture and Imperialism*: “the steady critique of nationalism,

which derives from the various theorists of liberation I have discussed, should not be forgotten, for we must not condemn ourselves to repeat the imperial experience” (331). While these ethical questions are interesting, value judgements about nationalism will be left to the reader. This thesis elucidates these emerging nationalisms within these cultural artefacts: the who, what, when, where, how and why of their assertion. Five of the seven authors under discussion assert some type of exclusionary nationalism expressed in varying degrees. There are very few historiographic novels of true reconciliation, (Slemon’s “recuperation”) many asserting to some degree what Said refers to as an internecine “rhetoric of blame” (96). More significant (and interesting) than blame is interrogating the historical processes which lead to one group dominating another. Said does not “jettison” Flaubert, Austen or Conrad because he dislikes some of their ideas. Neither does he allow them what he sees as socially ingrained hypocrisies. His balanced approach is a model for this type of cultural study.

Situational metafiction gives rise to many cross-disciplinary questions: How do these narratives affect the study and perception of their chosen historical periods? Do these novels have a political effect? My research suggests that situational metafiction is extremely influential. Internationally recognized novelists from all four of these countries write and continue to write in historical modes: Andre Brink (SA), Wayne Johnston (CAN), Peter Carey (AUS), Alistair MacLeod (CAN), Thomas King (CAN), Patricia Grace (NZ), Mudrooroo (AUS), Zakes Mda (SA), Kim Scott (AUS), Maurice Shadbolt (NZ), Timothy Findlay (CAN), and Kate Grenville (AUS). This is only a sample of some

of the better-known authors in what appears (according to Bernard and Huggan) to be a prevalent mode of writing in the settler nations and around the world.

My work uncovers the moral/political vectors of these works through a comparative analysis of multiple sources, which examines the author's chosen historical events and figures. A close examination of the authors' own sources (as in the case of Coetzee, Carey, Mda, Shadbolt, and Scott—only MacLeod and King do not give historical acknowledgments in their novels) has proven particularly revealing. This work benefits from instructive parallels within the settler nations; a comparative study of an imperial legacy as manifested in different particularities.⁶ For example, the Australian settlers' idea of *terra nullis* (that Australia upon settlement was "empty land") is identical to what Coetzee calls the "poetry of empty space" in the early settler writings of South Africa.⁷ This eliding mentality is also found in Shadbolt's *Season of the Jew* and *Monday's Warriors* as well as in his second autobiography where the author's pioneer forebears "won fresh worlds" from appropriated Maori land (*From the Edge of the Sky* 31). This frontier mentality is also clear in the narratives of early North America. In *Truth*

⁶ Diana Brydon in her chapter "Australian Literature and the Canadian Comparison" quotes and expands on the words of Claude Bissell: "'more may be discovered about both Canadian and Australian letters when they are compared than when they are studied in isolation' and secondly that 'comparisons are most effective and helpful when they deal with divergences that spring from a common base.' Canada and Australia clearly share a 'common ancestry' of predominantly English settlement imposed on the suppressed cultures of the indigenous peoples—a common base—and just as clearly represent divergent developments from that base owing to differences in history, geography, economics, immigration and settlement patterns, and the specific natures of the indigenous and imposed cultures involved" (56). This 'common ancestry' is a good way to describe the interrelation among all of the settler nations.

⁷ In *White Writing* Coetzee states: "In all the poetry commemorating meetings with the silence and emptiness of Africa—it must finally be said—it is hard not to read a certain historical will to see as silent and empty a land that has been, if not full of human creatures, not empty of them either . . ." (177).

and *Bright Water*, King mocks this idea by having Monroe “paint the Indians” back into colonial North American landscapes.

In my historical analysis of situational metafiction, I use what I refer to as the jury method. It is not infallible, but, as in a court of law, if ten witnesses give one story and someone else another, that eleventh story is “logically” looked at more closely. And as in a court of law, the persuasiveness of the lawyer (for the purposes of our analogy the historical writer) is judged in terms of the coherence of her argument and the verifiability of her sources. This method is not perfect, but, importantly, it is a means of proceeding: gathering what can be seen, through historical (in parallel with legal) precedent, as knowledge—knowledge in flux, but usable knowledge just the same. And so, while my research cannot tell me with mathematical precision “what happened,” it does provide the value of multiple perspectives on one event or historical figure. In this way, the author’s moral/political bias, their location in their work, is exposed. The work can then be considered in terms of the type of nationalism espoused, in much the same way as Edward Said interrogated the moral/political/cultural biases of Joseph Conrad. These novels have no obligation to documented history, but it is important to understand what they are saying *about* history.

Influential studies of postcolonial literatures, such as *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literatures* by Terry Goldie, *Text, Theory, Space: Land, Literature and History in South Africa and Australia* by Kate Darian-Smith, Liz Gunner, and Sarah Nuttal and *Is Canada Postcolonial? Essays on Canadian Literature and Postcolonial Theory* have helped to open the field of study

of the settler nations. The double colonization (Dutch and English) of South Africa had led past theorists to leave it out of this grouping. This is not a valid reason for its exclusion. Canada is strongly identified as a settler nation and it was also doubly colonized. South Africa is important to consider in the context of a settler nation; the other settler nations are perhaps closer to that country's Apartheid past than they wish to seem. As Attwell states: "Territorial imperialism . . . has given place to neocolonialism and now globalization . . . the murderous prospect of Apartheid kept South Africa caught in that earlier dispensation" (qtd. in Spivak, *Critique* 190). The lessons of South Africa from that "earlier dispensation" give the other settler nations the opportunity to look at (a close analogy to) their own recent colonial past, playing itself out in the present. Social inequalities and historical elisions evince a common imperial basis and continuing imperial legacy in all of the settler nations—the parallels are uncomfortable and instructive.

Examining the parallels among the settler nations leads to insights about the nature of settler colonization, and how it has conditioned our past and present. We see segments of all of these nations clinging to the vestiges of the British Empire. Other opposing elements, among them writers such as Shadbolt, Carey, and MacLeod, push to sever all ties to the mother country; authors who have repeatedly attacked the imperial legacy with historiographic method. Indigenous writers, such as King and Scott, assert counter-nationalism in dialectical opposition to the settler majorities of their nations and are not interested in the alleged subalterity of former (and arguably current) oppressors.

Internal strife has developed in these four countries along similar lines, into a predictable dialectic (settler versus indigene). Cultural mythology has been and continues to be spread through art and literature, and often panders in its sensibilities to the status quo. The perpetuation of much past oppression has been glossed over by those who consider themselves to have been oppressed: convict hatred of the Australian Aboriginal and the colonizing activities of the Glengarry Highlanders in Canada are strong examples of historical omission on the part of public history.⁸ This phenomenon is described by Anna Johnston and Alan Lawson in "Settler Post-Colonialism" as strategic disavowal.⁹ Sometimes the victim becomes the oppressor, but the victim's past does not justify the action. Edward Said comments to Salman Rushdie, in an interview in Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*: "To be a victim of a victim does present quite unusual difficulties" (182). The subaltern often perpetuates past injustices, and creates what might be termed a "sub-subaltern." If settler novelists like Maurice Shadbolt and Michael Crummey truly consider themselves subaltern, then this awkward term may need to be applied to clarify a disingenuous and misleading parallel.

Situational metafiction has the ability to confront these issues. While this form is effective, it must be addressed that there is no logic to assumptions of subaltern objectivity, simply because of a past of oppression. Eva Rask Knudsen contends that

⁸ As elucidated by Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore* and Gittings in "Canada and Scotland: Conceptualizing 'Postcolonial' Spaces."

⁹ "In the founding and growth of cultural nationalism, then, we can see one vector of difference (the difference between colonizing subject and colonized subject: settler-indigene) being replaced by another (the difference between colonizing subject and imperial center: settler-imperium). We can see this, with the benefit of postcolonial hindsight/analysis, as a strategic disavowal of the colonizing act. In this process, "the national" is what replaces "the indigenous" and in doing so conceals its participation in colonization by nominating a new "colonized" subject—the colonizer or settler-invader" (365).

Maori and Aboriginal fiction “‘set[s] the record straight’ (by turning history inside-out and locating its stories of suppression or exclusion)” (20). While it is possible that these fictions give a more balanced view of the past than their predecessors, Knudsen’s confidence in the new straightness of the historical record should give careful scholars pause for thought. Power structures, as articulated by Said and Foucault, have historically warped history and cultural narratives in their own interests. That situational metafiction questions these versions of history creates the parallel (and baseless) assumption that these new narratives of rectification are immune to the problems of their predecessors. In its pose of rectification, much current historiographic fiction perpetuates parallel forms of propaganda to the ones it is ostensibly *correcting*. Knudsen’s unsophisticated notion of correcting history denies the insights of the modern philosophy of history, and is perfectly in line with Hutcheon’s rhetoric of postmodernism as a unified philosophical school that has moved beyond the assumptive nature of past narratives. Narrative, although looked at in a different fashion by postmodernism, has not mutated into an objective form.

Current tensions exist between the indigenous and settler cultures in all of the settler nations: indigenous affairs are high on the political agenda. The Maori fight for foreshore rights, grappling with the flawed Treaty of Waitangi (1841); ongoing tensions rose in 2006 in Caledonia Ontario between local whites and the Six Nations over a burial ground—Highway 401 into Toronto has been subject to a blockade; Australian Aborigines work with the Mabo precedent (1996), which grants Australia’s indigenous peoples “the ability to understand” land ownership, fuelling Australia’s “History Wars”

with demands for reconciliation; South Africans struggle not to make the same mistakes as those of the ousted regime, but a legacy of segregation still haunts the country's political development. Australia and South Africa are experiencing violent opposition to immigration by nationalists. Alongside instructive parallels in the indigenous fiction of the settler nations, a parallel pattern of settler reaction and response exists. Thomas Keneally's *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* alludes to the complexity of this settler legacy in a conversation between young Australian farmers on a hunt for a renegade Aboriginal. One farmer refers to the ongoing Boer War, which most of the farmers have supported: "The Boers've got a lot of sympathy. . . . I mean all they wanted to do was have their land and keep the black man in his place" (107-108). These parallels bear examination in the modern settler nation.

Nowhere, I would argue, is an historical vision more influential than in contemporary historiographic fiction. But what part does documented history play in historiographic fiction? Curiously, this important question has not been answered. One historian, Stuart Pierson, saw Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* as an occupational hazard because of historical inaccuracies (292). On the other hand, another might welcome the attention this writing draws to his/her subject. James Ley, in an article on the role of fiction in Australia's "History Wars" expresses the problem as follows:

The question of authenticity is obviously crucial to historical fiction, but historical works in a realist mode want to have it both ways. They want to claim fidelity and a kind of diplomatic immunity from historical controversy. At least some of the critical disquiet about recent Australian

historical fiction springs from this sense of its unreflexive, unironic quality. (23)

However, Ley concludes his article by sidestepping the important issue he raises, saying “we should be looking to these works, not necessarily to define history, but to give us a sense of its relevance” (23). The works he speaks of *are* defining history in a dynamic way. As Laurie Clancy states in “Selective History of the Kelly Gang: Peter Carey’s Ned Kelly”: “As the American reviews of the novel demonstrate, many readers will put the book down with the belief that they now know the truth about Ned Kelly—just as many American teenagers have grown up thinking that Oliver Stone’s film *JFK* is the definitive account of Kennedy’s assassination” (56). The historiographic novel can be a powerful political weapon, and its practitioners wield historical/political influence. However, the basis and legitimacy of this influence is questionable.

New Zealand historian Michael King suggests that in historiographic fiction it is “axiomatic that imaginative leaps should be based on evidence where evidence is available . . . and that the resulting character should be presented plausibly and where he is based on a real-life figure—fairly” (12). While this axiom is not self-evident, it is compelling. As Canadian political commentator Rex Murphy said about Wayne Johnston’s depiction of Joey Smallwood: “An author is free to combine or invent as he or she chooses. Just so. But a reader is also free to feel a disappointment if the original is within reach of memory and experience and the created version is less persuasive . . .” (15). Does this appropriation of historical characters, the fictional altering of the accepted historical record, matter? In *The Historical Novel*, Georg Lukacs said that this type of

narrative is more honest than an historical narrative, because rather than taking the impossible pose of the objective history, historiographic fiction admits its rhetorical standpoint. Umberto Eco ennobles the historical novel, suggesting that these novels “not only identify in the past the causes of what came later, but also trace the process through which those causes began slowly to produce their effects” (qtd. in Hutcheon, *Future* 113). Conversely, in *Telling the Truth about History*, Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob would argue that, “At worst, [historiographic novels] are insidious ways of hiding the partiality and propaganda aims of the author of the narrative and the normalizing tendencies of modern states and societies” (232). Hidden aims can be elucidated through a combination of literary and historical analysis. My readings confirm that all of these claims have some basis in the situational metafiction of the settler nations, and appreciating these books in the terms of these claims helps to elucidate their politics.

Seven chapters focus on the work of seven authors from each of the settler nations, all chosen for their level of influence: Coetzee (*Dusklands* and *Foe*); Carey (*True History of the Kelly Gang*); King (*Green Grass, Running Water*); Mda (*The Heart of Redness*); Shadbolt (*Season of the Jew* and *Monday's Warriors*); MacLeod (*No Great Mischief*); and Scott (*Benang: from the Heart*). The fact that all of these writers are men points to a masculine predisposition in this type of nationalist writing, which some might describe as historical manipulation. Female writers do not seem to have taken up situational metafiction as a mode of writing. Zoë Wicomb (*David's Story*) from South Africa, and Fiona Kidman (*The Book of Secrets*) from New Zealand, are historical novelists largely unconcerned with the interrogation of the historical referent, or with

asserting a particular nationalism. Australian Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* is written in a modernist tradition, as a realist historical novel. New Zealand author Patricia Grace's *Tu* is similarly a non-ironic historical novel about Maori participation (through her grandfather's diary) in World War II. Grenville's novel is described by its author as being "above the fray [of Australia's history wars] looking down" (Ley 23). The novels I address in the following chapters are consciously in the fray, seeking to redress, revise, and reinvent history. That women do not seem to write in the nationalistic and often manipulative mode of situational metafiction is not necessarily an omission.

The authors included in this thesis, in their "regional and temporal specificities," often emphasize the contradictions between self-reflexivity and historical grounding, between lived and documented history, but mostly do so in a deliberately polemic fashion, to emphasize the created nature of British imperial or settler history. Coetzee is the only settler writer in this study to rigorously attack his own settler tradition. In terms of asserting nationalism, Mda is the most even-handed, questioning the role of his Xhosa people in their own historical downfall—contiguous with an interrogation of the acts of empire in this downfall. To a lesser extent, Scott and MacLeod are able to question their own people. The novels under review here by Carey, Shadbolt, and King are conspicuously nationalistic. They clearly *do not* emphasize the irony of their own ideological stances of exclusionary nationalism, within a type of novel, which is (theoretically) meant (according to Hutcheon) to question this type of monolithic thinking.

Writing in this apparently postmodern aesthetic, an author can effectively hide his/her ideology in a work that is not supposed to have any. Interestingly, novelists can effectively use postmodern theory and the totalizing assumptions it engenders, as a way to hide their own monolithic ideologies within what looks like historiographic metafiction. If one takes Hutcheon at her word, the purpose of these novels is to teach about social construct: "Postmodernism is careful not to make the marginal into a new center, for it knows, in [Victor] Burgin's words, that 'what have expired are the absolute guarantees issued by over-riding metaphysical systems'" (*Poetics* 12). One does not expect to be ingesting particular and nationalist ideology while *learning* this lesson of historiographic metafiction, but this is exactly what happens in many works of situational metafiction. These are influential works that are deeply misunderstood if their postmodern aspects are taken to signify an "anti-totalizing ideology."

Hutcheon, in Hegelian fashion, attributes to postmodernism an organic mind that progresses and now "knows" not to make the mistakes of the past. These nationalist historiographic metafiction are an excellent place in which to probe her assertions about postmodernism's "knowledge," as these novels do exactly what Hutcheon claims postmodernism should not do. In the situational metafiction of MacLeod, Carey, and Shadbolt, what is foregrounded is the constructedness of the opponent's (i.e. the British Empire) version of reality. Their histories are the "corrected" versions. The "marginalized" Scottish-Canadians, Irish-Australians, and lower-class British-New Zealanders (MacLeod, Carey, and Shadbolt) can be seen to be part of the new "center." Although more balanced in terms of representing both sides, the issue of the constructed

nature of their own ideology is not “foregrounded” by authors such as Mda, and Scott. Carey, Scott, Shadbolt, and King use history with a capital “H,” in the form of dialectical and unproblematic historical claims, to assert what they are implicitly attacking: monolithic thinking and exclusionary nationalism. Hutcheon states that “it is part of the postmodern ideology not to ignore cultural bias and interpretive conventions and to question authority—even its own” (*Poetics* 121). The term “even” here is odd, as though it were exceptionally objective for postmodern authors to question their own authority. One would think this would be the first and highest of concerns for writing in a school of literature that is ostensibly meant to question authority. Inserting ideology into historiographic metafiction is a postmodern move unanticipated by Hutcheon’s theory. By adopting and applying the concept of situational metafiction, this complex and widespread problem in the poetics of postmodernism approaches resolution.

Attwell’s category of situational metafiction takes direct issue with Hutcheon’s assumptions about postmodernism’s attitude toward the referent:

Historical fiction . . . usually incorporates and assimilates these data in order to lend a feeling of verifiability . . . to the fictional world.

Historiographic metafiction incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data.

More often, the process of *attempting* to assimilate is what is foregrounded. . . . (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114)

The situational metafiction I am discussing do “assimilate” historical data, sometimes foregrounding its unreliability; sometimes presenting this data as unironic history.

Hutcheon writes that “historiographic metafiction is not ‘ideological novels’ . . . they

do not 'seek, through the vehicle of fiction, to persuade their readers of the correctness of a particular way of interpreting the world.' Instead they make their readers *question* their own (and by implication others') interpretations'" (*Poetics* 180). Such an overstatement represents the crux of my argument with Hutcheon: all of the novels discussed here, and all of Coetzee's novels (including *Foe*) that Attwell addresses, *do*, in contrast to Hutcheon "seek, through the vehicle of fiction, to persuade [the] reader of the 'correctness' of a particular way of interpreting the world" (180). In contrast, Attwell asserts, "metafiction cannot escape historicization in the moment of its interpretation, even when its authors might prefer otherwise" (*J. M. Coetzee* 18). As this thesis shows, situational metafiction in the settler nations is dialectical, which is in direct contrast to the theory of historiographic metafiction. These two forms require clear differentiation.

Hutcheon has correctly identified a phenomenon within her own category of historiographic metafiction, but her insistence on the monolithic "anti-totalizing ideology" inherent in all works of historiographic metafiction is too rigid. *Dusklands*; *Foe*; *True History of the Kelly Gang*; *Green Grass, Running Water*; *Benang: from the Heart*; *Season of the Jew*; *Monday's Warriors*; *No Great Mischief*; and *The Heart of Redness*: all of these works self-consciously employ the questioning of authority, the self-reflexivity, the intertextuality, and the ironic use of historical referents that are the defining points of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction. These novels do indeed represent history in order to highlight the limitations of representation. However, they have employed an established aesthetic of postmodernism without subscribing to its "anti-totalizing ideology." (*Poetics* 231) One might argue that these novels are some sort

of *false* historiographic metafiction because they have been shown to *betray* this pan-postmodernist concern. One might try to argue that they are simply highlighting the postmodern paradox of representation by making exclusionary nationalist fictional assertions in a novel that is “meant” to question this kind of monolithic narrative. This might hold some water, if the moral/political location of each of the authors were not so closely tied to each author’s own personal history; his own *particular positional nationalism* as demonstrated in this thesis. This is why Attwell’s category of situational metafiction is important. It allows the specific insights of particular postcolonial situations to inform Hutcheon’s poetics of postmodernism. Hutcheon’s theory need not be abandoned, if it can admit to variations and moral/political bias (what I will call positionality) in some examples of her postmodern aesthetic. The postcolonial historiographic novel has (at least) two forms: historiographic metafiction and situational metafiction.

Attwell’s construct of situational metafiction, in asserting “regional and temporal specificity” sounds quite close to that of Hutcheon’s description of postmodern fiction in “Circling the Downspout of Empire”: “‘post-modern’ could . . . be used . . . to describe art which is paradoxically both self-reflexive (about its technique and material) and yet grounded in historical and political actuality” (168) However, Hutcheon only gets one half of the picture of most situational metafiction, the “problematizing” part. She misses the ideological part that often comes with a grounding in “political and historical actuality.” The overlap between postmodernism and postcolonialism that is situational metafiction happens where a *specific* grand narrative is interrogated from a *specific*

historico-political grounding. In this situation, where a particular grand narrative is addressed from a particular marginalized position, there is a dialectic within what Hutcheon labels a postmodern aesthetic.

Helen Tiffin, in her introduction to *Past the Last Post* furthers this point, in opposition to Hutcheon:

Pastiche and parody are not simply the new games Europeans play, nor the most recent intellectual self-indulgence of a Europe habituated to periodic fits of languid despair, but offer a key to destabilization and deconstruction of a repressive European archive. Far from endlessly deferring or denying meaning, these same tropes function as potential decolonizing strategies which invest (or reinvest) devalued “peripheries” with meaning. (x)

According to Tiffin, Hutcheon misses the point that sticking up for history’s “losers” is a binarist ideology, a dialectic unsuited to her anti-totalizing theory of postmodernism. While her idea that postmodernism takes a general humanism as its subject (“Circling” 168) is valid, when this humanism is particularized in a postmodern aesthetic, her poetics breaks down. This is one of many areas of Hutcheon’s poetics that requires the lens of situational metafiction. As Tiffin and Brydon suggest in *Decolonizing Strategies*, novels that exhibit many of Hutcheon’s postmodern signposts are not interested solely in “deferring meaning” or expressing an “anti-totalizing ideology.” There are issues that arise from the expression of these postcolonial dialectics—issues that will not be addressed if they are not identified. For example, for many writers and theorists, settler

victimization seems paltry and disingenuous when juxtaposed with the history of the invaded.

Hutcheon's formula of historiographic metafiction is problematized and ultimately refined by an investigation of the situational metafiction of the settler nations. Carey and Shadbolt write in opposition to the British Empire, but their application for victim status is what Johnston and Lawson call strategic disavowal—in consideration of what the victimized white settlers did to the indigenous populations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Asserting settler nationalism by ironically inscribing and deconstructing British imperial history, these antipodean writers assert a new monolithic center based on exclusionary settler nationalism. These examples show specifically how Hutcheon's theory needs to be rethought in terms of ideology and where it might arise. The settler nations, with their unresolved and bifurcated political natures, are fertile ground for political novels; situational metafiction in a postmodern aesthetic. These fictions are a good place to start the revision of Hutcheon's sometimes perceptive, but ultimately flawed and totalizing poetics.¹⁰ The novels I address invite the "grasp" of history, in the places where it suits their moral/political position; in the places where history does not, they employ a Hutcheonian "problematizing." This does not lead to an all encompassing anti-totalizing ideology, but a questioning of specific aspects of history, an endorsement of others: a calculated manipulation of a postmodern aesthetic to assert a specific moral/political position.

¹⁰ Recent work by Elias (*Sublime Desire*) builds on Hutcheon's construct of postmodernism, but as McHale suggests, "there is nothing here, as far as I can see, that is incompatible or irreconcilable with Hutcheon's approach. Quite the reverse, Elias has updated, extended, and complicated Hutcheon's version of postmodernism, giving it new 'legs'" (151).

Nünning's categories of implicit and explicit historiographic metafiction are a contribution to a "more finely nuanced poetics," but the work of McHale, Elias, or Nünning does not properly account for the nationalistic uses of these contemporary historical fictions. Tiffin suggests the *dynamic* postcolonial uses these postmodern techniques may be put to; my work examines these techniques in practice.

In her paper "Postmodern Afterthoughts," Hutcheon seems to be aware of some of the limitations of postmodern theory:

The trickiness of the politics of postmodernism did not only lie in its use of irony . . . it was also related to the broader issue of textualization. The negative argument was always that the self-consciously textual cannot "act" in the world. . . . The positive view was that the inscribing/undermining postmodern was self-reflexive and parodic in its reappropriation of existing meanings and its putting them to new and politicized uses, thereby allowing them to remain accessible . . . and powerful in a worldly way. (10)

Hutcheon adds that: "this paradoxically worldly textual dimension—of actual postmodern works of art—has remained understudied" (10). The study of this dimension, in reflexive and parodic historiographic novels of the settler nations, is the goal of this thesis. My assertion is that these texts, while displaying all the markers (parody, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, a questioning of the status of the historical referent and a general scepticism toward meta-narratives) of postmodernism, cannot be called postmodern in the way this area is currently theorized. It is more useful to look at them as

situational metafiction: postcolonial works that partake of aspects of a postmodern aesthetic without partaking in Hutcheon's anti-totalizing ideology. Situational metafiction, particularly those of the settler nations where it is the dominant form, are reflexive and parodic while remaining grounded in a particular political situation and ideology. They do not question the "possibility of historical knowledge," but challenge the historical knowledge of the imperial grand narratives or settler narratives from an oppositional and specific position, re-inscribing another version of the contested history.

Attwell's creation of the category of situational metafiction is an important contribution to postcolonial and postmodern theory; areas of study whose overlappings have not been adequately mapped. My work builds on that of Attwell by borrowing his category and applying it to the situational metafiction of all the settler nations. While important theorists like Hutcheon assert that "there is no dialectic in the postmodern" (*Poetics* x) she has not accounted for dialectical uses of the postmodern aesthetic. Her "totalizing model" ("Crossing Borders" 220) leads to an elision of an individual author's moral/political position, and pointed misreadings of influential authors such as J. M. Coetzee, Peter Carey, Thomas King, Zakes Mda, Kim Scott, Maurice Shadbolt and Alistair MacLeod, along with many other authors dealt with in this study. My work, by focusing on a specific political grouping (the settler nations), has uncovered a rupture in the totalizing theoretical apparatus of postmodernism, and a type of political/dialectical writing that is not accounted for by postcolonial or postmodern theory.

Chapter One

Situational Metafiction: The Example of Coetzee and Attwell

David Attwell's study *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* offers an account of the oeuvre of J. M. Coetzee, from *Dusklands* (1974) through to the publication of *Age of Iron* in 1990. Attwell contends that while the displacement of the narrative subject is progressive through this oeuvre (58), the relationship between reflexivity and history in Coetzee's writing is not typically postmodern, as the narrator "does not seek a mediating or neutral role" but the "implied narrator . . . shifts stance with and against the play of forces in South African culture" (3). Attwell asserts the "positionality" of such a stance, despite the postmodern aspects of Coetzee's writing, notably his problematizing of the role of the narrator and his problematizing of the writer's (and reader's) relationship with the historical referent. Reflexivity, parody, and intertextuality are seen as identifiers of historiographic metafiction, but Coetzee's works are not written to assert an anti-totalizing agenda, as are the novels subsumed under Hutcheon's category. The idea is put forward that in the politically charged arena of South African politics, Coetzee problematizes history *from a position*: "Coetzee's figuring of the tension between text and history is itself a historical act, one that must be read back into the discourses of South Africa" (3). The historically and positionally grounded nature of Coetzee's writing is asserted by Teresa Dovey and Derek Attridge. Dovey, in *The Novels of J. M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories*, asserts that "all of Coetzee's novels may, in effect, be read as expositions of the frontier mentality as it occurs in the existing forms of white South African writing" (69).

This chapter will focus on two of Coetzee's novels, one from his early career *Dusklands* (1974), and one more recent work, *Foe* (1986). By focusing on one early novel and one later novel, I will summarize Attwell's theory on Coetzee (the progressive displacement of the narrative subject through Coetzee's oeuvre) to show how even works such as *Foe*, (that have mistakenly through Hutcheon become paradigms of postmodern theory) are politically engaged in a specific and not an anti-totalizing context. Attwell's category of situational metafiction provides a theoretical framework for looking at postmodern influences on postcolonial fiction, one that is uniquely applicable to the contemporary historiographic fiction of the settler nations. The South African example is well applied to the other settler nations (Canada, Australia, New Zealand), former dominions that developed under different circumstances. As Gayatri Spivak quotes from Attwell: "Territorial imperialism . . . has given place to neocolonialism and now globalization . . . [but] the murderous prospect of Apartheid kept South Africa caught in that earlier dispensation" (*A Critique* 190). The lessons of South Africa are those of the other settler nations in that "earlier dispensation"; the parallels are uncomfortable and instructive. The issue of an indigenous majority (only present in one of the settler nations) elucidates the structures of power in the postcolonial settler nation. Again, as Derek Attridge suggests: "Lessons learned in South Africa have often proved valuable elsewhere, and the predicament literature found itself in during the struggle against apartheid has implications which extend to writing and reading in less politically fraught contexts" (2). While Coetzee's examination of his own complicity in the machinations of empire stems from his "politically fraught" context, his conclusions are applicable to all

of the cultural contexts that are rendered fictionally in this study, all clearly evincing the “frontier mentality” (69) referred to by Dovey.

Attwell, while his work focuses on close readings of Coetzee within his own political context, directly addresses the debate on postmodernism:

The argument I have conducted thus far, on the relationship between reflexivity and historicity, implicitly adopts a position in this [postmodernist] debate, one that shares with Linda Hutcheon a certain regard for the “paradoxically worldly” condition of forms of postmodern writing. My account of Coetzee’s fiction, however . . . [demonstrates how] its strength lies precisely in his ability to test its absorption in European traditions in the ethically and politically fraught arena of South Africa. The problem, in other words, is to understand Coetzee’s postmodernism in the light of his postcoloniality. (*J. M. Coetzee* 20)

In his paper “The Problem of History in the Fiction of J.M. Coetzee” Attwell describes this problem as seeing within Coetzee’s oeuvre, “the resources of postmodernism as enabling rather than undermining, an historical engagement” (96). This thesis draws on Attwell’s idea of situational metafiction as an interpretive model for the historiographic novel of the settler nations, and makes a clear distinction between these politically engaged novels and historiographic metafictions, the latter, which problematize the idea of historical knowledge in general and assert an “anti-totalizing agenda” without asserting a dialectic.

Situational metafiction is defined as follows:

This would be a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are *positioned* [italics mine] within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation. Of course, all of these things have a regional and temporal specificity. (*J. M. Coetzee* 20)

The example of Coetzee demonstrates how an author can problematize the role of the narrator while still *speaking from a position*. As Attwell points out in *Rewriting Modernity: Studies in Black South African Literature* “to decline the politics of historical discourses does not necessarily involve ahistoricism” (103). Attwell demonstrates how this declining of “the politics of historical discourses” is a political act; a principle well applied to the other historically engaged novels in this study.

Derek Attridge’s work also supports the view that Coetzee’s works are not typically postmodern, in that they are directly referential to a particular political situation:

It seems likely that the formal singularity of Coetzee’s works is an important part of their effectiveness as literature; what I wish to argue here is that this effectiveness is not separate from the importance these works have in the ethico-political realm, but rather to a large extent it constitutes that importance. Furthermore, I believe that this importance is considerable. Coetzee’s handling of formal properties is bound up with the capacity of his work to engage with—to stage, confront, apprehend, explore—otherness, and in this engagement it broaches the most

fundamental and widely significant issues involved in any consideration of ethics and politics. (6)

Here, Attridge gives support to the notion of a reflexive, parodic, and problematizing contemporary historiographic novel (Coetzee's "formal singularity") that is specifically political. While he focuses on calling this "modernist innovation," Attwell has a more precise and useful way of theorizing not just Coetzee, but a whole movement of reflexive, intertextual and parodic historical writing within the settler nations. Attwell describes Coetzee's work as being specifically postcolonial with postmodern influences. This distinction is important; the postcolonial situation is what gives rise to this hybrid of postcolonialism and postmodernism that Attwell has termed situational metafiction. Attwell's theorization of Coetzee in terms of situational metafiction provides a theoretical model for the historiographic novel of all the settler nations, which because of their "regional and temporal specificities," and their unproblematic political ideologies, are not accurately described as historiographic metafiction, although they meet the terms of its description.

Dusklands provides an excellent example of a text that participates in a postmodern aesthetic that "does not seek a mediating or neutral role in politics." It is written in a mode described by E. L. Doctorow as an attempt to create a "false document more valid, more real, more truthful than the true documents of the politicians or the journalists or psychologist" (cited in Green 132). As with Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the novel presumes to tell the "true and secret history" hidden by the machinations of Imperial history. As Attridge suggests: "The status of the main narrative

... is left vague, although its use of the first person together with the assertion that it has been merely 'edited' by S. J. Coetzee give the impression that it has some historical validity" (16). *Dusklands*, like *True History of the Kelly Gang*, appears to be typically postmodern in its concerns and its methods of addressing them; both novels have a focused intertextuality "where the interest lies in the critical distance set up between different discourses" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 33). In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the false archival information and notations, present as chapter headings, interact with the "found" letters of Ned Kelly and documented historical events. Between *Dusklands*' two narratives, "The Vietnam Project" and "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," the reader is encouraged to juxtapose these two visions of empire.¹¹ In this case, both novels problematize an imperial vision of history by referring to actual historical figures and events in a parodic fashion. Both employ a focused and typically postmodern use of intertextuality. Both assert a clear political position: *True History of the Kelly Gang* asserts Irish/Australian settler nationalism; *Dusklands* is a scathing critique of imperialism and white South African settler nationalism. While their agendas are opposing, both novels are similar in that they clearly assert a particular dialectic and partake of the postmodern aesthetic Hutcheon outlines for historiographic metafiction.

The first section of *Dusklands* is entitled "The Vietnam Project," the narrative of Eugene Dawn, in which the historical source is a 1968 volume entitled: *Can We Win In Vietnam? The American Dilemma* put together by war strategists at the Hudson Institute (Armbruster *et al.*). Dawn is a backroom boy who works for the Institute. While making

¹¹ What happens is somewhat akin to Sergei Eisenstein's montage theory in film, where through the juxtaposition of two images reader or viewer abstracts a concept.

reference to a real report and a real institute, this first section is rich in apparent postmodern play for Attridge:

On the first page of "The Vietnam Project" we become aware that a textual game is being played, for we learn that the narrator's supervisor is called Coetzee, and by the end of the novella the first-person present-tense narrative has become an impossibility, telling as it does of events that could not by any stretch of the imagination coincide with the recording of them. As if this were not enough, our attention is drawn to this impossibility in a classic metafictional comment by the putative narrator: "A Convention," he suddenly tells us while describing the moments just before he stabs his son, "allows me to record these details." (15-16)

Significantly, Both Attwell and Attridge argue that these metafictional aspects do not prevent this novel from being directly politically engaged, but are indeed the *means* of its positional political engagement.

In Coetzee's *Dusklands*, Dawn submits a Kurtzian report to his superiors at the Hudson Institute wherein "exterminating the brutes" is advocated through an escalation of the air war and spraying techniques: "I look forward to Phase V and the return of total air-war" (28), and "Why have we discontinued PROP-12?" (29). The cold murderous results of these actions are rationalized in a logic evocative of Lady Macbeth: "Until we reveal to ourselves and revel in the true meaning of our acts we will go on suffering the double penalty of guilt and ineffectualness" (30). Pointedly, Dawn breaks down mentally after his fragmented report is submitted; he is unable to follow his own imperial

prescription. Dawn's superficial marriage collapses and he is fired from the institute. He kidnaps his only child and moves into an anonymous motel in the San Bernardino Mountains in his home state of California to try his hand at writing. The senseless violence of Dawn's action, the stabbing of his own son, is the mental result of his embracing of the dehumanizing (imperial) violence of American soldiers against the Vietnamese. This examination of violence connects the two narratives of *Dusklands*, suggesting that the nature of power relations with the subaltern is the same in modern-day America or eighteenth-century South Africa. Both sections underline the idea that the narratives of empire need to be scrutinized, as they, like the bare violence of conquest, have historically been and continue to function as tools of domination.

Dovey connects the two narratives of *Dusklands* because of their parallel emphasis on historical reference: "Eugene Dawn, like S. J. Coetzee, invests his statements with moral authority . . . the numbered segments and mathematical formulae of his Introduction, like S. J. Coetzee's endnotes and empirical data, are an attempt to invoke the real" (129). Notably, this use of "extra textual authority" is one of Hutcheon's key markers of historiographic metafiction.

Attwell neatly summarizes the complex structure and conceits of the second part of *Dusklands*, "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee":

"The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" is a collection of four documents:

(1) a first-person account of Jacobus Coetzee's journey and return; (2)

the record of a second journey . . . amounting to a punitive raid on Jacobus

Coetzee's deserted servants; (3) an afterword by S. J. Coetzee; and (4) an

appendix, consisting of the “original” deposition or *Relaas* of 1760 by Jacobus Coetzee. . . . J. M. Coetzee, as “translator,” is S. J. Coetzee’s antagonist, for it quickly emerges that J. M. Coetzee subversively reproduces the work of S. J. Coetzee, both by dropping intertextual ironies and by actively rewriting the historical documents themselves; he thus explicitly breaks the conventionally neutral stance of translator. (*J. M. Coetzee* 44)

J. M. Coetzee as “translator,” although shown to be problematizing his own role and that of the referent, is far from being neutral. His moral/political position is a parodic interrogation of South African settler nationalism and its documents, which have been notably produced by the Van Riebeck society.

Attwell identifies the source of S. J. Coetzee’s version of pioneer history as being N. A. Coetzee, who in 1958 published, in the journal *Historia*, the essay entitled “Jacobus Coetzee: Die Boerpioneer van Groot-Namakwaland” (N. Coetzee). N. A. Coetzee’s actual account refers to Jacobus Coetzee as “one of the most noteworthy figures in our pioneer history” (*J. M. Coetzee* 45), a sentence referenced by the first sentence in the afterword, where Jacobus Coetzee is ranked “among the heroes who first ventured into the interior of Southern Africa” (108). Through a complex intertextuality we see that this is a position opposite to that taken by J. M. Coetzee, a poignant use of political parody and a bleak type of parody, interestingly, that provides much thought but little humour.¹² Dovey relates that “the Expedition of Captain Hendrik Hop corresponds, if only in date,

¹² This is an interesting point of contrast with postcolonial parodies such as King’s *Green Grass, Running Water* and Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, which are often humorous.

to a fact finding expedition under the official command of Captain Hop but effectively led by Jacobus Coetzee which retraced his steps of the previous year (113). *Dusklands* also offers a strong ideological contrast to Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, a novel, which by problematizing British imperial history in a postmodern fashion attempts to hide its Irish-Australian nationalist agenda, a subterfuge accepted by most American criticism of the book and endorsed strongly by Huggan. A markedly similar aesthetic—that of situational metafiction, is used by both authors to offer diametrically opposed visions of settler history.¹³ While readers may find J. M. Coetzee's sentiments more laudable, there is a parallel manipulation of historical sources to assert a specific political end; a political end not inherent in the original documents.

In "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," the mythology of imperial expansion is shown in stark terms, in order to highlight how much settler ideology departed from the reality it purported to describe:

My Hottentots and my oxen had given me faithful service; but the success of the expedition had flowed from my own enterprise and exertions. It was I who planned each day's march and scouted out on the road. It was I who conserved the strength of the oxen so that they should give of their best when the going was hard. . . . It was I who, when the men began to murmur on those last terrible days before we reached the Great River,

¹³ The reasons for J. M. Coetzee's objectivity in the interrogation of his own complicity in imperialism, as compared to the other settler authors in this study, seem to stem from the unavoidable political confrontation of settler/indigene in South Africa: the indigenous peoples of the other settler nations do not wield a comparable political power to those of South Africa.

restored order with a firm but fair hand. They saw me as their father.

They would have died without me. (Coetzee, *Dusklands* 64)

This passage clearly evokes Patrick White's groundbreaking novel *Voss*. The laying bare of the subject's position to expose self-serving inventiveness is also a characteristic of "The Vietnam Project," notably where the look in the eye of one Viet-Cong prisoner is "immediately generalized to all the Viet Cong" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 49). Dawn even mentions the novel as a source of inspiration once he has kidnapped his child and fled to hide in a California motel: "I have *Herzog* and *Voss*, two reputable books, at my elbow, and I spend many analytic hours puzzling out the tricks which their authors perform to give their monologues . . . the air of a real world through a looking glass" (Coetzee, *Dusklands* 38).¹⁴

The publication of *Voss* in 1960 was a clear harbinger of postcolonialism. In its interrogation of Australia's pioneer history, it based itself, like "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," and like all of the situational metafiction in this study, on actual events. *Voss* was inspired by the story of real-life German explorer Ludwig Leichhardt, who was lost in the Australian outback in 1848. As Thomas Keneally relates in "Show Me the Way to Go Home," "[White's] countrymen were baffled and somehow defeated by its savage judgements on their colonial and post-colonial vulgarity" (par. 1). Coetzee's work, in a similar vein, evoked a similar settler response in South Africa. The real author, Coetzee, in his first intertext, ironically admits of the strong influence of *Voss* on "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," and suggests this text offers a key to the understanding of *Dusklands*

¹⁴ Dawn's interest in *Herzog* perhaps comes from the similar intensive introspection of these two characters. His interest in *Voss* is a positional choice of the author.

as a whole. In both narratives, Coetzee exposes the colonizing mentality that invents the world most convenient for its theories and objectives.

This oppressive inventiveness is also emphasized through the form of the narrative, which Attridge describes as being “subversive” of its own “documentary trappings” in “the glaring inconsistencies among the three accounts of Jacobus’s expeditions” (16). Other notable interrogations of the role of the narrator include the two versions of the death of the loyal servant Kowler—illustrating the complete subordination of the record to Jacobus Coetzee’s reassertion of self. Importantly, these metafictional innovations do not problematize the nature of knowledge as a whole, but challenge a specific impulse of colonization in South Africa. Interestingly, the oppressive inventiveness of the frontier Boers is paralleled by an oppressive (as it is inventive and manipulative) inventiveness on the part of the author.

As Attwell correctly suggests, the issue interrogated by Coetzee is his own complicity in the narratives and machinations of imperialism:

The two narratives are connected, however, not only by their thematic resemblance but more substantially by the sense of displacement and complicity that Coetzee begins to feel as a white South African with an Afrikaner pedigree studying in Texas during the escalation of the Vietnam War . . . complicity is what the novel . . . undertakes to explore: Coetzee connects his ancestry and current experience, finding ways of making sense of the contiguity of American and Dutch imperialism in determining his *own* historical situation. (*J. M. Coetzee* 36-37)

Jacobus Coetzee (the pioneer character) paradoxically acknowledges the idea that the civilization he is bringing to these people has a degrading effect: "Let me say only that the wild Hottentots stood or sat with an assurance my Hottentots lacked, an assurance pleasing to the eye. A Hottentot gains much by contact with civilization but one cannot deny that he also loses something" (Coetzee, *Dusklands* 69). The pioneer narrative is laid bare; the myth of the bringing of the gift of civilization is shown in stark terms to be a justification invented for those without the stomach for the implications of imperialist expansion; the appropriation of land and resources at the *expense* of those who are given the gift of civilization

When Coetzee's servants abandon him in an attempt to regain this originary "assurance," he does not see the irony of his outlook. He hunts them down. His wording and subsequent actions deny the settlers' part in the "degradation of the Hottentot," while the juxtaposition of ideas elucidates Jacobus Coetzee (the character)'s settler hypocrisy. Coetzee's novel exposes this type of disavowal in the settler pioneer narrative, a type of disavowal of responsibility that Eugene Dawn advocates in Vietnam. There is also an instructive parallel in the strategic disavowal of the colonizing act, in the latter-day settler narratives of MacLeod, Shadbolt, and Carey, under scrutiny in this thesis. Whether an indictment or mythologization of settler history, all of the aforementioned novels are clearly referencing specific and localized political realities, and clearly take a *position* toward these political realities. All these "postmodern-looking" novels fit with Attwell's criteria of a "regional and temporal specificity" for situational metafiction.

Jacobus Coetzee's assertion that he is an instrument in the hands of history parodies a central religiously based idea held by many Voortrekkers during the colonization of Southern Africa. Old Testament scripture (notably the wandering of the Jews) was used as a justification for the Great Trek, away from the Cape Colony and onto "unsettled" indigenous lands. A markedly similar historicist justification of colonization is the leitmotif of Shadbolt's *Season of the Jew* and *Monday's Warriors*, where the inevitability of colonization in New Zealand is asserted to reassure a largely white settler audience. "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee" is rich in specific historically positioned parodic undertones; the parody, while widely applicable to settler societies, is being directed at a specific white settler population. This apparently postmodern aspect of Coetzee's writing does not participate in an "anti-totalizing agenda" in Hutcheonian terms. There are clear political goals to this work. Coetzee's problematization of the role of the narrator might also encourage a reader familiar with postmodern theory to identify *Dusklands* as historiographic metafiction, thereby missing the point of its inception.

To interrogate Coetzee's moral/political position, it is useful to look at his use of historical sources, notably what is added and omitted. From the *Relaas*¹⁵ of 1760 of Jacobus Coetzee, Coetzee (the author) omits several details that do not support his interrogation of white settler nationalism: "Omitted (among other details that disturb narrative coherence) are references to the friendly disposition of the Namaquas; the fact that Jacobus Coetzee was allowed to pass through the territory without interference; that

¹⁵ The *Relaas*, the fourth part, is the only historical document. It appears in *The Journal of Wikar, Coetsé and Van Reenan*, and can be retrieved from the Van Riebeeck Society (qtd. in Attwell, J.M. *Coetzee* 45).

there was an exchange of gifts; and, finally, that he returned *with one of the Namaquas* [italics mine] who wished to get to the Cape!" (Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee* 46). The desertion of Coetzee's servants, the central action of the novella, is also imposed upon this historical expedition. Like Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, documented history is used only when it suits the narrative goals of the author. As Attwell summarizes, "J. M. Coetzee's use of sources . . . would seem to be directly related to his critical intentions with respect to white nationalism, which found the confrontational version useful to its purposes" (*J. M. Coetzee* 45). Coetzee and Carey are both manipulating history in a seemingly postmodern fashion, but both have clear goals with respect to specific nationalist strains within their countries. Their clear *positionality* places the novels in this study more accurately in the category of situational metafiction than that of historiographic metafiction, despite participating in many aspects of this aesthetic.

For Attridge, Coetzee's political message is related in an aesthetic that is "willing to reveal its own dependence on convention" (17). He further asserts:

Coetzee's chiselled style can be seen . . . as drawing attention to itself in a way that undermines the illusion of pure expression; the slight self-consciousness of its shaped sentences . . . goes hand in hand with the intertextual allusiveness to reinforce the awareness that all representation is mediated through the discourses that culture provides. (74)

This *is* the political message, a message Coetzee repeatedly presents to South Africa. He wants readers to be aware of the colonizing powers of discourse. This directly political and locally specific message is presented by problematizing (through parody and

reflexivity) canonical colonial texts, such as the frontier narratives of the Voortrekkers, and the imperial fable of Robinson Crusoe.

The brutal violence of Eugene Dawn at the end of "The Vietnam Project" is intensified by this following scene from "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," where Jacobus Coetzee catches up with his servants who have abandoned him:

"Stand up," I said, "I am not playing, I'll shoot you right here." I held the muzzle of my gun against his forehead. "Stand up!" His face was quite empty. As I pressed the trigger he jerked his head and the shot missed. Scheffer was smoking his pipe and smiling. I blushed immoderately. I put my foot on Adonis's chest to hold him and reloaded. "Please, master, please," he said, "my arm is sore." I pushed the muzzle against his lips. "Take it," I said. He would not take it. I stamped. His lips began to seep blood, his jaw relaxed. I pushed the muzzle in till he began to gag. I held his head steady between my ankles. Behind me his sphincter gave way and a rich stench filled the air. "Watch your manners, hotnot," I said. I regretted this vulgarity. The shot sounded as minor as a shot fired in the sand. Whatever happened in the pap in his head left his eyes crossed. Scheffer inspected and laughed. (*Dusklands* 104)

This graphically disturbing murder scene, indicted by Peter Knox-Shaw as endorsing "true savagery" (qtd. in Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 54), is conversely seen by Attwell as only comprehensible within the spatial and temporal specificity of modern South Africa:

I would argue that the violence of the passage and others like it cannot satisfactorily be contained in interpretation, for the aggressiveness remains a *social* fact that readers have and will continue to give witness to. Coetzee's [oeuvre takes on] in a combative sense, the legacy of colonialism and its discourses; *Dusklands*' explosive aggressiveness is a measure of the extent to which this struggle is not only within the conventions of fiction but also with the social and moral framework in which those conventions reside. The game of power is both a form of critical, historical diagnosis, and a fierce attack on the sensibility of liberal humanism in South Africa. (*J. M. Coetzee 55*)

In other words, this unbridled presentation of violence is *forcing* white South Africa to face the violence that is inherent in their Apartheid-based society in 1972. Attwell suggests an extremely politically engaged reading of what could be misconstrued as historiographic metafiction.

Through the juxtaposition of *Dusklands*' two narratives, the reader is encouraged to view the machinations of empire and colonization in the context of America and South Africa. These nations are paralleled in order to indict specific forms of colonial and imperial oppression, and to suggest that there are important common elements in the oppression of the subaltern, in the various narratives of colonialism. There is knowledge to be gleaned by comparing these examples of oppression; this work asserts an anti-imperial ideology more politically and historically grounded than postmodern

historiographic metafiction, with their lack of dialectic and general anti-totalizing agendas.

As the weakened Jacobus Coetzee is carried symbolically by his loyal black servant, Kowler, the near drowned castaway, Susan Barton, is carried to Cruso by the African slave version of Friday in Coetzee's *Foe*, which is a postcolonial retelling of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Both of the "carryings" resonate metaphorically within modern South Africa, even post 1994, and *Foe* continues in the spirit and aesthetic of *Dusklands* to be "a fierce attack on the sensibility of liberal humanism in South Africa" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 55). Attwell feels that *Foe* is misunderstood, if taken to be historiographic metafiction: "*Foe* . . . while apparently rich in postmodern play is also a sceptical, indeed scrupulous, interrogation of the authority of white South African authorship" (*J. M. Coetzee* 89). I would add to this that here the author, as I have alleged is the case in *Dusklands*, is a metonymic representation of white South Africa, and its authority.

As Spivak suggests, although from the outset it is Barton's retelling of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Foe* is actually Friday's tale:

This novel reopens two English texts in which the early eighteenth century tried to constitute marginality: Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Roxanna*. In *Crusoe*, the white man marginalized in the forest encounters Friday the savage in the margin. In *Roxanna*, the individualist female infiltrates nascent bourgeois society. In Coetzee's novel, a double gesture is performed. In the narrative, Roxanna begins her construction of

the marginal where she is, but when her project approaches fulfillment, the text steps in and reminds us that Friday is in the margin as such, the placeholder (*lieutenant*) of the wholly other. . . . (174)

In this complex intertextuality, there is what Hutcheon would refer to, in *A Theory of Parody* as “extra-mural parody” (104). For Hutcheon, postmodern parody’s disengagement with the world is postulated on the premise that works that parody works of art are extra-mural and those that parody actual events are intramural and therefore satirical.¹⁶ While Hutcheon’s distinctions are useful to a point, they cause her to miss the pointed referentiality of *Foe*, something Spivak, Dovey, Attridge and Attwell all clearly recognize.

Hutcheon uses *Foe* extensively as a model of postmodern writing, but even in her analysis the localized political concerns (what I refer to as positionality) of this novel are made clear. The first part of her analysis characterizes *Foe* as historiographic metafiction: “The final scene of the novel returns to [the] debate about the nature and function of linguistic expression and reference and manages to problematize even further the entire novel’s relation to fictive and intertextual, as well as political reality” (*Poetics* 150). However, in the same paragraph Hutcheon adds: “That the silenced Friday is Black and Coetzee South African is part of the literary and material/political context of the novel” (150). Coetzee himself has pointed out in an interview that in *Robinson Crusoe*, “Friday is a handsome Carib youth with near European features. In *Foe* he is an African” (Coetzee, “Interview” 463). While Attwell agrees with Ina Gräbe that the novel favours

¹⁶ Hutcheon writes of the distinction between parody and satire in *A Theory of Parody*: “Parody is an ‘intramural’ form with aesthetic norms, and satire’s ‘extramural’ norms are social or moral” (25).

“the signifier over the signified,” he qualifies his agreement in saying that: “In this case the signifier itself is localized in allusive ways in order to make this story of storytelling responsive to the conditions that writers like Coetzee are forced to confront” (*J. M. Coetzee* 104). Hutcheon’s “political context,” is what Attwell sees as the spatial and temporal specificity of situational metafiction; a description that resonates with what Slemon refers to as the “historically grounded” strategies of postcolonial writing.

Hutcheon even recognizes the deliberate association with South Africa that has been implied by making Friday into an African, which he was not in his previous manifestation in *Robinson Crusoe*. This admission is incompatible with her assertion that *Foe* is historiographic metafiction. For in her own words: “There is no dialectic in the postmodern” (*Poetics* x). Here she admits a dialectic. The clear referentiality of making Friday an African shows there *is* a specific dialectic in *Foe*. The problem is that *Foe*, because of its use of “postmodern” techniques, is described incorrectly by Hutcheon as historiographic metafiction. Coetzee’s manipulation of Friday’s race *asserts* the very dialectic that Hutcheon denies for *Foe* as historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon’s theory, while it does seem to describe a particular postmodern school of writing, needs to be expanded to account for (unanticipated) localized political uses of the postmodern techniques of parody, intertextuality, and self-reflexivity found repeatedly in the historiographic fiction of the settler nations. Many situational metafiction have been mislabelled as historiographic metafiction, and for that reason have been misunderstood.

The particularized (and unproblematized) referentiality of *Foe* goes well beyond the making of Friday into an African. As Attwell explains:

The image of a beleaguered, hopeful Susan Barton—in her struggle to get her story told and in her relationship with Foe, author and agent of authorization—is strongly reminiscent of [Olive] Schreiner's situation in London in 1881-82, when she was looking for a publisher for *African Farm*. . . . One of the paradoxes that Schreiner lived out was that, although she made her break with the colonial adventure, it was nevertheless in the metropolis that she had to seek publication. . . . Such is Susan Barton's lot, too: she protects her version of the island but needs Foe to authorize it, to provide access to tradition and the institution of letters. (*J. M. Coetzee* 106)

Coetzee, by aligning Barton with Schreiner, suggests the limitations of the liberal humanist tradition in South Africa, condemning the processes of colonialism both the real-life Schreiner and the fictional Barton themselves condemn but nevertheless use. Barton and Schreiner are therefore complicit with the processes they seek to condemn. Coetzee's own complicity in this system is also implicit.

