

Chapter Seven

Welcome To Country: Talkin' the Talk.

'Speak English!' said the Eaglet. 'I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and, what's more, I don't believe you do either!' And the Eaglet bent down its head to hide a smile: some of the other birds tittered audibly.

Lewis Carroll (1968:32)

'Welcome to Country' ceremonies are a recent phenomenon and many Australian Aboriginal groups who claim traditional ownership of specific places now frequently perform it. These ceremonies always take the form of speeches. In the 'darug custodian' case, Welcome to Country is performed *exclusively* by Darug descendants.¹²³

The speeches are addressed to those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples who, for whatever reason, officially visit what is claimed as Darug Land. That is, the space which is simultaneously claimed as Darug Land and to which White visitors are 'welcomed' is generally everyday space for Whites - conference centres, university lecture theatres, art galleries. These are spaces to which Whites usually do not expect to be welcomed. They are spaces which are usually assumed to be 'White spaces'. These are certainly not everyday 'darug custodian' spaces. The welcoming that occurs is done *by* those who claim prior ownership of that place *to* those who visit that place. A welcome pre-supposes that those doing the welcoming already have claims to that place. This is why Darug descendants claim the exclusive right to perform such ceremonies. Not only does it support their own, and by extension, the

¹²³ Since completing my fieldwork, however, this role has begun to be performed by some very senior non-Darug Aboriginal men.

community's 'authentic' identity, but it also affirms their status within the community.

'darug custodians' always perform Welcome to Country ceremonies in a combination of their own version of 'Darug Language'¹²⁴ which is not otherwise used, and in English¹²⁵. Tribal Darug descendants also perform Welcome to Country ceremonies, but Tribal ceremonies are spoken *only* in English. So, as well as affirming status and 'authenticity', 'darug custodian' Welcome to Country also asserts an independent identity distinct from Tribal Darug descendants.

Over the eight years of my association with 'darug custodians', the frequency of requests for 'darug custodian' Welcome to Country ceremonies has increased exponentially. It is not unusual for my friend Alma, for example, to perform the ceremony two or three times (often even more) in one week. Many of these Welcome to Country ceremonies are performed for 'darug custodian' events and occasions such as Christenings, funerals, the opening of Aboriginal art exhibitions and various other, that is, 'non-darug custodian' Aboriginal communities' projects in western Sydney.

What is confusing and peculiar about Welcome to Country ceremonies, however, is that they have been, and are increasingly, performed at non-Aboriginal ceremonial occasions. I have witnessed Darug descendants perform Welcome to Country at a number of public sports events, art exhibitions, openings of public buildings and other public works projects. Welcome to Country has been increasingly performed at the opening of local government meetings and various other government projects which are not directly related to 'Aboriginal issues'. I would argue that Welcome to Country takes on added significance when it is conducted, as it often has

¹²⁴ I describe this 'language' below.

¹²⁵ Albeit a particular 'kind' of English as I describe later in this chapter.

been in my experience with 'darug custodians', as a welcome to traditional Darug Land by living Darug descendants to those who now claim sovereignty over that land. That is, when 'darug custodians', who have been historically alienated from their traditional land apparently 'welcome' representatives of the Australian state to that land.

An example of the misunderstandings, ambiguities and general puzzlement which Welcome to Country engenders occurred when Alma was asked to conduct Welcome to Country for an exhibition of art work which was not Aboriginal and did not include any Aboriginal artists. The show was sponsored and organised by one of western Sydney's local municipal councils. It was not until Alma actually arrived on the night of the Opening that she realised that it was a particularly controversial art exhibition which included some very confronting sexualised images which she objected to on grounds of personal taste and morality. Alma, however, always has difficulty saying 'no' - especially to White people in authority - and went ahead and performed the Welcome to Country speech. She was clearly concerned that her Welcome to Country may be perceived as support for, or worse, 'ownership' of the art project, rather than as a claim for Darug Land when she anxiously telephoned me the next day saying:

The only White people who ask me to do 'Welcome to Country' are the ones who don't understand what it ['Welcome to Country'] is. They think they're bein' trendy. They're showin' off that they know Aboriginal people. They pretend like we're friends 'n' then, after I do me speech they don't want nothin' to do with me. This art is terrible. It's embarrassin'. Welcome to Country is about Darug claims to country, not about puttin' our name to this rubbish.

