



**'FEAR THE BITCH WHO SHEDS NO TEARS':
THE CULTURAL DEPICTION OF THE WHITE FEMALE
SCAPEGOAT IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL DRAMA**

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The recent *Oxford Companion to Australian History* argued that in the quest for distinctive images of an emerging post-colonial nation, 'the dramatic representation of its history has ... been a relatively minor matter'. Playwrights, it's asserted, mostly look to contemporary subjects, indeed 'genuine reassessment has been scarcely a theatrical subject at all'.¹ Andrew Bovell's 2001 play *Holy Day*, an examination of the South Australian frontier of the mid-nineteenth century, is the exception that proves the rule. 'A play set in the past is only useful as far as it illuminates the present', Bovell writes in the foreword on the program. 'While *Holy Day* takes us into the world of our past, it does so only to invite a consideration of its legacy'.²

The following article takes this powerful and resonant historical drama as its focus, in exploring the continuity of an Australian cultural depiction of womanhood in the representation of white women's role in colonialism. Set as a mystery, encompassing today's two great contested aspects of Aboriginal history—frontier massacres and the stolen generations—the play is quite explicitly concerned with apportioning blame. And in proffering up one female (Aboriginal) as the unjustly accused perpetrator, then another, white, as the real (and unpunished) perpetrator, the play provides an ending that is as thought-provoking as it is, ultimately, unsatisfying. Here 'abject' white womanhood, constructed as a failed wife and murderous mother, takes the place of victimised Aboriginal womanhood to function as the ultimate scapegoat for the most horrifying atrocities of Australian colonialism.

As Margaret Jolly pointed out in 1993, the 'maternal body' has been central in the way that some 'colonising women' saw their relationship to Indigenous women, and 'maternalism a key trope in their writings'.³ So too has the maternal body been central in the way Australian women have been represented in literary culture and art. The representation and self-representation of Australian women as mothers and the issues surrounding their capacity to mother have been explored in work which builds upon the feminist critiques of Chodorow, Dinnerstein, Kristeva, and Rich.⁴

An 'extreme fear of the generative power of the mother has extraordinary explanatory power in its application to Australian culture ...' argues Joan Kirkby:

There is [in Australian culture] a fierce belief in the principle of identity without admixture, the exclusion of anything that breaks boundaries, a fierce need to maintain symbolic oneness, and a fierce condemnation of hybrids and migrant beings; but above all there has been a particular resistance to the feminine—to woman and the maternal. The idea of the self most commonly articulated in Australian literature bears strong resemblance to Kristeva's borderliner, who lives in a fortified but empty castle; unwilling to experience his own vulnerability, he remains a prisoner in the tower of his won identity, projecting his own abjection onto others and violently punishing them for it.⁵

Reading the persistent 'maternal' trope in the context of colonialism requires an awareness of the significance of race, as Vron Ware eloquently suggests in the opening of her study of white women and racism.⁶ And perhaps especially so with regard to this 'fear' of the maternal Kirkby identifies, which is not distinct from an exclusion 'of hybridity', but rather utterly implicated in its 'fierce condemnation'.⁷ While 'frontier feminists' may have indeed seen their key role as moral guardians of the sexual frontier between predatory white males and vulnerable Aboriginal women,⁸ the role prescribed for white women by the patriarchal colonial state was, as Fiona Paisley has perceptively noted, simply to provide 'privatised sexual services' for white husbands.⁹ And white women were expected to take a preeminent maternal role towards Aboriginal women, to 'teach' them to mother and to thus 'assimilate' to white society, and to supplant Aboriginal women as mothers to their own children.¹⁰ In cultural representations, also, it has been the white woman who takes on the maternal—and crucially, wifely—role and not the Aboriginal woman (with rare exceptions¹¹). My contention is that the punishing, projecting fear aspect of the maternal in Australian culture is a racialised construction intrinsic to the guilt and shame associated with colonisation, as can be seen manifestly in the play *Holy Day*.

The plot of *Holy Day* concerned the initial scapegoating of an Aboriginal woman, Linda, for the stealing of the child of a missionary couple. White missionary wife, Elizabeth Wilkes, refuses to speak about what happened the night her husband was shot, the mission church burned down, and her baby taken from its crib, except to state that her child has been taken. Condemned by a blood-stained shawl, Linda also stubbornly refuses to speak until making an evidently false confession in an attempt to prevent vengeance against her people. But Elizabeth is more than happy to let Linda carry the blame and to see the people who humiliated her on the

mission violently punished for what the audience increasingly can see is her own crime. The result: Linda hangs herself 'in custody' so to speak, the entire community of Aboriginal people is massacred, and Obedience, a young Aboriginal girl, is destroyed on the very brink of her womanhood.