In this rewriting of Defoe's classic allegory of imperialism, Coetzee takes on the western imperialist impulse as a whole, but does so from a particularized South African position. Defoe's model for Crusoe was acknowledged to be the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk. In his second sequel Defoe stated that "there is a man alive, and well known too, the actions of whose life are the just subject of these volumes, and to whom all or most part of the story most directly alludes" (Souhami 197). An interrogation of Selkirk's history shows that the Crusoe was a much sanitized version of Selkirk. In the first

edition, the book was prefaced as being written by Crusoe himself, and was widely believed to be a factual account. In these pretensions of biography, Defoe is much like Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang*; the concept of the *truth* being used partly as a means of creating interest in the tale. Selkirk was on Juan Fernandez for four, not twenty-eight years; there were no cannibals, there was no Friday, and Selkirk's "piety" was greatly in question.¹⁷ In Diana Souhami's book *Selkirk's Island: The True and Strange Adventures of the Real Robinson Crusoe* the moral tale of Robinson Crusoe is taken to task, by a thorough examination of its sources. In Defoe's narrative: "[Selkirk] was 'gentrified,' with a 'county seat,' a bower, kitchen, orchard and winter stores. He was 'removed from all the wickedness of the world . . . the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life.' No goat [copulation] for Crusoe" (198). Coetzee, by obliquely referencing Selkirk as the original source of the story, offers an effective attack on a colonial legacy, one that is written in "peculiarly South Africa terms"—using the particular to mount attack on universal principles of exploitation of the subaltern. Coetzee problematizes Defoe's Christian morality tale by making a Crusoe who is more like the biographical Selkirk we see in Souhami's book. Attwell concurs that "Coetzee's Cruso . . . is closer . . . to Defoe's model, Alexander Selkirk" (*J. M. Coetzee* 107). Attwell sees this choice to model his "Cruso" on Selkirk rather than Crusoe as responsive to the South African situation. Selkirk was not much like the pious Robinson Crusoe, but bears a strong resemblance, both in character and biography, to Coetzee's Cruso. Coetzee chose to obliquely reference known aspects of Selkirk's biography, as this hardened, stubborn,

¹⁷ Souhami relates how Selkirk later became a hunter of pirates (as he had formerly been himself) and a bigamist, giving further evidence that the model for Selkirk's "piety" was an invention.

righteous, and taciturn man was a better model for the South African slave owner his moral/political aesthetic wished to interrogate and expose.

Selkirk went to sea after an incident where he beat his brother with a cudgel. He dragged both his brother and father to the ground and beat his mother when she tried to intervene. He was ordered to “be rebuked in the face of the Congregation for his scandalous Carriage” (Souhami 55). In these circumstances, at the age of twenty three, Selkirk went to sea as a privateer. Souhami relates that “the privateers considered themselves English, civilized and entitled” (59). Along the way, at St Jago, they took on slaves to whom they gave “meager food rations and hard lessons in obedience” (59). After an argument with Captain Stradling of the *Cinque Ports*, Selkirk was abandoned on Juan Fernandez. There were many signs of recent occupation by Europeans, including a rough hut made of sailcloth.

Selkirk, like Crusoe, sustained himself with the reading of scripture and felt the island, hade made him “a better Christian” (Souhami 106). This is the aspect of Selkirk’s story most heavily drawn upon by Defoe, seeing the bareness of the island as a retreat from the baser influences of the world: “Thus I lived comfortably, my mind entirely composed by resigning to the will of God, and throwing myself wholly on the disposal of his providence” (Defoe 146). Selkirk, unlike the pious Crusoe, divided his time between scripture and copulating with goats. Coetzee draws on Selkirk’s “taciturn resistance and self-absorption, his refusal to keep a journal and his reluctance to do anything to save himself” (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 107). The notion of the pious Crusoe is problematized by the tight lipped slave master *Cruso*, Coetzee drawing on Defoe’s original model to

point out the less Christian aspects of English expansion into the Americas. As Souhami points out the privateers were “strategic thieves” whose regular activities included rape and pillage, murder, and buggery (139). Selkirk himself, once rescued and given control of a ship, abandoned several “useless Negroes” to the fate he had just escaped, castaway on an unfamiliar shore (152).

Coetzee’s rewriting addresses these darker aspects of the privateer in his depiction of Cruso, effectively taking issue with the supposed Christian piety of a brutal raider, and the imperial ideology that sanctioned his brutal oppression of the subaltern for purely economic reasons. The South African implications of this relationship are clear. The historical Selkirk, like Coetzee’s Cruso, was a ruined man once he left his island:

There was a rocky piece of land, high and fissured with rocks behind his father’s house. Here he built a kind of cave. His consolation in the day was to be there alone and watch the sea. He watched perhaps for a passing sail. “O my beloved island!” he was supposed to have said. “I wish I had never left thee.” (Souhami 190)

Coetzee has his Cruso die on ship, not wishing to leave. Susan Barton, the liberal humanist figure, admits that he would have survived had he stayed on his island. His stubbornness to leave his island is an allegory of the stubbornness of white South Africa to give up their African “island” of Apartheid: “In truth it was not fear of pirates or cannibals that held him from making bonfires or dancing about on the hilltop waving his hat, but indifference to salvation, and habit, and the stubbornness of old age” (Coetzee, *Foe* 14). Thus Coetzee, by drawing more on the original narrative of Selkirk, invents a

character who symbolizes the stubbornness and indifference of white South Africa to the opinion of its indigenous majority and the opinion of the world. Dovey suggests that "it is Cruso's life-denying insistence on separateness that most closely approximates Afrikaner nationalism and Apartheid" (351). Barton says of Cruso: "The simple truth was, Cruso would brook no change on his island" (Coetzee, *Foe* 27). This "life denying insistence on separateness" is not found in Defoe's novel, but has its source in biographical information about Alexander Selkirk from which Coetzee drew his model of Cruso. This is a clear example of politically positional use of intertextuality.

While Attwell does not see the full implications of the island allegory, he is clear on the role of Friday: "Friday's contextualization is most clearly rendered . . . in his mutilation and lack of speech" (*J. M. Coetzee* 108). This lack of speech is clearly referential to the fact that the indigenous majority of Apartheid South Africa was denied a "voice" in the political structure of their country, as they were not represented in parliament. Neville Alexander is the co-founder of the National Liberation Front in South Africa and spent ten years on Robben Island, charged with conspiracy to commit sabotage. He is currently the head of Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA), and his recent work has "focused on the tension between multilingualism and the hegemony of English in the public sphere" (par 1). In his review of *Foe* entitled "A Plea for a New World," he comments: "The apparent inaccessibility of Friday's world to the Europeans in this story is an artist's devastating judgement of the crippling anti-humanist consequences of colonialism and racism in the self-confident

white world" (38). The South African context that eluded North American theorists was very clear to those who suffered directly under the Apartheid regime.

In drawing the character of Friday, Defoe seems to have drawn on the story of Will, a Meskito Indian who was abandoned on Juan Fernandez before Selkirk (they were not there at the same time). Defoe learned of Will through William Dampier's journals, the captain who rescued Selkirk and whose journals Defoe used as a source. Like Friday, Will (the Meskito Indian) was resourceful, outlasting the other castaway on the island by moving high into the mountains. He had a knife and a gun, out of which he made tools for fishing and hunting. When he saw Dampier's ship, the *Batchelor's Delight* (a name used in Defoe's book) he roasted three goats and waited for the men to arrive:

When we landed a Meskito Indian named Robin, first leaped ashore and running to his Brother Meskito Man, threw himself flat on his face at his feet, who helping him up, and embracing him, fell flat on his face on the ground at Robin's feet, and was by him taken up also. (Souhami 41)

This passage seems to have been Defoe's source for the first encounter between Crusoe and Friday:

I beckoned him to come to me, and gave him all the signs of encouragement I could think of, and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down every ten or twelve steps in token of acknowledgement for my saving his life. I smiled at him, and looked pleasantly, and beckoned to him to come still nearer; at length he came close to me, and then he kneeled down again, kissed the ground, and laid his head upon the ground,

and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head; this it seems was in token of swearing to be my slave for ever. . . . (207)

Defoe appropriates the greeting ritual of the Meskito Indians transforming a greeting into a gesture of colonial submission; Crusoe assuming without a word spoken that Friday is “swearing to be [his] slave for ever” (207). Self-serving interpretations of the subaltern are shown in *Foe* to be a colonial legacy; the rationalizations of Cruso and Defoe are the rationalizations of white settler nationalists and the liberal humanists of South Africa.¹⁸ Coetzee’s version, in a complex intertextuality, draws on Dampier’s journal to problematize Defoe’s appropriation.

Coetzee’s Friday is a direct challenge to the Friday of Defoe who is presented as follows:

for never man had a more faithful, loving, sincere servant, than Friday was to me; without passions, sullenness, or designs, perfectly obliged and engaged; his very affections were ty’d to me, like those of a child to a father; and I dare say he would have sacrificed his life for the saving mine upon any occasion whatsoever. . . . (212)

Barton’s account of this relationship is quite different: “the unnatural years Friday had spent with Cruso had deadened his heart, making him cold, incurious, like an animal

¹⁸ Defoe, an ardent imperialist, wrote in *Essay on the South Sea Trade* that: “We shall, under the Protection, in the Name, and by the Power of Her Majesty, Seize, Take and Possess such Port or Place, or Places, Land, Territory, Country or Dominion, *call it what you please*, as we see fit in *America*, and *Keep it for our own*. Keeping it implies Planting, Settling, Inhabiting, Spreading, and all that is usual in such Cases . . .” (qtd. in Souhami 184).

wrapped entirely in itself" (Coetzee, *Foe* 70). Barton complains to Foe about Friday's mysterious "mopes" and reveals that on Crusoe's island Friday would:

without reason . . . lay down his tools and disappear to some sequestered corner of the island, and then a day later come back and resume his chores as if nothing had intervened. Now he mopes about the passageways or stands as the door, longing to escape, afraid to venture out; or else lies abed and pretends not to hear when I call him. (*Foe* 78)

Friday's passive resistance (well-explained by Fanon is his description of "the myth of the lazy nigger") is the only avenue open to him. Barton's blindness in her complicity to the subordination of the subaltern is clear in her statement that he had "no reason" for his actions. The reader is shown an attitude toward the subaltern, prevalent in South African white nationalism, a subjugating attitude that declines to even consider the perspective of the other, assuming they have no capacity for "civilized" contemplation.

Indeed, Barton often describes Friday in terms of an animal. This passage explains the white South African's fear of a black South Africa:

I think of a watch-dog, raised with kindness but kept from birth behind a locked gate. When at last such a dog escapes, the gate having been left open, let us say, the world appears to it so vast, so strange, so full of troubling sights and smells, that it snarls at the first creature to approach, and leaps at its throat, after which it is marked down as vicious, and chained to a post for the rest of its days. (Coetzee, *Foe* 80)

This was a common argument for the Apartheid state; that the indigenous majority could not handle their freedom, as they would not understand it. The image of a vicious animal “raised with kindness” mirrors the lie of Apartheid; that it was in the interests of the black majority and that it was instituted “with kindness.”

Coetzee’s narrative pointedly criticizes Defoe’s narrative in other ways, drawing attention to his wilful and self-serving inventions and linking them to an Apartheid mentality. Crusoe tells Barton two versions of Friday’s origins. One version is directly from Defoe where the grateful and subservient Friday is saved from being devoured by fellow cannibals; the other version is reminiscent of the tale of the African boy Xury, who in Defoe’s novel, helps Crusoe and is sold by Crusoe to slavers for his efforts: “But I was very loath to sell my poor boy’s liberty, who had assisted me so faithfully in procuring my own” (54). In the end Crusoe takes “60 pieces of eight” for Xury, along with a slaver’s promise that he would set him free in ten years, if he turned Christian. This incident is parodied in *Foe*, when Barton negotiates with a ship’s captain to have Friday let off “in Africa,” believing he would find his way for “when the time comes” she is “convinced he will know” (109). The captain promises to set Friday ashore “at the Cape of Good Hope” (111); it is significant that this South African reference is the only specific reference to any location in Africa. In a similar vein that seems to take issue with Crusoe’s specious and self-serving rationalizations toward Xury, Coetzee’s Crusoe rationalizes Friday’s lot: “If Providence were to watch over all of us . . . who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar cane?” (*Foe* 23). This mentality is alive and well in modern South Africa, and could be phrased as: “Who would be left to dig the

diamonds and gold from the South African earth?" The "necessity" of the subaltern is a persistent cultural narrative, an idea historically given scope and support by works like *Robinson Crusoe*.

Barton's attitudes slowly begin to sound like those of Cruso, Coetzee mocking the liberal humanist desire to distance oneself from the Afrikaner system they supported: "I . . . am turning Friday into a laundryman; for otherwise idleness will destroy him" (*Foe* 56). Barton's participation in the subjugation of the subaltern comes through clearly in her assumptions about Friday: "So I concluded he had been making an offering to the god of the waves to cause the fish to run plentifully, or performing some other such superstitious observance" (31). Perhaps the strongest indictment of South African liberal humanism comes when a ship arrives on the island. Cruso, unlike Selkirk or Crusoe, does not want to leave his island, a symbolic gesture toward the stubbornness of Afrikaner nationalism and their "island" state, but Cruso is, as was the Apartheid state, too weak to resist. Friday, however, is taken by force, at the insistence of Barton:

"There is another person on this island," I told the ship's master. "He is a Negro slave, his name is Friday, and he is fled among the crags above the north shore. Nothing you say will persuade him to yield himself up, for he has no understanding of words or power of speech. It will cost great effort to take him. Nevertheless, I beseech you to send your men ashore again; inasmuch as Friday is a slave and a child, it is our duty to care for him in all things, and not abandon him to a solitude worse than death." (Coetzee, *Foe* 39)

The fact that Friday ran away and fought to maintain this “solitude worse than death” is conveniently ignored by Barton, who despite her constant complaints, has found herself a gardener and laundryman who requires no pay. The South African implications of these details are not lost on South African readers, or on anyone who has an experience of this country.

Spivak endorses this specifically South African reading of this novel:

“David Attwell has pointed out the existence of the notion of a colonialism of a special type (what he calls colonial postcolonialism) that did not, by and large, export surplus value. He makes the interesting suggestion that this, too, might explain Cruso’s noncommittal attitude toward classic metropolitan interests” (191). The political allegory of South Africa in all its complexity is made clear. Spivak cautions “settler colonies like South Africa, Australia, Canada and the United States (omitting New Zealand for some reason) must be considered separately from the rest of Africa, India, and the Caribbean” (192). This “separate consideration” of the settler nations is important for the dismantling of overarching assumptions in postcolonial theory.

Near the end of the novel, Barton derides Foe for not helping his boy Jack get away from the life of a pickpocket. The hypocrisy of her liberal humanism is clear when we reflect on the reasons for Friday’s transportation to England. Foe suggests, “Jack has his own life to live” to which Barton replies: “Friday too has a life of his own . . . but I do not therefore turn him out on the streets.” Foe asks why she does not: “Because he is helpless. . . . Because London is strange to him. Because he would be taken for a runaway, and sold, and transported to Jamaica” (128). The situation Friday finds himself

in is the direct result of the actions and assumptions of Barton, which mirror those of the supposedly hard-line Cruso. The suggestion from the “gleam of understanding” in Friday’s eye at this exchange is a confirmation of the complicity of Barton’s liberal humanism (128); a system she gives the appearance of deploring, but like Cruso, benefits from the servitude and subjection of the subaltern. The suggestion is that the two, the slave master and the liberal humanist, are, in terms of perpetuating the Apartheid system, different part of the same mechanism. Foe, while not deploring the system, does not delude himself about its nature, as does Barton.

While Barton tries to rationalize her subordination of Friday: “Friday was not my slave but Cruso’s, and is a free man now. He cannot even be said to be a servant, so idle is his life” (76). Her rationalizations eventually break down, admitting the true state of affairs in her relationship with Friday, and, by association, the relationship of the white liberal humanist with the black South African subaltern:

I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence.
But is this the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I
use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will. At such
times I understand why Cruso preferred not to disturb his muteness. I
understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner. Do
you think less of me for this confession? (61)

Barton in her understanding of why “Cruso preferred not to disturb [Friday’s] muteness” shows a burgeoning understanding of her liberal humanist complicity in the Apartheid regime. As she admits in a moment of candour: “For myself I do not care how much he

sings and dances so long as he carries out his few duties" (92). One is reminded of the novels of Nadine Gordimer, and her sympathetic white characters' warm relationships with their black servants (*July's People*, *Burger's Daughter*). The fact that servants would be employed as such, and that this relation perpetuates an internecine dialectic, is an idea not interrogated by Gordimer.

The liberal humanist tradition of Barton's model Olive Schreiner is connected to that of Virginia Woolf. Claims to "Truth" are directly lampooned through Barton's musings on writing: "To tell the truth in all its substance you must have quiet, and a comfortable chair away from all distraction . . ." (51). While Coetzee problematizes the idea of absolute truth, it is important to recognize that he is taking issue with a liberal humanist tradition, that he is criticizing a particular type of white South African nationalism with which this liberal humanist tradition is complicit. This is a specific political stance and not a generalized anti-totalizing agenda, as Hutcheon has it by labelling *Foe* as historiographic metafiction.

Dovey argues that Coetzee portrays Barton in this way in order to emphasize that "the more prominent forms of Western feminism have appropriated the colonized subject to their own ends, using the native Other as a convenient figure for feminine difference" (356-66). Attridge points out that "the most fundamental silence is itself produced by . . . the dominant discourse" (82). He sees the figure of Friday as indicative of a larger process of mental colonization:

All canons rest on exclusion; the voice they give to some can be heard only by virtue of the silence they impose on others. But it is not just a

silencing by exclusion; it is a silencing by *inclusion* as well: any voice we can hear is by that very fact purged of its uniqueness and alterity. Who is Friday's foe, who has cut out his tongue and made it impossible for his story to be heard? Is it perhaps Foe, the writer, the one who tells people's stories . . . driving into deeper and deeper silence that which his discourse necessarily excludes? (82-83)

This "silencing by inclusion" is a central focus of King's *Green Grass Running Water*, wherein the author problematizes the "accepted" versions of the Native American in literature and popular culture. Moreover, this silencing is the *tactic* of Shadbolt's White New Zealand nationalist texts, *Monday's Warriors* and *Season of the Jew*, where the author presumes to give voice to heroes of the Maori resistance of the nineteenth century—a voice that finds colonization inevitable and even acceptable. As this thesis will demonstrate, situational metafiction can be insidious, as well as enlightening. These works (in all cases) by definition, "have a regional and temporal specificity" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 20).

The repeated assumption that Friday cannot understand words is significant in an intertextual sense, as his character in Defoe's novel quickly learns English. This is a pointed attack on the ingrained underestimation of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, another slaver's stratagem. Indeed, as Attridge points out: "our only reason for believing that Friday has been mutilated is Barton's report of Cruso's statement to this effect; she herself has no evidence of the cause of Friday's speechlessness, as she finds herself unable to look in his mouth" (81). Barton's character admits that "We must

cultivate, all of us, a certain ignorance, a certain blindness, or society will not be tolerable" (106). By coupling with Foe, Barton's liberal humanism becomes complicit with Foe's mental colonization, as she became complicit with Cruso's Apartheid regime by coupling with him.

The extent of Barton's wilful ignorance is seen in her comment to Friday (who she contends does not understand words) about the upcoming publication of their story: "Are you not filled with joy to know that you will live forever, after a manner" (58). Here the colonizing power of narrative (like that of Robinson Crusoe or the cultural narratives of the Apartheid regime) is ruthlessly interrogated. About Friday Barton says: "No matter what he is to himself . . . what he is to the world is what I make of him. Therefore the silence of Friday is a helpless silence. He is the child of silence, a child unborn, a child waiting to be born that cannot be born" (122).

The notion that Friday, as representative of the black South African, would want to be included within the cultural narrative of white South Africa is an assumption of cultural superiority, a common assumption in the historical narratives of all the settler nations. One need only look at the paternalistic tone of texts like Shadbolt's *Monday's Warriors* to see parallels with Barton's "wilful ignorance" of the state of aboriginal relations perhaps best illustrated in her comment: "He does not understand that I am leading him to freedom" (100).

As Njabulo Ndebele contends:

There have been diverse cultural interests to whom the challenge of the future has involved the need to open up cultural and educational centers to

all races. Missing in these admirable acts of goodwill is an accompanying need to alter fundamentally the nature of cultural practice itself. It is almost always assumed that, upon being admitted, the oppressed will certainly like what they find. (qtd. in Attridge 85)

Attridge connects the two novels addressed by this chapter:

[*Foe* and *Dusklands* constitute a] critique of the traditional unproblematic notion of the canon, showing it to be the reflection of a transcendental humanism oblivious to the role of cultural production and historical materiality. This would suggest one of the ways in which these novels challenge the structures of apartheid, a political and social system whose founding narratives claim to reflect a prior and “natural” truth of racial superiority. (80)

This assumption and the problems inherent within it, are addressed by these words of Barton, who like liberal white South Africa, was beginning to see through her own created dichotomy: “Was it possible for anyone, however benighted by a lifetime of dumb servitude, to be as stupid as Friday seemed? Could it be that somewhere within him he was laughing at my efforts to bring him nearer to a state of speech?” (146). The “kind master” Barton’s words echo the racist Apartheid mentality still very much alive in post-Apartheid South Africa. Foe himself ironically provides the answer to her assumptions: “as it was a slaver’s stratagem to rob Friday of his tongue, may it not be a slaver’s stratagem to hold him in subjection while we cavil over words in a dispute we know to be endless?” (150).

The fact that white South Africa benefited from not solving these problems is presented in Mda's novel *The Heart of Redness*. In a dispute among white South Africans (many of whom, like Coetzee himself has done, are immigrating to Australia) John Dalton points out the white liberal hypocrisy:

Yes, you prided yourselves as liberals. . . . But now you can't face the reality of a black-dominated government. It is clear that while you were shouting against the injustices of the system, secretly you thanked God for the National Party which introduced and preserved that very system for forty-six years. (161)

Coetzee pointedly illustrates this liberal hypocrisy when Barton finds Friday seated at Foe's desk:

It was Friday, with Foe's robes on his back and Foe's wig, filthy as a bird's nest, on his head. In his hand, poised over Foe's papers, he held a quill with a drop of black ink glistening at its tip. I gave a cry and sprang forward to snatch it away. (151)

Barton, the liberal humanist, only wants to give the appearance of wanting to give Friday a voice; she is not prepared for the real implications of this idea. The fear of an emergent black nationalism is also clear in Barton's musings on Friday's "cannibalism." The liberal humanist begins to sympathize with Crusoe, and assumes that he did cut out Friday's tongue, as Barton decides "for his sins" (95). Her fear of Friday's "teeth" is a fear of a black South Africa about which she suggests: "Better had he drawn his teeth

instead" (95). Friday's silence is a direct reference to the enforced political silence of the black South African majority.

Cruso's island, symbolic of South Africa and its legitimacy, is interrogated, in allegorical terms. Barton asks: "The island was Cruso's (yet by what right? by the law of islands? is there such a law?)" (51). In her interrogation of entitlement, Barton also begins to question the story of Friday's tongue: "Your master says the slavers cut it out. . . Is the truth that your master cut it out himself and blamed the slavers?" (84). Coetzee illustrates the white nationalist and the liberal humanist impulse to defer blame to the predecessor and to regard oppression of the subaltern in terms of necessity and responsibility. Coetzee shows the hypocrisy of such a stance of "aboriginal protection", as it matters little to the subaltern who created their current subjugation, when others maintain this state. This argument is extended: "Is there something in the condition of slavehood that invades the heart and makes a slave a slave for life?" (85). The implicit question behind this question being "is there a good reason, a "slaver's stratagem," for assuming this is the case?

Barton tries to humour Friday, and plays along with his "tune of six notes." She admits that "the music we made was not pleasing." She does not realize that Friday's monotonous tune is a form of resistance—not, as she assumes "a form of incuriosity . . . a form of sloth" (Coetzee, *Foe* 95).¹⁹ As Fanon has shown, it is a natural resistance to be "lazy" about tasks that are enforced upon an unwilling subject. As Barton realizes that

¹⁹ A subaltern has few forms of resistance available beyond armed uprising, which indeed became the case in South Africa in the 1980s. Shortly after the publication of *Foe*, the advent of MK, Nelson Mandela's armed wing of the ANC, became known to the world. Friday's silence can be interpreted as this pre-revolutionary potential.

while she played music to Friday's dancing "thinking he and I had made a consort, he had been insensible of me . . . bitterly I began to recognize that it might not be mere dullness that kept him shut up in himself, nor the accident of the loss of his tongue, nor even an incapacity to distinguish speech from babbling, but a disdain for intercourse with me" (98). Friday's ignoring of Barton has a North American parallel. In the preface to Thomas King's 1983 interview with N. Scott Momaday, King quotes Momaday's seminal Native American novel, *House Made of Dawn*, concerning the Pueblo response to the Spanish: "They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting." ("Literature" 167) To which King adds: "Momaday's description of this resistance, this 'outwaiting' provides a key to understanding the Indian world. It is a notion that is well understood by Indian people" (167). This "outwaiting" is well-applied to Coetzee's version of the South African indigene.

"Outwaiting" is represented in Friday's speechlessness, but the novel's ending pointedly has this speech emerging, almost prophetically predicting the future of South Africa's black majority. The novel ends with a renunciation of Foe, Barton, and white South African authorship: "In the third and final sections of the novel Friday gains in stature as the site of a shimmering, indeterminate potency that has the power to overwhelm and cancel Barton's narrative and, finally, Coetzee's novel itself" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 112). The inability of white South Africa to speak for the black subaltern is symbolized throughout the novel in Barton's musing about Friday's ritual of scattering petals over the site of the wreck of the ship that may or may not have brought him to the

island. Her variety of guesses point to her insistence on assuming what she cannot know. When an author figure (perhaps Coetzee himself) dives into the wreck, the metaphorical "home of Friday" he "pass [es] a fingernail across [Friday's] teeth, trying to find a way in" (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 157). Friday's mouth opens and "from inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption" (157). The "stream" washes over the author, but it is unintelligible to him. The story of Friday, the story of the indigenous South African, is similarly unintelligible to the white South African author. This is a scathing critique of those white authors (Coetzee includes himself) who try to speak for the subaltern, within the discourse of the colonizer. "Coetzee is careful . . . not to disqualify Friday from having a history, even though his emphasis falls on the silence that Friday keeps within the context of those authorized to speak. This does not mean, obviously, that the novel can *represent* Friday's history; it simply means that Friday is acknowledged to have one" (115).

This cautious approach is in stark contrast to the novels of Shadbolt, which presume to tell Maori history to a largely white settler audience. Shadbolt is a modern day Foe. As Spivak states, "Mr. Foe is everyone's Foe, the enabling violator, for without him there is nothing to cite," and "this *Foe*, in history, is the site where the line between friend and foe is undone. When one wants to be a friend to the other, it withdraws its graphematic space. *Foe* allows that story to be told" (193-194). Attwell summarizes: "This ending amounts to a deferral of authority to the body of history, to the political world in which the voice of the body politic of the future resides" (*J. M. Coetzee* 116) and that:

Coetzee's approach . . . in the figure of Friday, is cautious: preferring not to presume too much, Coetzee allows the representation of Friday to be shaped by the obvious political and epistemological limitations of colonial discourse . . . in Friday's silence Coetzee acknowledges where he stands while simultaneously fictionalizing the transformative power that threatens, or promises, to eclipse the voices of what we might call, for want of a better term, colonial postcolonialism. (108-109)

While the specific usage of historical events and figures in *Dusklands* and *Foe* are indicative of a current in the situational metafiction of the settler nations, Coetzee's other works problematize any comfortable labelling of his work as disengaged and postmodern, despite his use of postmodern techniques:

Waiting for the Barbarians does not presume to speak from a position outside the colonial episteme; similarly, the narrator of the first and third sections of [*Life and Times of*] *Michael K* chooses to speak from the same position . . . this degree of caution, even sobriety, about historical knowledge is more responsive to history than is sometimes recognized. (Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee* 93)

In other words, problematizing history does not necessarily mean that one is advancing (or even wishes to advance) an anti-totalizing agenda. Stephen Slemon, in "Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History" suggests how the allegorical mode of writing in *Foe* was, despite protests to the contrary from critics, responsive to its political environment: "Coetzee's tactic in [*Waiting for the Barbarians*] is to portray imperial

allegorical thinking in the thematic level of his novel and to juxtapose it with the allegorical mode in which the novel itself is written.” The same can be said equally of *Foe* and all of Coetzee’s novels discussed in this chapter—they are referential in terms of “split or cleft reference” (*J. M Coetzee* 18). Slemon suggests that those who miss the novel’s “politics of resistance” do so because of a “narrow view of allegory.” (163)

Coetzee, by criticizing white settler history, whether it be in an allegorical or problematizing mode, only does so because he believes there are things one can know about history. If there were nothing to know, there would be nothing to correct. The historical referent may not have been used accurately by the “public histories,” but the assertion that it has not been used accurately assumes that there *is* a historical reality that has been misrepresented. This addressing of alleged historical misrepresentation is a strong current in postcolonial fiction, and is the leitmotif of all of the novels addressed in this study. Coetzee clearly uses “postmodern” techniques such as allegory, intertextuality, parody, reflexivity, and problematizing of the historical referent to further what Slemon calls his “politics of resistance” (163).

Hutcheon’s poetics, her postmodern formula of the “anti-totalizing agenda” is unable to accommodate this kind of postmodern postcolonial writing, which Attwell has termed situational metafiction. From *Dusklands* through to *Foe* the reader sees the gradual, but steady dislocation of the subject (author); the breakdown of *relations* between the subject and its representation. However, for there to be a breakdown of relations, there must be relations. Coetzee problematizes this relationship, but until he left

South Africa he did so from a uniquely South African position.²⁰ Furthermore there is little that is problematic about his rejection of liberal humanism in white South Africa; this is clearly demonstrated in *Dusklands*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *Life and Times of Michael K*, and *Foe*.

Hutcheon seems to argue against her own definition of historiographic metafiction and *Foe*'s inclusion within this category when she calls *Foe* "another of the challenges to the liberal humanist—and imperialist—heritage that lives on in Coetzee's South Africa" (*Poetics* 199). A "challenge" would seem to participate in a dialectic ("there is no dialectic in the postmodern"), and would appear to have more specific political goals than advancing an "anti-totalizing ideology." One cannot simultaneously challenge a specific nationalism and maintain an anti-totalizing ideology. *Foe* advances a clear dialectic—a challenge to a specific political system—that of 1980's Apartheid. Clearly the situational metafiction of the settler nations call for a theorization of their own, as they look but do not behave like postmodern novels are supposed to within Hutcheon's prescription. Attwell's category helps clarify the confusing overlap of the postcolonial and the postmodern in the settler nations. In this emerging type of novel, postmodern techniques are used to postcolonial ends.

These two novels, *Dusklands* and *Foe*, represent a microcosm of Coetzee's oeuvre, as elucidated by Attwell:

Collectively . . . Coetzee's protagonists represent the ambiguous condition of postcoloniality that South Africa inhabits. What distinguishes white

²⁰ One could argue that Coetzee's present dislocation from South Africa is represented through his somewhat abrupt disconnection with South African subject matter.

South African literature from other “postcolonizing” literatures is not only that white South African literature is linguistically diverse but that the territorial capture underpinning it was always less complete; the consequence is a form of postcoloniality that, to the extent that it is critical, stands under an ethical and political injunction always to defer to the authority of an emergent national resistance that will inaugurate the age of postcoloniality proper. . . . (J. M. Coetzee 109)

Indeed, looking retrospectively at *Dusklands* we can see the preoccupation with violence that culminated in the Sharpeville Massacre of student protesters in 1976. In Friday’s threatening silence in *Foe*, we see the political tension and the emergent indigenous voice needing expression. *Foe* at its publication was both a call for a prediction and call for the new South Africa—a South Africa that came in 1994.

The displacement of the narrator identified by Attwell as the defining characteristic of Coetzee’s oeuvre is symbolically representative of a larger phenomenon in the settler nations of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa; this phenomenon and a parallel symbolic displacement of the narrator is present in all of the postmodern postcolonial novels addressed in this thesis. Coetzee fictionally displaces a progressively displaced white South African minority. Coetzee’s questioning of the author’s authority exists on two levels: it is also a microcosm, a synecdochical representation of a particular political phenomenon—a white South African identity in crisis. The ostensibly “problematizing” and “anti-ideological” dislocation of the narrator is used politically by many writers in the settler nations, to represent specific dislocations,

specific nationalisms and criticisms. As representing displaced peoples, indigenous writers in the settler nations [King (CAN), Ihimaera (NZ), Scott (AUS) and Mda (SA)] admit of Attwell's "positionality" by the simple fact of alleging displacement.

All of these writers use the dislocation of the narrator in the same way as Coetzee, as a representation of the dislocation of their culture. This "postmodern" technique reinforces the search for cultural identity that characterizes the situational metafiction of the settler nations. Coetzee, along with MacLeod, Carey and Shadbolt relate settler narratives of displacement and re-placement. This displacement is alleged directly and indirectly in these novels. The indirect allegation is represented by various forms of displaced narrators relating narratives of displacement. In the example of Coetzee, this technique is shown by Attwell to be a means of addressing a specific dialectic—settler versus indigene. His category of situational metafiction accounts for a clear sense of *position* in Coetzee's novels, which are misunderstood if they are placed under the rubric of historiographic metafiction.

Chapter Two

Folklore with Footnotes: Peter Carey's Ned Kelly

Carey's Booker Prize winning novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, like many works of situational metafiction, wants to have it both ways with history. That is to say, the novel wants to "problematize" the British Imperial settler history of Australia in a postmodern fashion, while at the same time laying claim to "the truth." The novel purports to tell the "true and secret" story of the famous Australian bushranger Ned Kelly, whose gang controlled a large section of the outback of North Eastern Victoria from October 1878 to June 1880, an area still known as Kelly Country. During the "Kelly Outbreak," the gang thwarted all attempts at capture, taking over entire towns with the help of sympathetic citizens, tired of the heavy handed and corrupt control of the Victorian Police Force. An Irish/English conflict emerges in the novel between the poor Irish selectors and the largely English (or English sympathizing) squatters. The novel tells Ned Kelly's side of the story through the "found" letters of Kelly. The letters are addressed to the (invented) daughter he would never meet. Carey builds on the living Kelly legend with extensive documented historical detail and even succeeds in emulating the former bushranger's semi-literate and self-righteous prose, as is found in his actual letters. In this project, he is linked with J. M. Coetzee's *Dusklands*, an attempt in the words of E. L. Doctorow to create a "false document more valid, more real, more truthful than the true documents of the politicians or the journalists or psychologist" (Cited in Green 132).

Laurie Clancy points out in his paper "Selective History of the Kelly Gang: Peter Carey's Ned Kelly" that: "As the American reviews of the novel demonstrate, many readers will put the book down with the belief that they now know the truth about Ned Kelly—just as many American teenagers will have grown up thinking that Oliver Stone's film *JFK* is the definitive account of Kennedy's assassination" (56). Reviewers such as Anthony Quinn and Jane Rogers, the latter of whom attests to the novel's "uncanny faithfulness to the facts," ("Remaking" par. 3) have missed Clancy's point that: "The corrections and additions to what is known of the facts are not made merely for dramatic convenience but to offer *a particular interpretation* of the Kelly myth; they serve not to offer a challenge to Ned's self-extenuating view of his own behaviour, but to endorse it (56). Coetzee's novel *Dusklands* asserts the reality of the brutal settler narrative of [the invented] Jacobus Coetzee, in order to challenge the white settler nationalism inherent in the pioneer narratives of white South Africa. Carey's project uses a similar truth stance for his inventions, but his goal is the *reassertion* of this same white settler nationalism. Even a cursory examination of the historical record²¹ clearly demonstrates that there is no attempt to avoid bias in this depiction of Australia's national hero, but in fact to reinforce an established nationalist mythology. While there is no absolute truth of history one can reference, Carey's work, while exhaustively thorough and meticulous when using historical reference in most of the novel,²² diverges significantly from *any* source at key

²¹ For the purposes of this discussion, "historical record" while admittedly a problematic concept, will refer to the (attempted) unbiased process of induction applied to historical evidence—in most cases, the letters of Ned Kelly and official state records.

²² Carey states of Ian Jones' *Ned Kelly: A Short Life* in his acknowledgments of debts to many historical sources: "Of these, it is Ian Jones I am most particularly obliged to. It was to his works I turned, almost daily, when I was lost or bewildered or simply *forgetful of the facts*" [*italics mine*]. In the greater part of his

moments, juxtaposing precisely referenced and documented historical details with pure literary inventions. My work interrogates these changes in this emerging historiographic style of writing, in order to examine the author's moral/political position in his work. This chapter of this thesis postulates that Carey designs his novel in such a way to ennoble the Kelly myth for the present generation of Irish-Australians.

Linda Hutcheon asserts that a new attention to the "enunciating entity that has been suppressed" (*Poetics* 75) finds expression in historiographic metafiction in "the form of overt textual emphasis on the narrating 'I' and the reading 'you'" (*Poetics* 76). There are multiple points of view in *True History of the Kelly Gang*: there is Kelly's "counter-narrative" (his letters); there is the point of view of the compiler of Kelly's letters (Curnow); and there is an omniscient narrator, who arrives like a deus-ex-machina at the end of the novel. While Hutcheon would insist on the absence of dialectic in postmodern fiction, the voice of Kelly and the voice of the narrator conversely lay claim not only to "theoretical knowledge" but to the "Truth;" a concept that is anathema to postmodernists. While thoroughly signposted with postmodern techniques, the nationalist tone of this work belies any attempt to link its use of truth claims to "anti-totalizing irony," which is Hutcheon's paradigm of the postmodern historiographic novel. The problem is that while this type of postcolonial fiction has all the markers of historiographic metafiction, its objectives are entirely different.

Attwell's category of situational metafiction accounts for the limitations in Hutcheon's theory, and for the postcolonial usage of what looks to be historiographic

narrative, Carey's novel is true to this source, which McQuilton portrays as a flawed Irish nationalist history.

metafiction: “a mode of fiction that draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them, and, finally, to the interpretive process, with its acts of contestation and appropriation. Of course, all these things have a regional and temporal specificity” (*J. M. Coetzee* 20). Attwell’s refinement of Hutcheon’s theory, his category of situational metafiction accounts for the “localized” and dialectical aspects of the postmodern/ postcolonial novel. This paradoxical and prevalent novelistic style is better defined as situational metafiction, a novel that uses postmodern techniques to postcolonial ends.

Like Attwell’s model *J. M. Coetzee*, Carey’s use of history is consciously political. While Carey’s “archaeology of facts” is insidiously persuasive, the details that are glossed, changed or omitted reveal Carey’s moral/political position, his Irish-Australian nationalist mythologizing of Ned Kelly. It can be argued that Carey only presents Kelly as he thought himself to be. This argument is persuasive until the “extra textual” commentary, especially the omniscient narrator’s final moralizing, is taken into consideration. After examining the relations of the three separate strains of this novel (the multiple “enunciating entities”), in comparison with the documented historical record, it is clear how invented historical details have been presented on the backdrop of documented historical details in order to equate the two. The alterations can all be shown to suit a political purpose. Ostensibly, a postmodern problematizing of this period of Australian History, *True History of the Kelly Gang* is a strong statement of Irish-Australian nationalism in a multicultural Australia. Carey is entitled to use his references in any way he wants, this is not the issue or concern of this thesis. What is important is

that this defining aspect of the novel, its particular positionality, is missed, if it is judged in terms of its postmodern markers.

Carey's vision of Ned Kelly, like that of popular Australian historian Ian Jones, is heavily influenced by the largely self-created folklore of Kelly, and by those who helped create a legend through stories and folk ballads—an oppressed people in need of a hero. The Irish-Australian selector, importantly, a sub-group of the colonizing power of Australia, was usually given the dregs of the squatters' land after it was deemed politically necessary to redivide the ill-gotten spoils of Australia's initial land grab by the wealthier, more powerful new arrivals. But even the redivision was still heavily corrupted in favour of the squatters, a rich, mostly British-born minority. While this oppression rests largely in the past, the settler/mother country conflict is a present day means of forging (in a double sense) an Australian identity. As in the other settler nations there has always been an eager audience for defining heroes of a fledgling country; heroic tales that tell a largely white settler population what they want to hear.²³ Carey's book reinforces old stereotypes of the "national character" of Australia, what can be seen as a dated and exclusionary mythology. This version of "the Australian" completely ignores the indigenous peoples and non-white immigrants of the former and modern Australia, not to mention its almost complete avoidance of the topic of women of all races. As Huggan suggests in his paper "Cultural Memory in Postcolonial Fiction: The Uses and Abuses of Ned Kelly" that "the national narrative embodied in Kelly . . . is embarrassingly

²³ In the other settler nations parallel heroic literature exists, a few examples discussed in this thesis are: *They Seek a Country* (SA), *Wacousta* (CAN), and *The Greenstone Door* (NZ).

exclusive" (149). With this being said, Huggan importantly misses the nationalism in Carey's work because he misreads it as historiographic metafiction.

The Australian nationalism asserted is based on a bush ethos, best described by nationalist historian Russel Ward in *The Australian Legend*. Ward's typical Australian is:

a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. . . . He believes that jack is not only as good as his master but . . . probably a good deal better . . . He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers or policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong. (1-2)

This exclusionary nationalism is clear in its exclusion of women from the national ethos, but in focussing on the "men of the bush" the typical Australian also came to be white and Anglo-Saxon. This "Australian Legend" privileges a particular group: the white Anglo-Saxon status quo. Aboriginals (who were generally acknowledged to be the best "bushmen"), Asian immigrants and women from all of these groups are excluded from this vision of Australia. This is the nationalism asserted by Carey's book. Theoretically, nationalism and postmodernism are not meant to coexist within the same novel. In *True History* postmodern techniques are the means to a specific political end.

True History of the Kelly Gang's self-reflexivity and its parodic treatment of the "British" history of Australia (historically asserted by the largely British central authority) misidentify it as historiographic metafiction and lead to Huggan's mistaken

assertion that it “debunks” “the romantic impulse toward anti-imperial nostalgia” (“Cultural Memory” 153), when this impulse is the novel’s *raison d’être*. Delores Herrero in her paper “Peter Carey’s *True History of the Kelly Gang*: Ethical Dimensions in the Re-Evaluation of Australia’s Mythic Hero” draws straight from Hutcheon: “Kelly may write his own story, but the (frustrated) insertion of different, at times even conflicting viewpoints, only contributes to bringing to the fore the arbitrariness of all kinds of official/historical discourses” (75). This apparently “problematizing” mode causes Herrero and Huggan, among many others, to miss the clear nationalist underlay in this work. As Green claims for South African writing that “it is difficult to separate nationalism from narrative,” he cautions about the “dangers of totalization” in interpretations like Huggan’s and urges critics and theorists “to be constantly vigilant with regard to the way . . . in which narratives are structured” (127). *True History of the Kelly Gang*’s use of parody and paratextual conventions also fits into Hutcheon’s prescription for postmodernist writing, which is non-ideological, serving only to “problematize” our relation to the historical referent. In the situational metafiction of the settler nations, *British* history is problematized—the history of the subaltern is somehow immune to the ills of grand-narrativization.

The foregrounding of a major historical figure (such as Ned Kelly), is also seen by Hutcheon as a marker of historiographic metafiction. She explains this postmodern move by contrasting with Lukács’ theoretical description of the historical novel:

Lukács’ third major defining characteristic of the historical novel is the relegation of historical personages to secondary roles. Clearly in post-

modern novels like *Doctor Copernicus*, *Kepler*, and *Antichthon*, this is hardly the case. In many historical novels, the real figures of the past are deployed to validate or authenticate the fictional world by their presence, as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand. The metafictional self-reflexivity of postmodern novels prevents any such subterfuge. . . . (*Poetics* 114-115)

Carey's clever use of this postmodern aesthetic (without a postmodern ideology) does exactly what Hutcheon asserts historiographic metafiction is meant to undo. He deliberately "hides the joins" with an "ontological sleight of hand" that incorporates the shortcomings of postmodern theory as applied to postcolonial works. In other words, by seeming to be postmodern, he hides his moral/political position, for "there is no dialectic in the postmodern" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* x). As Andreas Gaile points out in his paper "Re-Mythologizing an Australian Legend: Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*": "Carey, like many postcolonial writers, is obsessed with remembering, revisiting, and recreating the past, while paradoxically bearing the postmodernist mark of scepticism about rendering the past objectively" (38-9). Carey's "scepticism" and his problematizing are reserved for the British Imperial version of history; as for his own, it is meant to be taken as "true." This aspect of situational metafiction, one that is prevalent in the situational metafiction of all the settler nations, is what I refer to as "bifurcated problematizing."

If one follows Hutcheon's theory, *True History of the Kelly Gang* seems again to mark itself as postmodern by breaking Lukács's rule for the relegation of major historical

figures to minor roles. Carey's novel foregrounds perhaps the most famous Australian in history. Other postmodern markers abound. The self-reflexivity of the novel is constantly emphasized by chapter headings, which are fake archival descriptions of various packets of Kelly's letters to a daughter who never existed. Kelly's history within this invented backdrop, is either one way or another: meticulously researched and documented or completely fabricated. This is powerful way to tell a story about a cultural hero to one's own people and can be described accurately as propaganda, albeit in a very well-written form.²⁴ The negative attributes of Kelly are falsified in a vernacular that is reminiscent of Kelly's own letters. Carey employs his own style of metafiction to do precisely what Hutcheon believes is prevented by self-reflexivity. Carey uses postmodernism against itself: "While both historians and novelists (not to mention literary critics) have a long tradition of trying to erase textual elements that would 'situate' them in their texts, postmodernism refuses such an obfuscation of the context of its enunciation" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 67). Carey's novel accomplishes this "obfuscation" in the way Hutcheon suggests it has been "refused" by postmodernism, by overtly "situating" an invented context of enunciation within a skeleton of documented (and in Australia largely known) history. Attwell's category, situational metafiction, accounts for these shortcomings, and needs to be integrated into Hutcheon's larger theory to account for the widespread use of a postmodern aesthetic in postcolonial novels. The problem is, as Attwell asserts about

²⁴ This mixing of history and folklore to a specific political end is a recurrent aspect of heroic literature—usually involving the flattering of a monarch. In this modern mutation we see the flattering of the Irish-Australian.

Coetzee: "is to understand [the author's] postmodernism in light of his postcoloniality" (*J. M. Coetzee* 20).

The bushranger folklore of Australia has many strong parallels with the folklore of the American West and the Robin Hood folklore of England, all traditions of anti-authoritarian heroes—heroes of the common people seen as criminals by the central political establishment. Part of the Kelly legend is that Ned, while living in the bush and making sporadic lucrative raids on symbols of central authority, supported the unfortunate selector population by using money from bank robberies to help out on unfair rent payments and even tearing up mortgages during heists.²⁵ In his public commentary, Carey openly endorses this version of Kelly, suggesting that there is evidence for this view. Ian Jones also supports this theory in his historical work, a theory that is effectively dismantled by John McQuilton in his book *The Kelly Outbreak 1878-1880: The Geographical Dimension of Social Banditry*. Carey goes further than Jones, suggesting that for Australians, Kelly holds the importance of a founding father: "Kelly's far more to us than a Jesse James. . . . He's more like our Thomas Jefferson" ("Dialogue" 48).

This pioneer-saving Robin Hood, the Arthur of Australia vision contained in Carey's Ned Kelly, is seen clearly in the words of Steve Hart (another historical figure), who pleads to join the gang by recalling his youthful admiration for Kelly's generosity. In a scene of pure invention, Kelly bashfully claims to have never helped out Hart's father and tells the boy he is mistaken. Hart knows better: "No I aint you was the runner for Harry Power and you brung my da sufficient cash to make the rent o yes you did Ned

²⁵ In the course of this project, I met a young woman whose great-grandfather (an Irish farmer) allegedly had his plough stolen by the Kelly gang for their infamous "suits of armour."

Kelly then you done it twice more each time when the government was about to seize our land” (*True History* 216). There seems to be little evidence beyond anecdote to indicate that Kelly made rent payments for selectors down on their luck, but this is certainly the way an Australian Robin Hood *should* act. Indeed, this is the treatment Pretty Boy Floyd got at the hands of Woody Guthrie, the outlaw who provided for the poor. These literary/historical figures are all politically expedient and more likely indicative of a contemporaneous political climate than they are of what may have happened.

Ned Kelly claimed to not have “a murderous drop of blood in his veins” (Osborne 24), and Carey seems to agree in his portrayal, painting Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang* as a non-violent victim of circumstance.²⁶ Carey pays careful attention to history; because of this attention his folkloric inventions are more persuasive. From an early age, Carey’s Kelly yearns to have his own land where he can make an honest living raising and breeding horses. However, a study of the historical sources available on Kelly presents a radically different picture of the simple pastoral heroism of Ned Kelly, judging by the man’s own words and actions, particularly by the number of men he killed, or tried to kill, and the number of horses he stole. Even the sympathetic Jones could not deny the recurring criminal actions of Ned Kelly, something that Carey attempts to do in *True History of the Kelly Gang*.

In Australia, Kelly has been and still is consistently compared to Robin Hood. The hero of this body of English folklore certainly had a part in shaping his latter-day

²⁶In his public commentary, Carey corrected an interviewer who referred to Kelly as a murderer: “Well firstly I wouldn’t call Kelly a murderer, despite his killings” (*Compulsive Reader* Par. 2)

Australian manifestation. The reason for this “stretch” of a parallel, literally around the globe, is that Robin Hood is not a figure but a recognizable phenomenon. According to Stephen Knight in *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw*, Robin’s role is closest to that of a “social bandit,”: “resisting improper authority, which may be based in state or church and often has some connection with mercantilism—whether town business or church financial dealings” (7).²⁷ The creation of a social bandit is a predictable political response: the mythology of Ned Kelly is a textbook example of this phenomenon.

McQuilton here applies Hobsbawm’s concept of the “social bandit” to Ned Kelly:

The social bandit . . . is a symptom of profound rural discontent. His existence is the most primitive expression of a leaderless rural malaise, pre-political in nature but capable of attracting widespread local support. The social bandit himself never provides the leadership necessary to channel that unrest to political ends. He lacks the political expertise required and is also a criminal. It is axiomatic that he will lose in any conflict with constituted authority. Instead, the bandit becomes a legendary folkloric hero because he mirrors, in an extreme form, a value system held by those who support him. The social bandit’s supporters are often either illiterate or leave little in the way of personal records. In terms of nineteenth-century Australia, this is the majority of the

²⁷ One might note in this light the posters in Afghanistan that compare Osama Bin Laden with this figure of English folklore.

population. The bushranger who is a social bandit offers an insight into the nature of the communities who supported him. (2)

McQuilton's book *The Kelly Outbreak* is the result of a doctoral thesis that studied the social history of North-Eastern Victoria. McQuilton identified the causes of the Kelly legend long before Carey wrote *True History of the Kelly Gang*, and Carey actually lists it as an influence in his afterword. Carey and McQuilton agree on this much: "Under [Ned's] leadership, the Gang functioned as a small core, striking at selected locations and then vanishing back into the bush. . . . The Gang acquired an ubiquity amounting to invisibility and the Hunt took on aspects of guerrilla warfare" (3). Carey gives thanks to McQuilton in his acknowledgments, but creates a narrative that goes against the basic tenets of McQuilton's thesis, which directly challenges the conclusions of Carey's primary source: Ian Jones. Carey uses the parts of McQuilton's work that are useful for the sake of authenticity, glorifying a body of history (that of Ian Jones) and folklore that goes against the findings of McQuilton's thesis. The social conditions of the period and place created its own form of the legend of Robin Hood, without much concern for burden of proof. Carey's agenda is to support the nationalist myth of Ned Kelly, making use of the work of historians who disagree with this myth (McQuilton) and ones who use histories are supportive of the myth as well (Ian Jones).

As Stephen Knight explains, the creation of a social bandit is a well-documented political phenomenon, a folkloric expression of civil unrest and rebellion:

Variant as they are, all these political formations focus on the tenure of power. The basis of the agon which is the core of the Robin Hood tradition

remains a conflict over authority. Robin fights the sheriff to resist his rapacious exploitations of a delegated royal authority. In a recurring sequence, Robin's own authority is explored as he and an adversary fight, draw, and agree to be friends, and then Robin is consistently accepted as the leader of the band by consensus, not birth or violence. The outlaw's recurrent resistance to sheriff or abbot refuses to accept coercive power as a basis for protecting those who are less than powerful. (4-5)

Kelly's famous conflict with Wild Wright bears a striking resemblance to Robin Hood's conflict and ultimate partnership with Little John, a powerful rival becomes a powerful friend for the sake of fighting a greater injustice. The authority contested by Kelly and his gang is ultimately, like that of Robin Hood, the British monarchy.

In 1878, Kelly Country was ripe for its own Robin Hood. The inequality in the power structure of North Eastern Victoria came from the Orders of Council in 1847 which "gave the squatters a land monopoly for up to fourteen years and established them as the social and political elite" (McQuilton 24). In order to appear to remedy the situation, the Land Act of 1869 gave land to people (dubbed "selectors") who could satisfy the "improvement clauses." In most cases, the land was poor and there was no way to make improvements and still have time to support a family. According to the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* of April 19, 1879, "The only thing the selectors seem to have, is a splendid supply of firewood, hard work, and hard times" (qtd. in McQuilton 47). Class hierarchy had been successfully transported to Australia, along with its new inhabitants. Selectors and squatters became natural enemies. Carey dramatizes this

dynamic in an exchange when Ned is put in jail at age sixteen: "This is your new selection said Sgt Whelan . . ." (*True History* 102). A policeman openly mocks the plight of selectors as he puts Ned in jail, although Ned is jailed for bushranging. Here Carey builds on the oral tradition that the gang were all selectors and the victims of unnecessary police harassment. The numerous Irish constables (like the Irish Constabulary in Ireland) were seen as worse than the oppressive English, as they had turned their backs on their own people.²⁸

McQuilton is not as sure as Carey or Jones about the degree of purely Irish "victimization:"

During the [Kelly] Outbreak, an alternative explanation [to that of the police and government] had been widely circulated and believed in the North East. The Quinn clan²⁹ in general and the Kelly family in particular had been victims of unnecessary police harassment that had become persecution. [The killings at] Stringybark Creek [were] tragic and deplorable, but it was also the inevitable result of heavy-handed police attention paid to the Kellys. . . . Obviously the police were on firmer ground with their assessment of the Quinn clan. Yet an oral tradition holding the opposite view has remained a powerful part of the Kelly story. (69-70)

²⁸ This Australian hatred of police (especially Irish police) is shown strikingly in the recent film, *The Proposition*, which also draws on many elements of the Kelly legend.

