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## John Forrest: Western Australia under the banyan tree

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*Edith Cowan University*

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# John Forrest: Western Australia Under the Banyan Tree

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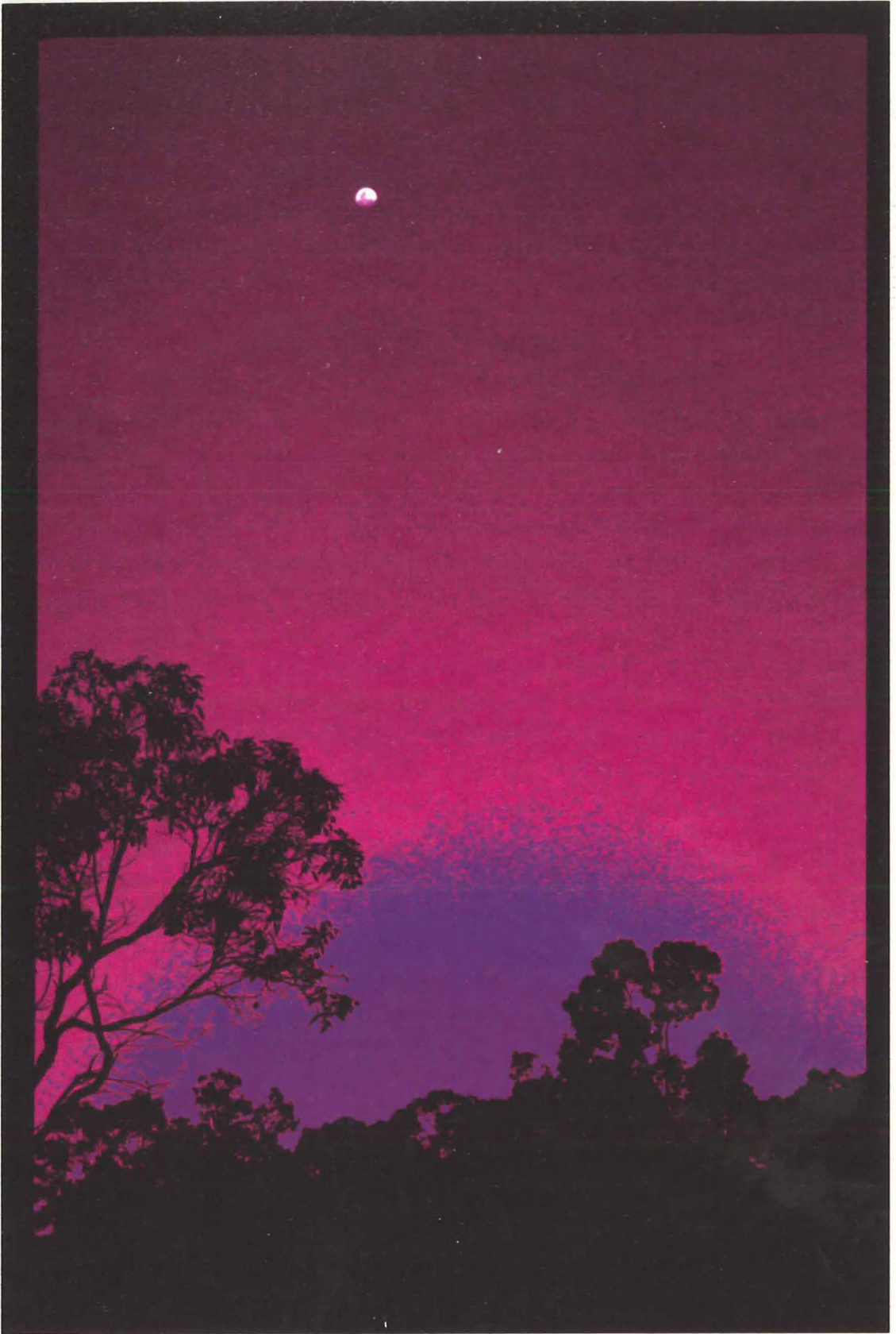
Date of Submission: 1/6/2002



[Figure 0.1: The cover of my book]

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.



[FIGURE 0.2: Night sky at Mundaring Weir]

# Abstract

This story is about a man named John Forrest, my great-great-great uncle. I want to investigate how he shaped and enacted upon the space we now call the State of Western Australia: as explorer, as surveyor, and as Premier. The photographs in my thesis explore how he *impacted* upon the landscape that we currently observe: they illustrate ways in which his past influence can be detected in the landmarks of our state, and they act as evidence of the "bigger picture", demonstrating the effects his influence has had on the present condition of the land itself.

The word 'impact' has synonyms including *collision*, *conflict* and *interference*. Interferences in the landscape were incarnated in the shape of the foundations built for the economic development of Western Australia, in the time during and after John's Premiership. Forrest helped construct many of the keystone elements of Perth; and these bedrock constructions remain mostly unaltered, if adapted at all.

I want to explore the manner in which John marked the land. Photographically, this initially entailed exploring sites (in and around Perth) that were established in an era of his omnipotent influence. Reaching other sites for photographic exploration involved making an approximate following of part of the route that John Forrest took in his 1869 expedition.

Forrest's mission in 1869 was to discover the remains of Ludwig Leichhardt: mine was to discover understanding. He travelled over 2000 old-school miles through land that was mostly "unexplored" (by white men). Before my trip in September 2000 (which is detailed in my book, although my thesis includes many of the photographs), I believed that I would only get to make pilgrimage to a small fraction of these sites. But with a bit of luck, and with help from kind country-town petrol station attendants, farm/station owners, RSL bar-persons (and many others); my travelling mates and myself — my *dumbart*<sup>1</sup> — were able to access some tracts of land I originally thought would be impossible to experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Nyoongah word meaning to be people of the same tribe.  
(Davis, 1986, p. 112)

My photographs are often intensely saturated and there is a reason for this. The definition of the word *saturate* is "to interfuse to soak: to imbue: to charge to the fullest extent possible: to satisfy all valencies of" (Macdonald. 1972, p. 1200), while the meaning of the word *saturation* is to be "deep in colour, free from white" (Macdonald. 1972, p. 1200). The intense saturation of my pictures pushes them in to the realm of fantasy, and as they revisit one of the early non-Indigenous attempts to write the epic of our state, they therefore lend themselves readily to the notion that every nation is based in phantasm. The pictures tell a story, but the style of narration invokes a sense that this story is necessarily charged with a way of seeing (and that there are many other ways of seeing).

The intense saturation of colour puts forth the idea that we must begin to tell the story of our nation differently. Historic events in Australia's "official" remembrances of the past are often only given one "true" meaning (they are told in black and white, they are either true or false, etc). In reality, there are a vibrantly rich variety of vantage points from which to view the past, present and future; there are also numerous ways to understand what is "true".

When talking about ways of knowing in my thesis, I cite Verran, who argues that Western ways of knowing have been "Blinded by an epistemology obsessed with scientific knowledge, [and thus] theory... [has been] taken to be the sole expression of true knowledge" (Verran. 1998, p. 238). John believed that indigenous Australians were evolutionarily inferior to non-indigenous (namely white) Australians, because the indigenous people had not recorded their knowledge and history in books. John did not think to look at the land as the indigenous people's library. When we deal with the landscape in image, we need to recognise that there is no sole expression of what is true. I portray this in my imagery by saturating the colours of the landscape. I wish to illustrate that experience and knowledge are things one must encounter for oneself, because this is the only way to realise the richness and vibrancy they have to offer.

# Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed

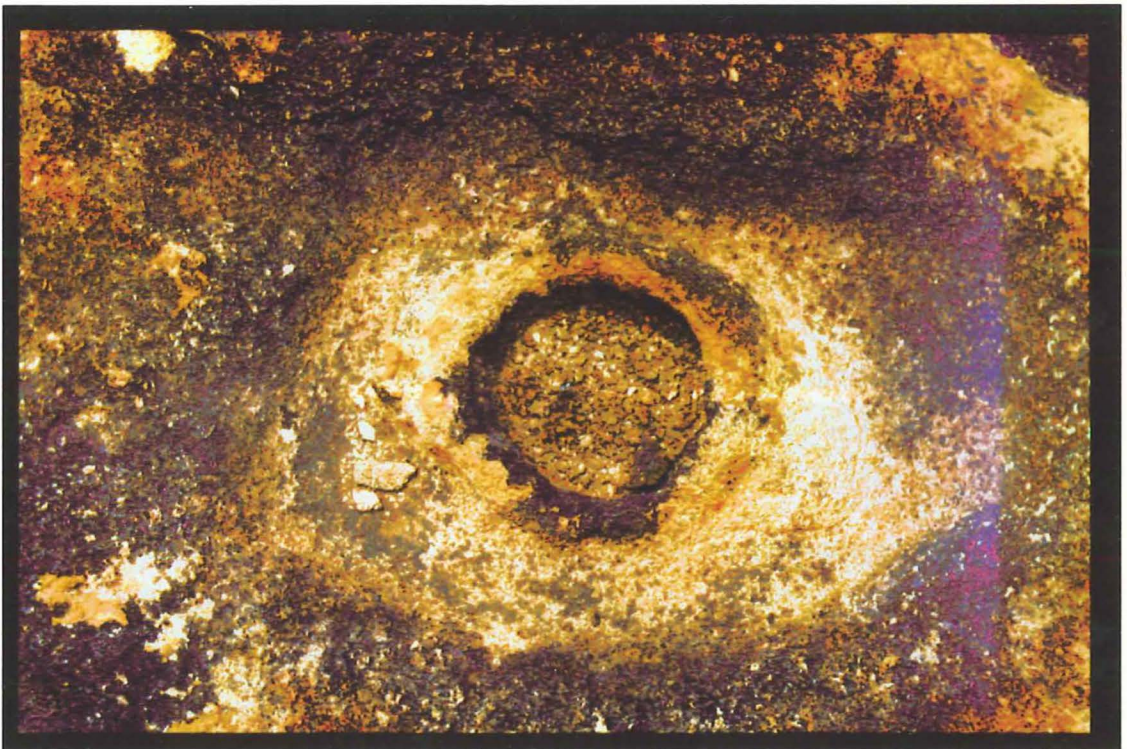
Zoë Janina Yökki Joy Trotman



[Figure 0.3: Mundaring Weir panorama]

## Acknowledgment

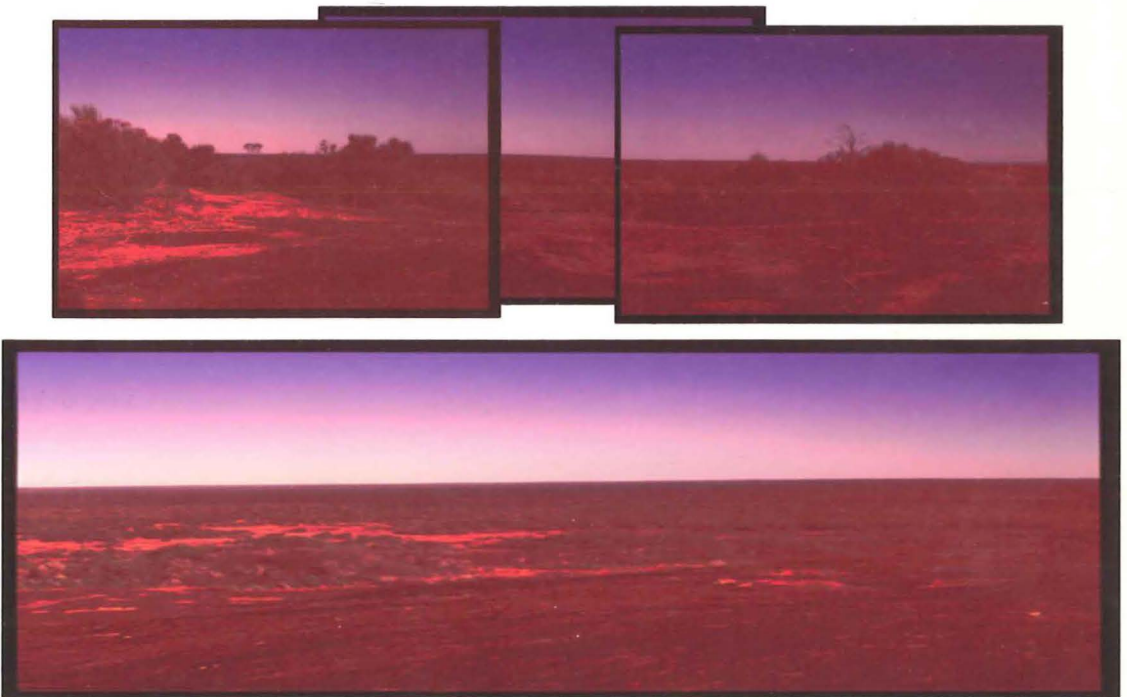
I would like to thank my mum and dad for all the support and love they have given me over the years. I would also like to express gratitude to my supervisor, Norm Leslie and my lecturers Max Pam and Kevin Ballantine. I must pay homage to my trusty old Canon TX-1 (which got stolen in February 2002), and bless my new Canon EOS 1000. Finally, I must show appreciation to Michael Weatherby, Dave Murphy, Nathan and Kelly, Rachel Thorogood, Kate Mathewson, Pania Coffey and Matt Lovering (I keep you both alive in my thoughts and dreams), Beez Devenish, Monty Johnson, Garth Taylor, Paul Migdale, Lachlan White, Darren Broad, Andrew Corey, Aunty Dot and Uncle John, Andrew, Pauline, Kyra, Belle, Cassidy, Marie, Tania Crow, Stephan, Rachel and Nicola.



[FIGURE 0.4: A rock at De-Eranning Hill]



[FIGURE 0.5: A jaw-bone I picked up at Mt Singleton]



[FIGURE 0.6: Mt Churchman Panorama]

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# Introduction

John and Alexander Forrest (my distant uncles) helped shape the nature of this space, establishing it as the place we know today — a place officially called *the State of Western Australia*.

In my initial stages of research, I discovered a revealing distant family crest. The crest was created in 1875, by William Forrest “of Leschenault near Bunbury in the Colony of Western Australia, Esquire, Civil Engineer and Landed Proprietor” (Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 135). William was the father of John and Alexander (who both became famous explorers/politicians); and at that time, this space was *officially* the *Colony* of Western Australia.



The caption, *Vivunt Dum Virent*, brings on a sense of dramatic irony and guilt — a sense with which I am now very accustomed. It translates, “*While they are green, they flourish*” (in reference to trees in a forest). In the context of the Forrest family, it means “*While they live they flourish*”. So what then, is their destiny, their legacy, after life?

When I was a child I was very proud to say, “*I’m related to John Forrest, the famous explorer*”. I believed that this gave me some sort of deep affinity with the land in (and upon) which I live. I thought that this made me important: John Forrest was/has been/is frequently referred to as the “Emperor of the West” (Edwards. 1964, p. 5), and as “Western Australia’s greatest son” (Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 81).

[FIGURE O.7: CREST FROM Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 134]

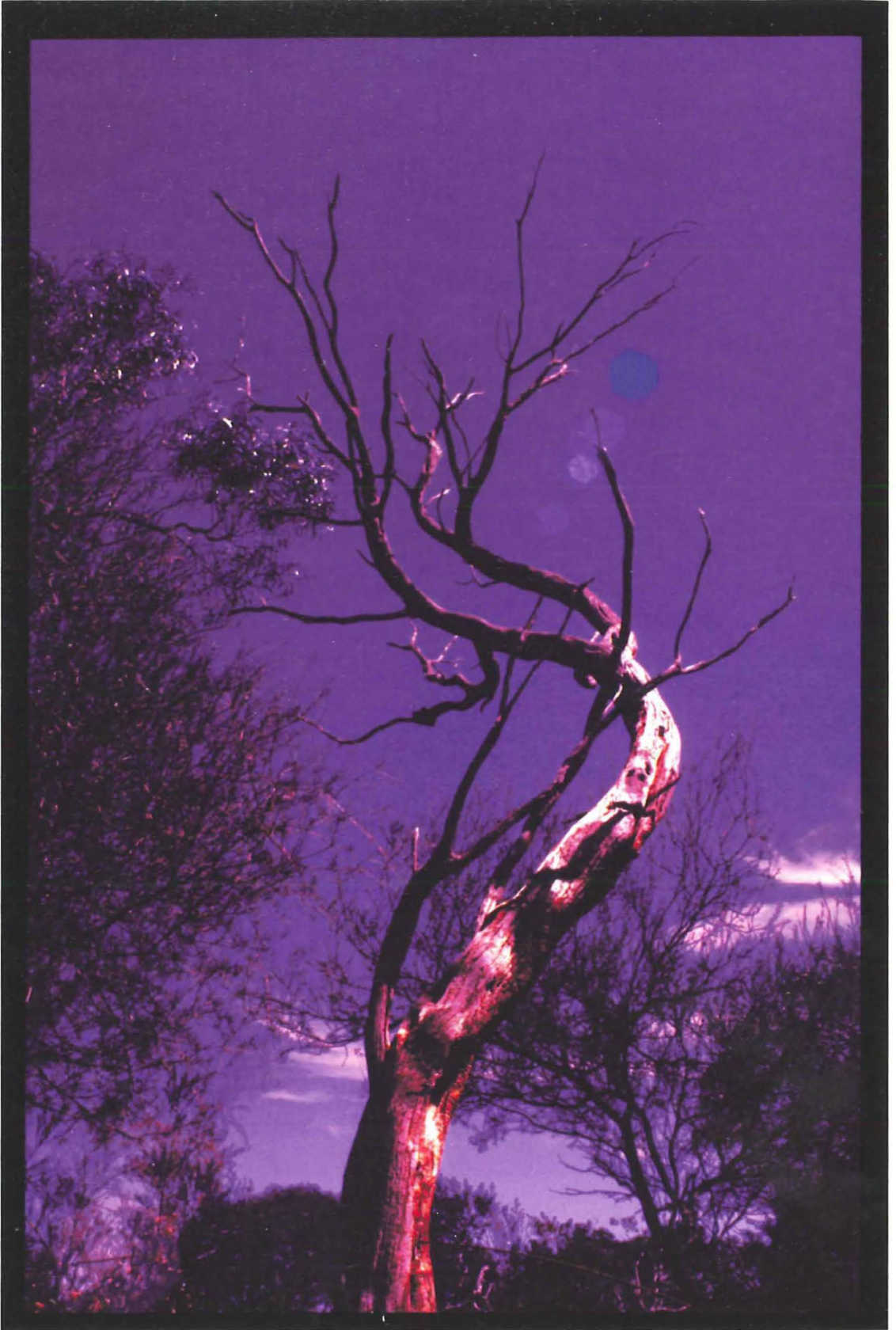
My thesis is an attempt to acknowledge the exoteric achievements of John Forrest, while giving voice to his inadequacies, which have long been ignored in our history books. I wish to create a somewhat critical analysis of John’s life. This means that I wish to examine him as a human being (with strengths and weaknesses), not deify and worship

him like most published records of his life. The intentions of my thesis can be divided into these four points:

- ⊕ To DECONSTRUCT the influence John Forrest is recorded to have had within the *imperial archive* of this space (Forrest is *officially* recorded in history as: explorer, surveyor, commissioner of "crown lands" and Premier). This will be achieved through addressing his relationship with (and perceptions of) aboriginal peoples.
- ⊕ To CONSTRUCT an alternative configuration of the version of John Forrest recorded in the imperial archives, suggesting that Forrest was in fact a land-grabber. This should foreground past policy, whereby "tractable natives" were utilised as a resource of interest. Even Forrest admits that the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was central to his "success".
- ⊕ To EXAMINE (photographically) the spaces that Forrest is recorded to have impacted upon (details of my photographic journey feature in my book). Also making an effort to locate traces of a story of indigenous history that occurred within this space.
- ⊕ To LINK the story of space documented within the imperial archive of "Australia", to contemporary issues of reconciliation<sup>2</sup> and environmentalism — divisive concepts for a culture largely structured by a myopic sense of "national identity".

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<sup>2</sup> Reconciliation is a term for a legislative process of "togetherness" — the fact that reconciliation is not a social reality means that the term is often viewed with some contempt. More "appropriate" terms for the *enculturation* of "togetherness" could be a "Walking Together" or an act of "Mutual Recognition", which intend to embrace (and not reject) difference and support a breadth in cultural understanding (the communication of culture should indicate togetherness in representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation).



[FIGURE 0.8: Tree at Mt Singleton]

# Chapter 1: The Way We Remember Ourselves

There is a problem in this space — “Australia”. The land has become a highly contested issue, and while we talk about being a unified nation, we know this is far from the case. Though we have made many policies to enforce unity (eg, assimilation, multiculturalism), the social reality is quite the opposite (though some would say not entirely), and this is hardly surprising. Why is national unity in Australia, something that works in policy but not in practice? In reference to indigenous Australians, the answer could be that the “official” policies and laws of our nation, largely ignore traditional indigenous policies and laws (especially those involving land ownership and use)<sup>3</sup>.

Before the coming of the white man, there was a law for all men [sic.] and time. This law guaranteed the undisputed tenure of the Land from generation to generation. The collective rights, titles and interests of the people were protected by this Law. The people lived in a state of virtue and democracy under the Law without recourse to kings, princes or police.

Let it be known that this Law of the land continues to guide us up to the present time. Next to the food we eat, it is the thing which keeps us alive and which we cherish most.

Let it be known that, in spite of our misery, the Land and its Law provide hope for us. The white man has never understood our Law nor taken it seriously.

Don McLeod August 1980

(CITED IN Don McLeod [On-line], 1999)

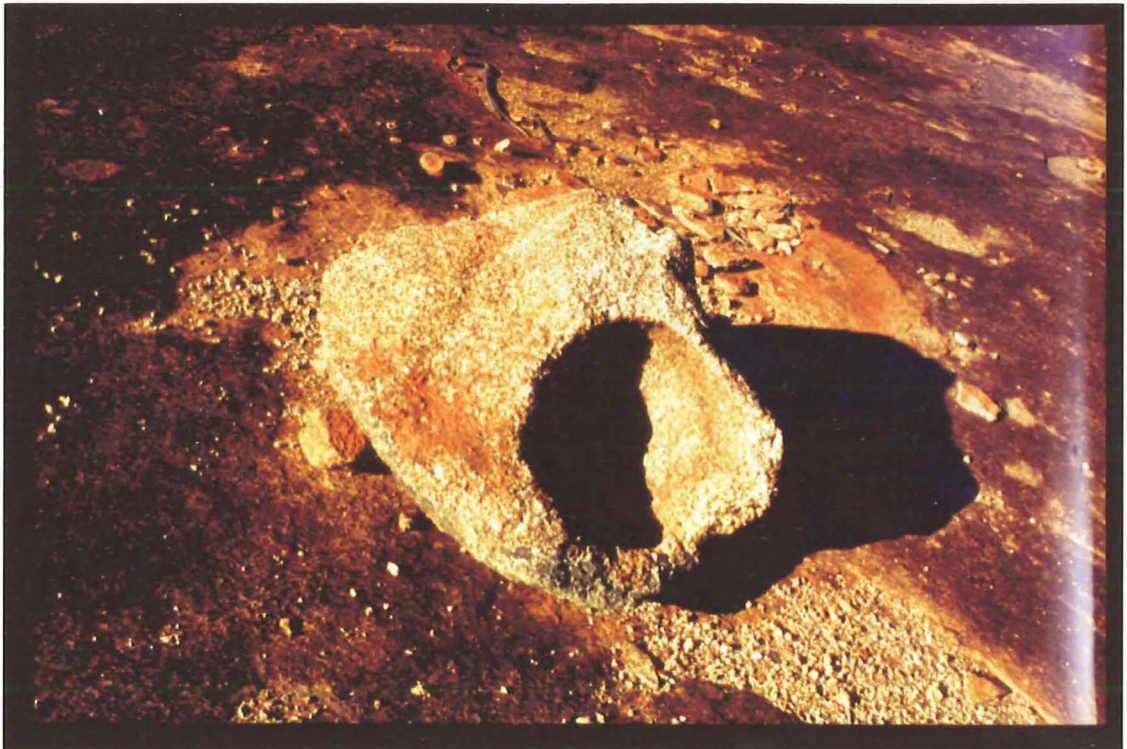
Don McLeod was one of the most important non-Aboriginal figures to help further the rights of indigenous people. The traditional indigenous land-law that he speaks of is currently being used in High Court cases to disprove our national policies and laws (though indigenous law prevails in only a few cases). Simply put, in Australia there are national (“official”) policies that are often in contention with traditional indigenous law. For example, elders from Murray Island — or Mer as the island is known to its people (100 nautical

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<sup>3</sup> Even though many Aborigines do not practice their ancestral culture, most understand that indigenous people (and indigenous law) were here long before this place became “Australia”. Similarly, most would argue that the insertion of white law into this space (which came with colonisation) would have breached indigenous laws (meaning that colonial law would have been rendered redundant by indigenous law). However, our nation’s “officialdom” must ignore these facts (although sometimes Australian law “officially” recognises indigenous claims of native title).

miles off the Queensland coast) — still talk of an idol god Malo, who ruled before the missionaries arrived. Malo's law was used by elders in their battle for sea rights (as their seas were being used by commercial fishermen), and showed the highest court in the land that traditional ownership on Mer did indeed exist.

The law of Malo was clear, Eddie Mabo said then, and remains clear: Keep your hands to yourself. Don't walk on something that does not belong to you. According to Malo's law, no-one trespasses on another man's [sic.] land: no fisherman visits another's reef without asking permission first.  
(Pryor. 2001, pp. 28 – 30).



[FIGURE 1.1: Rock at Mt Churchman]

How can "official" rules of land (and sea) ownership and use, be overpowered by indigenous laws? Well,

According to the international law of Europe in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were only three ways that Britain could take possession of another country:

1. If the country was uninhabited, Britain could take possession by claiming and settling that country. In this case, Britain could claim ownership of the land and share it out among its own people.
2. If the country was already inhabited, Britain could ask for permission from the indigenous people to use some of their land. In this case Britain could purchase land for its own use but it could not steal the land of the indigenous people.

3. If the country was inhabited, Britain could take over the country by invasion and conquest — in other words, defeat that country in war. However, even after winning a war, Britain would have to respect the rights of the indigenous people. For example, it still could not steal people's land.

(Board of Studies NSW. 1995 [Book]. *The Myth of Terra Nullius*, pp. 36–37).

However, Britain did not follow any of these rules in Australia. Instead of recognising the presence of indigenous people in this space (thus rendering its British “settlement” an act of invasion), Britain pretended as if Australia was uninhabited; *terra nullius*<sup>4</sup> they declared.



[FIGURE 1.2: Graffiti on the Perth – Kalgoorlie Pipeline]

The claim that in 1788, Australia was a *terra nullius*, was an allegation proved legal fiction in 1992 (the *Mabo* case<sup>5</sup>). Returning to the

<sup>4</sup> Terra Nullius: declaring that the land belonged to no-one. The presence of the Aboriginal people and communities were ignored. They were considered part of the flora and fauna and a ‘problem’ that could be dealt with.