In the final scene of the play, Goudry, a hard-drinking, boy-raping and ultra-vile convict who is the ringleader of the massacre, stands centre-stage with the limp body of Obedience in his arms. Obedience, we have learnt, is the stolen child of an Aboriginal woman, who has been raised to be a slave of the hard-bitten Norah, the rough-as-guts hostess of the Traveller's Rest in which most of the play unfolds, and to whom Goudry now tosses the broken girl back.

This scene followed the most powerful scene in the play, a monologue by Obedience describing the massacre just carried out:

When the full brunt of the shooting was over twenty-two people lay dead. Twelve of them were children. Another fourteen were injured. Eight had managed to escape into the bush. The old woman had been spared. Too old to run and too old to shoot. She sat by the fire and wept. The white men got down from their horses and shot the wounded. They made a pile of their bodies and set it alight. There was one white death. The man who had come to the camp to warn them. This is our history.¹²

Now we learn that Obedience has been raped and her tongue cut out by, so Goudry says, the Aborigines in revenge for the raid, although of course we know it is he who has finally had his way with the girl who was the object of his lust from the beginning of the play. We know this because we have previously learnt that Goudry's young mute companion, the boy Edward, has had his tongue cut out by the convict to prevent him from speaking the truth about how Goudry murdered his squatter parents and kept him as a sex-slave—Goudry's story, of course, is that 'the blacks' slaughtered his master and mistress, and the boy he'd kindly rescued had been struck dumb as a result.

There is nothing too unexpected in the depiction of the convict as depraved sexual monster, responsible for the genocide and rape of the Aboriginal people, and polluter of relationships between kindly squatters and gentle blacks. This construction began emerging in the earliest histories beginning with Henry Melville on Van Diemen's Land in the 1830s,¹³ and is still evident in some popular histories written today, such as Hughes' *Fatal Shore*.¹⁴ South Australian settler history, beginning with the notorious sealers of Kangaroo Island, has had a special attachment to the convict villain, as ex-convicts and runaways from other colonies were blamed by early chroniclers for atrocities against Aborigines.¹⁵ The 'vile convict' appeared on stage from the very first Australian melodrama written and produced in Australia with an Australian subject (actually written by

Melville), in 1834, up until 1871.¹⁶ Although from then on the convict villain was found to be framed and so redeemed, celebrated and then, finally, largely forgotten in popular theatre, Goudry's clasp on the mutilated Aboriginal girl echoes this older, pre-nationalist tradition—even when such stereotypes are now being questioned by revisionist historians.

In history-writing, a central focus on relations between white lower-class men and Aboriginal women typically results in the de-emphasising of the role of the white landholders and the total exclusion of Aboriginal men. Likewise for *Holy Day*, where the squatter character in the play, Wakefield (a name reverberant with powerful South Australian associations of respectable white settlement), is authoritative yet ineffectual, and there is no Aboriginal male presence at all. So what was perhaps more unexpected about this scene was its surreal parallel with a famous scene in the 1950s film *Jedda*. On the surface, there seems little correspondence between the mainstream and hugely popular Chauvel film fifty years ago and Andrew Bovell's play. But on closer examination they have more in common than just simply a concern with the anxieties surrounding Aboriginal child removal—and the tie is indicated within this final scene. Goudry holds the inert body of Obedience across him in exactly the same pose as the deranged Marbuk, an Aboriginal character of maladjusted sexuality and indeed criminality, held Jedda towards the final destructive denouement of the movie. Ironically, the absence of Aboriginal masculinity, underlined by the replacement of Goudry for Marbuk, calls to mind what is the fundamental common ground between *Jedda* and *Holy Day*—the dominating presence of the white 'missus'. It is Elizabeth Wilkes and the sexual repression and hypocrisy she represents, not free-spirited Linda, who is made the ultimate scapegoat. It is Elizabeth Wilkes' rigid posture of virtuous white womanhood that allows the degraded brutality of Goudry to be unleashed upon the Aboriginal people. She is then, 'that rarest of all characters in an Australian melodrama,' according to one of the foremost historians of the Australian popular stage—the female villain.¹⁷

It is interesting to consider that in contrast, the plucky, independent white woman—not infrequently sympathetic to Aborigines—was a stock character of Australian colonial melodrama.¹⁸ Katharine Prichard's 1927 play *Brumby Innes*, recognised as both the first Australian play to actually confront the brutal realities of racial relations in Australia, and the first realistic representation of sexuality in Australian drama, can also be seen in many ways as *Holy Day*'s predecessor. Yet Prichard challenged this tradition by presenting the central white female character, a high-spirited city girl, as one who would share the victimhood of Aboriginal women at the hands of a white station-owner.¹⁹ The culpability of the missionary wife in *Holy Day*, however, reflects more recent revisionist themes of sexuality and gender in postcolonial historiography.