²⁹ Ned Kelly's mother Ellen was a Quinn and the two "clans" were considered to be linked by this marriage.

McQuilton looked at both sides of the story with the eye of a social historian, and ultimately could not reconcile the Kelly legend with his picture of the Kelly reality. And he is not alone. The power of this oral tradition has taken on a powerful new form with Carey's novel, a postcolonial novel with postmodern aspects—a situational metafiction that references the historical record in order to assert a nationalist position in a settler/mother country dialectic.

One recurring aspect of the Kelly legend is the focus on police injustice, while turning a blind eye to the disregard the Kelly Gang had for justice:

The pistol whipping of the young Ned Kelly remains the most extreme but enlightening example of police attitudes. But the oral tradition that blames police persecution for the lawlessness of the Quinns and the Kellys in particular ignores not only the criminal nature of a man like Jimmy Quinn but also Ned Kelly's own [well-documented] boast that he was a duffer and a horse thief. (McQuilton 92)

Carey avoids dealing with such evidence in his characterization of Kelly. He would certainly be aware of these pieces of evidence. Judging by his extensive archaeology of "facts" Carey became extremely well acquainted with the body of work done on Kelly and his gang, including the above passages. But Carey's Kelly is no proud thief. Most sources, notably Kelly himself, suggest the opposite. As even the partial Ian Jones admits, "Ned . . . would boast that he had stolen 280 horses" (91). This nationalist position asserted by Carey through his character of Ned Kelly, coupled with his apparent postmodern aesthetic, demonstrates how the category of situational metafiction, as

applied to the settler nations, fills a pronounced gap in both postmodern and postcolonial theory.

The revisionist history of John Kelly's (Ned's father) life in *True History of the Kelly Gang* is similarly tendentious, and is used to assert an Irish-Australian nationalist agenda. Carey's novel presents John Kelly as a reformed political criminal, who was not allowed a chance to go straight, but even the Irish nationalist historian, Jones, could not spin the evidence on John Kelly in a positive way. Jones admits that John Kelly was transported for simple stock theft (two pigs). Furthermore, he stole from the farmer James Cooney who was, like the Kellys in Ireland, a peasant landholder of a half acre or less. This would be enough to exempt John Kelly from any claims of heroism but Jones dug deeper:

In Dublin Castle papers relating to Red's case were tucked away in a "Crown Witnesses" file—identifying him as an informer, most hated of all figures in an Irish Rogues' gallery. . . . Though described by police as "a notorious character" who had been involved with three men in the earlier theft of seven cows—a crime that could earn a life sentence—Red would receive the minimum term of seven years transportation. It is clear that he had struck a deal with the police and informed on his fellow cow-stealers.

(2-3)

When Carey departs so radically from the story presented by his admitted historical model, delving into rumours that Jones dismisses as folklore, a reader can see that he is

doing something other than trying to create the “most accurate” story he can out of an extensive archaeology of facts.

Osborne’s book *Ned Kelly* describes John Kelly’s criminal activity in Australia:

The Morgans owned seven hundred acres of rich pastureland, adjoining Red Kelly’s forty rented acres, and there was no love lost between the two families. The Morgans looked down on the Kelly’s as little better than convicts, while the Kellys saw the Morgans as the type of rich squatter who could always command the police, and who were to a great extent responsible for the persecution of the lower classes by the law. Morgan suspected Red Kelly of stealing his cattle, and one day in May 1865 he arrived at the Kelly homestead accompanied by a police constable. They searched the house and found the hide of a calf with the brand cut out. (14)

Carey dramatizes this incident, having the reformed Red (John) Kelly take the blame and punishment for his son Ned’s theft. There is no evidence to suggest that this was the case but by transferring the theft Carey helps paint Red as a sympathetic character, a noble self-sacrificing man whom the authorities hated for his Irish peasant roots, a man who was not allowed to reform: a hereditary victim of an unjust system. Carey has reinvented his John Kelly against a backdrop of precisely referenced historical details.

Adding another new twist to an extensive body of legend, Carey invents the “Sons of Sieve,” a group of Irish rebels who raided wealthy landowners in Ireland in blackface and dresses for disguise. In *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Red Kelly is transported for his political activities against the Empire. Later, Ned meets Steve Hart dressed in the

outfit of the Sons of Sieve, Hart having transplanted this fictional rebel movement to Australia. The invention and extensive use of this political group give moral justification both to Red (John) Kelly and Ned's gang. The idea that these men were fighting for their freedom is belied by their extensive history of theft, and their lack of interest in an actual political movement or military uprising, or even working their own land, an opportunity made available to all of them. Carey, while pretending the "history lesson" that his book is called in *The Economist* (Anon. 82) is inventing his own history against a backdrop of documented historical evidence, one aimed at reinforcing an existing white settler (Irish) nationalism.

Carey appears to be quite accurate about Ned's early career as a bushranger, he meticulously references historical accounts for the details of events, such as time, place and figures involved. Ned Kelly, according to all sources investigated, got his start at bushranging with the real life bushranger Harry Power. Carey, however, invents a "forced" apprenticeship—Ellen Kelly's selling out of her son for money. The fictionalized Ned adores his mother and only wants to get back and work his farm. He goes with Power, "for the sake of his mother" and "tries" to leave as soon as he can:

Here I bade Harry farewell I were the oldest boy there was work to do at home I told him the land act was a b----r of a thing they would take our land away if we did not comply.

Well I'm a b----r too said Harry Power and you must comply with me.

(*True History* 72)

Ned Kelly was, by all accounts, quite dedicated to his mother, but his reluctance to become Harry Power's "offsider" was another Carey invention. Harry lets Ned know that his mother does not want him back, and that if he leaves, he will be leaving the boots supplied by Power to walk a hundred miles barefoot. That night Ned "slept very badly thinking how Bill Frost [Ellen's new and pointedly 'English' man] had stole my land" (*True History* 73). Ned is portrayed as a victim of circumstance and as a hereditary Irish victim of the British. Forced into bushranging, forced into horse theft, forced into bank robbing, forced into murder, Carey's Ned's only dream is to have land and to be left alone by the central authority of the British Empire, a picture that does not emerge from a balanced academic examination of this historical figure. Carey's moral underlay shows through his novel's postmodern trappings.

McQuilton was dismissive of the Irish peasant element in the Kelly Outbreak:

[Ned's] own lifestyle belied any substantial link with the Irish peasantry beyond an emotional acknowledgement of his heritage. The over-riding passion to buy land, for example, had passed him by completely.

Similarly, Steve Hart and Joe Byrne, although eligible, had never selected land. Instead they relied on seasonal work for a living. Aaron Sherritt was the only Gang associate, in the same age group, who had selected land and attempted to work it properly and he was neither Irish nor of peasant stock. (189)

Carey's Kelly is an Irish-Australian fighting his ancient oppressors for what has been historically denied to the Irish: land. However, Ned Kelly, according to all available

documented historical evidence and a bit of inductive logic, was not very interested in land. This aspect of Carey's Kelly, the desire for land, is central to his sympathetic depiction; it is also pure invention. In this light one might reconsider E. L. Doctorow's idea of "false documents more valid, more real, more truthful than the true documents of the politicians or the journalists or psychologist" (cited in Green 132). Carey's work, rife with postmodern signposts, is perpetuating an established nationalist folklore in a postcolonial form, reasserting a settler versus mother country dialectic. My thesis demonstrates that this kind of historical writing, these situational metafiction 1.) exist widely, and 2.) are not adequately theorized as being non- dialectical historiographic metafiction.

Carey's Ned Kelly's passion is to live in peace on his own land as shown in this idyllic scene where he meets a young farm girl, on one of Power's unexplained stops at a safehouse:

After a time she asked would I like to see their cattle. She could show me a valley she said where there were no drought. She had long dark hair and bright and lively eyes so I thought I might as well I followed her across a sandy creek then up a rise we climbed up great shelves of granite to the rocky top below which were a sheltered hollow with grass so green it were beyond belief I could of lived there all my life. The small herd of cattle were all fat and gleaming it is always such a lovely thing to see proof of what contentment the colony might provide if there is ever justice. (*True History* 112)

This pastoral dream does not mesh with Ned Kelly's profile. As McQuilton points out, he had the opportunity to select his own land but did not. The land he works in Carey's book is his mother's. There is no real life indication he had any interest in working his mother's land either. Kelly's group was like other "mobs," selector's sons who avoided the gruelling work of their fathers for seasonal shearing work. These groups were known for their attention to fine clothes and good horses. "They carefully cultivated a devil-may-care demeanour and boisterous behaviour when visiting the towns. In short, they were 'flash' and proud of that flashness" (McQuilton 54-55). Carey has Kelly, the new "father figure" criticize his brother Dan for his "mob flashness" (*True History* 193). McQuilton attributes this "flashness" to Ned.

Once Ned Kelly was, as he and Carey would have it, forced into being an outlaw, by all accounts Ned Kelly revelled in this position, dancing, trick riding, buying drinks and fraternizing with women who were, by most accounts, equivalent to modern day groupies. Carey's Kelly does not match this profile: the wistful would-be farmer, locked into a battle he does not want, but cannot help but fight. Carey's Kelly states that when the group first went into hiding in Bullock Creek, as the result of an illegal (and by all documented accounts fictional) torturing of his brother Dan by the police: "We was building a world where we would be left alone" (*True History* 202). While they built this communal paradise, they also happened to be stealing a record number of horses; a strange way for someone who wished to be left alone to act. This is typical of the true Kelly's double standard for himself and others. Even before the outbreak, Ned Kelly was not leaving others alone, he was a sideman for a famous bushranger participating in

multiple armed robberies before becoming the greatest horse thief in Australian history. Again, the alterations to an otherwise carefully referenced history, cannot but help but show agenda.

The Irish element that McQuilton suggests has been exaggerated in the Kelly folklore is central to Carey's novel: "The Irish legacy contributed with its bitter hatred of the English and the Irish Constabulary but the Kelly's grievances were never alien to those who lived nearby, irrespective of their neighbours' ethnic backgrounds" (94). McQuilton gives evidence of an extremely diverse selector population, and is sceptical about the nationalist intentions of the gang's members and their subsequent mythologization. In light of this evidence, it is interesting to observe how Carey's use of Irish folklore is conspicuously nationalistic. Here Ned's mother is painted as a storyteller:

At night she would gather us about her and tell us stories and poems she had never done that when my dad were away shearing or contracting but now we discovered this treasure she had committed to her memory. She knew the stories of Conchobor and Dedriu and Medb the tale of Cuchulainn

In the stories she told us of the old country there was many such women they was queens they was hot blooded not careful they would fight a fight and take a king into their marriage bed. They would have been called Irish rubbish in Avenel. (*True History* 25)

Irish folklore is almost always employed in *True History of the Kelly Gang* in Irish nationalistic terms—an attempt to link an ancient sense of pride to a more recently

conceived Australian nationalism. By focusing on the English/Irish conflict of the past, *True History of the Kelly Gang* reopens an old wound, reinforcing an internecine and exclusionary nationalist binary. One cannot help but notice this “battle for Australia” is only concerned with white settlers, in a manner directly opposite to that of *Dusklands*. Situational metafiction is a mode that lends itself to nationalism, but also, in the case of Coetzee, to critique a very similar type of settler nationalism to that espoused by Carey.

After explaining how Ned and his mother have seen The Banshee, Ned goes on to explain how she made it from Ireland to Australia:

When our brave parents was ripped from Ireland like teeth from the mouth of their own history and every dear familiar thing had been abandoned on the docks of Cork or Galway or Dublin then the Banshee come on board the cursed convict ships the ROLLA and the TELICHERRY and the RODNEY and the PHOEBE DUNBAR and there were not an English eye could see her no more than an English eye can picture the fire that will descend upon that race in time to come. The Banshee sat herself at the bow and combed her hair all the way from Cork to Botany Bay she took passage amongst our parents beneath that foreign flag 3 crosses nailed one atop the other. (*True History* 92)

The banshee and the “slow wasting of St. Bridgit” (92) become symbolic (respectively) of enduring oppression and lost heritage. Other clear Irish folkloric references such as the boy who is said to be a changeling (116) tie the story and Ned Kelly to Ireland in ways

not previously existing in the body of Kelly folklore, breathing new life into a nationalist myth.

There is evidence that Ned Kelly did take up the Irish flag in his writings and speeches from time to time, and as McQuilton suggests, a type of patriotism did exist among the men:

The Gang's members had much in common. They were young and single men. Ned, at twenty-four, was the oldest. Dan was seventeen, Joe Byrne was twenty-one and Steve Hart was nineteen. All had been connected to various Mobs and all had been jailed on charges related to stock theft.

They were also Irish Catholics and although their religion was not important in its dogmatic sense, they were imbued with that fierce sense of exiled patriotism characteristic of the Irish in nineteenth-century Australia.

(101)

In assessing the Kelly Gang's Irish nationalism one must consider that such an emotional connection to a large population would clearly have been expedient to a group of outlaws. None of the men attempted to address the injustices of the Australian government politically at any point; theft and armed robbery were chosen over political action, despite a base of popular support. Support for the Kellys was a strike at the oppressors, the ruling class of police and squatter, who were seen as controlling the poor selectors' destinies in the name of the absent and often hated Queen. Unfortunate selectors could feel that they were making a stand on a small scale by helping them out. Any wise outlaw would capitalize on this Robin Hood element,

exaggerating one's ancient "Irish" struggle to a captive audience. Interestingly, Carey uses the same tactic as Ned did, exaggerating Ned Kelly's "Irish struggle" to please his audience.

This is exactly what Kelly does in his Jeriliderie letter, a sprawling and semi-literate anti-police litany of over twenty pages, at times inventively sarcastic, weakly apocalyptic, and at others, practically impossible to read.³⁰ In mid-explanation of the double murder at Stringybark Creek, Kelly plays the green card:

What would England do if America declared war and hoisted a green flag as it is all Irishmen that has got command of her armies forts and batteries? Even her very life guards and beef tasters are Irish. Would they not slew around and fight with their own arms for the sake of the colour they dare not wear for years and to reinstate it and rise old Erins isle once more from the pressure of tyrannism of the English yoke which has kept it in poverty and starvation and caused them to wear the enemy's coat?

(Jones, *Ned Kelly* 185)

Much like Ned Kelly, Carey rarely has much good to say about Britain and its colonial past in his country. When he won his first Booker prize for *Oscar and Lucinda* in 1986, a scathing indictment of the Anglican Church in Australia, Carey caused a furor by refusing to meet with the Queen Elizabeth, in an act of clear and unproblematic Australian nationalism.

³⁰ Peter Carey claims to have carried this letter around with him constantly while writing *True History of the Kelly Gang*

In *Jack Maggs*, another nationalist novel that has all the indicators of Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction,³¹ Carey tells the other side of the story of Magwitch, the Australian convict from *Great Expectations*, in a style reminiscent of *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Here he comments on the novel's conception. I will reproduce a large section of this interview, as it is uniquely applicable to this argument:

I am Australian. Our founding fathers and mothers did not come to our shores in search of liberty, they came to prison. Very few modern Australians are descended from those first convicts, but I believe that they affected the character of our nation forever. . . . Unlike Americans, Australians do not like to celebrate this moment when the nation is born, and it has been something of a passion for me to do just that. We carry a great deal of furniture about our beginnings . . . there is a great deal of self-hatred, denial, grief, and anger, all unresolved. It took a long time before I could think of exactly how I might use these passions to fuel a novel. Then one day, contemplating the figure of Magwitch, the convict in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, I suddenly thought THIS MAN IS MY ANCESTOR. And then: this is UNFAIR! Dickens's Magwitch is foul and dark, frightening, murderous. Dickens encourages us to think of him as the "other," but this was my ancestor, he was not "other." I wanted to reinvent him, to possess him, to act as his advocate. . . . That's where I started. . . . My fictional project has always been the invention or

³¹ *Jack Maggs* is also better described as situational metafiction, because of its clear and even admitted nationalist goals

discovery of my own country. Looked at in this way, *Great Expectations* is . . . (to an Australian) also a way in which the English have colonized our ways of seeing ourselves. It is a great novel, but it is also, in another way, a prison. *Jack Maggs* is an attempt to break open the prison and to imaginatively reconcile with the gaoler. (Carey, Interview)

It is interesting how Carey expresses a desire with the character of Magwitch to “Reinvent him, to possess him, to act as his advocate.” He undertook a parallel project with Ned Kelly.³² In his public commentary, Carey does not hide his nationalism. But *True History of the Kelly Gang* still *appears* to be a postmodern novel. This is where Hutcheon’s generalizations become dangerous, as they encourage an “anti-problematizing” approach to literature that looks to be postmodern. As Slemon argues in “Modernism’s Last Post,” postmodern theory is largely unaware of the “historically grounded” strategies “evident in postcolonial literatures” (14). The reality is much more complex than Hutcheon’s theory allows. Carey’s admission that his “fictional project has always been the invention or discovery of my own country” sheds light on *True History of the Kelly Gang*: it is both “discovery” in its use of accurate detail, and “invention” in its calculated additions to and manipulations of these details. This fascinating novel must be studied in the light of its use and “abuse” of historical references, and the dialectic behind its use of history, in order to be understood.

One of the most famous incidents in the history of the Kelly Gang was the gunfight at Stringybark Creek. Eventually, with the newly designated Kelly Gang in

³² Lawrence Jones describes a similar pose adopted by Maurice Shadbolt, in order to become New Zealand’s national storyteller.

hiding, wanted on multiple counts, including horse theft and attempted murder³³ the police came out to get them. Carey's Ned Kelly uses the fact that the police were carrying a giant belt called an "undertaker" as justification for the "pre-emptive strike" on their camp at Stringybark Creek. Wild Wright (Kelly's "Little John") squeezes the information out of the man who made the "dead man's belt," before relaying the information to the gang:

"What does it do?"

"Lord help me what does it sound like it does its for carrying a body its for strapping a dead man to a packhorse like I said its an undertaker now get out of here and let me finish." (*True History* 244)

The belt is all that is needed for Carey's Kelly to justify a "pre-emptive strike" on a group of policemen, ambushing them at their own camp.

The real Ned Kelly wrote the following words in justification of Stringybark Creek, in the famous Jerilderie Letter:

I was compelled to shoot them, or lie down and let them shoot me it would not be wilful murder if they packed our remains in, shattered into a mass of animated gore to Mansfield, they would have got great praise and credit as well as promotion but I am reconed [*sic*] a horrid brute because I had not been cowardly enough to lie down for them under such trying insults to my people certainly their wives and children are to be pitied but they must remember those men came into the bush with the intention of

³³ There is some evidence against police claims in the charge of attempted murder; however, it is difficult to rationally justify gunning a man down who is running away.

scattering pieces of me and my brother all over the bush. (McQuilton 99-100)

Kelly makes no mention of the “undertaker,” something one might think he would have mentioned in a letter of justification. Ian Jones, Ned Kelly’s great apologist, would have certainly picked up on this detail. Keith Dunstan’s *Saint Ned: The Story of the Near Sanctification of an Australian Outlaw* contains a photograph of the two dead policeman from the Stringybark Creek incident, being carried out “wrapped in Hessian and roped over packhorses” (29). Clearly no “undertakers” were available. Carey here gives the Stringybark legend newly invented ammunition, although even the presence of large belts would not make a very strong case for justifiable homicide.

Kelly’s “aversion to violence,” as presented by Carey, requires further examination. *Saint Ned* has it that the famous “Stringybark Ballad” was sung “to the tune of “The Wild Colonial Boy,” (43) to annoy local constables and rouse pro-Kelly sentiment. The ballad attests to Kelly’s legendary inherent desire to avoid violence: “But brave Kelly muttered sadly as he loaded up his gun/Oh, what a bloody pity that the bastard had to run” (43). Being adverse to a violence thrust upon one is part of Cawelti’s formula for the western hero. It might be observed that these lyrics echo Kelly’s own description (in the Jeriliderie Letter) of his reaction when Sergeant Kennedy ran. The logic being that since Kennedy could bring more men onto the Kellys if he got away; therefore, he either *had* to die or be taken hostage. He could not be allowed to escape. Kelly sadly hunted him down.

It might also be observed that this is the treatment the scene gets from Peter Carey, who adds an (invented) exchange between Kelly and the dying Kennedy, who leaves Ned a (non-existent) note for his family. Ned feels strongly about taking it to them, but it is destroyed when they cross a river, "explaining" why there is no historical record of it. Ned proceeds (in Carey's narrative) to express his regret having had to kill the man, and criticizes himself extensively for not having delivered the invented letter of a man he hunted down in cold blood. Another side to this legend, one ignored by Carey, presents itself in the 1879 pro-Kelly ballad "Farewell to Greta," which was often sung to taunt police. This song suggests no reluctance to violence, but rather a glorified vengeance on the Victoria Police force: "I'll shoot them down like kangaroos that roam the forests wide/And leave their bodies bleaching upon some woodland side" (Osborne 198). The execution of the informer Aaron Sherrit, Joe Byrne's childhood companion and closest friend, was also seen as "just revenge" though it has clear parallels with gangland and mafia murder codes.

The "historical" Ned Kelly's claims of non-violence are belied not only by his documented actions, but by his own writings and statements: In the bank raid at Jerilderie, Ned threatens the life of the escaped bank clerk: "I'll shoot Lyving when I see him" (Osborne 74). After the fact, he intended to kill a bank clerk, for the simple action of escaping a captor. Kelly's megalomania saw anyone who didn't co-operate completely with him as a "traitor" and thereby an enemy combatant. Kelly also suggests what his actions would have been if the police had employed their alleged cowardly tactics (using women and children as shields): "but they knew well I was not there or I

would have scattered their blood and brains like rain I would manure the Eleven Mile with their bloated carcasses and yet remember there is not one drop of murderous blood in my veins” (Osborne 83). These words suggest the presence of at least one drop. The delusional nature of Kelly’s prose is clear in its contradictions.

After the Jerilderie hold-up, a bank clerk named Sullivan made his escape. Kelly told the crowd at Glenrowan:

I don’t know how much money we took, but it was a lot more than they said in the papers. Anyway, we didn’t catch Sullivan, and I’d rather have caught him than robbed a dozen banks. I consider him one of the greatest villains unhung, and if I ever come across him, then God help him. I won’t shoot the bastard, that’d be too good for him. I’ll hang, draw and quarter him. I’ll hunt the bastard till I die. (Osborne 116)

As these words seem to speak for themselves, so did Kelly’s actions. At the taking of the town of Glenrowan, the gang’s last (and armoured) stand, the gang tore up the rail lines in order to wreck the oncoming trainload of police and trackers into a ravine, a carefully orchestrated attempted multiple murder. But was this an armed nationalist uprising as Ian Jones has suggested, or was it the last stand of some skilled but ultimately short-sighted outlaws? This second view is the one espoused by McQuilton, taking issue with Jones’s thwarted Irish revolution, the way Jones characterizes the Kelly Uprising.

Kelly expressed the following thoughts aloud from the top of a chair in Mrs Jones’s Glenrowan pub, where the gang gathered hostages and bought drinks:

First, I want to tell you that if I ever hear that anyone in here tonight tells the police anything we've said or done, I shall make it my duty to visit them some day and settle up with them. So you know what to expect. I'm not a bit afraid of the police, and if it was only them hunting for me I'd never be taken. But it's those damned black trackers I'm really afraid of because I know what they can do. They could track me over bare stones. A white man doesn't stand a chance with them at all, and it was mainly to kill those black bastards that I tore up those rails down the line. (Osborne 115)

The first issue here is the general threat of death to non-sympathizers. This does not sound like Clint Eastwood or Robin Hood any more. These are the words of a thug, an aspiring petty warlord. "You are with me or against me—and I will get you if you are against me." There is no mention of creating a "new Australia" for the oppressed people. This Robin Hood suffers greatly in the comparison to Knight's version, the man who "refuses to accept coercive power as a basis for protecting those who are less than powerful" (5). Conversely, Kelly used coercive power and threat to protect himself from the "less than powerful." Like Carey, Ian Jones seems to have been swept away by Kelly's fiery rhetoric and legendary status as an Irish Australian hero.³⁴

³⁴ An example of Ian Jones' rhetoric in *Ned Kelly: A Short Life*: "Even before Jerilderie Ned and Joe had begun to use the ageless methods of the rebel Irish, telling their story in balladry and poetry, the true 'seeds of fire' of Gaelic—weapons of a people whose rich oral tradition had been used against the British invader for hundreds of years. (Jones 201)

The second issue with Kelly's Glenrowan speech is his mention of the black trackers. Compare these previous sentiments with this scene from the book, where Ned and Joe sneak into the enemy camp to "use coercive power" on the black trackers:

When Joe Byrne jerked the barrel the old man held his hands up in the air and his apprentice done the same tho [*sic*] it were an action obviously new to him.

"You read them tracks to the police uncle" Joe whispered.

The tracker shook his head.

"You sure uncle?"

The old boy knew the score immediate.

"Nothing here boss he whispered back I swear by Jesus all them tracks belong to cattle."

"You tell them police fellahs there aint no tracks in here."

"Them b----rs get by very good without me boss you watch them."

"They give you tucker uncle?" (*True History* 281)

The Gang lets the trackers off with a warning; there is no love lost between the trackers and the Victoria Police, Byrne sympathising with their having been left out of the "tucker" (dinner). Here the relationship seems to be of a brotherhood of the oppressed. This invented (and not very believable) scene evinces Carey's strategic disavowal of the colonizing act, and his unease at his almost complete avoidance of the Aboriginal peoples in his picture of Australia. Perhaps this is because Ned Kelly (as Carey admits) was a racist. His novel tries to compensate with Joe Byrne's concern for their well-being. But

the death of these trackers, "black bastards" as he called them, was clearly Ned Kelly's goal. According to Robert Hughes in *The Fatal Shore*, the oppression and near genocide of the Aborigines of Australia was largely undertaken by the Irish population, who resented their "easy" treatment at the hands of the British.³⁵ Aborigines get off easy in Carey country, but in Kelly country many of the oppressed Irish were hunting them down. Huggan, (without addressing it) admits of the "racism underlying Kelly's mythicized status as a 'moral European,' a racism now generally acknowledged as being built into the structure of the so called 'Australian legend' itself" ("Cultural Memory" 142). In emphasizing one story of colonization, that of the lesser oppressed, Carey is helping to obscure much greater crimes and issues (unlike the Irish/English conflict), that actually have current relevance for Australia. This novel reinforces the status quo; this is not the work of historiographic metafiction. Carey's elision of his moral underlay, made possible by postmodern signposting, makes way for delusional claims. Rosemary Lloyd, in her paper "Figuring Ned: Nolan's Kelly, Carey's Kelly and the Masking of Identity" asserts that: "Carey's history of the Kelly gang has the potential to transform itself into a paradigm for all stories of the dispossessed: slaves, convicts and the Aboriginal people of the lost generation" (278). Carey has successfully elided the brutal aspects of Australian colonization: Lloyd accepts the oppressors to be in common cause with the oppressed.

Central to *True History of the Kelly Gang's* anti-squatter aesthetic is an extremely negative depiction of the Victoria Police force. Historically speaking, this is a shot at a

³⁵ Robert Hughes writes about the origins of convict/Aborigine relations: "In the eyes of the British Government the status of Australian Aborigines in 1788 was . . . superior to the convicts. The convicts resented this most bitterly. Galled by exile, the lowest of the low, they desperately needed to believe in a class inferior to themselves. Australian racism began with the convicts . . . it was the first Australian trait to percolate upward from the lower class." (94-5)

sitting duck, already riddled with holes and decaying. The force was the subject of international attention, and many high ranking members lost their careers over their inability to handle the Kelly Outbreak. There is little doubt that the gang were superior riders and bushmen, and it is still very easy to hide in the seemingly endless forests of Kelly country. What appears to have been the case was that an average police force came up against a skilled (but ultimately short-sighted) gang. All of this is well-documented; the picture that emerges is of the Victoria Police is more of ineptness, than a den of out and out corruption, a savage mechanism bent on oppressing the Irish-Australian. John Fitzpatrick, the Irish policeman, in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, confesses to his fellow "transplanted Irishman," Ned:

I adjectival spit and swear it they make us servants at their adjectival dinners even though that aint permitted by the rules those b-----s do not care they are the bosses of the effing colony I were wine waiter at a dinner where the Commissioner had the table set with naked ladies there were one in every chair. (*True History* 150)

Carey (through invention contiguous with fact) paints the police as a despicable and corrupt group, arm in arm with the squatters and the natural enemies of the selectors. Constable Oxley is a known horse thief (179). Detective Ward uses Ned's (non-existent) baby as a shield (as the historical Ned Kelly suggested the police had done with women and children), and throws him roughly in the air by way of threatening to find Ned's location (264). None of these details has any document or story behind them—but juxtaposed with documented historical detail, they start to blend together to create an

ominous vision of the Victoria Police. While McQuilton shows that police corruption was true to an extent, the open criminality of Carey's Victoria Police is exaggerated to the point of caricature. This tendency to exaggerate the evil of the Victoria Police and the wholesomeness of the Kelly Gang is skilfully mocked in the recent 2003 parodic film *Ned*. Clever satire is often politically revealing, and *Ned* suggests that the political reality was more complex than the nationalist folklore of Irish victimization that it mocks. Historically speaking, most of the Victoria Police came off looking like buffoons, men who did not have the skills to navigate the Outback, or the sense to listen to those who could. Peter Carey's depiction of the Victoria Police seems to be based on Ned Kelly's most inflammatory anti-British diatribes—a group of prostitute-soliciting, baby-tossing, property-grabbing horse thieves.

But what about the Kellys? Keith Dunstan, in the second chapter of his book *Saint Ned*, describes the atmosphere of Ned's upbringing:

Those in love with the romantic history of the gang talk of the persecution, the poverty, so hard that the settlers had to steal to survive, but the crime record around Greta and the King Valley was spectacular. There were three families, all intermarried, the Kellys, the Quinns and the Lloyds. In the seventies and eighties thirteen representatives of these families managed to score fifty-seven arrests and thirty-three convictions. (16)

While one may attribute a certain number of arrests to harassment, fifty-seven arrests and thirty-three convictions make for an elaborate conspiracy the inept Victoria Police hardly seemed capable of undertaking.

When the condition of oppression exists, the social bandit will arise. This "rising" is more a social phenomenon than the unique emergence of a hero—the hero will be made, regardless, according to McQuilton's application of Eric Hobsbawm's idea of the social bandit:

By June 1880, the Gang and its leader were legends. The transformation had been a rapid one, it itself a clear indication of the surrogate role assigned to the social bandit. Hobsbawm has neatly summarized the Kelly legend: 'a man who took from the rich to give to the poor and never killed but in self defence or just revenge.' The oral tradition is still alive that Ned Kelly, strongly aware of a bushranger tradition, lived up to the Robin Hood expectations of his sympathizers with the liberal distribution of money stolen from the banks. Certainly, it was distributed among the clan and prominent sympathizers and had been used to support the families of those arrested in 1879 which indicates the legend had a factual basis. The Gang paid for provisions taken from the region's selectors, partly because Ned Kelly was aware that to steal would be foolhardy, in effect an attack on the basis of Kelly support. . . . (147)

McQuilton persuasively suggests a practical necessity for Kelly's Irish Robin Hood stance, and the process through which a criminal can be made into a hero, despite many unheroic attributes. Sometimes a hero is necessary.

A similar dichotomy existed during the depression era tracktorings in Oklahoma, which is taken up in Woody Guthrie's song "Pretty Boy Floyd":

But many a starving farmer the same old story told / How the
outlaw paid their mortgage and saved their little home / Others tell you
'bout a stranger that come to beg a meal / Underneath his napkin left a
thousand dollar bill/It was in Oklahoma City it was on a Christmas day /
There was a whole cartload of groceries come with a note to say / Well
you say that I'm an outlaw you say that I'm a thief / Here's a Christmas
dinner for a family on relief. (1)

Floyd is given the same Robin Hood status as Carey's Steve Hart gives Kelly, a man forced to be an outlaw, looking out for his people—in this case, both outlaws make mortgage payments. The song ends with the claim that "You will never see an outlaw drive a family from their home." But Ned Kelly clearly threatened the homes and lives of non-sympathizers, and to attribute heroism to all "outlaws" is simply delusional.

The rationalization of Carey and Guthrie is an uncomfortable one: when the central authority is corrupt, its victims are excused from theft and even murder. This logic is parallel to the logic of modern terrorism; Robin Hood is above the law. Social injustice is easily used as a smokescreen for the chosen hero's less than heroic attributes, when one thinks of the word hero in terms of a figure who is a model for a group, who presents a standard to be admired and emulated. While McQuilton identifies this aspect of the Kelly legend, he also feels that Ned Kelly's heroic pose was not entirely insincere:

but he also seemed to genuinely identify with the poor Of course the legend and the reality do not always square quite so neatly. Although Stringybark Creek was not a premeditated attack, neither was it simply self-defence and just revenge. This characterization came from Ned Kelly's own passionate defence of his actions that October afternoon. But by 1880, it had been widely accepted and woven into the legend.

(147)

While it may not have been insincere, Kelly's heroic self-perception was not justified by attention to heroic considerations. He had no plans to make a better government. He did not put the concerns of his fellow "Irishmen" before his own. Ned Kelly was a charming and somewhat clever character, but his actions were not those of a rebel leader but rather of a criminal on a rampage. That the criminal was occasionally polite, and tried only to steal money from banks (Kelly famously returned a watch to a bank customer, taken by Steve Hart), these can be seen as the tricks of a showman. All of the gang were young "flash" and widely considered to be physically attractive. They certainly did capture the Australian imagination. However beloved he may have been (and still may be) at the time the Kelly Outbreak, Ned Kelly may very well have done "his people" more harm than good.

Joe Byrne, Kelly's right hand man, is credited with "The Ballad of Kelly's Gang" which gloats over the gang's multiple successes and suggests that revenge is sweet. The ballad also suggests the Irish peasant element that became so pervasive in the Kelly legend in its first line which is repeated at the beginning of the ballad's second part as

well: "Sure Paddy dear and did you hear the news that's going round / On the head of bold Ned Kelly they have placed two thousand pound." (Jones 201) Perhaps the gang's own self-promotion in terms of nationalist rhetoric was the greatest influence on Ian Jones' theory of the Kelly attempt for political organization and revolution that he presents in *Ned Kelly: A Short Life*. This work is admittedly the greatest influence on Carey's novel. McQuilton dismantles this argument systematically, explaining the guerrilla elements of the gang that made Jones' theory initially persuasive:

Kelly came from an Irish-Catholic background with its tradition of republican yearning, the concept of a republic becoming the symbol of an anti-British political system. Like many of the Irish, he saw the United States as the hope for the future of Ireland. . . . Ned Kelly demonstrated at Euroa and Jerilderie that he understood the basic strategy of guerrilla activity. He also warned the authorities in the Cameron Letter to beware their railroads. In the Jerilderie Letter he had foreshadowed a new dimension to the Outbreak: "It will pay the Government to give those people who are suffering in innocence, justice and liberty. If not I will open the eyes not only of the Victorian police and its inhabitants but also the whole British Army." (169)

One does not have to look far to see a parallel in the way that rail lines are presently threatened in Europe, or how civilians are targeted in attacks around the world, focussed in Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel. Ned Kelly clearly threatened the lives of all those who

co-operated with the police. If the people saw him as a leader, why would he need to threaten them?

McQuilton asserts that Kelly was not a leader of an Irish uprising, but that he *used* this perception and the subsequent position it gave him toward his own limited and non-political ends. The idea of revolution was a tool to spark the imagination of his supporters more than it was a real plan. While he feels the author has brought new information and insight to the study of the Kelly Outbreak, McQuilton disagrees with Ian Jones' thesis that the Outbreak was a thwarted Irish revolution:

But there is a tendency to over-stress this [Irish] element because it is so obvious . . . Ireland's ills were memories of tales told by his father and grandfather. Like "the green" and the shamrock, they were emotional symbols, a link with a past he had never experienced. The cruelties of Australia's convict history, the role and function of the local police and the power of the local squatter in a specific local sense were of greater importance in his letters than his sense of being specifically Irish. At Stringybark Creek, when McIntyre tried to dissuade him from killing his fellow countrymen, Ned told the trooper he considered himself an Australian. (188)

This documented statement does not play well for Carey and Jones' "Irish-Australian Revolution" and does not appear in either of their works.

McQuilton elaborates on the multilayered reality of settler society in late nineteenth-century Australia:

The importance of the Irish element is also belied by the nature and extent of Kelly sympathy. It cut across traditional prejudices associated with the Irish and reflected instead the diversity of the region's selectors' backgrounds. Sympathizers included not only the Irish Catholics, but settlers of English, Scottish, German, French, Danish, and native born origins Even the men close to the gang . . . were not drawn from Irish Catholic backgrounds alone. Williamson was an Englishman, Gunn was a Scot, the Baumgartens were German and Wild Wright was an Irish protestant. To attract such a broad cross section of the region's rural community ethnically, the Irish peasant element could not have been as significant as has been suggested [by Ian Jones]. (189)

In his *True History of the Kelly Gang*, Peter Carey is attempting to stir the embers of an extremely well-established political battle, the Irish Catholic/English Protestant dispute. Like Ian Jones, for Irish nationalist reasons, Carey chooses to exaggerate this element, while rigorously historically documenting the other parts of his story to an extent that is rarely seen even in straight historical fiction. In his situational metafiction, while there is a careful attention used in employing particular useful historical details, there is also a wilful blindness toward particular (and I would say inconvenient) recorded evidence.

Leo Braudy in *Narrative Form in History and Fiction*, says of Fielding: "[His] private history is a corrective to the biases and faulty generalizations about human nature that are secreted within the interstices of any public history bent consciously on proving or disproving a particular thesis" (92). This is exactly the narrative conceit of *True*

History of the Kelly Gang: that it is a revisionist corrective, a Foucauldian counterweight to the false public history of Ned Kelly. Carey presents his narrator like Fielding's "historian": "a passive author, who calmly records facts and chronicles social details, however incisively" (94). Braudy writes that Fielding's facts are "useful tools for puncturing the fantastic" (96) and that "*Joseph Andrews* is an experiment in writing about life without a deductive pattern, an experiment in using facts properly to convey a plausible world" (96). *True History of the Kelly Gang* uses facts in a way unforeseen by Braudy, as useful tools for *asserting* the fantastic, juxtaposing known history and pure invention in a game of "truth by association." The novel with a skeletal "archaeology of facts" does have a deductive pattern—it uses facts to lead the reader toward a particular perspective—in this case on a particularly volatile political topic. The best lies play on a grain of truth. As with Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, extensive footnoting and paratextual elements are not present to interrupt continuity as Hutcheon suggests of the postmodern usage of paratextual elements (Hutcheon, *Politics* 84), conversely, these elements attest to the accuracy of Carey's portrayal. While much of Jonson's history is accurate, the invented parts, like those in *True History*, conspire to Jonson's chosen moral/political position: the idea that power is ordained by higher forces, and that those of lower origins (Sejanus) should not aspire to raise themselves beyond their station. As with *True History*, facts are used as tools: there is no objectivity, only an assertion of objectivity. While *Sejanus* is somewhat obscure, Shakespeare's history plays operate on the same principle: the invented story with historical overtures *becomes* the history. The extent to which Shakespeare has influenced history, and the public perception of history, is

difficult to contemplate. But as Linda Hutcheon points out, history is far from immune to fictional influence. "The Henry most people think of is Shakespeare's" (*Future Indicative* 180). The Ned Kelly most Australians will think of is not McQuilton's, but Carey's. There is nothing to say this is a "bad" way to write; this type of writing should simply be seen for what it is. Historically-based postmodern fiction or historiographic metafiction has real political effects and is misunderstood if theorized into over-simplified generalities. This is where David Attwell's concept of situational metafiction applied to these novels of the settler nations, fills in an important theoretical gap.

One could argue that what is being portrayed in *True History of the Kelly Gang* is a creative and well-based vision of Ned Kelly's perspective on his own situation. But the novel goes beyond the first-person narrative of its protagonist. Carey's portrayal of Thomas Curnow, written in a third person omniscient voice, belies any narrative claims of objectivity.³⁶ The extensive paratextual elements also go beyond Kelly's narrative and clearly mark this work as "postmodern" in terms of the theorization of historiographic metafiction:

In historical discourse, we know that footnotes are often the space where opposing views are dealt with (and textually marginalized), but we also know that they can offer a supplement to the upper text or can often provide an authority to support it. In historiographic metafiction these footnoting conventions are both inscribed and parodically inverted. They do indeed function here as self-reflexive signals to assure the reader as to

³⁶ This narrative voice is clearly sympathetic to Ned Kelly, as will be shown.

the historical credibility of the particular witness or authority cited, while at the same time they also disrupt our reading—that is, our creating—of a coherent, totalizing fictive narrative. (*Politics* 81)

Hutcheon's confused thinking on footnoting and paratextuality is clear from her own contradictions within the preceding paragraph. She calls them both "marginalized" and "authorit[ative]" (*Politics* 82). Hutcheon is not at all clear about the power implied by a footnote in contemporary fiction, just that it ultimately undermines the authority of the text in historiographic metafiction. But what if it does the opposite? What if the paratextual authority is (logically) taken as it has been historically: as authority? The historical credibility of Carey's paratextual notes (contiguous with meticulously accurate history) is non-existent. But it is clear that these footnotes are meant to support the author's moral/political position, because that is exactly what they do. These chapter headings describe the state and dimensions of the "found" letters of Kelly that never existed. This is Carey's way of supporting his idea fictively, in historical terms, he cheats. It must be noted that he does not cheat to "problematize the idea of historical knowledge." Carey knows what he believes about Kelly, that he is "Australia's Thomas Jefferson"; he invents the "evidence" to prove it. This is very clever historiographic metafiction, in a mode unimagined by Linda Hutcheon, situational metafiction that, like the works of J. M. Coetzee, are postmodern and at the same time politically engaged in particularized ways. These inventive news ways of writing need to be examined more closely, and not all placed under one theoretical rubric, if theory is to maintain a position of usefulness.

Carey's nationalist underlay is most evident near the end of the novel, in his portrayal of Thomas Curnow. The schoolmaster at Glenrowan, Thomas Curnow, is credited with having thwarted the Gang's plans at Glenrowan and by doing so saved many lives. It is interesting to compare Osborne's vision of Curnow with his literary portrayal by Carey.

The schoolmaster appears to have been one of the very few citizens in the pub possessed of a social conscience. He was a sufficiently educated man both to understand how the Kelly Gang had been forced into existence by social and economic conditions in the colony, and to realize that their anarchic and murderous exploits must not be allowed to continue.

Cleverly, Curnow set about ingratiating himself with Ned, in the hope that at some stage he might be allowed to leave the pub and raise an alarm. The Kellys were openly boasting that the railway tracks had been ripped up, and that the special train would crash into the ravine shortly after it had passed Glenrowan station. (113)

History and legend both have it that when Ned let Curnow go home, he borrowed his sister's red scarf and flagged the train. It is clear that his actions saved the lives of many, if not all, on board.

Some would say Curnow was a hero, but *True History of the Kelly Gang* paints him as the Australia's Judas, a despicable sycophant of Englishness (he mocks Ned's audacity when he asks about Shakespeare) who sold out the nation's hero. At the novel's conclusion, the narrative conceit emerges that the letters we have read are Ned Kelly's

letters that Curnow got by offering to help him edit them—stolen loot from the outlaw. Curnow wants to despise Kelly, having cultivated what he sees as elevated English sentiments, but cannot help but “adore” Ned for reasons he cannot understand. One is reminded here, of Carey’s project to reconcile Australia with her “gaoler,” England. Curnow is described here, in a sort of afterword section to the Ned Kelly letters, by an unidentified omniscient narrator, a third Hutcheonian “enunciating entity” in italics:

Thomas Curnow had entered the dragon’s lair, the benighted heart of everything rank and ignorant. He had danced with the devil himself and he had flattered him and out-witted him as successfully as the hero of any fairy tale, and now he carried the proof, the trophy, the rank untidy nest of paper beneath his arm. These stained “manuscripts” were disgusting to his touch and his very skin shrank from their conceit and ignorance. . . .
(*True History* 357)

Curnow drops off the manuscript at home (fiction) and stops the train from falling into the ravine, saving the lives of all those on board (documented fact). After he does so, his own wife reviles him as a coward (fiction). In Carey’s version, Curnow is more interested in Kelly’s papers than he is in saving the train.

In this afterword of sorts, Kelly is the humanitarian in the shootout at Glenrowan, where innocent hostages were shot accidentally by police.

No-one spoke to Ned Kelly in this time but he did not need to have his responsibility pointed out. He could not protect these people against the police, nor could he protect himself. It seemed there was no machine ever

invented that could protect these people from the forces God had placed upon the earth. (True History 361-362)

One might suggest that Ned had just missed killing an entire trainload of people, and that without involving them in his exploits his “fold” would never have been at risk of death. And again, some saw his fold as hostages. The sympathies of this omniscient narrator in this final section are clearly toward Kelly: they also defy their own logic. This third of Hutcheon’s “multiple enunciating entities” does the opposite work of problematizing Kelly’s history, all these entities work in conjunction to assert a particular history.

Once the gang is shot down and Ned is taken alive (both fact) Carey’s final narrator writes the following about Curnow in his italicized omniscient afterword:

Thomas Curnow, meanwhile, was escorted by six policemen directly from his cottage to the Special Train and from there he was taken to Melbourne, where government protection was provided him and his wife for four more months. This was curious treatment for a hero, and he was called a hero more than once, although less frequently and less enthusiastically than he might have reasonably expected . . .

If this lack of lasting recognition disappointed him, he never revealed it directly, although the continuing ever-growing adoration of the Kelly Gang could always engage his passions.

What is it about we Australians, eh? he demanded. What is wrong with us? Do we not have a Jefferson? A Disraeli? Might we not find someone

better to admire than a horse-thief and a murderer. Must we always make such an embarrassing spectacle of ourselves?

In private, his relationship with Ned Kelly was more complicated, and the souvenir he carried from Glenrowan seems to have made its own private demands upon his sympathy. (True History 364)

So Curnow edited the text we have in our hands according to the fictional paratextual references, references that attest also to the existence of the non-existent “Melbourne Library.” He is presented by Carey as a cowardly pseudo-Englishman, who betrays his nation’s hero and steals his words to put his mark on them.³⁷ Carey here forces a representative of England and Englishness to admit their admiration of the Australian hero Ned Kelly, reconciling with the “gaoler.”

Is Carey a high minded historical novelist like that of Fielding’s ideal—without deductive pattern? It has been shown that he is not, but that it is useful to him for us to think that he is. Carey’s novel is fascinating and within his “rights” as a novelist. There is a good case to be made for there being no rules in art. Carey’s virtuosic ability to generate the character of Ned Kelly through his letters and legend could be seen as a much more important order of business than “straight history”—an honest fiction—“true” to its own parameters, using knowledge of the past to attempt to recreate a social milieu and pivotal characters within it. And perhaps Carey presented the world accurately as Ned would have seen it, including the invention of unlikely and dastardly police deeds. One might also say that truth in fiction is elastic or even just another narrative technique.

³⁷ Ironically, this is similar to what Carey does, but he takes Kelly’s words, ostensibly for purposes of correcting the public history, in order to assert his version of the “Australian Jefferson.”

In all of his surviving writings, Ned Kelly maintains a staunch righteousness and as Dunstan would have it "He was a paranoid in his loathing of every man who wore a policeman's uniform" (12). Dunstan references Angus MacIntyre of La Trobe University, who made a psychological profile of Kelly. MacIntyre states that: "Ned liked to think of himself as an essentially decent person and it was remarkable the ease with which he would justify his more outrageous acts" (18).³⁸ This is true of Carey's Ned Kelly. Carey is entitled to all fictional devices, and any good storyteller knows the power of the word *true*. But it is important to understand that his book does not conform to the pose of conveying the world *solely* as Kelly may have seen it. "Extra textual commentary" between chapters makes pretensions to objectivity, (one chapter preface criticizes Kelly's "wistfulness") but upon examination, this commentary serves to reinforce Carey's pro-Kelly moral underlay, in the same way as his historical inventions.

Carey in an interview with *The Compulsive Reader* has made the following comments on Thomas Curnow:

He is an interesting character and his action was immensely brave. He was a crippled schoolteacher who had this great courage. He got the biggest reward and was the one you would expect to be the hero . . . Curnow was entitled to his speech and it helps to highlight the particular nature of Australia, where a Curnow is reviled and Kelly is the hero. (par. 3)

³⁸ After being unjustly accused of cattle-theft, Kelly was quoted as saying (about his accusers) "I began to think they wanted me to give them something to talk about, therefore I started wholesale and retail horse and cattle stealing." (Dunstan 18)

Despite these open minded and non-partisan sentiments, Carey's final omniscient narrator clearly stands in judgment on Thomas Curnow. The section on Curnow and the character's words, rather than, as Carey suggests, "highlight[ing] the particular nature of Australia" serve to condemn him. Carey has his own wife call him a coward for saving a trainload of people.

If Curnow is Australia's Judas, it is not hard to figure out what is being said of Ned Kelly. The further implication of this judgement on Curnow is that Carey wanted the police train at Glenrowan, and the many people inside it, to be destroyed. Ned Kelly is an Australian hero, and a study of his life shows him to be a very problematic one. An Australian aversion to central authority, and a glorification of this aversion by one of its most accomplished novelists, is perhaps at this point a repressed violence, an anger at past oppression. But where is this rebellion toward central authority located now?

In an article entitled "Mate, You're a Legend" Tony Stephens writes about Australia's "History Wars" and how "the debate [about Australian identity] is ceaseless, to the point where Australians seem obsessed with the subject." (par. 1) Indeed many books have been written on the subject, the two most polemical being Keith Windschuttle's *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* in 2002 and Stuart MacIntyre's *The History Wars* in 2003. While seen as an author of liberal ideals, Carey's book is firmly ensconced in the right wing camp of the History Wars. This novel is written *for* the central authority, and caters to their sympathies, their need for a history and the heroes that come with it, blurring the less than attractive aspects of the "heroic" national ethos. And where does the indigenous population factor in? What about non-white immigrants

who consider themselves Australian? In public commentary, Carey makes overtures toward this concern, but his novel foregrounds an exhausted and now irrelevant rebellion, in the interest of reinforcing a questionable foundation myth and thereby the power of the existing white central authority—the “real Australians.” Interestingly, we can see this recent project as doing quite the opposite of what J. M. Coetzee’s *Dusklands* set out to do in 1972, to attack the settler mythos of his own people and tradition.

Carey’s modern white settler mythology prospers at the expense of ongoing concerns about national identity and of dispossession, a clear example of the “strategic disavowal” theorized by Johnston and Lawson:

In the founding and growth of cultural nationalism, then, we can see one vector of difference (the difference between colonizing subject and colonized subject: settler indigene) being replaced by another (the difference between colonizing subject and imperial center: settler imperium). We can see this, with the benefit of postcolonial hindsight/analysis, as a strategic disavowal of the colonizing act. In this process, “the nation” is what replaces “the indigenous” and in doing so conceals its participation in colonization by nominating a new “colonized” subject—the colonizer or settler invader. (“Settler Post-Colonialism” 57)

Carey’s apparent concern for rectifying past injustices is made clear in public commentary: “The two big issues in our lives are that we began as a convict colony and the other is that we invaded another persons’ country and took it from them and

pretended we didn't. There is a great tendency to deny both of these things"

(*Compulsive Reader* par. 9) These are safe comments for a novelist and apparent liberal humanist in Carey's current political climate. However, by focusing his novel on "the difference between colonizing subject and imperial center" Carey participates in the strategic disavowal of the colonizing act. His public commentary about Australian identity pays lip service to aboriginal concerns, but *True History* ultimately reinforces a nationalism that is white and exclusionary. Those who do not understand this, I believe, do not understand his novel.

True History of the Kelly Gang presents itself in the postmodern aesthetic identified as historiographic metafiction. It is self-reflexive and parodic in its approach to British public history, it presents multiple points of view and an increased emphasis on Hutcheon's "enunciating entity" in order to problematize that British history, as Hutcheon asserts: "to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanation . . . question[ing] whose truth gets told (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 123). Hutcheon's theory, however, can only be applied to this situational metafiction *in part*. Situational metafiction takes a bifurcated form: problematizing British Imperial history and asserting unironically a "new improved" subaltern history, which has suddenly become immune to the maladies of grand-narrativization. Carey is certainly interested in problematizing the British dominated history of Australia. When asked about his choice of title, Carey answered: "It is the putting of true and history together—anybody who thinks about reading at all calls to mind that history is written by winners and what's true and what's not and the dynamic in that." (*Compulsive* par. 6)

What is obscured is the assumption of critical distance in the interrogation of history.

Carey is now among the “winners.” Hutcheon suggests of historiographic metafiction: “It wants to challenge those [grand narrative] discourses and yet to use them, even to milk them for all they are worth.” (*Poetics* 133) One has to wonder what “worth” is being “milked” here. This is vague theorization. Carey’s “milking” of precise “outside” detail from historical texts contiguous with invention shows that its “worth” is in asserting the Irish-Australian nationalism: a nationalism that finds a talisman in the figure of Ned Kelly. As Clancy asserts: “Carey’s use of historical fact is not only subjective and selective but also highly partisan. The changes he has made to historical fiction lie mostly in one direction—a perpetuation of the comfortable and undisturbing myth of Kelly as a much put upon victim who rose up against his oppressors and fought for the rights of little people and against the misuses of authority everywhere.” Clancy adds that “It is the version which American reviewers accepted uncritically and which many Australians will continue to pay homage to, at the expense of an historical Ned Kelly who was a far more complex and ambiguous figure” (58). This type of nationalist assertion is not supposed to happen in the problematizing and anti-totalizing world of historiographic metafiction. But Huggan and Herrero (along with most prominent American reviewers) seemed to take the novel as being historiographic metafiction. If this category is to remain, it needs qualification in the postcolonial realm. Carey has every “right” to this aesthetic, but the inattentive reader risks being manipulated by a hidden moral/political position posing as objective history or as an objective interrogation of history. *True History* is an interesting novel, but it is neither objective history nor an objective interrogation of history.