(The Body Shop. 2000 [Brochure]. *Full Voice: Issue 3: Reconciliation and You*, p. 12)

If, as the *terra nullius* doctrine claimed, Australia was an uninhabited desert and belonged to no one in 1788, then the Aborigines simply had to vanish from state calculations.

(Davidson. 1997, p. 189)

<sup>5</sup> MABO: The *Mabo* case established the existence of native title in Australia, and therefore of a legal order before the whites arrived, thus ending the *terra nullius* doctrine. This

question of how "official" Australian law can be challenged by indigenous law, the *myth* of terra nullius provides a platform from which one may view the entirety of *Australian* law, policy and history as questionable concepts (terra nullius being the foundation for their construction). However, many people today are not prepared to recognise the dubious nature of the notions that form the foundations of the Australian nation. Out of fear, the majority of Australians (especially those in rural areas) do not support native title. Moreover, Australia's Federal Government (particularly our current Liberal Government) is certainly not ready to fully realise the suspect nature of these ideas (eg. the Australian government will not apologise to Aborigines for past maltreatment; anxiety exists regarding the lawsuits that may ensue, upon any admission that previous policies were wrong).

The rules of nationality and citizenship in Australia have always been more discriminatory against Aborigines than against any other part of the population. The attempts of the Aboriginal people to meet what was required of them to become citizens by an Anglo-Celtic nation were doomed to failure because those requirements were impossible to meet. They therefore went beyond the smug nation-state to an international society more likely to hear their justified demands for citizenship, since its standards were so much higher than the Anglo-Celtic society. Gradually, above all in a series of cases, they established piecemeal the rights to have those standards here. So they changed the possibilities for all Australian citizens who therefore could use principles enunciated in, say, *Koowarta v. Bjelke-Petersen*, to force observance of environmental rights in the *Dams* case.

The Aborigines thus contributed to Australian citizenship by showing how inadequate any notion of citizenship based on a single national identity must be today and in a future global world. The ruling party and state still resist.

(Davidson. 1997, pp. 188 – 189).

One source of cultural conflict in Australia is inherent in the way we represent ourselves as a nation. This cultural impediment is buttressed by the selective, metonymic and myopic nature of the official/imperial memory-banks, which aim to *document* the "history" of this space. The dominant way in which we remember John Forrest is an example of how our legends of the past have been warped in their recording<sup>6</sup>.

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means whites can no longer claim to a non-negotiated right of sovereignty.

(Davidson. 1997, p. 203)

<sup>6</sup> Legends relate to myths and a myth "is a story that is a specific and local transformation of a deep structure of binarily opposed concepts that are important to the culture within which the myth circulates. The most powerful and significant myths act as anxiety reducers in that they deal with the contradictions inherent in any structure of binary oppositions, and although they do not resolve them (for such contradictions are often finally irreconcilable), they do provide an

National identity, like personal identity is part memory, part forgetting. The selection of photographs in a family album finds a parallel in what might be called the national album: that collection of ancestors by which we understand ourselves and present ourselves to others.

("Rear Window", 1991)

Only the vanquished remember history.

Marshall McLuhan

(CITED IN "Today's Thought", 2002)

John Forrest was Westralian born. In 1847 he entered the world, the fourth child of Margaret and William Forrest. He went on to become an explorer, a surveyor, and a commissioner of "crown lands"; he was also the first Premier of Western Australia. I am John Forrest's niece<sup>7</sup>. "John, known as 'Jack' to his family, is often referred to as Western Australia's greatest son" (Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 81).

It is said that even at the tender age of three, John showed signs of sturdy independence.

Instead of riding, he insisted on trudging alongside the bullock wagon for the full three miles through the bush, when the family were moving to their new home.

(Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 81)

Forrest frequently tried to record the landscape (the "nature") that he encountered whilst on expeditions, in organised and detailed books; often procuring the most critical information from Aboriginal men with localised knowledge. Ironically, he attempted no *understanding* of this library of knowledge, synthesised in the land. "Blinded by an epistemology obsessed with scientific discourse, theory is taken to be the sole expression of true knowledge" (Verran CITED IN Tilley, 2002, p. 7).

This place (the land) is a composite record of time, space, botany and zoology. *Its* story is written upon (and within) the *actual* land itself — a space Forrest could only *reference* in his books. This land makes a testimony to its "nature"; it is marked by experience. However, Forrest was a lifelong aficionado of the opinion that, any localised experience was something far eclipsed by the superiority of his own, personalised knowledge. The conflict between these two sorts of knowledge ("official"/"legitimate" versus experiential/subjective) can be compared

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Imaginative way of living with them, and coping with them so that they do not become too disruptive and do not produce too much cultural anxiety".

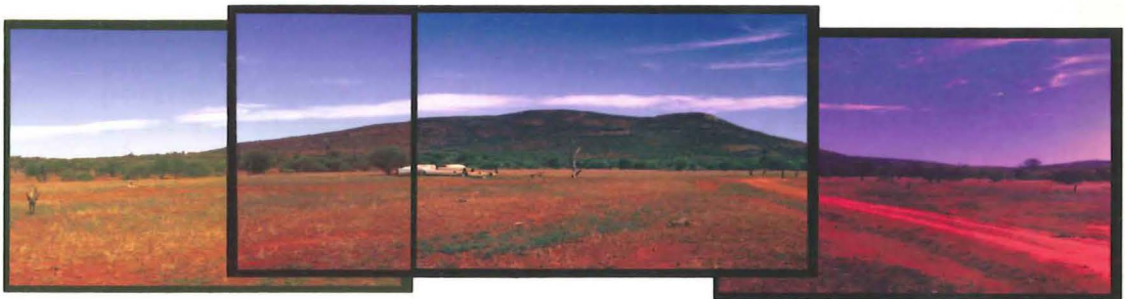
(Fiske. 1997, pp. 122 – 123).

<sup>7</sup> James Hill Forrest was John's brother: James Hill → Grace Hill Campbell → Joy Edeline Irene → Colin Howard → Zoë Janina Yökki Joy.

to the friction between “official” and indigenous (traditional) laws. This battle of knowledge reaches a similar conclusion: the land retains records of at least 60,000 years of knowledge and history, though only the last 214 are heralded and revered as the story of *our* nation (similarly, Australia recognises that indigenous people were here before non-indigenous people, but rules are largely constructed around non-indigenous policies).

[T]he Aboriginal imaginary (stories told about land through ritual, dance, painting, and oral and written narrative) had aesthetic value, to be appropriated as art and adornment, but not practical value, to teach survival or enhance understanding of the Australian environment, or legal value, to be recognised as a legitimate form of land ownership under a Western legal system.  
(Tilley. 2002, p. 7)

The real library that is in this land has much to offer Australia. We may come to a better understanding of how to care for this space, if we begin to share this space. Non-indigenous Australians are afraid to look at the land too closely: they fear they might find something that questions their presence, or their version of this space. Unfortunately, it means that this land — solely for our inability to acknowledge and look at it — is fast disappearing, through land clearance and salt levels. When the Europeans arrived, they saw Australia as a wild land to be tamed, they did not realise that:



[FIGURE 1.3: Mt Singleton panorama]

The open grassy woodlands that [they] encountered were, in fact, kept that way by Aboriginal fire management. [Aborigines additionally] maintained a mixture of edible grasses and herbs which were also useful in attracting animals.

In her book *Burning Questions*, Professor Marcia Langton argues that the concept of wilderness denies the very existence of Aboriginal biogeography. She calls it the scientific equivalent of terra nullius, and says that Australian natural resource scientists have been blind to indigenous knowledge systems. Wilderness, says Professor Langton, continues the colonial assumption "that this land (wilderness) is not and has never been governed by human institutions, by government laws".

The first Europeans saw Australia as a poor, scrubby, impoverished, even barren land. They were repelled by the arid landscape, bitterly disappointed at the dry salt lakes.

Marcia Langton

(CITED IN Wahlquist. "Hard Yards", 2001)

Nevertheless, John saw what he wanted in the land. In exploring and surveying he chose to pursue something he coveted more than life itself. John desired the same hero-worship that he had bequeathed to such idols as Gregory and Oxley (who were early Australian explorers). As a child John had been fascinated by their accounts and ordeals. Indeed, when Forrest looked at the landscape of this space<sup>8</sup>, I believe he truly saw his own magnified reflection, and conveniently ignored the rest.

On this note, Ross Gibson (1992) argues that cultures continually shape the environment to suit the needs of the community. He cites Hegel to support his claim (and one should note Hegel's gender bias):

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<sup>8</sup> I wish to distinguish between the words *space* and *place* (space is neutral, but place is space that has been given meaning):

place: an open space in a town, a market-place or square: a portion of space: a portion of the earth's surface, or any surface, or in any system, order, or arrangement: a building, room, piece of ground, etc., assigned to some purpose (as *place of business, entertainment, worship*): a particular locality; a town, village, etc.: space occupied: room: the position held by anybody, esp. under government or domestic service: due or proper position or dignity:

place-hunter: one who covets and strives after a public post (this is how Forrest could be viewed, especially in reference to this paragraph:

have place: to have existence.

[Partly O.E. (Northumb.) *plæce*, market-place, but mainly Fr. *place*, both from L. *platea*—Gr. *plateia* (*hodos*), broad (street).]

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 1020)

space: that in which material bodies have extension: a portion of extension: room: interval: an open or an empty place: regions remote from the earth.

[Fr. *espace*—L. *spatium*; Gr. *spaein*, to draw.]

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 1294)

Man realises himself through *practical* activity, since he has the impulse to express himself, and so again to recognise himself, in things that are at first simply represented to himself as externally existent. He attains this by altering external things and impressing on them the stamp of his own inner nature, so that he rediscovers his own character in them. Man does this in order that he may profit by his freedom to break down the stubborn indifference of the external world to himself, and may enjoy in the countenance of nature only an outward embodiment of himself.

Hegel

(CITED IN Gibson. 1992, pp. 63 – 64).

In 1997, the Battye Library of WA, held a seminar to commemorate the 150th birthday of Sir John Forrest. In the conference details on the web, it is argued that Forrest “was an ambitious man, and relished public recognition” (LISWA [On-line], 1997). John reflected *this* notable attribute of his character upon all of his exploits — as an explorer, as a politician, and as a human being in general — tenacious as an ox.

In 1868, Forrest was selected to be second in command (to botanist Barron Von Mueller) of an expedition party that would attempt to locate the remains of Ludwig Leichhardt. However, Von Mueller had to withdraw as leader — he had important botanical work to attend to in Melbourne — and when the party set-off in 1869, John was left as leader, giving twenty-one year-old Forrest, a very early opportunity to prove his talents.

John’s explorations gave him great confidence in the future of Western Australia and his knowledge, drive and initiative enabled him to lead the state forward with vision when he became Premier. His life was a natural progression from explorer, to administrative survey posts, to state and Federal politics, where, in 1913, he missed the Prime Ministership by one vote.

(Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 82)

In 2001, the majority of Australians celebrated one hundred years of an *official* policy of *combined nationhood*. This policy — enacted *nationwide* in 1901 — is known/referred to as “Federation”. Forrest’s leadership was of central influence to the concept we have of this space today; he is a “founding father”:

The overwhelming support that the miners and Labour [in Western Australia] generally gave to Federation has often been noted; this was in large part due to their desire for “a burst up of Forrestism”.

J. Bastin

(CITED IN Edwards. 1964, p. 9)

I wish to deconstruct contemporary notions of the Australian cultural identity because, as Tilley (2002) argues;



[FIGURE 1.4: Nambling field]

The concept of national identity... has lately become somewhat problematised. There have been various calls for its retirement... In Australia, however, we remain rather attached to the notion that our island continent also has a correspondingly island symbolic or cultural identity. We make regular and... often strenuous emotive efforts to peg out the borders of that identity. These efforts tend to cluster around occasions such as the Sydney Olympics, ... or the Centenary of Federation, intended to focus our attention on "nationhood and what it means", strengthen "national confidence and identity", and "celebrate" national "achievements" (National Council for the Centenary of Federation, 2000). (Tilley. 2002, pp. 1 - 2).

Tilley also puts forward the suggestion that, for our country "to avoid regression, or at best halts and uncertainties, a rapid step must be taken from national consciousness to political and social consciousness" (Franz Fanon, CITED IN Tilley. 2002, p. 1). My dismantling of the Australian national identity will prompt me to gauge whether the present space and time has at all been affected by Forrest's "autocratic conduct" (Edwards. 1964, p. 2). Furthermore, it will induce an anatomisation of the effect of his omnipotent dominance, over versions of the past.

Forrest's despotism helped *enable* (according to the history books<sup>9</sup>) the *colonies* to become *states* (and *territories*), and the *states* (and

<sup>9</sup> For example: Crowley, 1971 & 2000; Edwards, 1964; Muir & Muir, 1982.

*territories*) to "come together", to make a *nation*. The "unity" in this nation<sup>10</sup> was to be buttressed by *images* of equalitarianism/egalitarianism. Forrest helped legislate this Imaginary unity: an image through which he would attain his own personal potential for dominance. He promoted the idea that a *man's* worth should be judged by his actions, while courting the favour of distinguished members of society (eg. naming a spring after Governor Weld, and marrying into the colony's social elite). His actions echoed the social attitudes of Perth at that time. These attitudes:

[R]eflected the double standards that respected those who had made good in the colony, as well as those of 'good breeding' and 'good connections'.  
(Crowley. 2000, p. 48)

Perhaps the most telling fact about Sir John's Premiership (and a detail not often remembered) is that, for the time he held the position, there were in fact, no political parties. This meant that he was able to govern by means of a floating majority of support, rather than by a landslide and definite victory.

So what do we remember about John in our history books? As a nation (and particularly as a state), we frequently remember that he treated Aboriginal men with "respect":

Both John and Alex showed concern for the natives and handled them with confidence, though at times, their lives were in danger. Both men had great affection for Tommy Windich, Tommy Pierre, Billy Noogale and Jemmy Mungaroo who accompanied them on explorations. When Tommy Windich died, John wrote publicly of his faithful service and made sure that they all had 'white men's graves'.  
(Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 82)

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<sup>10</sup> A body of people marked off by common descent, language, culture, or historical tradition: the people of a state: an American Indian tribe: a set of people, animals, etc.

national: belonging or peculiar to a characteristic of, or controlled by, a nation: public: general: attached to one's own country.

nationalise: to make the property of the nation: to bring under national management: to naturalise: to make a nation of.

nationalist: one who favours or strives after the unity, independence, interests, or domination of a nation.

nationality: membership of, fact or state of belonging to a particular nation: nationhood: a group or set character of a nation: national character.

[L. *natio*, -*onis*—*nasci*, *natus*, to be born].

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 877)

I believe that Forrest respected "tractable" Aborigines, but had a distinct distaste for those who were "defiant". For example, on the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, during his 1869 expedition;



[FIGURE 1.5: Goomalling train line]

Forrest and Windich, scouting ahead, saw a distant fire, and approaching it surprised a middle-aged Aboriginal who took to his heels shouting and making for some of his friends who were at a little distance. Forrest set off in pursuit and quickly overtook the man, for he was riding Turpin, an old police horse, who knew all about running down native fugitives, as Forrest callously wrote in his journal...

When brought to bay, the Aboriginal dropped the dowaks and wooden bowl he was carrying and hastily climbed a small tree. Unable to make him come down, Forrest climbed up after him until the fugitive began pelting him with sticks, and kept this up with great vigour...

[Forrest] used his revolver to shoot at the tree to show what bullets could do, but this had no effect except to frighten off the other Aborigines.

The man seemed to not understand anything they said to him, and rejected all Forrest's advances, including the offer of a piece of damper. Short of using force, there was no way of getting him down, so Forrest eventually left him in peace, bidding him farewell, so he tells us, "in as kindly a manner as possible".

(Wilson. 1981, p. 48)

This event frequently remains unrecorded in publications about John Forrest. The only other record of this incident I was able to locate, was

in a video in the Alexander Library. This source quoted Forrest's journal:

I tried every means to tempt him to come down; I fired my revolver — twice. I attempted to climb up after him, but he pelted me with sticks, and was more like a beast than a man.

John Forrest

(CITED IN "John Forrest, explorer", 1986)

As a state, we frequently acknowledge that most of Western Australia's roads, bridges, public buildings and hospitals can in some way be traced back to Forrest and O'Connor. We forget about the massive British loans that financed almost all of Forrest's works.

As Premier of Western Australia, John was said to be a man ahead of his times. Remarkable as his own talents were he had access also to the talents of several men equally remarkable in their own way. Newspaper director Sir Winthrop Hackett, Bishop C.O.L. Riley, Septimus Burt, his brother Alexander as Mayor of Perth and Chief Engineer C.Y. O'Connor. John had been responsible for bringing O'Connor from New Zealand to Western Australia (at a salary equal to his own). He could see the need for a man of vision to implement the vast public works necessary in his growing state. With the knowledge of John the surveyor/explorer, his courage to raise loans, and the engineering ability of C.Y. O'Connor, much was achieved. The Goldfields water supply scheme was constructed, the inner harbour at Fremantle built, railways were extended, the telegraph line to Coolgardie was constructed, cold storage was provided by the Government, the Leeuwin lighthouse was built, the Royal mint opened, King's Park was set aside for the public and a modern education system replaced the former grants to the church bodies. It was the beginning of State Arbitration laws, the Public Service Act and the payment of members of Parliament. Agriculture flourished and the Agricultural Bank was established. John was distinctly allergic to speculators and liked to see land used and improved. He was a bold but careful financier always keeping expenditure below revenue.

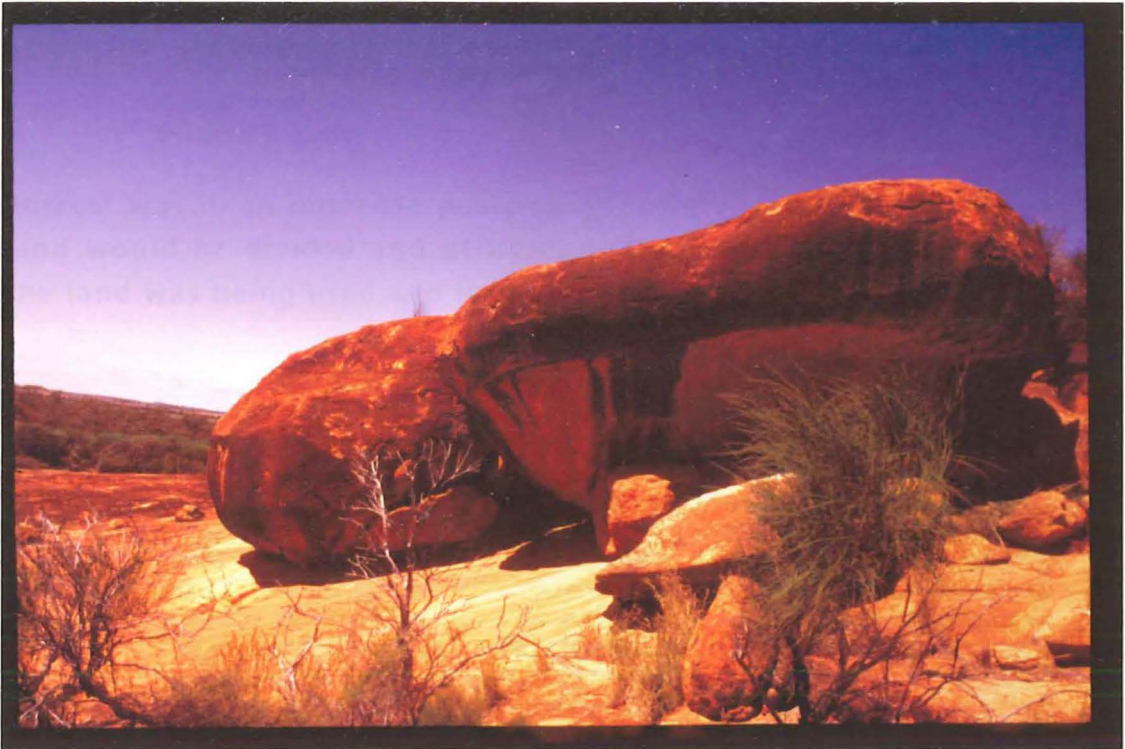
(Muir & Muir. 1982, pp. 94 – 95).

This citation introduces the aspiration central to Forrest's landownership policies: to see that the land be "used" and "improved". In the opening pages of *Big John Forrest: 1847 – 1918*, Crowley (2000) cites *Gulliver's Travels*, referencing in allusion, Forrest's attitudes toward landownership.

And, he gave it for his Opinion; that whoever could make two Ears of Corn or two Blades of Grass to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before; would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country, than the whole Race of Politicians put together.

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

(CITED IN Crowley. 2000, p. iii)



[FIGURE 1.6: A rock at Billyburning]

In 1898<sup>11</sup>, Forrest introduced the Lands Act. This allowed settlers to become landowners more readily (making loans available for the purchase of land), and then provided settlers with finance to develop their blocks. "To ensure that the land was fully utilised, its transfer was made conditional on the holder carrying out certain improvements within a specific period" (Haebich. 1988, p. 11). Forrest always regarded the new land law as his own personal triumph:

He wished to build up a peasant-type rural population on the principle that residence and improvement should be 'a sine qua non condition of alienation of land on easy terms from the Crown'. As he explained:

*The main object I have in view is to settle the population — 'a bold peasantry' — on the soil; to see the country utilised and occupied; to encourage the agricultural progress of the colony; and, while doing this, to give as much security as possible to the pastoral tenant, especially in localities not suited to agricultural development.*

John Forrest  
(CITED IN Crowley. 2000, p. 56)

Crowley also mentions here, that in response to Forrest's idea of a bold peasantry;

<sup>11</sup> One should note that Forrest was quite politically active in 1898, and in my thesis, there are recurrent references to his exploits in this year.

An unkind critic once said that Forrest was really trying to establish 'a Race of Indigent Cockatoos' and that Englishmen would never make peasant proprietors. What the colony really wanted was 'stout British yeomen'.  
(Crowley. 2000, p. 56)

Forrest was in an immense position of power. He could decide how the land would be divided and utilised, and he could argue as to whether the land was being used and improved.

In his dual roles as surveyor-general and commissioner of crown lands, Forrest had great personal responsibilities. There was no public service board, or competitive public examination system for entrance into government employment, and heads of departments could exercise a good deal of patronage in appointments, promotions and dismissals. He could generally act, if he had the mind for it, as the Land Czar of Western Australia. By the stroke of a pen, he could virtually deprive a farmer of his land for failing to improve it, or a pastoralist of his lease for not stocking his property and being late with the rent. He could advise the governor to run a road through the middle of a farm or station for public purposes, or debate a town site where none existed. His decisions, or those of his staff acting under his authority, could be disputed or challenged, but very few ever were. He could have been in a position to further his own and his friends' fortunes.  
(Crowley. 2000, p. 57)

Crowley (1971) provides his reasoning for Forrest's success:

He had an eye for the lie of the country, and a feel for the topography of his native land. He was well able to cast the chain and to handle the complicated calculations involved in plotting and mapping, and was a great asset to the Assistant Surveyor in Bunbury, as well as to the settlers in the surrounding district.  
(Crowley. 1971, p. 22)

In 1929, Colebatch argued that John Forrest's main qualifications for leadership:

[W]ere a burning patriotism for the land of his birth; unshakeable confidence, resulting from personal knowledge of its qualities; and courage, steadfast and absolute. These gave him the unquestioning following always at the command of a positive leader: the man "who knows that he knows"  
(Colebatch. 1929, p. 101)

Muir and Muir (1982) are confident in their prosaic claim that:

In words that may be applied to others of that period F.K. Crowley wrote that John:

*"took with him to his grave this compound of social snobbery, laissez faire capitalism, sentimental royalism, patriotic Anglicanism, benevolent imperialism, and British racial superiority".*

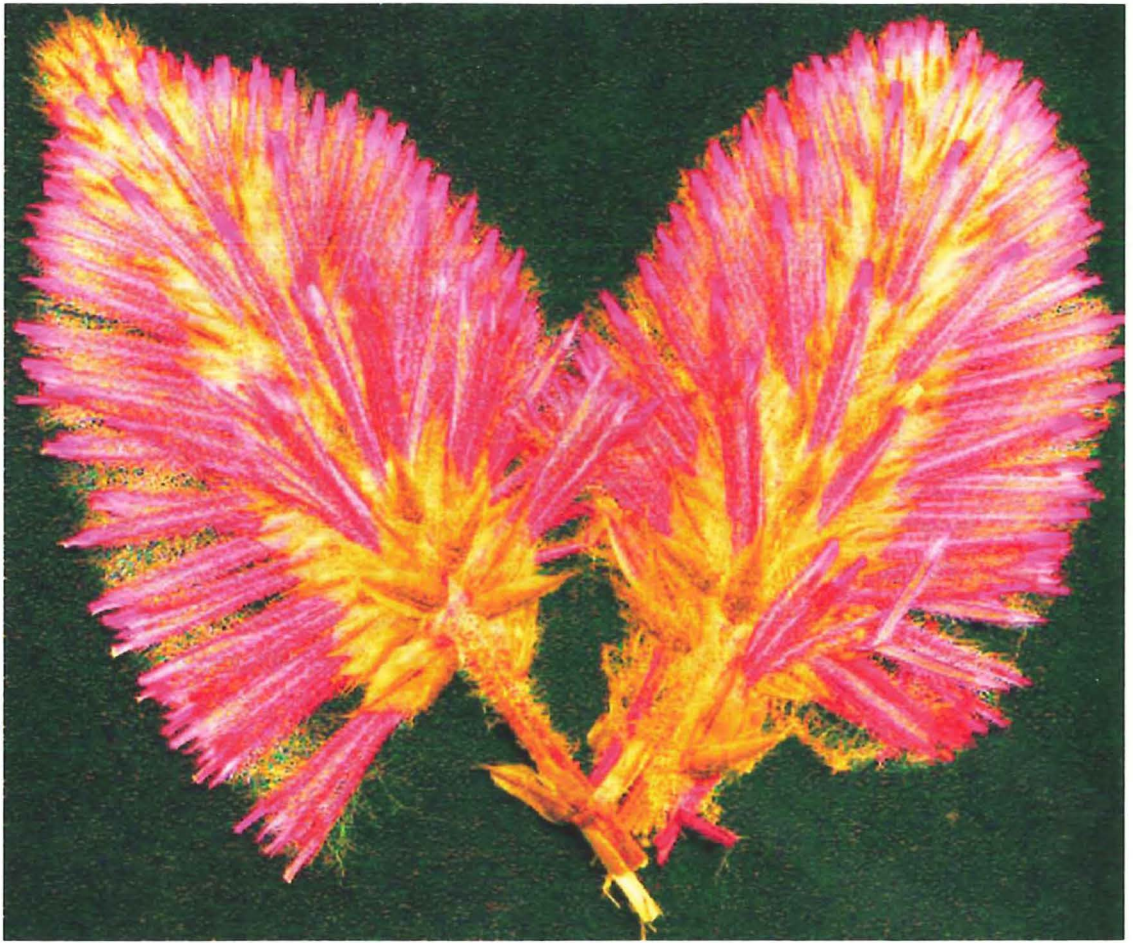
Few men have remained so long in the public eye, reached such a prominent place so early, and retained active leadership for such a length of time. We can be justly proud of 'Uncle Jack', who was as fearless at the age of seventy as he had been as a young explorer and politician. When warned not to make his last voyage [to England] he said, "I have faced death before and I will face it now. What does it matter if I die at sea". His parting words to the Premier Mr. H.B. Lefroy were, "I have a charge for you: Look after our native land". That native land has honoured his memory with a peerage and a bronze statue and his name lives as surely as if he had had the family for which he and Margaret longed.  
(Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 95)

This is how John is immortalised in our national memory-bank. This space is (apparently) his "native"<sup>12</sup> land. My own existence is (apparently) dedicated to the perpetuation of his fond memory. So what is it; the perturbing knowledge, the thing that I have discovered, which has led me to question my pride in my "great" heritage? What does it mean, to "flourish" as I live this life, the great-grand-niece of "Western Australia's greatest son"?