In histories written in the postwar wake of the British Empire, the view that white wives destroyed harmonious relations between coloniser men and the natives, or, at the very least, exacerbated racial tensions, emerged.²⁰ (And we should not forget that *Jedda* appeared in this postwar period.) This stream in the historiography of colonialism converged somewhat uneasily with feminist revisionism of the late twentieth century, as identifying white women's historical responsibilities in the processes of colonialism came to be seen as an important objective of feminist scholarship.²¹ For many years, the colonialist image of the white woman as a benevolent 'good fella missus'—positing a pivotal but admirable role for white women in shaping race relations—had been enshrined in Australian popular culture.²² In a challenge to this 'myth', Elizabeth West in 1977 concluded that the white woman was in fact an 'active participant in the development of racial tensions, and exacerbator of conflict', indeed, in her coercion and treatment of Aboriginal women as servants, was 'far more brutal' than white 'masters'.²³ Likewise Judith Godden argued that white women created racial tensions on the frontier, by condoning abduction and the ill-treatment of women for domestic labour (as opposed to sexual) purposes.²⁴ The most outright statement against the old image of kindly white mistresses was made by a group of leading Aboriginal women academics in 1991:

We realise that our internal conflicts have been exacerbated by colonisation and white women have always been part of that process. So just because you are women doesn't mean you are necessarily innocent. You were, and still are, part of that colonising force. Our country was colonised on both a racially and sexually imperialistic base. In many cases our women considered white women to be worse than men in their treatment of Aboriginal women, particularly in the domestic service field.²⁵

In fact, as these historians above indicate with their careful delineation of the sexual and the domestic, the historiographic issue of the extent of white women's complicity in the colonising project arose at least partly in response to what might be called the "sexual jealousy" thesis. This idea that white women were jealous of Aboriginal women's attractiveness to 'their' men was used by Miriam Dixson back in 1976 to explain colonial white women's hostility to Aboriginal women and by implication racial discord in general.²⁶ A thesis exerting a powerful hold in the (white male) popular imagination,²⁷ it exists in diametrical opposition to still enduring heroic representations of pioneer women.²⁸ Its key elements—sexual repression and competitiveness on the part of white women—are clearly reflected in the characterisation of Elizabeth Wilkes.

The characters of the four women, Elizabeth, Linda, Norah and Obedience, are all aspects of womanhood structurally entwined but

Elizabeth, recognisable as the 'God's police' figure in that misogynist dichotomy of Australian culture observed by Anne Summers,²⁹ is the pivotal character of the play. In keeping with the stereotype, her prime concern is to build and protect a private, enclosed domain in which she resolutely plays out her role of wife and mother in the Victorian cult of true womanhood. This stereotype also entails an essential revulsion against sex for any purpose other than procreation.³⁰ (By contrast the stereotype of native or black female sexuality, which Linda, the falsely accused character represents, is sexual openness, promiscuity, sensuality, her body a 'site for desire, but not for family'.³¹) But Elizabeth is driven not by desire but rather a steely concern for duty and security. The tension of her position on the frontier is manifested in a dislike and fear of the 'natives' outside, particularly a revulsion against interracial sex, and the untenability of it highlighted as it becomes increasingly clear that she not only encouraged her husband to suicide but also probably killed her own child out of despair. But unable to admit to her human frailty, and indeed, responsibility, Elizabeth allows the Aborigines she blames for her failures, to weather the storm that must follow.

Sarah McMann, the white foster mother of *Jedda*, was a much more sympathetic character than Elizabeth, but she too represents the disorder arising out of repressed female sexuality. She seems, as Jeremy Beckett put it, 'to embody a notion of failed sexuality among white Australia'.³² The theme of motherhood, via the 'motif of the mother-daughter relationship, which Chauvel powerfully imbues with the classic psychoanalytic motifs (loss, displacement, sacrifice)'³³ is also central to the narrative. Banishing her husband from her bed after the death of their child, Sarah takes an orphaned Aboriginal baby girl in place of the children she will no longer bear. But *Jedda*, like Obedience in *Holy Day*, becomes 'a sexual being in a household where sexuality is denied'.³⁴ (There are interesting parallels here too with whorish and diseased Norah's determination to protect Obedience's innocence.³⁵) With the appearance of the sexual predator and outlaw Marbuck, these complications collide in his abduction and eventual killing of *Jedda*. But it is Sarah, whose action in taking *Jedda* represents the assimilation policy, who is ultimately responsible for *Jedda's* tragic end.³⁶

