'Modern Stone-Age Slavery' : Images of Aboriginal Labour and Sexuality

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As a white girl growing up in Bardon, Queensland, I used to stretch out on the carpeted floor in our steamy lounge room to watch television with my brothers and sisters. Tarzan, the pale wild-man, showed us how 'natural man' behaved in the jungles, and his partner Jane did the same for 'natural woman'. My young brother learnt the exotic language - that rather repetitive 'bwana mon-tinna bibi', spoken amidst whooping bird and ape sound effects. *Lost in Space* showed us the white nuclear family in the technologically advanced future and my brothers did 'tribal' dancing to its theme song. *The Flintstones* taught us 'yab-a-daba-d-o-o!' and the life of a farcical 'modern stone-age family'. This recently revived spoof on the 1960s American nuclear family was full of ambiguity about what 'primitive society' meant and made no reference to North American Indians. Fred and Barney were the hard done-by breadwinners who went out to earn a wage, while Wilma and Betty kept house and respectively raised the stereotypical sweet toddler Pebbles and the boyish Bam Bam, with his trademark club. In *The Flintstones*, the men thought they were dominant but the wives were cleverer, 'nagging' and covertly controlling them. The men tried to evade the women's demands, but Fred Flintstone was always calling out 'W-I-L-M-A!', demanding that his food and everything else be organised for him.

The 'modern stone-age family' of the Flintstones were a not-so-other Other, immediately recognizable to 'us'. The Flintstone's satire relied on themes central to gender-labour power conflicts in the contemporary white family, made funny by preconceptions about stone-age gender relations. In the 'serious' stone-age of children's encyclopaedias, Neanderthal men ruled uncontested, and with a large club in one hand, the dominant image had him unceremoniously dragging women around by the hair.¹ *The Flintstones* had cars and houses and drive-in theatres and rather than hunting for food, had brontosaurus-burger shops; they were therefore remarkably 'civilized'. Somehow these popular media portrayals, along with all the other lessons appropriate to Australian children belonging to this outpost of the British Empire, combined to produce a cumulative image of 'primitive' life, always contrasted against the white Australian family. In school readers, Australian Aborigines were said to be one of the last 'stone-age' people still in existence. They had not 'progressed' to the 'iron age', not even to establishing gardens; they were a relic, we might 'help' them now, but they had no place in our collective imaginings of the future.

None of the regular television programs - mainly American imports - which I watched as a child dealt with themes relating to Australian Aborigines, but I also encountered numerous story-books, bric-a-brac on plates and wall-hangings which portrayed them as extremely cute children - 'picanninies' - who lived in the bush.² Whenever I ventured beyond suburbia, I looked for these children

and was disappointed that I never saw any sign of them on bushwalks. For some reason I rejected what I heard about the adults being dirty and inferior. As I grew older I became exposed to different images, such as those of Aboriginal women as sexualised, as 'cheap'; this was apparently a 'natural' part of white gender formation in this colonial nation.

Any discussion of western images or representations of Aboriginal labour must start with a critique of our contemporary preconceptions. Urban Aborigines and others have been exposed to similar configurations from the mass media and other venues, but their different location changed the personal meanings of 'primitive', 'civilized', 'self' and 'other'. Sometimes this could result in confusion regarding identity and poor self-esteem or in a more constructive oppositional stance. As Marianna Torgovnick stated in *Gone Primitive*, her excellent study of western representations of so-called 'primitive cultures':

To study the primitive is ... to enter an exotic world which is also a familiar world. That world is structured by sets of images and ideas that have slipped from their original metaphoric status to control perceptions of primitives ...

She refers to such images and ideas as primitivist 'tropes'³.

Recent interest in textual analysis and the study of representations has shifted the emphasis of scholarship; literary and visual imagery is now problematised, not just to scrutinise the credibility of a 'fact' but rather to glean evidence of the meanings of that discourse.⁴ Partly influenced by the post-modernist concern to study texts⁵ but also responding to demands by Aboriginal people that whites no longer attempt to write about Aboriginal experiences, some white anthropologists and historians have retreated to the study of representations of 'the other'. Examples of this genre are Jeremy Beckett's edited collection, *Past and Present* and John Arnold and Bain Attwood's edited work, *Power Knowledge and Aborigines*.⁶ The study of representations, however, should not be conceived of as a safe, whites-only territory, for Aboriginal scholars must also participate in this debate. Edward Said's *Orientalism* has often been oversimplified to imply a one-sided representation, which would enable the west to learn about itself, whereas Said was really arguing about an ongoing historical nexus between East and West.⁷ Furthermore, we must not lose sight of the negotiations which took place between the represented and the representers, even though such evidence, as in my discussion below, may be limited. Particular pundits from different cultures - usually male - presented the view of their society preferred by their interest group or faction; this was part of a strategy to gain endorsement of a particular subjectivity or political position. Certain Aborigines have thus been labelled 'professionals' in the business of providing information to whites. It was a position of both short and long term strategic, ideological and material benefits.

This article does not attempt a comprehensive overview of the ways in which Aboriginal workers have been portrayed. Rather, it aims to demonstrate some of the interplays between patriarchy and class which informed the political

agendas of colonial and gender struggle.⁸ The first set of representations come from the early observers at Port Jackson (later Sydney, New South Wales) and depicted images of Aborigines who worked for themselves or worked in the traditional economy. The second area of discussion concerns aspects of twentieth century class struggle and collaboration, especially in the Northern Territory of the 1920s and 1960s; it focusses upon representations by white male pastoralists and unionists and by considering some Aboriginal versions of events, provides a previously suppressed reading of the Wave Hill walk-off.⁹ This approach leads to insights into the relevance of gender in shaping historical processes and provides reflections upon the impact of colonialism on gender, cultural and other formations of identity.

The Gentleman's Savage

Among the earliest and most influential sets of representations are those contained in the journals of the first British invaders - the late eighteenth-century men of the upper or middle class who served the British Crown and its military wings, the marines or navy. These observations have been constantly repeated and embellished and later endorsed by Australian historians as the freshest and most accurate depictions of Australian Aboriginal society available.¹⁰ Twentieth century descriptions by anthropologists encountering relatively 'untouched tribes' enriched the repertoire, as did popular literary descriptions. Moreover, since the 1980s Aboriginal men's and women's alternative representations via books, art, film and photography have reached a wider audience.¹¹

Dominant images of Aboriginal work in traditional society have divided along gender lines. Aboriginal men were commonly depicted as lazy (leisurely/free) and the women as slave-drudges (unfree). This was the case in 1788 and the imagery still has credibility in 1995. In relation to work, the term 'Aborigines' usually meant the men, with whites expecting them to be the exclusive breadwinners; consequently they were commonly stereotyped as lazy or more recently as 'bludgers', disinclined to work or to work hard and likely to inexplicably 'wander' off on 'walkabout'. These negative images actually accuse Aborigines of having too much freedom.¹² In much of the nineteenth and twentieth century, both missionaries and government officials advocated training and 'apprenticeship' (unfree labour) in servile forms of work as the means by which Aborigines would achieve 'uplift' and 'civilisation', which promised the right to gain citizenship, full 'equality' and 'freedom'.