Problematically, it has been labelled as both by influential critics and theorists, largely because, as I have shown, it contains the following signposts of historiographic metafiction: multiple narrators, self reflexivity, parody, intertextuality and a general distrust of metanarratives. *True History of the Kelly Gang*, with the help of theorists who blur important distinctions, becomes an effective tool for the propagation of an exclusionary Irish-Australian nationalism. Such works need to be examined in terms of their use of documented historical sources, and need to be considered individually, not as a school of postmodern writing. By understanding *True History the Kelly Gang* as situational metafiction, this novel is better understood.

Chapter Three:

Shadbolt's Bent: Settler Mythology as Situational Metafiction

The historical fictions of New Zealand author Maurice Shadbolt look very much like historiographic metafiction as delineated by Linda Hutcheon. By participating in this postmodern aesthetic, Shadbolt's revisionist and parodic historical works give the impression of creating disorder, ostensibly participating in the Foucauldian rupture in the grand narrative of British imperial history. This chapter will demonstrate that Shadbolt's postmodernism is of a postcolonial type, one that problematizes Hutcheon's theory that all postmodern novels problematize the historical referent in an attempt to assert an "anti-totalizing ideology." Shadbolt's historicist and nationalistic version of New Zealand settler history is asserted in a novel that will be shown to contain all of the key aspects of historiographic metafiction, but few of its apparent non-dialectical/anti-totalizing objectives. With his reworkings of particular events in the New Zealand Wars, he follows Hutcheon's postmodern injunction of "the particular and the local take[ing] on the value once held by the universal and the transcendent" (*Poetics* 97). The often parodic narration of *Monday's Warriors* and *Season of the Jew* appears to "problematize" British imperial history. Importantly, however, as with Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, a postmodern aesthetic is used, but in a bifurcated fashion that problematizes British Imperial history, but not history as a whole. There is a dialectic (settler versus mother country) in both of Shadbolt's novels discussed in this chapter. There is also a weight and an unproblematized relationship to the referent, when the author's moral/political position is being supported. Maurice Shadbolt's settler

nationalism does not fit into Hutcheon's poetics, and its ethical dimension is best examined under the rubric of Attwell's situational metafiction.

Shadbolt prefaces his novel, *Monday's Warriors*, with the following words:

I am indebted to the historian James Belich for his generosity with research material, especially his provocative M. A. thesis *Titokowaru's War*; also to Kendrick Smithyman, for his scholarly tracking of Kimball Bent through the undergrowth of the nineteenth century; and not least to military historian Lieutenant-Colonel Christopher Pugsley for patiently walking me over warrior ground.

In his acknowledgment of debts to all of these scholars, Shadbolt claims a type of historical legitimacy for his narrative, an unproblematized relationship with his referent Kimball Bent. This is a common practice in many modern historiographic fictions and some would say a good fictional tactic. How you want to weigh the truth declarations of a writer of fiction is another question. Certainly one can claim (as many writers of situational metafiction do) that fiction is fiction; but this begs the question of the relationship between fiction and history. If "fiction is fiction," why not stick to fiction and use fictional names and details? Strangely, two of Shadbolt's three thanked scholars give diametrically opposed accounts of much of his subject matter as will be demonstrated. Shadbolt has no obligation to be faithful to these respected versions of events and figures—but why thank them? One might be tempted to label this a Hutcheonian "problematizing" of the historical referent, if Shadbolt's nationalist ideology were not demonstrably present.

James Belich's historical investigations revised modern perceptions of the New Zealand Wars. In his book *The Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict: The Maori, the British and the New Zealand Wars* he asks: "whether a consistent pattern of interpretation existed, how and why it worked, and whether it can be used against itself to alleviate the problem of one-sided evidence" (14). Ostensibly using this "pattern of interpretation" against British Imperial history, Shadbolt's historical works ultimately reinforce settler mythology. This goal is obfuscated through focusing on the settler versus mother country dialectic (wherein the settlers are the victims), and tokenistically valorizing the Maori people as noble savages whose time has passed. His move (unconscious or not) is to shift the conflict of settler versus indigene to settler versus mother country, to clean up the details of colonization. While there is no "true history," to which we can refer, there is a body of historical scholarship that can demonstrate a clear deviation from *any* historical source. This is particularly interesting when the invention is contiguous with historically sourced details, as is the case with *True History* in chapter two. Shadbolt's version of New Zealand history is a *history for* the New Zealand settler, in the way that Peter Carey's work is a *history for* the Irish-Australian settler or in the way *Green Grass* is a *history for* the Native American.³⁹

Shadbolt's historical novels expand on old myths: helping foster a modern "pattern of interpretation": Shadbolt's own historicist vision of conquest. By associating himself with Belich (and this is reciprocal—Shadbolt is quoted on the back cover of Belich's book *I Shall Not Die—Titokowaru's War*) and Pugsley, Shadbolt suggests that

³⁹ *History for* as Levi-Strauss uses the term. Coetzee is left out of this grouping because he deflates rather than valorizes nationalism.

his research and projects are comparable to those of these historians, and that he is helping to “set the record straight” or, as the title of the critical anthology on his work suggests: *Ending the Silences: Critical Essays on the Works of Maurice Shadbolt*.⁴⁰ The anthology might also be described as “manipulating the silences” an attitude that would resonate with Stuart Pierson, who lamented what writers like Shadbolt and Wayne Johnston are doing to “history”—rewriting the past to express the moral/political message they wish to extend to the reading public. Pierson focused on inaccuracies as flaws—I look at the historical inaccuracy as a site of rupture, a locus of authorial intention. In simple terms—why the change? It can be argued that all books are political, even an introspective work is an assertion of political individuality. Shadbolt’s works are positional in ways that require probing; his rhetoric does not fit his reputation as a liberal novelist, supposedly telling the untold story of a dispossessed people. The Maori are ostensibly Shadbolt’s subject, but they are a Hitchcockian McGuffin—a plot device used deliberately to mislead the reader. Shadbolt’s true subject is the problem of cultural identity of a settler population living on appropriated Maori land, and the assertion of the legitimacy of the settler presence in New Zealand.

As Rex Murphy said about Johnston’s depiction of Joey Smallwood, in his review of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*: “An author is free to combine or invent as he or she chooses. Just so. But a reader is also free to feel a disappointment if the original is within reach of memory and experience and the created version is less persuasive . . .”

⁴⁰ It is interesting to compare Shadbolt’s acknowledgement of Belich to Mda’s acknowledgment of Piers: Shadbolt’s presenting a very opposite vision to that of his historical mentor, Mda being almost “plagaristically” faithful.

("Alas, Joey" 14). In the case of Shadbolt, I think there is more than disappointment at issue. The questions are: "What is the author changing?" and "Why?" The question is more complicated than: "Should they do it?" That question is irrelevant as ought statements are based on abstract moral constructs. It is more fruitful to ask: "What are they doing and why are they doing it?"

Shadbolt, when criticized for his casual use of historical material contiguous with invention, would compare himself to Shakespeare and speak of his "novelist's license" ("Letter" 10-11). The most contentious issue is the use of actual historical figures. In Shadbolt's body of work, the possible subjects of historical inquiry are voluminous: I will focus primarily on Kimball Bent—the American/Canadian⁴¹ deserter from the British Army, and the Maori general Titokowaru in the novel *Monday's Warriors*. I will also make reference to Shadbolt's use of other historical figures such as the British soldiers Colonel Thomas McDonnell and Colonel George Stoddard Whitmore, the Maori general Te Kooti, and Colonel W. G. Malone, a New Zealand commander who died at Gallipoli.

Shadbolt's novel *Monday's Warriors* depicts Titokowaru's spectacular (and before Belich unacknowledged) victories over superior British military forces. Titokowaru sued for peace for several years, reaping the scorn of many of his own tribesmen. Once surveyors illegally crossed his final line in the sand, Titokowaru hit the creeping appropriation with unexpected wrath, killing several of New Zealand's soldier "heroes" and threatening to drive the rest of the British into the sea.⁴² In 1868, white New

⁴¹ There is no source to say whether he was Canadian or American, but he lived in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and in Maine.

⁴² The author of this thesis had the good fortune to peruse the original declaration of war by Titokowaru at the National archive in Wellington.

Zealand was in a state of mass hysteria, the government rationally contemplated the loss of the North Island. During his first forays Titokowaru drove the British line back forty miles—people were exiting Wellington en masse. And somehow, in this newly remembered epic, this apparent Foucauldian rupture in imperial history, a lowly deserter from North America had a part to play.

Kimball Bent was a British soldier of uncertain origins: differing accounts point to roots in Maine and a wife in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The *Waikato Times* wrote in 1960 that he “married Sarah Crosby in 1856,” but when she ran off with another man, he went to England and enlisted in the 57th Regiment. (“British Sailor” 1) He apparently deserted more than once, and was put in a military prison for stealing a watch. (“Kimble [sic] Bent” par. 2) Kimball Bent went AWOL to fall in with the Maori enemy in the later stages of the New Zealand Wars, claiming mistreatment at the hands of the Empire. Upon capture, Bent was made a slave of the powerful chief Tito te Hanataua, who had to watch that someone did not kill (and possibly eat) him. In battle situations the diminutive Bent was still under suspicion and was seen to be of limited use among massive and skilled warriors. He was kept with the women and children. Bent was seen, as were many Pakeha Maoris, as a special pet.⁴³ In the early days of New Zealand’s colonization, many poor whites (deserting soldiers and whalers, escaped and released convicts) fell in with the powerful and numerous Maori, sometimes under duress. Powerful chieftains liked to show their mana (the power of their warrior spirit) by the keeping of a pet Pakeha.

⁴³ “Pakeha” is a Maori term for a white man or woman.

Shadbolt's Bent in *Monday's Warriors* bears little resemblance to the man who told his story to the historian James Cowan in the early part of the last century. In 1911 this series of interviews was made into the book *The Adventures of Kimble Bent* [sic]. In contrast to all historical accounts, most notably those of his mentor, James Belich, Shadbolt's Bent is not a slave. On the contrary, he quickly becomes the chief advisor to Titokowaru, who was perhaps the greatest Maori warrior of all time. He becomes close friends with several warriors who seem loosely based on real figures.⁴⁴ In Shadbolt's inventive account, Bent is violently obsessed with revenge against the British, who never find a kind word at the hands of this author. Shadbolt's Bent joins the Maori warriors and kills his regimental commander (Hassard) as contemporaneous military folklore would have it: a renegade American as the source of embarrassing British military losses to savage peoples. Throughout *Monday's Warriors*, Bent's dreams focus on killing his two remaining tormentors: Flukes, the martinet sergeant and Tonks, the drummer with a relish for the cat o' nine tails. This folklore was most likely based on Bent's admitted threat to the regimental drummer just after he administered Bent's flogging for insubordination. As Cowan tells it from Bent's testimony: "Then the prisoner was cast loose, swearing in his pain and passion to have the drummer's life" (*Adventures* 20). This is as far as the evidence goes. This chapter will demonstrate the historical implausibility of Shadbolt's account of Bent, showing how (and suggesting why) existing historical versions of Bent have been manipulated by the author—used accurately (in terms of his quoted sources) only when it serves his moral/political position. Again, this is not to condemn these

⁴⁴ Big seems to be the historical Big Kereopa and Demon seems based on the warrior Katene; both are found in Cowan.

books, it is a method of looking at how their use of history is geared toward a particular moral agenda.

Linda Hutcheon would perhaps see Shadbolt's inaccuracies as a "problematization" of the historical referent:

Historiographic metafiction suggests that truth and falsity may indeed not be the right terms in which to discuss fiction. . . . Postmodern novels like *Flaubert's Parrot*, *Famous Last Words*, and *A Maggot* openly assert that there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just others' truths. (*Poetics* 109)

This postmodern formula is complicated, however, when some "historical truths" are problematized and others asserted. This type of situational metafiction, as defined by David Attwell, admits of the positionality of this type of fiction, which is exacerbated in the settler nations because of their unresolved indigenous issues. Through the application of Attwell's construct to Shadbolt's work, we once again see how particular postcolonial examples can inform and revise postmodern theory. It is interesting to note, however, that while Coetzee's *Dusklands* is a positional interrogation of South African settler history, Shadbolt only interrogates the British Imperial side of the history of his country, choosing to give the role of victim to both the Maori and the settlers.⁴⁵ Both *Monday's Warriors* and *Season of the Jew* could be also classified as historiographic metafiction, because of their postmodern use of historical personages in starring roles, going against Lukács's

⁴⁵ This ironically is a similar aesthetic to that of Thomas King, who while sharing a style of bifurcated problematization, would have little patience with Shadbolt's subaltern claims—the two being dialectical historiographic writers on opposite sides of the coin.

definition which includes the “relegation of historical personages to secondary roles” (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114-115). The parodic interrogation of imperial history is also a strong identifier of historiographic metafiction, a dominant in all of Shadbolt’s historical works. Problematically, the theoretically assumed objectivity of postmodern novels is what “hides the joins between fiction and history” in these works of Shadbolt’s.

Kimball Bent, James Cowan, Dr. James Belich , William Skinner (a Taranaki surveyor who knew Bent), and every newspaper account that I came across in the New Zealand National Archive in Wellington: all claim the same—that Kimball Bent never fired a shot at the British, disputing a few (very poorly) documented claims to the contrary. Shadbolt’s *Monday’s Warriors* hinges on the assumption that he did. It is in this reinvention of Kimball Bent that we begin to see Shadbolt’s moral/political position. A similar use of history is shown by Attwell in Coetzee’s *Dusklands*, where the Boer pioneers’ history is altered to suit Coetzee’s political purpose: “Coetzee’s use of sources . . . would seem to be directly related to his critical intentions with respect to white nationalism . . .” (*J. M. Coetzee* 45). Shadbolt’s use of sources is parallel, but unlike that of Coetzee in *Dusklands*, his position is on the settler side. The author “omits [N. A. Coetzee’s] cordial exchanges” with the Namaquas and “adds desertion” of his “Hottentot” servants in order to “engineer a certain consistency” (*J. M. Coetzee* 46). This “consistency” relates to his anti-settler position. Shadbolt uses an identical type of historical manipulation to assert an opposite aesthetic: to elevate the historical Kimball Bent into a fiercely anti-British/Maori friendly New Zealand settler. In this move Shadbolt attempts to ostensibly accommodate the Maori while asserting an anti-British

New Zealand nationalism. By alleging commonality between the New Zealand settlers and the Maori, Shadbolt asserts an historical elision. The country *was* already New Zealand (since 1841) the settlers *asked* for British military help and received it. The British (through General Cameron) eventually denied this help to Sir George Grey, as he was illegally appropriating Maori land. It seems like now that the British are gone, it is safe to blame them for actions that were clearly taken for, and often by, the settlers.

Belich quotes *The Adventures of Kimble Bent* twelve times in his book *I Shall Not Die*. Belich also makes extensive use of James Cowan's other works in several of his books. Shadbolt may not have made this connection, or he may have had other reasons for his public derision of a source he used extensively himself. In his afterword entitled "In Fact," Shadbolt derides Cowan's research abilities:

Early in the twentieth century a journalist and apprentice historian named James Cowan, looking for frontier tales, knocked on Bent's door and asked for some of his time. The old man did better than grant an interview. He allowed Cowan to make free with diary notes on his early life. The result was a series of highly coloured articles and in 1911 a book called *The Adventures of Kimble [sic] Bent*. Failing even to check the spelling of his subject's name, Cowan was bound to get much else wrong. He duly did. Much might be credited to Bent's leg pulling. Much was surely due to Cowan's failure to audit Bent's story. Anyway he credited Bent with a youthful existence in the U. S. Navy and even half membership of a mysterious Indian tribe called the Musqua in Northern Maine: There is no

such tribe.⁴⁶ Still anxious for a clean slate, and a formal pardon, Bent denied having fired at fellow whites in the New Zealand Wars, and particularly not at his regimental commander (Colonel Hassard). He admitted only to manufacturing shot fired. The story would not have survived long under cross-examination in a witness box. Cowan, however, was no lawyer and Bent no sworn witness. Otherwise much of Cowan's book is rather overwrought fancy in *Boy's Own* prose. (*Monday's Warriors* 307)

The status of this interesting and misleading afterword is greatly in question. Shadbolt offers no proof of any of his statements, and, as we see, some of his more scathing criticisms of Cowan are simply false. Cowan's later work is some of the most respected in the field of New Zealand history. These paratextual elements are postmodern markers but they make no attempt at irony in Hutcheonian fashion; they are meant to add weight to what is historically asserted by the author.

The Adventures of Kimble Bent is quite fascinating, an important historical source for early New Zealand. It is also hard to get, perhaps harder now that it has been publicly denounced as being trivial by a major New Zealand author. Perhaps most importantly, by denouncing the easily picked on Cowan, Shadbolt gives himself the false appearance of a liberal (and postmodern) historical novelist taking issue with the past injustices of the old regime. But Shadbolt is of this party—a white New Zealander of settler stock. Quite

⁴⁶ The Musqua are in fact a tribe in Iowa, another name for the Fox people. Several historians and writers in this study spell Kimball as "Kimble" including James Belich.

simply, the settlers got the land. Blaming the British for this, and reaping the benefits, does not ultimately make sense.

Belich, about whom Shadbolt is effusive in his praise, makes the following judgement of Cowan:

The most recent comprehensive examination of the wars based on primary evidence, *The New Zealand Wars and the Pioneering Period* (1956) [was written] by James Cowan, Cowan's work has an obvious bias and obvious weaknesses, but to castigate him for being a man of his era is a fruitless exercise. It can even be counter-productive, because *the recognition of his bias is easily mistaken for its correction* [italics mine]. Cowan was the product of an intensely Anglocentric, Empire worshipping period in New Zealand's development, and in this context his balance is quite impressive. He showed a real sympathy for the Maoris, for example in his analysis of the Parihaka incident of 1881, and Maori veterans trusted him enough to provide him with accounts of their experience. (*Victorian* 16)

This warning seems to be tailored for Shadbolt, whose "recognition of [Cowan's] bias" is "mistaken for its correction." Ironically, even a cursory reading of *Monday's Warriors* and *The Adventures of Kimble Bent* yields sufficient evidence of how heavily Shadbolt has drawn from Cowan's "overwrought fancy" about Kimball Bent. As Belich credits Cowan for sympathy for the Maori in the Parihaka incident, we will later see how Shadbolt's settler nationalism whitewashes the same incident.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ A massacre of Maori warriors by New Zealand soldiers.

Shadbolt's afterword claims: "Still anxious for a clean slate, and a formal pardon, Bent denied having fired at fellow whites in the New Zealand Wars, and particularly not at his regimental commander" (*Monday's Warriors* 307). He suggests that Bent did not speak truthfully. Colonel Hassard was Bent's regimental commander, and while Gudgeon (a professional soldier) gives credence to this folklore in his book, the much quoted work of settler nationalism, *Reminiscences of the War in New Zealand*, both Belich and Cowan state that the legend that Bent shot his regimental commander, is simply false: "The Pakeha conviction that [Bent] killed his old colonel, J. Hassard, at Otapawa, is not true. Bent [was] a man of easy disposition, rather sensitive, and without any indication of viciousness, strong passion, or boldness. . . . He [was] not the only British deserter in the area, and some [were] more formidable" (*I Shall* 37-38). The more formidable deserter is Charles Kane, who I will show was the model for Shadbolt's version of Kimball Bent.

The *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* entry on Kimball Bent, also addresses the issue:

There is little evidence of the events of [Bent's] life except for his own much later testimony. Bent was undoubtedly a liar: in his youth to save his own skin; in later life to retrieve his reputation. But many of his stories are not improbable, and much of the information he gives is not relevant to his quest for self-justification. Further, his biographer, James Cowan, checked his tale with survivors from both sides of the conflict. (par. 4)

Shadbolt's scorn for Cowan's history does not seem to be very widespread. In terms of this investigation, Shadbolt's dismissal of Cowan's work is confusing and suspicious.

Belich's Bent has "no indication of viciousness, strong passion or boldness" (*I Shall* 38).

Shadbolt's Bent is a different story.

Shadbolt has Bent kill his old commander, Colonel Hassard, just as contemporary folklore of the time would have it. Indeed, it makes a better warrior story than Cowan's first hand depiction where Bent "often woke from unpleasant dreams":

One was of a British regiment charging him with fixed bayonets and pinning him against the palisades of his *pa* [hilltop fortress]. Fervently he hoped that he would not be in the fort when the troops marched to the assault, and that the Hauhaus would not compel him to level a *tupara* against his one-time comrades, the old "Die Hards." (*Adventures* 57)

Shadbolt depicts these dreams as well, but his Bent takes a completely opposite tack, one of vengeance. Shadbolt's Bent is encouraged to wait out the battles with the old people women and children, but decides to walk the warrior way. According to all other sources available, the historical Bent decisively walked the other way, out of choice and compulsion—he did not want to fight, and didn't even have the option. He wanted to go back peacefully to his own people, and the army he had deserted. Shadbolt's version could not be further from the image presented by the available historical documents. He is certainly allowed to do this as a writer of fiction. But why? And why bring historical figures into your story to change them? Like Shakespeare's historical works, situational metafiction is re-politicizing historical events and figures, interacting with historical evidence that is chosen to suit a particular moral/political position in a particular political context. My point is not that they should not do this: my point is that they *are* doing this.

Situational metafiction is an important part of the current postcolonial literary climate, a part of which current theory seems largely unaware.

Shadbolt's Bent in many ways bears a closer resemblance to the historical Charles Kane, who the Maori referred to as "Kingi." Bent told Cowan that Kingi: "was a fiercely vindictive man, and swore to have a shot at the white men from whom he had cut himself off for ever" (Cowan, *Adventures* 122). Kane fought alongside the Maori at Turuturu-Mokai, the first minor victory of Titokowaru's war. The two Pakeha-Maoris are confused more than once in the annals of New Zealand history. One might notice the similarity between Bent's description of Charles Kane's vow, and the vow Shadbolt's Bent makes to kill Hazard, Flukes, and Tonks. Kimball Bent remembered that Kane was "exceedingly bitter against his old officers"...he felt vengeful towards the British and did not share Bent's inhibitions about shooting those of his countrymen in Victoria's service (Belich, *Victorian* 83). Cowan checked Bent's story with the Maori. "Bent, it was reported afterwards in the *pakeha* camps, also accompanied the warriors, but he denies this [claim], asserting that he did not stir from the *pa* all night; [Bent's version] is confirmed by the Maoris" (*Adventures* 122). Further credence is given to Bent's account by W. H. Skinner's 1946 book; *Reminiscences of a Taranaki Surveyor*. Skinner met and spoke with Bent in 1880. On the topic of Bent's life with the Ngati Ruanui, Skinner wrote:

[Bent] was compelled to labour in the plantations, and in the building of fortifications, but he was not allowed to take part in operations against Pakeha soldiers. . . . Bent was accused of having actually fought against

British forces, but he strenuously denied that he had ever used a weapon against the troops, and in this he was supported by the Maoris. (47)

The Maori would have benefited by having the British think one of “their own” had fought against them—this would give many a discontented soldier pause for thought. It is clear that Kane did fight at Turuturu Mokai, in the manner that Shadbolt has Kimball Bent fight. Kane is absent from *Monday’s Warriors* but Shadbolt uses him as a character in his earlier novel *The Lovelock Version*.⁴⁸ Shadbolt’s Bent goes directly against all the sources checked by Skinner and Cowan, and Belich. His narrative technique deliberately confuses two historical figures, for the sake of making Kimball Bent into an anti-British warrior.

Bent’s life among the Maori was less than pleasant by most non-fictional accounts. He was, by his own account, a slave, and was often in peril of his life from warriors who could not understand the presence of the white enemy in their midst. This aura of distrust is enough to explain Bent’s not having been provided with a gun. Bent’s own testimony has him as a much less contented Pakeha-Maori. Even his second master, Rupe, once tried to kill him for not working hard enough. It is clear that Titokowaru had a strong affection for Bent, which ended up serving him well. Titokowaru, who perhaps saw the psychological advantage of having a white subject, protected his asset, the less than jubilant Pakeha-Maori, Kimball Bent:

⁴⁸ Shadbolt was heavily criticized in the *New Zealand Listener* (May—July 1980), by Malone’s family, his former soldiers, and by historian Michael King, for what was seen as a slanderous misrepresentation of the historical Colonel W. G. Malone. At risk of court-martial, Malone refused suicidal orders from British high command, and eventually his New Zealand battalion took Chunuk Bair, the most decisive Allied action at Gallipoli. While Shadbolt publicly refused to apologize, he did proceed to write two books (*Once on Chunuk Bair* and *Voices of Gallipoli*) that valorized the very man he had lampooned as an inept buffoon under the thumb of the British.

I lived exactly like a Maori . . . worked like a nigger, and always went about bare-footed. They would not give me a gun, nor did they make me fight—for Titokowaru . . . would not permit me to go on the war-path—but I had to make cartridges for them. (Cowan, *Adventures* 106)

This is much different from the idyllic life Bent leads with the Maori in *Monday's Warriors* once he has proved himself as a warrior. The admission that he *did* make cartridges is self-incriminating. His derogatory and racist language shows a mind very unlike the superficially pro-Maori Bent created by Shadbolt. Shadbolt's Bent *appears* to see the Maori as brothers in oppression with the settlers: a brotherhood of the oppressed against the British Empire.

Another part of Bent's testimony is self-incriminating as well. Bent told Cowan how after Turuturu Mokai, where Kane *had* fought, Titokowaru called both Pakehas before him, and asked if they intended to leave. Having wearied of his life with the Maoris by his own account, Bent admitted that he did wish to leave. The chief then threatened both of their lives if they did so. A few days later Kingi (Kane) deserted the Maori:

For some little time nothing was heard of him. At length the warriors of the *Tekau-ma-rua*, while out scouting one day . . . discovered on the track leading to the settlement a note addressed to the white soldiers' commander at Waihi, stating that the writer (Kane) and Bent were at Te Ngutu-o-te Manu, awaiting a favourable opportunity to tomahawk Titokowaru, cut off his head, and bring it in to the government camp.

Kane was evidently clearing the way for his return to civilization, and this note—which he had left in a place where he hoped the white troops would find it—was obviously intended to serve as a palliative in some measure of his military offences. (Cowan, *Adventures* 136)

So, if Kimball Bent's testimony to James Cowan is, as Shadbolt suggests in his afterword, "In Fact," a perjurious attempt "for a clean slate, and a formal pardon," Bent would reasonably (later in life and safe from his former tribe) have lied and said that he had worked as a double agent like Kane did, as "a palliative . . . of his military offences." He did not. If he feared retribution from the Maori for his narrative, he most likely would not have referred to his former tribe as "nigger(s)," regardless of how widespread this usage was (and still is) in the Antipodes. As the *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* contends, much of Bent's testimony is compelling because it is self-incriminating. A careful liar could come up with better self-serving lies. As Cowan states: "'Ringiringi,' (Bent) questioned, disclaimed any knowledge of [the letter] and as to the incriminating reference to himself, he assured Titokowaru that 'Kingi' [Kane] was lying" (*Adventures* 136). Titokowaru seems to have believed him, as his warriors spared Bent and killed Kane that night.

Later, when Bent was interviewed by Cowan, Bent had much to gain by falsely claiming to have plotted against Titokowaru, and little to lose. One of the more widely read books of the period was Gudgeon's 1879 *Reminiscences of the War in New Zealand* where this folklore of Bent begun to be taken as fact. However, among Cowan's

unpublished papers in the New Zealand National Archives, held in the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington, is this commentary by Bent:

Gudgeon's *Reminiscences of the Maori War* (sic) says that I was killed in Te Ngutu o te Manu by the Maoris, also that I was in the fight at Turuturu and tried to persuade the Hauhaus to rush the redoubt. But Gudgeon confused me with Kane whose name was Kingi, while mine was Ringiringi. The statement that I was at Turuturu Mokai is not true.
(Cowan Papers 25)

This mistake occurs in Gudgeon's *Reminiscences of the War in New Zealand*; it is based on the testimony of a Maori boy who was taken prisoner at Te Ngutu:

When questioned about the deserter Kimball Bent, the unnamed boy said that there were two pakehas with Titokowaru; one of them named Te Ringi-Ringi and the other Kingi (Bent) [Gudgeon proceeds from this initial mistake of names to compound Bent's offences, in Kane's stead]. He also stated that both of them were engaged in the attack on Turu Turu Mokai [sic] . . . the reason that Kingi was shot was, that a tale had been industriously circulated among the semi-friendly Maoris, to the effect that Bent had promised McDonnell to shoot Titokowaru, provided he received pardon for having deserted to the Hauhaus. (190)

Gudgeon's narrative is basically the same as Bent's, if Bent's and Kane's names are reversed. Once Kane is killed: "they wanted to serve the other Pakeha in the same manner; but Titokowaru refused, saying, 'He is too useful; who will make the cartridges

when he is dead'" (Gudgeon, *Reminiscences* 191). Gudgeon made this mistake—Bent took pains to clarify it when speaking to Cowan, but for some reason Cowan was hesitant to criticize Gudgeon's nationalist history and did not publish the correction. This reluctance gave Shadbolt an opportunity for the creation of the warrior version of Kimball Bent, a skewed version still in circulation in recent works of history. I believe that if Cowan had published the previously quoted testimony, the folklore of Kimball Bent would have taken a very different shape. For example, Maori writer Trevor Bentley's book *Pakeha Maori: The Extraordinary Story of Europeans Who Lived as Maori in New Zealand* quotes and endorses Gudgeon's account (135), but does not take cognizance of Gudgeon's mistaking of names; therefore, accidentally lending support to the idea that Kimball Bent had been a leader in the assault at Turuturu Mokai.⁴⁹

Shadbolt was aware of Kane, as both Pakeha-Maoris are characters in his semi-historical/historical parody *The Lovelock Version*. It appears that in *Monday's Warriors* Shadbolt used a composite of both Pakeha-Maoris for his depiction of Bent, making his hero more hero-like. A man who learns to fight like a Maori and kill the unjust British; a man who gains respect in his community by throwing his scolding wife over his shoulder; an anti-British settler who (unlike the historical Bent) is instrumental in Titokowaru's war. If *Monday's Warriors* had not been written, none of these qualities would have ever been attributed to Kimball Bent. Cowan's book chronicles a fascinating, but often degrading existence for the deserter, who often wished he had not left the British. Many later newspaper accounts present the same story from Bent himself. A piece in *The Patea*

⁴⁹ This is sadly ironic, as the reason this story was circulated was to explain British and settler losses to "uncivilized" Maori.

Mail from December 14, 1878 has the author pleading Bent's case for a pardon:

"think[ing] fourteen years seclusion from the world sufficient punishment." (Kimble Bent par. 3) Several articles plead the same case; that of a man wishing to return to his own people but fearing the penalty for desertion. This desire to return to society does not fit with Shadbolt's anti-British/Maori valorizing objectives. Again, yes it is fiction, but what kind of fiction is it? What is significant is that *Monday's Warriors* is expressing a dialectic through an aesthetic that is considered to be postmodern and "without dialectic."

Unlike Shadbolt's rendition of Bent's story, the story, as related by historians and journalists is far from glorious or heroic. It also came to Cowan first hand. The lack of self-glorification in the account given in *The Adventures of Kimble Bent* makes a very persuasive case for its validity. Among the Maori, Bent usually lived in fear of his life. When use could be made of him, his status rose to that of a low-caste woman. Later in life he gained some acceptance as a medicine man, but never came close to the status conferred by Shadbolt, upon his arrival/capture. Bent's most revealing comment to Cowan was "Many and many a time I wished myself dead and out of it" (*Adventures* 200). Shadbolt's Bent, on the other hand, is sustained by the venom of revenge, his desire to kill Flukes, his sergeant and Tonks, the man who gave him his lashes. He is close friends not only with Titokowaru but with the fiercest Maori warriors, Big Kereopa and Katene.⁵⁰ Shadbolt's Bent could not be less like the composite picture an historical examination produces of Kimball Bent.

⁵⁰ According to Cowan's *Adventures*, Katene (Demon) never stopped wishing to have Bent killed.

Titokowaru's mysterious fall is the climax (or anti-climax) of the tale, whether it be told be Shadbolt, Cowan, or Belich. After three unprecedented victories over the British, Titokowaru builds his most formidable *pa*, one that seems impregnable. When the British rush it in the morning, all of the warriors have left. Belich here puts enormous weight on Bent's testimony as received by Cowan at the crux of *I Shall Not Die*, the research Shadbolt thanked him for providing:

[Titokowaru] was detected in a liaison with another man's wife.

The misdemeanour was, in Maori eyes, fatal to his prestige as an *ariki* [high chief] and a war-leader. . . . A council of the people was held to discuss the cause célèbre, and many an angry speech was made. Some of the chiefs went so far as to threaten Titokowaru with death. At length a chieftainess of considerable influence rose and quelled the storm of violent words. She appealed to the aggrieved husband's people not to attempt Titoko's life; but urged that the garrison should leave the *pa*—it would be disastrous to make a stand there after their . . . spiritual head and their war leader, had lost his *mana-tapu*. This met with general approval, and on the night of the attack the people packed their few belongings on their backs and struck into the forest . . . Kimble Bent had no reason to lie. His memoirs are generally accurate, except about his own early career. He [also] kept a journal He was an eyewitness, and as one of Titokowaru's immediate entourage was in a position to be well informed. (243-244)

In contemporaneous settler folklore of the New Zealand Wars, the successes of the Maori were guided by the superior wisdom of an American mercenary. Shadbolt expands on this mythology, giving it context and (apparent) basis. The paternalistic assumptions behind this folklore give little credit to the superior military skills the Maori showed against the vastly greater British forces, demonstrated clearly by Belich's work. Contemporaneous newspaper accounts help reconstruct the mentality, that of a settler population who cannot fathom their British Army being repelled by "a bunch of savages." Playing into this folklore, Shadbolt's Bent becomes instrumental in the Taranaki uprising, in a way that seems extremely unlikely to those (Belich, Cowan, and Skinner) that chronicled his life. In *Monday's Warriors*, as Titokowaru's "grandson," Bent counsels Titoko on the most important decisions of his life, supporting the Bent folklore of the time and the very un-Belichian idea that the Maori could not have done so well on their own merits.

Nelson Wattie in his paper "The New Zealand Wars in Novels by Shadbolt and Ihimaera" suggests that the same assumptions plague *Season of the Jew*, Shadbolt's novel that reinvents the most famous Maori general: Te Kooti:

What I am objecting to is both an aesthetic and a moral point, the two sides of the coin being inseparable: in *Season of the Jew* there is no neutrality at any point, no symmetry, and consequently no real justice to Maori skills and attitudes. There are many hints thrown out that Te Kooti owes his successes to his British training. First, the general point is made that he had enjoyed a missionary education. Then we see him buying a

book on Garibaldi, who is apparently to serve him as a model of nationalist fervour. Ironically, it is Fairweather who tells Te Kooti who Garibaldi is Later, even in the foreground of battle; it is European behaviour that teaches Te Kooti military skills: "I rather think that even Te Kooti doesn't know Te Kooti. Or not yet." "What are you thinking, sir?" "That we might be contributing to his self knowledge" (125). And later Fairweather warns another officer, Canning, of Te Kooti's skills. The hot-headed Canning is sceptical: "You are terrified by Te Kooti." "Impressed. In a month he has turned himself from melancholy exile into a tolerable student of martial enterprise; we promise to inspire still further." (144)

Wattie's points are well-argued and apply to *Monday's Warriors* and the invented war council Kimball Bent gives to Titokowaru. As Wattie suggests: "None of this can be reconciled with Belich's view: in his study he makes the point that traditional Maori warfare was a match for British tactics as long as it could be modified and kept flexible to cope with new weapons. No 'inspiration' from Europeans was needed" (439). Shadbolt's tendency to attribute white influence where there was none is by no means unique. It is, in fact, commonplace in the history and historically-based fictions of the settler nations. In what is now South Africa, Shaka's mentor, Dingiswayo, organised the northern Nguni into an extremely efficient warrior society that paved the way for the Zulu kingship. Much of this history is limited to oral narrative. Brian Roberts, in his book *The Zulu Kings*, identifies a "pattern of interpretation" in two of the main written sources: the explorer journals of Henry Francis Fynn and Theophilus Shepstone. Roberts claims that

both authors attributed Dingiswayo's successes to western influence in "largely imaginative and contradictory accounts," a fallacy: "typical of nineteenth century thinking on events in Africa" (41). This is a common tack of settler mythology all over the world: where any industriousness or cleverness attributed to "the savage" must have its origin in contact with European influences.⁵¹ These cultural generalizations are not the usual fare of the liberal novelist; there seems to be a deep-seeded Euro-centric conservatism under the surface in the works of Shadbolt's under discussion, a conservatism that masks itself as an ironic counter-history. The anti-totalizing ideals of much postmodern writing are absent from this text.

Shadbolt's Titokowaru, the reluctant warrior, wearily asks Bent the ultimate question: "Are we to kill them all?" (246). In this way Shadbolt puts the fate of the North Island in the hands of a white man: Kimball Bent, the diminutive Maori slave. Later, Shadbolt suggests that Titokowaru gave up intentionally, in contrast to any account of Belich, Cowan, and Bent himself:

"Answer me, grandson," he said, "Is this what I wished?"

His voice was cold.

"Mostly," Kimball said.

"Why, then, is it now not?"

"Now you've got it?"

"Just so. What does this tell you?"

"That there's no pleasing some."

⁵¹ For another example: *Wacousta* explains the successes of Pontiac through the influence of Wacousta, the white man "gone native."

"It tells me that the next world might make more sense."

"The next?" Kimball asked with unease.

"I see none in this."

"Tonight," Kimball protested, "is no time for talk like that." (*Monday's Warriors* 246-247)

Shadbolt's Titokowaru gives up the fight after this passage. Shadbolt's idea in the mouth of his character Titokowaru, suggests a historicist interpretation of the march of history. The conquering of the Maori and the colonization of New Zealand were historical necessities. Shadbolt, in a comforting move toward white New Zealand settlers (who comprise most of his reading audience), has Titokowaru see the "inevitability" of civilization." This counter narrative has no real Maori sympathy.⁵²

Shadbolt's unease is settler unease, a fundamental discomfort with the facts of nationhood, built on the violently appropriated lands of another people. While ostensibly he shows sympathy and understanding with the Maori, his ultimate conclusion seems very close that of the outdated and mockable James Cowan—that, while admirable, the Maori way of life *had* to change with the arrival of "civilization." Lawrence Jones in "Out of the Rut and into the Swamp: The Paradoxical Progress of Maurice Shadbolt" points out the central idea of *Monday's Warriors*:

The book can be read as a post-Belich demolition of the imperial military myth, but it does not do that in order to embrace a Maori nationalist

⁵² Thomas King accuses James Fenimore Cooper of using Native American characters in a similar way, to expound the rationalizations of the conqueror (ch.5). His arguments about Cooper are well-applied to the fictional works of Maurice Shadbolt.

counter-myth but is rather more subversive, its irony finally being a kind of defence against the inexorable forces of history. For its ultimate irony is that perhaps the apologists for empire were right in their social Darwinism, the "triumph" of the European was perhaps inevitable, but if so it was not the result of a Providential pattern of progress but rather of an inscrutable, seemingly morally indifferent pattern of necessity. There can be no doubt that Shadbolt's "rebels" are humanly preferable to his colonists, but there can also be no doubt that, as Titokowaru realized, they could not win against the forces of history. (29)

But Shadbolt's "rebels" *are* colonists, and the presence of the mysterious "forces of history" is a flawed epistemological assumption on Shadbolt's part. In conversation Jones reiterated this point, that colonization of the Maori lands in question was "inevitable." But the Maori did not lose their land through any fabled "law of history"—they changed because they were compelled by force. But they were only compelled to a certain point. They drew their own lines.⁵³ The Maori defence of the North Island is a compelling argument *against* the inexorable forces of history. Through a combination of diplomacy, manipulation of the London press and guerrilla and siege warfare, the Maori managed to keep a much higher percentage of their ancestral lands than any other indigenous group overwhelmed by the British Empire.⁵⁴ This was done with little coordination between the

⁵³ Ironically, most of this documented historical information, information that stands in direct contrast to Shadbolt's historical vision, comes from James Belich.

⁵⁴ Notably, this highly evolved society fared much better than the Scottish Highlanders at the hands of the British. But this is small consolation to many Maori with nationalist sentiments, who feel they still live in an occupied country, while other colonized peoples of the world, for the most part, achieved independence by the mid 1960s.

Maori King, Titokowaru and Te Kooti. Had the Maori efforts been coordinated on three (winning) fronts, it is this author's contention that they could have retaken the North Island. As public perception in London played a large role in Titokowaru's campaign, it is crucial to consider that a full-scale invasion to defend a settler population making further illegal appropriations would not have been acceptable to a liberalized British public in 1868.

Inevitability is a convenient argument when your backyard recently belonged to someone else. Shadbolt's game, perhaps on an unconscious level, is what Johnston and Lawson call strategic disavowal of the colonizing act: "In this process, 'the national' is what replaces 'the indigenous' and in doing so conceals its participation in colonization by nominating a new 'colonized' subject—the colonizer or settler-invader" (365). It is clear how Titokowaru and Kimball Bent have been used to this end by Shadbolt: explaining Maori successes through the influence of the benign Kimball Bent, creating an obfuscating binary of settler versus Mother country through Bent's hatred of the British Empire, thereby deflecting the blame away from the people who actually *got* the land: the New Zealand settlers. Shadbolt places historicist ideas of inevitability in the mouth of Titokowaru, one who fought passionately all his life for what Shadbolt has him give away as though he had planned to all along. He gives the Maori chieftain the "wisdom" to think of colonization in acceptable terms. Once the Maori demise is accepted in terms of "inevitability," the settler versus mother country dialectic is able to become the new focus.

Strategic disavowal is to avoid the question of colonization by focusing on the conflicts between the settler population and the mother country. But in Shadbolt's case it also involves rationalizing the historical "necessity" or "inevitability" of colonization, a point which adds to Johnston and Lawson's model. A good example of this tendency, found throughout the fiction of the settler nations, comes from Shadbolt's second autobiography, *From the Edge of the Sky*:

The country didn't belong to us, not yet. It was as though New Zealand had risen magically from the ocean: that its towns and cities, mines and mills, roads, and railways, were the consequence of some virgin birth. What we did know was England, with Ireland, Wales and Scotland misty runners-up. We belonged to the British Empire. We saluted an alien king or his costumed representatives. Buttressing our education was the belief that there was little of our land worth knowing: no history, no literature, no art, no culture. This was a familiar frontier lament, frequently indulged in by bookish luminaries. Brimming with self-pity and bemoaning their isolation from cosmopolitan Europe, they gave the appearance of detesting their rough-cast fellow countrymen and loathing their land. If so, what was the point? It wasn't my intention to join this martyrs' chorus; there were better things to grumble about. Like Yeats in pre 1916 Ireland, many of us imagined we lived where motley was worn. We were wrong. There was nothing motley, nothing inconsequential, about the muscular men who won fresh worlds from moist wilderness in which their wives

and children would one day prosper. Without their labour, without their sacrifice, I might not have been more than a Hertfordshire poacher and amateur burglar.⁵⁵ (31)

Shadbolt's questionable assumption that his ancestors' appropriation of Maori land saved him from a life as a poacher in England avoids the question of the theft. He does this by playing hereditary victim and pointing the finger at the British. As Edward Said has said of Palestine in relation to Israel. "to be the victim of a victim presents unique difficulties" (*Imaginary Homelands* 182).

Ironically, much of this "credit" for the "winning" of New Zealand is due to one of Shadbolt's most derided historical figures. Colonel G. S. Whitmore, who subdues the Maori resistance in Shadbolt's homeland so the "muscular men" could win "fresh worlds from moist wilderness." The idea of fresh worlds is found in South African fiction in what J. M. Coetzee calls, "the poetry of empty space." (*White Writing* 177). As Coetzee points out, much settler literature is more comfortable with the idea of virgin land than brutal dispossession. Shadbolt's "fresh worlds" were already populated by an advanced agricultural society, with enough surplus to develop a warrior class.⁵⁶ It is interesting to note here how situational metafiction can be used equally to tear down nationalist mythology (Coetzee, Mda) as well as to perpetuate it (Shadbolt, Carey). King, MacLeod, and Scott will be shown to do both.

⁵⁵ Shadbolt's non-fictional *One of Ben's* traces his family history from England to New Zealand, starting with the transportation of several of his relatives to Australia for poaching game.

⁵⁶ Coetzee states in *White Writing*: "In all the poetry commemorating meeting with the silence and emptiness of Africa—it must finally be said—it is hard not to read a certain historical will to see as silent and empty a land that has been, if not full of human figures, not empty of them either" (177).

Shadbolt uses Colonel G. S. Whitmore in two of his novels in the Maori Wars Trilogy, as a symbol of British conquest. He is a central figure in these parodic counter narrative—the lampooning of an imperial hero fitting three of Hutcheon’s key criterion for historiographic metafiction: parody, a questioning of metanarratives and the use of a major historical figure as a central figure. Belich’s assessment of Colonel G. S. Whitmore, is that history has imposed upon him a fabled ineptitude, in order to maintain the Victorian interpretation of British losses against Te Kooti and Titokowaru: that they would have beat “the savages” with a good commander. Shadbolt plays directly into this misconception using Whitmore as cannon fodder, portraying him in ways that reinforce what Belich sees as wilful misinterpretations, ones he has sought to correct through patient documentation. Shadbolt even goes so far as to have Titokowaru call Whitmore, the general who ultimately defeated him, a “fool.” “Whitmore is not to be slain . . . I fear not fighting fools” (*Monday’s Warriors* 214). Belich assesses Colonel George Stoddard Whitmore as follows:

The most important government military commander in the war against Te Kooti was Colonel G. S. Whitmore. Whitmore was perhaps the most able British leader of the wars next to Cameron, though he never acquired the same respect for Maori abilities. A British regular officer who topped the Staff College in 1860, he also had considerable experience of irregular warfare—against Bantu and Boers in South Africa He had a very rare mix of military qualities: an excellent theoretical knowledge, particularly of strategy and logistics, combined with energy, resolution, and the

willingness and capacity to conduct operations on a shoe-string in the worst of terrain. He was also cursed with the personal charm of a rattlesnake.

Whitmore was clearly a prime target for the usual scapegoat hunt in cases of military failure, but antipathy towards him also added a peculiar twist to general trends of British interpretation. (*Victorian* 220-221)

It is interesting to note the pervasiveness of such interpretations, that they can emerge in even supposedly revisionist works. One assumes Shadbolt had read the book for which he thanked Belich so warmly. So again we look for the motive in the historical “twist.” Again, by endorsing the view of a particular historian, Shadbolt is having it both ways with history, interrogating and asserting, covering his assertions by associating a liberal historian with his own ultimately conservative and paternalistic views. If this bifurcated problematizing is not acknowledged, this historical fiction is misunderstood.

Here Shadbolt mixes documented history with pure invention in order to give the invention more dialectical weight, perhaps a good fictional move:

Colonel George Whitmore. Distressed with soft campaigning and political muddle, Whitmore had sold off his commission in the imperial force and raised his own colonial militia. Currently he was pressing politicians and Cameron to pursue Maori rebels into their forested sanctuaries, rather than leave well alone. Short of temper and stature and often of breath, a veteran of two Kaffir wars and the Crimea, Whitmore had no use for martial

modesty; he claimed to enjoy battles best when horses were shot from under him. (*Season 33*)

The “Aunt Sally” tone of mockery is set: here documented evidence is mixed with pure invention. Soldiers were said to have had trouble keeping up with the endless energy of the “short of breath” Whitmore, a man who was given a task and completed it, however unappealing that task may be to our modern sensibilities. Shadbolt in his desire to create a settler nationalism, needs an enemy (other than the real one of history: the Maori). His strategic disavowal is precisely identified with that of Johnston and Lawson. His scapegoat is the historical figure Colonel G. S. Whitmore.

Belich identified a marked tendency in the interpretation of the New Zealand Wars:

As in the nineteenth century, the majority of historians emphasize British blunders as the main causes of recognized defeat. The minority revive the equally questionable contemporary hypothesis which stressed difficulties of terrain, British logistical problems, and Maori evasiveness. Both groups follow the more enlightened contemporary commentators in noting Maori courage, chivalry, and some types of skill, [as did Cowan before them] but they too deny the existence of strategic planning, co-ordination, and combination. (*Victorian 17*)

Belich sees no “blunderers” but assumptions of superiority against superior tactical Maori generals as the cause of the first wave of British losses: “We shall see that, contrary to the

legend, the senior British officers in New Zealand were usually moderately competent, and a few were very able indeed" (*Victorian* 23).

While Shadbolt wishes, at least on his book covers, to demonstrate sympathy with Belich's revisionist history of the New Zealand Wars, Belich's findings are rarely in sympathy with Shadbolt's writings on Whitmore. Shadbolt's Whitmore first sees action in *Season of the Jew*, leading up to the battle of Ruakituri. Arrogant and ignorant, he commands foolishly and reluctantly takes advice from his inferiors (mostly the invented Fairweather) after the fact, presenting it later as though all successes were his idea all along.⁵⁷ Insipid and talentless, one has to wonder how this character got to his position as a military leader. Upon hearing of possible enemy fires in the forest, Whitmore idiotically disregards their potential threat. A condescending narrative voice surmises, "Whitmore wanted no fires complicating the command picture" (*Season* 127). Not believing Fairweather that Te Kooti's passive rearguard is a decoy luring them on, Whitmore ignores good advice and walks into a predicted ambush. These preventable errors are disastrous for their mission, and it is only through the cool and unassuming actions of Larkin and Fairweather (the New Zealand settlers) that they recover. There is no historical evidence to suggest that these mistakes were anything but pure invention on the part of Shadbolt. The settler versus mother country binary could not be more obvious. Whitmore is used by Shadbolt as a symbol of empire, a stereotypical Aunt Sally to be safely trodden upon in an attempt to distance New Zealand from Britain's Imperial

⁵⁷ Fairweather is called "a composite character" (*Season* 382) by Shadbolt but seems to be based extensively on F. J. Gascoyne, who held the same military position at the time depicted in *Season of the Jew*. Gascoyne's *Soldiering in New Zealand* may not be identified as a source because of his strong anti-Maori sentiments and his unflattering participation in the Parihaka incident.

mechanism. This disavowal attempts to place the blame of dispossession on the British, exonerating the settlers who were the real source of Maori dispossession, like Fairweather, the non-noble Englishman who becomes a landowner in the “fresh world” of late nineteenth-century New Zealand.

Belich’s highest praise for Shadbolt’s scapegoat clown is as follows:

The East Coast strategy originated with Whitmore He noted that disaster in east and west, and various signs that Kingites might take a hand, created a multiplicity of threats. Against this was the hard fact that “we can only maintain one Field Force.” . . . On the other hand, while farmlands could not be protected from marauders, towns and redoubts could be defended by local forces. It followed that the proper policy was for threatened regions to stand on the defensive “until successively the Field Force can come to their relief.” Whitmore might be no match for the genius of Titokowaru, but this simple strategic insight was to help turn the tide of the war. (*Victorian* 258)

Whitmore’s tactical move is parodically dismissed by Shadbolt as follows in *Season of the Jew*. It is interesting that the two books overlap in time and character: “Having found a fight he could win, Whitmore left enough graves on the far coast to impress his superiors and returned to Wanganui” (*Monday’s Warriors* 240). One must assume some purpose for this odd reinterpretation of documented events.

During this period in the novel, Captain Herrick writes a letter to Fairweather:

Colonel Whitmore, you may be glad to know, has taken himself off to the western coast of the colony where he is doubtless bringing fresh heart to the Hau Hau rebels. . . . Any day now we expect to hear of his next stunning triumph, which will leave us free to imagine the Hau Hau controlling such of the colony as Kooti does not. (Shadbolt, *Season* 193)

The irony here is that Whitmore was winning the war, one piece at a time, leading Belich to call him the “most competent” commander on the Imperial side of the war. Shadbolt seems to want to rewrite this man’s documented accomplishments. Belich sees a very competent soldier whose abilities finished a conflict. Shadbolt sees an elitist bungler who is stricken with “sweaty panic” in battle, although he was a veteran who was known for being on the front line (*Season* 150). Whitmore seems by most accounts to have been an unpleasant elitist. But according to Belich he was no bungler, he was no coward, and he was no fool. So why pretend he was?

At the battle of Ngatapa, which Belich calls “Whitmore’s greatest success,” and says is “wrongly credited to Ropata” (*Victorian* 221) Shadbolt’s Ropata (a Maori who has sided with the British to destroy his tribal enemies) is indeed calling the shots and wins the day. Fairweather muses about Whitmore’s “spine”: “[Ropata] asks why Whitmore makes no attempt on Ngatapa; he asks if he is here to do all the work. I have stopped short of explaining to Ropata that our commander has been lowered by a spinal affliction earned in his last encounter with Kooti” (*Season* 278). Fairweather, the intermediary, relays the message: “Major Ropata also feels, sir, that your investing lines are too loose” (283). Whitmore goes on to win the battle as a retreat, but even this is seen

in terms of error. Escape is made by means of quickly fashioned flax ropes and torn blankets “dangled down the precipice of which Whitmore had been warned” (286). So at the battle of Ngatapa, Ropata is the man of ability, Fairweather is the go between, and Whitmore is the fool in charge. Indigene—settler—empire: one outmoded, the second the object of our narrative sympathy, the third the villain. We are meant, through a clear narrative sympathy, to be impressed by Fairweather’s open-mindedness about Ropata. But Ropata is, by definition, (if we were not British military leaders giving him medals of loyalty to *his* Queen) what is commonly known as a traitor. Shadbolt’s admiration of the “fading savage” is a colonial continuum found in the works of Duncan Campbell Scott and in the collections of Sir George Grey; men whom Thomas King might suggest (as he does of James Fenimore Cooper) have their own reasons for wanting to “bury” the noble savage. The “world historical” figure Fairweather, buries quite a few.⁵⁸

Fairweather advocates a “clean sweep” and in Shadbolt’s version the killed are all men who utter “no cries” taking their death in the warrior way. It is interesting to contrast the depictions of this event by Shadbolt and Maori writer Witi Ihimaera:

Yes, Pakeha, you remember Matawhero [the justification for this killing].