Monuments or places that seem to symbolise the very essence of the nation are represented as completely benign places; there's never been struggle around them, they never represent any contradictions. [Contradictions] are erased from the history books, and therefore erased from any popular memory.  
The construction of the nation is also about the construction of a nation that is classless, and doesn't have tremendous class conflict in its history. I think that the ways in which the symbols of the nation are always about a struggle, constructs one popular memory against another.  
(*"Rear Window"*, 1991)

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<sup>12</sup> Belonging naturally: innate: inherent: natural: in natural state: unsophisticated: belonging by birth: belonging to the people originally or at the time of discovery of the country, esp. when they are coloured or uncivilised: applied to Australian plants and animals to which the name of an already known different kind has been transferred:  
one born and long dwelling in a place: vaguely, a coloured person (*coll.*):  
a white person born in Australia: an indigenous species.  
nativism: the belief that the mind possesses some ideas or forms of thought which are inborn and not derived from sensation: the disposition to favour the natives of a country in preference to the immigrants.  
nativity: state or fact of being born: time, place, and manner of birth: nationality of birth: fact or status of being native.  
native-born: born in the country: having a status by virtue of birth (*Scot.; obs.*)  
[*L. natus - nasci, natus, to be born*].  
(Macdonald. 1972, pp. 877 - 878).



[FIGURE 1.7: A flower press from near Mt Churchman]

## Chapter 2:

# The Way We Forget Ourselves

Forrest was an auteur<sup>13</sup> in the construction of space. He helped structure the dominant perception of this place, *officially* recognised as the State of Western Australia. However:

Anything and anyone can be appraised and catalogued in the imperial archive as something useful, as a resource, or as a hindrance to the extraction of resources, something to be avoided or removed. Gold is a resource, to be assayed and exploited, but a ravine is a hindrance, to be skirted or bridged. 'Tractable' natives are seen as a resource, to be put to work. Uncooperative ones are a nuisance to be marched off the nearest cliff. From the potential realm of possibilities for combining resources from all points of the world, more than one empire has selected dispossession, subjection, slavery, and genocide.  
(Wark. 1997, pp. 49 – 50).

One of Forrest's critics once wrote (in a letter to a relative), "the weakest minds look upon Forrest as a little God" (Edwards. 1964, p. 2). This is quite different to the image of Forrest most frequently encountered. Edwards later notes another disagreement Forrest had with a fellow government member (Harry Venn). Venn fearlessly challenged Forrest, and on one occasion, John warned Venn to either *bend* or *break* under his rule, to which Venn dramatically replied, "Death rather than dishonour" (p. 3).

In his biographical account, Forrest's mistakes are sometimes noted; but more frequently, they are excused:

It has been said that he made mistakes but also that he made Western Australia. One amusing mistake was made in King's Park. The man who had found his way through the centre of Australia became lost in the Park while marking out a possible second drive. When night-fall was close he and members of the King's Park Board emerged on the wrong side of the park!  
(Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 85)

Forrest was, in many ways, as his-story tells it, "a decent fellow" and a "fairly humane man" (Adams, P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000). He did however make a number of "inflammatory observations

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<sup>13</sup> The director/creator of a film; one who brings anything into being; a beginner of an action or state of things.  
(Macdonald. 1972, p. 86)

about the natives, for whom he reputedly had so much concern" (Adams, P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000). In an 1883 speech, Forrest says that he:

[P]itied these poor wretches, they were fast disappearing from the face of the earth. It didn't matter what we may do, in a very few years there would be none of them left at all — they were getting fewer and fewer in number every year — and there could be no doubt that their doom was to be extinguished from the face of the earth.

(Adams, P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000)

Then, in 1890, he addressed the *Australian Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) convention in Melbourne. Forrest declared that:

There is no doubt but that Australia has been peopled for a considerable amount of time, and it is also certain that its original people are much lower in the human order than any of their neighbours. These facts being admitted, it becomes interesting to speculate as to the causes which have acted upon these people and have led them to follow the nomadic life in which they were found and in which they continue to live.

John Forrest, 1890

(CITED IN Aveling, 1979, p. 50)

In this speech, Forrest makes further attempts to repudiate (or to refuse to recognise) the fact that this space was the possession of the indigenous people. He endeavours to officialise and justify why it was appropriate that the land be usurped from them:

There is probably no race of people which has done so little to leave behind it a record of its existence as the Australian aboriginal race, and no race has been so little able to cope with civilisation. After existing in their own savage state for an immense time, an intercourse of about half a century with a civilised race has been sufficient to almost remove them from the face of the earth.

John Forrest, 1890

(CITED IN Aveling, 1979, p. 51)

These excerpts may well illustrate the prevailing attitudes of the time; they may also exemplify the official view that determined government legislative procedure. Therefore, some may conclude that Forrest did not act at all unethically (ethics were different then), except when viewed with the benefit of hindsight. This may be true, however, we must look at the fact that our society is currently in turmoil over issues like The Stolen Generation. We must recognise how damaging these past opinions have been to our present and future, and thus, question these attitudes when we write our history, in the hope that they will not be repeated in our future (in reference to the figure of

John Forrest in our history books, his questionable attitudes are not interrogated as often as his heroic deeds are applauded). We must be critical of these attitudes and where they have left us as a nation today.



[FIGURE 2.1: Mt Churchman Camp]

After passing the 2001 centenary-cross-road, we should be thinking about what it means to flourish as a *being* within this space — we should not be contemplating what it means to be an “*Australian*” (an identity which is already fixated on narrow versions of history). Prominent features of our cultural landscape (other than and as a double standard to — the “centenary celebrations” of last year) include —the issue of reconciliation, and encompass a growing concern for the environment.

I believe the most striking need in Australian society is to take responsibility for an unequal past. Therefore, in order to write back to my uncle, I explored indigenous conceptualisations of the land, history, and representation to find a rebuttal:

One of the things I think Europeans find difficult to understand is, they talk for instance about the spiritual affinity for the land and the Aborigines, but what we don't understand is that the land is the Aborigines' botany. It is their zoology. It's their library. It is their reference book... It is their geography. All the culture that we have

in books and the knowledge, it is there, localised in the land. And once the land is taken away from them, all their complete culture goes because it is so fixated in the actual landmarks. Their legends are in the land. They weren't written in books. They were the land itself.

(Coutts. 1989, p. 65)

Forrest was a land-grabber: he sought space to usurp it, and then call it his own by birthright. To be "native" to this land was his *fantasy*, a term referring to an "explicit attempt... made to render plausible the fictional world by reference to known or imagined scientific principles, or to a projected advance in technology, or to a drastic change in the organization of society" (Abrams. 1999, p. 279). In saying that the indigenous peoples of Australia had no records of their existence, and that they were evolutionarily inferior to the white people in Australia, he was attempting to render the taking of indigenous lands as an acceptable action. In his eyes, this action was justified purely by the "fact" that non-indigenous Australians would put the land to "better" use. Today, it is more widely recognised that:

Every fence in Australia encloses land that was once the sole property or the shared possession of a particular group of Aborigines.

WEH Stanner

(CITED IN Spearrit & Stephen. 1992: February 22 – 23, p. 22)

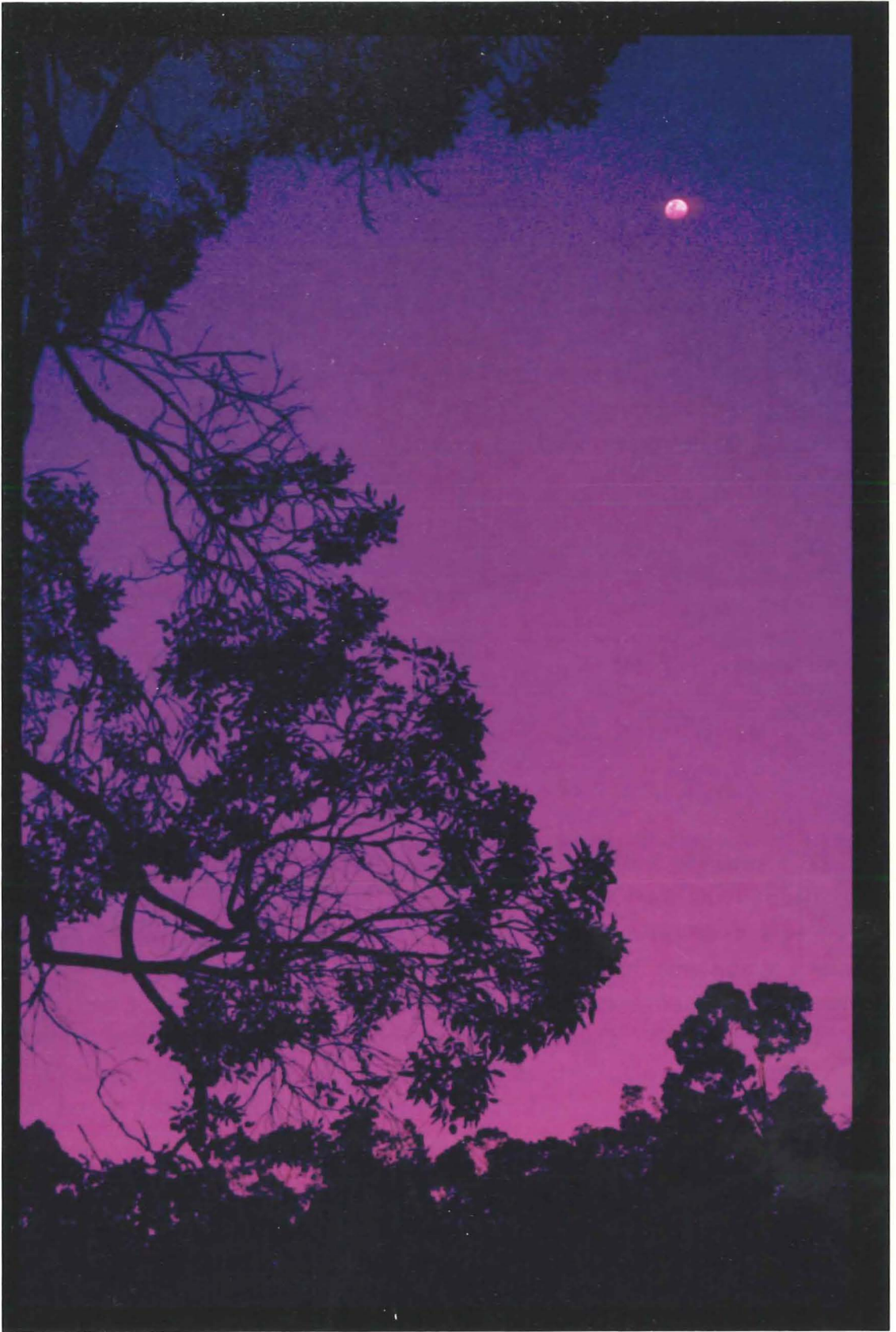
Few articles criticise John. There are some documents that (chiefly) hail John as a hero, while also putting forth the slight possibility that he was just an accidental success. For example, it has been said that:

The ten years of his administration constitute the most memorable period in the whole century of Western Australian development. It witnessed a four-fold increase in population – from 46,000 to 180,000 – and saw an expansion of public revenue £400,000 to nearly three million per annum. Some folks say that Forrest was lucky:

'You can never get the fool to understand  
How luck and merit still go hand in hand'.

(Colebatch. 1929, p. 101)

Very few documents aim to deconstruct his status as a hero completely. Most criticism is directed toward his despotic tendencies while in government, effectively stating that the "Emperor of the West" (Edwards. 1964, p. 1), the "Land Czar of Western Australia" (Crowley. 2000, p. 45) -- John Forrest -- demonstrated that the rich have a poor conscience, no matter how bold the peasantry.



[FIGURE 2.2: Night Sky at Mundaring Weir]

Junior partners come and go  
 Out of the firm of Forrest & Co.,  
 What odds does it make to the boss of the show  
 What sort of a place they find it?  
 I've only to shuffle the cards in my fist,  
 Or give my kaleidoscope a twist,  
 And the same old comet comes out of the midst  
 With a different tail behind it.  
 Archibald Sanderson  
 (CITED IN Edwards. 1964, p. 13)

The kaleidoscopic nature of our *national identity* requires our attention and examination. Tilley (2002) states that "every nation is based in phantasm" (a notion I shall discuss further in Chapter 3), and that each has an "illusory entity or idea at the centre of its culture which permeates that culture's narratives of unity with destabilising emanations" (Tilley. 2002, p. 2). She also maintains that while national symbolics (by which she refers to the political space of the nation) "exist on a non-real level, they have effects at a very real level" (Tilley. 2002, p. 3).

The national symbolic is a fantasy of collective identity and expression but, at the same time, it is also a powerful system of control. Berlant (1991) points out that:

*[T]here is always an official story about what the nation means, and how it works; not only in the way propaganda enacts a systematic fraud on citizen-readers, but also in the power of law to construct policy and produce commentary that governs the dominant cultural discussion of what constitutes national identity* (p. 11).

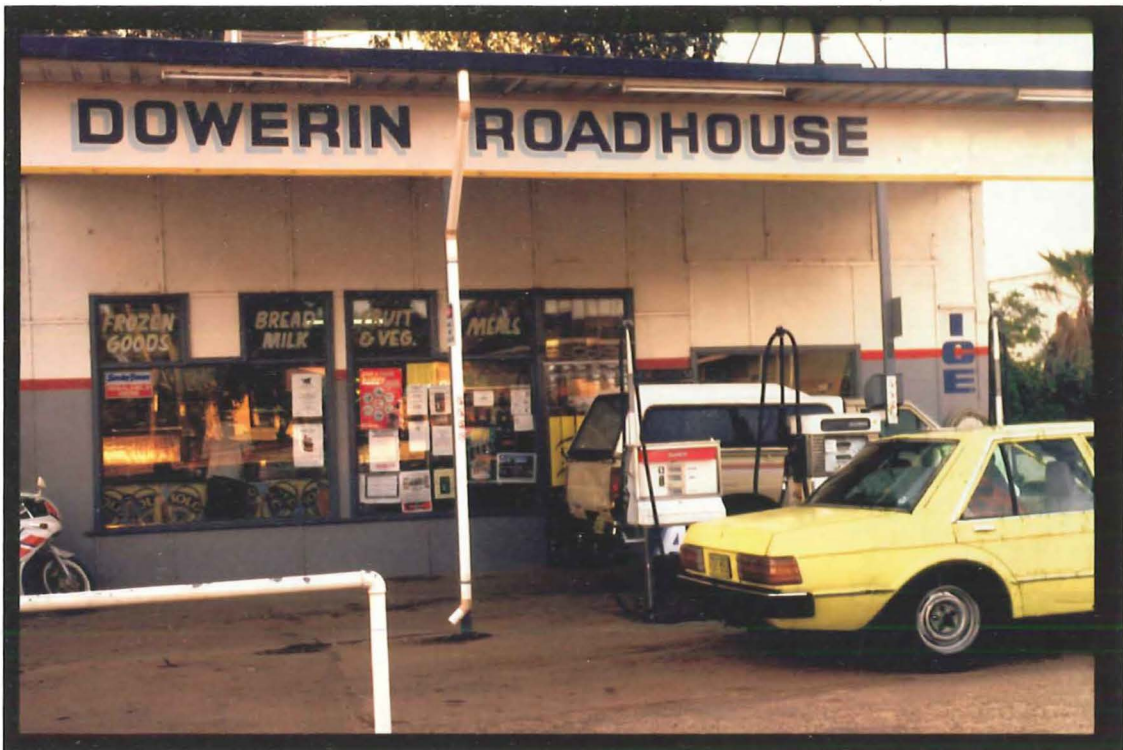
Berlant  
 (CITED IN Tilley. 2002, pp. 3 - 4).

I propose this dismantling of our national identity because I believe that a future of mutuality<sup>14</sup>, is a future in which benefit and recognition are the rights that all people share, rather than a privilege for the lucky few. Currently, the *national past* of this space aims to structure present attitudes: firstly, it constructs a narrow conception of past space-time; and secondly, it uses these conceptions (of the past) to structure the future. It seems that the future we assemble and construct for our nation, cannot *invalidate* the *treasured* concepts from its (accepted/"official") *national past*<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> mutualism: symbiosis: theory that mutual dependence is necessary for the welfare of the individual and society: practice based on this; mutuality.

[Fr. *mutuel* - L. *mutuus* - *mutare*, to change.]  
 (Macdonald. 1972, p. 871)

<sup>15</sup> Terra nullius is an Australian phantasm, and as such it illustrates this process by which our future has been (or is) constructed around treasured national concepts of the past. "Its original perpetrators well knew its application to be based in fiction, yet it was subsequently treated and used as fact" (Tilley. 2002, p. 5). Perhaps the



[FIGURE 2.3: Dowerin Roadhouse]

The function of nationalist memory is to create seamlessness, where in fact the reality is an extraordinary disjuncture, separations, and perhaps most important of all, dramatic changes of consciousness. But a story has to be told in a seamless way, and so things that are uncomfortable, things that don't fit, tend to get set aside or reinterpreted to make them seamless.  
(*"Rear Window"*, 1991)

The collective memory must actively reject those mutinous memories that discredit the dominant discourse; otherwise there may be fractures in the façade of national unity. Berlant suggests that disruptions in the seamlessness of our story, or

[D]isruptions in the realm of the National Symbolic create a collective sensation of almost physical vulnerability: the subject without a nation experiences her/his own mortality and vulnerability because s/he has lost control over physical space and the historical time that marks that space as a part of her/his inheritance.  
Berlant  
(CITED IN Tilley. 2002, p. 8)

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most significant point this example has to offer is that, although the British realised that before 1788, Australia was not actually a *terra nullius*; the *official* claim that this land was uninhabited (or that indigenous people did not resist its British usurpation) was not *formally* repudiated until 1992.



[FIGURE 2.4: Rock pool at Mt Churchman]

This need to protect our "official" understandings of our nation is something further illustrated by the fact that most critical examinations of Forrest, conclude with the insinuation that his presence was somehow necessary. In the end, even Edwards excuses his autocratic conduct:

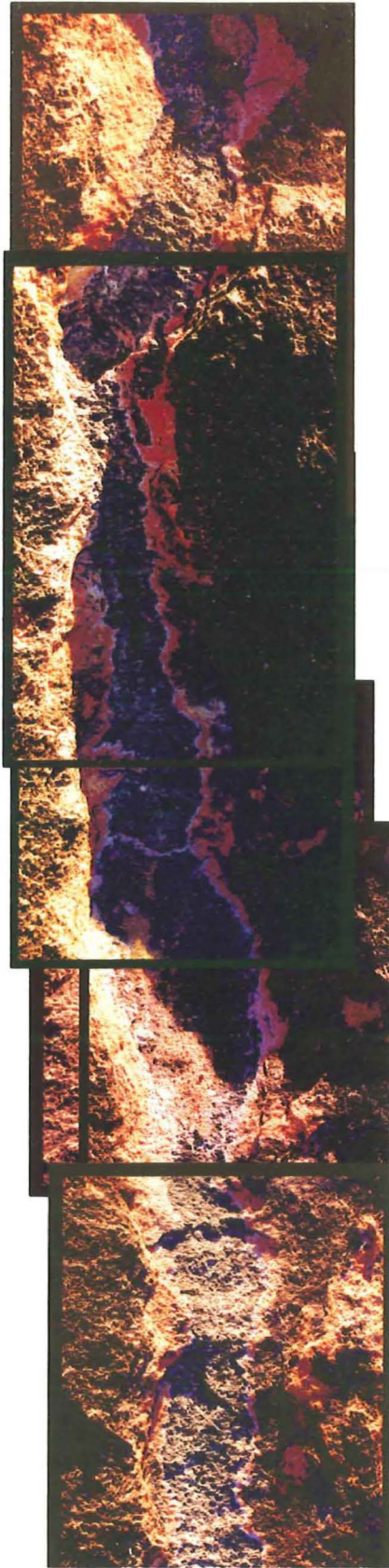
The benefits of his style of government can be seen by noting that the decade of stable administration under "The Emperor of the West" was "a feat never before performed in any Australian colony after the adoption of responsible government"; the disadvantages were manifested by the instability which followed Forrest's resignation, there being four ministries in less than eighteen months. There was no obvious leader to follow Forrest; as the Indian proverb has it, "nothing grows under the banyan tree". Considering the momentous changes that were taking place, however, in Western Australia at the end of the nineteenth century, it was probably just as well that the colony was led by such a man. (Edwards. 1964, p. 10)

Perhaps his presence was a necessary founding component of the Australia we know today, but is that a place we can all be proud of? Is it a place we can all call our home? The "facts" of the past make the path to a "unified" future hard to discern. In the shadow of the banyan<sup>16</sup> tree there is no fruit, so let's remove the old tree: an attempt to "right" a "wrong" is a process involving growth and a building of trust.

The words 'sharing history' suggest a recognition that since 1788 we have shared the same country and have, or can develop, a common sense of time and place through the created historical record. To share history involves changing the way Australian history is constructed and represented. It involves non-indigenous Australians identifying with aspects of indigenous Australians' cultures and histories. It also involves Australians sharing their knowledge and perspectives of history in this country. There are many clues in the landscape that reveal that since 1788 there has been a sharing of history. By 'reading the country' it is possible to identify many reminders that highlight this sharing. Place names, massacre sites, and memorials and monuments are examples of these reminders, and their potential to facilitate a sense of sharing history. (Clark. 1994, p. 1)

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<sup>16</sup> An Indian fig-tree with vast rooting branches: a Hindu trader, esp. from Gujarat: loosely, out of India, any Hindu; an Indian broker or financier: a loose jacket, gown, or under-garment worn in India. — Banyan days: (obs.), days on which no meat was served out, hence days of short commons generally, from the abstinence from flesh of the Banyan merchants. [Port. *baninan*, perh. through Ar. *banyān*, from Hind. *baniyā* — Sans. *vānija* — *vanij*, a merchant.] (Macdonald. 1972, p. 100)



[FIGURE 2.5: Panorama of water worn tracks on Mt Churchman]

The construction of a “unified” future involves communication, a process “central to the life of our culture: without it culture of any kind must die” (Fiske. 1990, p. 2). Culture “is about ‘shared meanings’” (Hall. 1997, p. 1), and language is the vehicle most frequently used in the production and exchange of meaning. Hall (1997) argues that the production and exchange of meaning operates within a “circuit of culture” (p. 1), which consists of the central practices of representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation. In our culture today, the meanings produced in this circulation are influenced and defined by powerful institutions (eg, the Federal Government, the media). The results of this circulation have the energy to profoundly shape our experience of the “real”, and the power to alter our perceptions of “reality”.

On this note, Tilley cites Berlant when she argues that the “modern nation installs itself within the memory and the conscience of citizens — partly by explicitly interpellating the citizen within a symbolic nationalist context... and in part by providing a general technology of memory<sup>17</sup> that establishes the subject’s “destiny” to receive her/his national inheritance” (Berlant CITED IN Tilley. 2002, p. 4). Since ideology cannot be separated from language (as language is the medium of ideology), meaning is “what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we ‘belong’ — so it’s tied up with questions of how culture is used to mark out and maintain identity within and differences among groups” (Hall. 1997, p. 3). If culture relies on communication, then communication can bring a changed future.

By changing the way we represent issues within our history, we can alter our culture and create a more “unified” space. We cannot change the past or the attitudes that prevailed within it, but when we look at representation (particularly within history) we can “learn to think of meaning less in terms of ‘accuracy’ and ‘truth’ and more in terms of effective exchange — a process of *translation*, which facilitates cultural communication while always recognising the persistence of difference and power between different ‘speakers’ within the same cultural circuit” (Hall. 1997, p. 11). In reference to John Forrest’s representation within history, we should look at his participation in the disenfranchisement of indigenous people. We cannot change the scientific discourse he uses in his presidential address to the AAAS in 1890 (which I cite earlier in this chapter), but

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<sup>17</sup> “A form or technology of collective identity that harnesses individual and popular fantasy by creating juridically legitimate public memories” (Berlant CITED IN Tilley. 2000, p. 4). Tilley claims that we witness this technology of memory in operation through the material selected for collection in our “national” archives, galleries and museums.

we can realise (within our history books) that he used this discourse to sustain what Foucault would call a *regime of truth*.

Truth isn't outside power... Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned... the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

Michel Foucault

(CITED IN Hall, 1997, p. 49)

In his 1890 speech to the AAAS, John claimed that the inferiority of the Aboriginal race was illustrated by their lack of historical record. Do we understand this place today as having history before imperialism? Well, attitudes have changed and, yes, we do recognise this.

Is this space recognised by all, as the rightful possession of the Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples? No, we do not acknowledge this officially; however, if we recognise that *terra nullius* was a lie (which was the Empire's justification for invading Australia), then we esoterically acknowledge that colonists mendaciously usurped this space from indigenous peoples.

Finally, can this place be a "together-space" with this knowledge in our hearts and actions, as strong as the ANZAC memory? Or, is this space to be divided by our "official" and "actual" memories of the past? Are there always going to be conflicting and divisive versions of our story, or together in this space, can all of our stories correspond without erasure?