In the Australian context, the most enduring and commonly cited imagery of Aboriginal women related to assessments of their traditional status within their own society. 'Slaves' and 'chattels' are the most common terms. Their husbands are represented as their masters, who were, by contrast, lazy and domineering. The women were considered to be property, victims of male violence, of primitive rituals, of unrefined lust.¹³

The Port Jackson settlement was a place premised upon detention and convict labour, where Aboriginal men were also being held captive by the British. Female

convicts were subject to various humiliations, and women's forced labour was central to the system. It therefore seems anomalous that white upper-class men were so obsessed with the dignity of black women's labour in 'savage' society.

Captain Watkin Tench, a 'First Fleet' arrival, subscribed to the same savagist imagery already used in the Canadian and North American literature:

the women are in all respects treated with savage barbarity; condemned not only to carry the children, but all the other burthens, they meet in return for submission only with blows, kicks, and every other mark of brutality.¹⁴

Tench often wished that 'those European philosophers, whose closet speculations exalt a state of nature above a state of civilization' could survey the 'phantom' raised by their 'heated imaginations'. Accepting the category of 'state of nature' as pertaining to the people he called 'Indians', he reasoned that it was 'least adapted' to promote people's happiness. His own ruminations produce a more suitable imperialist discourse:

a savage roaming for prey amidst his native deserts, is a creature deformed by all those passions, which afflict and degrade our nature, unsoftened by the influence of religion, philosophy, and legal restriction: and that the more men unite their talents, the more closely the bands of society are drawn; and civilization advanced ... and man fitted for his unalienable station in the universe.¹⁵

Tench was correct in that it was easier to write of such ideas in a distant 'European' (he meant French) armchair than as a member of the advance guard of a British imperial army in the process of usurping the original landowners.

Rousseauian notions of the 'noble savage' evolved out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the corruption of the 'civilized' elite, but they invited fresh observers to test the theories. When they did so, it was often to defend their own society, especially its 'higher' class ideals.¹⁶ British society was structured around a political, economic and social system in which work was controlled and organised along certain lines, though in the 1780s and 1790s, this was in a state of flux. The Christian tradition, however, stratified certain types of work as 'higher' than others, and such a philosophy of work was a central tenet of civilization. When men like Captain Tench saw that indigenous women's work was not confined, as according to the evolving British ideal, to domestic work, they were depicted as drudges. Work for subsistence and work regarding marital obligations were conflated as leading to a 'slave' status. Consequently, Eora women were thus believed to be subject to oppression as subsistence and sexual slaves, challenging any subscribers to romantic imagery relating to 'noble savages'. The discourse is best understood in terms of the ferment going on in England, especially the ascendancy of the Evangelical movement. Catherine Hall argues that between 1780 and 1832 England was enduring a transition from an aristocratic and mercantile capitalist society to an industrial capitalist society with a growing bourgeoisie. In opposition to the aristocracy's moral laxness, the

Evangelicals wanted to reconstruct daily life by creating a new morality with liberal and humanist parameters, yet buttressed by social conservatism. Central to their mission was an attack on slavery, a moral issue viewed as 'above politics'. Of equal importance was a mission to redefine the position of the woman in the British family, and this was supported by arguments about the 'natural order', another transcendent issue.¹⁷ They adopted an active programme to implement their ideals, which stressed the education of women, the poor, and later the 'natives'. As well as being significant to the middle-class ascendancy, anti-Slavery also gained nationalistic associations with Britishness.¹⁸ Women's 'nature' and status was hotly debated after the French revolution and this was highlighted in England by the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. But the Evangelicals totally rejected the notion of women having the same rights as bourgeois men; although they should be well-educated, this was to better equip them as wives and mothers.¹⁹ A complicated nexus was evolving whereby women's role and the slavery issue had become central to shaping a new society based on Christianity and progress.²⁰

Tench's own 'unalienable station' as part of the Imperial project and the English class structure facilitated an affinity with such attitudes. As a 'first-hand' observer, as a well read, curious, 'enlightenment man', he claimed 'neutral' insights. Yet he already categorised the people whose land the British were alienating as 'Indians', meaning they fitted an existing intellectual tradition of representation, and his language is steeped in a much older discourse of savagism.²¹ Amidst the discourse of otherness was also the belief that 'original man' was 'us' in an earlier form, that is, our human ancestors, our historical origins and therefore the natural, cruder beginnings of the present order. Hence Aboriginal women were sometimes dubbed 'Evites'. In the Judaeo-Christian creation story, Eve was told by God that Adam would 'rule over' her.²² So in various half-contradictory conflations, slave imagery for indigenous people could simultaneously adopt the moral high ground about what the British rejected and justify the oppressive side of what they were.

Representations of Aboriginal labour have never been fresh or objective, but have continuously operated in the context of a more universal discourse about savagism and about gender. Striking similarities exist between depictions of Australian Aborigines and North American and Canadian indigenous peoples. Earlier depictions often placed special emphasis on themes of labour and hierarchy, focussing primarily upon themes of 'freedom' versus its opposite: 'enslavement'.²³

The blame for Australian Aboriginal women's subjection was placed not upon their family structure, however, but upon the moral fibre of Aboriginal men, assumed to be their rulers. Exogamous marriage of women was seen by the British as akin to property exchange;²⁴ their men were seen as 'owning' them. In the example of the famous Aboriginal diplomat, Bennelong, who lived around the Port Jackson settlement in the 1790s, Lieutenant David Collins also described how he was dominated in various ways by his wife, Barangaroo, who was harshly criticised by white observers for such behaviour.²⁵ On the one hand

the predominant rhetoric condemned male bullying of women, yet the same writers observed female bullying of men. But such evidence did not fit the shape of the dominant discourse so was marginalised and soon forgotten.

'Ceremonie d'un Mariage' from Domeny de Rienzi
Océanie vol 3, Paris (1855) ML980 115A3
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Barrington's *History of New South Wales*, 1802, of somewhat mysterious origins but nonetheless a popular text, synthesised and dramatised what the author gleaned from earlier tracts on 'marriage by capture'. A plate depicted the muscular savage with club in hand, dragging his unconscious woman victim through the bush. Such actions led him to conclude their conduct made them 'considerably inferior to brute creation'.²⁶ This is how he explained the 'typical courtship':

The monster ... stupefies her with blows, which he inflicts with his club, on her head, back, neck, and indeed every part of her body, then, snatching up one of her arms, he drags her, streaming with blood from her wounds, through the woods, over stones, rocks, hills and logs, with all the violence and determination of a savage, till he reaches his tribe.²⁷

This description has every element of myth, of relying on pre-existing primitivist tropes. The author knows what savages are like, and so does the reader, and this merely confirms what they already believe. Other stories of brutal courtship and marriage had repetitive elements and lacked any detail regarding time, place and characters, suggesting that they may have all stemmed from one

observed incident. Their vague origins suggest that they could have emerged from rumour amongst the British or from an Aboriginal tale, repeated and embellished by each subsequent author. We cannot discount the possibility that it was an Aboriginal man in close contact with the white rulers - a man such as Bennelong, plagued by marital problems, or Colebee, whose wife Bennelong managed to gain as his own - who was the source of such stories. From other colonial stories of savage capture, including those of white women, both author and audience knew the story well.²⁸

Australian Aboriginal women were seen as slave-drudges due to their subsistence and carrying work, and as 'sexual slaves' because of their traditional marriage to older men and polygamous marital arrangements. Like a slave, she was portrayed as subject to forceful abduction. After contact with non-Aboriginal society, her husband was often described as a pimp, a parasite, who lent her out to anyone who paid. The British observed that the man did not play the role of primary breadwinner; indeed Aboriginal women played a similar, if not more important, role, and the men also participated in nurturing children. This challenged the 'natural order' believed in by European civilization, even that of the Rousseauian noble savage tradition. By the 1780s, the philosophy of the noble savage was increasingly disputed, partly perhaps to reassert that the British and Imperial order was superior to the 'primitives'. We also need to ask who was meant to be impressed by this, the 'savage' or the 'civilized', the British reader or the British overseas?