Let me remind you of the murders at Ngatapa. I picture it this way, the killing of the Te Kooti followers by the colonial forces at Ngatapa on the morning of 5 January, 1869.

⁵⁸ In order to convince Ropata’s Maori to fight, Fairweather suggests to Colonel Whitmore that they be falsely offered land. Fairweather states: “As you well know, politicians of this colony have been inclined to overlook desperate promises made to loyal Maoris in time of need; I should not let it linger on your conscience.” (266) Here is a perfect act of strategic disavowal: Fairweather (who gets some of this land) puts all the responsibility on Whitmore, the symbol of empire.

The firing squad raise their rifles. . . .The women begin crying and the children, not knowing why their mothers are crying, begin to scream. . . .

Then they begin to fall, pitching over the side of the cliff, 120 men, women and children, crowding the air in the long slow dive to death.

(*Matriarch* 177-178)

Shadbolt's omission of women and children that were killed at Ngatapa, as Ihimaera correctly asserts, is a clear misrepresentation of an historical event.⁵⁹ This is not a moral judgement on "pure history"; this is a demonstrable observation. We may ask, in the minds of the people, if settler folklore is more powerful than documented history.⁶⁰ Clearly we see that this positional writing can be manipulative and politically assertive, and not "historically problematizing" as its aesthetic would automatically indicate to many current theorists.

In *Monday's Warriors*, Shadbolt portrays Thomas McDonnell as a meek and arrogant Englishman, with little understanding of what he had gotten himself into with the Maori. He is assessed by Titokowaru as follows: "With Many Birds (Von Tempsky) gone we can rely on McDonnell to take fright" (151). McDonnell, like Whitmore, could be faulted for arrogance, but never for cowardice. Shadbolt has attributed cowardice to several historical figures who, upon investigation, seem rather ridiculously brave.

McDonnell was awarded the New Zealand cross for bravery in a reconnaissance mission that General Cameron wrote of in his congratulatory letter:

⁵⁹ This portrayal of an actual massacre is ironically paralleled by the many historical elisions of British Imperial history, with which Shadbolt is ostensibly taking issue.

⁶⁰ I met a Maori man in Wellington of the Ngati Ruanui tribe of Titokowaru. He was well-spoken and an intelligent musician. He had never heard of Titokowaru, whose military successes were parallel to those of Crazy Horse or Sitting Bull.

I cannot conceive that anyone can have been more justly entitled to it than yourself in undertaking a reconnaissance mission which took you into the midst of the Maoris, from whom, if you had been taken by them, you could expect no mercy. (Gudgeon, *Defenders* 185)

McDonnell's adjutant's statement attests that at Te Ngutu, Mc Donnell:

remained in the rear of the force the whole time, encouraging his men, and fighting his way . . . when the fatigued [stretcher] bearers...were for a moment inclined to waver . . . [McDonnell was] calmly announcing to his men that, happen what would, he would not stir from the spot until every wounded man passed on. It is only fair, and no exaggeration to say, that it is mainly owing to Colonel McDonnell's exertions that so many of the wounded were brought off. (*Defenders* 185-186)

McDonnell, known as "Fighting Mac," was well-known for his bravery, as Belich suggests: "McDonnell lacked many virtues but courage was not one of them" (*Victorian* 50).

Why this headhunting of Whitmore? Why slander McDonnell as a coward? Why give Kimball Bent tactical significance in a conflict that he clearly did not have? Why valorize traitorous Maori, who represent the downfall of their island's defence against colonization? Even in terms of dramatic purpose, it seems unwise to downplay an enemy's skills when recreating a battle on paper. Historical accuracy (in terms of basing the action on a documented source) has already been sacrificed, so why not make as good a story as possible out of the "raw material of fact." To portray McDonnell, Whitmore

and their soldiers as bungling fools makes Titokowaru's victories seem hollow. Why make cowards and fools out of soldiers who were not (according to the historian you have aligned yourself with)? Because they were British, and Shadbolt's self-invention, as Lawrence Jones has it, as: "New Zealand's storyteller" (Personal Interview 1) needs a conflict. A conflict to help create a sense of nation, a heroic literature. Shadbolt creates a dynamic of settler versus British military, one which appropriates the real suffering of the Maori and obscures the reasons and the nature of the New Zealand wars.

With George Fairweather in *Season of the Jew*, Shadbolt attempts to emulate the classic hero of Sir Walter Scott, the mediocre hero who is a middleman between cultures, praised by Lukacs for his representative purposes as the "world historical individual" (*Historical Novel* 39).⁶¹ As with Scott's Francis Osbaldistone in *Rob Roy*, the protagonist is of both worlds, but the narrative insidiously draws the reader into sympathy with the grand narrative of progress and empire.⁶² Fairweather may be a reluctant lover of empire, but he protests too much and then acts in his own interests. Nelson Wattie suggests that Fairweather, far from being the neutral character suggested by Ralph Crane (in "Tickling History" and "Windows onto History"), is implicated by position in the very practices he evasively condemns. As Wattie suggests:

evasiveness is a poor substitute for neutrality. [Fairweather] suggests that he has reservations about his own opinions by refusing to express them bluntly. This might be called irony if his actions were not so much

⁶¹ Lukacs suggests a strong connection between Scott's heros and a Hegelian view of history—Shadbolt evinces the Hegelian notion of historical inevitability in his New Zealand Wars trilogy.

⁶² Interestingly, the same type of middleman character is used to assert a similar strategic disavowal of the colonizing act in the New Zealand classic *The Greenstone Door* (1914). Scott's novel *Rob Roy* seems to do the same to the Highlanders.

blunter than his words. He seems to suggest that he can accept neither the Maori position [n]or the imperialist one . . . but in fact he joins the imperialist army and condones what must surely be called atrocities.

(436)

Wattie incisively exposes Fairweather's "problematizing pose" adding that in the novel when atrocities take place, they are carried out by "Maori supporters of British rule, like Ropata" (436-7) or by Te Kooti himself.

The "Poverty Bay Massacre" or "Matawhero Raid," described by Belich and Witi Ihimaera as a legitimate act of war, is related by Shadbolt's character Herrick as: "worse than anything said of the Indian Mutiny. Worse than Cawnpore. I shall never see anything more hateful" (Shadbolt, *Season* 223). Wattie suggests that "Shadbolt, for all his attempts at ironic distancing, gives prominence to a view of Matawhero that is British, imperialist, and racist" (445). Ihimaera addresses this double standard, in *The Matriarch*. As the two novels were published in 1986, his direct address can easily be imagined to be directed at Shadbolt himself: "Yes Pakeha, you remember Matawhero. Let me remind you of the murders at Ngatapa" (177). Shadbolt's apparent "ironic distancing" is an avoidance of clearly saying what he wishes to say. His moral/political position, his particular dialectic, is laid bare with historical analysis, particularly of his own sources.

Shadbolt's nationalism is shown most clearly in his play about Gallipoli, *Once on Chunuk Bair*. Military Historian Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Pugsley is another name Shadbolt invoked as a help to his research. In his book *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*, Pugsley gives this account of Colonel W. G. Malone of the Wellington Battalion:

An Englishman, he had settled in Taranaki with the armed constabulary in the 1880s, and had seen service in the Parihaka Incident. A lawyer farmer, he was a perfectionist in everything he did. As a Territorial soldier commanding the Taranaki Rifles, Malone had studied the theory of war, and was now determined to excel with his battalion in the practice. A strong-willed man, he would not budge if he thought he was right. This did not always make for easy relationships and in Egypt his men "cursed him for a martinet who kept them toiling like the coolies of the land."

(72)

The Parihaka Incident in 1881 was famous for its use of armed constabulary against the pacifist Te Whiti (often referred to as New Zealand's Gandhi) and Titokowaru's followers, who were non-violently protesting the illegal confiscation of their land by ploughing up survey lines. Gascoyne and Malone were there to enforce the confiscation of land, very close to where Shadbolt was born and raised. The action was led by John Bryce, who is deconstructed by Belich from frontier hero to brutal child killer. Malone in Taranaki as the commander of the Taranaki Rifles, would have assumed the role of the hated District Commissioner in former colonial Africa, keeping order through brutal suppression.

Shadbolt's Maori sympathies are strained here; his model for Fairweather (Gascoyne) and his New Zealand hero (Malone) were both personally involved with the imprisonment and humiliation of Titokowaru, his Maori hero of *Monday's Warriors*. According to Belich, in *I Shall Not Die*, Gascoyne showed clear enjoyment at

Titokowaru's fall (285-6), and being force fed out of a hunger strike with a tube. Did Shadbolt consider the humiliation of a revered chieftain historical necessity? To Belich these actions seemed completely unnecessary and brutal, a dark period in his country's past. It is compelling to see that two of Shadbolt's best known heroes were brutal suppressors of legitimate Maori resistance; something Shadbolt's historical research would have made abundantly clear.

What does one make here, of Shadbolt's "tickling" of history, as Ralph Crane would have it, or his "revelling in the actuality of the past" in the words of Ralph Johnson? Johnson claims "whether writing 'history' or 'historical fiction,' there is a responsibility to the living descendants of characters, as well as a duty to the dead" (14). While Johnson's review of *The House of Strife*, the final book in Shadbolt's trilogy, uncovers incidents of historical inaccuracy, he concludes that "to question whether Shadbolt has been authentic is to miss the vital strength of his novel: accessible and persuasive theatre in a rebellious trilogy" (14). Certainly Shadbolt has no duty to be historically accurate. But what is he "rebellious" against? Rebellious against a mother country that no longer controls? This outdated "rebellion" (intentionally or not) elides the facts of colonization, in a very similar manner to Alistair MacLeod's anti-British aesthetic will be shown to do in the next chapter.

In the New Zealand Wars trilogy, the British soldiers are shown in an unsympathetic light—but the settlers, like the Colonel Malone of the armed constabulary, are shown in a sympathetic light. This settler versus mother country dialectic is shown clearly in this exchange between Dodds (the New Zealand militia man) and Colonel

Whitmore (the imperial representative). Dodds suggests they give up the pursuit of Te Kooti: "We just want to live peaceful . . . You'd march us till we rot. The likes of you can't do that to the likes of us no more. Not in this country. We got rights. And we got the vote" (*Season* 122-123). Further distinction is made between "imperial" and "colonial" orders (143). The implications of this colonial/imperial dialectic are repeatedly a peaceful settler population and a violent imperial force.⁶³ This stance of colonial versus Britain is seen repeatedly in the fiction of the settler nations, notably in John Richardson's 1840 work, *The Canadian Brothers*, in *True History* (as has been demonstrated), and in the South African novel *They Seek a Country*. It is interesting to note that the same fictional methods are used in these different nations for the same purpose: to "clean up" the details of conquest for what amounts to a foundation myth. Daniel Francis points out that George Hodgin's longstanding high school history textbook *History of Canada* contends "that Canada was one of the few countries which was not originally settled by (or for purposes of) conquest" (*National Dreams* 59). This eliding mythology is widespread. Strategic disavowal of the act of conquest is markedly present in the contemporary historical novels of the settler nations, notable in the works of Shadbolt, Carey, MacLeod, and Michael Crummey, to name just a few.

The presence of the mysterious "forces of history" is a flawed epistemological assumption on Shadbolt's part. This is almost identical to the rhetoric of rationalization used by Duncan Campbell Scott, when he was Minister of Indian Affairs—that the

⁶³ This motif of Shadbolt's is not demonstrable in any documented historical sense; however, the opposite is clearly demonstrable in the works of Belich.

demise of the “Indian” way of life was “inevitable.”⁶⁴ The Maori did not change through any fabled law of history—they changed because they were compelled by force.

Ironically, Wattie’s claim for Fairweather, that he uses his knowledge of the Maori in order to conduct a more effective war against them, can be applied to Shadbolt, whose historical prejudices, most notably the historical necessity of colonization, are ~~revealed/show through~~ in his New Zealand Wars Trilogy. Shadbolt’s search for a national identity/foundation myth gives rise to some troubling questions. Unearthed, Shadbolt’s moral/political positioning is a fascinating study of the contradictions implicit in settler mentality—a thirst for identity apart from Britain and an insecurity about the means of acquisition of the nation, leading to implied justifications for Maori dispossession.

Terry Goldie’s book *Fear and Temptation: The Image of the Indigene in Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Literature* interrogates settler mythology in three of the settler nations. Goldie says about the literary works of Australian P. R. Meredith and former Prime Minister of Nova Scotia, Joseph Howe that:

[these texts make] a clear distinction between the blatantly evil violent whites and the equally imperial yet benevolent hero.

Such texts seem to maintain that the white invasion was evil only in methodology. They imply the superiority of the liberal white text over the history of white society and suggest that the invasion could have been other than violent, that present Canada, Australia, and New Zealand could

⁶⁴ This issue is addressed by Native American writer Thomas King in chapter five.

have been created by some other means. They refuse to accept the white society as violent in its essence. (100)

Shadbolt's *Monday's Warriors* and *Season of the Jew* present a very similar conceit. The narrative sympathy in both novels rests with the ultimate conclusion that the appropriation of Maori land was an historical necessity.

Perhaps the most telling example of this mythmaking tendency comes at the end of *Season of the Jew*, where the aged Fairweather and Te Kooti meet for the last time:

"You forgive me," Kooti said. Not a question; a statement.

Fairweather agreed that this appeared to be the case; it also appeared to be the case that Kooti had forgiven him.

"That is so," Kooti acknowledged. (383)

This is meant to be a lesson to modern day New Zealanders: to know their past and for both sides to forgive and forget. However, the past presented by Shadbolt is skewed by his agenda. The Maori suffered greatly at the hands of the colonizers; the colonizers need not have suffered at all—they chose to invade. Ihimaera sees Te Kooti as a hero of the Maori, and his Te Kooti would not have apologized to a settler for anything.

Furthermore, based on my research, Ihimaera's depiction of this historical figure is much more accurate (based on the documents available) than that of Shadbolt. This is Shadbolt's attempt to have "one vector of difference (the difference between colonizing subject and colonized subject: settler indigene) being replaced by another (the difference between colonizing subject and imperial center: settler imperium)." This is Johnston and Lawson's "strategic disavowal": "In this process, 'the nation' is what replaces 'the

indigenous' and in doing so conceals its participation in colonization by nominating a new 'colonized' subject—the colonizer or settler invader" (57). Fairweather asks that a victim of the battles, Hamoira Pere, may also forgive them (the new nation), but what Shadbolt (and by association Fairweather) wishes to assert is dual responsibility in the violent process of colonization. One need not apologize for having been invaded.

Fairweather is, from a position of false neutrality, taking issue with the violent acts of the British center and the Maori retaliation—denying that the settlers, like himself and Shadbolt's ancestors, were the reason for the violence. Titokowaru's submission to "the forces of history" is Shadbolt's attempt to make a clean slate of issues that still need to be resolved, of wounds that have not healed.

Chapter Four

Wolfe and the MacDonalds: Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief*

The writings of MacLeod are often associated with Scottish tradition and Celtic mythology; few critics have considered his writing to be postmodern. On close reading, however, many of his works, and in particular *No Great Mischief*, are focused on interrogating the act of writing. In his paper, "Re-Sourcing the Historical Present," Colin Nicholson argues for "a postmodern turn in Alistair MacLeod's short fiction" (95). I would argue that *No Great Mischief* takes this turn further, and that the novel represents a departure of style for MacLeod. While the poetic touch of the Celtic seanaichie remains, this highly reflexive novel takes on current historico/political concerns in a style that contains many aspects of a postmodern aesthetic. *No Great Mischief*, in its very title, represents a challenge to the doxy of Canadian history. The novel interrogates the mythology of James Wolfe and the Plains of Abraham and the Highland regiments so crucial in the battle for Canada. While the use of reflexivity and the counter narrative/parodic treatment of Canadian history might encourage identification with Hutcheon's construct of historiographic metafiction, this novel espouses a clear Scottish Canadian nationalist position. As Tom Nairn suggests in his paper "Death in Canada: Alistair MacLeod and the Misfortunes of Ethnicity," MacLeod is telling his Scottish Canadian community that things would be different "if they stood up to be counted politically" (59).

While British Imperial history is problematized in a postmodern fashion, MacLeod's Scottish-Canadian history is *asserted*. This bifurcated approach, problematizing the narratives of the oppressor and asserting the narratives of the oppressed, is typical of the situational metafiction of the settler nations. It is a process I refer to as *bifurcated problematizing* which is *problematizing from a position*. The massacres of Highlanders at Culloden and Glencoe and the cultural inheritance of the Highland Clearances are seen by MacLeod as being very real, or in the language of postmodernism—as very solid referents. These clear political concerns coupled with a self-reflexive Foucauldian counter weight to imperial history, are best described by Attwell's category *situational metafiction*, which accounts for particular dialectics in postmodern/postcolonial works.

Hutcheon identifies historiographic metafiction as a form that does not “aspire to tell the truth” as much as to question “*whose truth gets told*” (*Poetics* 123). Self-reflexivity (which causes the reader to reflect on the nature of production of the text) and ironic use of historical referents (which causes the reader to reflect on the provisional nature of recorded history) are key indicators of historiographic metafiction. While *No Great Mischief* is not a straightforward parody, it certainly makes use of irony to question the historical record. The bitter irony of the title extends to what MacLeod sees as an historical irony and a continuing problem, for the Highlanders to be overused and under-appreciated, whether by a former enemy (Wolfe and England) or a faceless multinational (the MacDonald miners working for Renco development). Intertextuality is another key indicator of historiographic metafiction; sections of Wolfe's actual letters are

reproduced and read aloud by characters. These elements influence the action of the novel; MacLeod's use of these apparently postmodern techniques will be shown to be dialectical and directly political.

Historiographic metafiction often presents a new attention to the "enunciating entity [that] has been suppressed . . . [in] the form of overt textual emphasis on the narrating 'I' and the reading 'you'" (*Poetics* 76). This apparently postmodern attention to the suppressed "enunciating entity" is clear from the first line of *No Great Mischief*, which does present, throughout its span, a reflexive interrogation of the role of the narrator: "As I begin to tell this, it is the golden month of September in southwestern Ontario" (1). This deceptively simple opening mimics the techniques of the storyteller (or seanaichie) so naturally that the reader is drawn in, not questioning immediately what has been asserted. However, upon further reflection, it is clear that the "I" is actually not "beginning to tell" anything—it has all been written down. From the first line of his novel MacLeod slips in as a storyteller: a narrator in the "now" with the reader. Thus begins this counternarrative to the doxy of Canadian history: the story of Clan Calum Ruadh of Clan MacDonald.

In *No Great Mischief*, the interrogation of the role of the narrator becomes more complex, as Alexander MacDonald seems to communicate with his brother Calum, after he has left his apartment.

"Ah," haunts the voice of my oldest brother, "ah, 'ille bhig ruaidh. You've come at last. We have come a long way, you and I, and there are no hard

feelings." The voice pauses. "I have been thinking the past few days of
Calum Ruadh. I wonder what he looked like?"

"I don't know," I say. "I don't know. Only what I have been told."

"Ah," says the voice. "Stay with me. Stay with me. You are still the
gille beag ruadh." (17-18)

The telepathic implications of this passage could be passed off as being metaphorical, if the question about Calum Ruadh were not so specific. A type of "clan understanding" is repeatedly asserted as a source of real knowledge, in stark contrast to conventional historical knowledge. Importantly, as a repeated aspect of situational metafiction, MacLeod does not hesitate to *use* conventional historical knowledge, when it helps advance his Scottish-Canadian dialectic.

Calum's question leads Alexander into the second chapter, where he starts, by way of his own boyhood name, to tell the story of Clann Calum Ruadh. Nicholson points out one of the apparently postmodern aspects of this narrative: "The oral texturing of MacLeod's scripted transmission encodes the inexorable cultural transformation his writing is about. Like Coleridge's ancient mariner, Alexander's narrative springs from compulsion, but he knows the deceptions implicit in recall . . ." ("Man of Feeling" 209). Alexander's memory is not perfect, but the "core of meaning" in his recall is not questioned, or meant to be questioned by the reader. It is, with all its flaws, asserted, and as Nicholson rightly claims, this narrative is about the "cultural transformation," the untold (and allegedly suppressed) history of a specific people in a specific place. MacLeod's presentation of clan characteristics "beyond understanding" extends to

Alexander's sister as well, who, on her trip to Moidart in Scotland, is recognized immediately as a MacDonald as her forgotten Gaelic emerges:

It was just like it poured out of me, like some subterranean river that had been running deep within me and suddenly burst forth. And then they all began to speak at once, leaning towards me as if they were trying to pick up a distant but familiar radio signal even as they spoke. We spoke without stopping for about five minutes. . . . I don't know. And I don't even know what we said. The words themselves being more important than what they conveyed, if you know what I mean. And then all of us began to cry. (*No Great Mischief* 163-4)

A tribal intuition is put forward by Catriona as a tangible reality.⁶⁵ Later she makes reference to Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* "where Morag talks about lost languages lurking inside the ventricles of the heart" (193). A further assertion of clan knowledge "beyond understanding" is the fact that that her trip was augured by a visit from a mysterious woman in her hotel bedroom who spoke in Gaelic, and then disappeared. These passages contest historical knowledge with clan knowledge and could be seen by the Hutcheon school as a "problematizing of historical knowledge."⁶⁶ This would be persuasive, if MacLeod did not make such extensive (and conventional) use of the very type of knowledge historiographic metafiction is meant to problematize. Despite his clan

⁶⁵ This assertion about innate characteristics of language is made repeatedly by indigenous authors in this study, notably by Scott in *Benang: from the Heart* (99). MacLeod is the only non-indigenous author in this study to do so.

⁶⁶ These passages could also be described as magic realism, a style often associated with historiographic metafiction. See discussion in chapter seven.

beliefs,⁶⁷ MacLeod is far from rejecting history: his history is nuanced in order to show what may have been left out in the grand narratives of Canada and Scotland. Nairn identifies MacLeod's prose as "a stark portrayal of ethnicity deprived of political meaning; of an essence marooned in time and space, incapable of collective will or assertion" (60). There is an obvious dialectic here and the nationalism of this stance is in no way problematized. Problematizing from a position is a recurring aspect of the situational metafiction of the settler nations; interrogation being reserved for the cultural narrative with which the given author is taking issue. The narrative that is being attacked in the settler nations is overwhelmingly British Imperial history, but indigenous authors do not separate the settlers from the British invasion, as most of the non-indigenous authors I have encountered do.⁶⁸

Nicholson's description of the enunciating entity in some of MacLeod's short fiction provides insight into the narrator, Alexander MacDonald, and his reason for telling the story of *Clann Calum Ruadh*. Nicholson explains the function of this clan narrative:

To tell a story is to take arms against the threat of time . . . the telling of a story preserves the reader from oblivion. . . . Time is one of the essential things stories are about. As MacLeod's narrators talk of a past, they reveal a shaped and shaping continuity that figures ontological entrapment for speakers who are as much shaped as shaping because the first-person

⁶⁷ MacLeod has told me in conversation that he "can hear" the forerunners of death, a type of moaning from out on the sea ice of the Northumberland Strait, while others "cannot."

⁶⁸ Interestingly, within the scope of this study, only J. M. Coetzee and Wayne Johnston make no strategic disavowal of the colonizing act.

narratives they utter are intertextual derivations from prior story. ("Man of Feeling" 111)

Hence MacLeod uses techniques associated with postmodernism in an emerging postcolonial style to express the cultural entrapment of the Highlanders. Nicholson argues successfully here that "the message is the medium." While the story may alter from telling to telling, this does not indicate a postmodern interrogation of knowledge; the "core of meaning" of these stories is clear. This cultural critique is directly engaged with an existing community and is therefore correctly defined as endorsing a particular side of a particular dialectic, despite aspects of a postmodern aesthetic.

In his essay, "From Clan to Nation," David Williams suggests that MacLeod's novel's reflexive (and arguably postmodern) framing has political results:

what we hear in such passages is the inwardness and reflectiveness of a mind structured by writing.

Likewise in the end, the effects of writing on the narrator's consciousness have an unforeseen political consequence. For what he notes on the borders of his family history, and what he writes in the margins of their oral memories, adds up to a vision of the nation. (66-67)

Williams goes on to describe the vision of the cultural mosaic of Canada in the book, and describes the novel itself as "a virtual instrument of citizenship" (67). While MacLeod does seem to want to address the entire nation, he does so through a particularized lens, that of Clann Calum Ruadh; in doing so he asserts a particular and localized Scottish Canadian nationalism.

While the historiographic novels of the settler nations overwhelmingly focus on the issue of national identity, there is a unique trend in Canadian situational metafiction to assert a “prior belonging”—a separateness from the rest of the nation. As Herb Wyile notes:

Contemporary Canadian novelists are much less inclined to construct patriotic narratives of the building of a nation and of a unitary Canadian character than to dramatize the exploitation, appropriation, and exclusion that such narratives of nation have often served to efface. (7)

Wyile, however, neglects to interrogate the nature of these specific and apparently “problematizing” narratives. MacLeod lays a greater claim to Scottishness than Canadianness; perhaps this is why his books are placed in the Scottish literature section in Scottish bookstores. It is often said that the Scottish areas of Cape Breton are “more Scottish than Scotland” by Scottish visitors. This pride of former place led MacLeod to trace the fictional path of a forebear.⁶⁹ MacLeod, however, is strongly connected to clan MacDonald. There is, in MacLeod’s fiction, an ethnic patriotism that takes the place of a unified Canadian patriotism

MacLeod’s *No Great Mischief* can be read as the genealogy and legacy of Clann Chalum Ruaidh. As he waits for the boat for the New World in August 1779, Ruadh:

was unaware that the French Revolution was coming and that a boy
named Napoleon was but ten, and had not yet set out to conquer the world.

⁶⁹ Interestingly, unlike their Canadian counterparts, the situational metafiction of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa evince little interest in happenings in the mother country, as compared to the events of their own.

Although he was not surprised, later, at the number of his own relatives who died before and during Waterloo, still shouting Gaelic war cries while fighting for the British against the resistant French. General James Wolfe, whom he perhaps did not remember from the Forty-Five, was already dead twenty years, dying with the Highlanders on the Plains of Abraham—the same Highlanders he had tried to exterminate some fourteen years before.

(22)

While the emphasis of this passage is “leaving Moidart,” what the reader comes to realize in the passage of three centuries is that it is the clan that matters more than the place. It is “the Scotland of the mind” that unifies MacLeod’s characters, in both his novel and his short fiction.

The preoccupation of Alexander’s two grandfathers (Grandfather and Grandpa) with “the Scotland of the mind” is clear from their dialogue:

When he [Grandpa] was told he would get money back, although only a modest amount, he slapped Grandfather on the shoulder and said, “My hope is constant in thee, Clan Donald,” which is what Robert the Bruce was supposed to have said to the MacDonalds at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. (88)

Grandfather, the patient clan historian, has an unironic relationship with what he feels to be historical truth. Perhaps history’s “winners” have covered up that “truth,” but there is a truth to be gleaned. Most postmodern novelists would not agree to this assertion.

Grandfather gently tries to suggest to the cheerleading Grandpa that the warrior

ethic had its historical (and continuing) drawbacks. He tells Grandpa and Alexander (as a young boy) about the fall of 1689, when the MacDonalds came back from the Battle of Killiecrankie. The unreflective Grandpa hopefully suggests that they had won:

“Yes, they had won,” said Grandfather. “They had won the battle in the old way, but they had also lost a lot. They had lost the exciting young man who was their leader and their inspiration and who, somehow, gave them a belief in their cause. They carried his body from the field in their bloodied plaids and buried him in the churchyard. Perhaps it was the beginning of the end, for afterwards it was not the same—although they remained and fought for a man they did not much care for, after others who began with them had gone home.” (89)

Grandpa’s appreciation of this loyalty is not accepted by the more discerning Grandfather: “Yes, loyal to a cause which was becoming daily more muddled and which was to cost them dearly in the end” . . . “Trying to hold their place. They lost a lot of men . . .” (89). The real cost of the Highlanders’ famous bravery and loyalty is not accepted unquestioningly by Grandfather, nor by the novel’s author, who juxtaposes the modern MacDonald miners with the former warrior/mercenaries.

As though to trick Grandpa into seeing his own delusions, Grandfather paints a vivid picture of the returning Highlanders:

I see them sometimes coming home across the wildness of Rannoch Moor in the splendour of the autumn sun. I imagine them coming with their horses and their banners and their plaids tossed arrogantly over their

shoulders. Coming with their broadswords and their claymores and their bull-hide targes decorated with designs of brass. Singing the choruses of their rousing songs, while the sun gleams off the shining of their weapons and the black and the redness of their hair. (89-90)

Grandpa slaps his knee with joy at this vision, which confirms his own romantic views.

Grandfather proceeds to ruin this image with the more realistic version:

Of the hundreds of bodies at the pass of Killiecrankie, even if they won, and of those left behind . . . carrying home their wounded, draped over the horses' backs or on stretchers which were only plaids clutched in white-knuckled fists. Of the one-legged men with their arms thrown over their comrades' shoulders, trying to hop back the long miles they had walked or run across in the months of spring. . . . Of the men with bleeding stumps where their hands used to be, or of those bleeding between the legs—ruined in *that* way, . . . of those who did not get back, although they had made it through the battle, could not make it over the long, mountainous walk back home and were buried instead beneath cairns of stones in the rocky or boggy earth. (90)

This sobering vision of the triumph of Killiecrankie asserts an anti-royalist perspective on this Scottish/British dialectic, made even clearer by Grandfather's line: "Fighting for the Royalist cause or their own individuality" (91).

Grandfather's questioning of who is being followed by the Highlanders, the central concern of this novel, begins with these vivid scenes. He imagines the men saying:

"Well, this better be worth it. Somehow." And here they are again, forty years later, coming back with the same ambiguous thoughts of Killiecrankie."

"When I think of them this way . . . the sun does not shine on Rannoch Moor." (91).

The effect of this on Grandpa is sobering, as he responds by saying, "Well, we have to be going now . . ." (91). While Grandfather and MacLeod both find it admirable in its resolve, both assert that fierce tribal loyalty in the modern age bears examination. The author suggests that it is time to ask: "Who is being followed, and why?" As Nicholson assesses: "[In this] fable of postcolonial Gaeldom in decline, the only surviving meta-narrative in this constructed world is that of capital and its investing energies . . ." ("Man of Feeling" 208). While problematizing this "meta-narrative," MacLeod is asserting his own political vision, opting not to throw out the historical referent with the problematizing bathwater. MacLeod links various questionable followings of the Highlanders: the doubt suggested about the "royal cause" of Bonnie Prince Charlie to the more dubious following of former enemy James Wolfe at the Plains of Abraham. It does not take long to link the multinational Renco with Wolfe and the British, and the mining of uranium for a faceless multinational as a questionable mercenary activity. Through Grandfather, MacLeod suggests a historical inability of the Highlander to see his own

battles—to do the dirty work of others, on the battlefields of the past or in the mines of the present. In this assertion there is an implicit enemy: empire has reorganized itself into the colonizing narrative of multinationalism. The assertion of an enemy to be overcome is the basic tenet of nationalism. MacLeod's message is against central authority. He shows the mutating enemy as being the British Empire, the Canadian government, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and finally the multinational Renco development.

In *No Great Mischief*, the following Scottish nationalist vision of Bonnie Prince Charlie is presented to Catriona on her visit to the ancestral MacDonald home of Moidart. An old man recounts what he looks back to as a golden age, when the Highlands stood a chance of being free of the yoke of England:

“The Prince was here you know. . . .”

“Bonnie Prince Charlie. Right at this very spot. He came from France in the summer of 1745 to fight for Scotland's crown. We were always close to France. . . .” “It was called the auld alliance.”

“He was only twenty-five. . . . Almost a thousand men went with him from here The *Bratach Ban*, the white and crimson banner, was blessed at Glenfinnan by MacDonald.”

“We could have won . . . if the rest of the country had joined us. It was worth fighting for, our own land and our own people, and our own way of being.” (162)

The treacherousness of the British is also repeatedly asserted in *No Great Mischief*.

MacLeod vividly describes:

the stillness of Glencoe, where the MacDonalds were massacred in their beds early on the morning of February 13, 1692, by the government troops they had fed and sheltered for two weeks. Their tall and gigantic leader, "Mac Ian," rising from his bed to answer the five a.m. knock upon his door while the blizzard raged outside. Offering his hospitable glass of whisky, even as he turned his back to pull on his trousers, only to have the bullet smash into the back of his head, causing him to pitch forward across his wife within their still-warm bed; his once red hair, which had lightened with his advanced age, reverting suddenly back to the even brighter redness of his blood while the soldiers fell upon his wife and gnawed the rings from her fingers with their teeth. (94)

Passages such as this form the foundation of MacLeod's claim of the Highlanders historical victimhood at the hands of the British Empire. That the British are so easily replaced by Renco suggests that the problem is of a larger human order—of the inability of a tribal society to function in the modern world on equal footing, leading to endless cycles of following. Again, this is a clear political message: a clear taking of one side of an existing dialectic, and not an epistemological problematization of history. The moral/political positions of situational metafiction are easily elided when misidentified as historiographic metafiction. This misapplication of theory leads to misreading; these misreadings are repeatedly encountered in the critical works engaged with in this study, among the most glaring misreadings being the apolitical interpretations of Carey's *True*

History of the Kelly Gang. MacLeod's work, while not as historically manipulative as that of Carey, bears examination for the same reasons.

Although *No Great Mischief* is one of the most popular Canadian novels ever written, the disenfranchised Canadian highlander is a difficult pill to swallow for some: among the Alexander MacDonald's of history are this country's first Prime Minister, Sir John Alexander MacDonald. And as Gittings points out in his paper "Canada and Scotland: Conceptualizing 'Postcolonial' Spaces," the Glengarry Highlanders were responsible for many colonizing acts themselves; doing to the native peoples of Canada what the English did to them during the Highland Clearances. The indigenous writers in this study (King, Mda, Scott, Ihimaera) do not make the separation of mother country and white subaltern; thus viewing the land appropriations made by English, Irish, Scottish, and German as equally unjust. Additionally, the "victimization" at the hands of Renco bears examination and as Nairn points out this is "hard, dangerous, but relatively well-paid work" (55). The pride and fatalism of the Highland miners is presented in another of MacLeod's works, the short story "The Closing Down of Summer," where the mining company, rather than treated as an overlord, seems to be treated with distant contempt. One might easily argue that the MacDonald miners do it for the money and the glory, and could choose not to if they wanted.

This "victim narrative" is problematic in other ways. MacLeod shows both awareness as well as a calculated avoidance of aboriginal issues in his character of James MacDonald, who Alexander and Calum meet while working in northern Ontario. They are surprised when he greets them in Gaelic by saying "*Cousin agam fhein*":

He was a James Bay Cree, he said, and his grandfather or his great-grandfather, he was not sure which, had been a man from Scotland who had plied the trade routes of the north when fur was king. This was the man's fiddle, he said, offering us the battered instrument. He told us that his own name was James MacDonald and he had recognized the tartan on the shirt of the red-haired Alexander MacDonald, which I had been wearing at the time. The English/Gaelic phrase meant "cousin of my own." (151-52)

The pervasive nature of Clan MacDonald is shown again, appearing in the indigenous peoples of this recently settled country. The problems of this pervasiveness are suggested metaphorically through James MacDonald's musing about the nature of songs:

"Sometimes," said James MacDonald after finishing a tune which everyone knew by sound but not by name, "it is like a man have [*sic*] a son and he is far away and does not give the son a name." He paused. "But the son is there anyways," he added shyly, as though embarrassed by the fact that he had said so much. (154)

This "unnamed son" is a MacDonald, a clan manifestation in the Cree people. Although MacLeod avoids the issue of whether this is a good thing or not, James MacDonald is shown to be extremely proud of his Scottish heritage—an attitude that would not play well with many of his fellow Cree. MacLeod here puts words in the mouth of an indigenous character, which support his vision of his clan.

As Williams states of the music scene:

At one point only do the warring miners come to acknowledge their kinship, when a James Bay Cree begins to play the fiddle. . . . Still the aboriginal fiddler forms a cultural bridge at the cost of his own cultural suppression. For, as a Métis of mixed blood and heritage, he is admitted to the company of the Highlanders on the basis of the tribal shibboleth. (46-47)

The potential meeting of three disenfranchised cultures is divided and conquered, as MacLeod shows to have been the case throughout history, by central authority—in this case in the form of Renco's superintendent. But the parallel is misleading: the French and the Scots *took* the land of James MacDonald's James Bay Cree. The ease of elision of the aboriginal factor is shown in Nairn's reading of this scene, where James MacDonald is described simply as "a mysterious itinerant fiddler," and makes no mention of his Cree status, or the fact that this potential meeting of cultures is taking place on former Cree land. He does make the valid point, however, that "the mine owners want . . . to see ethnicity returned to, and firmly kept in, its "proper place" (56). Unfortunately, both MacLeod and Nairn neglect to interrogate the status of the most disenfranchised of all these "ethnicities."

In *Decolonizing Fictions*, Diana Brydon refers to a "myth of concern" that sought to reconcile Canada's differences to assure a common good:

Indeed, it is astonishing how prevalent this national mythology, summed up in Northrop Frye's picture of a "peaceable kingdom" still is, despite Canada's deplorable and continuing record of internal violence—the

dispossessing of the country's original inhabitants, the dispersal of the Acadians, the rebellions of 1837 (and the shipping of these rebel "convicts" to exile in Australia), the internment of the Japanese during the Second World War, the invoking of the War Measures Act in 1971—each proving that "consensus" can only come about through the repression of opposing or resistant elements. (68)

MacLeod's treatment of James MacDonald plays into this myth of concern, by suggesting a peaceful integration of Clan MacDonald and the Cree. One is encouraged to ignore the colonizing activities of the Glengarry Highlanders against the native peoples of Canada by the "victimized" Highlanders (Gittings 152). This depiction suggests that Canada's native peoples are better off for having connected with the MacDonald clan. James greets them in Gaelic, plays some Celtic fiddle and is taken in and given work. In the end he leaves them with a haunch of moose meat as though to say "all is well."

By suggesting the Highlanders and the French and the Cree are linked by their historical victimhood at the hands of the British Empire, MacLeod elides the fact that the Highlanders acted as a *part* of the British Empire, appropriating James MacDonald's Cree land for the purposes of settlement and territorial strength.⁷⁰ As Brydon cautions:

Comparative postcolonial studies that work with categories of "nation" must continually stress their awareness of the diverse competing discourses that fissure such a concept or risk repeating the imperialist denials of difference that they deplore. (*Decolonizing* 64-65)

⁷⁰ The Irish are also given this victim status, one Irish miner among the MacDonalds describes their respective ancestries as "but different branches of the same tree" (55).

This thesis repeatedly demonstrates the applicability of this warning, in the narratives of all the settler nations.

While James MacDonald is used to assert the power of the clan, the plight of Canada's native peoples is left unexamined. At one point, Alexander's sister Catriona provides a long digression about the Masai she saw in Kenya: "They had been 'troublesome' according to the tour operator, and when colonization first came they had attacked rather than co-operated" (*No Great Mischief* 232). The later application of the word "troublesome" (236) to the Highlanders is a direct attempt to link the two groups as victims of British colonization. Finding common cause with the Masai avoids the more difficult question of the Highlanders' participation in the dispossession of the native peoples of Canada. And there were certainly Highlanders involved in the dispossession of the Masai. When Catriona asks Alexander if he knows that Calgary is named after a place on the island of Mull he replies that he did not. She adds that "there are none of the native people left there anymore either" (209). The idea of "native peoples" disenfranchised is skimmed, but not interrogated. This parallel, like Crummey's parallel of the Newfoundland Irish and the Beothuk (*River Thieves*), does not hold up under examination. It does not make sense to claim common cause with a people your people have oppressed and disenfranchised.

Nevertheless this "strategic disavowal of the colonizing act" is widespread in the situational metafiction of the settler nations. *River Thieves* is an elaborate attempt to claim an originary status for Irish Newfoundlanders (like Crummey himself). Indeed, in an afterword, Crummey explicitly blames their demise on "the spread of British and

French communities throughout the island's coastline" (335), making no mention of his "subaltern" Irish. The clearest example, however, comes from the title, where the "river thieving" of the Beothuk on settlers is directly aligned with Irish thieving of the British on the Thames. Reilly, the most sympathetic character in the novel, tells of his ancestry:

He was born in St. Giles, Reilly told him, although his parents were both from Ireland and he was raised Irish, surrounded by Irishmen, and never thought of himself in any other way. . . . His father worked as a lumper on the cargo ships on the Thames, but his vocation was stealing from the English. Each night at low tide the river thieves made their way onto the East India ships at anchor. (52)

The "Robin Hood" nature of stealing from the postcolonially condemned villain, the British East India Company, is also found in Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Reilly is transported, like Ned Kelly's father. Both novels stress their "Irishness" as opposed to Englishness, somehow eliding the idea that the Irish were complicit and very active participants in the colonizing process. MacLeod sets up the same dichotomy with the Scottish and English in *No Great Mischief*, but his approach is more like that of Carey's than Crummey's—both authors perhaps realizing that too much mention of the aboriginal peoples would bring up uncomfortable memories and implications for their particular nationalisms. Of all the situational metafiction examined in this study, only Coetzee and Johnston "problematize" the settler tradition from which they are writing.

Johnston addresses this issue only at the end of *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* as though to acknowledge that the history of Newfoundland was not *only* the history of

the settlers, but also of the Beothuk. Through the character of Fielding, one senses an authorial explanation of an omission: "I am not . . . able to imagine the point of view of the men at whose hands so many [Beothuk] died. I like to think that in their place, I would not have done what they did, but that is something I can never know (558). The admission of the inability to speak for a particular subaltern from the colonizing position is the central focus in Coetzee's *Foe* (as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis)—a novel mislabelled by Hutcheon as historiographic metafiction. A lack of this admission looks like conscious *omission*. The uncovering of this strategy of omission in public histories is the stated goal of Hutcheon's construct of historiographic metafiction. Yet we *find* this very tactic of elision in these situational metafiction, which I repeatedly assert cannot be read as apolitical historiographic metafiction, although they fit the (currently inadequate) definition.

These situational metafiction, importantly, are problematizing from a position (bifurcated problematizing). Here MacLeod problematizes the public history of the founding of Canada, but he does so from a nationalist Scottish Canadian *position*, a position that again, like the public history, uses elision of inconvenient details to further its own agenda. In *No Great Mischief*, Grandfather returns from the public archives in Halifax, with a revelation about Wolfe that gives the novel its title. This exchange is important, so I will reproduce it in its entirety:

"Wolfe and the Highlanders at Quebec, on the Plains of Abraham. He was just using them against the French. He was suspicious of them and

probably would have been satisfied if the French had killed them all. Just using them for his own goals, for as long as they might last.”

“But,” said Grandpa, “didn’t you tell me once that it was a French-speaking MacDonald who got them past the sentries? And that he was the first up the cliff with the other Highlanders. . . .”

“Yes,” said my grandfather. “*First up the cliff*. Wolfe was still below in the boat. Think about it.”

“They were first because they were the best,” said Grandpa stoutly. “I think of them as winning Canada for *us*. They learned that at Culloden.”

“At Culloden they were on the *other side*,” said Grandfather in near exasperation. “MacDonald fought *against* Wolfe. Then he went to Paris. That’s where he learned his French. Then he was given a pardon so that he could fight *for* the British Army. He fought against Wolfe at Culloden and then fought for him years later at Quebec. Perhaps you can’t blame Wolfe for being suspicious under the circumstances. He has a memory like other men. Still MacDonald died fighting *for* the British Army, not *against* it. And one doesn’t like to think of people giving their best, even their lives, under deceptive circumstances.” (108)

The “deceptiveness” of Wolfe at the Plains of Abraham, is questionable. W. T. Waugh’s *James Wolfe: Man and Soldier* has it that: “Wolfe was the first man ashore, speedily followed by De Laume” (286), and he has it that the Forlorn Hope was “headed by Captain DeLaume and that it “was not quite so bad as it looked” (286). These details can

certainly lead to a different version of events. MacLeod uses the historical details that support his nationalist underlay, and avoids the ones that do not.

An example of dramatic nationalist clan history, one that supports the MacDonald version of events in *No Great Mischief*, is found on the Canadian Genealogy website:

Captain Macdonald, a very active climber, passed the "Forlorn Hope" and was the first man to reach the top and feel his way through the trees to the left, towards Vergor's tents. Presently he almost ran into the sleepy French-Canadian sentry, who heard only a voice speaking perfect French. . . . While this little parley was going on the "Forlorn Hope" came up; when Macdonald promptly hit the sentry between the eyes with the hilt of his claymore and knocked him flat. The light infantry pressed on close behind. The dumbfounded French colonial troops coming out of their tents found themselves face to face with a whole woodful of fixed bayonets. They fired a few shots. The British charged with a loud cheer. The Canadians scurried away through the trees. And Vergor ran for dear life in his nightshirt. ("Plains of Abraham" par. 37)

While this odd piece (pro-British, anti-French, "Canadian" nationalist and somewhat overly dramatic) has it that Captain Donald MacDonald "passed the Forlorn Hope," there is no mention of this "passing" in W. T. Waugh's *James Wolfe: Man and Soldier*, but he does say that "a Highlander, imitating Fraser, opened a parley in French, and before the sentry detected the fraud, a strong party came charging with fixed bayonets (286). Beckles Willson's *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe* credits the second attempt at

deception to a "Captain MacDonald, a Highlander" (488), but makes no mention of MacDonald's hit "with the hilt of his claymore." There is no mention of MacDonald in Francis Parkman's *Montcalm and Wolfe*—Parkman credits the initial ruse to "a Highland officer of Fraser's regiment" who "had served in Holland, and spoke French fluently" (286). At the diorama of the battle of Quebec in Quebec City, the first (and most important) ruse is attributed to Fraser. As the public histories reveal little consensus, MacLeod is given a free hand with history.

The story is much better in MacDonald mythology: Captain Donald MacDonald tricks the first sentry and is first up the cliff; he lures out the second sentry and smites him with his ancestral broadsword. No MacDonald tale would refer to his ruse as "imitating Fraser," in fact, *No Great Mischief*, by not referring specifically to which sentries MacDonald "got them past," MacDonald gets credit for Fraser's clever ruse at the shore and the ruse at the summit. As MacLeod would possibly admit, this *arrangement of historical details* makes for a better story. So does Wolfe's implied reluctance, which is simply not accurate. The allegation that Wolfe "was still in the boat below" is directly contradicted by Waugh who suggest the opposite that Wolfe "was the first man ashore." It is difficult to know exactly what happened, but from the jury of historians I have used the consensus suggests that Captain Donald MacDonald did fake out the second sentry. Simon Fraser is credited with the first ruse in F. E. Whitton's *Wolfe and North America*. Wolfe's implied cowardice is belied by the fact that he died in the very battle portrayed. Who ever heard of a general being on the front line of attack? MacLeod's clan nationalist position emphasizes the historical details that support the

message he wishes to express: The power and pervasiveness of the clan relationship and its foundational importance in the founding of Canada. The clan's exploitation by the larger interests of Empire and industry. This situational metafiction is clearly nationalistic, and I would venture to guess, admittedly so.

Significantly, this novel's title is politically charged. The very passage quoted in the title is dealt with directly in Waugh's *James Wolfe: Man and Soldier*. Wolfe referred to the Highlanders as a "secret enemy" and once, speaking of recruiting them as soldiers in a letter to his friend Captain Rickson, he made the cynical comment, "No great mischief if they fall" (101). According to James Michael Hill in *Celtic Warfare*: "Since his callous remark in 1751 referring to the Highlanders' expendability, Wolfe's attitude toward the clansmen had mellowed" (164). A year before the siege of Quebec Wolfe wrote: "The Highlanders are very useful serviceable soldiers, and commanded by the most manly corps of officers I ever saw" (Hill 164). In conversation MacLeod even admitted that Wolfe's suspicion of the Highlanders had some basis: "he made this judgment based on their differences, and maybe you can't blame him. You know—if you were commanding an army and you had all these people you fought against fifteen years earlier . . ." (MacLeod "Interview" 41). In another interview, with Shelagh Rogers, MacLeod speaks about a letter from Montcalm, expressing the view that the Highlanders, many of who had, in MacLeod's words had "become sort of mercenary. . . ." (27) would be easily turned to the French side.

Another version of this slice of history is more flattering to Wolfe, and ironically reinforces MacLeod's leitmotif, that of the dubious quality of glory. Before reaching Anse au Foulon quoted these lines from [Thomas] Gray's *Elegy*:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all the wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

After which he reportedly said: "Gentlemen, I would sooner have written that poem than take Quebec" (Willson 486-487).

This episode is corroborated by Francis Parkman. Wolfe's philosophical turn is strangely in tune with that of Grandfather's interrogation of the glorious history of the MacDonald's. It seems a dubious criticism to suggest the General, rather than Captain Donald MacDonald, should be "first up the cliff." The fact that Wolfe *does* go up the cliff and dies in battle alongside the Highlanders so is also ignored by Grandfather, emphasizing only the image of Wolfe "still below in the boat," an image belied by Waugh's claim that he was the "first man ashore." MacLeod selectively ignores these details, because they do not fit with his moral political position, the idea that the Highlanders historically bravely and loyally served the very forces that disenfranchised them, and continue this pattern of serving unworthy masters (the multinational Renco) to this day.

MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* uses postmodern techniques to convey a specific political message, in a postcolonial mode of writing identified by Attwell as situational

metafiction. His message deals with the historical victimization of the Highland peoples who migrated around the world—specifically those Highland MacDonalds (his ancestors) that migrated to Canada. In this novel, MacLeod uses history in a bifurcated fashion, problematizing the public history of the British Empire, of James Wolfe and the Plains of Abraham while simultaneously asserting a Scottish Highland history of Canada. This problematizing from a position is a political assertion. MacLeod's political assertion in *No Great Mischief*, while supported by logic and historical evidence on many levels, has significant logical flaws: notably the elision of the Highlanders' complicity in the colonizing processes of the British Empire, and in their own present day "victimization." His valorization of essential clan characteristics is problematic in its unquestioning amalgamation of James MacDonald into the clan, ignoring the man's own Cree heritage and the more significant victimization of those people at the hands of empire, some of those hands being those of the Highlanders themselves. The "disenfranchised Highlanders" did a great deal of disenfranchising themselves. Additionally, as this chapter has illustrated, the modern-day Highlanders play a major role in their own modern day "victimization" at the hands of industry, doing work they choose to do for good pay. These flaws in MacLeod's political logic are aesthetic flaws in an otherwise perceptive and innovative novel.⁷¹

I disagree with Nairn that the ending of *No Great Mischief* augurs, as Nairn claims, "the figurative demise of the [Scottish] Cape Breton community" (57). The

⁷¹ Nelson Wattie suggests on page 158 of this thesis that Shadbolt's "tickling of history" requires consistency in order to aesthetically succeed as literature. I would further this to say that if politics and history are part of one's literary aesthetic, then inconsistencies can rightly be considered aesthetic flaws.

Scottish Canadian community that is spoken of by Nairn is alive and well in the Cape Breton I am from; this community is sometimes overbearing in its self-valorization. I do not believe that MacLeod advocates this interpretation of demise either, although it is clearly present (perhaps the leitmotif) in his early fiction. There is too much in the way of constructive criticism in this novel to align it with MacLeod's earlier and well-documented fatalism about his Cape Breton community. *No Great Mischief* needs to be considered on its own terms. The novel, unlike MacLeod's short fiction, makes a clear attempt to directly engage with contemporary politics.

One of the aspects of the novel that belies the fatalism of Nairn's interpretation is the image of the well on Alexander's island home. Although "neglected," the "well pours forth its gift of sweetness into the whitened darkness of the night" (*No Great Mischief* 283). This repeated image symbolizes the subterranean impulses and understanding of Clann Chalum Ruadh. The "neglect" is something MacLeod suggests his people need to address. However, there are many examples in the novel of how this "clan understanding" is alive and well in the contemporary world, from Catriona's encounter in Moidart, to the clan impulse to protect one of their own, (Calum's "justified" flight from the R.C.M.P., the American Alexander MacDonald's escape from the Vietnam draft). The message is more complex than a lament of cultural "demise." The figure of Grandfather functions as a spokesperson for the best of the clan, advocating that his people avoid the fetishization of their ethnicity (as does the romantic Grandpa) into a monolithic form that keeps them subject to monolithic entities like the British Empire or Renco development. The MacDonalds are portrayed as the mercenaries of the great

power structures, empire or multinationalism, killing for profit or digging toxic uranium from the earth for their economic overlords. As Grandfather illustrates through history, aligning oneself with such overlords is *a choice*. Through this character, MacLeod achieves a type of balance in his problematization of history. Like Zakes Mda, J. M. Coetzee, Kim Scott, he is not afraid to criticize his own people. The balance of portrayal here, however admirable, does not negate MacLeod's (or any of the aforementioned authors') clear position within the represented dialectic. Like Mda, MacLeod's position is firmly, while not delusionally, nationalist.

Although Nairn misinterprets what he sees as the fatalism of *No Great Mischief*, his final suggestion obliquely references Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," suggesting that MacLeod's message to Scottish Cape Breton is to find "alternative expression in the era of globalization" (42). This is consistent with MacLeod's moral/political position, which is spoken most clearly through the figure of Grandfather, the patient historian, who wants his people to learn from their mistakes, and to stop letting the imagined concept of ethnicity keep the Cape Breton Highlanders ghettoized as a workforce for multinational commerce. While MacLeod delivers this message, he is guilty of the same type of empty valorization cautioned against by the character of Grandfather.