In *Jedda*, it is the inherent dangers surrounding Aboriginal child removal and adoption, rather than racial conflict and frontier violence, for which the white missus is blamed. ('Chauvel rewrites history', says Marcia Langton, '... as if none of the brutality, murder and land clearances occurred'.³⁷ The 'silent narrative' regarding *Jedda's* origins as a stolen Aboriginal child³⁸ is in fact a repressed history of colonial violence.) The echoes of Sarah McMann in *Holy Day* serves to make the link between these two vexed historical issues in contemporary considerations of Australian identity, which the play sets out to address.

The class, gender and race relationships depicted in *Holy Day* are built around a literal structural absence—that of Elizabeth's missing daughter, who we not only never see, but whose body is never found. Again, this corresponds to the narrative of *Jedda*, which is structured around the original dead and buried white child whom *Jedda* replaces. The decision to use the 'lost white child' motif—a longstanding cultural icon of the colonial experience for Australians—indicates the oblique relationship between this historical preoccupation and middle-class white Australians' deep-seated emotional response to the history of the Stolen Generations.

Oblique, rather than direct and explicit because the 'lost white child' is so potently a symbol for the anxieties of colonial settlement in a strange and unknown land. Historically, the lost child motif symbolised the apprehensions of settlers in terms of the cutting of ties with their home country. But in the late twentieth century the lost child became, unsettlingly, the abducted, the abused, the murdered child³⁹—and the mother who seemed to grieve perhaps a liar and even a killer.

Holy Day makes various references to the real-life disappearance of Azaria Chamberlain at Uluru in the 1980s. Beginning from the dramatic opening scene, depicting Elizabeth looking out over a vast desert plain, while storm clouds roll and lightening flash around her, the audience can scarcely avoid missing the allusion. Against a burning cross and the words '*Terra Nullius*' the ragged, pale, and bleeding white woman clutching a shawl to her face chants religious incantations to her god:

Do my justice, Lord, and fight my fight against a faithless people.
From the deceitful and impious, rescue me. From the impure, protect me. For You, Lord, are my strength.... Bring me to the Holy Day.
Then I will go to the altar of God. Then I shall eat of His body and drink of His blood, the blood of my gladness and joy.⁴⁰

The scroll across the top of the play program—'A desert. A murder. A missing child'—Norah's repeated admonition to 'Fear only the bitch who sheds no tears', and the blood-stained baby's clothing, all reinforce this reference.

The pull of this headline drama had itself derived from colonialist anxieties still relevant to white Australians in Central Australian landscapes. As Kay Schaffer has commented insightfully upon the deep well of Australian suspicion that the accused mother, Lindy Chamberlain, confronted in the 1980s:

The codes of meaning through which the population interpreted the death of Azaria Chamberlain and the character of her mother must have existed in the culture long before the event took place. Reports of the death of the baby gave shape to 200 years of historical

constructions about the land waiting to solidify around a woman and an event. The disappearance of the child at Ayers Rock allowed Australians to pour a century of fear and frustration, evidenced by representations of the bush as cruel mother, on to a woman who became the archetypally evil mother ... The 'meaning' which materialised around the infant's death already had been constructed within an Australian imaginary ... It is not the 'reality' or the 'facts' of the case which deserve closer scrutiny but the modes of representation which enabled the population to read the events according to pre-existing systems of meaning.⁴¹

Azaria's dry-eyed, religiously inclined mother (or so she was represented) allowed dingos, not people, to be slaughtered in retribution for her daughter's disappearance. But there are in fact historical literary precedents even for this, which ironically connect the lost white child motif to the processes of explaining and excusing colonialist genocide. Back in 1844, Louisa Meredith, married to a Tasmanian squatter, a squatter's wife, poured derision on a similar claim by an Aboriginal mother. When asked by Meredith's husband of the baby's whereabouts, 'she replied with perfect nonchalance', exclaimed this historical white missus, 'I believe the Dingo patta!'

She believed the dog had eaten it! Numbers of the hapless little beings are no doubt disposed of by their unnatural mothers in a similar way.⁴²

Infanticide, like cannibalism, has long been endorsed as a core feature of 'the primitive', justifying and rationalising colonial brutalities. Such obscure connections which link *Holy Day's* scapegoats Elizabeth and Linda with real-life scapegoat Lindy Chamberlain are drawn upon and reworked not in any conscious way, however, but rather as another layer of cultural practice, put down on the palimpsest that is the Australian past. So cultural anxieties about dangerous women, vile men and innocents betrayed are deftly and powerfully woven into a tapestry of guilt and accountability for our colonial sins.