Slavery is a concept implying extreme inequality in human power relations. Debates about its definition still raise uneasy questions of what is free and what is unfree labour and the term has long held strongly emotive and moral associations.²⁹ While generally 'slave' applied to people who were bought and sold for labour purposes, today its strongest associations regard people of different colour. The African slave trade had such a strong impact on the population of the 'New World', and now increasingly, on the populations of old imperial nations like Britain. Slavery is not just about property status; it also describes coercive labour relations, where force has been used to obtain, retain or extract labour.³⁰ An Australian workers' song argued against imported indentured labour, referring to convicts as 'white slaves'.³¹ Sometimes it refers to a type of work rather than the nature of work relations; the *Shorter Oxford's* first definition is: 'Severe toil like that of a slave, heavy labour, hard work, drudgery' followed by 'servitude, bondage; the condition of being entirely subject to, or dominated by, some power or influence; a state of subjection or subordination comparable to that of a slave'.³² For British and Americans of the late eighteenth century, its meanings were personal and political ones, tempered by class, and many well-to-do households had actually used slaves in their own homes. As attitudes, laws and circumstances changed over the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, those meanings also changed.

Many of the early British-Australian representations have a great deal to do with a colonial preoccupation with a social order based on particular gendered labour relations. In their own society, relations between genders and between classes were well prescribed, but the relationship between coloniser and colonised

could not be conceived until a conceptual framework was created by which to understand and justify its power arrangements. In a circular, if not tautological, argument, the allegation that indigenous men did not behave like 'gentlemen' to their women proved their primitive, lowly status, just as being classed as 'primitives' confirmed that this was the way they treated their women.

Ethnocentric judgements about women's role within the institution of Aboriginal marriage, became a sort of backdrop to the operation of British common law, which necessarily implied the negation of native law. Furthermore, these widely held notions influenced the level of protection Aboriginal women received from their own men and from white men respectively. In Aboriginal law, there were safeguards to prevent unwarranted violence by a man towards his wife. Certain male kin enforced this law which could even result in execution. On all Australian frontiers, tribal law enforcers were usually perceived as law-breakers in the eyes of British law and in the eyes of the Christian missionaries. The mythology softened any widely condoned imperative to punish white men who offended against black women. After all, she lacked marital choice and was slave labour. Given this imagined yardstick, the colonial state could regard any sexual or employment relations with European men, however harsh, as preferable.

British concern about black women's status in their own society also proved a welcome discursive device to avoid guilt about their own transgressions on Aboriginal property, as expressed in the doctrine of *terra nullius*. Woman has often been equated with land in western imagery: for example virgin land, the mother country, now mother earth. The slavery theme provided so-called 'evidence' that 'natural woman' was subordinate to man. But implicit in such representations was the gender/labour ideology that her realm was the home and the refined arts rather than heavy labour. In many ways, the depiction of Aboriginal women was a message to the writers' own wives and their class. It was a form of ideological gender warfare, being played out rather obtusely via a new sample of 'savages'. White women activists had certainly not lost the battle against male 'savagery' in their own society where women were considered a form of property, but a focus up on external examples, such as imagined 'savages', was a terrific diversion.

British men were thus empowered as 'heroic rescuers' of Aboriginal women; 'saving' black men from their aggressive women was never an issue. The images projected upon Aboriginal society advantaged the elite British male self; they gave him a heightened sense of masculinity and asserted a superiority over the 'primitive' not because of his physical strength, but according to the value of their ideal of 'gentle' treatment of women. There was no need to prove that the lower classes were rougher than 'gentlemen'; that was part of hegemonic ideology, implicit in the very language of class.

Following Pateman,³³ another possibility is that the British understood the marriage contract as fundamental to the social contract and to the ordering of the patriarchal state. So, by using Aboriginal male behaviour towards their wives as a yardstick of civilization, the British were perhaps really testing their own ability to rule over these people. That the imagery of slaves and chattels was

targeted at the moral rights of Aboriginal husbands over their wives suggests that this discourse was part of a campaign to undermine Aboriginal family relations, most explicitly Aboriginal marriage. Did such a model pose a threat for British men due to contemporary agitation regarding women's status within their own society? Or was it some sort of half-conscious attempt to destroy what they perceived as the cornerstone of Aboriginal society? Once the marriage institution in Aboriginal society was demolished in their own minds, if not in reality, it would be relatively simple to dominate the women and colonise the society. White male rulers could be substituted and would implicitly do a better job than the black 'monsters'.

Given the gradual nature of dissemination of such ideas, this may seem far-fetched. After all, the books had to be published, the audience reached. But such texts, like the earlier oral evidence of Joseph Banks, were viewed as authoritative information by the men of the Colonial Office and it was they who were to write the laws which shaped official Aboriginal policy. The British needed little convincing of their validity, given the precedents of colonization in other countries, such as Canada, which had already enabled the British to develop well-established primitivist tropes.

Representations were not just 'mistakes' and nor did they remain in the realm of philosophy or ideology. Consciously or unconsciously contrived, they soon became practice via the actions of frontiersmen and policy-makers. But they were at their most powerful on the level of a comprehensive cultural discourse, an imperialistic discourse, which simultaneously ratified the ideals of the dominant culture and debunked those of the dispossessed. By focussing on work, this imperial discourse discredited the validity of the traditional economy; by focussing on gender, especially marital/sexual relations and labour, it attacked a fundamental organisational tenet of Aboriginal society.

Pastoralists

We will now leap forward in time, and travel north to consider a range of representations of white labour in the Northern Territory in the first decades of Australian nationhood in the twentieth century. Here the imagery most palatable to White Australia came from white women. The literary representations of Jeannie Taylor, or Mrs Aeneas Gunn, are probably best known, especially the quirky, unpredictable behaviour of domestic servants, including Bett Bett, the 'rescued orphan'. *We of the Never Never* assessed Aboriginal women as failing in feminine decorum, as servile, yet sometimes authoritative within their own community. Mary and Elizabeth Durack also portrayed them warmly, in strong maternalistic tones - the kind one might adopt to describe the baffling ways of an amusing pet.³⁴ The dominant image of an innocent, childlike ambience masked a sense of cultural incomprehension by white authors. The labour relationship in which Aboriginal workers were always inferior to the white 'missus', meant that Aborigines could be reassuringly portrayed as social and racial inferiors, in a familiar discourse about troublesome servants who needed to be kept under thumb with 'colourful antics' to entertain readers.