As it has been demonstrated that *No Great Mischief* is a political novel with "regional and temporal specificity" (Attwell 22) it is important that it be distinguished from its cousin, the historiographic metafiction. The misreading of situational metafiction such as *No Great Mischief*, under the rubric of historiographic metafiction,

is illustrated by this passage from Wyile's book, *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History*—an analysis clearly taken from Hutcheon's playbook:

the historical novel, in Canada as elsewhere, has undergone substantial reformulation in various ways that parallel developments in historiography, particularly politically and epistemologically. In the process of unearthing the untold or obscure stories of the past, or revisiting established stories, contemporary novelists are also contributing to an investigation of the process of historical representation—what history is and what it means to try and depict the past. More specifically, they are contributing to an investigation of the role of representations of the past in the construction of social, political, cultural, and, not least of all, national discourse. (5)

Like Hutcheon, Wyile assumes these “conscientious investigators” have no political agendas of their own. This thesis demonstrates repeatedly that this is usually not the case. By conflating situational metafiction with historiographic metafiction, the political agendas of many influential writers are elided. In situational metafiction, problematizing exists contiguous with politics: a problematizing from a position. The sheer number of texts that exist in this bifurcated mode necessitates the widespread acceptance of situational metafiction as a category that identifies and clarifies postmodern influences on postcolonial novels.

Wyile asserts that the "contemporary historical novel" is a turn away from public history "rather than serving to reinforce nationalist myths" (6). My four year investigation of the contemporary historiographic novel of the settler nations has shown this to be a vast oversimplification and perhaps a basic misunderstanding of the form. Hutcheon and Wyile can be interpreted as suggesting that one take an author's postmodern agenda at face value (when the novel contains the signposts of historiographic metafiction), rather than interrogating the motives that cause a novelist to represent a particular slice of history from a particular position. Such projects are often much more that a generalized critique of the process of writing history. The contemporary historical novel of the settler nations, in the prevalent form of situational metafiction, does not fit within these neatly totalizing theories of anti-totalization. Hutcheon has certainly identified a trend within postmodern writing, but totalizing misreadings like that of Wyile, whose words lead one to assume that there is never a political agenda in the contemporary Canadian historical novel, show the dangers of expanding a theory beyond established and demonstrable parameters. The totalizing nature of the theory of historiographic metafiction has caused a whole genre of postcolonial writing, the situational metafiction, to be subsumed under the rubric of historiographic metafiction, a place where these novels do not belong.

Chapter Five:

Our Home on Natives' Land: Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*

This parodic twisting of part of Canada's national anthem comes from Coyote, a pan-native trickster figure employed as a main character in King's *Green Grass, Running Water*.⁷² This line also appeared on the CTV national news in May 2006, emblazoned across a Six Nations protestor's sign in Caledonia, Ontario, when an ongoing standoff over land claims first erupted in violence between natives and non-natives. Pan-nativism is King's cultural aesthetic. This idea is also the cohesive force behind the Six Nations, an alliance of native peoples for mutual protection. The fact that a Six Nations member is referencing a novel a half-Cherokee man wrote about the Blackfoot, shows how boundaries, tribal and political, can be effectively reinvented in the postcolonial situation. *Green Grass, Running Water* takes on the settler/indigene dialectic in a move that effectively dismantles such settler mythologies.

For King, pan-nativism is a necessary consolidation of the colonized peoples of

⁷² Page 270

North America. Key to this cohesion is in understanding a common history of oppression as a Native American, and an emphasis on the historical commonality of Native American peoples, through such pan-tribal ceremonies as the Sun Dance as well as such cross-cultural figures as Coyote. Importantly, King's use of history is bifurcated: while settler history is ironically interrogated, native history (history from the Native American perspective) is presented unironically, as evidence of the author's cultural aesthetic. This selective use of history is ironically very similar to the aesthetic of *True History of the Kelly Gang*; both authors use situational metafiction as a nationalist platform, only from opposite sides of the coin.

Green Grass, Running Water attacks the central tropes of white North American history in a style identified by Linda Hutcheon as historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon sees parody and self-reflexivity, coupled with a questioning of the historical record, as identifiers of a postmodern aesthetic.⁷³ She argues that historiographic metafiction should not be criticized for "not telling history," because they are (for Hutcheon) more importantly telling us *about* history through their form. Self-reflexivity, which encourages us to reflect on the nature of production of the text, and ironic use of historical referents, causing the reader to reflect on the provisional nature of recorded history, are key indicators of historiographic metafiction. As demonstrated in the last four chapters, contemporary historical reference is not always non-dialectical, and is often used toward nationalist ends in novels that are, at once, self-reflexive and ironic in their

⁷³ Magic realism is another fictional tactic often associated with postmodernism. For examples of this approach see Ibis Gomez-Vega's "Subverting the 'Mainstream' Paradigm through Magic Realism in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*."

use of historical referents. In the case of *Green Grass, Running Water*, only the history of the dominant culture is interrogated in a postmodern fashion. A second, native history is *asserted*. This mode of bifurcated problematizing needs to be addressed by postmodern and postcolonial theory.

Hutcheon's "anti-totalizing ideology" and her assertions about the "non-dialectical" nature of postmodernism are an accurate description of many postmodern novels, but, importantly, her theory is not all-encompassing, as King's native nationalist ideology evinces. Slemon, in "Modernism's Last Post" argues that much postmodern theorizing is unaware of the "historically 'grounded' strategies of 'de-essentialization' evident in postcolonial literatures," and that this "is perhaps contributive of postmodernism's overwhelming tendency to present itself . . . as a crisis, a contradiction, an apotheosis of negativity" (14). A "historically grounded strategy of de-essentialization" is a good description of *Green Grass, Running Water*. While this novel partakes of most of the aspects of historiographic metafiction, to apply Hutcheon's anti-totalizing criteria to *Green Grass, Running Water* would be to profoundly misunderstand its message, which contains a strong dialectic that is anti-settler. Through application of Attwell's construct of situational metafiction to Hutcheon's paradigm of historiographic metafiction, my intention is to reclassify these postmodern-looking postcolonial works as situational metafiction. This will be accomplished through the examination of the conjunction of postmodern and nationalist elements in the historiographic novels of the settler nations.

In his introduction to *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian*

Native Fiction, King wrestles with the problem of Native American historical fiction:

The literary stereotypes and clichés for which the period is famous have been, I think, a deterrent to many of us . . . most of us have consciously set our literature in the present, a period . . . which allows . . . us the opportunity to create for ourselves and our respective cultures both a present and a future . . . perhaps we will begin to write historical novels once we discover ways to make history our own. (xii)

Situational metafiction provides King with a method to do just this: juxtaposing native history onto the present. King creates a metaphoric double-exposure, one that shows us that history, for the native (both the lived and settler versions), is very much alive in the present. James Cox in his paper “All This Water Imagery Must Mean Something” asserts that King’s novel “privilege[s] cultures and belief systems historically marginalized by the invading culture’s exclusive and dominative discourses” (220). This “privileging” is overtly political, a clear example of the dialectic that is meant to be absent in historiographic metafiction.

Ostensibly, *Green Grass, Running Water* follows a postmodern aesthetic, as outlined by Hutcheon:

First of all, historiographic metafictions appear to privilege two modes of narration, both of which problematize the entire notion of subjectivity: multiple points of view (as in Thomas’s *The White Hotel*) or an overtly controlling narrator (as in Swift’s *Waterland*). In neither, however, do we find a subject confident of his/her ability to know the past with any

certainty. (*Poetics* 117)

Green Grass, Running Water, while employing both multiple points of view and an overtly controlling narrator, will be shown to know certain events of the past “with certainty.” King’s novel moves back and forth from a conventional style of narration to an overtly controlling and omnipresent “I,” who speaks with Coyote (the pan-native American trickster figure) about what is happening in the novel and how the action can be affected. King’s novel also follows Hutcheon’s prescription in its emphasis on “the particular and the local take[ing] on the value once held by the universal and the transcendent” (*Poetics* 97). King employs these postmodern techniques to problematize the settler history of North America. However, there are important events in the past that King’s narrator and Native characters know with certainty, events that are unproblematized—events that are pivotal in conveying the central message of *Green Grass, Running Water*.

In his non-fictional *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, King shows a strong awareness of conventional history, and an ability to use it to make a statement:

In 1887, the U.S. Congress passed the General Allotment Act, or the [Henry] Dawes act as it was popularly known. Driven by the government’s desire to control tribes, by the desire of settlers for cheap land, and by the popular notion that land set aside for Indians was the antithesis of North American values and fair play, the General Allotment act sought to “re-imagine” tribes and tribal land. (130)

One of the reformers who worked on this act was Merrill E. Gates, one of the “Friends of

the Indian,” whose “humanitarian colonialism” presents a strong parallel with Sir George Grey’s (the former governor of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa):

We have . . . the absolute need of awakening in the savage Indian broader desires and ampler wants. To bring him out of savagery into citizenship we must make the Indian more intelligently selfish before we can make him unselfishly intelligent. We must awaken in him wants. In his dull savagery he must be touched by the wings of the divine angel of discontent. The desire for property of his own may become an intense educating force. The wish for a home of his own awakens him to new efforts. Discontent with the teepee and the starving rations of the Indian camp in winter is needed to get the Indian out of the blanket and into trousers—and trousers with pockets in them, and with a pocket that aches to be filled with dollars. (*Truth* 131)

Gates’s words bring to mind George Grey’s line in *The Greenstone Door* as he urges Cedric to forget his Maori upbringing and ties: “Do not rouse again that fire that has burnt itself out. Let the past die, and turn your eyes to the future” (Satchell 193). These thoughts are also concurrent with those of A. O. Neville, who is dealt with in detail in the next chapter. The fact that these ideas recur in different settler nations, dressed in different clothing, evinces what seems a natural impulse of the colonizer, to assuage an historical guilt with the cultural myth that the state is interested primarily in their protection.

King comments on his own travels to the other settler nations of Australia and

New Zealand in *The Truth about Stories*:

In New Zealand, I had met a great many Maoris, and while there had been friction between Maoris and Europeans, the two groups seemed to have organized themselves into an uneasy peace between equals. In Australia there was no such peace. Just a damp, sweltering campaign of discrimination that you could feel on your skin and smell in your hair.

The Aboriginal people, I was told, were failing. They were dying off at such a rate that they wouldn't last another decade. It was sad to see them passing away, but their problem, according to the men who gathered in the bars after work, was that they did not have the same mental capacities as Whites. There was no point in educating them because they had no interest in improving their lot and were perfectly happy living in poverty and squalor.

The curious thing about these stories was I had heard them all before, knew them, in fact by heart. (50-51)

While it might be easy to attack these generalizations about all "the men who gather in bars" King is pointing beyond specific stereotypes toward a larger (and demonstrable) impulse of cultural mythology in the settler nations—to assert that the indigenous peoples were of a lower order of humanity. King's situational metafiction presents and discredits such self-serving mythologies as mental colonizations, through an (often ironic) interrogation of the history of European contact with the native peoples of North America.

Carleton Smith, in *Coyote Kills John Wayne*, concludes his piece on King with the following words: "At the conclusion of King's novel we are thus reminded of trickster's sacred function within traditional oral cultures as a healer, but also as a disruptive semiotic element that resists colonial representations and stories of containment" (75). While there is some truth to these words, it is perhaps too appealing to theorize a unique "trickster" approach to King's writing.⁷⁴ *The Satanic Verses*, a seminal postmodern work, is clearly a major influence on *Green Grass, Running Water*. The Archangel Gibreel, and Shaitan, the devil, are Rushdie's parodic means of questioning the cultural authority of Islam, in the same way King uses Coyote and figures from the Bible to interrogate Western attitudes toward Native Americans. Both books have deliberately employed elements that would be considered sacrilegious to Muslims (Rushdie) and Christians (King). Rushdie's narrator, like King's, is another mysterious "I." After two men fall into the ocean from an airplane exploded by Islamic terrorists, they survive for unknown reasons. The men shed their former identities and become the two religious figures mentioned above. The "I" narrator intrudes on the action, giving the reader just enough to go on. The reader is similarly (and intentionally) disoriented by the lack of identification of the narrator in the opening of both novels. Both authors employ mysterious, powerful and somewhat omniscient narrators. There is a deliberate attempt to obscure the identity of the narrator in both works. Both novels employ the cultural figures of dominant cultures in order to question what they stand for, and to subvert the

⁷⁴ To see other examples of this interpretation see Dawn Karma Pettigrew's "Coyote Discovers America: the Cultural Survival of the Trickster in the Novels of Thomas King" and Robin Ridington's: "Coyote's Canon: Sharing Stories with Thomas King."

oppressive ideologies they contain.⁷⁵ Both authors do this through the means of making these figures earthbound with supernatural powers. Rushdie's novel was clearly a major influence on this "trickster tale."

Rushdie's work seems to have been a major influence on the theories of Hutcheon as well; Rushdie being one of her most referenced authors. Intentionally or not, King's choice of this postmodern style of writing places his work within a particular and established aesthetic, that of historiographic metafiction. I would argue that both Rushdie and King write in a postmodern aesthetic, but that *Green Grass, Running Water* has clear nationalist elements that distinguish it from the more problematizing works of Rushdie. From an advantageous marginal viewpoint, Rushdie's works employ history in a self-reflexive and parodic style in order to challenge various nationalisms and, importantly, the idea of nationalism itself. His ability to reflect on "social meaning as historically constituted" has made his novels paradigms of postmodern writing (*Poetics* 15). *Green Grass, Running Water* is able to reflect on this process in a similar way through a similar aesthetic. However, King's nationalism ultimately distances his works from Rushdie's more decentered stance. Rushdie's novels are political, but his refusal to take a side in the dialectic he presents places his work more in the category of political philosophy: political meditations without allegiance.⁷⁶ King's work is also philosophical but it functions in a different way from Rushdie's, using a similar aesthetic to both tear down and build up specific exclusionary nationalisms. The issue is one of taking sides, and

⁷⁵ In *Green Grass, Running Water*, Coyote's dream, which is King's parody of the western conception of God, "gets loose" and "thinks it is in charge of the world" (1) to which the narrator responds to Coyote "Now you've done it" (2).

⁷⁶ It would not be difficult to argue an Anti-Pakistan rather than an "anti-totalizing" argument in *Shame*, as Aijaz Ahmad does; still Hutcheon uses this novel repeatedly as an example of historiographic metafiction.

King clearly takes a side, employing history to reinforce his arguments. Settler cultural history is interrogated, rejected—and replaced.

Green Grass, Running Water meets other specific criteria of historiographic metafiction as outlined by Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*: “Intertextual parody of canonical American and European classics is one mode of appropriating and reformulating—with significant change—the dominant white, male, middle-class, heterosexual, Euro-centric culture” (130). This approach, coupled with the novel’s overt self-reflexivity and questioning of “social meaning as historically constituted” (15) is clearly meant to associate *Green Grass* with other historiographic metafictions. The parodic elements in this novel can clearly be seen to be “appropriating and reformulating” North American (and Western) cultural history, but history in this novel is bifurcated into parodic and non-parodic uses. The unironic use of history is employed to bolster the argument on the Native American side of the dialectic.

Illustrating this point, the reader begins *Green Grass, Running Water* with a history lecture—unironic, unproblematic linear history that condemns the past Native American policies of the United States government. In a university class on Plains Indian Ledger Art, Blackfoot history professor Alberta Frank lectures on how a special prison was conceived in Fort Marion, Florida for troublesome Native leaders. Her students interrupt with inane questions and commentary. Throughout this novel, historical names are given to modern characters with the intention of ironic resonance, the ironic use of historical referents even extended to the novel’s title, which was a common (and often violated) clause of many North American treaties, that the treaty would stand as long as

the grass is green and the water runs. Frank's student, Henry Dawes, is said, on the first line of this section, to be falling asleep to her lecture:⁷⁷

In 1874, the U.S. army began a campaign of destruction aimed at forcing the southern Plains tribes onto reservations. . . . Now as the tribes came in, the army separated out certain individuals who were considered to be dangerous. . . . seventy-two such individuals . . . were chained to wagons, . . . and imprisoned at Fort Marion [Florida], an old Spanish fort in Saint Augustine. . . . As a way to help to reduce the boredom of confinement [the army] provided the men with drawing materials. . . . Collectively [their] drawings are known as Plains Indian Ledger Art. (18-19)

This passage represents a balanced assessment of this period in Native American history. It is significant to remark here that while there is irony in the novel's present, the weight of the above historical account is clearly meant without any problematizing irony. When a student asks what happened to the Indians that made it to the prison, the question is left hanging. The classroom clears and the point is made: that even when the crimes of settlement are exposed, a modern audience is mostly concerned with whether this will be on the test. The one student who remains after the others leave gets her question answered elaborately in a metafictional format. In an inventive move, the narrator takes things into (his/her) own hands by having four of these old Fort Marion Indians (all of whom at the time would have to be much older than the oldest living human in order to

⁷⁷ Senator Henry Dawes created the aforementioned Dawes Severalty Act, or the General Allotment Act of 1887. This act, which divided the communal holdings of reservations into individual plots, resulted in the loss of huge sections of major reservations, notably those of the Montana Blackfoot, close to where the story takes place in Alberta, and among the same people.

still be alive) escape from their hospital (with symbolic resonations of Fort Marion) to go and fix the world as they have apparently been doing on and off for the last century. In this complex novel, time and space are flexible, as they are in Native American trickster cycles.⁷⁸ This trickster cycle is different in that it uses this flexibility to attack the inflexible stereotypes of settler fiction and history. However parodic the novel may be, the weight of the history presented about Fort Marion and the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee, importantly, is unironic. The reader is meant to see the truth about these stories.

By way of pursuing an answer to the student's question, the narrative drops the reader into a conversation with Hawkeye, the Lone Ranger, Ishmael and Robinson Crusoe, who have escaped from Fort Marion, which has morphed (symbolically) into a hospital where they are being treated for depression. King chooses his helpers from four different tribes: Cheyenne, Kiowa, Comanche and Arapaho, and names each ironically as the white side of Leslie Fielder's frontier couple. Their self-appointed mission is to fix the world.⁷⁹ A power reversal is clearly attempted, by giving the old Indians' supernatural powers and the help of the pan-native figure of Coyote.⁸⁰ By presenting the binary of Tonto and the Lone Ranger, the frontier couple, in its reverse, King shows its ultimate fallacy: the self-serving inventiveness of settler mythologies, such as John Richardson's *Wacousta*, and James Fenimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans*; the imperial assumptions

⁷⁸ See Paul Radin's study *The Trickster: A Study in North American Indian Mythology*.

⁷⁹ The four Indians are actually four Native American female creators (First Woman, Thought Woman, Changing Woman and Old Woman) with their own parodic mythological narratives contiguous to the contemporary action of the novel, an emblematic postmodern use of intertextuality.

⁸⁰ It is significant to his pan-native aesthetic that neither King's actual tribal affiliation (Cherokee) nor his adopted one (Blackfoot) is represented in the prisoner list at Fort Marion or among the supernatural Indians. For King, it is irrelevant which particular Native Americans suffered, for he sees Native Americans as one people.

present in *Moby Dick* and *Robinson Crusoe*; and later, but parallel manifestations, such as the figures of John Wayne and the Lone Ranger. Cultural history is more influential than actual history; the point is made that the best story wins the public's acceptance as fact.

This is a particularly postmodern message: "The contradictory nature of postmodernism involves its offering of multiple, provisional alternatives to traditional, fixed unitary concepts in full knowledge of (and even exploiting) the continuing appeal of those concepts" (*A Poetics* 60). Hutcheon describes a parallel postmodern aesthetic in *Ragtime*: "[E. L.] Doctorow's deliberate anachronisms are ways of commenting upon the age of Wilson by importing a dramatic example from the age of Nixon, and his point is, quite clearly, that the forms of present-day racism have their roots in the past" (203). By taking his native prisoners from an actual prison (Fort Marion) in the final days of the frontier wars, and anachronistically placing them in modern North America, King creates a cultural metaphor: a type of third space, resulting from the juxtaposition of the two time periods and their associated cultural narratives.⁸¹ King employs a similar postmodern aesthetic to make a similar point. However, unlike Doctorow, King uses this aesthetic to endorse a particular side of a particular dialectic.

Fort Marion is one of the fixed unitary concepts of settler mythology, a locus for the improvement of the savage Indian, and was considered a showcase for the benefits of assimilation. In *The Regional Review*, a publication of the National Parks Service of America, F. Hilton Crowe described the experiment as "one of the first practical demonstrations of the ability of the Federal government to elevate and civilize the

⁸¹ C. P. the concept of "third space" in Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*. There is also an interesting parallel here with Eisenstein's montage theory.

western Indians, and one of the earliest advances in a rational method of making citizens of the remnants of our aboriginal population" (1). For King, all history is story⁸² and now the story of Fort Marion is to be told from the native perspective, with elements of parody and magic realism. Having shown his ability to effectively use conventional history, King mounts a cultural offensive on one of the pillars of western civilization and what he sees as the ultimate historical fiction: the Old Testament. Again echoing Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, King takes on Christianity. First Woman's narrative proceeds through an ironic history (both literary and literal) of North America, pointedly placing equal weight on cultural inventions such as Natty Bumppo and Robinson Crusoe, this work clearly participating in what Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction's "study of social meaning as historically constituted" (*A Poetics* 15).

The narrator begins by placing Adam (Ahdamn) with the Cherokee figure First Woman in frontier North America in a mock Genesis:

And just so we keep things straight, says that GOD, this is my world and
this is my garden.

Your garden, says First Woman. You must be dreaming.

And that one takes a big bite of one of those nice red apples. (*Green Grass* 68)

By mixing such narratives as *Genesis* and *The Lone Ranger*, King points to how cultural narratives are often predisposed and even designed to reinforce oppression, colonizing

⁸² King is quite adamant about the idea of history as story, but what he identifies as shortcomings in the "story" of colonial North America are not interrogated in his own work. As Wylie comments on Rudy Wiebe, the authors of the situational metafiction of the settler nations are often "unreflexive about their own practices" (432).

the mind as well as the people and their land. Predictably, Ahdamn and the First Woman are kicked out of the garden by the bossy GOD. Soon they find themselves in Frontier North America, facing the problem that all Native Americans faced in those times: settlers.

King effectively uses parody in a postmodern fashion, mocking unitary settler assumptions about hero cowboys and dangerous “Indians” in North American history in a clear Hutcheonian *problematizing* of cultural history. After Ahdamn and First Woman “get kicked out of the little GOD’s garden” First Woman saves herself from “the rangers” by impersonating the Lone Ranger. The rangers offer to kill her “Indian” for her:

No, no, says First Woman. That’s my Indian friend. He helped save me from the rangers.

You mean the Indians don’t you? says [sic]those rangers.

That’s right, says First Woman with the mask on. His name is Tonto. . . .

Okay, says those rangers, but don’t say we didn’t try to help.

And they gallop off, looking for Indians and buffalo and poor people and other good things to kill. (71)

Using one western myth against the other, one can see King appropriating the divide and conquer tactics of imperialism. King revises popular culture because he understands the power of entertaining stories: they capture the public imagination more than revisionist history, and have a greater influence on a nation’s image of itself. In the cultural imagination, the best story wins. So if history is all “story,” why not retell the story of Fort Marion from the native perspective? This tack, while departing from the doxy of

postmodernism, is the one King takes, that of ironically fixing history, a “history for” (in the sense used by Claude Levi-Strauss) the Native American. This is a clear ideology at work—an indictment of white settler North America and not a Hutcheonian “problematizing” as the rangers ride off “looking for Indians and buffalo and poor people and other good things to kill.” There is a clear dialectic in this postmodern-looking novel, best described as Attwell’s situational metafiction; at times it is persuasive, at others simply emptily antagonistic, reasserting an internecine binary (white/native) that needs no reassertion. Regardless of its intermittent effectiveness, this dialectic is consistent.

Having worked his way parodically through the cultural history of Western society, King binds the narrative of First Woman to that of the four Fort Marion natives. This is where the parody embarks (through the journey of the supernatural Indians) on its mission of “fixing history.” From an omniscient narrative platform, the narrator and Coyote discuss what is going to happen to First Woman and Ahdamn next. The narrator has them captured by U.S. soldiers back in 1891, and brought to Fort Marion with chains on their legs. Ahdamn enjoys success as an “Indian artist,” but First Woman reminds him that they have to go “fix the world.” First Woman again uses a Lone Ranger disguise to help Ahdamn, along with Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye, escape from their metaphoric captivity⁸³ in the mental hospital that used to be Fort Marion. This flexibility in identity is admittedly, and intentionally, confusing.

Juxtaposed with this satiric postmodern Native American retooling of creation is

⁸³ Identities and times can shift in Native American story cycles, but the suggestion is that the Lone Ranger, who seems to lead the group, is a woman: First Woman. There is also a suggestion that all of the four Indians are women.

the rather straight (by comparison) story of Lionel, the Willy Loman of the Alberta Blackfoot. The intertwining of these two plots puts emphasis on the postmodern Foucauldian injunction to focus on the particular in history; as though to say: "This is what happened, and this is what is important *now*." Lionel, a forty-year-old television salesman who is overweight and uninspired, lingers outside his community, and is presented as a product of North American culture. Lionel's life needs to be "fixed," and as we find out, this is the project of the supernatural natives and Coyote, to teach Lionel what it is to "be an Indian."

Lionel's first lesson (and King's leitmotif) is that he and all natives are part of a community. History is used both ironically and unironically to assert this clear pan-nativist ideology, which is has clearly different objectives than Hutcheon's anti-totalizing ideology of historiographic metafiction. In *All My Relations: An Anthology of Short Fiction by Narrative Writers in Canada*, King, in the introduction, speaks explicitly about the importance of community to Native peoples of North America, asserting Attwell's "regional and temporal specificity" of situational metafiction:

Community, in a Native sense, is not simply a place or a group of people, rather it is, as novelist Louise Erdich describes it, a place that has been "inhabited for generations" where "the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history. . . ." For Native writers, community—a continuous community—is one of the primary ideas from which our literature proceeds. (xv)

This sense of community is acted on literally, by invoking another native author.

Community, for King, is of the utmost importance.⁸⁴ It is also a difficult responsibility. Community gets Lionel into trouble, as a university student working for the department of Indian affairs. King names Lionel's supervisor Duncan Scott after Duncan Campbell Scott, the Canadian poet and former Minister of Indian affairs. While lauded for his knowledge of the Native American, from today's perspective, Scott's project of assimilation smacks of cultural genocide.

Daniel Francis addresses the cultural myth of Duncan Campbell Scott in *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*:

In retirement, he painted himself as a disinterested public servant carrying out official policy to the best of his ability. . . . "I was never unsympathetic to aboriginal ideals . . . but there was the law that I did not originate and which I never tried to amend in the direction of severity." Actually, Scott had a great deal of latitude when it came to enforcing regulations under the Indian Act and to recommending changes to the Act, and he often took "the direction of severity." For instance, no sooner was he put in charge of the Indian Department than he proposed changes to the act which made it an offence punishable by imprisonment for an Indian to attend traditional ceremonies [such as the Blackfoot Sun Dance] or to wear "aboriginal costume" in public show or exhibitions. (210)

Scott also hired spies to monitor "Indian Affairs," and made it illegal for Natives to hire lawyers to help with their political grievances. Ironically, the plight of the native arrives

⁸⁴ See Jace Weaver's "Native American Authors and Their Communities."

in the mind of most Canadian schoolchildren from the pen of Scott, his most popular poems ("The Forsaken" and "The Onondaga Madonna") chronicling the demise of the native peoples that involved his own controlling hand. King's ironic historical referent is pointed and effective. It is also part of a clear dialectic that is anti-settler, not anti-totalizing. In line with Attwell's construct, this dialectic "draws attention to the historicity of discourses, to the way subjects are positioned within and by them and . . . to the interpretive process with its acts of contestation and appropriation" (*J. M. Coetzee* 22) and like J. M Coetzee "make[s] political choices through a medium of allegory" (*J. M. Coetzee* 93). As in *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the political choices in *Green Grass, Running Water* are made in order to reinforce an existing nationalism, significantly, one diametrically opposed to that of Carey's. Situational metafiction, as we have and will continue to see in this thesis, is an extremely malleable form.

The actual 1973 standoff between AIM (American Indian Movement) members and federal agents at Wounded Knee, another example of "regional and temporal specificity," is the catalyst for Lionel's criminal record, something that has dragged him down ever since. Wounded Knee is an important element in King's message. The beginnings of pan-nativism can be seen to have originated in the loose confederacies of the Ghost Dance in 1890; it was no accident that the same place was chosen for the 1973 standoff with federal agents.⁸⁵ While the Ghost Dance⁸⁶ resulted in the Wounded Knee

⁸⁵ This standoff lasted ten weeks and resulted in the deaths of two Native Americans and the paralysis of one federal agent. This and other actions of the American Indian movement brought native affairs to the highest levels of the United States government.

⁸⁶ In light of the emphasis of this study, it is interesting to compare the millenarian aspects of the Sioux Ghost dance with the Cattle-Killing cult of the Xhosa, similar movements developed at similar points of

Massacre in 1890 of over 300 unarmed Sioux, it broke ground for future confederacies and pan-native movements such as AIM and Red Power. In the novel, Lionel becomes associated with members of AIM when he is instructed by Duncan Scott to give an empty prewritten speech, "The History of Cultural Pluralism in Canada's Boarding Schools," to a group of natives south of the border. When a woman, (who reminds him of his sister Latisha) shouts: "What does this crap have to do with our brothers and sisters at Wounded Knee," (*Green Grass* 56) the stage is rushed, thankfully ending Lionel's second-hand speech. Lionel's ability to deliver the words of the colonizer to his own people, coupled with his childhood worship of John Wayne, is shown as a type of self-hatred, a rejection of his own origins:

So he stood there, feeling vulnerable, as each speaker talked about the people at Wounded Knee and the FBI and the general condition of Native people in North America. Every so often someone would remind the crowd that this was their chance to stand up for the people. Lionel stood there for two hours, nodding his head occasionally, shifting from one leg to the other, putting his hands behind his back, putting his hands in front of him, pushing his lips out, sucking his lips in. (57)

Lionel is not ready to stand up for his people: he is presented both as a victim of society and as a victim of self-imposed victimization, a legacy of conquered peoples the world over. King perceptively presents this pose as a damaging justification, rather than a reality. D. C. Scott is still around, but you do not have to believe his story. King's

colonization. See Michael Adas' *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against the European Colonial Order*.

dialectic is with the "Lionels" of the native community, by impressing upon them that their heritage and action on a small scale are both important, as the four Indians (female creators) and the women in Lionel's life, try to point out. King sees this as an important and unironic message, an unproblematic lesson of history.⁸⁷

Lionel is asked by one of the speakers to attend an AIM rally at the state capital in Salt Lake City, next to the statue of Massasoit, "the Indian who greeted the Europeans at Plymouth Rock." He replies, "I'm Canadian." The speaker does not accept this as an excuse, and when Lionel says he "has a reservation" to fly back, "the man took Lionel by the shoulders, looked at him hard and said, 'Some of us don't'" (58). Lionel joins a convoy of vans to join the 1973 standoff at Wounded Knee. On the way, he ends up being arrested for disturbing the peace. The readers are meant to see that Lionel's criminal record was unwarranted, the result of continuing oppression, and that it has held him back in life.⁸⁸ We are (with some basis in fact) meant to see that Lionel has been punished for "being an Indian," and worse, that he has accepted this fate.

King links cultural mythology to Lionel's denial of his heritage and to the state of Native affairs in North America today. One of his favorite targets is James Fenimore Cooper. He takes on this cultural icon directly in *The Truth About Stories*:

One of the favorite narrative strategies was to create a single, heroic
Indian . . . who was the last of his race . . . death and nobility were
sympathetic ideas that complemented one another, and writers during the

⁸⁷ See Dee Brown's *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* for a historical study that shares King's dialectic.

⁸⁸ There are almost as many Aboriginal inmates in Canadian prisons (17,000) as there are Aboriginal university students (22, 881).

first half of the nineteenth century used them in close association, creating a literary shroud in which to wrap the Indian. And bury him. (33)

Indeed, a close reading of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* confirms this attitude: where the numerous Iroquois are described as the lowest most treacherous creatures imaginable, and the only Native Americans that are admired (although "partially benighted in the vale of ignorance" (Cooper 48)) are conveniently ready to die, like the noble savages of John Richardson and Duncan Campbell Scott.⁸⁹ The problem, well-articulated by King, is that these stereotypes "become" history. King skilfully mocks Cooper's facile generalizations through his parody of Hawkeye or Natty Bumppo, whom he calls Nasty Bumppo. Appropriating and rewriting figures from literary history is a style emblematic of historiographic metafiction. But, as with Coetzee's *Foe* (taken by Hutcheon to be paradigmatic historiographic metafiction), this parody is pointedly political within a specific cultural context.

Old Woman is floating on the primordial sea, and comes to shore to meet Nasty who refers to himself as a "Postcolonial Wilderness Guide and Outfitter." Bumppo explains the difference between Indian and white gifts:

Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes. Indians don't talk much. Indians have good eyesight. Indians have agile bodies. . . . Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sophisticated. Whites are

⁸⁹ Ironically, the "vanished" Mohegan tribe still consists of over two thousand full-blooded members and the Mohegan Sun casino in Connecticut is one of the largest in the world, with an annual profit of one and a half billion dollars.

sensitive. These are all white gifts say Nasty Bumpo.

So, says Old Woman. Whites are superior, and Indians are inferior.

Exactly right, says Nasty Bumpo. Any questions? (*Green Grass* 393)

While this image of Hawkeye is far from the enlightened humanist scout played by Daniel Day-Lewis, it is a direct (and I would argue insightful) parody of Cooper's ideas. It may be surprising to some that one of the most popular writers of Native American fiction had such a low opinion of people that were his chosen subject. It is also hard not to notice in reading Cooper that even when it comes to Indianness, Hawkeye is better than the Indians.

King is even more explicit about Cooper in *The Truth about Stories* "Cooper isn't arguing for equality. He's arguing for separation, using some of the same arguments that 1950s America would use for segregating Blacks from Whites" (104). Reading *The Last of the Mohicans* makes one aware of many of the cultural assumptions of Cooper's that King takes issue with in his work. This aspect of the work of *Green Grass, Running Water* is particularly dynamic: Cooper's ideas still hold sway in a largely unexamined body of cultural myth. Overall, King is very effective in countering this colonial residue, but disappointingly fails to move beyond a counterattack—a reassertion of an internecine binary. When Old Woman⁹⁰ turns out to be an Indian that Nasty does not know (like the countless Iroquois he kills in the Deerslayer stories), Nasty decides to shoot her. At the sound of the shot, it is Nasty who dies: the implication is that Coyote has killed off one of

⁹⁰ First Woman, Old Woman and Changing Woman seem to be names for the same figure, drawing on an amalgam of Native American myths, reinforcing the idea of pan-nativism. See Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz's *American Indian Myths and Legends* and Stith Thompson's *Tales of the North American Indian*.

the Indian killers of North American settler mythology, which is a trend that continues in the novel.

The mission of the four supernatural Indians culminates in the altering of the fake western classic *The Mystic Warrior*. In this version, John Wayne and Richard Widmark are killed, with Widmark wetting himself beforehand. The meaning of this parody is not quite clear: kill the misconceptions or kill the white men? King's anger is palpable; the message in parodic form, although elaborately staged, seems to be no more sophisticated than an eye for an eye. This symbolic killing of white men also occurs in Sherman Alexie's psychological thriller *Indian Killer*, except in this novel the deaths of actual white men at the hands of a spirit of the Ghost Dance is disturbingly seen as the beginning of a new justice. Reasserting the native/white binary in such stark nationalist terms serves to polarize both sides and to ignore what Edward Said cautions in his conclusion to *Culture and Imperialism*:

The steady critique of nationalism . . . should not be forgotten, for we must not condemn ourselves to repeat the imperial experience . . . how can we sustain the liberating energies released by the great decolonizing resistance and the mass uprisings of the 1980s? Can these energies elude the homogenizing processes of modern life, hold in abeyance the interventions of the new imperial centrality? (331)

And can "these energies" avoid the assertion of new nationalisms through novels that appear to be historiographic metafiction, which by their very nature, according to Hutcheon, are meant to interrogate and expose the very formation of cultural monoliths

such as binary exclusionary nationalisms? As Arnold Davidson, Priscilla Walton and Jennifer Andrews assert in *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions* "King's brand of comedy . . . continually walks a tightrope between inclusion and exclusion" (41). What is ostensibly a meditation on the formative power of discourse is simultaneously a vehicle for the very type of discourse it is meant to expose. This is different from Hutcheon's paradox of the postmodern; King's cultural assertions are not solely meditations on the societal power structures that make meaning. King, politically, saves his ironic questioning for the white side of his asserted binary.

The most important result of the supernatural Indians' mission, Lionel's self-assertion as a Blackfoot, is a slap in the face of D. C. Scott. Lionel stands up for native, not western, history in the form of the pan-native Sun Dance. Latisha's ex-husband George (who is importantly white) returns to the Sun Dance, hoping to use his family connection to get photographs for a magazine piece. Photographs are not permitted and in a repeated scene the film is not allowed to leave (*Green Grass* 140). The first time it was Eli's uncle Orville who insisted on having the film. Lionel's coming of age, at the Sun Dance on his fortieth birthday, comes in the form of this repeated cultural assertion. It takes George's assault on his culture, like D. C. Scott's outlawing of this important ceremony, to awaken Lionel to its importance. These particular incidents in a particular native history are shown to be crucial to a sense of community, and in line with Attwell's description of situational metafiction.

The cultural importance of the pan-native Sun Dance to the Blackfoot community is a theme reiterated throughout the novel and in King's other works, such as *Medicine*

River. Norma encourages Lionel to attend, telling him that the Sun Dance “straightened [his uncle Eli] right out and he came home” (62). No longer banned, the performance of this ceremony is the most important event in the novel, a cultural assertion and a step away from the cultural assimilation advocated by D. C. Scott. Eli, like his nephew Lionel, got wrapped up in the white man’s world, and like Lionel, needs this tradition to remind him of the importance of his culture:

Best of all, Eli liked the men’s dancing. . . . Eli and the rest of the children would stand in a pack and wave pieces of scrap paper at the dancers as the men attacked and fell back, surged forward and retreated, until finally, after several of these mock forays, the lead dancer would breach the fortress of children and fire the rifle, and all of the children would fall down in a heap, laughing, full of fear and pleasure, the pieces of paper scattering across the land. (*Green Grass* 137)

In an act of ceremonial history, a Native American version of historical fiction is enacted; the children’s papers representing empty treaties of colonization. Eli Stands Alone returns home and moves into his Grandmother’s house below the new dam (a cultural monolith in concrete form), which violates Blackfoot treaty rights. Eli’s protest works, effectively stopping all development on Parliament Lake. However, Eli Stands Alone dies when the dam breaks, suggesting the price of resistance.

The importance/impotence of fighting for treaty rights is revisited in King’s story “Another Great Moment in Canadian Indian History” in *A Short History of Indians in Canada*. In this story, no large-scale solutions are forthcoming, and minor victories are

hard won and depressing in their relative insignificance. The battle in this story is won, not through an appeal to justice, but by a disruption of tourism in Victoria with the tribe using existent racism in their favor. This ironic and defeated tone is emblematic of King's work. In *Coyote Kills John Wayne: Postmodernism and Contemporary Fictions of the Transcultural Frontier*, Smith misses the ultimate point that there is no "radical ungrounding" created by King's supernatural historiography (74). Cox is also mistaken in his assertion that the conclusion of *Green Grass, Running Water* "emphasizes regeneration" (239). King's fictions repeatedly assert the opposite; that changes are difficult even on an individual level. While successful on a small scale, King's four Indians admit it is a slow process righting the wrongs of colonization and rangers that persist with the illusion of being alone in a new world. Setting things straight in "Indian History" and the impossibility of doing so is the leitmotif of King's body of work, which is also the central theme of *Truth and Bright Water*.⁹¹ King's concern is the rectification of native history, and as he seems to realize, this is confined to small local efforts, like those of the four old Indians, Monroe, or Owen Alland's standoff for hunting rights. This emphasis on the particular and local again fits Hutcheon's prescription for historiographic metafiction, but again its message does not participate in an anti-totalizing ideology. Hutcheon claims there is "no dialectic" in historiographic metafiction, but the dialectic here is clear. The tone is of defeated but stubborn nationalism: King's pessimistic injunction is to stick together against the oppressors, and to make the best of a battle

⁹¹ Monroe in *Truth and Bright Water* uses his art to make symbolic gestures: he buys an old church and makes it vanish by painting it into the landscape (we are told it happens); he makes buffalo statues and places them on the prairies, and paints Natives into famous early landscapes of North America. His final effort is to return the bones of his people, stored in a museum, back to tribal land.

already lost.

In the preface to King's 1983 interview with N. Scott Momaday, King quotes Momaday's seminal Native American novel, *House Made of Dawn*, concerning the Pueblo response to the Spanish: "They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting," to which King adds: "Momaday's description of this resistance, this 'outwaiting' provides a key to understanding the Indian world. It is a notion that is well understood by Indian people" (Momaday, "Interview" 67). This "outwaiting" is not described any further, other than to say it is well understood by Indian people. Perhaps this comment sheds light on King's use of Cherokee in the novel, excluding the majority of the reading public from his message. Acclaimed Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o made a similar move when he decided he would no longer write in English, excluding most of his former reading audience. Perhaps, for both, cultural exclusion *is* the message.

After the supernatural Indians have killed John Wayne and Richard Widmark, and taught Lionel how to assert himself, the ultimate message is bleak:

"Well, grandson," said the Lone Ranger, "that's about as much as we do for you. . . ."

"Fixing up the world is hard work," said Ishmael.

"Even fixing up the little things is tough," said Robinson Crusoe. (387)

These sentiments are echoed in *The Truth about Stories*. In speaking of a fellow native novelist's suicide, King writes: "And we were both hopeful pessimists. That is we wrote

knowing that none of the stories we wrote would change the world. But we wrote in the hope that they would" (92). King's stories *do* change the world: they resonate politically through the Native American community. The assertion that fired the young Caledonia protestor's imagination, the assertion that came from King, is that Canada is natives' land. While this argument can be made, it only serves to exacerbate an internecine binary. The settlers are not leaving and neither are the natives. Reconciliation involves compromise on both sides. King's words do have influence—his work extends his idea of community, when he isn't advocating an eye for an eye. However, anger and defeat are palpable in all of King's novels.

An important question hangs over the assumptions of *Green Grass, Running Water* and many parallel projects of historiographic metafiction. If all history is story, how is one to know when it is "fixed?" Is the Native American version not the "right" version, but just another version? The same question is well applied to Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Both novels are polemic situational metafiction—where history is either fluid or real, depending on whether it fits the author's moral underlay. A past of oppression does not make one right, but it often creates an illusion of critical distance, both in authors and theorists. In this thesis, this illusion is more the rule than the exception.⁹² In his anger toward cultural stereotypes, King, like Carey, perpetuates stereotypes of his own. Davidson, Walton, and Andrews suggest that King's comic style causes his work to "avoid the polemics that often mark cultural critiques" (3). These

⁹² The exceptions within this thesis: Coetzee is blatantly critical of his own settler tradition, Zakes Mda is critical of Xhosa and settler tradition in South Africa, Alistair MacLeod is critical of the Cape Breton Highlanders, but ultimately ennobles their cultural aesthetic.

“polemics” are simply masked; they are not “avoided.”

Cultural mythology consists of the stories that cultures tell themselves— part history, part tall tale. Cultural myths have predictable qualities: one of these being the preservation and validation of the present status quo by its participants. King, like Rushdie, is eager to take on the proponents of mental colonization, but the historical pitfalls of Negritude (the reassertion of an internecine binary) have emerging parallels in Native American literature. King chooses to mount a one-sided attack on the largely white culture he and all Native Americans must deal with daily, which reinforces a destructive binary of mutual cultural exclusion. King presents very few positive white figures in his novels; there are none in *Green Grass* and arguably only one in his entire body of fiction.⁹³ King’s native women are stereotypically strong, caring, and smart— whereas his white men are weak, vain, and ignorant of larger causes.⁹⁴ Lionel suffers from this “white man’s disease” and it is up to the pan North American native community to set him straight. King does not seem to realize that positive stereotypes can be just as damaging as negative ones. His works use both. This aspect of King’s writing may further ghettoize Native peoples, pointing the finger and fuelling resentment without suggesting ways to proceed. While this lack of vision does not invalidate King’s perceptive critique of Western Society, and the stories it tells itself, he fails to move

⁹³ Having searched all of King’s oeuvre for an example of a positive portrayal of a white man I have come to the conclusion that Joe the Painter, from “Joe the Painter and the Deer Island Massacre” (from *One Good Story, That One*) is the only white male depicted by King in any detail who is not initially avaricious, self-involved and utterly inconsiderate toward Native Americans. This repeated choice of characterization demonstrates a clear dialectic of indigene vs. settler.

⁹⁴ Thankfully for King’s readers, his native men have the strengths and failing of regular human beings.

beyond an internecine cultural binary.

Hutcheon claims that "postmodern fiction does not so much 'aspire to tell the truth' as much as to question *whose* truth gets told" (*Poetics* 123). Her model of postmodern writing attributes an ubiquitous critical distance to writers of historiographic metafiction. King's non-fictional collection *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative* suggests that this writer is not quite as decentered as he is expected to be as a writer of historiographic metafiction. He is more accurately a writer of situational metafiction. King's novel uses postmodern techniques to attack settler history, but his use of history is strikingly conventional and positional when it comes to his own cultural assertions. King's omniscient narrator tells Coyote "There are no truths. . . . Only stories" (*Green Grass* 391). This seeming objectivity belies the novel's metaphor of "fixing history," and the omniscient narrator's assertion to Coyote to: "Just get it right;" (348) the assertion of a "mistake" necessitates a "correct" and an "incorrect" version of history. Despite his clearly (almost obsessively) postmodern aesthetic, King asserts a clear nationalist ideology and is quite clear on certain "truths." It is only the history of the colonizer that receives his ironic postmodern treatment. The native version of Fort Marion and Wounded Knee are not meant to be questioned. Perhaps Hutcheon would argue that King's ideological assertion, his dialectic, is another paradox of postmodernism. I would disagree. The novels she describes as historiographic metafiction use the paradox of postmodernism to question the limits of historical knowledge and cultural metanarratives. That is not what is being questioned in *Green Grass*, *Running Water*. History is used directly to bolster a nationalist aesthetic. For Hutcheon, Historiographic metafiction such

as *The Satanic Verses* teaches us that “social meaning is historically constituted” (*Poetics* 15). The lesson of King’s nationalist assertions in a postmodern forum is that historiographic fiction is not immune to dialectic, and despite sharing a complex aesthetic it does not automatically share the same “anti-totalizing” goals as the works focused on by Hutcheon. Furthermore, novels written within this postmodern aesthetic are able to hide their nationalist assertions, simply because they are not *supposed* to be there. *Green Grass, Running Water* presents an opportunity to expand the presently limiting definition of the postmodern novel as simply historiographic metafiction, and the poetics of postmodernism that Hutcheon has begun. This is undertaken through the application of Attwell’s concept of situational metafiction to the postcolonial novel. There *is* dialectic in the postcolonial use of this postmodern aesthetic, and the situational metafiction of the settler nations provide a portal into this aspect of postmodern/postcolonial writing.

Chapter Six:

Benang: The Interrogation of A. O. Neville

Although in its acknowledgements, Kim Scott's *Benang: from the Heart* is admitted to be "a work of fiction" (499), this work of situational metafiction relies heavily on a skeleton of historical "facts," including the author's own family history. While the official and accepted histories of Australia are taken to task in postmodern fashion for their "totalizing" assumptions, other "facts" are brought to surface, used as evidence, indicting the white settler history of Australia. This new history is a story from the perspective of a part-Aboriginal man, who like the author and many of his mixed-race family members, had their origins hidden from them by their own people. *Benang: from the Heart* is a postcolonial project of reclamation: a novel that asserts the position of the modern Aborigine in Australia through its presentation of history from both Western and Aboriginal perspectives.

The main target of this novel is the historical A. O. Neville, the chief protector of Aborigines from 1915-1936 (at which time he became Commissioner for Native Affairs) and the white supremacist mythology that he asserted in his position. Neville's 1947 book *Australia's Coloured Minority: Their Place in our Community* is described by Scott as "a continual—albeit perverse—source of inspiration" (499). Neville is directly quoted twelve times, and is a perpetual figure in the novel, looming over the narrative as a menacing presence. The section "the first white man born" refers to Neville's theories of selective breeding; a way of eradicating the "Aboriginal stain," the popular analogy of the time being "that of a small stream of dirty water entering a larger clear stream. Eventually

the colour of the smaller is lost" (3). This passage is quoted by Scott from the *Daily News*, 3 October, 1933. Neville's words preface the second section, already heavy with historical reference, with the words: "As I see it, what we have to do is uplift and elevate these people to our own plane" (*Benang* 13).

This idea of uplifting is Scott's central metaphor in *Benang: from the Heart*. The main character, Harley, (whose white Grandfather was a disciple of Neville's theories) has been "uplifted" by his grandfather, Ernest, to such a degree that he does not know his identity. Harley's loss of contact with his history is represented metaphorically by his propensity to float up in the air, no longer rooted to the solid earth, which importantly, his Nyoongar people regard as a sacred ability. Scott's narrative style, which is often labelled as magic realism, encourages identification of *Benang* as historiographic metafiction. The novel's intense self-reflexivity and intertextuality also encourage this identification. This chapter will show, through an examination of the author's use of history, the specific dialectic addressed and the position asserted by *Benang*, which is accurately defined as situational metafiction.

Neville's theories of "uplifting" are well-documented by C. D. Rowley's books *Outcasts in White Australia* and *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, which appear, along with Neville's own book, to have been a major source for Scott's research. Rowley's work documents the theory and practice of Aboriginal "protection" during Neville's time in power:

Neville . . . stated that eventual assimilation of the Aboriginal population was the policy objective of his government. He clearly equated

assimilation with absorption through intermarriage, and quoted the Anthropological Board of Adelaide and Dr. R. Cilento as authorities for the view that the Aboriginal not being “negroid” there would be no “atavism”. . . . He was confident that if he could get control of children from the age of six years for training and education he could deal with the problem, which was not a native one, but a financial one. At the level of stock-breeding, perhaps only at such a level, it was possible to bureaucratised the complicated issues of social change. Thus Neville expressed the intention to prevent marriages of part-Aborigines with Aborigines. (*Destruction* 321)

Neville’s state sanctioned “control of the [mixed race] children” was one of the key elements focused upon in Rowley’s work, and it is the subject of the book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* by Nugi Garimara. This story was made more familiar to North American audiences by Phillip Noyce’s 2002 film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* where the lead role, A. O. Neville, is played by Kenneth Branagh. Both narratives address the escape of three of these “mixed race” children, who did not wish to be “uplifted.”

Benang: from the Heart addresses many of the same places as *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, but is more properly a genealogy of the Benang family of the Nyoongar people; a genealogy that had to fight for its life against the real life Auber Neville and his theories put to practice: “Raised to carry on one heritage, and ignore another, I found myself wishing to reverse that upbringing, not only for the sake of my own children, but also for my ancestors, and for their children in turn” (*Benang* 21). Where Scott uses documented

history and ironic metaphor to challenge the settler past, his narrative techniques fit cleanly into Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction, but this novel, like all the others focused on in this study, use a postmodern aesthetic to postcolonial and specific political ends. As Lisa Slater suggests in her paper: "Kim Scott's *Benang: An Ethics of Uncertainty*" "One cannot speak out against colonialism and racism without entering into a historical and cultural dialogue that in turn positions and limits one as a particular subject" (149).

In this situational metafiction (contiguous to a problematizing process) there are real historical referents used to support a specific message. Scott's interrogation of Neville and his imperial theories can be seen as "anti-totalizing." This interrogation is undertaken, however, for a stated purpose—for the author to reclaim his own identity. Once again, a dialectic beyond that of a statement of "anti-totalization" is found in what appears to be the historiographic metafiction of the settler nations. *Benang: from the Heart* provides another strong example of how postcolonialism informs postmodernism, and how Hutcheon's category of historiographic metafiction is importantly and necessarily refined by Attwell's construct of situational metafiction. Unlike the situational metafiction of Carey, Shadbolt, and King, Scott's presentation of a dialectic (like that of Mda, Coetzee, and Johnston) attempts a balanced outlook in its project of reconciliation, instead of reasserting an internecine nationalist binary.

A 1929 Aboriginals Affairs Report by Neville makes his policy clear:

policy is to check as far as possible the breeding of half-castes, by firmly discouraging miscegenation. Every effort is made to encourage the

marriage of those *now with us* [italics mine] to people of their own [white] race . . . the cross breed element provides the most difficult part of the “Aboriginal” problem, as what they inherit of the superior intelligence and tastes of the whites is generally nullified by the retarding instincts of the blacks. (*Outcasts* 14)

While it is comforting to think of Neville as an aberration of his society, Rowley discourages such a scapegoating impulse:

These principles, taken from stock breeding, were not simply the wishful thinking of a handful of white supremacists, but represented a common strain of thought in Australian politics of this period. An Aboriginal affairs department had some of the advantages of the armed forces in that its expressed aim (of getting rid of the Aboriginal “problem”) appealed to prejudices so deep-seated that it was comparatively easy for it to avoid any drastic re-thinking of the need for its work. It probably contributed, in each state, as much to the “problems” it was ostensibly solving as any other single factor. (*Outcasts* 8)

The extent to which Aborigines were treated like actual vermin has only recently been exposed. This exposure has re-energized the indigene/settler dialectic in Australia, and created a public debate referred to as the “History Wars,” discussed in chapter one.

The exposure of Neville and the ideas he represented is Scott’s postcolonial project. As Slater writes in “*Benang, This ‘Most Local of Histories’*”:

Scott suggests that the widespread acceptance by settlers of the assimilation of Indigenous people into white, mainstream society as a form of “care and protection” blinded (and arguably still does) settler Australia to the violence it was perpetrating. (52)

Not only has this mythology of “care and protection” maintained an illusion, it has led to a right-wing backlash with works such as Keith Windschuttle’s *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* a book that argues that the “new histories” are purely left-wing inventions. While this chapter does not deal explicitly with Australia’s “History Wars” the idea of “whose history?” is central to this chapter and thesis. In Australia, there is no question that this novel is asserting a particular side of a dialectic. Scott, unlike *Windshuttle*, attempts balance in his portrayal—considering the less than admirable historical actions on *both* sides of the settler/indigene dialectic.