For an historian this is disconcerting, not least because the play is presented as being a 'genuine reassessment of the past'. As the program sold at the performances made it clear from the outset, *Holy Day* was framed as 'history', and made various references to 'truth' or what might be called 'knowledge-power' claims. The playwright stated that he was depicting a history that had been 'denied' and 'distorted',⁴³ while the artistic director referred to the implications of the play for 'the truth of the holocaust that occurred in this nation'.⁴⁴ Most crudely, the program includes, without explanation or reference, a four page long timeline of Australian history⁴⁵—this being the traditional and unapologetically orthodox way of presenting 'true' history. Only the designer's commentary offered a sense of the literary construction of the 'history' proffered in the play. She explained

that her design, derived from an early 'map' by settler Thomas Wakefield, had been

deliberately left open to show the periphery, where edges get blurred through personal experience and observation, and the history that is presented to future generations can be reinvented through a complex variety of truths and perspectives.⁴⁶

In the process of representing history, regardless of whether we are historians or playwrights, we know that we all essentially write stories and construct a past that works for the present, a 'usable past'. Yet truth, as they say, can be stranger than fiction. In the records of South Australian history there are two alternative stories which would have been more satisfying and less cliché-ridden as a historical plot for *Holy Day*. There is the story of convict Thomas Donnelly, recorded by the nineteenth-century missionary Christina Smith. Smith herself was an intriguing female character, who among other things travelled with Aboriginal guides, established a home for Aboriginal children, and endeavoured to Christianise the Buandig people in the face of their 'hoots of laughter' and 'yells of ridicule or disapprobation'. Her writings reveal a 'precarious sense of identification' with Aboriginal women when the men are absent, and the typical missionary's preoccupation with infanticide.⁴⁷ Jane Haggis has written of how Smith's great-granddaughter actually reconstructed a story out of her records that concerned an escaped convict, Thomas Donnelly, being hanged for murdering an Aboriginal person, his tragic and possibly false conviction representing a blow struck against the injustices of the frontier.⁴⁸ This same Donnelly—the only European to be hanged in colonial South Australia for killing an Aboriginal person—may in fact have ensured by his hanging, only 'that Indigenous deaths at settlers' hands became more covert'.⁴⁹ Was Donnelly a scapegoat? Why had a white female missionary seemingly taken up his cause?

Another alternative, intriguing historical narrative is the sad story of Miss Phyllis Flower, who was a nursing sister at Point McLeay mission in the 1920s. A few months after tendering her resignation, following being told she had to take a forced transfer to Alice Springs, she took morphine and killed herself. One of the 'chief causes' listed in the mission records kept pertaining to the event, was that the baby of an Aboriginal woman had died. This was not mentioned in the report published in the local Adelaide newspaper, which did however mention two of the other listed causes. 'Miss Flower apparently had been worried about a small legal action which she had told her friends she thought was to be taken against her, and this had preyed upon her mind,' *The Advertiser* reported. 'On the Thursday before the tragedy she took a native patient from the mission station to the Adelaide Hospital, where he died within a few days of his admittance.'⁵⁰ It is certainly not clear how the death of the Aboriginal woman's baby, which

had occurred whilst Sister Flower was in Adelaide with the sick man, corresponded to the 'small legal action'. However the records show that the nursing sister had previously reported the mission superintendent to the Aborigines Protector. The superintendent had 'got to know and blamed Sister' and this was listed as another of the chief motivating factors behind her suicide. It is unclear for what exactly she had blamed the superintendent but the next cause listed was the sister's concern over the 'young lady keeping house for him' — the sister was 'afraid of this being the downfall of the wife and family'. The final cause, as hinted at by the newspaper report, was that the superintendent, had apparently reported the Sister for 'legal action for defamation of character'.⁵¹ In this case, then, it would appear that the white missionary woman may have been the scapegoat for some complicated tragedy involving the death of a child—of an Aboriginal woman.

The problem is not that there are arguably richer and more interesting stories in South Australian history such as these. The problem is not only that the repellent Elizabeth and revolting Goudry serve to obscure the complexities and ambiguities of white women's and convicts' relationships with Aboriginal people under colonialism. What these stereotypes obscure, fundamentally, is the role of those who wielded the power over, if not the practice, of the two great genocidal crimes in our history—mass killing and mass child removals. The genteel squatter Wakefield would not countenance the killing of Aborigines even in the face of cattle spearing, and would free enchained Linda if only Elizabeth would give him the word. Indeed his complicity in the clearance and persecution of indigenous peoples is only acknowledged as far as his need for a respectable wife forces him to accept Elizabeth as she is. At the last moment—just before the impending massacre—Elizabeth comes to him to tell him she 'is ready to tell ... the truth', but Wakefield stops her.