These apparently benign, maternalistic images, discussed by Tim Rowse in relation to the writings of the Durack pastoralist family in the Kimberleys,³⁵ had a profound impact on the popular imagination of white Australians, especially in the formation of national Australian identity. Gunn's books were best-sellers, regularly reprinted, and made compulsory reading in Australian schools for decades. Their stories and their telling embodied something that those in authority believed young white Australians needed to learn about themselves. Imbued with a clear sense of their place as colonials, as bravely 'settling' a harsh land, and generally laundered of obvious violence, the white people benevolently occupied a pedestal high above the native peoples. It was as though the Aboriginal people happened to be in the same country by some strange accident of nature, and needed to be adopted, helped or rescued by well-meaning whites. Alternative terms like 'kidnapped', 'exploited as cheap labour', 'stolen from families' and 'country' found no place in such 'nice' children's stories about 'good pioneers'.³⁶ The language of paternalism, its codes of control, the adages about 'firmness and kindness' all had parallels in other colonial situations, for example Fiji and Ceylon. Katherine Susannah Prichard's *Coonardoo* (1929) was far more critical of the colonial regime, and dealt with sexual topics which excluded it from the school text-book scene. Even this novel, however, emphasised undying loyalty and powerful reciprocation on the part of the white matriarch and the Aboriginal servant.³⁷ Only Xavier Herbert's *Capricornia* dropped the paternalistic theme.³⁸ Despite its recognition in literary circles, this far cruder and ruder frontier story was considered unsuitable for white women, and 'polite society' generally, and its exposure to white schoolchildren rarely occurred before the 1980s.

Benign images of Australian Aboriginal work relations were effectively marketed and their repetition and 'fit' into palatable Imperial discourses made them convincing. Like children with strange ways, Aborigines were unreliable but cute. Their employers were not capitalists trying to make a profit but benefactors doing the primitives a favour. Here was the kindly mother; here was the naughty child.³⁹ Sometimes the child even got so naughty they ran away for good. It was a comfortable way of looking at 'the Aboriginal problem' for white Australians. Whites remained the 'good guys' and Aborigines the free-wheeling pets who sometimes needed our help, but were also happy being independent. The word slave could not be further from the lips of these pastoralists as they described 'their' children of the 'wilds'; they spoke of freedom, of their habit of going walkabout - to roam with loose abandon, to do whatever they wanted, free in spirit and in body.

As humanitarian lobby groups became more prominent in government in the 1920s, the pastoralists posited themselves as historically aware authority figures with a sense of responsibility for Aboriginal welfare. On behalf of the Northern Territory Pastoral Lessees Association (NTPLA), W.H. Grant, of the Peel River Land and Mineral Company, made an introductory speech at the 1927 pastoral award hearings of the Arbitration Court. He started by acknowledging the recent 'takeover' of lands 'over which the aboriginals had been accustomed to roam and hunt for centuries'. The pastoralists, he argued, 'pay rent to the Government for the land and naturally consider that they are

entitled to the use of it.' Partly to prevent stock losses and partly to obtain 'accessible labour', Aborigines were 'encouraged to work on stations.' This assessment was included in an argument against Aboriginal workers receiving equal pay.

The aboriginals take to station work readily, and the occupation suits them, as perhaps no other industry would. They become fairly efficient, though, of course, not to the same degree as a white man. They are useful because of their local knowledge of the country ... They have, of course, neither the general knowledge, intelligence or initiative of a white man, but when put on a definite job, and properly instructed, they are often reliable enough when trained. Their habit of 'going bush' or on 'walkabout' as it is called, when they feel that way affects ... their dependability.⁴⁰

In 1927 the NTPLA made an official policy statement on Aboriginal employment stressing that Aborigines liked the work, had 'natural gifts' and enjoyed 'freedom' in the wet season. The pastoralist Lowe of Mataranka stated: 'The blacks are perfectly happy and satisfied. They do not know the value of money'. Another stated that they would be difficult to get working if they received money: 'it will be the end of the happy blackfellow'.⁴¹ Pastoralists also took up the cry that money was evil, that it would make Aborigines 'no happier'.⁴² 'Anyone who knows the black will agree that it is impossible to overwork him. The blacks on the stations are happier than they are anywhere else.'⁴³ The assumption the all-knowing role of one with 'inside' knowledge of Aboriginal cultural ways and measures of their happiness provided powerful rhetoric in a world ignorant about Aboriginal culture.

Unionists

An opposing discourse on the status of Aboriginal labour dominated the writing of white trade unionists, humanitarians and some anthropologists. But such alternative views received no state endorsements in school texts. White unionists' first concern was for their own conditions of labour and their platform on Aborigines was poorly formulated.

The Australian labour movement had been long united against the importation of cheap Asian, Pacific Island and European (for example Maltese and Italian) labour. In the Northern Territory, as earlier in the NSW and Victoria, unionists had mobilised against coloured labour, as in the 1911 strike at the Darwin wharf which protested the employment of Chinese workers instead of Europeans. In 1913 the NT Administrator (the equivalent of state governor) used Aboriginal labour drafted through the government to break a shipping strike.⁴⁴ Only the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) openly accepted Chinese and other coloured members. Very few Aboriginal workers belonged to unions, and most unions made no effort to recruit them.

In the Territory, where pastoral and other employers relied extensively on Aboriginal labour and Chinese numbers were dwindling due to the repatriations

and immigration restrictions of the White Australia policy, Aboriginal labour became a key issue. The union secretary, Toupein, thus claimed that Aborigines were employed so cheaply they were 'a menace to the white man'.⁴⁵ Their case argued for the introduction of wages for Aborigines, recognition of white men's supervisory role with blacks, a set ratio of whites to be employed for every so many Aborigines employed and a total ban on Aboriginal labour in the droving industry. They also wanted Aborigines entirely segregated from whites - reputedly to 'prevent their extinction' but more likely to rid themselves of competition.

The North Australian Workers Union (NAWU) depicted Aborigines as 'slaves without the advantage of slavery'. They argued:

A slave owner would not allow his slave to be decimated by preventable disease and starvation the same as these people are in the country or bush. If there is no slavery in the British Empire then the NT is not part of the British Empire; for it certainly exists here in its worst form. ⁴⁶

Yet in apparent contradiction to aspects of their slavery arguments, unionists had earlier argued a pro-development line that 'the Western Australian did not make any headway till he discarded the black'.⁴⁷ In the 1927 pastoral award case, they argued that blacks had no sense of duty and would go off hunting or 'go bush' unless carefully watched and directed.⁴⁸ This was part of the union's demand for the jobs of white men to be classed as supervisory and to be granted special allowances accordingly.

The Commissioner decided that the employment of blacks in greater numbers than whites proved Aborigines did not provide equivalent work to a white man.⁴⁹ Given their depiction of their Aboriginal co-workers as unreliable and requiring special supervision, the unionists had provided supporting evidence. Yet this clearly contradicted their stance that Aboriginal labour was worth the same wages as a white man. Further, the Commissioner accepted that Aboriginal living conditions were not at the same level as whites, concluding that it was less difficult to cook for a 'black' so three Aborigines counted for white men in cooking allowances. So cooks were to receive less pay and the unionists failed to have their real concern about the undesirability of cheap labour addressed at all.