Among these less admirable actions would be Auber Neville’s efforts to stem the Aboriginal population’s growth through the establishment of draconian laws. At the 1937 Conference of Commonwealth and State administrators the panel observed: “that part-Aborigines were developing a tendency to marry within the part-Aboriginal group, and, without some special pressures, were likely to increase rather than conveniently disappear into white Australia” (*Outcasts* 16). This conference made “carnal knowledge of an Aboriginal woman by other than an [full blooded] Aborigine an offence in 1939” (*Outcasts* 18). *Benang: from the Heart* brings to life the horror his people felt for their “Aboriginal Protector.” These new laws further marginalized the Aborigines to a position in society where they were bound to encounter violence from an intolerant white

majority. Aborigines could not own their own land, work in the towns, or even travel from place to place without a pass; a hangover from the policies of former Australian governor Sir George Grey, whose pass laws survived in South Africa (where he was later governor) until the fall of Apartheid. Scott's fictionalization of this period shows how all of these laws played out within a particularized context; the blood and land line of the Benang clan.

Harley's white grandfather, Ernest Soloman Scat, is an historian in the settler tradition. He is also a pedophile, and his portrayal suggests that many used the barely human legal status of Aborigines for their own sexual gratification. This rape is a metaphor for the "rape" of Aboriginal history by the proponents of empire.⁹⁵ At the novel's outset, Ernest has suffered a stroke, and Harley, after a childhood of abuse, has found Ern's papers. In his documents, Harley discovers that his own heritage has been hidden from him all his life, and that he is meant to be the first to leave "the dirty stream." Harley was his Grandfather's experiment, his "first white man born" from Aboriginal stock. Harley, now his grandfather's guardian, has reversed the power structure of the indigene/settler dialectic—a microcosm of Aboriginal anger of past injustice. He admits to having tortured Ern, both mentally and physically for the abuse he has suffered at his racist Grandfather hands.

The worst torture for Ernest is that Harley did not confirm Neville's theories and that Harley's "Aboriginal stain" has not been washed away:

⁹⁵ This rape is a synecdochical representation that has a strong parallel with the works of J. M. Coetzee, see page 80.

I want to stress that I am not proud of my behaviour, but nor can I deny that I was very angry. Angry with my grandfather, his rigour, his scientific method, his opportunism, his lust. And so I am reluctant to begin with my grandfather, as if all I can do is react to him and his plans, as if I have nothing else.

But even if that were true, is it such a bad thing to begin with anger and resistance? (*Benang* 31)

Scott perceptively identifies and represents the problem in metaphoric fashion, of indigenous peoples writing back at their oppressors. He obliquely references Njabulo Ndebele's idea of indigenous writing moving beyond a binary obsession with the white other to focus on the "psychologically self-sufficient community" of the oppressed (73). He does not want to simply "lash back," but is unable to completely control his desire to do so, digging his words literally into his oppressor. Scott does not completely disown violence, pointing out that anger and resistance are a "beginning." However, he does not content himself with anger, but works with what he sees as historical rectification as his form of positional postcolonial resistance.

The indigene/settler binary is complicated by Harley's complex ancestry, beginning with his grandfather stepping off the boat in Australia:

So who was Ernest Solomon Scat? A Scotsman, with a trade and education enough to pass himself off as a clerk. The youngest in his family, he understood the necessity to make his own fortune, and how

patience and information would help him do so. He needed to prove his superiority, and trusted no one. (*Benang* 46)

The parallel with Calum Ruadh of *No Great Mischief*, the Scotsman stepping off the boat in Canada, is interesting. Scott's Ern can be seen as a foil to MacLeod's Calum, the dirty underbelly of settler history in the new colonies. Ernest, upon arrival, seeks work with his only connection in the new country, "his distant relation Mr. A. O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, no less . . ." (*Benang* 39). Neville, arrogant and self-important, reluctantly helps his relative. Neville has Ern investigate Sandy One Mason, the mixed-race patriarch of the Benang clan. Ern is influenced and inspired by Neville's theories, and begins his own research. He takes a pretty mixed-race wife from the Benang clan to start to route the "dirty stream" into the clean white river. It is soon clear that Ern's interest in the attractive and vulnerable mixed-race women comes from a sense of power and mastery over them; one that he was not able to achieve in the world of white men.⁹⁶

By having his Grandfather related to Neville, the author makes Harley doubly implicated by his ancestry. Harley, after he has done his own research, is clear on the ancestry he wishes to espouse and which to deny; a reversal of the attempt of both part-Aboriginal and white in early Australia to renounce Aboriginal blood at all costs: "My true ancestors, those of my blood-and-land line, the women I must call Harriette and Fanny . . ." (*Benang* 51). In proclaiming his "true ancestors," Harley is publicly renouncing his white ancestors, which was the very thing many of his blood-and-land line ancestors (his Uncle Will is a repeated example) did to their own "blood-and-land" line.

⁹⁶ There is an interesting parallel here with David Lurie's interest in mixed race women in Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*.

The novel moves through and beyond a “problematizing” of the imperial history and white settler mythos of Australia. *Benang: from the Heart* represents a clear act of genealogical reclamation and is a particular assertion of Aboriginal nationalism—the history that is asserted in place of the Imperial history, is not subjected to the same postmodern problematization. This is a key factor in defining the situational metafiction of the settler nations, this bifurcated form, which I refer to as *problematizing from a position*.

Jack Chatalong is Harley’s uncle and role model, a half-caste⁹⁷ who, like Sandy One Mason, plays the white man’s game in order to overcome its rules. Jack writes a letter to A. O. Neville, in order to get out from under the ironically named Aboriginal Protection Act, which made one closely analogous to an untouchable in the Hindu caste system: “From the first Act in 1897 there had been provision for exemption of individual *half-castes* from its operations: but ‘only a minority can be safely trusted to manage their own affairs’; and in 1929 he had exempted only twenty-nine” (*Outcasts* 14). *Benang: from the Heart* dramatizes the painful but understandable attempts of Chatalong to get himself classified as white, showing how the government had economically turned successful half-castes against their own people by punishing them for being Aboriginal. As Rowley describes: “What mainly happened was a tendency, when it suited the administrator, to deny special assistance to a person who was of ‘light caste’” (*Outcasts* 12). Scott, who seems to have read and drawn from this particular report, fictionalizes a

⁹⁷ As with American slaves, the exact degree of mixture in the subaltern Aborigine had significant ramifications for their status.

manifestation of this policy, in the form of a letter to Auber Neville from Harley's Uncle Jack:

Gebalup October 26, 1929

The Chief Protector of Aborigines

Dear Sir,

In regards of the Aborigines Act has it I am a half-caste and I Don't mix up with the Blacks and I work Hard and Earn a living the same as a white man would my mother was a black woman and my father was a white man and I can Read and write But I have now Been barred from going Into a Pub and having a drink because I have got no permit so Could you do any thing in the way of granting me a certificate of exemption.

Yours Faithfully,

Jack Chatalong. (*Benang* 64)

The "denial of special assistance" is exactly what happens to Jack's application for a certificate of exemption. In the end he meets all the criteria for this certificate, but Neville denies him, on the rumour that Jack has been known to visit his black relatives. While this episode is invented, the following actual letter of the same nature evinces a clear understanding on the part of Scott, of the machinations of "Aboriginal Protection."

Here a mixed-race man, in a letter to the department, eloquently expresses the injustice of his own situation and that of many others:

Is it that they want to pass a law to say we half-castes, whether we are 90 percent white blood . . . living in a position as good as many white people,

are still aborigines, and are still on the same footing as those on the fringe of civilization? If we are law-abiding and are getting an honest living, are we not British subjects? I think we are entitled to citizenship . . . the plight of the half-caste today is due to this department. They have taken charge of the half-caste aborigines for the last 29 years or so, and what have they done for us? The result is: "You are a good dog, but keep in your kennel." Now the Chief Protector wants guardianship over all our children, whether born in wedlock or not. Our children are our most sacred rights. We are all married in churches. It seems the . . . Department wants to take charge of all their earnings and to make sure they will be serfs for the State. (*Outcasts* 24)

Neville often exercised his own judgment on the inhuman exceptions policy believing the end justified the means and that "ultimately the natives must be absorbed into the white population of Australia," he also repeatedly complained that missionaries "allow the half-castes under their control to marry anybody" (*Outcasts* 27).

While Rowley provides enough information to thoroughly indict Neville on humanitarian grounds, he, like Scott, sees Neville as a manifestation of a larger delusion, a group of opportunists who did not have the stomach for the implications of their own actions. This settler narrative of "aboriginal protection" was a group convincing itself that it was doing "the right thing." The problem was and is much larger than Neville. On the introduction of official corporal punishment, Rowley notes: "It is to Neville's credit that he spoke very strongly against this and that he admitted the earlier practice of 'unmerciful

flogging' in Western Australia, and in practice" (*Destruction* 328). He also objected to the "making of a man who murdered someone into a tracker of his own kind" (*Destruction* 201). Rowley, like Scott, discourages the comforting notion that Neville's ideas and actions were aberrations. These were mainstream ideas accepted by the status quo, and Neville was widely seen as a "protector." Scott's novel, like King's indictment of D. C. Scott in *Green Grass, Running Water*, takes effective issue with the imperial idea of benevolence toward the aboriginal populations of the settler nations.

One of Neville's workers, James Segal describes a widely held view of Aboriginals in the last century:

The settlements . . . give the natives a chance. They're a Child Race. It's our duty to train them for Useful Work, and keep them from harm, from causing harm. They can be an Embarrassment . . . an ideal camp is near enough to town to allow the *natives* to call for rations when they are indigent, to come under surveillance . . . and to provide a ready labour force when necessary. However, it must always be far enough from white habitations to avoid complaints and to discourage unwelcome visits by white men. (*Benang* 47)

This principle of settlement is based on the ideas of Sir George Grey and is an example of a phenomenon of segregation that pervaded and still pervades the settler nations: parallels in South Africa (Soweto) and Canada (Halifax's Africville) show an imperial ideology behind these acts of protection. After slavery had been abolished by England in 1820 the accepted attitude to indigenous or non-white peoples became: "We want their labour, but

we don't want them around." Shantytowns are designed to provide a subaltern workforce that goes away at the end of the day. Scott is not willing, like so many of his people, to forget these past injustices and their enduring legacy.

However, Scott's work is more considered and sophisticated than a simple indictment of colonial oppression.⁹⁸ South African writer Ndebele states in his essay "Guilt and Atonement" that "it is crucial at this point that the past be seen as a legitimate point of departure for talking about the challenges of the present and the future" (155). One of the most impressive aspects of works such as *Benang: from the Heart* is the attempt to avoid bias: writers like Scott and Mda are not blind to the role of indigenous peoples in the oppression of indigenous peoples. When some of the children of the Benang clan are caught and taken to the government schools, a psychology of inferiority and acceptance is pushed onto the children: "A girl returns to class with her head shaved, wearing a sack for a dress. Those who quietly snicker nevertheless suffer with her. Because you never knew. It might be you" (*Benang* 94). The laughter here is particularly sinister, as it admits an acceptance of the rules of the oppressors or as Scott describes later in the novel: "how we have conspired in our own eradication" (100). Mda's *The Heart of Redness* elaborates on the culture of collaboration by showing the Xhosa who linked themselves to the colonial oppressors in order to become the new oppressors, a phenomenon first exposed by Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Scott, like Ndebele and Mda, understands the failings of reasserting a "rhetoric of blame," as Said has called this phenomenon, and is careful to avoid making the same mistakes as those he interrogates.

⁹⁸ This reassertion of an internecine binary was the tactic of Mudrooroo, who was disgraced in the late nineties when it was revealed that this "godfather of Aboriginal writing" was not Aboriginal but African.

While this attempt at balance is admirable in an oppressed subject, it does not nullify the clear positionality of Scott's nationalist message—a message of reclamation and assertion.

In an official report of a visit to a native settlement, Harley prefaces the simple-minded sanctimonious writing with these words: "I laugh at some of the reports of the visitors to the settlement, just as some would have at the time" (95). This is an important qualifier: writers such as King and Mudrooroo do not qualify their criticism of "whites;" thereby leaving their works open to monolithic exclusionary interpretations—reasserting the internecine binary. Scott tries to show both sides. What follows is an account of the "joys" of seeing the effects of white benevolence on a "savage" people concluding with the rhetoric of Empire: "*Segregation is the only thing for the Aborigines. But let their segregation be Christian, and the natives taught to be useful . . .*" (96). Harley ironizes with these sentiments, by confessing that he used to tell Ern, while he tortured him: "I do hope I'm being useful" (96). Scott admits the anger and the desire for revenge in his character. He does however, not condone it as the works of Sherman Alexie (*Indian Killer*) and King (*Green Grass, Running Water*) imply. These native nationalist works reassert the internecine binaries with which they are ostensibly taking issue. *Benang: from the Heart* is more discerning in its politics.

Scott is careful to point out exceptions to the rule of Aboriginal oppression:

Following branches of my family tree, I discovered a series of white men who—because they married Nyoongar women and claimed their children—were exceptional. . . .

My family, my people, we have done such things. Shown such shame
and self-hatred. It is hard to think what I share with them, how we have
conspired in our own eradication. (*Benang* 99-100)

These two examples, problematizing a history of white oppression and interrogating
aboriginal complicity, demonstrate an unwillingness to make monolithic assertions. Scott
prefers to make his stand from a particularized position, but in the assertion of this
position does not become blinded by exclusionary nationalism.

Harley's uncle Jack Chatalong witnesses Harley's act of metaphoric
deconstruction, another strong postmodern signpost for those inclined to search and
categorize. Harley has gone through all of Ern's "research" and reorganized it to show its
oppressive nature. He is also, simultaneously, as his invalid Grandfather watches,
destroying the entire house in which he was raised by his abusive grandfather. When his
uncles show up to see him, he is half-mad and floating at the ceiling. Jack is not so much
shocked as annoyed. Admitting that: "Old Ern. . . . He's a bastard all right" (113). Jack
tries to impress upon Harley not to fall into the trap of an eye for an eye: "But, you know
. . . You're not like him, eh?" (113). Jack presents Harley and the reader with an
alternative to revenge: reconciliation. "I showed them the photos, and Uncle Jack was
angry. 'Yeah, well this is just to make you sad, reading and looking at things like this. It's
just a wadjela (white) way of thinking, this is. You should just relax, feel it. You gotta go
right back, ask your spirits for help'" (113). This is a turning point in the novel, where
Jack, Will, and Harley go to the places of their ancestors. Ern is also pointedly forced into
the expedition. Jack teaches Harley and Ern an aboriginal approach to history. It is a

learning experience for all of them. Like King, Scott advocates an understanding of history and tradition as a remedy to the ongoing ills of colonial oppression. Scott, however, is able to do this without reasserting the same exclusionary binary.

Uncle Will, who had petitioned to have his mixed race uncle listed among the “pioneers” of Gebalup, is also affected by this interrogation of the past. As he recalls the injustices of the past, being separated from his darker cousins, seeing townspeople laughing at his sick uncle in the street he admits: “I hate myself, know that?” (145). He remembers a rare occurrence of standing up and defending his uncle Sandy: “I should have been like that more often, more angry” (145). How to deal with the anger towards a past of oppression is one of the major considerations of this novel. Harley’s torturing of Ern is pointedly arrested by Jack and Uncle Will, but Harley still does not know where he stands (or floats):

In fact, I felt very insecure. I didn’t know who to trust. After all, I remembered what my father had told me of Uncle Will, how he had been kept right away from even his own mother.

I knew I had been uplifted. I knew I’d been ill. But what about these old men, how did they see themselves, how did they see me? And how could they be so, so . . . So kind to Ern. So kind. They knew how he was surely. I could not bring myself to tell them what I knew about him.

(Benang 147)

As it turns out, they already knew. Like Scott, Jack is willing to forgive, but not to forget. Jack Chatalong represents a middle road, a balanced look at where his people have come

from and where they have gone. He wants to be clear about the past, but feels revenge is not a way forward.

As Slater suggests: "Harley's special effect is not only his 'propensity for elevation,' which satirizes and laments the colonial regime's project to *raise the native up*, but also importantly the *unhealthy* subject that this has produced" ("Kim Scott's" 150). In this focus, Scott's novel again bears a strong resemblance to King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, there being a useful parallel between Harley and Lionel, both of whom are suffering a similar cultural "unhealthiness." Like Harley, Lionel needs to be taught how to express his indigeneity, in order to become healthy again. And like Lionel, community combined with tradition, is what will make him healthy again. Jack takes Harley, Ern and Will on a journey to get in touch with their traditions. As they travel ancestral lands on highways he comments: "'The main roads follow a traditional run. . . .' 'And you know, we showed all those white blokes.' He looked at Uncle Will. 'Your father, he was shown by your mother, and her mother. And there you were wanting to be a pioneer'" (*Benang* 167). Jack mocks Will's complicity with the mentality of colonization, and feels that it is important to admit what has happened. Harley still sees the past in the present of Uncle Will: "I thought of how Uncle Will walked. Proudly, cautiously; like one provisionally uplifted, whose toes barley gripped the earth" (168). The complex psychology of this character, at once hating himself and proud to be a "settler" of his own ancestral lands, is shown to be a difficult problem. It is also a problem that is addressed, in its very depiction.

Jack is dismissive of Harley's assumptions of book knowledge; his point being that the writers have shown repeatedly they cannot be trusted. This message is ostensibly postmodern, but ultimately reinforces a particular moral political position, that of Aboriginal nationalism. Harley's metaphoric floating (pointedly "envied" by Uncle Will) is seen by Jack as avoidance. One day he reels Harley in from the sky like a flying fish:

He snorted. "You fuckin' silly little shit. What? You kartwarra [crazy], that it? You're something special, you know." He was insistent and angry. "I tell you you gotta go right back, you got something special there coming out. I can see where you come from all right. You gotta give away that reading and all those papers for a while." (*Benang* 166)

Tradition is clearly asserted by Jack, the textual irony being that it is asserted within the tradition with which Jack takes issue. The use of a western form to convey aboriginal ideas is a complex issue, and Scott does not shy away from representing this problem. His use of magic realism, like King's use of the Native American trickster, is an assertion of aboriginal tradition on a modern form—a pointed and positional way of attacking a cultural metanarrative with an alternative narrative.

However, it is still a question how such a move will be perceived by the aboriginal communities of these authors. The fact that Jack qualifies giving up reading with "for a while" shows he is willing to use the form (novel) and language (English) of the settler/invasor to an end beneficial to the Aboriginal people of Australia. The tired charge of postcolonial complicity would use the logic that indigenous people *should* fight

with spears against warplanes in order to be culturally authentic. Furthermore, the imposition of cultural authenticity is often exposed as a tactic of continuing ghettoization of the subaltern, a deep-seated problem about which many well-meaning theorists remain oblivious. Scott, through Jack, shows an understanding of culture in flux, and of using the weapons at one's disposal.

The rejection of western civilization is persistent in Jack. On their travels, Harley quotes a statistic from his Grandfather's papers about a mass killing of their Nyoongar people. To his figure of eighteen and the "permit for it" Jack "snorts." "More than that, they killed just about everyone around here. Most Nyoongars still won't come here, just wind up the windows and drive right through Gebalup" (*Benang* 177). Harley starts to see the reasons for Jack's rejection of "history." Ern manages to say a few words while they sit around the fire, and explains to Harley how he is disconnected permanently from his "dying" tradition. "His words cut deep. I had inherited his language, the voices of others, his stories. That history whose descendants write: *There was never any trouble. Never blood spilled, or a gun raised in anger*" (185). To which Jack responds: "Don't need guns when you got poisoned flour, poisoned waterholes." "Even Uncle Will," the formerly aspiring pioneer of his ancestral homeland, admits this is "not right" (185). These talks take on the status of a project of reclamation: "We used to yarn all night, then, me and the three old men. Well, it was Uncle Will and Uncle Jack, in their different ways, and me and Ern listening. Ern must've been learning the whole time. I know I was" (*Benang* 191). The reader is also immersed in this learning process, alongside an elitist settler and a reluctant Aboriginal. Importantly, the reader observes that there is a "wrong"

history and a “right” history, according to this author. The “wrong” history, for Scott, is that of Auber Neville.

The following quotation, attributed to A. O. Neville, prefaces a chapter entitled “mirrors.” Harley becomes obsessed with mirrors, looking for signs of his ancestry. He is afraid that Neville’s plan to erase his history may have been too successful to overcome:

Our policy is to send them into the white community, and if the girl comes back pregnant our rule is to keep her for two years. The child is then taken away from the mother and sometimes never sees her again. Thus these children grow up as whites, knowing nothing of their environment. At the expiration of the period of two years the mother goes back into service. So that it really doesn’t matter if she has half a dozen children. (*Benang* 159)

The frank tone of this narrative evinces the idea that Neville and his ilk believed they were doing a good thing.

Nugi Garimara also quotes Neville directly in her book *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence*, wherein the tale is told of her three aunts as children, who tried to return home, escaping from the very same Mogumber settlement that Harley’s uncle Jack is sent to. In one of these quoted (non-fictionalized) letters Neville states the following:

It’s a pity that these youngsters have gone “native,” but it cannot be helped. They were attractive children, and should have been brought in years ago. . . . This emphasizes the necessity for Police Officers to report the presence of half-caste children in the bush. (129)

It is easy to see in these circumstances how a situation such as Harley's (which we are certainly encouraged to believe is very similar to Scott's) would induce cultural amnesia. When Jack catches Harley in the mirror, obsessing about "traces of ancestors," he dispenses some tribal wisdom (which often metaphorically resembles logic): "You need to throw that away. . . . You know a mirror—or even if it's water—a mamari, a little devil man, he sees himself in it, that'll stop him. Make him think too much, dance around, not know what to do. It's not that different for some of us" (*Benang* 163). Aboriginal cosmology is asserted as a remedy for colonization and its ills. While some would accuse Scott of "reverting to tribalism" (see Norman Rush's indictment of Mda, discussed in chapter seven), the problem is much more complex than "all or nothing." There seems to be a need of some common denominator on which to build a new cultural identity from the scattered remains of a culture literally laid waste by colonization. Like Mda, King, and MacLeod, Scott stresses the importance of preserving culture for his community.

Uncle Will opens up in these campfire sessions, which become something like cultural therapy for the Nyoongars, and a forced education for Ern. In this process, Jack, who seems to speak for the author, is the therapist for all of them.

"I hate myself," he said. "I turned my back. I was the only one who could get away with it."

"Nah, Will, don't worry about it," Uncle Jack tried to reassure him. "We were all like that, I reckon. Had to be. I would've done the same. You're a bit fair. It was different. Don't worry about it." (296)

Here Jack perhaps recalls playing the fool for a group of white men on a "spree." In that case, and in Will's, there was little choice. His work of reconciliation is to force recognition of the past. Jack is impatient with Will's pioneer pretensions, but forgiving of his need to survive within a white-dominated society. Silence, for Jack, is death. His message to a damaged people resonates with that of Nelson Mandela in a post-Apartheid South Africa, the essence of which is to forgive, but not to forget. The forgiving of one's self is one of the more difficult tasks for Harley, Jack, and Will. We do not see that Ern asks this forgiveness.

As a child Jack showed the qualities of the storyteller, which have been emulated by Harley in his taking on the role of the scribe, or the tribal historian: "It was just that he spoke as quickly as he thought and, having picked up so many strange bits and pieces of stories in his short life, understood that the only way they could be connected was by his utterances" (*Benang* 252). In his dual role of scribe/historian, Jack wants to assert an aboriginal version of the history of Australian colonization:

"Sometimes," Uncle Will or Uncle Jack told me, "Fanny talked about those islands. They used to take our people out there." So it must've been Uncle Jack talking, because Uncle Will never talked that way. "They took people out to the islands and left them. They were places of the dead. Some of our spirit is out there now." (263)

Jack becomes Harley's model as a storyteller; he, like Scott, must struggle to express the tension between two often opposing traditions.

Scott is not the first to approach the history of Australian colonization through situational metafiction. The myth of “Aboriginal protection” is well-represented in modern Australian situational metafiction both by aboriginal and non-aboriginal authors. Both Robert Drewe’s *The Savage Crows* and Mudrooroo’s *Dr Wooreddy’s Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* take on George Augustus Robinson, the former Protector of Aborigines, as their protagonist. Both novels rely heavily on historical details (particularly Arthur’s own deluded journals) to depict the disastrous experiment of Flinder’s Island. Here Drewe quotes from Robinson’s journals an example of how George Grey’s “success” with the “degraded hottentot” could be applied to the Australian Aborigine. Importantly, Grey (who was also the governor of New Zealand and South Africa) figures significantly in several novels discussed in this study:

I submitted to the Governor [Grey] that just as the degraded Hottentot had been raised in the scale of beings and the denizens of the Societies Islands made an industrious and intelligent race, so might the inhabitants of His Excellency’s territory be instructed. (41)

One can see a very similar pattern of oppression in the settler nations emerging, often because of Sir George Grey’s far-reaching influence in these former colonies.

Importantly, Grey, like George Arthur, Auber Neville and Duncan Campbell Scott, was a manifestation of the political will of the time.

Like *Benang: from the Heart* both *The Savage Crows* and *Dr Wooreddy* rely heavily on documented historical details in their indictment of Aboriginal Protection. The

disastrous experiment of Flinder's Island is a crucial focus in both novels.⁹⁹ Mudrooroo's depiction parallels and seems to have drawn heavily from Drewe's novel. Without basis he decides to make George Arthur into a sexual predator. This polarizing tactic, a literary lashing out, is of questionable value, as not all white men were lustful and paedophilic. Scott takes pains to acknowledge this, as he does in this story of:

Sandy One's mother [who] was conceived in rape, born on an island,
and—snatched from her mother—was little more than a child when she
was thrown from a boat and into the arms of the convict shepherd who
walked her to Fredrickstown. A good white man, he schooled her and their
boy. (*Benang* 486)

This reference to a "good white man" is significant: it is the type of balanced presentation that one does not find in the works of Mudrooroo or King, whose works unfortunately reassert an internecine binary. Scott and his characters are interested in moving forward.

As Harley examines the two wedding certificates that marked his family's turn toward whiteness, he remarks: "I thought of all those the papers named, and of how little the ink could tell" (349). Ironically, Harley is using "ink" to reclaim the history obscured by ink. This certainly fits with a Hutcheonian "problematizing of historical knowledge," but the history that replaces the old one the "new ink" is meant to have some historical weight. History is not "problematized" to the point where there are no solid referents, as it is within Hutcheon's theorized anti-totalizing ideology of historiographic metafiction.

⁹⁹ On September 9th 1830, George Arthur passed on the order to his workers on Tasmania: "I want you to effect the voluntary removal of the entire black population. The Aborigines committee wants me to place every last one of them on Flinders Island" (Drewe 187).

Harley and Jack may not trust words absolutely, but they still use them to make their case, which contains a clear dialectic and a clear position within this dialectic.

Oral tradition is an important part of Harley's and Jack's project of reclamation, it is not storytellers and didgeridoos around the fire but modern aboriginals telling stories—stories that are considered to be true. Upon a chance meeting with Harley's aunts (Olive and Norma), the women quickly bring up Harley's father, Tom, who, like Will, had distanced himself from Nyoongar associations.

“Yeah, he was a Nyoongar all right,” said Olive. “A lot of his family thought they were too good for the rest of us.” She glanced at Uncle Will.

“Your people are from here, you know, but Jack would've told you that.”

She looked again at Uncle Will, as if expecting he might say something.

(Benang 366)

Here we see inter-tribal resentment. Some of it may be well placed. Uncle Will did petition to have his father listed as one of the original pioneers of Gebalup, but he never mentioned his mother (who showed his father the place of her ancestors), which is a fact Olive seems to know. Later, it is clear that he had never taken his own children (by a white wife) to see their own grandmother (381). Jack again shows that he is more interested in recognition than blame: “‘Now your father,’ said Uncle Jack, taking the initiative. ‘He lived with Harriette when he was little, didn’t he?’ He was asking me, he was asking Will, he was asking the women to contribute” (366). Jack sees Harley's anger destroying him, and has decided that anger does not do anything for anyone. Possibly, if all the anger were given vent, there would be too much with which to deal.

When the story of Harley's father, Tommy, came up around the campfire, Harley prefaces: "There were things I could not say around the campfires. I used to whisper such things to Ern, to let him know I knew. Remind him that he did too" (388). Tommy was sent to Sister Kate's, a school where part aboriginal children, mostly orphaned, were educated. In reality it was a pick-up spot for pedophiles. As Harley continues, we are meant to understand that this portion of the tale did not make it to the fire. "Tommy was alone with his uncles. . . . You understand why I did not want to talk to Uncle Will and Uncle Jack about this" (388). One outside the situation can only imagine how difficult something like this would be to admit, let alone forgive.

Understandably from his abused standpoint, Tommy turns his back on his ancestry and his son, Harley, whom he leaves with Ern, knowing the probable consequences. Harley, later on, in a search for his mother, encounters several possible mothers. One of these, Ellen, speaks of avoiding the "*Blackfellas*," and tells the abused Harley how much he owes his grandfather, Ern, for his education and lifestyle.

It is the sort of experience that made it very hard for me to look up family. To find each of them, almost without exception, forgetful. Some were boastful, some were frightened, and all of them only partially alive. I don't know how my father managed to do it. I understand why he kept himself apart from everybody. I understand, but it is not something you choose.

(*Benang* 397)

Harley leaves his "maybe mother" in wide-mouthed astonishment as he grabs the door handle to prevent his being "uplifted" into space. Harley replies to this forgetful

Nyoongar woman, who is an example of Aboriginal Australians who had conspired in their own eradication, that “this is the great gift of civilization.”

Harley states his goal explicitly, a goal that clearly resonates with the parallel project undertaken by the author: “Taking on my Grandfather’s words, trying to save us that way. Saving us because I thought I could read and write so well that I should be able to find my way out of even here” (*Benang* 428). “Here” is Harley’s limbo of identity, his “uplifted” state. However, writing has to be balanced with an understanding of Harley’s own Nyoongar culture and an acceptance of “what has happened”; a knowledge and acceptance of the history of colonization from the Aboriginal perspective.

After his father is killed in a car accident (and before Jack tries to help Harley find a way beyond revenge), Harley lashes out in anger at the invalid Ern:

At one stage, full of frustration and anger at my place in Grandad’s [*sic*] story, I wrote END, CRASH, FINISH into his skin. I poured black ink and ash into the wounds and tended them carefully so that the skin would heal and seal the letters stark and proud.

I read through his notes, and all I could do was work on his house by day, and tend him, treat him, tie him down and occasionally write a word or two in the way I have indicated above. “Here,” I would poke and prod him, “quite white where the skin does not touch.” (447)

Harley seeks revenge on the damage words have done to him and his people, in a symbolic but also direct fashion, a parody of Ern’s former pseudo-examinations of his mixed-race wards, ostensibly looking for signs of blackness. He carves words into Ern in

revenge for the words of Auber Neville and others that made his people untouchables in their own land.

Jack persists in showing Harley a way beyond revenge. Although rendered impotent by the accident that killed his father, Jack brings Harley to his children of whom he is until this point in the novel unaware, conceived in his first and only experiments with intercourse. Walking with his children, Harley is followed by a young bird who is then met by an older bird above them.

I looked to my children, and—oh, this was sudden, not at all a gradual or patient uplift—I was the one poised, balanced, hovering on shifting currents and—looking down upon my family approaching from across the vast distances my vision could cover—I was the one to show them where and who we are. (*Benang* 456)

In an example of birdsign reminiscent of the *Odyssey*, Harley understands his role as the scribe for his people, the storyteller/historian. When he tells his Uncle Jack, who has told him before that he has a gift, Jack explains his own understanding: “Those birds. That was the spirit in the land talking to you. Birds, animals, anything can do it. That is what Aboriginal people see” (457). It is clearly important for Scott to show that although he is speaking in the language of the colonizer, he is speaking *for* his people in words that come from his Nyoongar culture. He has an Aboriginal gift that other peoples cannot have. He is clearly expressing an Aboriginal nationalist position, a counternarrative, and making unproblematic claims for a type of exclusive Aboriginal knowledge.

At the novel's end, there is what seems to be an exercise in self reflexivity, a direct address from the author to reader, dropping the intermediary of the character of Harley:

Yes, I am something of a curiosity—even for my own people.

We thought it strange, but possible, that we might reach more of you this way . . . by scratching and tapping from within the prison of my grandfather's words.

I have written this story wanting to embrace all of you, and it is the best I can do in this language we share. Of course, there is an older tongue which also tells it. (*Benang* 497)

Through his acknowledgment of the primacy of oral tradition and explanation the novel as his way of transmitting that tradition, Scott effectively dismantles the criticism of "complicity." Scott takes on the more important task of reminding Australians, Aboriginal, white, mixed, and other, that the original inhabitants of the island continent "are still here" (497).

Slater describes Scott's concept of indigeneity as a construct in flux: "Scott bears witness to Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) identity being created through dialogue, storying and embodied practices. . . . Indigeneity . . . [is] culturally constructed and always in the process of becoming" ("Kim Scott's" 150). Slater oversimplifies here. Most narratives of indigeneity (and all of those addressed in this study) assert a priori characteristics of their indigeneity that do not conform to a purely "constructed" identity. Slater is correct about culture being malleable, but she is incorrect in thinking that Scott

sees it as purely constructed. The influence of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha does not address this issue either) is clear: "In writing from a liminal space Scott empowers *Benang*'s Nyoongar community to articulate alternative understandings of belonging and identity, which will act to destabilize white dominance" ("Kim Scott's *Benang*" 150). While culture is being continually invented, there are innate aspects asserted by Scott about his community, just as MacLeod asserts innate aspects of his Scottish-Canadian Gaelic community. Slater articulates Scott's position of "constructing" indigeneity just as Tom Nairn and Colin Nicholson apply Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" to MacLeod's works. But the communities described by MacLeod and Scott, importantly, are not for them entirely "imagined." Both Scott and MacLeod use their narratives politically, to assert innate attributes of their ethnic groups.

This parallel of what I will call ethnic nationalism, has both Scott and MacLeod asserting a priori attributes to their respective cultures, most notably in the form of language:

At Mogumber Settlement, Jack Chatalong cut and carted wood for the old [blind] couple. . . . They knew him by his voice. In the evenings he sat stoking their fire, seeing its reflection in their blind eyes and listening to words he may not have understood, but which reached deep within him, made him feel like an instrument being played. But such a poor instrument because although he felt the humming alive within him, it was more like a struggle to breathe than articulated song. (*Benang* 101)

The innate qualities of ancestral language are asserted by both Scott and MacLeod, the latter who writes about Catriona MacDonald's experience of Highland Gaelic she did not know how to speak when she is "recognized" by her people in Moidart, whom she has never seen before (chap. four). This emphasis is repeated in *No Great Mischief* in a reference to Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, when Catriona refers to: "lost languages lurking inside the ventricles of the heart." (193) Both Scott and MacLeod are making a cultural assertion; these are languages that *we* understand but that the oppressive powers above us do not. Language is an important part of our solidarity. These sentiments are also put forward by King, who uses Cherokee script and assertions of innate Native American knowledge throughout *Green Grass, Running Water* and throughout his non-fictional work. These cultural assertions are certainly dialectical, and necessitate these novels' identification as situational metafiction.

Scott, like King and Mda, focuses on the nature of storytelling (a common postmodern focus) but all do so within a unique and particularized indigenous context. The fact that all of these authors address traditional belief also ties them to their cultural context, but the split with contemporary "white writing" is not as radical as Slater or Eva Rask Knudsen wish to assert. In Slater's statement "Harley deploys Enlightenment ideals of investigation and empiricism—'white ways of thinking'—which he recognizes as his grandfather's legacy" ("*Benang: 'This Most Local of Histories'*" 59). There is something of a colonial hangover, as essentializing these attributes as white unconsciously denigrates the indigenous ability to think rationally.

Despite these important oversights, Slater is correct about the dynamic and political nature of Scott's novel:

Scott is insisting that to perform acts of revitalization and cultural regeneration one must not only attend to the pain of history, but also contemplate and nourish that which has in the past and continues in the present to sustain and revitalize one's community. ("*Benang*" 64)

In this, Scott's project is parallel to that of King and Mda, looking at the past and present with all the tools at one's disposal. Using the tools of the colonizer to empower one's community can only be called complicitous by a perspective that wishes to ghettoize those communities, to see them as stable fixed entities—rather than belonging to the “process of becoming” that Slater attributes to Scott and which I, in turn, attribute to the other indigenous writers of the settler nations, King and Mda, looked at in this study. Culture is in flux, but importantly, all aspects of culture are not. The basis of the cultures that have been investigated is asserted by these authors, not problematized or interrogated. To think of culture as purely constructed is a fundamental misunderstanding of culture— or a *convenient* misunderstanding, that helps connect ancient traditions to flux-oriented discussions of postmodern theory. Culture and tradition are more often than not, opposed to flux. Scott advocates a balance between tradition and regenerative change.

Benang: from the Heart, like the other situational metafiction of the settler nations, uses apparently postmodern techniques to postcolonial and political ends. This work does indeed problematize British Imperial history but it *problematizes from a*

position. Attwell's category of situational metafiction, as applied to Coetzee, is useful in the wider context of all the settler nations, to describe works like *Benang: from the Heart* that appear to be historiographic metafiction but do not partake of its anti-dialectical, anti-totalizing objectives. In *Benang: from the Heart*, Kim Scott uses history, both conventional Western and Nyoongar, to underline his Nyoongar nationalist message, a message of cultural assertion against the historically-rooted systematic oppression that continues against Aboriginal people in modern-day Australia.

Chapter Seven:

False Prophecy and the Politics of Recall: Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

Zakes Mda's novel *The Heart of Redness* explores the historical causes and impact of the ritualistic cattle killings that took place in Xhosaland in 1856-7, exacerbated by the intense pressure of creeping British appropriation of the Xhosa homeland. A prophetic movement arose claiming that the rinderpest (or lungsickness) destroying the cattle-based wealth of the Xhosa was the result of mixing with the white colonists. A teenage prophetess named Nongqawuse made the following declaration:

The Strangers said I must tell the nation that all cattle now living must be slaughtered. They have been reared by contaminated hands because there are people who deal in witchcraft. The fields must not be cultivated, but great new grain pits must be dug, new houses must be built, and great strong cattle kraals must be erected. Cut out new milk sacks and weave many doors from buka roots. The strangers say that the whole community of the dead will arise. When the time is ripe they will arise from the dead, and new cattle will fill the kraals. (*Heart* 60)

Those who were impure when the strangers "rose," would be judged as such and destroyed—this, without directly saying it, directly implicated the colonizing wave and its sympathisers. The above quotation, and most of the historical perspective in *The Heart of Redness*, come almost directly from the work of historian Jeff Peires, one of the people

to whom Mda dedicates his book.¹⁰⁰ The narrative of *The Heart of Redness* is evenly split between the build-up and aftermath of the 1856-7 wave of Xhosa cattle killings, and the present-day rift between the Believers and Unbelievers in Qolorha, where the movement began. While the details about the cattle killing are corroborated in Peires, the present-day existence of the two cults is exaggerated by Mda in a metaphoric invention.

Mda uses his juxtaposition of past and present to explore the idea of false prophecy in the postmodern/postcolonial mode of writing identified by David Attwell as situational metafiction. While exploring Mda's dialectical use of history, this thesis highlights the applicability of Attwell's construct to Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction that pervades postmodern theory. As Wendy Woodward observes in "Jim Comes from Jo'Burg": "*The Lives of Animals* [J. M. Coetzee] and *The Heart of Redness* . . . both draw on postmodern narrative practices to construct versions of postcolonial history" (312). This chapter and thesis provide support for Attwell's category, showing its applicability to the postmodern/postcolonial novel of the settler nations.

The idea of false prophecy and its political results is the novel's leitmotif: *The Heart of Redness* explores three different narratives or "prophetic" movements that have deeply influenced the South Africa experienced by the present-day Xhosa: the false prophecy of British civilization as presented to the Xhosa by Sir George Grey, the false prophecies on Nongqawuse and Mhlakaza, and the false prophecies of black

¹⁰⁰ In his M. A. Thesis "Re-Imagining Community Histories" Roger Courau suggests of the connection between Peires and Mda: "Mda could not have asked for a more valuable source; all of the research work had been done for him" (60) Courau, however, neglects to consider Mda's present day Qolorha, which comprises half of the novel.

empowerment. While critics such as Norman Rush see the book as an endorsement of “tribalism” this chapter asserts that Mda explores a much more complicated relationship with Xhosa tradition, and is critical of many key elements. Furthermore, the novel’s indictment of historical movements and figures remove any suggestion of Hutcheon’s “anti-totalizing ideology” of postmodernism, despite its clear usage of elements of the postmodern aesthetic Hutcheon identifies for historiographic metafiction. In *The Heart of Redness*, narrative techniques that have been classified as “postmodern tools” are used for positional postcolonial work.

Mda’s narrator is clear about the connections between this colonizing wave and today’s disparity of wealth in South Africa. His main character, Camagu (like Mda himself) left South Africa in exile because of his anti-Apartheid activities (Mda for those of his father). Camagu returns to South Africa with memories of “the middle generations”: the Apartheid years.

He can see dimly through the mist of decades all the lush plants that grew in his grandfather’s garden, including aloes of different types. There are the beautiful houses too: the four-walled tin-roofed ixande, the rondavels, the cattle kraal, the fowl run, the tool shed. Then the government came and moved the people down to the flatlands, giving them only small plots and no compensation. (*Heart* 65)

Mda’s narrator is occasionally intrusive. These intrusions are a key to the locus of the author’s moral/political position. One of the narrator’s primary goals is to expose the colonial mentality embodied in the man who perhaps more than any other epitomized

British colonialism: Sir George Grey—the man Mda sees as largely responsible for the loss of Camagu's grandfather's home. This chapter will examine three historical versions of Sir George Grey (those of Jeff Pieres, James Rutherford, and Edmund Bohan) to show how colonial history is problematized (that of Rutherford and Bohan) and how a revisionist history is unproblematically *endorsed*, in this work of situational metafiction.

In Grey's journals, we get a glimpse of his humanitarian ideals, after working for the colonial office in Ireland:

In all my walks on deck, on my first voyage, my mind was filled with the thought of what misery there was in the world, the hope there was in the new lands, and the greatness of the work of attempting to do something for the hopeless poor. The effort to get lands, made by single individuals, seemed to me a wrong to humanity. To prevent such a monopoly in the new countries has been my task ever since. (Rutherford 5)

The adjective "white" is missing in these descriptions of the "common people" and "the poor." Such passages, like this one highlighted in Rutherford's biography of Grey, are at the source of the cultural mythology that would have perhaps one of the greatest enemies of indigenous peoples in the history of the British Empire, lauded as a philanthropist. Grey is portrayed as the great protector of the Maori, even by recent biographies (Bohan). Historically, Grey's legacy was to have orchestrated the appropriation of the lands of the Australian Aborigines, the Maori and of indigenous peoples of South Africa, particularly the amaXhosa, all of whom he governed during his career. In *The Greenstone Door*

(1914), still hailed by many as a New Zealand classic, Governor Grey is presented as an even handed legislator, and the great white father of the Maori. The same historical figure is a central character in Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*. In this novel, Grey is presented as a voracious imperialist. This portrayal is supported by documented historical evidence in a fictional setting. Mda invents very little about Grey, but as Hayden White emphasized in *The Content of the Form*, what one chooses to present (and omit) historically, is a clear indication of one's moral bias. Grey is the first of Mda's three false prophets.

The overt positionality of this novel, coupled with its use of postmodern techniques, offers a challenge to overarching theories of postmodernism. The foregrounding of a major historical figure, such as Grey, is seen by Linda Hutcheon, as a mark of historiographic metafiction. While clearly incorporating many apparently postmodern elements, *The Heart of Redness* presents a history of Sir George Grey in line with that of Peires "in almost plagiaristic detail" (Courau 60). This is not meant to be taken as "problematization of the historical referent," but a clear indictment by Mda of this false prophet of civilization. Pieres's work is largely an exposure of Sir George Grey, clearly taking a side in a Xhosa/settler dialectic. Mda's faithfulness to the depiction of a respected South African historian is a testament to his "real weight" of depiction. His endorsement of Pieres's work as the "true history" belies Hutcheon's "anti-totalizing agenda." This is a postcolonial novel written in a postmodern aesthetic, with a clear *positionality* and a clear political underlay. The confusion created by this common overlapping emphasizes the usefulness of Attwell's category of situational metafiction, as

applied to all postcolonial novels written in (or with overt elements of) this postmodern aesthetic.

Sir George Grey was an assimilationist, his ideas well-suited to a Roman governor creating new citizens of empire. The “common people” were to be white and Christian, and those of color who fell in with the colonial program, were to be grateful second-class citizens. The “hope” for the indigenous peoples of the three colonies that Grey oversaw as governor (Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa), was that the white wave of settlers would go away. In the settler nations, this was not to be. In his famous compassion for the poor Irish, there was an implicit assumption that non-whites had lesser need of their own lands, because of their “primitive ways.” The “primitive ways” of a cattle-based society with burgeoning elements of democracy were exaggerated by the colonial office, in order that the march of civilization could swallow up their land.¹⁰¹

Grey’s two biographers, James Rutherford and Edmund Bohan, both elucidate and perpetuate the colonial mythology so successfully created by Grey himself. Both criticize his methodology, but see little to criticize in Grey’s aspirations. Bohan, for one, presents Grey as a “tragic hero,” the implicit tragedy being his inability to realize his ultimate dreams of empire. Rutherford, while more balanced, shows deep-seated assumptions about the necessity of imperialism. Mda’s novel effectively takes on these accepted versions of Grey, in his description of the colonial legacy in South Africa. The

¹⁰¹ This description of Grey comes from all three aforementioned sources; none of these statements find contradiction in any of these works. I could not find anything in Rutherford or Bohan that contradicted Mda’s portrayal of Grey.

invective in *The Heart of Redness* is much more complex than just another attack on dead white colonists, following Njabulo Ndebele's appeal to South African literature to move beyond an internecine binary to focus on consolidating: "the sense of a viable, psychologically self-sufficient community among the oppressed" (73). Rather than lay blame, this novel explores the roots of the problems facing the author's people contiguous with present-day political reality. This is a postmodern/postcolonial work that seeks solutions.

For Mda, Grey is only one of three prongs on the devil's pitchfork. Mhlakaza, Nongqawuse's uncle and guardian, widely believed to be the true source of the Cattle-Killing cult, is seen by Mda as an internal enemy. Mhlakaza, for Mda, was a Xhosa man warped by his failures with missionary Christianity—a man who, for the sake of asserting power, pushed a unwitting fourteen year-old prophetess and a disastrous cult on a desperate people. In the novel, colonial sympathizers such as Mjuza and Ned, are seen to be turning their back on their own traditions (they both convert to Christianity) and profiting from the suppression of their own people. This depiction leads into the third prong of Mda's pitchfork of colonialism, that of present corruption. Three prongs, three false narratives that Mda wishes to put before his people for careful consideration. This chapter will demonstrate Mda's historical basis for his three-pronged assertion.

Mda's narrator repeatedly parallels the black opportunists of colonial times with the tyranny of the so-called "black empowerment" movements of the new South Africa, which he portrays as benefiting a newly designated ruling class: a new set of black overlords for "the people." Desmond Tutu and Barney Pityana have both been critical of

black empowerment, Tutu suggesting, like Mda, that it “privileges an elite” and Pityana that “the pyramid [of rich and poor] remains the same” (“Interview”). As Courau suggests: “Names like NoCellphone and NoSatellite are effectively satirical in their suggestion of the shallowness of ‘progress’ conscious chiefs, but they also reveal the level of corruption even in remote outposts of the ‘nation’” (236). The seemingly postmodern irony of this satire contains a clear message to the current ruling elite of South Africa, a message that has made Mda unpopular among many politicians of the African National Congress.

“Black Empowerment” attempts to prevent Camagu from organizing workers of Qolorah (Nongqawuse’s former village) into a mutually beneficial cooperative. The new administration, despite its rhetoric, shows little interest in the projects of “the people” who wish to better their lives. Camagu, who holds a doctoral degree, has difficulty finding any kind of work because he didn’t learn the toyi-toyi freedom dance. He is refused a small business loan for a cooperative society in Qolorah, the type of micro-economics one would expect to be a focus of “the new South Africa.” Fanon has shown this problem, this colonial hangover, to be endemic of colonized peoples, because of a failure to abandon the oppressive colonial apparatus of the former government. New oppressors with new rhetoric (Robert Mugabe comes to mind) fill the vacant slots. Mjuza and Ned are the opportunists; ready for the spoils of a new system. This contemporary political theme also presents itself in the figure of Sekatle in Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) a man who reaps the benefits after having openly opposed the South African revolution. Opportunists are, for Mda, just as bad as the colonists like Grey. In

this overtly dialectical and positional work of situational metafiction, Mda wishes to evoke and probe the past, in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

Unlike his historical mentor Peires, Mda actually leaves out some of the more heinous of Grey's acts toward the Xhosa, such as the attacking of King Sarhili's starving and defenceless people. This is intentional: Mda sees no further point in blame: recognition and reconciliation in the form of real empowerment are the messages of this complex didactic fiction. But Mda also wants his people to be clear about his particular image of "what happened" and clearly asserts Pieres's version of "what happened." Mda's postmodern "problematization" is reserved for the colonial histories of Grey. He does not problematize Peires at any point of the novel. Importantly Peires's version is accepted as the "true history."

Mda's Sir George Grey is introduced as follows:

The Man Who Named Ten Rivers was Sir George Grey, the man who had taken over as governor of the Cape Colony after Cathcart's death. He had strived with great enthusiasm with a mission to civilize the natives. Those amaXhosa who had become amaGpobhoka—the Christian converts, that is—believed in Grey. People like Ned who were on good terms with white people came back with stories of Grey's greatness. He had been a governor in Australia and New Zealand, they said, where his civilizing mission did many wonderful things for the natives of those countries. Of course he had to take their land in return for civilization. Civilization is not cheap. He had written extensively about the native peoples of those

countries, and about their plants. He had even given names to ten of their rivers, and to their mountain ranges. It did not matter that the forebears of those natives had named those rivers and mountains from time immemorial. When Ned told them about the naming of the rivers, a derisive elder had called Grey The Man Who Named Ten Rivers. And that became his name. (*Heart* 95-96)

In symbolic retribution for replaced names, Grey has his own name replaced. His slogan “civilization is not cheap” rings like the much derided slogan of neo-colonialism and parodic song title “Freedom isn’t Free” (Parker 2004). The real question in both cases is “Whom is it for?”

Nót everyone is taken by Grey’s benevolent posturing. The sons on Xikixa, the historical patriarch of Qolorha, are twins that gave rise to the competing cults of the Believers and Unbelievers (indicating belief or disbelief in Nongqawuse’s prophecies).¹⁰² Twin and Twin-Twin are both pointedly against Grey, but against each other as well. Twin-Twin accuses: “The only reason your Grey came here is because the white people are full in their country. So they came here to steal our land” (*Heart* 96). Twin and his brother Twin-Twin represent two approaches to the Cattle Killing, the respective cults of the Believers and Non-Believers. Twin becomes a religious zealot along with his Khoisan wife Qukewza, seeming drunk with desperation-fed delusion. Twin-Twin abhors the pointless destruction of the Cattle Killing, but thrust in collusion with the colonists against it, soon comes to realize that it may be the lesser of two evils. The twins are

¹⁰² Xikixa was symbolically beheaded by colonial forces, leaving the believing Xhosa in Qolorah without a leader in the afterworld.

symbolic halves of a Xhosa everyman, the reader comes to sympathize with the desperate hope of the believing cult through Twin and Qukewza, and with the hard realism of Twin-Twin, whose praise name is pointedly: "He who awakes with yesterday's anger." While we are meant to sympathize with both characters, who represent impulses, we are also meant to criticize Twin's blind acceptance of new and damaging traditions, and Twin Twin's wholesale rejection of tradition. Mda advocates a middle road: the importance of knowing and following one's own traditions interpreted with clear eyes and not the fires of desperate fundamentalism. The dangers of false prophets.

Grey's Aboriginal Committee report gets straight to the heart of his agenda:

from the peculiar code of laws of this people, it would appear not only impossible that any nation subject to them could ever emerge from a savage state, but even that no race, however highly endowed, however civilized, could in other respects remain long in a state of civilisation if they were submitted to the operation of such barbarous customs." [On which Rutherford comments]: Exactly as he did later in South Africa, he persuaded himself that the weaker members of the tribe were "suffering under their own laws" and were being subjected to the violence of their fellows. (Rutherford 53)

To the biographers Rutherford and Bohan (while occasionally critical) it seems enough that Grey *made reference to benevolent principles*, and that his blindness to the actual state of native affairs in all of these countries is somehow forgivable because former colonizers were harder on the indigenous populations. For Mda, this is a myth. No one

could have broken indigenous power in the settler nations more effectively than a seeming “humanitarian.” Rutherford, who is clearly of the Governor’s party adds that: “the striking thing about the review is that he observed native customs only to condemn them. . . . He took it for granted that European modes of life and conduct, being so evidently superior to those of primitive tribal life, were bound to prove congenial and welcome” (54). Or if they were not, they would have to be, because land was needed. While a great collector of surface detail, Grey knew little or nothing of the internal mechanisms of the societies he assimilated, rationalizing the dismantling of entire cultures by asserting their inevitable demise in the face of “civilization.”¹⁰³

The history teacher in Mda’s *Qolorha* rejects Grey’s dismissive interpretation of the Xhosa social structure, explaining how Grey’s “civilizing” was democratically speaking, a backward step for Xhosa society:

But it was like that even in the days of our forefathers. . . . Chiefs never made decisions unilaterally. That is why they had councillors who would go out to get the views of the people first. That is why they held imbhizos which all the men were obliged to attend. Things were spoilt during the Middle Generations when the white man imposed a new system on us, and created his own petty chiefs who became little despots on behalf of their masters. (*Heart* 108)

Fanon argues that in former colonies this imperial system has progressed basically unchanged through various surface mutations, propping up of petty despots who bend to

¹⁰³ There is a strong Canadian parallel in the career and ideology of Duncan Campbell Scott (see chapter 3)

the imperial (or neo-imperial economic) will of the moment. In the case of the Xhosa, this flawed system forcefully replaced that of a culture that, like that of the Maori, had democratic principles such as the deposing of an unpopular chief and the open discussion of major political issues. Grey's imposition of this version of "civilization" is shown by Mda's novel to be a lie, and a political regression for those it was ostensibly to benefit. As suggested in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, "civilization" took the voice away from the indigenous peoples of South Africa.