[FIGURE 2.6: A sign at Mt Churchman]

### Chapter 3: WHY SORRY IS SUCH A HARD WORD TO SAY: Why is unity easy to falsify in Olympic ceremony?

One-hundred and twenty-four years after John Forrest was born; fifty-three years since his exit from politics; and also, fifty-three years since he shuffled off this mortal coil, it was 1971. Leader of the Labor Opposition, Gough Whitlam, made the speech cited below. His discourse is myopic: he refers to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people as the *responsibility* of "all Australians" (this obviously refers to all *non-indigenous* Australians). I believe that it is the responsibility of *all beings*, to ensure that *all* other beings are equally treated. It is important that we recognise how crucial inter-dependence<sup>18</sup> is, in all spaces. However short-sighted his discourse, Whitlam makes some important points in this speech.

Let us never forget that Australia's real test as far as the rest of the world, and particularly in our region, is concerned is the role we create for our own Aborigines. In this sense, and it is a very real sense; the Aborigines are our true link with our region. More than any foreign aid program, more than any international obligation which we meet or forfeit, more than any part we play in any treaty, agreement or alliance, Australia's treatment of her Aboriginal people will be the thing upon which the rest of the world judges Australia and Australians... not just now, but in the greater perspective of history... the Aborigines are a responsibility we cannot escape, cannot share, cannot shuffle off; the world will not let us forget that.

Gough Whitlam

(CITED IN Davidson. 1997, p. 188)

Whitlam's discourse fails to acknowledge the Australian nation and the idea of its prescribed national identity, as questionable concepts (by nature). Some may argue that the concept of the Australian nation is

<sup>18</sup> inter-: between, among, in the midst of: mutual, reciprocal: together.

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 682)

dependence: state of being dependent: reliance, trust: that on which one depends.

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 346)

An example of inter-dependence is bio-diversity (which is between different species). Inter-dependence means that one does not act as either totally dependent or independent from everyone else. It allows people to act as a group and broaden their understandings, while permitting individuals within this group to think for themselves.

not a questionable one, as it is ratified in international law and underpinned by our constitution. This may be true, however, returning to an idea I outlined in Chapter 2 (which I shall develop more fully here), the idea that every nation is based in *phantasm* (a term described by Tilley as "an event built in the consciousness by the layering of interpretations which take place after the supposed time of the 'original' occurrence" (Tilley. 2002, p. 2)): It becomes obvious that the "'origin' is... the foundation-stone of nationalistic discourse; without 'origin' there can be no history, no progress, no identity" (p. 2).

If the origin is that which has no antecedent, then the presence of Aborigines in this space would have been an impediment to the "settlers"; they sought "to establish a nation, and therefore [needed] to become a native and to write the epic of the nation's origin" (Lawson, CITED IN Tilley. 2002, p. 5). Furthermore, if *terra nullius* was the doctrine that allowed the "settlers" to establish a nation, that legitimised their writing of the epic of its "origin", and which made the establishment of our constitution an attainable goal, it means that Australia (its constitution, its laws, policies, etc) *originated* in a lie. This leaves Australia as a nation empowered by law, but contentious as a social reality, the result being our questionable national character.



[FIGURE 3.1: Another Mt Churchman sign]

The action promoted in Whitlam's speech is responsible, but the words highlight the dubious nature of this enculturated space. The Australian landscape is the locus of this conflict. The effects may be observed in our societies, our policies, our economies, our geographies, our lifestyles, our spiritualities, and our mythologies.

Not exclusively the field of indigenous natural forces, not predominantly the domain of social organization, the barely populated continent has been figured as a paradox — half-tamed, yet essentially untameable; conceding social subsistence, yet never allowing human dominance. Because it has been presented as so tantalizing and so essentially unknowable-yet-lovable, the land has become the structural centre of the nation's myths of belonging. The image of the paradoxical region can be used to explain so many of the inconsistencies of a colonial society. If the land can be presented as grand yet "unreasonable," the society which has been grafted on to it can also be accepted as flawed and marvellous. Indeed it can portray itself as marvellous because it has subsisted, with all its flaws, in this grand, yet unreasonable habitat. It is the kind of myth which "naturalises" a society's shortcomings and works to make them acceptable, indeed admirable.  
(Gibson. 1992, p. 63)

Forrest participated in the advancement of the white frontier. He denied indigenous biogeography and knowledge systems<sup>19</sup>, and he helped establish a regime of truth, which aimed to maintain an unjust usurpation of indigenous land. He suggested, in effect, that the terrain was a *wilderness*<sup>20</sup>, a place that was not and never had been governed by human institutions, by government laws. Therefore, although Whitlam's speech is a pertinent marking of a significant shift in our national attitude, the sense of shame and responsibility I feel for my uncle's actions, are things echoed on a more cellular level (for me) by Adrienne Rich when she quotes Julia De-Burgos:

That my grandfather was a slave  
is my grief; had he been a master  
that would have been my shame.  
Julia De-Burgos  
CITED IN "North-American Time" (Rich. 1983)

Whitlam's language is patronising and paternalistic. He creates a clear discourse of distinction, delineating between what it is/means to be "Australian", and what it is/means to be "Aboriginal" (Whitlam says that "the responsibility" that "we cannot escape" is the equal treatment of "our own Aborigines"). It may currently be true to say

<sup>19</sup> Even though it is quite obvious that, as an explorer (with indigenous guides/trackers), he would have utilised and been aware of this knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> Definition based on a quotation I made in Chapter 1, in which Asa Wahlquist cites Professor Langton's *Burning Questions*.

that, within the "imagined community"<sup>21</sup>, the terms "Indigenous" and "Australian" (mostly) mutually exclude each other, even though the 1967 referendum legally granted full citizenship rights to indigenous people. It is important that we understand our cultural differences, however it is also necessary that we work as a *group* of individuals. This isn't easy when the rights of indigenous and non-indigenous Australians are legally equal, but the social reality tells a different story:

It is regrettable, given the contribution to understanding citizenship, that Aboriginal citizen rights continue to lag so far behind practically. Australia has become a cause for international concern in the 1990s for its failure to meet human rights standards which are the basis for democratic citizenship.

The tenacious hangover of Anglo-Celtic norms remains a problem. It highlights how important the tussle of terms or discourse is and will become as we approach the second millennium. Compared with the 1930s the laws are there, so are the institutions, but the reality of the denial of equal citizen rights to Aborigines is still great.

(Davidson. 1997, p. 203)

Despite land rights and spending programs, indigenous Australians have not found the path to economic self-sufficiency. "Aborigines are the poorest in a rich society. The most unhealthy in a healthy society. The least educated in an educated society" (ABC, "Unfinished Business", 2001). To explain why our official policies do not match our social reality, Oodjaroo Noonuccal stated that "White Australians have to accept that it is time for them to be the listeners and the learners" (Oodjaroo Noonuccal CITED IN Davidson. 1997, p. 214). It is time that non-indigenous Australians listened to the needs of indigenous Australians, rather than allow a government to create policies which intend to look after needs that, as a nation, Australia is yet to fully understand.

Whitlam's "in the greater perspective of history", is a nice way to refer to my thoughts on Forrest. Burgos highlights the point that I would be full of grief had Forrest's life been restricted by the actions of another, that he was responsible for repressing other people is my reason to be full of apology and shame.

In the greater perspective of history, what did John Forrest do exactly? What evidence exists of his impact on the social landscape of Western Australia? That my uncle was "imbued with the ideals of the time" (ABC, "Unfinished Business", 2001) is not a reasonable excuse for his actions. Rather, these ideals are reasons for me to apologise in word and deed.

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<sup>21</sup> A term borrowed from Benedict Anderson.

I feel *choo* or *kienya*<sup>22</sup>. So, why is sorry so hard for some to say, making its acceptance and the act of forgiveness almost impossible? Perhaps when things are done gradually, there is more tragedy.

One point of my research into Forrest's representation, involved a comparison between two books about Forrest by the same author. Frank Crowley wrote *Forrest: 1847 – 1918: Vol. 1, 1847 – 91: Apprenticeship to Premiership*, in 1971. Volume Two never eventuated. In 2000, Crowley published *Big John Forrest: 1847 – 1918*, and this is an abridgement of the 1971 book. As such, it offers valuable insight into the progression of Australian culture and its selective national memory.

Of particular interest is how the 2000 book often evades the (now) more questionable (and less "politically correct") connotations of Forrest's discourse; while the 1971 book seems to include more of Forrest's opprobrious commentary, but leaves this unquestioned and unanswered. Forrest's representation has changed with time. In 2000, Crowley uses many more ellipses in quoting Forrest's speech, and in doing so, Crowley erases (rather than writes back to) Forrest's more questionable tendencies. For example, in the 1971 version, a transcript of an official report written by Forrest is given:

The native inhabitants are all utilised, and to a great extent civilised, owing to their useful employment as pearl shell divers, and also on the stations their services are invaluable. They do nearly all the shepherding, shearing, wool-washing, fencing and carting, and seem contented and fairly satisfied with their employers. The natives have not yet arrived at that stage of civilisation to know the value of their services, or scarcely the knowledge of money. A shirt, a pair of trousers, a belt, and a blanket, are the usual considerations for a pearling season, and they keep one master as a rule, and have little idea as yet of changing from one to another...

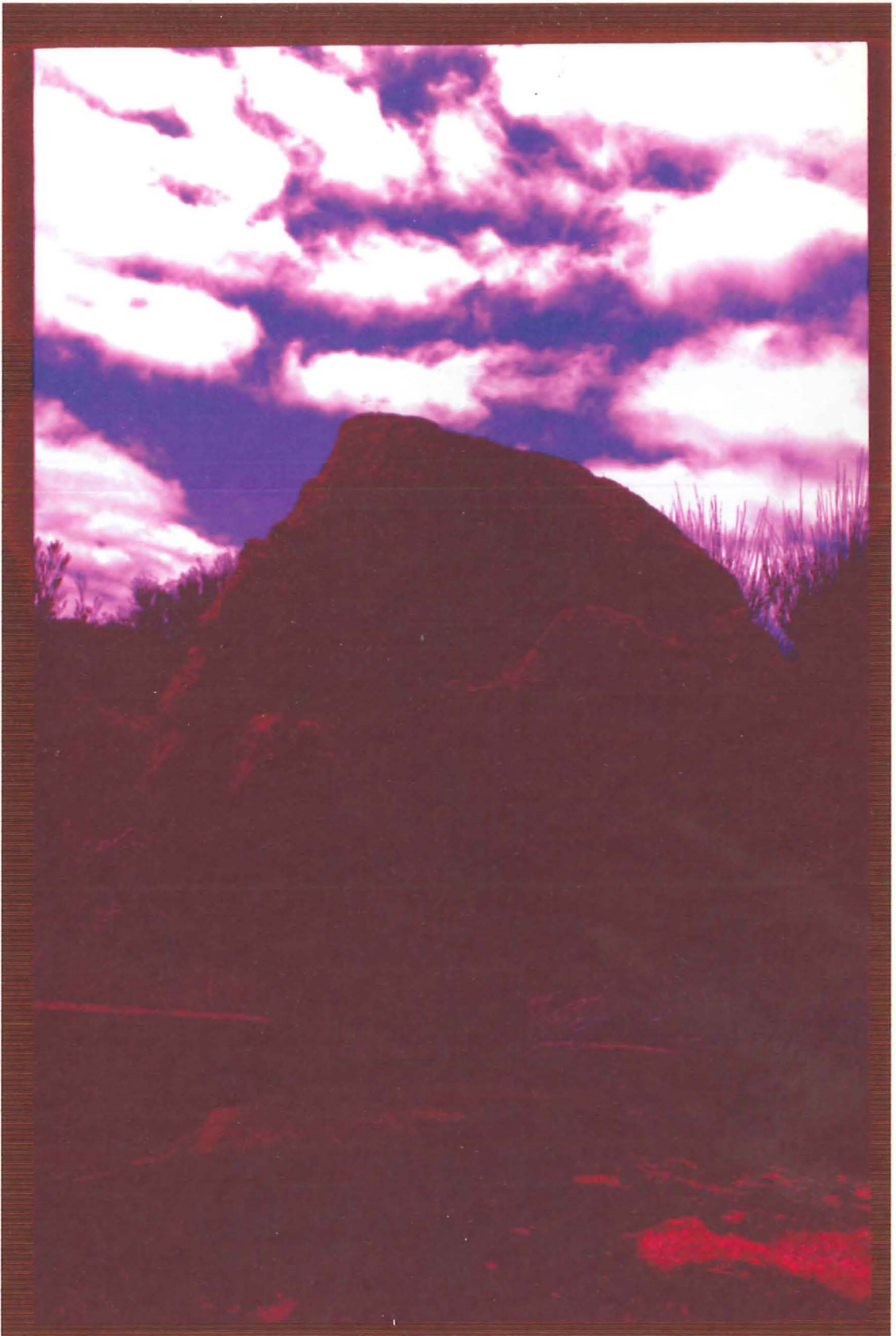
Their habitats are similar to those in the South Western and Central Australia, with but few exceptions. They are very intelligent, and do not appear to be dying out as in our older settled districts, and are thought by some to be increasing in number. Their dialect is very euphonious and is easily acquired. Our experiences of them were very favourable indeed, and we were very much assisted by them in carrying out our duties.

John Forrest

(CITED IN Crowley, 1971, p. 102)

In the 2000 abridgement this becomes:

<sup>22</sup> Nyoongah words, both meaning shame.  
(Davis, 1986, pp. 111 – 112).



[FIGURE 3.2: Rock at De-Eranning Hill]

[I]n his official report Forrest remarked that all the Aborigines were 'utilised, and to a great extent civilised' owing to their employment as station hands and pearl shell divers. He wrote:

*The natives have not yet arrived at that stage of civilisation to know the value of their services, or scarcely the knowledge of money... Their habitats are similar to those in the South Western and Central Australia, with but few exceptions. They are very intelligent, and do not appear to be dying out as in our older settled districts, and are thought by some to be increasing in number. Their dialect is very euphonious and is easily acquired. Our experiences of them were very favourable indeed, and we were very much assisted by them in carrying out our duties.*

John Forrest

(CITED IN Crowley. 2000, pp. 35 – 36).



[FIGURE 3.3: A rock at Billyburning]

In other words, Crowley has carefully cropped the quote that features in the 2000 abridgement. Here the citation does not mention how much of the work is actually being done by the station hands. While the second quote does maintain that the Aborigines had scarcely the knowledge of money, it does not reveal that indigenous pearlers were paid in clothing rather than wages for a season of work. Finally, the 2000 citation does not disclose that the employer was thought of as "master" (insinuating that the employee was a slave).

John wanted to build a "profitable" relationship with poverty (Forrest found that "tractable natives" were resourceful and exploitable, but

the "habit of exaggeration" exhibited by those less "cooperative", hindered and agitated him). Forrest often praises the "assistance" of the Aboriginal people, but never allows them to be glorified in their own right. He thanks them for their service in the pursuit of his own goals, but does not allow them to be remembered for their own achievements.

Anyone would imagine from the remarks of some hon. members, and from what was heard outside, that the natives were our worst enemies instead of our best friends. Colonialisation would go on with very slow strides if we had no natives to assist us.  
John Forrest on the ABORIGINAL NATIVE OFFENDERS BILL, 1883  
(CITED IN Crowley, 1971, p. 132)

Why is sorry hard to say, and so difficult to accept? Well, most of us don't want to remember our shameful part in the story (the bit with responsibility attached). No one can get the story "right", and there are always multiple versions of the "truth". Exaggeration exists at either end of the story, because all of us want to be either the hero or the victim all of the time (rather than sometimes being the villain or the perpetrator)<sup>23</sup>. In this space, some stories have dominated as the (heroic) "national-truth", while other stories have had only very limited glory in the national memory-bank.

When someone says sorry, the aim is for the recipient to eventually *forgive* the past, not to eventually *forget* what has happened in the past, over time. This should also be the intent of the person who makes the apology — to remember the past, and to tell it. Uniting over the nasty bits in our story is something that could only better equip all beings in this space, for movement towards a more cohesive present/future:

Reconciliation is about addressing past grievances and about forging a new foundation for future relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians... Dialogue needs to take place within the context of an honest remembering of Australian history. An equally fundamental fiction that must also be officially repudiated is that colonisation was peaceful. This does not necessarily mean that peaceful settlement is replaced by violent resistance; rather it

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<sup>23</sup> I must add that I do not aim to continue the construction of indigenous Australians as victims (I believe that Aboriginal Australians now look to both the past and the future: a past of oppression, and a future that cannot reside in a victim mentality). What I am saying here is that one would prefer to think of their role in a story as either that of the hero and/or the victim (characters who have not committed wrong-doing), rather than thinking themselves the villain (who commits wrong-doing unto the hero and/or the victim).

means an honest recognition that invasion was often violent and that indigenous Australians resisted the taking of their lands. (Clark. 1994, p. 41)

My understanding of cohesive space, is a place that has a deeply reflective and honest story. This would allow all the beings within this space to find peace with each other, and within their identity as a group. In our story, Forrest was a hero, but a hero with major downfalls. This is the same for all classic heroes, and is also true about all people. He achieved many things, but his success was made possible only by the proficiency of other people around him (some of whom rarely feature in our national memory).



[FIGURE 3.4: Aboriginal paintings at De-Eranning Hill]

On this note, we should remember a tale of one of this land's unsung heroes. His memory in our national consciousness has been very much overshadowed by Forrest's. To begin one of the tales of Tommy Pierre<sup>24</sup>, it should be noted that whilst on an expedition with John, Alexander Forrest found a fairly large waterhole in a spinifex desert (Alexander poetically dubbed this rarity, "Diamond in the Desert"). A few days later, Tommy Pierre discovered an abundant and permanent spring, whilst the party were desperate for water. John:

<sup>24</sup> Tommy was a tracker who accompanied John — the party-leader — on many of his expeditions; he had also been William Forrest's servant for 25 years.

[F]irst named the spot Pierre Spring, but later changed it to Weld Springs, in honour of Governor Weld, and renamed Diamond in the Desert Pierre Spring. No doubt be felt that in gratitude to Weld, who had always taken a great interest in exploration, only the best watering place was worthy to bear his name. Pierre, the discoverer of the spring had to take second place.  
(Wilson. 1981, p. 90)

The waterhole renamed, *Pierre Spring*, is now known as *Well Number 6 on the Canning Stock route*. It becomes fairly evident that John had a sense of gratitude deeply linked to his desire for public recognition, and this is something we should remember (in our history) as often as we construct him as a hero. John was a *winyarn*<sup>25</sup>; his excessive pride (hubris) was his tragic flaw (hamartia). John was human after all. However, his insult to Pierre was not yet over.

Pierre was called upon to respond to a complimentary speech, at a reception held after the parties return from yet another expedition. After some hesitation, he spoke:—

Well, gentlemen, I am not in a good humour tonight. [Laughter] I am very glad I got through. We got a capital gaffer that leaded us through, it isn't ourselves but God who brought us through the place and we ought to be very thankful to God for getting us through. [Laughter and cheers] I am not in a good humour tonight to speak [Laughter] but I will speak when I get to Adelaide. [Prolonged cheering].  
Tommy Pierre  
(CITED IN Wilson. 1981, p. 110)

After his speech, Pierre was not heralded as a hero. Rather, he was laughed out of the building for his lack of grammatical finesse; for his joy at the mission's success (which was assumed to be his joy to be back in "white-man's land"); and for his thanks to God (which is assumed to be Pierre's way of expressing his devout *Christian* belief). Moreover, and to add insult to injury, at a later reception in the Perth Town Hall (which Tommy would not have attended), Forrest mimics Tommy's speech, mockingly:

Well, gentlemen, I am very thankful to come back to the Swan River and Bunbury, Fremantle and Perth. I thought we was never to get back. [Laughter] Many a time I go into camp in the morning, going through desert place, and swear and curse and say, 'Master where the duuce are you going to take us?' I say to him 'I'll give you a pound to take us back' [Cheers and laughter]. Master say 'Hush! What are you talking about? I will take you right through to

<sup>25</sup> Nyoongah word meaning poor fellow, or the pity felt for a weak-willed person.  
(Davis. 1986, p. 114)

Adelaide,' and I always obey him. Gentlemen I am thankful to you that I am in the Town Hall. That's all I got to say. [Cheers].  
 John Forrest  
 (CITED IN Wilson. 1981, pp. 111 – 112).

Another tracker who accompanied parties led by Forrest, was a man named Jemmy Mungaro. Mungaro features in an interesting story that is based on *fact* and *speculation*. I believe that in 1869, Forrest wanted to do more than bring home the remains of Leichhardt. The settler's held a strong mythological belief, that somewhere in the "Dead Heart" there would be a great oasis, or an *inland sea*. I believe Forrest wished to "find" this sea, and thus be forever remembered for doing so (or else be remembered for proving it mythical).

The reason I speculate that this was a deeper desire of Forrest's, is complex. In many of Forrest's biographies it is said that he had "a poor opinion of the veracity of the natives" (Crowley. 1971, p. 35), whom he considered "totally unreliable" (Crowley. 1971, p. 33):

In his journal Forrest criticises the native [Mungaro] for his exaggerations, and the unreliability of his stories, but acknowledges the value of his services in finding water and in tracking horses which had strayed.  
 (Mossenson. 1960, p. 12)

Forrest began to be doubtful about the truth of the natives' stories so freely circulated.  
 (Compton. 1969, p. 3)

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the expedition, Forrest comments that

[T]he white members of the party were hopeful of success, and the Aborigines

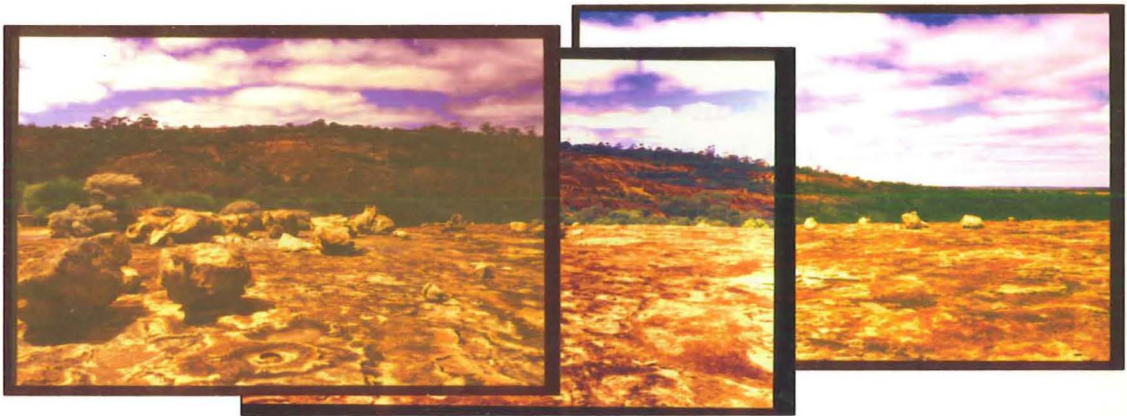
*[O]n the best terms with everybody and everything and Jemmy Mungaro, so far as could be judged from his demeanour, might have been the most veracious guide who ever led a party of white men through difficulties and dangers on an expedition of discovery.*

John Forrest  
 (CITED IN Wilson. 1981, p. 41)

Perhaps Forrest was initially happy to find an indigenous man who would disclose to him, "helpful" information (Forrest praises his honesty). Later, Forrest realised that Mungaro's information was not as "helpful" as he had originally thought, and he begins to criticise Mungaro's veracity.

Many of the books repeat the word "veracity" in particular, although the reason for its recurrent use is never given. There is one book

(*Bushman Born* by Helen Wilson, 1981), about the role of Aboriginal men in Forrest's expeditions. Wilson gives this statement — the "veracity of the natives" — some possible foundation. In his diary, John explained his view of this "lack of reliability", recounting that Jemmy Mungaro had assured John (and his party) that he knew exactly where the remains of Leichhardt were. Mungaro said that he saw Leichhardt and his party being killed by another group of Aboriginal men.



[FIGURE 3.5: De-Eranning Hill Panorama]

Secondly (in *Bushman Born*, 1981), Wilson notes that in John's diary, Jemmy is *claimed* to have stated (before the party set out in 1869 and without prior question) that there was a big river inland (the size of the Avon), and that this river was full of fish. He also said that the party would have trouble crossing this river. Jemmy is even recorded as having encouraged one of the (white) party members to purchase a "fish book... to catch the fish" (Wilson, 1981, p. 50) before they left Newcastle (now known as Toodyay). One may question what use a fish book would have been to the white members of the party (how could they use it to identify or catch fish in a body of water that would more than likely contain new species, given its inland location). Furthermore, one may speculate what use it would have been to a person with localised knowledge like Jemmy. Perhaps that was Jemmy's joke at the white men's over reliance on the knowledge found in books — I mean, how *do you catch fish, with a fish book?*

To illustrate Mungaro's complete lack of reliability where veracity was concerned, Forrest recounted the story told to him and Mr. Monger at York. Jemmy would have had them believe that there was a large river like the Avon to the eastward. Even though he must have known he would be caught out in the lie, he urged Mr. Monger to buy fish books at Newcastle to catch the fish in this river. He stated further that they would have great difficulty in crossing the river, and stuck to his story every time they cross-questioned him. No wonder they were disappointed when the mighty river turned out to be nothing more than a brook running into a salt marsh, and completely dry in summer. We must assume that this river was the one visited at Warne, though the reference is not clear and may possibly refer to a separate incident. In other respects Forrest found Jemmy a good fellow, and an efficient bushman, useful in many ways.

His commendation of Jemmy's virtues might have been tempered by his dislike of that worthy habit of exaggeration.

(Wilson. 1981, p. 50)

It is recorded (originally in Forrest's expedition journals) that Jemmy told this "fishy" story out of the blue, without any question about the possible location of an inland sea. However, I doubt that Forrest would have believed Jemmy was smart enough to make a joke; and he would never have thought Jemmy keen enough to out-fox the fox. Forrest was too eager to get a big name: I imagine he would have questioned Jemmy as to where this "sea" could possibly be, and then been embarrassed by his arrogance and ignorance. The fact is, the party *did* reach a salt marsh (Lake Barlee), which they spent two strenuous weeks trying to cross, without luck.

Perhaps Jemmy had a laugh at the *wetjala*<sup>26</sup>. They denied Aboriginal spirituality, but had their own superstitions (beliefs that could have seemed much more nonsensical in the eyes of someone attuned to their surroundings). *Wetjala* reckon all knowledge could be put in books, and that this would bring great power. Perhaps that was why Jemmy was an exaggerator, an embellisher: he wished to teach Forrest that knowledge was localised (and demonstrate that Forrest's presumptions were just as inflated as his stories), perhaps he desired to show Forrest this knowledge, if only he would be willing to look.