AJ T/I 0304.

Surely, however, it is likely that local government and other state

representatives do recognise, at least to some extent, the significance of Welcome to Country and the challenge it poses to state sovereignty. It seems that for Welcome to Country ceremonies to be possible, there needs to exist - on the part of those representing the sovereign state - an absolute separation between 'traditional Aboriginal ownership' of a place and a land claim. A land claim, at least for Whites, means a court case and the presentation of evidence which substantiates Aboriginal claims on 'our' terms. This legal claim is not understood to be the same as the cultural recognition which is instigated by Welcome to Country ceremonies. But, for people like 'darug custodians' who have been unsuccessful in making legal land claims, the making of what amounts to verbal land claims is an important way to publicly make their claims known and gain some White recognition of the cultural foundation of those claims. That is, for all ostensive purposes, Welcome to Country ceremonies are Darug land claims.

However, the kind of recognition these ceremonies represent by those who now request them, is a far more benign kind of recognition; a benign if not patronising *inclusion* of Aboriginality in state celebrations and rituals. In other words, it is a way in which an *idea* of Aboriginal country can be included in state representations without legal or political consequences. It is a way for a claim to more friendly, more inclusive relations with Aboriginal peoples to be incorporated into the national story.

Welcome to Country emerged at the same time as Darug identity within the era and context of native title. Alma tells me that there were frequent opportunities to perform Welcome to Country from the beginning of this era. Native title and multiculturalism created a discourse of inclusion of those previously excluded from the national story. Authors including Barry Morris (1991), Andrew Lattas (1993) and

Michael Mansell (1989), however, argue that where multiculturalism aims to embrace Aboriginal peoples into the nation simply as a 'culture' or 'ethnicity' equal to all others, native title and multiculturalism work together to establish Aboriginal peoples' connection to land as prior to that of the Australian state only by making Aboriginal peoples *part* of the Australian state. That is, by recognising *both* Aboriginal peoples' equality with all other cultures in multicultural Australia *and* Aboriginal peoples' prior connection to the country (while simultaneously denying sovereignty over that land) the Australian state is able to appropriate Aboriginal peoples' primordial relationship to the place 'we' have only been associated with for slightly longer than two hundred years. Native title recognises prior Aboriginal ownership, multiculturalism gives Aboriginal peoples and their prior ownership to the Australian nation.

These attempts to reduce Aboriginal claims to the same pluralistic kinds of claims as all others in Australia are subverted by 'darug custodian' Welcome to Country speeches¹²⁶. That is, Welcome to Country asserts irrefutable Indigeneity¹²⁷. Darug descendants presenting Welcome to Country do *not* represent one equal culture among many, but an Indigenous claim to prior possession of the land *before* all other cultural groups. This is done symbolically at many different levels.

Many of the Aboriginal peoples all over Australia, conduct Welcome to Country ceremonies in their own language,¹²⁸ often followed, as is usually the case in 'darug custodian' 'Welcome to Country' ceremonies, by an Aboriginal English¹²⁹ translation.

¹²⁶ I am sure that this is done in most, if not all Welcome to Country speeches.

¹²⁷ Barry Morris (1991) offers examples of how this is done in a Dhan-gatti context.

¹²⁸ That is, those who have not lost all knowledge of 'traditional' languages and how to speak them as a result of colonisation.

¹²⁹ I say more about Aboriginal Englishes below.

The speaking of what amounts to a land claim in an Aboriginal language both implies, and explicitly makes a number of different claims simultaneously. Among these claims is that the country subject to the claim has sustained prior and continuing Aboriginal cultural interpretation and has been named and classified according to that different system of meaning. The making of the claim in a particular Aboriginal language makes that claim specific to the community that speaks this particular language. The claim made in this language, therefore, contests *all* other claims to this land, including other Aboriginal claims. Aboriginal languages are understood to be languages which pre-date European contact. In this sense, by using Aboriginal languages to make these claims, the claims are placed in a temporal space which pre-dates contact with Whites. These are claims to land which are *prior* to the existence of the Australian state. In this sense, speeches in Aboriginal languages literally *demonstrate* the conditions and the terms upon which native title insists. That is, they are evidence of on-going relations between a specific group of people to country, Law and culture.