Don't... for if you do then I can only turn you away. But if you stay quiet then yes, I can take you, for a man out here needs a woman by his side. But this is our agreement, Mrs Wilkes. You and I will be silent about what passed. For what is not spoken will eventually fade'.⁵²

And because the play is, like *Jedda*, set on the remote frontier far away in space and time from the government interventions that child removal required, the cold-blooded bureaucracy and political expediency that saw mass child removal conceived as a 'solution' to the 'Aboriginal problem' is ignored altogether. In place of the urban politicians and public servants (all white men) who actually formulated and orchestrated these Stolen Generations policies, we are presented with the female publican of outback Australia, anti-establishment, man-hating Norah, the "Damned Whore" counterpart to Mrs Wilkes, as the culprit. Again, like *Jedda*, 'sexist anxieties

about woman, the figure that is passed between men, is masked by the narrative's exploration of race'.⁵³ We might perhaps read the character of Wakefield, representative of white middle-class colonization, as the Australian equivalent to Kristeva's 'self'—surrounded by a maelstrom of violence, he stands, hands unstained, making judgement on the guilt of the women upon whom all the abjection of colonialism has been heaped. *Holy Day* provides a story with scapegoats that clearly operate to remove guilt from certain elements in our society, and assuage the consciences of those who attend the theatre.

Theatrical and dramatic productions, however much they may draw upon historical themes, are not concerned with 'genuine reassessment of our past'. Instead, they reiterate, extend and play with cultural traditions and contemporary concerns, relying on the jolt of recognition hitting the unexpected to trigger the audience's emotions. Thus *Holy Day* draws upon old gender and class stereotypes, and longstanding fears embedded in the Australian psyche, to refigure them in terms of present postcolonial concerns with 'reconciliation' and apology. Billed as 'a cry to find the courage to understand our past',⁵⁴ in the end, it is, indeed, the exception that proves the rule.

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¹ Peter Fitzpatrick, 'Drama', *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds Graeme Davison, John Hirst & Stuart Macintyre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 194.

² Andrew Bovell, 'From the Writer', *Holy Day by Andrew Bovell (Official Program)* (Adelaide: State Theatre Company of South Australia, 2001), 3.

³ Margaret Jolly, 'Colonizing women: The maternal body and empire', *Feminism and the Politics of Difference* Eds Sneja Gunew & Anna Yeatman (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 104.

⁴ See for example, Kay Schaffer, *Women and the bush: Forces of desire in the Australian cultural tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). See also Delys Bird, "'Mother, I won't never go drovin'": Motherhood in Australian Narrative', *Westerly* 4 (1989): 41–50; Sue Rowley, 'Inside the Deserted Hut: The Representation of Motherhood in Bush Mythology', *Westerly* 4 (1989): 76–95; Joan Kirkby, 'Barbara Baynton: An Australian Jocasta', *Westerly* 4 (1989): 114–124. My thanks to Shannon Schedlich-Day for bringing these articles to my attention.

⁵ Kirkby, 'Barbara Baynton', 123.

⁶ Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (London: Verso, 1992), xi–xii.

⁷ Further to this point see not just to Ware's work cited above but also Ann Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Anne

McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995); and Radhika Mohananram, *Black Body: Women, colonialism and space* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999): 149–174.

⁸ See Marilyn Lake, 'Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man', *Journal of Australian Studies: Australian Frontiers* 49 (1996): 12–20; Fiona Paisley, 'No Back Streets in the Bush: 1920s and 1930s Pro-Aboriginal White Women's Activism and the Trans-Australia Railway'. *Australian Feminist Studies* 12, no. 25, (1997): 119–137; Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919–1939* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Alison Holland, 'The Campaign for Women Protectors: Gender, Race and Frontier Between the Wars.' *Australian Feminist Studies* 16, no. 34 (2001): 27–42.

⁹ Fiona Paisley, 'Ideas Have Wings: White Women Challenge Aboriginal Policy 1920–1937', unpublished PhD thesis, History, La Trobe University, 1995, 201.

¹⁰ See Francesca Bartlett, 'Clean, white girls: assimilation and women's work' *Hecate* 25, no. 1, (1999): 2–12; Heather Goodall, "'Assimilation Begins in the Home": the State and Aboriginal women's work as mothers in New South Wales, 1900s to 1960s', *Aboriginal Workers* Eds Ann McGrath & Kay Saunders (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History: 1995): 75–101.