But when Forrest looked, he saw something different: he saw a chance to make himself known and respected. Haebich (1988) illustrates the lack of understanding Forrest demonstrated in his relationships with indigenous people, when she argues that Forrest was endowed:

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<sup>26</sup> White-fellas.  
(Davis. 1986, p. 113)

[W]ith a sympathy for Aborigines and he was fond of reminding his colleagues [when in government] that 'as the first possessors of the land' they deserved 'something better than repression'... Nevertheless, this sympathy was overlaid with a mixture of paternalism and 'benevolent imperialism and British superiority'... Forrest had little respect for Aboriginal traditions and his analysis of Aboriginal society presented to the *Australian Association for the Advancement of Science* in 1890 was based on its supposed 'evolutionary inferiority, isolation, lack of innovation and inability to produce a leader.' A shrewd politician, Forrest showed on numerous occasions a ready willingness to abandon his avowed sympathy to suit his own political ends. This was particularly evident during the 1890s when he submitted to pressure from the pastoral lobby to introduce the harsh laws controlling Aborigines in the pastoral industry.

(Haebich. 1988, p. 54)

From 1898 to 1901, Forrest was in charge of the Aborigines Department. John was "personally interested in Aboriginal affairs and had a reputation as an expert in the area" (Haebich. 1988, p. 53), and in 1898, he made another significant impact on the social landscape of Western Australia: he halved the indigenous ration scale. This scale remained in force until the late 1920s, and according to Haebich, "over the years it contributed directly to high levels of malnutrition and associated diseases amongst Aborigines throughout the state" (Haebich. 1988, p. 55).



[FIGURE 3.6: The rabbits at Wialki]

Why is sorry such a hard word to say? Well, just look at all the stuff we might have to contend with. No one wants to admit that they were

wrong, but if that gets in the way of an apology, it means that they are afraid to do anything right.

On March 28, 2000, many Australians (indigenous and non-indigenous) walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge, to show their support for reconciliation, and for a government apology to indigenous Australians<sup>27</sup>. Moreover, the 2000 Olympic Opening Ceremony (also in Sydney) symbolically acknowledged issues — on a “global” stage — including the guilt felt by many non-indigenous Australians.

However, the symbolism within that ceremony can also be seen as an attempt to ingratiate Australia with an international audience. If, as Davidson (1997) argues, Australia became “a cause for international concern in the 1990s for its failure to meet human rights standards<sup>28</sup>” (p. 203); then the Olympics (more specifically the *cultural* Olympics) offered the “perfect” opportunity for Australia to show the “world” how much it has “changed”. Therefore, one could speculate that the strong indigenous presence within the Opening Ceremony, was planned to divert the attention of the international media/community, and take the edge off the abuse of human rights in Australia (particularly the abuse of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander rights).

It seems as though the only time Australia makes any movement to change its policies and ideologies, is when the “world” is “watching”. In his speech (cited at the beginning of this chapter), Whitlam illustrates his concern that the “world” would “judge” Australia on its treatment of Aboriginal people. Similarly, Mr Howard has offered no government apology to indigenous Australians, however, in the “international” Olympic arena, Australia acknowledged a strong sympathy for indigenous people and their experiences of our colonial past:

[W]hile indigenous relations with the Government might have been at crisis point, there has been some evidence of a countervailing shift in the national attitude. White Australia has been gradually awakening in the past 30 years to the extent of Aboriginal dispossession. The path to this new recognition has been peppered by memorable moments — the overwhelming support for the 1967 referendum that gave Aboriginal people the vote, Gough Whitlam pouring sand into Vincent Lingiari’s hand, Malcolm Fraser shepherding the 1976 *Northern Territory Land Rights Act* through Parliament, the protests at the Bicentenary in 1988, Paul Keating’s

<sup>27</sup> There were similar marches/ceremonies held across the nation, including the public gathering in Perth that I attended.

<sup>28</sup> These standards are the signatory to various international conventions.

speech at Redfern when he acknowledged the extent of Aboriginal pain, and now the High Court's Mabo and Wik decisions.  
(Bachelard. 1998, p. 3)

Isn't it strange that "active" and "responsible" citizens are better focused on the needs of others, than the people who are supposed to enforce the legislation that binds the whole society together? And without a united "force" of "responsible" citizens, how can we hope to build those rhizome groups who actively join forces to combat sexism, racism, homophobia, etc? Beck Hanson alludes to the importance of such groups when, in his song Mixed Business (1999), he suggests that the:

Freaks flock together,  
Makin' all the people scream.  
(Hanson. 1999, © Geffen Records)

It is vital that the citizens who remain disenfranchised by Australian society come together in a movement of peace to challenge what could be seen as an outside attempt to control their lives on every level:

Since a peaceful society cannot exist when some of its citizens are denied basic human rights, the peace movement, almost by definition, must always oppose discrimination, exploitation and racism in all its forms.  
(AWD [On-line], 2000)

Yet, however much the public criticises politicians in their efforts to serve their constituency<sup>29</sup>, we must all remember this one thing: if politicians did not pander to the *demands* of their audience, they would not be doing their job. We could not say that the people that we *elect* to *represent* us, stand for what we *think* and *believe* in most strongly as a *nation*. It is just unfortunate that, for politicians, this does have more to do with votes than real people. We call the system democratic, but that does not mean that it does not cause problems:

When the dust settles, many of the refusals of democracy and the Western legal/political tradition so common in recent years will be seen more positively. They can be read as a quite valid complementary demand for more grass-roots discussion; a revivifying of the debate in the *agora*<sup>30</sup> which we have lost, in which

<sup>29</sup> Politicians pander to their audience. For example, the Children Overboard fiasco prompted a strong swing towards the Coalition in the 2001 election, due to their harsher policies on boatpeople. However, this event was later proved to be false. It is still being debated as to whether John Howard was aware of the false nature of this event, though Mr Howard has silenced many of the participants, not allowing them to give evidence in court.

<sup>30</sup> An assembly, place of assembly, market-place.

the voices of the peoples may again be heard challenging the massive centralisation and rule of experts that has always been so inhuman in history.  
(Davidson. 1997, p. 215)

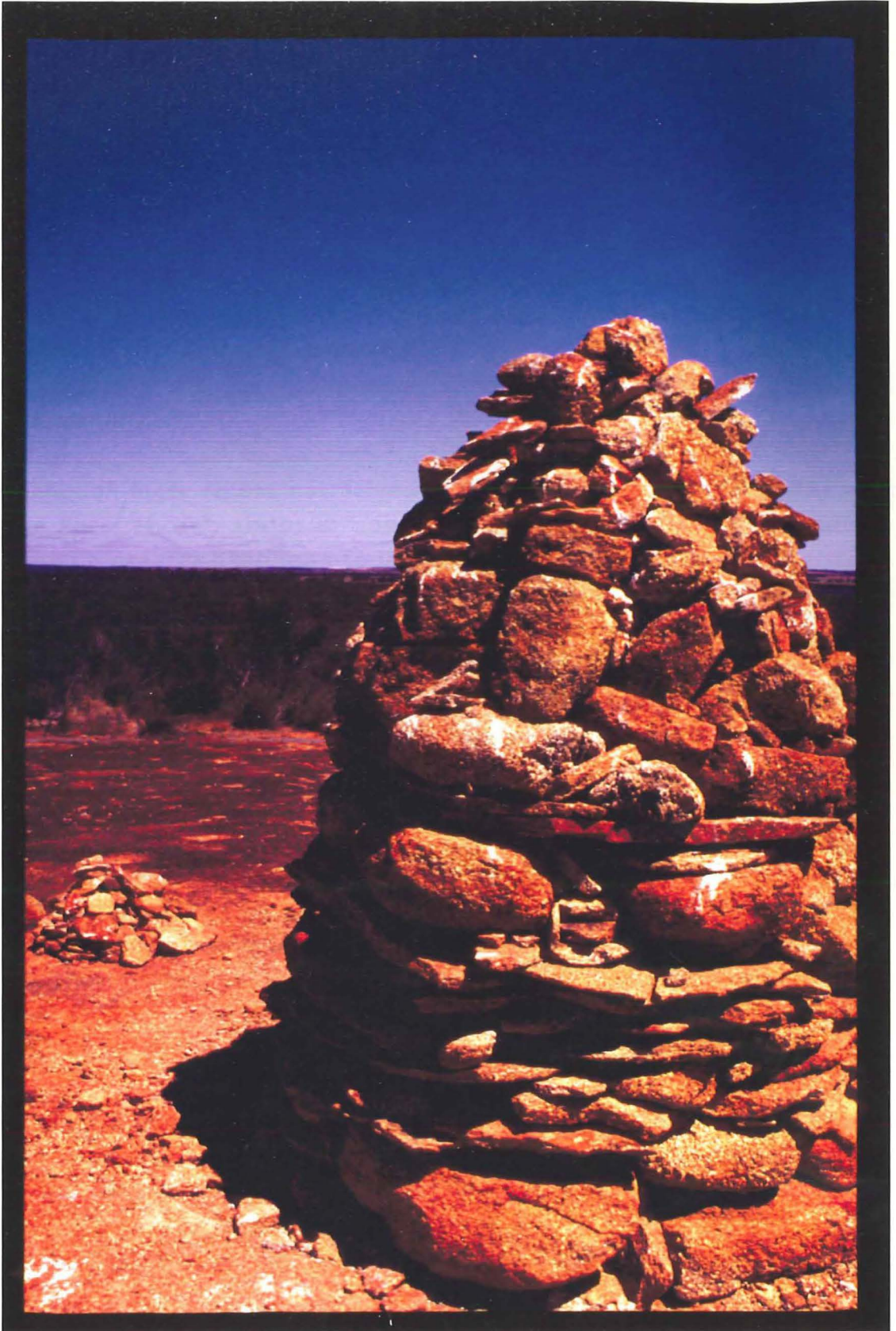
All in all, I liked the Opening Ceremony, even if it was an attempt to pander to my sensibilities; or to nullify the international media; or even if it was a shallow attempt at the word "sorry"<sup>31</sup>. At least the pressure of the people's message meant that it got to the politicians. Most of Australia (and the world) saw that, it was great. Maybe one day, "coming together as a nation" *will* be a way of life, rather than a smile forced for the camera.

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[Gr. *agora*, assembly, market-place].

(Macdonald. 1972, p. 24)

<sup>31</sup> In one scene a group of indigenous people pursued the non-indigenous girl (who represented the spirit of our nation). The indigenous group represented the shadowy ghost of our nation's *unfinished business*. Australia has to reach a closure on its past, that's what reconciliation means: the ghost will remain until we lay it to rest.



[FIGURE 3.7: Stacked rocks at Billyburning Rock]

## Chapter 4: Where to NOW: identity celebration or cultural reconciliation?

My thesis does not aim to *generate a construction* of Aboriginality, given from a non-indigenous point of view. Rather, my intention is to *apologise* for the past behaviour of my family (which I recognise as shameful), and to *initiate* a process of *dialogue* between all Australians.

Although more recent narratives of the "Australian story" (eg. "Beyond the Fatal Shore", 2000; & "100 Years — The Australian Story", 2001<sup>32</sup>) are of a greater likelihood to include reflections on indigenous history, along with expressions of their experiences of colonisation, and indications of their present situation in Australia, many of the nation's "official" remembrances (usually those less recent, though Crowley (2000) is a more current example) do not recognise the significance of indigenous experiences of the past, or of their presence in contemporary Australia.

This leaves Australia as a nation surrounded by questions and inconsistencies. For example, what does it say to Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander people, that many of the official stories<sup>33</sup> of this land's past, continue to be unrepresentative of the stories of experience they have to offer? Furthermore, if the phantasm of terra nullius is the "origin" upon which the Australian nation is based, what does that say for the *imperial* version of the history of this space?

If the Mabo case (1992) rendered terra nullius a technology of memory that was no longer "helpful" to the "progression" of our nation (though it was the foundation for its construction), what has the effect of this recognition been? It brought forth the Native Title Act (1993), which

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<sup>32</sup> Another example was the Olympic Opening Ceremony in Sydney (2000), which wove a narrative of cultural frustration in its depiction of this land's indigenous past, as well as its postcolonial present.

<sup>33</sup> The stories that we teach children; our citizenship candidates; the stories which fill our library's "history" shelves with their "fact".

put Mabo into action, and this has seen many Indigenous claimants before the High Court, some of them proving the validity of their land claims. However, the acknowledgement of the façade of terra nullius has not led to the realisation that, because the doctrine provided the foundation for the establishment of the High Court (and other areas of officialdom), its power of judgement and rule over indigenous land claims has been somewhat falsely appropriated.

Additional ambiguities plaguing the Australian psyche include the question of what is said about the sincerity of the political and social processes of reconciliation, when imperial history remains our "official" national history? What does it mean when Crowley abandons Forrest's speech, for more favourable words? It means:

We're at the wrong side of an upside-down pyramid, and it is absurd, and it's one of the darkest periods in history, and people will look back at our generation and say, 'What on earth were they thinking? This absurd culture of distraction and entertainment, at a time when what is needed is so urgent, and so serious, and so colossal. What on earth were they thinking?' And then we go in and we announce that we're helping people. At this moment in Australia, we look back on the ideology of the Aboriginal Protection Acts, and I think some people thought they were really going to be helpful. But a generation or two later, we say, 'You thought that would be helpful? You thought you were helping someone? Did you really?'

Peter Sellars

(CITED IN Garrett. [On-line], 1999)

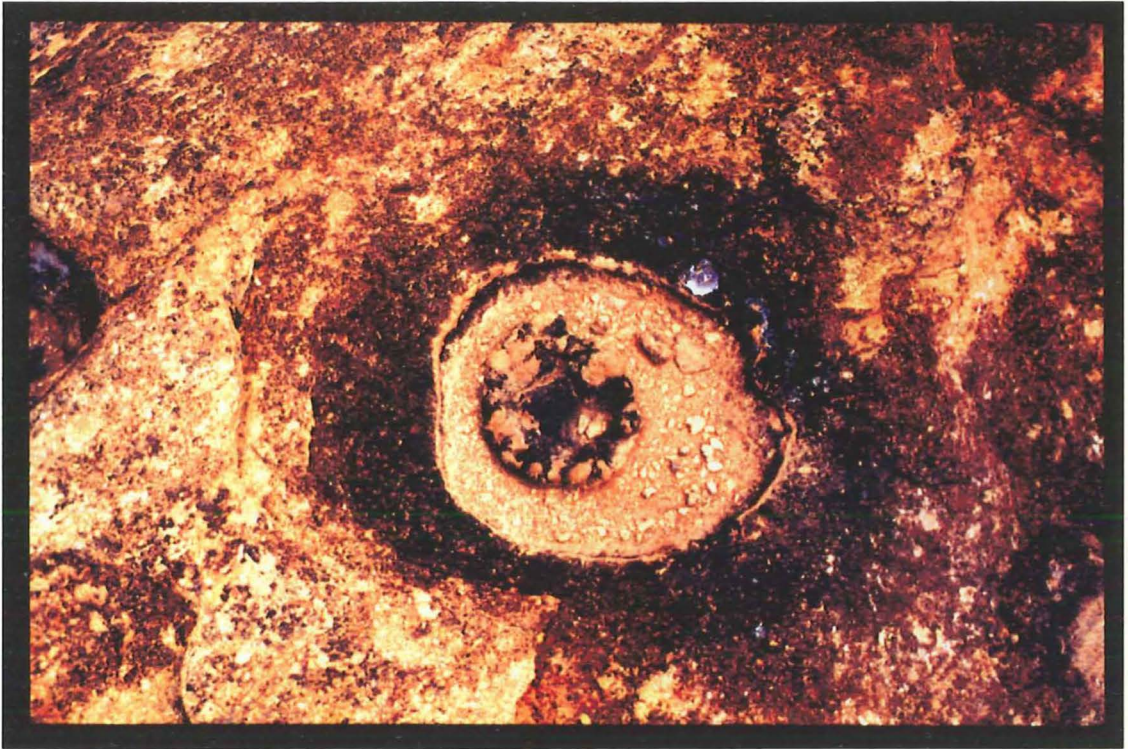
The above quote says a lot about the benefit of hindsight. If we take a retrospective look at Forrest, we can criticise the way in which he disenfranchised indigenous people, and the way in which he ignored indigenous knowledge systems (though he made use of them when it suited him). We can be critical of the result of his actions (and the actions of others), which leaves our nation in a culturally troubled present; but how do make sure that we do not repeat these actions in the future? As Forrest's descendent, I feel it is my duty to ensure that the next generation will be able to look at ours without a sense of shame for injustices done. The only way to make sure that these actions are not repeated is to tell the story of our nation differently:

[I]f anything, the next generation will be ashamed of the propaganda of the previous generation, and its library's maybe not what you need. But in fact you're investing your historical resources, not in books but in people, in oral history, in this question of the oral tradition, of how living people embody history, history's not something outside you, it's not something you refer to, it is something you are living, and your ancestors are living through you, or speaking through you; you are not separated from your history, and history cannot be looked at objectively, which is something I

hate to inform the major networks; because we've seen where objectivity leads.

Peter Sellars

(CITED IN Garrett. [On-line], 1999)



[FIGURE 4.1: Rock at De-Eranning Hill]

Contemporary Australians (of many different backgrounds) have seen Gough Whitlam and Vincent Lingiarri holding hands, but they still don't think of Land Rights as *shared rights*. In the past, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups (in an attempt to come to terms with the colonisers who had invaded their lands) recognised the Europeans as past clan members, who had died and then come back to life, their skin turning white in the process:

Indigenous Australians rarely thought of quitting their traditional homelands and they could not imagine anybody else wanting to leave theirs. Thus when the colonists arrived in their country and set up camp at particular places, local clans believed they must have formed an attachment to those places in some former life.

In western Victoria... reincarnated country-people were known as *ngamadjidj*...

Aboriginal people hoped that by calling the European-*ngamadjidj* by their former clan names their memories would be sparked, and that they would then rightfully share their possessions, as Aboriginal peoples should. These clans were attempting to 'Aboriginalise' their colonisers by incorporating them into their kinship system [notably different from the way the Europeans *excluded* indigenous people from "their" nation (and from citizenship rights), and then attempted to assimilate indigenous people by removing their

culture, making them more "acceptable" to white Australians so that they could become citizens later on]...

The Aboriginal peoples of western Victoria often attempted to formalise relationships with the *ngamadjldj* by staging rituals of diplomacy... local clans enacted the ceremony of *tanderrum* or 'freedom of the bush' in which strangers were allowed access to clan resources after a ritual exchange of gifts which symbolised the landholder's hospitality and established friendly relations with the strangers.

(Clark, 1994, pp. 3 – 4).

Today, most indigenous and non-indigenous people have little desire to share the land, more often they hope for separate territory. Contemporary Australians have heard of Wik, Mabo and other Land Rights cases, which have winners' and losers', and have been fought in the High Court; but we rarely think about sharing the land rather than fighting over it. And we don't fight about land in the cities, only in the country, where some of the land that has been owned by white people for generations is being given back to its indigenous owners via the courts.

For example, Lindsay McDonald owns a homestead in Queensland that is currently under a Native Title claim. She says that attachment and commitment to the land is not about race, but about the practice of culture, and therefore the McDonald's (who have buried relatives and married children on their land) and the indigenous owners (who have practiced their culture for thousands of years on the same land) both have legitimate claims to the land (though neither side has considered sharing the space). The claim on the homestead means that the McDonald's cannot get a bank loan to buy more farm equipment or livestock, they cannot plan for the future:

The bush people find it hard to forgive the hypocrisy, I have to say that. There is an enormous amount of hypocrisy because, basically, it is the country that's being asked to bear this burden and not the city. I think all of us in the bush would say to the cities that we don't see why you shouldn't share that. After all, if the land we live on was once aboriginal, surely the land that you live on was once aboriginal, and if there is a cost to pay, surely that should be borne by all Australians.

Lindsay McDonald

(CITED IN Hughes, "The Dead Heart", 2000)

Her argument is valid, but it ignores the fact that to change the social landscape of Australia, the land must become a shared possession and responsibility, rather than a contested issue. However, indigenous owners are not necessarily going to want crops planted (or livestock grazed) and farmed, and non-indigenous owners possibly will not want to be told what to plant and where, and which places are sacred and

cannot be entered. The issue of coexistence is something Justice Thooey recognised during the Wik case.

He took the pains to emphasise... that just because he and his three fellow judges had found that pastoral leases did not confer exclusive rights on the leaseholder, this in no way destroyed their title to the land. All it meant was that their rights were limited to the terms of the laws that framed their leases. That is, in this particular case, they had few rights over the land other than to graze their cattle and build appropriate infrastructure to help them with that task. He was talking about coexistence. Native title holders were entitled to enjoy their rights under their form of title, and pastoralists were entitled to enjoy theirs under the legislation. They would have to learn how to live together.

This sounded simple but... it would not necessarily prove so. Justice Brennan had warned against the coexistence argument... saying that it might 'prejudice... peaceful resolution of disputes' because the law had difficulty trying to 'recognise the coexistence in different hands of two rights that cannot both be exercised at the same time'.

(Bachelard. 1998, p. 67)

Some would argue that a future of togetherness (of reconciliation and *shared* rights) is untenable. Negotiation is the key to a nation "unified" by difference, and a "unified" nation requires togetherness in its *official imagination* of itself (in its projected, symbolic national identity). However, this sense of togetherness that recognises cultural diversity is something lacking in Australia; not in our policies, but in our social reality.

Therefore, it is easy to understand why many non-indigenous and some indigenous peoples argue against reconciliation, or hope for *separate* territory, rather than an Australia unified by difference (for indigenous Australians it may seem impossible to get non-indigenous Australia to listen and reassess its history). The whole of Australia needs to understand that if we're talking about reconciliation, we cannot abandon the past. That means, before we can go forward, we need to look back.

A High Court Case, called the Yougarla Case is (possibly) about to make the same kind of newspaper headlines as Mabo and The Stolen Generation (Adams, Phillip interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000) — at least in Western Australia. This case is named after one of the plaintiffs, Crow Yougarla, and is based on the fact that in 1889, Western Australia was desperate to achieve state-hood and self-government — there was a desire for a "burst up in Forrestism" (Edwards. 1964, p. 9).



[FIGURE 4.2: Night sky at Mt Churchman]

The Imperial Government was well aware that Western Australia had the ability to govern itself, but there were concerns about the treatment of "the natives" raised by articles documenting maltreatment, such as those by Reverend John Brown Gribble (Adams P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000). This led the British representatives to build a Section 70 into the first Constitution of Western Australia — no Section 70, no state-hood, no Constitution, no Forrestism:

There shall be payable to Her Majesty, in every year, out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund the sum of Five thousand pounds mentioned in Schedule C to this Act to be appropriated to the welfare of the Aboriginal Natives, and expended in providing them with food and clothing when they would otherwise be destitute, in promoting the education of Aboriginal children (including half-castes), and in assisting generally to provide the preservation and well-being of the Aborigines.

Section 70 of the Constitution Act 1889

(CITED IN Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation [On-line], 1999.

Section 70 effectively stated that 5,000 pounds of the annual revenue of Western Australia was to be given to a Governor-appointed Protection Board, for the welfare of the indigenous peoples of this state. This was to be expended in buying them clothing, food, and the like. Once the annual revenue exceeded 500,000 pounds, the amount reserved for the Board was to be 1% of this total revenue every year (Adams, P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000).

The Section was seen as a lack of faith in the ability of Western Australia to control its own destiny, and was strongly resented by people like John: those proud "Westralians". Section 70 was, however, also accepted as necessary in order to ratify Western Australia as a state, though this did not stop John's unsuccessful efforts just 3 years later, to repeal the Section.

After many failed attempts, John believed he had successfully repealed Section 70 in 1898 while in conversation with the British Secretary of State for Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain — though this was not to be the case. Then in 1905, an Aboriginal Act passed which seemed to give Royal assent to the extinguishment of the Section — but this was always in doubt. In addition, it was not until many years later that indigenous Western Australian's knew anything about the existence of a Section 70 (Adams, P interviews Tom Stannage, radio broadcast, August 17, 2000).

Considering that in 1897, the last major Aboriginal resistance movement was wiped out in the Kimberley region, and also the fact that Western Australia's annual revenue was greatly bolstered above 500,000 pounds due to the gold rushes (up to three million per annum according to Colebatch, 1929), John thought that the inclusion of Section 70 was preposterous. He believed that it was ridiculous to reserve such a "large" percentage of the annual profit of the state, to put toward the welfare of a people who — in his eyes — were soon to no longer exist (as he frequently proclaimed in his anthropological speeches).

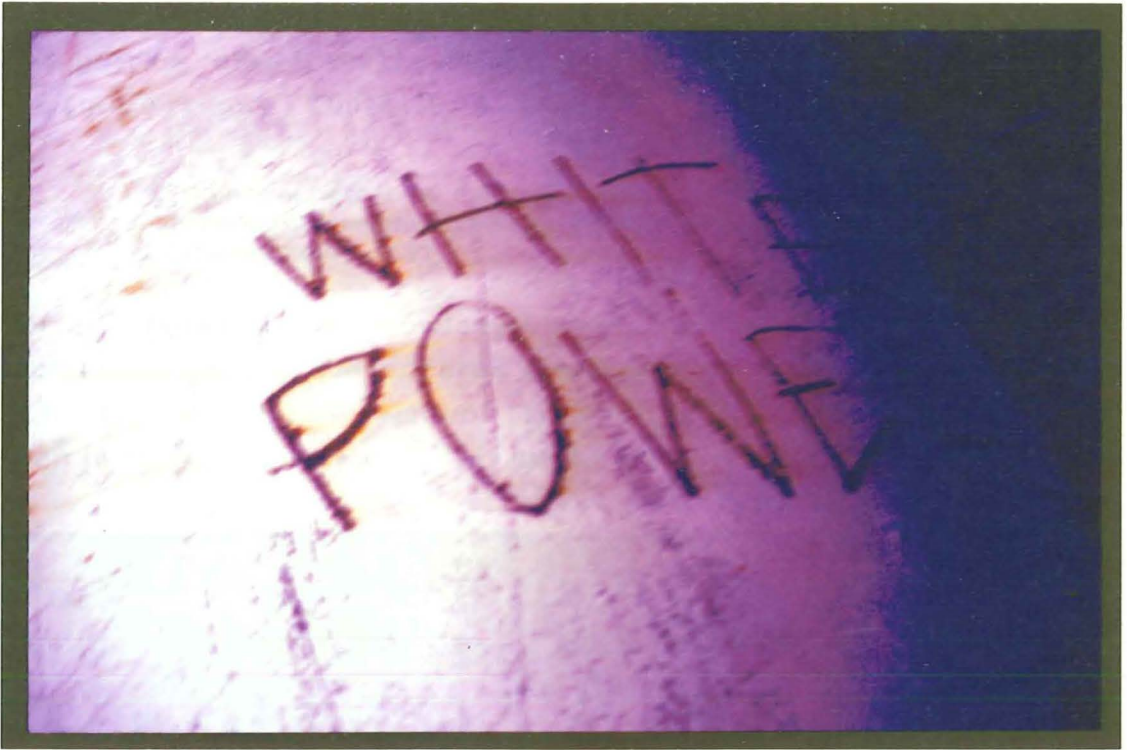
Forrest aligned indigenous Australians with "nature" rather than "culture", meaning that they were "able to *be known*, but not able to *know*" (Tilley. 2002, p. 7). He also played a major role in the formulation of the protectionist policy of "smoothing the dying pillow" (adopted in Western Australia in the 1880s), which insisted that the "child race" was in need of "protection" (this policy effectively excluded Aborigines from citizenship rights). Forrest maintained the belief that indigenous Australians possessed "no knowledge of value; not about ways of relating to the land, nor of ways of conceptualising space. They existed to be taught (the imperial project), not to be learned from" (Tilley. 2002, p. 7).