While not directly accused, the idea is presented in *The Heart of Redness* that Grey had a hand in the cattle killing movement, a widely-held belief in modern Xhosaland: the Transkei.¹⁰⁴:

People murmured among themselves that there were rumours among some Unbelievers that in fact The Man Who Named Ten Rivers was responsible for the cattle-killing movement, so as to break the might of the amaXhosa and subjugate even those lands across the Kei River that the British had failed to conquer. Some were even saying that one of the Strangers Nongqawuse saw behind the bush was in fact The Man Who Named Ten Rivers in person. But John Dalton did not hear these rumours. He was going on about Sir George's magnanimity of spirit, his intelligence, his charm and his unconditional love for the native peoples of the world,

¹⁰⁴ I have heard this exact view stated by a modern Xhosa man, who explained to me that despite the fact Grey did this the Xhosa "didn't like to talk about Nongqawuse anymore." The term "Transkei" comes from the forcing of the Xhosa across the Kei river.

which he had already demonstrated to the natives of a country called New Zealand across the seas. (*Heart* 142)

The idea of Grey in the bushes telling Nongqawuse her lines surfaces many times in Mda's narrative. Even the imperially biased Bohan, in his book, *To Be a Hero: A Biography of Sir George Grey*, admits: "Yet even as he strove to avert disaster, Grey recognized the advantages latent in the crisis. Sooner rather than later, Sereli [*sic*], Mhlakaza and all the chiefs they had gulled would be discredited: 'we can draw very great permanent advantages from the circumstances, which may be made a stepping stone for the future settlement of the country'" (162). It is not clear from Bohan's narrative that he does not laud Grey's tactics. As Mda demonstrates with details from Peires, results of the drawing of these "great permanent advantages" from the Xhosa crisis are still being felt.¹⁰⁵

Mda's narrator comes out clearly on this point, expressed in an omniscient narrative intrusion: "Twin-Twin was right on both counts. The intention of The Man Who Named Ten Rivers was to break the power of the chiefs" (154). Grey's immediate method for doing this was the "Chiefs' Plot," a theory whereby the Cattle Killing was presented as a subversive method of drumming up anti-colonial sentiment. When this unlikely scenario is questioned, Mda's Grey is evasive: "'Simple, my dear friend. The mind of the native can be very devious,' said the Governor sagaciously" (155). When confronted with a sea of "blank faces," Grey continues:

¹⁰⁵ I was invited to attend the water commission meeting at the trader's store in Qolorha by its chairman V.S. Nkonki. Nkonki verbally attacked Rufus Hulley (who apparently isn't John Dalton) with the words "if it were not for Nongqawuse, you would not have your big store on the hill." It struck me that he, as the most prominent unbeliever in town, that he may have been Mda's model for Bhonco.

Kreli and Moshesh want to drive the pacified Xhosas into a war they do not want against the English. Hunger will make them desperate and they will fight. They will steal cattle from the white people and the Thembus to provide their fighting men with food. Now they are killing their own cattle so that they will have none to guard, and more men will be available to fight. Those are the true reasons for the cattle-killing. (*Heart* 156)

These are the actual reasons Grey put forward. Mda's novel points to a great deal of existing scholarship, most of it from Pieres. In his book *The Dead Will Arise* and a series of papers, Peires laid the groundwork for Mda's critique of Grey. Mda not only uses Peires's historical details, he follows many of his conclusions as well. Peires alleges that rather than taking action against the Cattle Killing movement, Grey disingenuously blamed it on the "Chiefs' Plot." Peires outlines step by step how the "Chiefs' Plot" was a government plot to justify actions and illegal land appropriations that went against the humanitarian principles that were bandied about in London and Cape Town. Mda's book follows this description to the letter, an "unproblematized" endorsement of a particular anti-colonial history.

In his paper "The Late Great Plot: The Official Delusion concerning the Xhosa Cattle Killing 1856-1857" Peires contends that a fabricated "Chiefs' Plot" gave Grey justification for crushing what remained of Xhosa resistance to colonization.

It might be argued that, in the very nature of the case, it is unreasonable to expect tangible proof of so deep a conspiracy. . . . Many of Grey's own contemporaries, however, including Cape Attorney-General William

Porter, were sceptical all along of the notion of a "chiefs' plot." Charles Brownlee, the Ngqika agent, was an experienced frontiersman and fluent in Xhosa, and was prominent in supplying the information on which the "chiefs' plot" hypothesis was based. And yet, in his later years he rejected the "chiefs' plot" as an explanation of the cattle killings. (259)

Mda's view of the "chiefs' plot" is that of Peires: that it was a piece of luck for the colonial government, of which they made as much use as possible. Attorney-General William Porter actually threw it out of court. Peires makes the point that until his book, the "chiefs' plot" was the most widely accepted explanation for the cattle killing.

Peires demonstrates how an abandoned and faulty rationalization became the basis for implementing a pre-existing policy of occupation:

The pursuit of the "chiefs' plot" was more than an act of retributive justice, it was an integral part of future policy. From the very beginning of his Governorship in 1855, Grey had wanted to fill up British Kaffraria "with a considerable number of Europeans of a class fitted to increase our strength in that country." Just before the commencement of the cattle-killing he had begun to implement this scheme by concentrating the normally dispersed Mfengu homesteads of the Crown Reserve into villages with strictly demarcated plots, thus clearing the way for extensive European settlements on their vacated land. The death and exile of tens of thousands of Xhosa during the cattle-killing opened the way for

an extension of this scheme to the remainder of British Kaffraria and even beyond.

Once Grey saw the ramifications of the situation, he took action.

The arrest and conviction of Chief Maqoma, the greatest of the Xhosa fighting leaders, on a charge of instigating the murder of an informer prompted the notion of a clean sweep of all the chiefs, many of whom were transported for receiving stolen property. Mhala's trial and conviction opened up the whole of the coastal district to white settlement. The expulsion of Sarhili more than doubled the size of British Kaffraria, and was also intended for British settlement. . . . ("Late Great Plot" 273- 274)

In Peires's assessment: "The 'chiefs' plot" was thus imperceptibly converted from an honest mistake to a specious rationalization. Thereafter it became, for Grey, a weapon with which to save his reputation." (274). He concludes that although the modern myth of Sir George Grey whispering the prophecies to Nongqawuse is invented, the results of his actions were exactly the same, crediting the myth with an element of cultural understanding. This too is in line with Mda, except Mda's cultural understanding goes deeper. His history is almost exclusively that of Peires, a man who interrogates the integrity of Sir George Grey.

The continuing strength of Grey's legacy is particularly evident in Bohan's biography of Grey. Bohan justifies actions against the Xhosa chief Mhala because of

complaints about occupation Bohan does not see the irony in usurping lands because someone complains that their lands are going to be usurped.

Yet his private pity for the victims of the Xhosa disaster and his characteristic concern to educate and “improve” them did not soften his stance towards the chiefs, whom he blamed for the catastrophe and who continued to defy his concepts of reason and authority. Mhala, in particular, was killing more cattle, complaining about the troops encircling his lands, and haranguing his fellow chiefs. . . . (166-7)

Bohan’s unexamined sympathy with the governor’s “vengeance” shows his full belief in what Peires and Mda see as Grey’s delusional propaganda: “In effect, Grey now exacted his own vengeance for what he considered the Xhosa chiefs’ deliberate and deceitful manipulation of their credulous masses, and he set about saving their people in the only way he could envisage: by assimilating them into the colony’s wider economy” (167). Mda, through Peires, takes on these neo-imperial historical views suggesting the audacity of the idea that Grey was “punishing” bad chieftains and “saving” their people. Peires lays out the social reality of this move of Grey’s: millions of acres of the best Xhosa land confiscated, 120,000 disenfranchised people ready to serve as a labour force (a force that still mines diamonds and gold) that could be bought for the price of a meal. Grey had admittedly planned such a labour force in Australia, but had more success with the more sophisticated Xhosa, once they had been broken. Upon investigation, Bohan emerges as a very selective investigator.

Contrasting himself with the former governor, Sir Harry Smith, Mda's Grey expounds on his successful administrations in Australia and New Zealand, speaking of how he had scattered the Aboriginal peoples as cheap labour: "all over settler country" (*Heart* 156) and like Duncan Campbell Scott in Canada, disallowed them to "congregate together and practice their old uncivilized habits" (*Heart* 156). Mda expands his New Zealand/ South African parallel, having Grey brag about how he had disciplined a Maori chief named Te Rauparaha. Grey saw future problems from himself and his settlers, so he:

accused [Te Rauparaha] of plotting to kill white settlers and rape their women. The chief was arrested, and was released only after his people agreed to hand over three million acres of prime land for white settlement. This added more land to the millions of acres that Sir George had gained by various means from the Maori, including court-martialling and executing their uncooperative leaders and transporting some of them to Australia.

As for Te Rauparaha, although there had been a great uproar that he had been falsely accused, it was well worth his sacrifice. His people received the greatest gift of all: education and British civilization. The governor built schools and hospitals for them. He could do the same too for the natives of the Cape Colony and British Kaffraria if they walked the roads of civilization and did not fill their heads with idle thoughts of killing settlers and raping white women. (*Heart* 157)

Rutherford seems to have been Mda's source on the Maori and while of Grey's party, his does not neglect Grey's more nefarious actions. Grey tells his listeners he will do the same with the amaXhosa as he did to Te Rauparaha (*Heart* 157), an assertion to which history can attest. Peires and Mda hold that the way in which Grey exploited the Cattle-Killing movement made Grey directly responsible for the humanitarian disaster that unfolded, with 40,000 people and 100,000 cattle dead, 120,000 people displaced and broken.

Mda's invented character of Bhonco in present day Qolorha speaks words that echo those of Twin- Twin. Bhonco, a direct descendant of Twin Twin and the head of his cult of Unbelievers says of Nongqawuse: "She was a fake. She was used by white people to colonize us" (165).¹⁰⁶ Mda, while elaborately indicting Sir George Grey, equally wishes to point out that colonization involves the duplicity of the colonized. Mda places equal blame on Mhlakaza, Nongqawuse's uncle, whom he felt was really pulling the strings. In his paper "The Central Beliefs of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing" Pieres gives the following account of this man:

Mhlakaza, the uncle of Nongqawuse and a key instigator of the cattle-killing, was no heathen witch-doctor but a Christian convert who had lived in the Colony and spoke Dutch and English. Under the name of Wilhelm Goliath, he acted as personal servant to Archdeacon Merriman of Grahamstown between 1849 and 1852. He could recite the Creed, the

¹⁰⁶ V.S. Nkonki described Nongqawuse to me as: "The Judas Iscariot of our people." This attitude has also been expressed by a former Prime Minister of the Transkei "homeland" George Matanzima in 1980, and by several other prominent politicians.

Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and most of the Anglican liturgy in Xhosa, and was fairly well acquainted with the Bible. He fell out of favor with the Merrimans for troubling them with his dreams and visions and being "too lazy" to work. They cut down his pay, and some time in 1853 he left for independent Xhosaland, longing still to be a "Gospel Man." The Gospel that he eventually taught was by no means the one he learned from Merriman, but nor was it devoid of important elements of Christianity. (60)

Most of what is known about this enigmatic man comes from the journals of the Archdeacon (later Archbishop) of Grahamstown: N.J. Merriman. His journals were published as *The Cape Journals of Archdeacon N. J. Merriman*

Merriman refers to "my man Wilhelm" and describes their first journey together, to administer the Holy Communion to seven people in Post Retief:

to my very great joy my Kaffir attendant, into whose heart by this time I had wound myself, presented himself among the communicants . . . As this is to the best of my belief the first Kaffir that has ever communicated with the English Church . . . there seemed to be a special grace attending the first sacraments of any place. (52)

Merriman muses about how lucky it was that he had decided to walk with an attendant. It is fascinating to think about how the Xhosa nation might be different today if he had taken a horse as he had originally intended. Merriman was clearly proud of this

accomplishment with "his Kaffir," and looks at himself as Wilhelm's spiritual mentor.¹⁰⁷

He later mentions: Wilhelm is "I believe, a good man; I had great pleasure in taking him to be confirmed" (106). Merriman's feelings were to change on this subject.

For Mda, Christianity was a false prophecy for Xhosaland, as it was able to produce a destructive force like Mhlakaza, and colonial sympathizers like Ned and Mjuza. One suspects that such chilling Old Testament style comments of Merriman's such as the following: "God seems through the Kaffirs to have taken from them that which they refused to give him" (152) written in his journal while Wilhelm was his "personal servant" may have had no small influence on Mhlakaza's abrupt, harsh, and confused rendition of Christianity, which ultimately mutated into the Cattle-Killing cult.

Eventually, Wilhelm is no longer tolerated by Merriman's wife or family, and "regarded somewhat like the knights of Lear" Merriman decides to abandon his disciple in mid-training "to take charge of the [new] Kaffir school in Southwell." (127) Merriman's final comment on this chapter of their relationship is rife with historical irony: "I dismissed him, not a little thoughtfully and anxiously, to his new work. Mr. Water's reports of his progress have been hitherto very pleasing and promising" (127). Wilhelm is given a lectern, which can look very much like a pulpit.

Wilhelm's teaching position does not last, nor does his imposed Christian name. Mda picks up this part of Mhlakaza's story, having the invented twins speak with the historical Wilhelm, who has gone back to his original name: Mhlakaza. Mda describes these developments straight from Peires, including how Mhlakaza gave indication that he

¹⁰⁷ A Xhosa friend explained to me that the only English equivalent to this word is "nigger."

left the Methodists for the Anglicans because of their private confessions and because they “wore more beautiful robes” (52). The narrative critique of the missionaries is clear:

Twin and Twin-Twin did not see any difference between the Methodists and the Anglicans. They were all white people who, according to the teachings of the great Prophet Nxele, had been cast into the sea for murdering Tayi, the son of Thixo. The waves had spewed them on the shores of kwaXhosa. And now they were giving their reluctant hosts sleepless nights. (52-53)

The poisoning power of religions other than one’s own being imposed from outside is strongly suggested, a vein that continues throughout the novel. While some misconstrue this novel as a wholesale endorsement of tradition, it is a nuanced critique of false prophecy, regardless of its source. For Mda, Christianity, regardless of its source or the intentions of that source, was not a positive force for the Xhosa nation.

Initially, the gospel men, and especially Wilhelm Goliath, were treated with amusement because of their strange injunctions: “They found it funny that the way to the white man’s heaven was through trousers and dresses” (*Heart* 54). In this account, Merriman is cleverly implicated by Mda: “In any case, this Goliath looked hilarious in his ill-fitting black suit that used to belong to Merriman” (54). In the narrative comment “The gospel men made sense only when they talked of the resurrection” (54) Mda invokes Peires’s contention in *The Dead Will Arise* that both Sarhili and Mhala (the two strongest supporters of the cattle-killing) were very interested in the immortality of the soul, Peires noting that Sarhili once impressed a missionary by “his knowledge of the

story of Lazarus" (136) and that "The believers felt not only that Christianity was compatible with Cattle-Killing beliefs, but even that Christianity positively corroborated Nongqawuse" (136). The new figures of UnguNakapande (the eternal one) and Sifuba-sibanzi¹⁰⁸ (Broad-Chested One) are implicitly invented by Mhlakaza in Mda's account. Peires believes this bifurcated cosmology "probably reflects the Christian dichotomy between God and Christ" (137). Mda breathes fictional life into Peires's political assertions, and uses them as a foundation for his own present-day (and dialectical) assertions about the dangers of false prophecy.

Prophecy is debated early in the novel, when Twin-Twin's wife is implicated as a witch by Mlanjeni. Twin-Twin defends her and receives his family line's ancestral (and supernaturally symbolic) scars, which afflict the Unbelievers generationally.¹⁰⁹ Thereafter he refuses to accept Mlanjeni as a prophet, and fights his brother over this issue. The validity of prophecy is clearly a central concern to the novel from the outset, and an important issue in Xhosa society. The two brothers, who were always happy together since birth, fall out permanently over their disagreement about Mhlakaza. The next time the twins see Wilhelm Goliath, he has called an *imbhizo* (public meeting) of the people of Qolorha. He now refuses to be called Wilhelm Goliath, and insists on being called Mhlakaza. The way Mda presents his sudden turn around makes Mhlakaza a deeply suspicious character. Twin-Twin, the original unbeliever, is sceptical from the outset: "Indeed that is wonderful . . . His children went to scare the birds in the fields, and he has

¹⁰⁸ Sibanzi was originally a Khoi name for God, but this usage Sifuba-sibanzi, was unique and more closely related to Jesus, the new name indicating a connection to but difference from Sibanzi.

¹⁰⁹ I interpret this supernatural generational affliction as a reminder of, and as a warning to those who abandon their traditions.

called the whole nation to tell us about it" (*Heart* 58). Mhlakaza ignores Twin-Twin and continues:

At first [Nongqawuse] thought she hadn't heard well, and continued to play with Nombanda and to chase the birds. The voice persisted. She slowly walked to the bush while Nombanda remained transfixed. At that time mist rose round the bush. The faces of two Strangers appeared in the mist and addressed her. (59)

Mda's scepticism speaks through Twin-Twin: "Let the girl tell us herself" (59). The fact that Mhlakaza has called the meeting and is explaining what happened shows the author's deep suspicion of the "gospel man" and his forms of religion in his "borrowed coat" of Christianity.

One can hear Merriman's Old Testament style judgment of the "Kaffirs" in Mhlakaza's injunction; pointedly the last word *after* Nongqawuse speaks:

You have all been wicked, and therefore everything that belongs to you is bad. Destroy everything. The new people who will arise from the dead will come with new cattle, horses, goats, sheep, dogs, fowl and any other animals the people may want. But the new animals of the new people cannot mix with your polluted ones. So destroy them. Destroy everything. Destroy the corn in your fields and in your granaries. Nongqawuse has told us that when the new people come there will be a new world of contentment and no one will ever lead a troubled life again. (*Heart* 60)

By putting these words (almost directly quoted from Pieres) directly in the mouth of Mhlakaza (and not Nongqawuse), by tracing his superficial adherence to religions, and by having him constantly questioned by Twin-Twin, Mda is accusing Mhlakaza (and Merriman by association) of being the true source of the Cattle-Killing. Missionary Christianity is implicated alongside Mhlakaza, who can be seen as the unwitting dupe of partial instruction. One can imagine that Merriman's initial pride in his disciple lessened significantly in the years following their split. The editors of his journals from the Van Riebeeck society make no mention of Mhlakaza, a significant historical figure about whom they provide most of the documented evidence.

Mhlakaza, as presented by Mda, shows many attributes of a confidence man. He begins his presentation of the prophecies by saying "at first he had treated the message of the Strangers as a joke" (60). Later, when Nongqawuse became "overwhelmed by the spirits" Mhlakaza would "take over and make his pronouncements" (88). Twin-Twin is direct in his accusation and remains steadfast in his rejection of the prophecies. "Don't you see, all the words she utters are really Mhlakaza's? She is Mhlakaza's medium. The same Mhlakaza who was spreading lies, telling us that we must follow the god of the white man. The very white man who killed the son of his own god!" (85). This event marks the split between Twin-Twin and Twin, and the metaphorical split of the Xhosa nation. Unlike recent criticism by Norman Rush and Rachel Donadio, that places Mda firmly on the side of the Believers (Twin) and "tribalism," Mda's line is not so clear cut: there are clearly positive and negative aspects to both approaches and he often endorses (through narrative sympathy) Twin-Twin's more modern ideas.

After a fresh outbreak of lungsickness, a cattle-killing frenzy, inspired by the prophecies, ensued. Nxito, the unbelieving chief of Qolorha, demanded that Mhlakaza show proof of the strangers:

The wizened chief was suspicious. He sent Twin-Twin to reconnoitre the appointed meeting place and make sure there was no chicanery.

Unfortunately, Mhlakaza's spies discovered Twin-Twin hiding in the donga near the sacred place where the new people were expected to appear just for Nxito's benefit.

"Nxito has insulted the new people!" screamed Mhlakaza. "He has placed an Unbeliever on their path! How do you expect them to come when their path is obstructed by the evil shadow of an Unbeliever like Twin-Twin? The new people must have left in anger for the mouth of the Great Fish River. Nxito must bear all the blame." (*Heart* 238-239)

This incident (based on an account by Peires where a man named Makombe takes the place of Twin-Twin) provides Mhlakaza with a ready-made excuse for the failure of all his prophecies and the darkest aspect of the Cattle Killing, where the Unbelievers were attacked by the Believers for being the source of the failure of the prophecies.¹¹⁰

Mda's moral/political position, through Twin-Twin, is perhaps most clearly rendered in these words: "What I am saying is stick to your own god and his true prophets. Leave other people's gods, including those gods' sons, daughters or any other

¹¹⁰ My two guides to Nongqawuse's pool, Sithembiso Konkwane and Siphwo Nkonki, explained to me that lack of adherence to her prophecies was the cause of their failure. Forty miles down the coast, in the village of Bulungula, members of the community knew very little about her—not one of the many people I spoke with endorsed this view.

members of their families” (86). Mda fictionally presents his historical argument, that the Cattle-Killing was made possible by zealous pseudo-prophets, who confused their own traditions with those of Christianity. As shown in Michael Adas’ book: *Prophets of Rebellion: Millenarian Protest Movements against European Colonial Order*, a bit of Christianity (particularly the millenarian aspects) can be a poisoning and deadly influence on tribal religion. David Lloyd, in his paper “The Modernization of Redness,” suggests that during the Cattle Killing the missionaries found “rich ideological pickings in disillusioned people” (36). In all of these cases apocalyptic traditions were invented in the face of colonization, with disastrous results for their adherents. Mda forces the reader to examine this invented religion and the very nature of culture, suggesting that in the following of one’s traditions there must be rational judgment. For Mda, tradition is important; but it must be interpreted, not blindly endorsed.

Mda wishes to identify Mhlakaza’s confused mixing of religions as an insidious problem, on the level of the rinderpest that destroyed the cattle. Camagu compares the devout impulse that drove the Cattle-Killing to “The same sincerity of belief that causes thousands to commit mass suicide by drinking poison in Jonestown, Guyana, because the world is coming to an end . . . or that leads men, women and children to die willingly in flames with their prophet, David Koresh, in Waco, Texas (*Heart* 282). This “sincerity of belief” while not to be rejected, is also not a reasonable justification for taking a damaging path. This is where Norman Rush’s critique of *The Heart of Redness* as endorsing the Cattle-Killing is proven to be a clear misreading. While Mda is not explicit

about what constitutes the “right path,” he clearly indicates an aversion to the mixing of traditions, a move he sees as largely causing the Cattle-Killing.

One particularly disastrous concept of Christianity to be taken out of context was the idea of the apocalypse, an idea that inspired the Sioux Ghost Dance, with similar results.¹¹¹

[Nongqawuse] promised nothing less than the re-enactment of Creation itself as expressed in the concept of *uHlanga*, by which the Xhosa meant both the Creator god and the source of creation *UHlanga* was even confused on occasion with the biblical story of creation, as when it was rumoured that “Adam our first father has come upon the earth accompanied by God and two sons of God, together with a numerous new people.” (Peires, “Central Beliefs” 54-55)

Peires disagrees with Monica Wilson who called the cattle-killing movement a “pagan reaction to the pressures of colonial and Christian influence” stating that: “the cattle killing owed its very existence to biblical doctrines. . . . In particular the doctrine of the resurrection had gained ready acceptance, albeit in a form not anticipated by the missionaries . . . (“Central Beliefs” 57). Although this reaction of the Xhosa was not anticipated (and as shown by Timothy Stapleton in “Reluctant Slaughter” often not genuine) Pieres and Mda do not place the blame on the missionaries as much as on Mhlakaza and Grey, who used the unfortunate circumstances to personal advantage.

¹¹¹ See Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

Grey's refusal to help the supposedly allied Unbelievers is suspicious, and well-documented. Mda elaborates fictionally on Peires's conclusions: "'The strongholds of murder and superstition shall be cleansed,'" said Sir George spiritedly, 'as the gospel is preached among ignorant and savage men. The ruder languages shall disappear, and the tongue of England alone shall be heard all around. So you see, my friends, this cattle-killing nonsense augurs the dawn of a new era'" (*Heart* 237). When Dalton¹¹² (the ancestor of the storeowner in modern Qolorha, the man who beheaded the father of the twins) asks Grey what is to be done about the emergency of thousands of starving people, he is told that he has spoken out of turn. Grey suggests that the prophets be arrested, Gawler (another historical figure) says that "The chief commissioner fears an uprising" (*Heart* 238). Grey is incredulous at what he himself suggested was the tactical danger of Kreli's (King Sarhili's) and "starvation tactics." He responds to Gawler: "An uprising of dying people?" (*Heart* 238) By having his character say this, Mda is making Sir George Grey disingenuous, countering the very theory he propounded.

A close look at his actions, even through the eyes of two partial biographers (Rutherford and Bohan) elucidates Grey's numerous calculated falsehoods. When the starving Unbelievers took to raiding the Believers who were allied with the colonial government, Grey refused to protect them, although their alliance had brought this vengeance upon them:

¹¹² John Dalton (despite Mda's published protestations to the contrary) seems to be based on the real-life Rufus Hulley, a trader in Qolorha. Mr. Hulley seemed to think so as well—he had mixed feelings about *The Heart of Redness*. "When I read it, I called Zakes and said: 'Thanks for the publicity, not all of it good.'"

In the other villages, though, the raids continued unabated. Hordes of hungry Believers burnt down the Unbelievers' homesteads after looting them. The Unbelievers appealed to Gawler and his master, The Man Who Named Ten Rivers, for protection. Although Gawler protected Twin-Twin personally, for the man was considered useful by the colonial government, the rest of the Unbelievers were without protection. All The Man Who Named Ten Rivers would say was that the Unbelievers should hold their ground. But he would not send his military force to defend them. He made it clear that the military would be sent only if the hordes strayed into white settlements and farms. (*Heart* 266)

The reader is led to surmise that the colonial administration wanted to see the two sides divide and conquer themselves, refusing to support those that supported them. In this Xhosa civil war, land was ripe for the plucking.

Grey punishes the Believers by appropriating their land. Former farmers and land owners were suddenly squatters:

The Man Who Named Ten Rivers, who had styled himself The Great Benefactor of the Non-European Peoples of the World, was taking advantage of the defenceless amaXhosa and was grabbing more and more of their land for white settlement. Twin-Twin's scars itched all over when he heard stories of advancing parties of settlers who were demarcating for themselves chunks of farmland on the ruins of Believers' homesteads. Those amaXhosa who continued to occupy their homesteads suddenly

discovered that they were squatters on their own land and now had to work for new masters. (*Heart* 296)

Grey ordered that only those who agreed to work for the colonists would be given famine relief. Many amaXhosa found themselves working as slaves in white settlements, being paid only in food rations.¹¹³ None of these charges finds any contradiction in Rutherford or Bohan. As the narrator suggests, Twin-Twin was right about Grey. Twin-Twin's reaction to the devastation of the Cattle-Killing is the wholesale rejection of belief and the creation of the Unbelievers.

Rutherford here is effectively critical of Grey's method's, but neglects to scrutinize the ideology behind these goals:

Though credit must be given to Grey for approaching the problem of the South Australian aborigines in a spirit of genuine benevolence, yet by modern ethnological standards his understanding was superficial and faulty, and, by any standards, the means at his disposal were so inadequate that what he did amounted to no more than a few friendly gestures . . . he was guided by pious sentiments rather than systematic knowledge and established principles. The humanitarians of that time regarded aborigines the world over as much the same sort of people and expected them to respond identically to similar treatment. If neglected and maltreated by white invaders more civilized than themselves, they would succumb

¹¹³ This series of events provided South Africa with a Xhosa workforce for its gold and diamond deposits, a system of generational exploitation that has changed very little since its inception after the Cattle Killing. Every Xhosa elder I spoke with had formerly worked in the northern mines.

under pressure of warfare, disease and vice, but if they were protected by the Government and taught by the missionary, there was some hope that they might be rescued from heathen barbarism and fitted to survive in a modern Christian society. (52)

“Genuine benevolence” would have guided Grey to change his native policy when he saw the results did not work. The fact that he never wavered suggests that in his exuberance to lift up the poor white man, he took it as a necessary evil to subjugate the native. Sarhili’s starving people, whom he ordered Gawler to massacre, could not have been overly impressed with Grey’s “paternal” protection. Grey could not have been unaware of how much land had been taken or sold: most of the documents passed through his hands.

Grey’s benevolence is shown by Mda and Pieres to be a lie. As Pieres states in *The Dead Will Arise*: “Even if Grey did not initiate the Cattle-Killing, he bears the responsibility for turning it into an irrevocable catastrophe.” (318) Grey’s lies were more insidious than those of King Leopold’s “humanitarian” mission in the Congo for the very fact that they were more believable. After abolition, imperialism had to justify itself to a burgeoning left wing. What Mda and Pieres wish to expose is the idea that Grey was ostensibly quelling the fires of the openly aggressive imperialists, while more effectively pursuing identical and equally damaging goals in a more practical fashion. Duncan Cameron, a British general stationed in New Zealand, disapproved of Grey and his tactics, and accused him of using the British Army to illegally acquire Maori land. When the Maori have to be defended from their governor by a British General, the governor’s

philanthropy becomes a bit suspicious. This is not the lover of Maori culture we see in William Satchell's *The Greenstone Door*. But it is the image of George Grey that holds currency in white New Zealand, an image based on colonial mythology and rationalization of land theft, perpetuated by the likes of William Satchell, Maurice Shadbolt, William Bohan and unwittingly, the usually perceptive Nelson Wattie, who endorses Satchell's version of Grey.

Rutherford feels that the establishment of a dozen mission schools by Grey represent his "philanthropic purpose at his best" (320). But philanthropy is generally defined as "disinterested humanitarian practices." As presented by Mda and Pieres, Grey could hardly have been more interested in the results of his practice, the breaking of a culture and the establishment of his own legacy, turning "savages" into citizens by turning them against their traditions. He also needed to save his reputation. Grey's "philanthropy" involved a wilfulness to ignore the results of this system, although his early journals show an understanding of the contradictory policy he was to enforce in all three of the colonies he came to govern. In speaking of the Australian Aborigine Miago, who chose to return to his tribal lifestyle, Grey states:

He could have either renounced all natural ties, and have led a hopeless, joyless life among the whites—ever a servant—ever an inferior being—or he could renounce civilization, and return to the friends of his childhood, and to the habits of his youth. He chose the latter course, and I think that I should have done the same. (Rutherford 19)

This passage in Rutherford comes from a man who spent his life convincing tribal peoples in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa to assume exactly this status he rejects for himself and his “friend” Miago. It is clear that Grey understood the results of his actions, and was not misguided in his benevolence as Rutherford suggests. Mda, while creating an evocative character, adds very little in the way of undocumented invention to the picture of a man who usurped vast territories and numerous cultures, in the guise of bringing the light of civilization. Mda effectively uses colonial history against itself, in a situational metafiction that *problematizes from a position*.

However important, outlining the crimes of the past is not Mda’s primary goal, but a means to an end. Understanding the past is crucial to the future, and Mda sees historical mistakes still being made in his culture. Near the novel’s conclusion, an authorial voice seems to come through Camagu, who is trying to stop what he sees as the wrong type of “progress”: a gambling city for Qolorha dressed in the terms of “black empowerment”—providing nothing for the people it is supposed to empower. The debate between the “progressive” unbelievers and the “conservative” believers turns back to Nongqawuse and the Cattle-Killing, which Camagu refuses to dismiss out of hand. The non-believers insist this chapter must be forgotten in order to move into the future. “What I am saying is that it is wrong to dismiss those who believed in Nongqawuse as foolish. . . . Her prophecies arose out of the spiritual and material anguish of the amaXhosa nation” (*Heart* 283). This perspective is endorsed by Gugu Hlongwane in her doctoral thesis “We are One! Discourses of Nation-Building in South African Texts”: “Nongqawuse’s prophecies . . . were genuinely interested in a new South Africa” (218). As with Grey, the

point is not blame but recognition of false prophecies: the false prophecy of British civilization, the false prophecy of Nongqawuse's cattle killing. And perhaps most pointedly, the false prophecy of black empowerment, embodied in the Aristocrats of the Revolution (Mda's worst of the ANC), who like Grey, are presented as tyrants in the guise of liberators.

There are two characters named Qukezwa in the novel, one from the past and one from the present. Both are female role models, as are found in many of Mda's novels, and as a pair they connect the historical and present-day split of the novel. The example of the two Qukezwas is presented as the road of reflective wisdom. One should abandon the prophets when they have abandoned the people. Qukezwa abandons the prophetic cattle-killing cult when her child is endangered with starvation and forced labour. She renounces Nongqawuse and Mhlakaza, and decides to return to the gods of her Khoikhoi people. When Twin accuses her of failing the prophets she replies: "Desert the prophets? . . . They deserted us. Where are they now? Mhlakaza is dead. The girl-prophets were arrested. Your prophets lied to us. The god of your people is weak. He failed to protect his people" (*Heart* 293-294). The parallel false prophecies/narratives of the Cattle-Killing and black empowerment emphasize the danger of following leaders who do not take care of their people, as Sir George Grey's and his false prophecy of civilization. When a tradition is damaging, Mda feels it should be changed. Qukezwa feeds her starving child with the tabooed shellfish, seeing that this "tradition," like that of the Cattle-Killing, does not protect its people. For Mda, religion and political structures are meant to empower the people, when they do not, these structures have failed, and should be abandoned. Mda

frames his moral/political position, his particular message to the Xhosa people, elaborately with Peires's history of the Cattle-Killing, which it must be emphasized, is presented *unproblematically*. Postmodern/postcolonial works, situational metafiction, as my thesis establishes, often problematize the opponent's argument—while simultaneously presenting historical evidence that supports the novel's own moral/political position unproblematically. In this bifurcated form, Rutherford and Bohan are problematized—Pieres is endorsed.

Twin-Twin, after the damage of the Cattle Killing has been done, looks toward a difficult future for his people. While the cult of the believers is not the answer for Twin-Twin, neither is Christianity:

Twin-Twin went away to brood on the dangers of religion. Ned, Mjuza, Dalton and Gawler had all tried, at various times, to convert him to Christianity. But he told them he could not join a religion that allowed its followers to treat people the way the British had treated the amaXhosa. He was indeed disillusioned with all religions. He therefore invented his own Cult of the Unbelievers—elevating unbelieving to the heights of a religion. (*Heart* 299)

Twin-Twin develops a cult of “unbelief” that evolves into its modern manifestation: a wholesale rejection of the old Xhosa traditions and an embracing of “progress.” The “progressives” in modern day Qolorha are Twin-Twin's Unbelievers. And his “unreligion” is being manipulated by what Mda sees as the same historical colonial mechanism dressed up in new clothing. This time it is called “Black Empowerment” by

the new ruling elite. As Hlongwane asserts: "Liberation movements like the African National Congress made similar promises [to those of Nongqawuse] that, in Camagu's mind, remain unfulfilled" (227). Through these historical parallels Mda's narrative illustrates a contemporary point, a political assertion. That the modern term "progress" can be just as slippery as George Grey's term "civilization." Mda's three pronged motif of false prophecy begins with the messages of Nongqawuse and Sir George Grey—in order to parallel them with modern shortcomings of black empowerment in the new South Africa. These parallels are meant to suggest an ongoing connection between the present and the days of George Grey and Nongqawuse: a colonial mechanism intact in South Africa.

Mda sees the proponents of "progress" leaving much that was good about his culture behind. He repeats the idea that "progressive" modern development has made things worse for many modern Xhosa. As Courau suggests: "the forced relocation of people and the emergence of such local problems as prostitution and unemployment as the social problems of these developments" (92). The Transkei, the province: "with the worst levels of poverty, infant mortality, life expectancy, illiteracy, infrastructure, services and skills . . . in the country" (Courau 234) has many developments that do little for the majority of the population. Not to mention the emerging problems of drug use, violence, and theft that seem to be linked with contact with such "progressive" tourist development. Many of those who have gone to the city return alienated from their traditions, and alienated from a society from which they are economically separated. Courau correctly suggests "Camagu realizes that it is for the community itself to engage

with its traditions, to be proactive in its development endeavours, and to take responsibility for its own future" (93). Twin-Twin's "cult" of believers uses the past as an excuse for the wholesale rejection of tradition, which, for Mda, is as damaging as embracing a false tradition. The latter day Qukewza, whose beliefs are founded in conservation, fights the type of progressive "black empowerment" that would turn Qolorah into a gambling city. Qukewza has shown Camagu the importance of tradition and conservation, the latter which was also of great importance to the Xhosa king Sarhili, before he was deposed by Grey. Despite his failure to lead people away from Nongqawuse, King Sarhili's conservation area Manyube "a nature reserve where people were not allowed to chop trees or hunt animals and birds" (*Heart* 151) is presented as an example of forward-looking policy in harmony with Xhosa tradition.

Early in the novel, Mda's narrator muses on the limitations of black empowerment after 1994 in South Africa:

[Camagu] discovered that the corporate world did not want qualified blacks. They preferred the inexperienced ones who were only too happy to be placed in some glass affirmative-action office where they were displayed as paragons of empowerment. No one cared if they ever got to grips with their jobs or not. All the better for the old guard if they did not. That safeguarded the old guard's position. The mentor would always be hovering around as a consultant—for even bigger rewards. The problem with bureaucrats of Camagu's ilk was that they efficiently did the jobs themselves, depriving consultants of their livelihood.

The beautiful men and women of this world did not like the Camagus of this world. They were a threat to their luxury German sedans, housing allowances and expense accounts. (*Heart* 33)

Mda expresses such authorial intrusions through Camagu and Twin-Twin. He does not try to avoid the idea that in his fiction he is expressing opinions with current political relevance.

In an interview in *Africultures*, Mda states:

I think that the government is doing a wonderful job, that it has progressive policies which sometimes even go against the majority of the population's ideas. I write about corruption because it is unacceptable. Certain people have betrayed us through horrible acts, by not treating all South Africans equally. (Interview 17)

By making "certain people" (Barney Pityana's public condemnation of Jacob Zuma comes to mind) and their cronies into character types, Mda's fiction effectively addresses this type of corruption, in a postmodern/postcolonial situational metafiction.

Camagu undergoes a positive change in Qolorha, and becomes a leader of his people:

At these meetings with political big shots, [Camagu] never forgets to remind them that all the black empowerment groups in Johannesburg and other big cities empower only the chosen few. They do not create employment for the people. Instead, whenever these big companies are taken over by these groups, there follows what is euphemistically called

rightsizing in order to maximize profits. Thousands of workers are retrenched. These black empowerment groups do not empower workers by creating jobs for them. Instead, workers lose jobs. (*Heart* 274)

At the novel's climax, two of these "consultants" show up in Qolorha to promote the new casino and development, two white men with their black "chief executive officer."

As the villagers look on, the future of their village is explained to them:

The young black man is introduced as Lefa Leballo, the new chief executive officer of the black empowerment company that is going to develop the village into a tourist heaven The two elderly white men—both in black suits—are Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. They were chief executive and chairman of the company before they sold the majority shares to black empowerment consortia. Now they act as consultants for the company. (229)

The "old guard" consultants, as Camagu suggests, have changed the window dressing of the South African business; the benefits still go to a chosen few. Lefa Leballo tells the people how: "In the bad old days such projects would be done without consulting them at all." He adds that they "must also show respect to these important visitors, by not voicing the objections that he heard some of the villagers were having about a project of such national importance" (230). Leballo, in his role as medium, (paralleling the relationship between Nongqawuse and Mhlakaza) "gives the floor to Mr. Smith" (230) who proceeds to elaborate on what Qolorha has in store.

When Camagu turns the tables on the developers by suggesting there will be no benefit to the villagers, only hordes of people and pollution, the village seems to fall in behind him. His vision of eco-tourism, inspired by Qukezwa and King Sarhili, captures their imagination. At the point of crisis Lefa Leballo shows his true colors:

We are going ahead with our plans How will you stop us? The government has already approved this project. I belong to the ruling party. Many important people in the ruling party are directors of this company. The chairman himself was a cabinet minister until he was deployed to the corporate world. We'll see to it that you don't foil our efforts. (232)

The true rhetoric of the Aristocrats of the Revolution surfaces in the face of crisis, trying to use political muscle when persuasion and the rhetoric of progress fall short. But by this time, Camagu has swayed the crowd, and has to face another complication, that of another "Great White Father."

The conservation movement against the gambling city is led by the white storeowner John Dalton, although now accepted by "his people" the Xhosa, is shown to be a danger in himself. Like many well-meaning advocates of empire, Dalton cannot see beyond his self-created role, cannot see the parallel between himself and the colonist Grey. Dalton's paternalistic water project is symbolic of the need in South Africa for real power in the hands of the people. Camagu (in another authorial intrusion) takes him to task:

You went about this whole thing the wrong way, John. The water project is failing because it was imposed on the people. No one bothered to find out their needs....

That is the danger of doing things for the people instead of doing things with the people It is happening throughout this country. The government talks of delivery and of upliftment. Now people expect things to be delivered to them without any effort on their part. They expect someone to come from Pretoria and uplift them. The notions of delivery and upliftment¹¹⁴ have turned our people into passive recipients of programmes conceived by so-called experts who know nothing about the lives of rural communities. People are denied the right to shape their own destiny. Things are done for them. The world owes them a living. A dependency mentality is reinforced in their minds.¹¹⁵ (207-208)

Camagu explains that a conquered people are prone to suffer from a dependency mentality, whether the conquering be in terms of land or economy. Great White Fathers like Dalton, despite their good intentions, exacerbate the problems of inequality in South Africa, perpetuating this dependency mentality. This fact is represented symbolically by Mda by making John Dalton's direct ancestor of the same name be the man who beheaded Xikixa, the father of the twins and the common ancestor of all of Qolorha. The idea is that the false prophecies of British civilization as imposed on the Xhosa have left

¹¹⁴ It is useful to compare the concept of "upliftment" as parodied by Kim Scott (Chapter 6)

¹¹⁵ Despite Mda's distancing of his narrative from the real-life Qolorha and the real life Rufus Hulley, there is a water project in Qolorha that was designed by Mr. Hulley that has these very same problems. I attended a town council meeting where these issues were discussed.

the people “headless,” without the guidance of their own traditions. Camagu asks that real power must be put into the actual hands of the actual people: not in the hands of people like Lefa Leballo and his colonial consultants, who, like most colonial overlords, say they are acting in the peoples’ interests.

Mda’s middle road wishes to preserve what is useful from the past, and to abandon what is harmful. *The Heart of Redness* is misunderstood if taken as an endorsement of Norman Rush’s “culturally backward-looking ideology” (“Apocalypse When?” 32). Mda’s vision looks forward, in a way that Norman Rush, with his clear and unreflecting bias toward western culture, seems to have been unable to fathom, speaking over the Xhosa like Dalton and Grey, yet another Great White Father. While Camagu understands that economic development is necessary, it can be done in a way that preserves ecology and celebrates a rich culture. Camagu focuses on living tradition. The unique methods of cooking oysters and other shellfish, and the rich tradition of ornate Xhosa clothing are both living traditions among the Xhosa of Qolorha, and both can help sustain the cooperative society. Again, despite good intentions, Dalton’s new tourist village oversimplifies and misrepresents the traditions that Camagu’s society upholds. But it is better than the gambling city that they both helped defeat, and compromise is necessary in a complex political environment. Camagu represents a perspective that is a prescription for the new South Africa: give the people an opportunity to lead themselves. Camagu advocates preserving traditions that preserve the people, a modern and forward looking approach to tradition that allows a people to keep their ties with their own history while moving forward. This is the main thrust of Mda’s novel. Camagu has a more

complicated response to Xhosa tradition, not the all or nothing approach described by Rush and the oversimplified “Xhosa self-sacrificial impulse” posited in the absence of knowledge of the culture by Rachel Donadio (53).¹¹⁶ A parallel may be found in Nelson Mandela’s description of his own Xhosa circumcision rite in *The Long Walk to Freedom*, where the foreskin is buried in the earth: “The traditional reason for this practice was so that they would be hidden before wizards could use them for evil purposes, but, symbolically, we were also burying our youth. . . . It was a kind of spiritual preparation for the trials of manhood that lay ahead” (14). Camagu (and implicitly Mda’s) approach to Xhosa tradition is not to abandon it, as Norman Rush advocates, but to interpret and adapt the tradition, so it is meaningful and helpful to its people, as the two Qukezwas demonstrate. *The Heart of Redness* is an elaborate historically-based warning to the Xhosa people, to pay mind to the interpretation of cultural narratives, and the detection of false prophecy.

Having established the political positionality of this novel, I will now show how the novel’s other postmodern elements lack contextualization within postmodern theory and mistakenly identify *The Heart of Redness* as historiographic metafiction, just as his early plays, because of absurdist elements, were thought to express an aesthetic devoid of hope. Mda states in an interview in *The Missouri Review*: “In my view every work of art makes a political statement, even if the artist does not intend so. . . . In South Africa . . .

¹¹⁶ In her piece “Post-Apartheid Fiction” in *The New York Times Magazine* Donadio confuses the Believers and the Non-Believers; a distinction crucial to the novel and to the point she is trying to make—the “Believers” are the ones who wish to conserve the landscape and heritage, not the Unbelievers. Secondly, and more she puts all Xhosa culture under the umbrella of “self sacrificial impulse.” It is unclear to the writer of this piece whether she read *The Heart of Redness*, as her views seem to come directly from Norman Rush, whom she quotes repeatedly in this article.

the dominant discourse in society was apartheid If the dominant discourse in society is politics, then the work will reflect that. ("Interview" E. Williams 66) Mda cites J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, and Andre Brink, among other South African writers, as examples of political novelists (67). All of these writers use aspects of a postmodern aesthetic; these situational metafictional novels are not accounted for in either postmodern or postcolonial theory. This missing contextualization is provided by the application of David Attwell's construct to this and other historiographic novels of the settler nations.

Intertextuality is a signpost of an "anti-totalizing" postmodernist ideology for Linda Hutcheon. As Michael Worton and Judith Still suggest in their book *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices*: "Both kinds of intertextuality that Michael Riffaterre distinguishes apply to *The Heart of Redness*" (26). Jacobs in "Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*: The novel as Umngqokolo" provides further identification with the category of historiographic metafiction. "The genealogical tree of the Xhosa's 'descendants of the headless ancestor' [Xikixa] that Mda provides at the beginning of the novel, invites one to consider it as a South African offshoot of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's magic realist novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, with its similarly twinned and recurrent family names and characteristics" (228). *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a paradigm of postmodern writing and is used extensively by Hutcheon.¹¹⁷ While she is accurate about its anti-totalizing ideology, its South African "offshoot," while fitting her postmodern criteria, is clearly involved in a present-day dialectic, most of the critical material on Mda's work acknowledging a strong political preoccupation. The comic

¹¹⁷ See Hutcheon's thoughts on magic realism being both postmodern and postcolonial in "Circling the Downspout of Empire" (169).

parodic aspects of the novel also encourage its identification as historiographic metafiction, but Wendy Woodward, suggests in her paper “Jim comes from Jo’Burg” that Mda uses humour “for transformatory, postcolonial purposes, and specifically, for rehabilitating the traditional Xhosa worldview within a historicized setting” (173). Parodic elements, such as the comic war between Bhonco and Zim, do not nullify the weight and the rigorous use of documented (and serious) history in the novel; history which is used to make a current political statement of Xhosa nationalism

Pulma Dineo Gqola’s paper “Between Nongqawuse and Sara Baartman: Memory, Colonialism and Literary Signification in Contemporary South Africa” demonstrates some of the confused thinking that comes from the overlap of postmodern theory with postcolonial literary practice. The following paragraph is expressed in terms of the author’s own Xhosa nationalism:

Nongqawuse forces us to deal with our Xhosaness and the vulnerability of that painful past which has been elevated in history to the moment of total defeat. There were wars before Nongqawuse—after her there was nothing but death, conquest, shame, landlessness, poverty. Interrogating her history is an invitation to engage with the insecurities of our identity, history, home. (149-150)

The clear political *positionality* of *The Heart of Redness* is further endorsed by her comment: “The ripple effects of these conflicts continue with contemporary characters (set in the 2000s), the descendents of the 1850s characters.” (151)

Despite this identification, Gqola confusedly links the novel's political assertion of particular effects of the past continuing in the present of a particular place (Attwell's situational metafiction) to a postmodern problematizing mode that problematizes the status of the historical referent. "[Mda's] chosen magic realist mode permits a blurring of the past and contemporary resistance to History's claims to truth. This novel, like Wicomb's (*David Story*) destabilizes the meaning we attach to the past" (151). This claim, taken directly from Hutcheon's unified school of postmodern fiction, besides contradicting what the author herself has asserted, ("it forces us to deal with our Xhosaness") is inaccurate, based on what we (including Gqola) already know about *The Heart of Redness*. The sections on George Grey are meticulously taken from Pieres, whose work is the opposite of "destabilizing the meaning we attach to the past." Mda uses Pieres to make a historical *assertion*.

Situational metafiction uses history two ways, ironically or conventionally as suits their moral/political position. From Mda's perspective, we are clearly not meant to call into question the historically documented renderings of the more heinous acts of Sir George Grey. Gqola contradicts herself in her next paragraph when she quotes Jameson's "violent formal narrative dislocation" as necessary for creating a "narrative apparatus... capable of restoring life and feeling to... our capacity to organize and live time historically," adding that "Mda's *Heart of Redness* and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story* are precisely such endeavours" (151). How exactly these political goals are brought about through "destabilize[ing] the meaning we attach to the past" is mysterious, as the two contentions are incompatible. This is a strong example of the confused thinking created

by overarching and overlapping literary theories. While Siphokazi Koyana in "Qolorha and the Dialogism of Place" admits that "Mda uses various fictional strategies (intertextuality, prophecy, myth, mysticism, and magic realism) to treat 'truth' as a relation between voices and the reality to which each refers." At the same time, he admits of Mda's ethical dimension, his moral/political position: "Mda as writer uses Qolorha as an experimental site in which to help us see more clearly those elements of our past that restrict our progress while he suggests ways in which we can engage with the present in a manner which will be valuable for the future" (52). This is clearly a dialectical use of history, in which the meaning is not "destabilized" (Gqola) or problematized (Hutcheon). There is an implicit assumption that Hutcheon has cemented in postmodern theory, that once an author "problematizes" history, history is constantly problematized throughout their work. Within situational metafiction, authors problematize and assert different histories. My work has (hopefully) uncovered and remedied this oversight in postmodern and postcolonial theory, with respect to the situational metafiction of the settler nations.

CONCLUSION

When I asked Linda Hutcheon if David Attwell's category of situational metafiction is compatible with her own category of historiographic metafiction she replied:

"Yes, they are compatible, but they are looking at different things." (Personal Interview)

I disagree. These terms are not overlapping, Situational metafiction is a natural development of what Hutcheon has labelled historiographic metafiction. It is not possible for a work to be simultaneously dialectical and non-dialectical. In other words, a work (such as *Foe*) cannot be *both* historiographic metafiction and situational metafiction.

While Attwell is reluctant to say this, it is the natural corollary of his theory.

The interest in his work comes from its addressing of particular oversights in Hutcheon's theory of the postmodern novel. Namely that a particular breed of postmodern novel, the situational metafiction of South Africa, is both postmodern, in terms of its aesthetic, and directly engaged in the contemporary political arena.

If one is to say that because of this that these works are not postmodern but postcolonial, there are clearly aspects of both of these theoretical frameworks inside all of the novels dealt with in this study. Postmodern theory needs to account for these novels that are being mistaken as non-dialectical. Hutcheon's *Poetics* in its next revision, should account for these theoretical developments.

These two kinds of novels need to be considered separately, because they are doing very different things. Postmodern novels, as seen by Hutcheon, are philosophical

meditations on the possibility and limitations of knowledge. But Hutcheon's somewhat static theory does not account for the mutations of this type of novel, mutations into particular dialectics. Because of the appeal of her largely accurate but overarching theorization of the postmodern novel, some postcolonial novels with elements of a postmodern aesthetic are being misread as apolitical postmodern meditations. The eight novels studied in this thesis have been shown to fit the description of historiographic metafiction. They have also been shown to be nothing of the sort. The most glaring example of a misreading of a political novel as an apolitical philosophical meditation I encountered was Graham Huggan's reading of the Booker prize winning *True History of the Kelly Gang*. For an intelligent theorist like Huggan to be so far off the mark showed me that the work I was doing was important. Theory is meant to be an aid to reading, not a misleading distraction. Those who lump situational metafiction in with historiographic metafiction do a disservice to both styles of writing.

These distinctions are important because of the novels in question, many are widely read and are thus widely influential. *True History of the Kelly Gang* won the Booker Prize. *No Great Mischief* won the IMPAC Dublin award. Maurice Shadbolt was referred to by the Times Literary Supplement as "a grand old man of New Zealand letters." Coetzee won the Nobel and the Booker prize. If such influential authors are making political statements, it is important to recognize these statements, as Huggan did not in the case of *True History*. A graduate student reading his review would be tempted to understand Carey's book as apolitical meditations on the nature of history. I believe my work has shown conclusively that this is not the case. If one does not identify the

politics in these novels, one does not understand them fully. The politics are there, and current theory, rather than aiding the comprehension of these novels, encourages their misinterpretation. In my project of looking at the use of documented history in the contemporary fiction of the settler nations, the theory available to me was not only a hindrance; I realized I had to theorize this area of writing (the situational metafiction of the settler nations) myself. Attwell's observations on Coetzee were of great value to me, as they applied to all of the works dealt with in my thesis: postmodern looking works that assert a moral/political position in a contemporary political dialectic.

If I apply what Hutcheon said about "not looking for the same things" we come up with an interesting possibility: that perhaps these novels can be read on levels that are both political and apolitical. Again, I find this idea very interesting, but I am not sure that an author's motivation in conceiving of a novel could be simultaneously concerned with specific political issues and remain philosophically detached. Indeed, I do not think this makes sense. I do believe that novelists like Peter Carey and Thomas King, for example, use postmodern techniques to make nationalist statements within a particular dialectic. This is not accounted for in Hutcheon's body of work, and these situational metafiction, as I have shown, reach enormous audiences.

This thesis certainly leaves the category of historiographic metafiction intact, but it elaborates on this category, by identifying a phenomenon of postcolonial writing in the settler nations. It is my contention that the phenomenon of situational metafiction has moved beyond the settler nations; this further identification and theorization is work that remains to be done.