Humanitarians, feminist groups and the international anti-slavery, human and civil rights lobbies were actively concerned with Aboriginal labour conditions in the 1920s and 30s. Like the Church missionary societies, they also used the terms chattels and slaves to describe Aboriginal pastoral workers. ⁵⁰ (Some of these issues and examples are discussed in articles by Holland as well as Evans and Scott in this collection.) The Australian Board of Missions and Aboriginal Friends Association opposed the structure of pastoral work in the Northern Territory because wages were not paid. They argued that this system, being 'akin to slavery' should not be accepted in a British country. Aborigines needed financial independence or 'their doom is definitely sealed'.⁵¹ Missionaries wanted the right to visit pastoral stations, but they also wanted the right to have

Aborigines working at mission stations in more 'refined' occupations than pastoralism. In their view, stations were places of rampant sexuality, alcohol and other vices, whereas missions were havens - albeit working ones - away from the evils of the western world.⁵²

In the 1920s and 30s, the Australian humanitarian lobby was becoming increasingly influential and well-organised. In 1930, Arthur Blakely, Minister for Home Affairs endorsed their view when he stated:

It would appear that there was a form of slavery in operation and that aboriginals were being worked without any remuneration whatever.⁵³

The same year the North Australian Workers Union did a complete turnaround by accepting Cecil Cook's, the Chief Protector of Aborigines, policies on racial stratification. They therefore supported the idea that Aborigines *not* be paid, but that 'half-castes', the term for Aborigines of mixed descent, receive wages. On the union's behalf, Rowe claimed that pastoralists wanted to keep Aborigines of mixed parentage 'on the level of the black so that they can exploit them as blacks ... These lads are driven back into the black's camp and live the black's life.'

A pastoralist claimed the 'half-caste apprenticeship scheme' introduced by the government for 'training and uplift' was a way of 'Hiring them out as slaves.'⁵⁴ Chief Protector Cook argued that Aboriginal 'myalls', unlike those of mixed descent, required no money: 'he can get everything he requires from the bush. By comparison the white man is at a disadvantage and he had a skewed attitude regarding equality. [T]he point of equality is reached where the white man is employed on the basic wage and the aboriginal is unemployed.'⁵⁵ Thus in Cook's view, Aborigines had unique characteristics and freedoms of choice which made them the opposite of slaves.

The labour movement, in arguing for equal rights for men, had much to lose if it endorsed arguments of differential entitlements on the basis of 'race'. The confusion white unionists suffered regarding Aboriginal labour issues were evident in another case which happened around the same period. In 1928, Darwin unionists introduced a boycott on all hotels which employed Aboriginal labour. Much of their rhetoric hinged around the need to attract more white women to the Northern Territory. For the boozy white Territorians, this abstemious protest revealed a strong commitment and lasted a remarkable five months. In the ensuing public debate, however, they became demoralised and somewhat humiliated by newspaper articles which classed them as hypocrites due to their employment of Aboriginal women or men in their homes and gardens. They argued that such domestic help was essential to keep white women in the tropics. These unfortunate weather-beaten women, supposedly endangering their health and reproductive capacity by simply being in tropical conditions, deserved any 'little assistance' they could get.⁵⁶ Unionists were all too ready to criticise the larger employers such as pastoralists and hoteliers for employing black labour, but had not apparently noticed they were doing so themselves. Perhaps this was because domestic work was associated with wifely, unpaid labour. White

unionists argued such assistance was their due as white men in the tropics and they refused to relinquish it. But the blame was placed primarily on the needs of the white women of the Territory - a very small group who did not actually join the debate - and not upon the men's own domestic requirements.

White unionists argued that black labour was keeping them out of work. But their voice became unstuck because they had no framework by which to explain the odd disjunctions between gender, class, race, work inside and outside the home. The white man's burden, the white woman's burden and the place of white men within the context of colonial power relations did not fit the dichotomous paradigms of the working man's struggle, which saw oppression as being primarily between capitalists and free white labour. Most unionists conceptualised coloured labour as another capitalist/employer attack on them. More fundamentally, white workers' disadvantage, especially in tropical and more remote regions, paled in comparison with the advantages they enjoyed of power and status above the colonised class, and with their added opportunities for leisure.

Unionists' use of the term 'slaves' signified injustice but also neatly fitted their image of primitives as subordinate to 'real' workers like themselves. Aborigines' lack of codified rights was largely because unionists had neither encouraged them to join or let them into the unions. During the 1930s, some communist sympathisers, dubbed 'red ragers' by the pastoralists, had raised Aboriginal awareness of unjust wage and labour conditions. But when unionists were asked by the Arbitration Court to consider what constituted 'good workers' and what did not, their response reflected the standardised 'Award' system and the principle of the male breadwinner earning a 'family wage' linked with living costs.⁵⁷ They did not consider that plurality in workstyles or family shape might be incorporated.

When attempting to discredit employers, unionists categorised Aboriginal workers as slaves, and when to their advantage, they endorsed the pastoralist view that blacks were difficult to handle. And when it came to striking against their employment as cheap competition in hotels, they had not even thought through the conflicting issue of their own reliance upon Aboriginal labour. Additionally, these mainly male unionists were also exploiters of Aboriginal women's sexual labours, a category not recognised by contemporary society as labour at all, but as a moral failing. Such relationships were excluded from workers' representations of Aboriginal workers, excluded from their images of self and their rhetoric. Apparently these were rights of Empire which they would not eschew. As workers, they must be the exploited group. There was no attempt to develop an ideology to acknowledge their complicity as colonisers and usurpers of Aboriginal land and 'slave-drivers' themselves.⁵⁸

The labour movement knew they benefited from the imperial project, but to their detriment, they did not develop a consistent stance on Aboriginal labour, instead merely sharing the prevailing national mythologies, including those of primitivism and paternalism.⁵⁹ The 'pioneer legend' which John Hirst showed to be middle-class⁶⁰ could easily be shared by the workers. Therefore, the force of Never Never style propaganda did not upset them particularly; race and

their employer status enabled them to wear at once the same hats as their bosses and to identify themselves as white pioneers, employers of and even benefactors towards Aborigines.

By the 1960s, with African anti-colonialist struggles and American civil rights struggles bringing black rights onto the radical agenda, the Australian trade union movement became actively involved in supporting the Aboriginal stockmen who led the Wave Hill strike or 'walk-off'. Economist and lawyer Frank Stevens noted the negative labels pastoralists and other white employers used in relation to their Aboriginal employees. They were 'lazy, incompetent, dirty, untruthful, alcoholic and of low intellect.' Stevens was struck by the similarities with what Californian cotton farmers said of Afro-Americans, Mexicans and (Caucasian) Oklahomans. His survey exposed many of the contradictions in these allegations, proving that 'race' factors were much less relevant than the comparability of servile social relationships.⁶¹

The traditional interpretation of what happened at Wave Hill has been of an equal wages struggle. In a noble gesture, southern and Territory leaders of the white union movement backed the unfortunate exploited Aboriginal workers and saved them from the nasty enemy, the British multi-national, Vestey's. Victoriously, they achieved equal wages and later Land Rights. More recently, southern Aboriginal groups have explained their own important involvement in the victory. For diverse groups, it symbolised an enlightenment regarding Aboriginal economic exploitation and land rights, Australia-wide.