The idea that the Aboriginal "race" was doomed to extinction was a commonly held belief of the time, and was based upon a Darwinist discourse of evolution. The belief meant that the "vanishing" Aboriginal population, was not an issue of serious concern for the government, it was an expected and "natural" outcome. This belief allowed the government to ignore the fact that "in Western Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory, ... Aborigines were still being murdered with relative impunity until the 1930s" (Davidson. 1997, p. 194). In 1900, Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, warned Forrest that, "their inaction, not the forces of evolution, would be blamed by future generations for the demise of the Aboriginal population" (Haebich. 1988, p. 58).

Forrest helped displace Aborigines from their land (their source of food and centre of their spiritual beliefs), thus rendering them no longer self-sufficient. He then cut back the amount of support that they received from the government, meaning that not only were they no longer independent, they were also no longer supported by the government that dispossessed them of their ability to look after themselves:



[FIGURE 4.3: Graffiti on the Perth -Kalgoorlie Pipeline]



[FIGURE 4.4: Graffiti on the Perth -Kalgoorlie Pipeline]

They have already lost most of their land, their rights to self-determination and, in some cases, their dignity. Their interactions with a white society which would neither let them live as they always had nor let them live as equals, has conspired to erode their health and their social cohesion on a massive scale. They have the highest rates of imprisonment in the land, they die in custody at much higher rates than other Australians. Outside jail they still die 17 years, on average, younger than white Australians. Many young Aborigines are estranged from their culture and ancestral languages, and face high unemployment and an uncertain future. (Bachelard. 1998, pp. 2 - 3).

Frankly, I do not understand why John could not attain even a brief sense of his profound and double-edged impact upon the Western Australian landscape (in both a physical and a social sense). I really cannot comprehend how he could so casually overlook his participation in the violent advancement of the "white frontier", into the land of the indigenous West Australian peoples. It is with the benefit of hindsight that I can say these things, but that does not mean that his attitudes (which were shared by many non-indigenous Australians of the time) should remain unaddressed and unquestioned.

Forrest was often blind to his impact on indigenous people. For example, I mentioned in Chapter 3 that Crowley uses a citation of John Forrest in both his 1971 and 2000 books. This quote ends with Forrest myopically reinforcing the "benefits" enjoyed by indigenous people,

due to their employment as station hands and pearl shell divers (he is also patting himself on the back for a job well done). He remarks that the (more remote) Kimberley Aborigines:

[D]o not appear to be dying out as in our older settled districts, and are thought by some to be increasing in number.  
(Crowley, 1971, p. 102)

Forrest failed to acknowledge that in earlier settled districts, indigenous people had endured more contact with Anglo-Australians (who brought disease, alcohol and who pushed them off their land) than in more remote areas. This meant that:



[FIGURE 4.5: Campfire at Mt Churchman]

While acts of physical violence against Aborigines became less frequent in the more settled parts of the country, a new feature of their relationship with Anglo-Australians was the imposition of legislation with the potential to control practically all aspects of their lives; their freedom of movement and association; choice of employment; right to dispose of assets as desired, including wages, and to marry and raise families. While lack of bureaucratic and financial resources meant that legislative controls were not fully utilised, nearly all Aborigines were deprived of basic political rights; their personal freedoms were limited, and they were commonly discriminated against by employers. Many lived in fear of government officials who had the power, most notably exercised in Queensland, to compel residence on reserves, and in most States to remove children by force.

A. Markus

(CITED IN Davidson, 1997, p. 191)

Recently, a group of Kimberley (Pilbara) elders (including Crow Yougarla and Billy Thomas) have been seeking to prove in the WA Supreme Court, that the repeal of Section 70 was illegal, and that State Government is still bound to hand over funds for Aboriginal welfare in accordance with the Constitution Act of 1889. After a number of failures in the WA Supreme Court, the High Court granted the claimants leave to appeal on August 4, 2000:

In 1905 the Government of John Forrest attempted to repeal the legislation but they overlooked one important point. What the United Kingdom Parliament had said was to remove the provision, a special procedure had to be followed. That procedure included tabling the amending bill in the United Kingdom Parliament for 30 days. That was not done. Section 70 was forgotten about for years. Then in the run-up to the Pilbara stockman strike on wages and conditions, a bush lawyer called Don McLeod recovered it... He was constantly complaining as to the reinstatement of Section 70, because that was one of the bases upon which WA was given its own constitution and self-government in the first place. Despite McLeod's dogged perseverance the legal battle didn't begin until 1993 [McLeod could not find a legal avenue to fight the case]. The failure of Premier Forrest to table the document for 30 days back in 1905 provided that avenue.  
(ABC [On-line], 2000)

In reference to the Yougarla case, John may have left us with a legacy that has a price tag amounting to hundreds of millions of dollars. But this depends on the decision made by the High Court on the legitimacy of the claim, that this Section was never successfully repealed. However, there is a "bigger hole in the bucket" of Australian society.

Our task now is actually to make indigenous art, because we have to understand how indigenous art functions and why it functions and what it is we're doing. And forgive me for the next few minutes, I don't talk about making any money, and I don't mean to offend anyone who does make money. It has never been one of my gifts, and I can only speak in another direction, but it's a direction I think also should have some air space. This question of how it is when the British and French, Germans and so on, came to the rest of the world, they didn't find libraries so they assumed that these were primitive cultures in our histories, because they had no libraries.

Peter Sellars

(CITED IN Garrett. [On-line], 1999)

The central problem within our society (and its story) comes down to a lack of understanding. As Don McLeod claims, "We live in a racist State and we live in a racist Commonwealth. Nobody wants to see black fellas living in their own land in charge of their own affairs" (CITED IN ABC [On-line], 2000). Non-indigenous people continue to fail "to comprehend Aboriginal people, or to find the grounds for any understanding" (Langton, 1993, p.38). However, at the

Sydney 2000 Olympic Opening Ceremony, we did symbolically *acknowledge* that our national identity is based on a history, which is constantly challenged by the existence of "other" voices:

Who we are is very mixed up, and who we can be is open. It doesn't have to be determined by some preordained national history, which will determine where we go from here.  
(*"Rear Window"*, 1991)

During the centenary celebrations of the year 2001 (marking 100 years of Federation), these voices were bound to haunt that *image* of national unity (eg. the ABC series *"100 Years – The Australian Story"*, particularly the episode "Unfinished Business", illustrated that even 100 years after Federation, our nation is not a completely unified one). These are the voices my distant uncle thought were doomed to extinction. These are the voices that were being silenced, massacred and extinguished with relative impunity in this state, up until the 1930s (eg. the Oombulgarri massacre in the Kimberley in 1926, the Onmalmeri massacre in the east Kimberley in 1927, the Walpri massacre of 1928). These voices tell us of a darker past — a past that continues to poison the future:

How we approach relations with indigenous Australians is one of the most important issues that we face as we move towards further landmark events — a republic, when we make the symbolic break with our colonial past, the centenary of Federation and the new millennium. More than anything else our approach to reconciliation and native title will shape our reputation on human rights in the international arena.

Many of our attempts to deal with these issues until now have failed. We have poured money in to fix problems we have not adequately understood. We have tried policies ranging from genocide to assimilation, self-determination, reconciliation and economic empowerment. Just as the High Court in the Wik case provides the signpost to how we might coexist in Australia's heartland, we find that heartland being swayed by the preachings of Pauline Hanson, who has lent an extreme edge to the debate.  
(Bachelard. 1998, p. 3)

Our national pastime seems to be to continue to leave indigenous stories in a largely unexplored shadow of experience. But if Australia is to move beyond its obviously *distorted* national image, surely it means attaining the realisation of the importance of a shared story of the past; a shared vision in the present; and a shared harvest planned for the future. This land is rightfully the property of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that does not change by being written in a book, or by not being written in it; it remains true regardless of whether it is ratified in the nation's "official" laws (which are recognised internationally) or not. If the truth is in shadow it does

not mean it has disappeared, only that it may be more difficult to realise. I think Midnight Oil put it best when they sing:

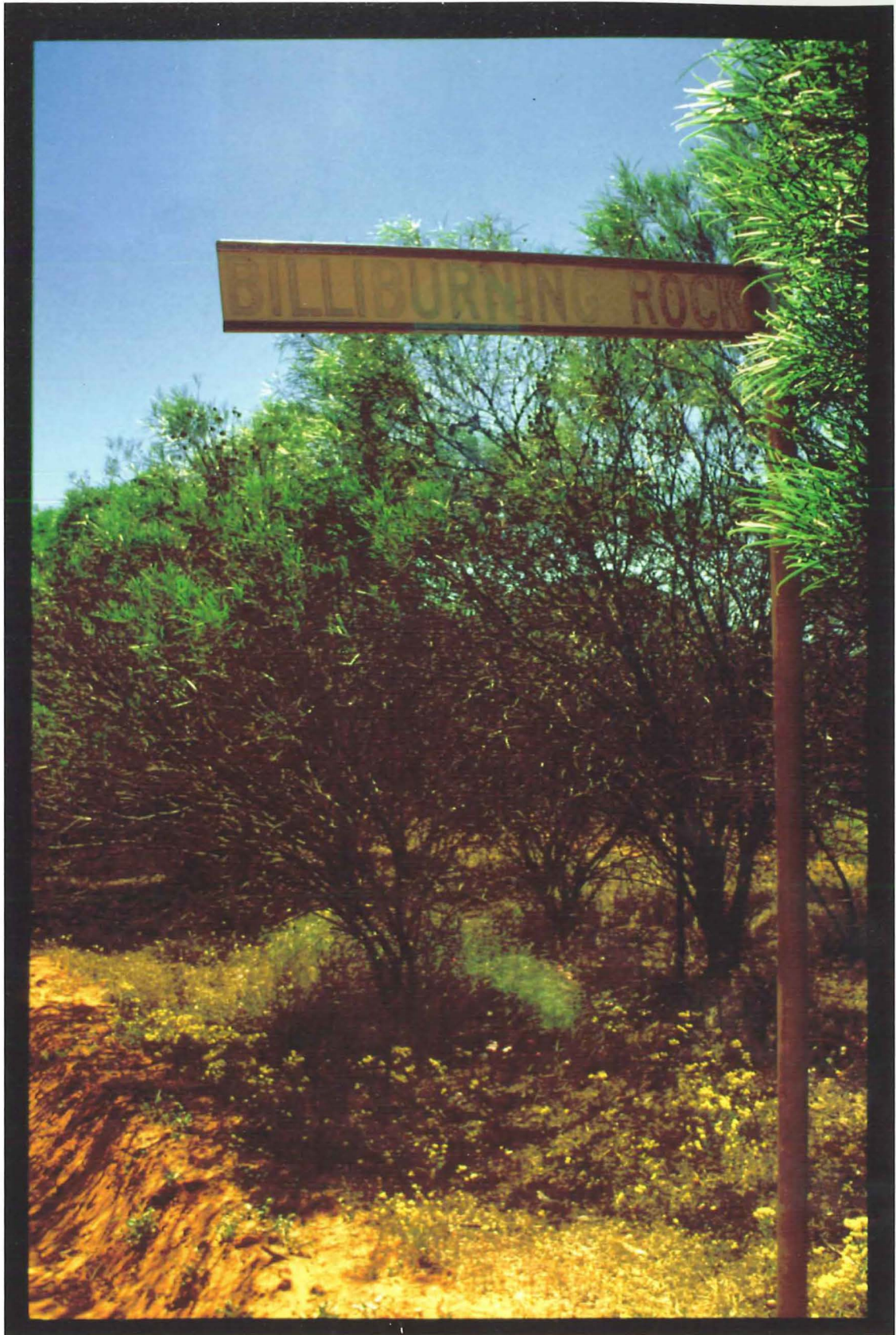
The time has come.  
To say fair's fair.  
To pay the rent.  
To do our share.

The time has come.  
A fact's a fact.  
It belongs to them.  
So let's give it back.  
(Hirst, R. & Moginies, T. & Garret, P. 1987, © Regular records)

If it is not "officially" possible to recognise indigenous experience in the past, present and future of this space; then our policies and our body politic are continuing to live in denial. Furthermore, this land will continue to be divided by "Australian" and "Aboriginal" lands and reserves, in spite of the fact that Australia has officially labelled its (non-indigenous) "origin" — the phantasm of terra nullius — a lie; and completely disregarding the reality that this leaves non-indigenous presence and landownership in Australia, a contentious issue. If it is officially possible to recognise these things, we may all have the chance to work together. We may all have the chance to work together with no fear, and with lots of love:

If we can imagine the injustice, we can imagine its opposite... We non-Aboriginal Australians must try and imagine the Aboriginal view. It can't be that difficult.  
Prime Minister Paul Keating  
(CITED IN December 1992, at the launch of the International Year of Indigenous Peoples)

"Not just now, but in the greater perspective of history" (Whitlam CITED IN Davidson. 1997, p. 188), we as a nation must judge our past. As John's descendent, I feel it is my duty to question him, "Baron of Forret", "Baron of Bunbury". I believe he was guilty of silencing and erasing many "other" perspectives of the stories of experience he told, stories which have been given to our nation to read and accept as "fact". Furthermore, he assumed that because indigenous people had no books, they had no knowledge. Their "lack of knowledge" was the justification he gave white Australians, allowing them to cheat indigenous Australians from their land and their independence. Moreover, he then duped this land's original inhabitants of the "compensation" provided by Section 70 (money in exchange for livelihood and dignity), which he believed/estimated was far in excess of their needs.



[FIGURE 4.6: Sign at Billyburning Rock]



[FIGURE 4.7: Trayning sign]

The state had enough money to build a pipeline from Kalgoorlie to Perth, but not enough to set aside even a tiny 1% of this, for indigenous Australians. Forrest — the man who thought he knew. I feel that, at 21, I am closer to knowing than he ever was.

John wanted Westralians to believe Colebatch's 1929 prediction about how Western Australia would be in 2029:

Australia is a white man's country in which the conquest of Nature is comparatively easy. To read Rolvaag's — "Giants of the Earth" — that saga of West American colonisation — is to realise how much kinder are conditions to the Australian people. A hundred years ago the "Parmelia" brought from the cradle of the British race men and women of English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish birth. In a new land they have merged more closely with each other than in the country of their origin. All have become Australians, and their pride as West Australians is complementary with their ardent loyalty to Australian nationhood. The end of another hundred years — no matter what vicissitudes of fortune may intervene — will find this State great and prosperous, the home of a happy and united people, stimulated by high tradition, qualified by inherited character, and determined, in love and patriotism, to hand to their successors the choicest fruits of liberty.

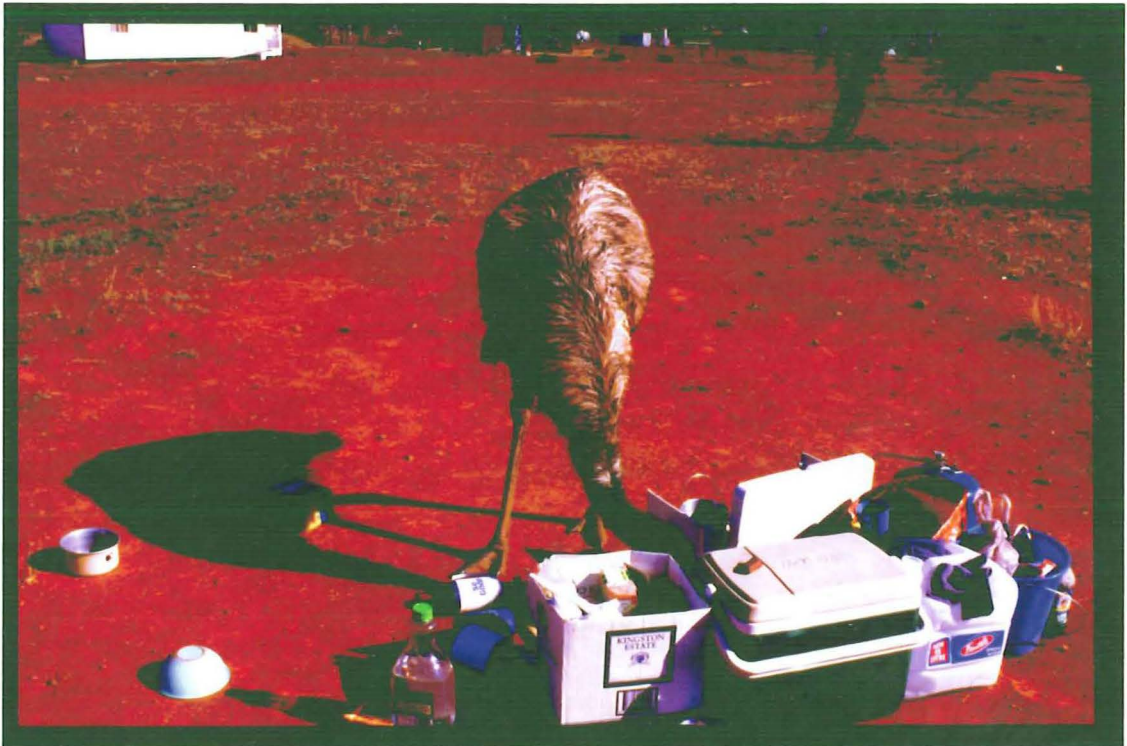
(Colebatch. 1929, p. 476)

Right or wrong?! Well, Crowley (2000) argues that, in John's time:

Perth had a population of about 8,000, and the feature that impressed most tourists was that it seemed to have been 'topped and tailed'. There was no aristocracy, or hereditary establishment, but in its place a small clique of officials, landowners, pastoralists, merchants and lawyers who lived graciously with the aid of an abundance of domestic servants, and who took a close interest in their neighbours' most trifling affairs...

Their way of life and their incomes contrasted markedly with the lot of mechanics and labourers, but there was no army of paupers trying to exist on a near-starvation diet, or packed into insanitary terraced slums and crowded industrial areas [or more precisely, *few white armies of paupers*]. Colonial wages and colonial 'grub' were a great deal better than the working class could have enjoyed At Home in the British Isles, and there was always the chance of moving up the social ladder, as the surveyor-general had done. Shepherds often became prosperous pastoralists. Frugal farm labourers could become homesteaders. And the professions — particularly the public service, the law, the church and surveying — were open to the talented and ambitious boys of the younger generation.

(Crowley. 2000, p. 48)



[FIGURE 4.8: An emu at Mt Singleton]

Colebatch's prediction rings true in some ways, except in his forecast of a happy and united people. Today, the "choicest fruits of liberty" have been handed on to the successors of those who "made good" in the colony, meaning that the fruits of this harvest still "belong" to the few. For example, Kerry Packer (one of Australia's richest men) owns 37% of the pastoral land in the Kimberley region (Bachelard. 1998, p. 32), and Janet Holmes a Court (one of Australia's richest women) owns 5.6

million hectares of land in properties scattered between WA, Qld and NT, and is rated to be worth A\$250m (Bachelard, 1998, p. 133). This disproportionate distribution of wealth (money, land, liberty, etc.) leaves Australia as a nation divided, not united.

So how do we begin to fix these problems in Australia? For Australia to become a nation of "united and happy people", it must reach closure on its past, and deal with injustice in its present. A meaningful process of reconciliation will be one based on mutual respect — respect for difference, respect for culture, respect for land, respect for integrity as human beings:

Make us neighbours, not fringe dwellers:  
Make us mates, not poor relations.  
Citizens, not serfs on stations.  
Oodjaroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)  
(CITED IN Davidson, 1997, p. 188)

The problem today, is that the lessons in understanding which even the blood of "Western Australia's greatest son" is eager to learn, were not taught in any of the pre-tertiary schools that I attended. Certainly, we may have touched on Aboriginal mistreatment, but I was never taught about indigenous land-concepts with the same enthusiasm as say, Bible lessons, or how to celebrate Settlers' Day (and I completed year 12 only 5 years ago). Indigenous people were forced to learn our "national" language (English), and to understand non-indigenous (British) land-concepts. Moreover, their adherence to and comprehension of "Australian" law became central to their survival. In contrast, non-indigenous Australians, have made little effort to study indigenous culture, law and understanding. Don McLeod once said that:

The blackfellas are the kindest people in the world. We have so much to learn from them. They've looked after this country for 40,000 years and we've stuffed it up in less than 200.  
Don McLeod  
(CITED IN AWD [On-line], 2000)

In an effort to share our future in this nation, we must begin to share culture, and share our past:

Historical and war memorials are significant forms of cultural expression, they are generally erected after much public discussion with careful consideration of what would be appropriate. Memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national identity; they are a very concrete expression of public history, a way of making permanent in letters carved in stone a judgement about events, which may be local, national or international. Memorials

reveal public perception, and may be seen as a measure of the popular influence of the views and writings of historians.  
(Clark. 1994, p. 24)

Other revealing expressions of national identity and perception include the rituals we celebrate as a nation (like ANZAC day, or Australia day — which was dubbed by the Aboriginal Progressive Association in 1938, as the Day of Protest and Mourning). Earlier, I mentioned *Tanderrum*, a ceremony of the indigenous people of western and central Victoria. The *Anbarra* people of north-central Arnhem Land have a ritual of diplomacy called *Rom*, and this ceremony is usually performed over several weeks. “It culminates in a procession and presentation of one or more ritual poles to the recipient group”, and “its purpose is to establish or reaffirm friendly relations between peoples of different communities and, frequently, of different languages and cultures” (Clark. 1994, p. 4). Currently, Australia does not celebrate such indigenous rituals on a national level:

Given the important symbolism of rituals of diplomacy such as *Rom* and *Tanderrum*, similar ceremonies could be staged throughout Austrlia [sic.] as gestures of goodwill, and to cement friendly relations. Such ceremonies could contribute to the process of reconciliation.  
(Clark. 1994, p. 41)



[FIGURE 4.9: Beacon Town]

I was offered a variety of languages in school: Greek, Italian, Mandarin, Indonesian, Japanese and French. However, I was never offered lessons in one of this state's regional languages. What use would they be? John and others, tried and succeeded in taking knowledge over in a sense:

In trying to differentiate itself from the Old World, Australian society began to define itself with essentialist myths of land. The specific qualities of the nation would grow from the land. The colony would gradually "belong," it would eventually be "in place," and it would cease to be a colony. So the story went...

If you want the real Australia, look at the earth, not at the people or what they have produced — the erroneous implication here is that the landscape has not already been produced by social actions. The landscape seems to extend unsullied, as the handiwork solely of nature, inscribed and subscribed with innate messages...

The legends of the awesome land imply that the society cannot be seen to be directing the environment in its own interests...

(Gibson. 1992, pp. 72 – 73).

Our history and our national identity do not *reflect* the "nature" of the Australian (or West Australian) landscape; they are, in fact, *projected* onto the landscape. We then read this landscape as if it says something quintessential about Australia, our history and our identity. "The existence of the land in the image works to authenticate the actions of the figures in the landscape" (Gibson. 1992, p. 74). Although our colonial past is projected strongly onto the landscape of Australia (and thus, is commonly read as the "origin" of our nation), the land has retained evidence that this space has an "origin" that predates colonisation (eg. rock art). Moreover, while our schools may teach (and our history may proclaim) that this space had an indigenous history before it had an imperial one, we do not, as a nation, celebrate indigenous rituals, or practice facets of indigenous culture, as a part of our symbolic identity.

If, as a nation, we begin to celebrate indigenous culture, we initiate a process of understanding, we reach closure on our past; can we then be sure that our nation's future will be a "happy and united one"? Not if we follow the suggestion given in the conclusion of Tilley's essay. When Tilley asks "How to move forward from this space of division and discomfort?", her answer is "to abandon, as Fanon urged, the particular encapsulation of the 'nation', much though we love and hate it, and embrace instead something in the nature of a dialectic of local and global conceptualisations of identity" (Tilley. 2002, p. 10).

This suggestion is problematic, in that it proposes that in reaching for more global conceptualisations of identity, we will find something

other than division and discomfort. However, the globe, like our nation, is also a fractured and agitated space:

The people of different civilisations have different views on the relations between God and man [sic.], the individual and the group, the citizens and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views on the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy. These are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes. Differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. Over the centuries, however, differences among civilisations have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts.

Samuel Huntington

(CITED IN Davidson. 1997, pp. 285 – 286).

In a society intent on globalisation, countries that wish to remain competitive must form unions for free trade across regional borders. Examples of these unions include the European Union, the North American Free Trade Association, and (belatedly) the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) area (which includes Australia, Burma, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, just to name a few). Although the Australian state is quite aware how far APEC's policies conflict with best international practice, our involvement in it can be seen as a desire to promote trade relations with countries with appalling human rights records. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) *Human Rights Manual* states that "One conclusion we... draw from history and experience is that democracy, a culture of respect for human rights, and the achievement of social justice will only be sustained if they are developed willingly, impelled by popular support and not imposed coercively" (CITED IN Davidson. 1997, p. 186). Davidson concludes that this "rings false where no conditional aid is imposed and where local populations cannot express their 'popular opinions'" (Davidson. 1997, p. 186), as was so clearly demonstrated in East Timor. In terms of moving away from the division and discomfort that nationalism provokes (as held by Tilley), and thus initiating more global conceptualisations of identity:

Even the regional economy and its free movement of capital, goods and labour will not end evening up inequalities in all available goods. There will be poor and rich; there will be pre-modern, modernising and post-modern states, and this means continuing antagonisms, jealousies and disagreements about collective goods. (Davidson. 1997, p. 286)

Therefore, it becomes obvious that more global conceptualisations of identity will not move us from an environment of division and discomfort, to one of unity and calmness:

It is at least probable that the regional polity, without which Australia cannot survive as a nation-state, will not be a liberal democracy. The consequent problems for an Australian liberal-democracy in the twenty-first century are enormous. The Kantian ideal of men and women who 'dare to think' for themselves and to throw off the self-imposed tutelage by asserting their capacity for autonomous reason lies at the heart of our ideal of human dignity and belief that human happiness can be attained. It will have to come to terms with an ideal of Confucian origin that says that wisdom teaches men and women to fit in and that life is suffering. Our problem is that if we accept it, we accept what Montesquieu called despotism. Is it worth it to do so?  
(Davidson. 1997, p. 286)

Rather than concentrating on globalising our conceptualisations of identity, Australia firstly must deal with its own problems of identity and belonging that exist in its own backyard. Then, and only then is it possible to contemplate moving on to negotiating issues of identity within a global community. This means that unity within our national awareness is an important facet of unity within the context of global consciousness, and we should not abandon, as Tilley suggests, the particular encapsulation of the 'national' (though this national encapsulation should not aim to limit our conceptualisations of identity within a global context).