¹¹ See Catherine Martin, *The Incredible Journey*. Introduced by Margaret Allen (London: Pandora, 1987); Susan Sheridan, "'Wives and Mothers like ourselves, poor remnants of a dying race": Aborigines in colonial women's writing' and 'Mary Gilmore's and Katharine Prichard's representations of Aborigines', *Along the Faultlines: Sex, Race and Nation in Australian Women's Writing 1880s–1930s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995): 121–134, 135–152.

¹² Andrew Bovell, *Holy Day* (Sydney: Currency Press, 2001), 64.

¹³ Henry Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land, from the year 1824 to 1835* (1835; Sydney: Horwitz-Grahame, 1965).

¹⁴ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (London: Pan, 1988), 95. See also Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance 1788–2001* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), 28–9. Jan Kociumbas has most recently reviewed this historiographic literature: Jan Kociumbas, "'Mary Ann", Joseph Fleming and "Gentleman Dick": Aboriginal-Convict Relationships in Colonial History', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 3, no. 1 (2001): 28–54.

¹⁵ Robert Foster, Rick Hosking & Amanda Nettlebeck, *Fatal Collisions: The South Australian Frontier and the violence of memory* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001). 7. See also Victoria Haskins, 'Aboriginal Histories', *The Wakefield Companion to South Australia* Ed. Wilfred Prest (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001), 3.

¹⁶ Eric Irvin, *Australian Melodrama: eighty years of popular theatre* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1981) 4–5; Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788–1914* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), 74.

¹⁷ Margaret Williams, *Australia on the Popular Stage 1829–1929* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983), 205, 297.

¹⁸ Phillip Parsons (general ed.) with Victoria Chance, *Companion to Theatre in Australia* (Sydney: Currency Press/Cambridge University Press, 1995), 456. See also Richard Waterhouse, 'Australian Legends: Representations of the Bush, 1813–1913.' *Australian Historical Studies* 31, no. 115 (2000): 218–9.

¹⁹ Parsons, *Companion to Theatre*, 456.

²⁰ See Claudia Knapman, *White Women in Fiji 1835–1930: The Ruin of Empire?...* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 1–18.

²¹ Jane Haggis, 'Gendering Colonialism or Colonising Gender? Recent Women's Studies Approaches to White Women and the History of British Colonialism.' *Women's Studies International Forum* 13, nos 1–2 (1989); see also Jolly, 'Colonizing women'; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2000).

²² M E McGuire, 'The Legend of the Good Fella Missus', *Aboriginal History* 14, no. 2 (1990): 124.

²³ Elizabeth West, 'White women in colonial Australia', *Refractory Girl* (1977): 54, 56–57, 59.

²⁴ Godden, Judith. 'A new look at the pioneer woman.' *Hecate* 5, no. 2 (1979): 18–19.

²⁵ Jackie Huggins, Jo Willmot, Isabel Tarrago, Kathy Willetts, Liz Bond, Lillian Holt, Eleanor Bourke, Maryann Bin-Salik, Pat Fowell, Joann Schmider, Valerie Craigie, & Linda McBride-Levi, 'Letter to the Editors', *Women's Studies International Forum* 1, no. 5 (1991): 506.

²⁶ Miriam Dixon, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia: 1788 to 1975* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 198. See also Lyn Riddett, 'Watch the White Women Fade': Aboriginal and White Women in the Northern Territory 1870–1940, *Hecate* 19, no. 1 (1993): 73, 87, 90; also Bobbi Sykes, 'Black Women in Australia: A History', Jan Mercer (ed.), *The Other Half: Women in Australian Society* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1975): 313–321.

²⁷ See, for example, Keith Willey, *Boss Drover* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1971), 18–20.

²⁸ See for example Patricia Thompson & Susan Yorke (eds), *Lives Obscurely Great: Historical Essays on Women of New South Wales* (Sydney: Society of Women Writers (Australia) NSW Branch, 1980) including Hazel de Berg & Anne Boyd, 'Bring Your Scissors, Lady: The Matriarch of Forster': 125–128; Marjorie Kendall, 'Sarah Claydon: Foster-mother to Aboriginal Children': 38–45. Note that in a more recent popular history of Australian women the author felt compelled to apologise for the 'celebratory' and 'too rosy' depiction of pioneer women, and pointed out that 'the land the pioneers used was taken from its original owners': Alison Alexander, *A Wealth of Women: Australian women's lives from 1788 to the present* (Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2001), 19.

²⁹ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police* (1975; Ringwood: Penguin, 1994).