Aboriginal leaders like Vincent Lingiari and Lupgna Giari (Captain Major) eventually enabled Frank Hardy and other activists to understand that land rights and less demeaning treatment by employers were just as important for them as the wages issue. Yet there was another, hitherto muffled, reason for the walk-off, possibly more important than anything - one not totally censored by Hardy, but marginalised, with no place in the storyline. This was white men's unfair sexual monopolisation of Aboriginal women, which was certainly one of the key reasons for the walk-off. Indeed, to achieve parity, by the 1970s Aboriginal men were demanding the right of access to white women. This was largely kept quiet, I was told, because 'the public was not ready for it at that time'.⁶² Frank Stevens had referred to 'the almost animalistic sexual domination of aboriginal groups by frontier type cattlemen' which he stated even included a sexual traffic in girls as young as seven years of age.⁶³ Yet in his excellent study *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry*, Stevens devoted only a page to the topic, first labelling it 'sexual promiscuity' on the Aboriginal women's behalf, before then using the term 'sexual exploitation' and citing an example of a white woman's rejection of an Aboriginal woman as 'a dirty beast' because she accused a pastoral inspector of attempted rape. Unlike the labour relations and work processes of the cattle industry, the sexual relations, which were organised by white and Aboriginal participants along similar economic and kin/loyalty lines as stockwork, tended to be explained by white intellectuals as something peculiar to Aboriginal culture, something which need not and probably could not be logically explained. In such a discourse, 'promiscuity' was being equated with the 'walkabout', which was seen as something inexplicably 'primitive', the antithesis of the rational,

something in the category of a 'call of the wild'. The phenomenon was akin to the sorcery, the rhythmic beat which entrapped the 'civilized' Aboriginal girl in Charles Chauvel's 1950s movie, *Jedda*, a call which led to her brutalisation and her eventual death by a 'wild savage'.

A closer inspection of Frank Hardy's book, *The Unlucky Australians*⁶⁴ reveals that sexual issues were considered crucial by the Aboriginal leaders. But it was not a topic which he wanted to subject to the same scrutiny as the non-sexual labour. In his first and most troubling complaint to Hardy, Vincent Lingiari lamented: 'Vesteys did not treat Aboriginal people the right way'. He, like other Aboriginal male elders, was deeply concerned at the practice whereby the Aboriginal men were required to stay out in the bush, whilst the white ringers came back every Friday night. 'Some them white fellas play bloody hell with black gin women, leave Aborigine natives out in bush for that. When Aborigine stockmen come back they have to pack up and go away again. That not right.'⁶⁵ The communist trade unionist, Brian Manning, reiterated this concern. Even the strike camp was raided by white men with grog and guns, looking for women. When Vesteys bosses took some Aboriginal women back to the main homestead, 'so white fella play hell with them'; Lingiari feared this would break the strike, that the young Aboriginal men would return in order to get the women away from the white men.⁶⁶

In an unrelated context, Hardy cites some disgusting jokes about Aboriginal women, with reference to 'uglyness' and 'pox', without any comment about their offensiveness, merely labelling them 'bawdy'.⁶⁷ As in the earlier *Flintstones* example, acceptable humour can be a good indicator of what the dominant group deemed 'acceptable' beliefs and practices. (Indeed, jokes can be defensive, sparked by contestations by the group who is the butt of the humour.) The lapse in Hardy's usual humane approach probably stemmed from a desire to appeal to, if not impress, a male readership. This 'last frontier' was a place where white men proved themselves, and he did not want to totally set himself apart from white male culture.⁶⁸ Enjoying bawdyness, usually about black women, was part of being a good Aussie mate.

Historians such as Andrew Markus and Ann Curthoys have previously argued that the struggles of unionists have often been blinded by colour prejudice.⁶⁹ In the case of relations between coloniser and colonised, the representations were also blinded by questions of labour exploitation of a sexual nature: a practice which white men often flaunted over Aboriginal men as an assertion of power.

Sexual liaisons, call them labour, kin relations, love or lust - created competition between men: sometimes between white boss men and workers, sometimes between white workers, but in this case most significantly, between Aboriginal men and white men. This was not, therefore, only a question of 'big bad Vesteys', the wealthy British-based company which had a monopoly over pastoral leases in the Territory. Moreso it was a question of collaboration and shared secrets between different classes of white men. The strike which became pivotal to land rights in Australia was significantly a protest by Aboriginal men against white men's sexual monopoly.

White men's complicity led them to be blind to the inadequacies of their position. The competing representations by pastoralists and white unionists conformed on the issue of the right of access to Aboriginal women. And they probably agreed that Aboriginal men should not have access to white women. The fact that they both shared the same imperial project, that both groups were being distinctly advantaged by the power of colonial authority, ended up weakening the unionist position much more than the pastoralists'.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The practice of representation, as demonstrated by the examples discussed in this paper, became a central battleground, but not merely between two sides. The imagery of representation was always threatened by an outbreak of open conflict due to the tensions within each group, and this was further complicated by the conflict and collaborations between them.

The image of captivity was one of the most powerful in the range of depictions of Aboriginal women. Women were so often depicted as captives of men, and they were certainly captives in the language of representation. They were captives of the male gaze, captives of patriarchal histories, with often captive bodies, captive imaginations for mythologising. The captivity motif drew together white men and white women in demarcating the boundaries between themselves and their colonial others. As Vron Ware, Peggy Pascoe and Marilyn Lake have recently pointed out, when twentieth century white feminists attempted to 'save' their black sisters, white women were really attempting to save themselves.⁷¹ But perhaps more importantly, by the men's concern for saving black women, and white women's concern to do the same, this gender collaboration made the imperial project more likely to succeed.⁷²

Firstly, white men were mentally saving black women for themselves, for black men were undeserving of black women. They did not know how to treat a lady. Secondly, the missionaries had to save black women from both white men and men like themselves. Furthermore, by endorsing the maternalist activist position, arguing for women's sexual purity, respectability, and clear demarcations between men and women's labour roles, white men, like white women, were unknowingly attempting to rescue themselves. That is, men struggled to retain their own sense of masculinity, one uncontested by white or black women. Perhaps most important of all, they had to save themselves and their property from middle class white women's increasing demands for rights, which included demands to venture out of an exclusively private sphere, indeed, to attempt to 'save the world' themselves. They were out to prove a point, not just about how 'primitives' (men) were 'primitive' in relation to their women, but perhaps more importantly, about what a good 'deal' white women got within their own ranks.

But just as the first images of traditional Aboriginal society became frozen in the aspic imagery of slave-women, so too did later slave imagery of capitalist oppression become unstuck. Complicating factors were gender, the peculiar

nature of colonialism, and the colonisers' failure to recognise the wider implications of the gendered struggles going on between and within the categories coloniser and colonised. These relationships occurred in ever more complicated contortions that involved material goods, power, access to land, reciprocal relationships and security for families. These arrangements effectively questioned the hegemonic definitions of work itself and the distinctions between family, community, public and private, sexual work and sexual 'freedom'.