To adjust our national consciousness, we must begin to share our history and we must learn to re-characterise figures like John within that history. Our nation should be clear on its memory of Forrest; he was a founding father of Western Australia as we know it today, but Western Australia is currently a state (within a nation) that is (and has been for a long time) undergoing an identity crisis. This crisis has been induced by events within our colonial past, frequent attempts to ignore this land's indigenous history, and failures to address, in our present constructions of history, conflicts within our national past and our national identity. The only way we can move beyond this point of crisis is to adjust our distorted national identity, and to revisit and readdress events within our national history.



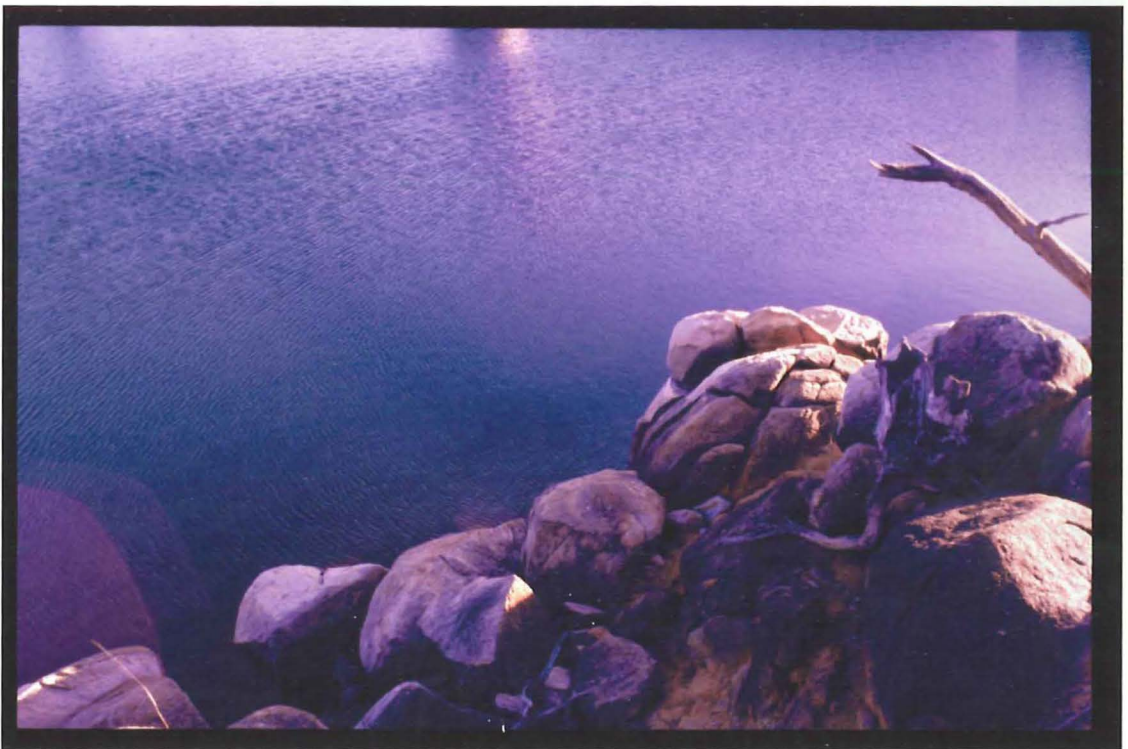
[FIGURE 4.10: Tree at Mt Singleton]



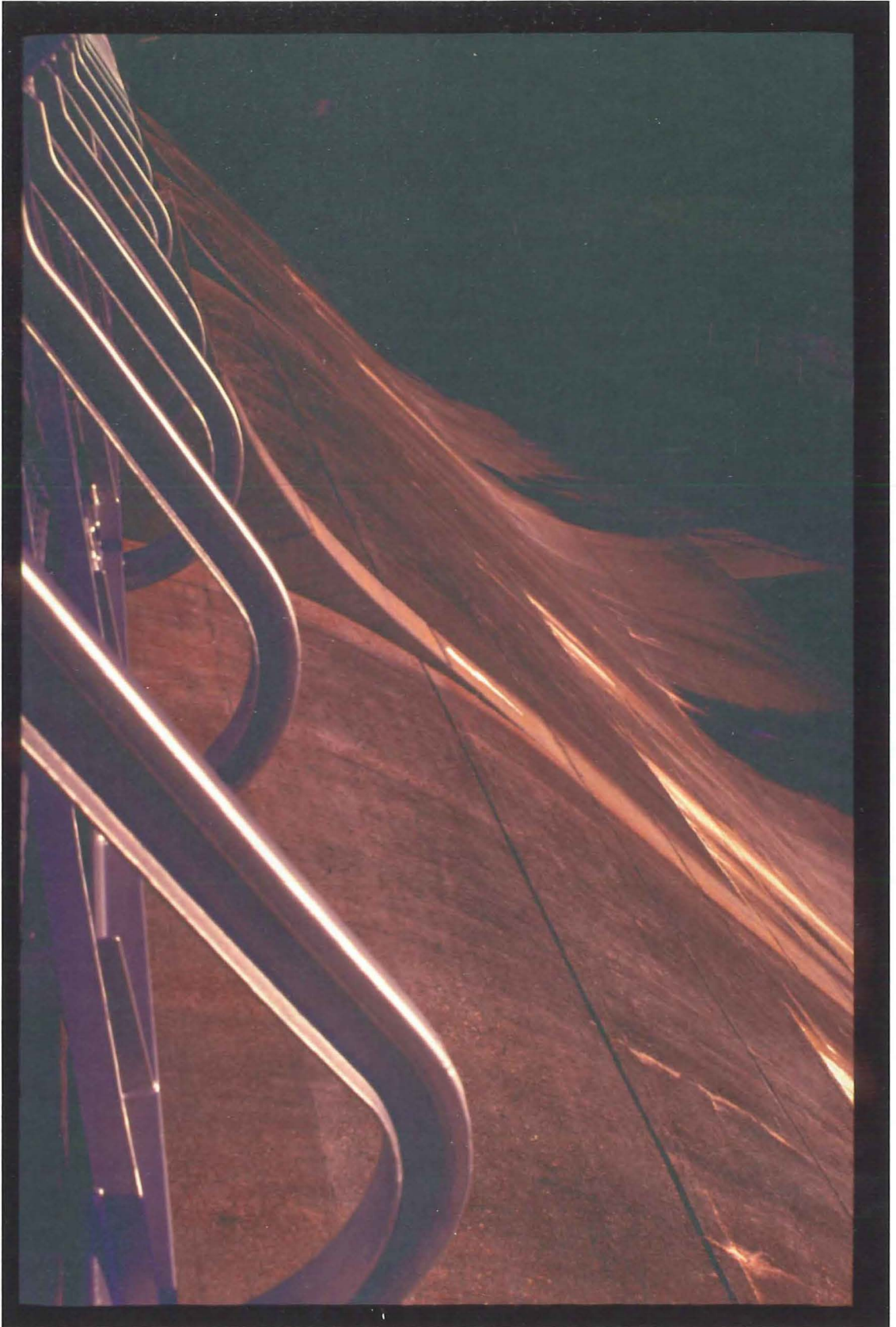
[Figure 4.11: Plane letting off fuel at Mt Singleton]



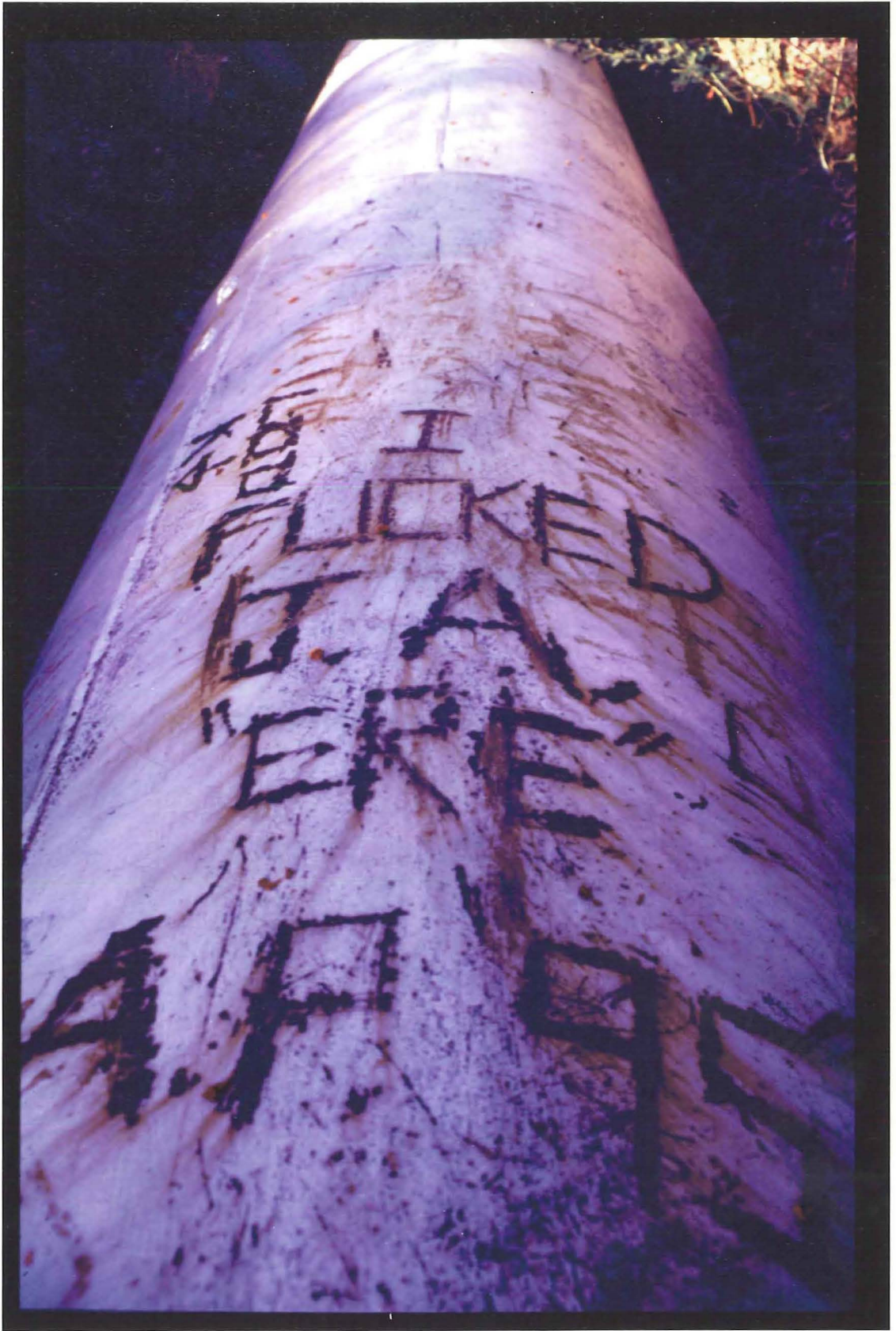
[FIGURE 4.12: Old car at De-Eranning Hill]



[FIGURE 4.13: Rocks at Mundaring Weir]



[FIGURE 4.14: Fence at Mundaring Weir]



[FIGURE 4.15: Graffiti on Perth – Kalgoorlie Pipeline]



[FIGURE 4.16: Graffiti on Perth – Kalgoorlie Pipeline]



[FIGURE 4.17: Car at De-Eranning Hill]





John Forrest:  
Western Australia  
Under the Banyan Tree

A critical analysis of John Forrest

Zoë Janina Yökki Joy Trotman



# Abstract

My thesis investigated how John Forrest shaped and enacted upon the space we now call the State of Western Australia: as explorer, as surveyor, and as Premier. The photographs in my book explore how he *impacted* upon the landscape that we currently observe: they illustrate ways in which his past influence can be detected in the landmarks of our state, and they act as evidence of the "bigger picture", demonstrating the effects his influence has had on the present condition of the land itself.

A photographic examination of Forrest's impact firstly entailed exploring sites (in and around Perth) that were established in an era of his omnipotent influence. My photographs of Mundaring Weir and the Perth to Kalgoorlie pipeline symbolise this initial stage in my photographic journey (SEE FIGURES: 0.2, 0.3, 1.2, 2.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15 & 4.16). Reaching other sites for photographic exploration involved making an approximate following of part of the route that John Forrest took in his 1869 expedition.

Forrest's mission in 1869 was to discover the remains of Ludwig Leichhardt: mine was to discover understanding. He travelled over 2000 old-school miles through land that was mostly "unexplored" (by white men). Before my trip in September 2000, I believed that I would only get to make pilgrimage to a small fraction of these sites. But with a bit of luck, and with help from kind country-town petrol station attendants, farm/station owners, RSL bar-persons (and many others); my travelling mates and myself — my *dumbart*<sup>34</sup> — were able to access some tracts of land I originally thought would be impossible to experience.

While both my book and my thesis include many of the photographs I took on my journey in 2000, my thesis mostly explores Forrest's representation within history. My book acts a journal detailing the expedition I completed in 2000.

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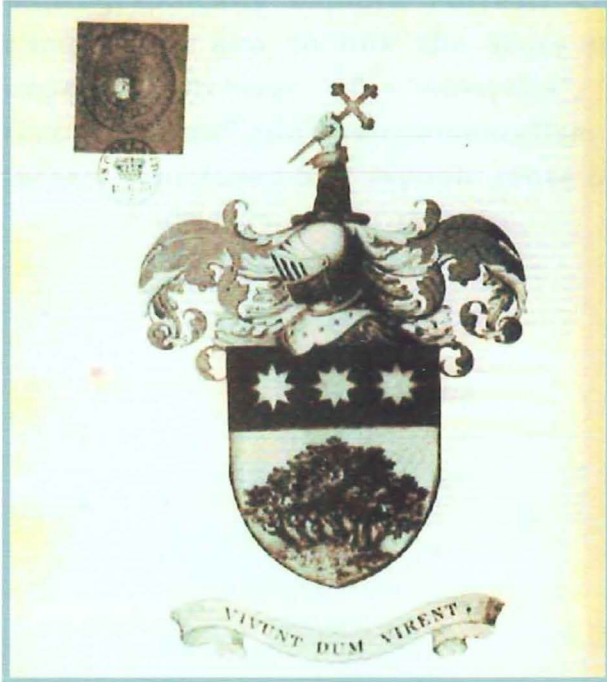
<sup>34</sup> Nyoongah word meaning to be people of the same tribe.  
(Davis. 1986, p. 112)



# Introduction

John and Alexander Forrest (my distant uncles) helped shape the nature of this space, establishing it as the place we know today — a place officially called *the State of Western Australia*.

In my initial stages of research, I discovered a revealing distant family crest. The crest was created in 1875, by William Forrest “of Leschenault near Bunbury in the Colony of Western Australia, Esquire, Civil Engineer and Landed Proprietor” (Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 135). William was the father of John and



Alexander (who both became famous explorers/politicians); and at that time, this space was *officially* the *Colony* of Western Australia.

The caption, *Vivunt Dum Virent*, brings on a sense of dramatic irony and guilt — a sense with which I am now very accustomed. It translates, “*While they are green, they flourish*” (in reference to trees in a forest). In the context of the Forrest family, it means “*While they live they*

*flourish*”. So what then, is their destiny, their legacy after life?

When I was a child I was very proud to say, “*I’m related to John Forrest, the famous explorer*”. I believed that this gave me some sort of deep affinity with the land in (and upon) which I live. I thought that this made me important: John Forrest was/has been/is frequently referred to as the “Emperor of the West” (Edwards. 1964, p. 5), and as “Western Australia’s greatest son” (Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 81).

(CREST FROM Muir & Muir. 1982, p. 134)

My thesis is an attempt to acknowledge the exoteric achievements of John Forrest, while giving voice to his inadequacies, which have long been ignored in our history books. This meant that it created a somewhat critical analysis of John’s life, examining him as a human being (with strengths and weaknesses), not deifying and worshipping

him like most published records of his life. My thesis aimed to question John's dominance over versions of the past, and interrogate the stories that we presently understand as the "truth" of our history. I endeavoured to understand his contribution to society in the greater perspective of history because, like each and every one of us, John is (or was) both a hero and a villain.

My book photographically examines the spaces that Forrest is recorded to have impacted upon, while attempting to locate a story of indigenous history also occurring within these spaces. Additionally, the book acts as a journal detailing the journey I took in an attempt to photographically explore Forrest. Collectively, the thesis and book components aim to link the story of space documented within the imperial archive of "Australia", to contemporary issues of reconciliation<sup>35</sup> and environmentalism – divisive concepts for a culture largely structured by a myopic sense of "national identity".

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<sup>35</sup> Reconciliation is a term for a legislative process of "togetherness" – the fact that reconciliation is not a social reality means that the term is often viewed with some contempt. More "appropriate" terms for the *enculturation* of "togetherness" could be a "Walking Together" or an act of "Mutual Recognition", which intend to embrace (and not reject) difference and support a breadth in cultural understanding (the communication of culture should indicate togetherness in representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation).



# Yallarah

## (a Group Dance)

This book describes a journey that I took in September 2000, upon which I emulated Forrest's 1869 expedition. I attempted to follow John's route through the area as much as possible, however because of a deficiency in funds, time, and due to the sheer lack of a 4WD; it was impossible for me to complete an exact replica of the original journey. In my mind, the landscapes I encountered were different/changed from the places described to me in books.

John believed that the "country through which the expedition had passed was mainly a worthless desert" (Crowley. 1971, p. 35), yet, in my exploration, I discovered places with a cornucopia<sup>36</sup> of wildlife, surviving on an abundance of underground water (as well as water caught in rock pools); and this was far from John's description of a worthless desert. This abundance of life was coupled with land that had in some ways been degraded. For example, the underground spring at Mt Singleton (which comes to the surface at a brook where Forrest camped) was covered in algae caused by an oversupply of nutrients due to the use of superphosphate.

I found that the imagery within these places — times and spaces — rung out with a comforting mantra for my journey, strangely, one that worships the endurance of the earth. Even if attitudes change and the human condition is an ephemeral one, the land has been here (for a long time) to remember what we forget.

The old men say: the earth only endures. You spoke truly. You are right.  
"The Earth Only Endures," sung by Used-as-a-Shield  
[Tento Sioux Music]  
(CITED IN Boulet. 1998)

We are a tribe: it's that kind of a vibe between us, and I don't know how else to explain it. The four members sit like this, in a saggy "Yellow Submarine" XD Falcon. We are a tribe, even if we don't know it yet.

Upon finally leaving "this shitty hole", Nathan (resident member of the spring-worn back-seat, and perpetual visitor to the broken and non-opening back-doors of the Falcon) sends a SMS message from his mobile, to the mobile of the resident member of the go-go pedal and front seat: my lover, Michael. Perhaps you would think it more humorous when you understand that we were all standing right next to

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<sup>36</sup> The horn of plenty according to one fable, the horn of the goat that suckled Jupiter, placed among the stars as an emblem of plenty: an ornament consisting of a horn overflowing with fruits: an abundant source of supply.  
[*L. cornu copiae* — *cornu*, horn, *copia*, plenty.]  
(Macdonald. 1972, p. 290)

each other! Nath was notifying the other tribe members to the fact that we were... "cruizin".

Now would you just look at us: the whole screaming mob of us! The whole bloody four of us — here we are: Kelly (the kween of kalm), Zoë (the kween of kaos), Michael (otherwise known as "Mick") and Nathan (indeed, Nathan Daniel; as in "Nathan-iel").

In the writing of my thesis I set out to discover the impact made by John Forrest on the social landscape of Western Australia. I aimed to analyse the characterisation of Forrest within our "official" writings of history, to clarify his actions within this story, and to determine how these actions have influenced and shaped our present. The tribe's journey (following Forrest's 1869 exploration route) aspired to identify the social and environmental impressions that Forrest's past actions have left on our landscape in the present. We hoped to find evidence within the landscape that supported my written deconstruction of Forrest, in an effort to pair the notions of localised and personalised knowledge, rather than constructing them as binarily opposed. These findings have been documented photographically in my book (and in my thesis).

My photographs are often intensely saturated and there is a reason for this. The definition of the word *saturate* is "to interfuse to soak: to imbue: to charge to the fullest extent possible: to satisfy all valencies of" (Macdonald. 1972, p. 1200), while meaning of the word *saturation* is to be "deep in colour, free from white" (Macdonald. 1972, p. 1200). The intense saturation of my pictures pushes them in to the realm of fantasy, and as they revisit one of the early non-indigenous attempts to write the epic of our state, they therefore lend themselves readily to the notion that every nation is based in phantasm. The pictures tell a story, but the style of narration invokes a sense that this story is necessarily charged with a way of seeing (and that there are many other ways of seeing).

The intense saturation of colour puts forth the idea that we must begin to tell the story of our nation differently. Historic events in Australia's "official" remembrances of the past are often only given one "true" meaning (they are told in black and white, they are either true or false, etc). In reality, there are a vibrantly rich variety of vantage points from which to view the past, present and future; there are also numerous ways to understand what is "true", because there are a myriad of "truths".

When talking about ways of knowing in my thesis, I cite Verran, who argues that Western ways of knowing have been "Blinded by an epistemology obsessed with scientific knowledge, [and thus] theory... [has been] taken to be the sole expression of true knowledge" (Verran. 1998, p. 238). John believed that indigenous Australians were evolutionarily inferior to non-indigenous (namely white) Australians, because the indigenous people had not recorded their knowledge and history in books. John did not think to look at the land as the indigenous people's library. When we deal with the landscape in image, we need to recognise that there is no sole expression of what is true. I portray this in my imagery by saturating the colours of the landscape. I wish to illustrate that experience and knowledge are things one must encounter for oneself, because this is the only way to realise the richness and vibrancy they have to offer.

My photographic exploration privileges the space in which events took place, over the time in which they took place.

European history is a particular way of making sense of the world. Say, for example, something happens, like a natural disaster... The event is given a date... and as time goes on it becomes history, it becomes an event of the past. But to Aboriginal people, *when* something happened, is not as important as *where* it happened. (Board of Studies NSW. 1995 [video]. "The Australian Experience: Discovering Australia's Aboriginal History")

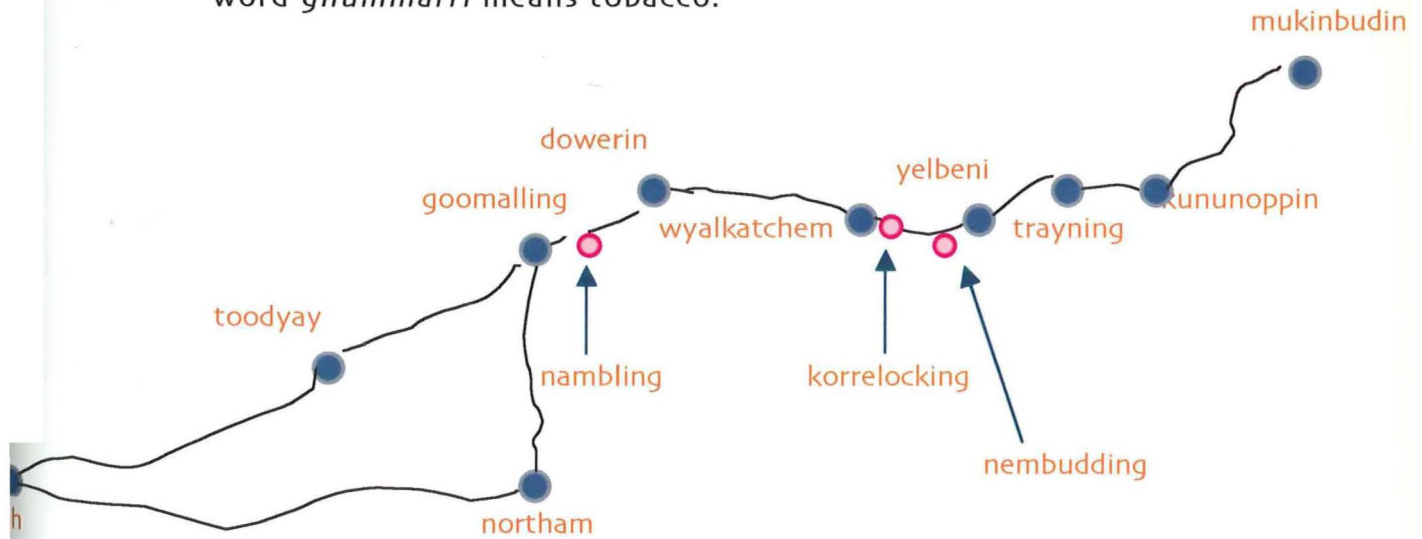
Similarly, Oodgeroo Noonuccal suggests that in the remembrance of history, space is more important than time.

Let no one say the past is dead.  
The past is all about us and within.  
Haunted by tribal memories, I know  
This little now, this accidental present  
Is not all of me, whose long making  
Is so much of the past.  
Tonight here in suburbia as I sit  
In easy chair before electric heater,  
Warmed by the red glow, I fall into dream:  
I am away  
At the camp fire in the bush, among  
My own people, sitting on the ground,  
No wall about me,  
The stars over me,  
The tall surrounding trees that stir in the wind  
Making their own music,  
Soft cries of the night coming to us, there  
Where we are one with all old Nature's lives  
In scenes where we belong but have now forsaken.  
Deep chair and electric radiator  
Are but since yesterday,  
But a thousand camp fires in the forest  
Are in my blood.

Let none tell me the past is wholly gone.  
 Now is so small a part of time, so small a part  
 Of all the race years that have moulded me.  
 Oodgeroo of the tribe Noonuccal  
 (CITED IN Board of Studies NSW. 1995 [book]. I give you this story, p.  
 134)

We set out from Perth really late on this first day. You know how you set out when you are in an assortment, a set, a group, a mob — travelling. As much as you all *think* it's a good idea to get up at the crack of dawn, so that you all get to *see something* of the place that you are in; you somehow end up leaving at 3pm on a Thursday noon-night journey. On the road, there are always an infinite amount of white lines that must fly past, before people meet their destination. That day we got from Perth to Mukinbudin.

On the way to our destination we made a few stops. John's map referred to Goomalling, so I thought I'd drop on in for a quick visit. Member Nathan tells me that, when requesting a cigarette from this particular affiliation of citizens, I am to convey that I am craving a "numrie". The tribe is, at this notion, amused. Later, I remember the play *No Sugar* by Jack Davis (1986), and the fact that the Nyoongah word *gnummarri* means tobacco.