³⁰ The 'domestic ideology' which was associated with this image of 'true womanhood' has been most notably explored by Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780–1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987). There is an extensive range of literature discussing the set of stereotypes of femininity that emerged in the nineteenth century out of this ideology, including the sexual repression it entailed, for example, Mary Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), especially her chapter 'Mothers of Civilization'.

³¹ Hannah Robert, 'Disciplining the Female Aboriginal Body: Inter-racial Sex and the Pretence of Separation.' *Australian Feminist Studies* 16, nos 3–4 (2001): 76.

³² Jeremy Beckett, 'Sarah McMahon's Mistake: Charles Chauvel's *Jedda* and the Assimilation Policy.' *Olive Pink Society Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (1993): 17.

³³ Barbara Creed, 'Breeding Out the Black: *Jedda* and the Stolen Generations in Australia', *Body Trade: Captivity, Cannibalism and Colonialism in the Pacific*, eds Barbara Creed & Jeanette Hoon (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2001), 221.

³⁴ Beckett, 'Sarah McMahan's Mistake', 17.

³⁵ See Barbara Creed on *Jedda*'s threatened sexual innocence yet, conversely, her ability, as a signifier of boundary-crossing, to offer the promise of 'fertility and passion to the land rendered barren by white settlement': 'Breeding Out the Black' 224. The sexual promise of both *Jedda* and *Obedience* ends with rape (and destruction) symbolised by 'flames from the fire' (Creed, 224).

³⁶ My interpretation here is in direct contrast to a recent interpretation of the film's 'pro-assimilationist' message offered by Barbara Creed 'If *Jedda* had followed Sarah McMann's wishes, she would be not have had to endure such a terrible ordeal, and fall to her death' (216) which Creed suggests is a more credible interpretation than the alternative: 'Such a tragic outcome ... would never have befallen *Jedda* if Mrs McMann had listened to her husband and not attempted to assimilate *Jedda*' (215). For Creed this latter position is one of cultural relativism, whereas I read it as one of enforcing wifely submission – Sarah McMann's mistake was to override her husband. See Creed, 'Breeding Out the Black'.

³⁷ Marcia Langton, 'Well, I heard it on the radio and I saw it on the television...': *An essay for the Australian Film Commission on the politics and aesthetics of filmmaking by and about Aboriginal people and things* (Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993), 45–46.

³⁸ Creed, 'Breeding Out the Black', 210.

³⁹ Peter Pierce, *The Country of Lost Children: An Australian Anxiety* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) xii, 179–201.

⁴⁰ Bovell, *Holy Day*, 1.

⁴¹ Schaffer, *Women and the bush*, 65.

⁴² Louisa Anne Meredith. *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales During a Residence in that Colony from 1839 to 1844* (London: 1844, 95) cited in Patty O'Brien, 'The Gaze of the "Ghosts": Images of Aboriginal Women in New South Wales and Port Phillip (1800–1850)', *Maps, Dreams, History: Race and Representation in Australia*. Ed. Jan Kociumbas (Sydney: University of Sydney, 1998), 393.

⁴³ Andrew Bovell, 'From the Writer,' in State Theatre Company of South Australia, *Holy Day by Andrew Bovell (Official Program)* (Adelaide: State Theatre Company of South Australia, 2001) n.p.

⁴⁴ Roselba Clemente, 'From the Director,' in State Theatre Co SA, *Holy Day (Official Program)* n.p.

⁴⁵ Unattributed, 'A History of Cultural Genocide,' in State Theatre Co SA, *Holy Day (Official Program)* n.p.

⁴⁶ Cath Cantlon, 'From the Designer,' in State Theatre Co SA, *Holy Day (Official Program)* n.p.

⁴⁷ Amanda Nettlebeck, 'Seeking to spread the truth': Christina Smith and the South Australian Frontier,' *Australian Feminist Studies* 16, no. 34 (2001), 86–87.

⁴⁸ Jane Haggis, 'The Social Memory of a Colonial Frontier,' *Australian Feminist Studies* 16(34) (2001): 91–99.

⁴⁹ Foster, Hosking & Nettlebeck, *Fatal Collisions* 7.

⁵⁰ 'Mission Station Tragedy,' *The Advertiser*, 25 December 1926.

⁵¹ Correspondence of the Aborigines' Friends Association, State Library of SA: SRG/139/1 File 88.

⁵² Bovell, *Holy Day*, 63.

⁵³ Creed, 'Breeding Out the Black', 229.

⁵⁴ Playbox, 'Holy Day: Playbox presents State Theatre South Australia', <http://www.playbox.com.au/html/detail/holyday.html> (accessed 8 Nov 2001).