White men's ability to enjoy regular sexual interaction with Aboriginal women would seem to contest the older image that they were slaves to Aboriginal men, but a supporting set of representations situated Aboriginal men as the sellers of their women, as the pimps. Lingiari's version of events presented the pastoralists and unionists consciously changing station work practices in order to monopolise Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women's complicity is also implied in various pieces of evidence, but this is an issue outside the boundaries of this discussion. In the context of the white Australian nation, white men were in a superior bargaining position to Aboriginal men; they used the arbitration system to reinforce this. Unionist co-operation with Aboriginal men in a struggle against a capitalist monopoly at Wave Hill presented a symbolic opportunity for the Left to absolve itself of colonialist crimes. It was a transforming experience for the white men involved. Yet even in what became an almost Biblical tome of the radical Left in the 1960s, Hardy omitted the Aboriginal women's voices, their representations. And despite the intentions of the strike, it is doubtful that the Aboriginal men retrieved their own women, let alone achieved much sexual access to white women.

Work was conceptualised by white men as a man's sphere, the walk-off a male affair. A primitivist and masculinist vision shared by white capital and labour transcended the class conflict which became the public reading of this event, obscuring the vital significance of gender and colonialism. Following Lingiari's statements, it would appear the women had gone on a different sort of 'walkabout' to the men's 'walkoff'. Nor did the labour battles of unionists address conflicts they were constantly resolving and accommodating within their own culture and between cultures. Their own cultural attitudes to work and lifestyle and demands, of work, family and sexuality, of the colonial enterprise as a whole, could have been creatively challenged by lessons from Aboriginal culture.

In contemporary Australia, the relationships between public and private work, paid labour and the family; wifehood, sexuality and women's labour, remain unresolved. Even the category of 'sexual interaction' is problematic; does it signify pleasure, oppression, obligation, work, or, as some Christians believe, is it only 'natural' as a part of human marriage? White women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries remained caught in the dichotomies of 'respectable' and 'fallen' women, and relative to black women, with white as pure and black as whores. By the 1960s, both 'slavery', 'walkabout' and sexual 'promiscuity' had become tropes of 'Australian primitive' life.

Meanwhile the 1960s characterization of Wilma Flintstone is an ironic example reminding us of how white women's role within the family can be palatably

presented in an ahistorical fashion. Such a white woman was defined as wife, one who was sexually desirable but faithfully monogamous to a man, who stayed at home and did not go walkabout, a woman to be judged by her ability to keep a neat house. In antithesis to the 'backward stone-age' or pre-modern era, it was the latest technology, rather than the lower class or coloured domestic servant, which would 'free' white women of heavy labour and the drudgery of slavery. Images of the primitive still abound, being taken up by the women's movement and the men's movement of the 1990s. Best sellers like *Iron John* and *Women who Run with the Wolves*⁷³ signify the continuing search by westerners for some primitive, 'wild' but gender-specific essence. Yet in the past 200 years, western culture has been very busy ensuring that 'wildness', especially for women, only allowed for slavery rather than freedom.

In the examples considered in this paper, colonials argued both that 'civilization' would bring the individual freedom that traditional societies lacked and that imperialism brought a great legacy of slavery. The state and even its radical critics, however, found it more difficult to admit to the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women by white men than to Aboriginal men's labour exploitation by colonials. Perhaps it was because they were signatories to those wider contractual arrangements which kept women in an inferior place to men. White men, especially working class men, did not like to call themselves colonisers; they found it too hard to acknowledge that, in the 'wildness' of the frontier they created, it was their own kind who were the wolves, the dingoes.⁷⁴ And further, they were not sexually conforming to the intentions of White Australian nationalism.

Some of the uncomfortable silences of twentieth century Australian masculinity thus grew out of the inherent conflicts of enacting the part of a sexually aggressive gun-toting frontiersman at the same time as symbolising the vanguard of a 'civilised', racially pure, sexually controlled nation. In the continuing Imperial context of the white Australian nation, men and women's imaginings of Aboriginal women shaped and continue to shape understandings of gender, sexuality and labour for all concerned.

Endnotes

1. See also R. Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Pan, London, 1987
2. See, for example A. McGrath, 'Europeans and Aborigines' in N. Meaney ed., *Under New Heavens*, Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1989.
3. M. Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, Chicago, 1990, 8.
4. See earlier studies of stereotyping: J.W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972; and on Australian Aborigines, Chinese and Melanesians, see R. Evans, K. Cronin, K. Saunders, *Race Relations in Colonial Queensland*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1988.
5. For example the works of M. Foucault, B. Anderson, E. Said are particularly relevant.
6. J. Beckett, ed, *Past and Present: the Construction of Aboriginality*, Canberra, Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988 and B. Attwood and J. Arnold, eds, *Power, Knowledge and Aborigines*, LaTrobe University Press, Bundoora, 1992.
7. E. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978. This point was elucidated in a conversation with Martyn Braach-Maksvytis.

8. As also shown by Pat Grimshaw and Andrew May, "'Inducements to the Strong to be Cruel to the Weak': Authoritative White Colonial Male Voices and the Construction of Gender in Koori Society' in N. Grieve and A. Burns, eds, *Australian Women: Contemporary Feminist Thought*, Oxford, Melbourne, 1994, provides an excellent survey of representations in colonial Victoria; they found that evidence contained in their sample of mid-nineteenth century tracts was replete with contradictory data.
9. Twentieth century white feminists were also concerned with issues of slavery and Aboriginal women's rights. See Holland, this collection.
10. As discussed in F. Merlan, 'Gender in Aboriginal social life: a review' in R.M. Berndt and R. Tonkinson, eds, *Social Anthropology and Australian Aborigines*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra. For numerous citations of slave images in traditional society and in later colonial employment, see also K. Saunders and R. Evans, eds, *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992, 6, 12, 15, 18, 24, 30, 32, 34, 53, 77, 159, 181.
11. For example, Sally Morgan, *My Place*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle, 1987, was a best-seller; R. Langford, *Don't Take Your Love to Town*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988; P. Cohen and M. Somerville, *Ingelba and the Five Black Matriarchs*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990. J. Huggins, *Auntie Rita*, ASP, Canberra, 1994, represents a different genre in Aboriginal biography; T. Moffat's film *Nice Coloured Girls*. Aboriginal urban artists like Fiona Foley, Karen Casey and a range of traditional desert artists have created a powerful impact.
12. See also R. Broome, 'Aboriginal workers on south-eastern frontiers', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26 (Oct) 1994.
13. See A. McGrath, 'The White Man's Looking Glass' in P. Russell and R. White, *Pastiche 1*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, 40-42.
14. W. Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, Library of Australian history, Sydney, 1979, 290.
15. Tench, 291.
16. See B. Smith *European Vision in the South Pacific*, London, 1960.
17. C. Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*, Routledge, New York, 1992, 82.
18. Hall, 79-82.
19. Hall, 83.
20. See J. Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Melbourne, 1994.
21. A. McGrath and W. Stephenson, 'Representations of Indigenous Women in Canada and Australia' in G. Kealey and G. Patmore, eds, *Canada-Australia Labour History Project*, forthcoming.
22. See R. Sawyer, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York, 1986.
23. Such a dichotomy is reminiscent of recent historians' dilemmas regarding whether they depict Aborigines as victims or agents. Plenty of evidence of both exists in historical sources.
24. See, for example C. Levi-Strauss, *Les Structures elementaires de la parente*, discussed in R. Blackburn, 'Slavery: its Special Features and Social Role' in L. Archer, ed, *Slavery and other Forms of Unfree Labour*, Routledge, London, 1988.
25. A. McGrath, 'The white man's looking glass: Aboriginal-colonial gender relations at Port Jackson' in P. Russell and R. White, eds, *Pastiche 1. Reflections on 19th century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, 41-2.
26. Hughes 15.
27. Cited Hughes from Barrington, 35.
28. See R. Barthes, *Mythologies*, in S. Sontag, ed, *Barthes: Selected Writings*, London, Fontana, 1982, 103, 106, 116, 118, 125. A vast literature on captive white women also existed in North America by this time.
29. See R. Sawyer, *Slavery in the Twentieth Century*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986; R. Blackburn, 'Slavery - its Special Features and Social Role' in Archer, L., *Slavery and Other Forms of Unfree Labour*, Routledge, London, 1988; R. Evans, 'Kings in Brass Crescents. Defining Aboriginal Labour Patterns in Colonial Queensland' in Kay Saunders, ed, *Indentured Labour in the British Empire 1834-1920*, Croom Helm, London, 1984. See also Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, Harvard,