There is a railway line going through Goomalling, evidence of John's influence (SEE FIGURE: 1.5). Although the line in Goomalling was not constructed while Forrest was Premier, it is an indication of his impact

on our landscape (environmentally, socially and economically). Forrest encouraged the vast extension of railway lines for the transport of resources (increasing the state's "prosperity"), and for the movement of people (for colonisation to be "successful", the white frontier needed to be advanced). He came across vast rail systems when he visited America and the United Kingdom, and he was much impressed with the growth in industry promoted by the efficient extraction and transportation of resources.

We pass Nambling, stopping to photograph a salt marsh (SEE FIGURE: 1.5). On Forrest's journey, he had to completely bypass this area because it was dense with thickets. It is hard to say whether the salt marsh is the result of the land clearance undertaken by farmers, or whether it was something that existed in the area before the removal of the thickets<sup>37</sup>. Bruce Campbell (a lecturer at Edith Cowan University) suggested that its presence is most likely the result of a combination of both factors (the salt was probably present prior to the clearance of the land, and the water levels would have risen after its clearance). If it is the result of land clearance, then we could say that this too is a site of John's influence. I mentioned earlier that John liked to see the land "used and improved" (subjective concepts), and he based his landownership policies on the condition that attempts were made to utilise and enhance space. In Forrest's mind, the terms "used and improved" were conditions that required landholders to clear land for the growth of crops and the grazing of livestock. Therefore, it could be said that this salt marsh (if it is the result of land clearance) is an embodiment of Forrest's impact on the environmental landscape of Western Australia.

The next place we visited was Dowerin (SEE FIGURE: 2.3) where we decided to stop for fuel. We notice that someone has "remade" a local directional sign pointing to Calingiri. For these lonely folk, it now more appropriately reads:



<sup>37</sup> I hesitate to say "naturally" occurring — just as the nature of this land has been shaped by the presence of non-indigenous culture over the past 214 years, its nature would also have been shaped by the presence of indigenous culture, which had been the dominant influence upon this space for up to 60,000 years prior to European invasion.

We mosey on through Wyalkatchem, which I cannot help myself from pronouncing “*what-cha-call-em*”. The town’s location and the sheer length of its name, means that it cognates well with the area Forrest referred to on his map as “Dwortwollanking”. On this map, he also made note that this area was “sandy country”. We carried on through Korrelocking, Nembudding, Yelbeni, and Trayning (SEE FIGURE: 4.7).

Trayning is a name derived from the Nyoongah word *duri-ining*, which means, *snake crawling through grass near campfire*. Forrest called Trayning, “Yarranging” because (in his mind) it was marked by the furthest eastern sheep station of the time, “Yarrong”. However, colonial naming authorities (including Forrest) usually favoured the use of indigenous Australian place names, and this is evident when one realises that about 70 percent of the 4,000,000 place names in use are indigenous in origin or inspiration (though some of the indigenous names were changed by explorers and have been re-assigned their Aboriginal name more recently). The Trayning town site goes further than its name to recognise its indigenous history — it has an explanatory sign (revealing the origin of the town’s name and what it means), which was erected as a community project, sponsored by the (1988) Bicentennial Committee. Clark (1994) states that:

A worthwhile initiative for reconciliation would be for naming committees to erect appropriate and explanatory signs, following research, consultations and negotiations with local indigenous communities, at places carrying indigenous names.  
(Clark. 1994, p. 33)

The tribe then did as Forrest did: we headed North for Waddouring Hill (which cognates with the place Forrest called “Waddouring”), and by this stage it was dark. We then reached our destination — Mukinbudin — at about 9:30pm, in darkness. A non-delineated landscape, full of sky-planted floodlights.

Actually, upon entry into the town, Mukinbudin closely resembles an airstrip: a place where they light up the sky, while the ground remains dark. In and around the caravan park in particular, there is a great cascade of floodlights. These light up the sky around the town in their forecasted pattern of distribution, but they fail to illuminate the *earth*. Looking at the ground, you can see “stuff”, but you are left with no idea about what this “stuff” could possibly be; while in the sky, the stars disappear.

Surprisingly, it seems that the "Caravan Park" in Mukinbudin is one of the most happening places in town (that's right folks, rock on out and roll on in). In fact, on that night (being the first night of camp, when usually, no one gets any sleep), it was about 1:30am before the mob thought that we'd better get to bed. We thought about sleeping only 'cos we knew our voices were carrying loudly over the resplendent flat, red, dryness of it all.

It's so funny when you all get together in the darkness to arrange beds and blankets, food and entertainment. There's something so magical about being there, in that place. It's humorous that the space we are all trying to understand, is the space that already understands us.

Funnily enough it seems, on trying to sleep, we come to the realisation that our tribe was comparatively quiet. That is, when in competition with the massive party that some Mukinbudin resident was having: drum-kit 'n' all. The local cop had even been put on stand-by: watching out for any blow-ins coming to cause trouble. But the noise didn't really matter much. Most of the crew plummeted into a deep sense of relaxation and sleep.

The next morning, the tribe decides to mission to De-Eranning Hill (SEE FIGURES: 0.4, 3.2, 3.5 & 4.1); which is about eighty-one kilometres from the Caravan Park in Mukinbudin<sup>38</sup>. Just before reaching the farm on which the hill is situated, we find an old rusted out car (a typical "outback" image), which has been re-appropriated and used as a sign (SEE FIGURES: 4.12 & 4.17). The hill is located on the farm of a local family; it consists of granite rock, and it forms some sort of a water storage plan for the surrounding district. A series of walls have been constructed around the rock, reaching about 30 centimetres in height. These aim to support the rock's natural ability to catch rainwater, and then to direct this water into a well at the bottom of the rock. The well is subsequently used as a community resource for things like fire trucks.

Although the water is not the reason why the tribe has come here, we find it amusing that we are following it, as Forrest would have done in 1869. We come here to see the aboriginal paintings in a cave amongst the rocks (SEE FIGURE: 3.4). As wonderful as it feels seeing ancient

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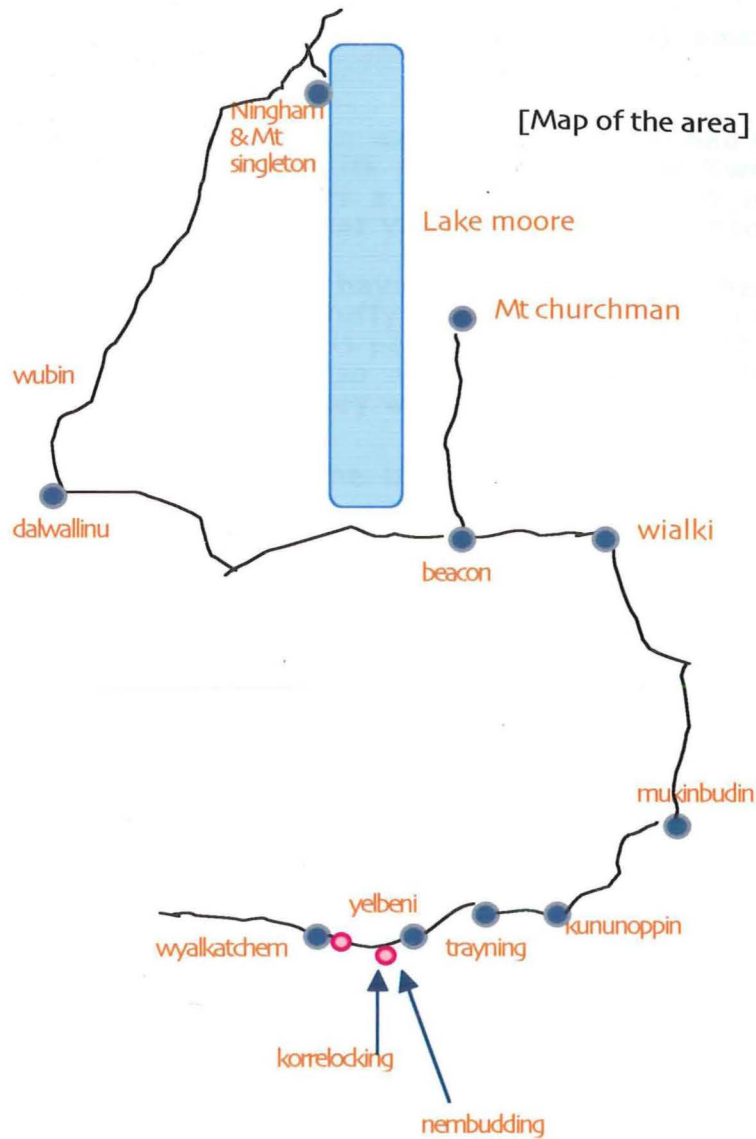
<sup>38</sup> To any fellow traveller who visits Mukinbudin, you should be aware of this one very small thing: they *do not* sell Super/LRP at their Service Station (observed by Zoë Janina Yökki Joy Trotman, 2000).

reminders of our lands largely "mysterious" past, it seems that some visitors have felt the inclination to leave their own impressions on the rock. We don't know how to begin appreciating these "latest additions" (noting the near instantaneous connection we make in our culture between visual evidence, validity and the "truth"). Are these valid remembrances of the past, and of humanity in the area; or should it offend us that some one should want to do exactly what the indigenous people of this land did, however many thousands of years ago? It's seems a funny question, but, why is the inscription "Jeremy woz 'ere" not as beautiful as those pictures in the cave? Why do I value this time worn imagery more than the work of some one I feel I should more readily understand?

I do not know how to read the symbolism in these paintings, but I can interpret them as proof that indigenous Australians did have an attachment to this place. I can also say that this connection was broken by the non-indigenous usurpation of the land (which was to be used for farming purposes). As explorer, John was a central character in the identification of land (in non-indigenous understanding), and in the evaluation of its possible "usefulness" (whether it was suitable for pastoral purposes, or whether it was more likely to be a site of interest for geologists). In his role as the Surveyor-General, John was responsible for dividing up, fencing off, and putting up for offer, land that belonged to the indigenous Australians. Therefore, the paintings in this cave are evidence that this land was a space of culture before its European invasion; that the land that indigenous culture was connected to was usurped from them; and that another culture was subsequently grafted onto the landscape. John played an important role in this process in Western Australia.

Haplessly hot, the members of the Yellow Submarine pull out of De-Eranning Hill, to drive the full sixty-five kilometres back to the main road.





Our destination included the most “geographically manifest”<sup>39</sup> rural community of this short northbound leg of the journey: Wialki (SEE FIGURE: 3.6). Striking aspects of Wialki include the planning of the town-site, and the exoteric expressions of the community’s culture that were encountered on our journey. The tribe had agreed to eat lunch at Wialki, but when we got there it seemed there was nowhere to get lunch from.

Wialki consisted of:

- ☼ A sign pointing to BEACON, which is regarded as the nearest town of any considered geographical-integrity. From this sign there is, hanging by its soft long ears, one rabbit. The

<sup>39</sup> This is not said in reference to the town’s appearance on the map; rather, it alludes to the sense that upon encountering the town, it became the most *physically noticeable*.

tribe is (for the want of a better word) amused at this repulsive photo opportunity.

- ⊙ It seemed that this sign was all that WIALKI had to offer the tribe, so we followed its directional advice. Twenty metres later, we venture over a railway crossing. It is after this crossing that we see that WIALKI has a small school.
- ⊙ Residents/local hoons have also managed in their isolation, to hang another two fluffy rabbits from the sign marking the "Railway Crossing". This pair imitate in death, the behaviour for which they are so well renowned in life; and the behaviour for which they were killed so ritually.

Settlers brought rabbits from the United Kingdom to Australia, with the purpose of reminding them of "home". The rabbits had no natural predators here, and consequently, it did not take long for them to reach plague proportions. To the dismay of the settlers, the rabbits destroyed crops (they also threaten our smaller native animals by competing for food, and degrade the land with their burrows), and thus became a nuisance. Ironically, the growing plague of rabbits provided some relief for indigenous Australians, endowing them with a supply of meat and income. After photographing the rabbits at Wialki, we move on in a westerly direction to Beacon (SEE FIGURE: 4.9).

Forrest travelled a route that still exists today. This is a little west of my tracks to Beacon. He has plotted places like Yetelling, Yammaling and Beebyning (currently there is a place called "Beebeegnying"). I believe Beacon is the place that Forrest referred to as "Danjinning Well". When we got to Beacon, the Yellow Submarine needed some dynamism — we needed fuel desperately. For the tribe to enter the divine expanse that is Mt Churchman (SEE FIGURES: 0.6, 1.7 & 3.1), we first had to pay the ferryman. In Beacon he charges a lofty \$1.18 per litre.

After filling-up, the tribe is notified: NO CAMPING IS ALLOWED AT MT CHURCHMAN. No camping that is, without permission from the owner of the tract of land on which this "large bare granite hill" (Forrest. 1870–1920?, [Map]) is situated. The surrounding area was a nature reserve, so technically, we were not permitted to enter or camp. Fortunately, the locals at Beacon could help us out in this respect.

The actual "owners" of this space were on holiday, so a fax was sent from Beacon notifying the possessor of our desired future presence. Not that it really meant much: our presence was something to which

the owner would remain unaware, until they read about it in a message when they returned.

And the landholder certainly did not want any "uninvited" guests. There was a sign erected around a cattle grate at the entry point to a large tract of fenced land (SEE FIGURE: 2.6). Upon passing, the tribe reads the sign, which has been erected to invoke fear. The sign falsely claims that this fence is a "State Barrier Fence", it also states that crossing it would incur a \$200 fine. How's that for clever security?

We enter Mt Churchman. The tribe is confronted. A massive bare granite hill. The hill retains water in its crevasses, clefts, fissures, and notches (SEE FIGURE: 2.4); meaning that there are plenty of birds and other animals, living off the rock itself.

I found a number of things interesting about Mt Churchman. Upon pouring the contents of a bottle of water on to the granite, I said to Michael, "Isn't that weird, that's the way water has always run down this hill when it falls onto this part of the rock. It's like a programmed reaction to water, a programmed use of the water". Then I realised the logicity of the explanation that the original inhabitants of Australia gave to this distribution of water: the waugyl, the water snake. When I looked at the rock, it was covered in snake-like trails of granite, water-worn — its wrinkles of life are also creases of fertility and decision (SEE FIGURE: 2.5).

We camped here this night, feeling free in isolation. Cooking and mucking about, the mob has an amazing experience at Mt Churchman (SEE FIGURES: 2.1, 4.2 & 4.5). This land is not "useless" as Forrest claimed it. We couldn't understand why the animals would be there if it were.

The natives made good trackers and hunters, but were unreliable for almost anything else. "Good country", to them meant a small water-hole in a spinifex desert, used by a few kangaroos, emus, and possums. The natives needed little water, because they never washed themselves or used water for cooking, and they rarely had any pets who needed it, except dogs. The country through which the expedition had passed was mainly a worthless desert, useless for agricultural or pastoral purposes, though Forrest thought that it would be worthwhile sending geologists to examine it thoroughly. (Crowley. 1971, p. 35)

How can land be "good country" in the eyes of one person, and "worthless" in the mind of another? Perhaps this question is answered

when we consider that, when the British arrived in /invaded Australia, they didn't realise that:

The open grassy woodlands that [they] encountered were, in fact, kept that way by Aboriginal fire management. [Aborigines additionally] maintained a mixture of edible grasses and herbs which were also useful in attracting animals.

In her book *Burning Questions*, Professor Marcia Langton argues that the concept of wilderness denies the very existence of Aboriginal biogeography. She calls it the scientific equivalent of terra nullius, and says that Australian natural resource scientists have been blind to indigenous knowledge systems. Wilderness, says Professor Langton, continues the colonial assumption "that this land (wilderness) is not and has never been governed by human institutions, by government laws".

The first Europeans saw Australia as a poor, scrubby, impoverished, even barren land. They were repelled by the arid landscape, bitterly disappointed at the dry salt lakes.

Professor Langton

(CITED IN Wahlquist. "Hard Yards", 2001)

Furthermore, if John (and non-indigenous Australians as a whole) found the land to be "worthless" and "useless", why was it then usurped from Australia's indigenous peoples, who recognised it as "good country"?

Since Nature provided so liberally [for the indigenous peoples], they had no need to till the soil in order to increase supply [meaning the indigenous understanding of "good country" could include land that was "useless", in Forrest's mind, for pastoral purposes]. They had no knowledge of the art of cultivation, but they exercised certain restrictions in the use of supplies liable to exhaustion.

(Colebatch. 1929, p. 114)

In the morning, something happens. It sounds funny — it began as a joke. Nathan begins what I can only explain as a corroboree. We began to pick up breadboards, sticks, clanging things, ourselves and our voices, until we were all dancing. We were beating out a rhythm to describe the joy we felt in feeling free.

This is where I began to realise the significance of the song "Great Southern Land", and its relationship to my story. In this case, the particular lines:

So you look into the land, it will tell you a story,  
A story bout a journey ended long ago,  
Listen to the motion of the wind in the mountains,  
Maybe you can hear em talking like I do,  
They're gonna betray you, they're gonna forget you  
Or are you gonna let them take you over that way?  
(Davies. 1982, Great Southern Land © Regular Records)

In Forrest's diary, he recorded the party's arrival at Mt Churchman on May 5<sup>th</sup>. He also recorded the arrival of a group of "nine natives", who were apparently friends of the tracker Jemmy Mungaro (who, as I mentioned in my thesis, was responsible for the initiation of the search for the remains of Ludwig Leichhardt).

At this point John was faced with a series of different reports about the relics of white men. This group of indigenous men led Forrest to notion that the bones of Leichhardt were to be found at a place called Bouincabbajibimar. However, a week later, the party met a "second team of twenty-five natives, also friends of Mungaro" (Mossenson. 1960, p. 11), and these men offered a different explanation of the bones at Bouincabbajibimar. A corroboree was held, which some books claim was in honour of the expedition (eg. Compton. 1969, p. 3). I believe that the celebration was more keenly purposed at aligning the group of Aboriginal men, rather than any service to the needs and greatness of the explorers.

This group of men told Forrest that the bones at Bouincabbajibimar were those of horses, which had been lost in Austin's expedition after they had consumed poisonous plants. Forrest knew this place as Poison Rocks. Disappointed, the party then changed direction again, heading for a place called Noondie, where Mungaro assured him they would find what they were looking for.

At Mt Churchman in 2000, we had a corroboree to celebrate our existence in the land. A place our relatives once called hell, while usurping it from those who could see the goodness in it. We celebrated our ability to appreciate this land: the feeling that comes from living in a space, the feeling that comes from trying to understand it. Forrest once commented that it was:

[I]nteresting to speculate as to the causes which have acted upon these people and have led them to follow the nomadic life in which they were found and in which they continue to live.  
(Aveling. 1979, p. 50)

I think it is interesting to speculate as to the reasons for much more perturbing events in the history of our land. For example, when the invaders arrived and found this place was "uninhabitable", why were they not astounded by the sheer tenacity and will to live that the indigenous people living here displayed? Why could the imperialists not come to the point where they thought, "Hey, these people could teach me something"? Why did the British not recognise that their

understandings of "good country", were almost certainly going to be different from indigenous conceptualisations of it (considering that the land was used in markedly different ways to support survival in both cultures)?

In celebrating in such a way at Mt Churchman, we prove that the causes that acted upon the land's original inhabitants, (leading them to their nomadic lifestyle), are also causes that sometimes call the "invaders" to become peripatetic<sup>40</sup>. The cause is to understand how to celebrate our own existence. Its call just happens to be almost inaudible by most, until the land is calling to them so loudly they cannot hear anything else: everything else is quiet. John couldn't hear the land, all he could hear was the crowd cheering for more, and it is more important for the tribe to know this than finding exactly where John was all those years ago.

We move on and go back through the "State Barrier". We are just in time to meet the thirteen 4WD's that were coming to the granite ghost of time to surmount its surface. Even though tracks from previous 4WDing were visible on the rocks, Mt Churchman was understood by the tribe, as a space of peace. But it was being made quite obvious that this was a tenuous thing, and we moved on to the next destination.

Billyburning was pretty much the first location name I spied on Forrest's map, and let's face it — it is a name that just invited you through the front door and up to the campfire for a cuppa. So when I saw a sign pointing to Billyburning Rock (SEE FIGURES: 1.6, 3.3 & 4.6), I had to follow.

It was a short excursion, but I think the majority will agree that the most "scenic" view of the area is only visible when standing on the rock. From there you can see the attractive outdoor facilities — ie. the dunny/WC/toilet. One interesting feature of Billyburning is a pile of stacked rocks, to which visitors are supposed to add their own rock. This way they can leave their mark upon the landscape (SEE FIGURE: 4.6). Other features of interest include the plethora of geckos that bask on Billyburning's granite surface.

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<sup>40</sup> Walking about: Aristotelian: of e.g. a teacher, itinerant.—*n.* a pedestrian: an itinerant: an Aristotelian.—*adj.*  
[Aristotle is said to have taught in the walks of the Lyceum at Athens].  
(Macdonald. 1972, p. 992)

There was an interesting hue change in the land, the sand, and the rocks at this point in the journey. The further you go up, the redder it gets, which was made quite plain on the remainder of the day's journey. The rest of the day required us to travel back to the main road, and turn to the west (encountering Cleary, Kulja, Burakin and Kalannie), finally hitting Dalwallinu.

From there we ventured to Ningham, which is a sheep station that encompasses the strangely rocky Mt Singleton (SEE FIGURES: 1.3, 4.10 & 4.11). Now this place is weird. Mt Singleton is in one of the driest areas that I have ever seen. I mean the differentness of it all, the redness of the soil. The plants that grow there are species of flora you have never seen before (especially the prickles) (SEE FIGURE: 0.5). However, Mount Singleton itself is comprised of river rocks; and below the red dry prickliness of Ningham ground, there are millions of litres of water. This develops into a winding spring and brook.

There is so much water there that the farm house has five palm trees growing in a row, and a Morton Bay Fig the size of which I have never seen before. The availability of water allows the owner to have an unusual animal policy (as in just let the little blighters do whatever they want), permitting the initiation of many interesting relationships between campers and stray herds of goats, horses, dogs, kangaroos and emus.

By the way, waking up to an emu with its head stuck in your billy (which is still filled with last night's stale spaghetti) is kind of amusing (SEE FIGURE: 4.8).

We were not able to climb Mt Singleton: we had no 4WD, and no time. However, I did manage to question the proprietor about his knowledge of John Forrest. He told me that if I were to follow the dry riverbed, I would eventually find an eternally wet brook: the place at which Forrest camped (SEE FIGURE: 0.8). This brook is now covered in green algae which results from the use of fertilisers.

I mentioned earlier that John thought that the land the party had passed through "was mainly a worthless desert, useless for agricultural purposes" (Crowley. 1971, p. 35), and in a way he was right. Land in the United Kingdom has a lot of topsoil (which retains nutrients for crops), but land in Australia does not, and this means that our soil is not suited to growing crops (of wheat, oats, etc). Rather than changing their way of

life to suit the land they were living on, the settlers decided to adjust the land to fit their requirements. This meant using fertilisers on the soil to promote its productivity. However, when the nutrients from these fertilisers leach into our water, it promotes the growth of algae, and this threatens our waterways and the aquatic life they sustain.

After this walk, we cooked lunch and began the return journey home. I thought about you, John Forrest, I thought:

Looking everywhere, cos I had to find you,  
This is not the way that I remember it here.  
Anyone will tell you it's a prisoner island,  
Hidden in a summer for a million years.  
Great Southern Land  
It'll burn you black  
(Davies. 1982, Great Southern Land © Regular Records)

Perplexing that Forrest was burnt black: a cancerous spot on his temple meant that he died while on voyage to England, where he would receive his title of Baron. Strange that he died just before he was to be bestowed with such an honour. John was burnt in his mind, the place where he valued himself the most, and the opinions of others least. As Midnight Oil sing, maybe "the time has come" (Hirst, R. & Moginies, T. & Garret, P. 1987, © Regular Records) for John to stop ignoring the voices of the people that found him water when he was thirsty. Maybe "the time has come" for Forrest to understand that to live here, is to live in a perpetual state of being called to wander, just as he did. The nomadic way of life, is the way of living Forrest imitated on his journeys, and the one I imitate now (although, like Forrest, I do not live my entire life wandering). Acceptance is the only way to attain understanding — the land is the only constant, and even that changes... This is the truth, this is right.



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Source: Edwards, P.G. (1964). An Aspect of the Cabinet System of Government Which Evolved in Western Australia During the Years 1890-1901. [Leaflet]. [Available from BATTYE LIBRARY PR CABINET, in ALEXANDER LIBRARY, Northbridge].

A contemporary skit on Burt's resignation in October 1897

A Modern Elijah

Elijah: "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

Some years ago, John Forrest and Co.  
Took hold of the Government strings.  
There were five, all told, in the push, you know,  
To draw the pay and run the show,  
And several similar things.  
I was quart-pot king of that first little ring.  
And the rest were pannikin kings.

A K.C.M.G. as sworn P.C.,  
I've served my seven year term,  
But there's never one left but are of the old original firm..  
In the words of the prophet of old I say  
(For my Bible I never forget)  
They may seek my life to take it away  
But they haven't got rid of me yet!

Sing hey, sing ho, for J.F. and Co.!  
There were five in my first string band.  
There was Shenton G. as the M.L.C.  
To mould the Council to my decree,  
While Marmoin managed the land;  
And Burt and Venn were the two other men  
Who pulled in that four-in-hand.

Sir George, you know, was the first to go,  
Promotion for him was a cert.  
The next one was Marmoin to give me the slip,  
(He's gone since then on a longer trip)  
And Venn was a little too free with his lip,  
So out went Venn in his shirt!  
Now I've wrung the hand of the last of the band  
And bidden good-bye to Septimus Burt.

Where are the four that I ruled of yore,  
I that am despot deft?  
Scattered and strayed is that old bridge,  
I, only I, am left!  
Still on the throne I have made my own,  
Playing my hand for the most alone,  
Foot on the necks of men.  
Careless of what they may think or say,  
Who seek my life to take it away,  
As they sought in the prophet Elijah's day.

In Shenton's place I put for a space

One Parker, a glib Q.C.,  
 But things got darker for Stephen Parker  
 When he turned aside in his stiff-necked pride  
 To wrestle a fall with me;  
 For he dropped down straight from his high estate  
 Like a shot-riddled bronzewing pigeon.  
 Poor Parker! He hasn't got up again yet,  
 His ace is dough and his star is set,  
 And Richardson's found religion.

Junior partners come and go  
 Out of the firm of Forrest and Co.  
 What odds does it make to the boss of the show  
 What sort of a place they find it?  
 I've only to shuffle the cards in my fist,  
 Or give my kaleidoscope a twist,  
 And the same old comet comes out of the midst  
 With a different tail behind it.

Seven fat years have I held the post,  
 Collard the boodle and ruled the roost,  
 Sat on my perch and made my boast  
 That no-one could knock me off it!  
 They seek my life to take it away  
 But Providence watches o'er Forrest J.  
 In the same vigilant way  
 That Providence watched in Joseph's day  
 On the life of Elijah the Prophet.