- Massachusetts, 1982.
30. Evans, 'Kings', 183-212.
 31. A. McGrath, 'Exile into Bondage: An Analysis of Asiatic Indentured Labour in Colonial Queensland', unpublished BA (Hons) thesis, University of Queensland, 1976, Ch 1. M. Dunn, 'Forced Labour or Slave Society?' in E. L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley, eds, *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, ANZ, Sydney, 1975.
 32. *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 2.
 33. C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988.
 34. A. Gunn, *We of the Never Never*, Hutchinson, London, 1902; J. Gunn, *The Little Black Princess*, Robertson & Mullens, Melbourne, 1924 (1905) K.S. Prichard, *Coonardoo*, A.&R. Sydney, 1929; X. Herbert, *Capricornia*, A & R, Sydney, 1938.
 35. T. Rowse, 'Paternalism's Changing Reputation', *Mankind*, 18 (2) 1988.
 36. J. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend' in *Australian Historical Studies*, 18 (71) Oct 1978.
 37. See K. Saunders in Evans et al *Race Relations*; A. McGrath, *Born in the Cattle*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, especially Ch 4. See also J. Larbalestier, 'Amity and Kindness in the Never Never', *Social Analysis*
 38. X. Herbert, *Capricornia*, Sydney, 1938.
 39. But see also J.W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1972. Psychology approach to analysing the 'typology' of slaves rather than as imagery.
 40. Pastoral Award proceedings, 1927 in *Northern Standard* (hereafter NS), 10 July 1928.
 41. Attorney for Northern Agency to Chairman of Directors, Bovril Australian Estates (B.A.E.) Ltd, London, 14 Aug 1930 in B.A.E., Butlin Archives of Business and Labour, 119/4/1.
 42. J.W. Bleakley, 'The Aborigines and Half-castes of Central and North Australia', 1928, *Commonwealth Parliamentary papers*, 21, 1929, 41.
 43. Bleakley Report, *ibid*, 61-2, 71.
 44. *Northern Territory Times*, 24 May 1919; F.X. Alcorta *Darwin Rebellion*, University Planning Authority, Darwin, 1984; A. Markus, *Governing Savages*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990; A. Curthoys and A. Markus, eds, *Who Are Our Enemies? Racism and the Australian Working Class*, Labour History, Sydney, 1978.
 45. NS, 22 June 1928.
 46. 'Aboriginal Employment and Conditions in the Northern Territory', Owen Rowe, North Australian Workers Union, 16 March 1932, in ANU Archives of Business and Labour, (now the Butlin Archives) ACTU Correspondence, 1-5.
 47. Conference on Wages, 1930, 44-6.
 48. NS, 13 March 1928, 8 May 1928.
 49. See Pastoral Award Proceedings, *Northern Standard*, 13 May 1927, 22 June 1928, 10 July 1928, 29 June 1928.
 50. Later examples include G. Parsons, *Black Chattels. The Story of the Australian Aborigines*, National Council of Civil Liberties, London, 1946.
 51. J.S. Needham to Secretary Northern Territory Pastoral Lessees Association (NTPLA), October 1928 and 17 March 1930 in NTPLA records, Aborigines 1. Also C.J. Edwards to Secretary NTPLA, 15 April 1929, NTPLA records, Abs 1.
 52. Much more could be said on the ways in which Christian missions to Aborigines represented Aboriginal labour, in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but this is a rather large topic which unfortunately cannot be dealt with in this paper.
 53. A. Blakely to Acting Secy ACTU Melb, 13 June ACTU Correspondence, ANU Archives Business and Labour (Butlin Archives). See also 'Conference on wages for Aborigines and Half-castes 1930' in AA CRS A1, 38/329.
 54. Conference on wages 1930, 8 and 31.
 55. Conference on wages, 1930, 38.
 56. *Northern Standard*, 21 Feb 1928, 11 May 1928, 15 May 1928.
 57. See S. Macintyre, *The Succeeding Age, The Oxford History of Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, 103-4. Also P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. McGrath, M. Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Ringwood, 1994, 200-201, 208 provides basic details on the Harvester Judgement and the consequent family wage.

58. This may not be true of all unionists in all states. Further research is required.
59. For an excellent discussion of labour movement culture and dominant culture see D. Horne, *The Public Culture*, Pluto Press, London, 1986, 152-9, especially 158.
60. J. Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *op.cit.*
61. F. Stevens, *Aborigines in the Northern Territory Cattle Industry*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, x. Refer also Long Johnny Kingayari, 'The Wave Hill Strike' in L. Hercus and P. Sutton, eds, *This is What Happened*, AIS, Canberra, 308-309. See also T. Jarrett, unpublished honours thesis, UNSW, 1992.
62. Confidential conversation and interview by A. McGrath with Pincher, Dagaragu, NT, 19 July 1979. AIATSIS Oral History Collection.
63. Stevens cited by F. Hardy, *The Unlucky Australians*, Thomas Nelson, Melbourne, 1968, 16.
64. The book contains other denials too. Hardy's title, *The Unlucky Australians*, with its play on white Australia's belief in material success and the 'luck' factor, reinforces the belief that all other white Australians were indeed well off, which denies class differences, and it might be interpreted to imply that the Aboriginal situation was a matter of chance rather than colonial action.
65. Hardy, 7.
66. Hardy, 80, 86, 159. 'Bestey mob take them lubra back there, so white fella play hell with them, that's what I reckon, and if they have lubra them young stockmen might go back to work.'
67. Hardy, 140.
68. See also A. McGrath, 'Travels to a Distant Past: Mythologies of the Outback', *Australian Cultural History*, 10, 1991.
69. A. Curthoys and A. Markus, eds, *Who Are Our Enemies?* *op.cit.*
70. Sometimes the role of white unionists has been exaggerated, as it was not until Aboriginal workers and the Aboriginal rights groups mobilised in the south and in the Northern Territory that they had any chance of gaining improved wage conditions.
71. V. Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, London, Verso, 1992; M. Lake, 'A Revolution in the Family. The Challenge and Contradictions of Maternal Citizenship' in S. Koven and S. Michel, eds, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and Welfare States in Comparative Perspective*, London, 1993.
72. Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue, The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939*, New York, Oxford, 1990.
73. R. Lawler, *Earth Honouring. The New Male Sexuality*, Rochester, 1989; Clarissa Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, New York, 1992.
74. X. Herbert, *Capricornia*, Sydney, 1938 characterised the arrival of white invaders as the 'The Coming of the Dingoes'.