Not all (or possibly any) of the Aboriginal languages used in Welcome to Country ceremonies, however, can be said to reflect unchanged similarities with languages spoken before Whites came to Australia. Some can only claim weak resemblance to Aboriginal languages recorded soon after colonisation. As an extreme case, like many Aboriginal groups who have sustained the prolonged and devastating effects of colonisation, Darug descendants have lost virtually all knowledge of Darug Language as it was spoken by pre-contact Darug Ancestors. Individuals and families have retained fragments of language knowledge, but there are no speakers of Darug Language. There is no Darug language community. Nor are

there any records in full and very little in part of Darug language (vocabulary perhaps, but very little grammar). It is consequently impossible for Darug descendants to prove a) they actually *have* a language or b) that they possess the kind of evidence required to make a native title claim stick. Darug descendant 'darug custodians'¹³⁰, however, use what they insist is a version of Darug Language that they have developed, with the help of word lists from a White supporter in the early days, and then by themselves over the last twenty five years to conduct Welcome to Country ceremonies.

Regardless of the denials of the possible existence of a Darug language - and it is denied by White linguists, Tribal members and other 'experts' (anthropologists, biologists and lawyers, for example) - this version of Darug Language is never-the-less regularly spoken in ceremonial contexts. 'darug custodian' Darug descendants always conduct part of the Welcome to Country in their own version of what they call Darug Language. As a language, however, it is not understood either by the audience or 'darug custodians' themselves. That is, it is recently invented verbal ritual affirming Darug identity. It has been developed without the help or support of White linguists or anthropologists. It has been developed by 'darug custodians' by utilising historical records and family memories of Darug Language vocabulary and constructing this vocabulary into an English grammatical framework (I provide a comprehensive description of the version of Darug Language spoken at 'darug custodian' Welcome to Country below). That is, while it is formally presented as Darug, it is not comprehended either by the audience, or by the speaker. It is a dramatic ritual performance.

¹³⁰ 'non-darug custodian' Darug descendants - or Tribal members - do not use this language.

While 'darug custodian' Darug descendants are elaborating their own version of a ceremonial Darug 'language', Tribal Darug descendants are doing something different with language, helping to rebuild an 'authentic' Darug language. This Darug is not a spoken language - even in the ceremonial context of Welcome to Country speeches - but it is never-the-less currently being reconstructed by White academics in order to support Darug land claims. 'On-going connections' to a primal, 'pure' Darug culture are made by showing that the language has only survived in a fragmentary form into the present. Linguistic revival work shows that single words, or certain meanings have been passed down through families, but like Darug descendant genetic heritage, the language has been diluted to such an extent by colonisation that the only 'whole' or 'complete' 'authentic' culture exists in the past. Reconstruction of the language is not necessarily intended to revive it, in the sense of creating or encouraging a community of language speakers, but to demonstrate a commitment to 'connecting' current cultural knowledge to what can be retrieved from the past through research (Kohen 2001: pers.comm).

That this approach has been unsuccessful in the courts has not affected what is now ingrained as 'truth' in the Tribal version of 'Darug Culture'. The 'darug custodian' version of Darug Language challenges what are now Tribal beliefs. This has the effect of making the 'darug custodian' version of Darug language seem 'inauthentic', at least in the context of native title claims. The Tribal version of Darug attracts a greater degree of academic attention than the 'darug custodian' version. This is because a) it has been largely developed by White academics with the support of darug descendants and b) because it has been developed for the purposes of native title. I argue that 'darug custodian' representations are judged to be

'inauthentic' primarily because they are not made to prove native title claims; they are, rather, made to initiate cultural recognition. Yet, as the ethnographic example presented later in this chapter will show, an increasing number of White audiences appear to support 'darug custodian' Darug descendants in their endeavour to develop and speak a version of Darug 'language' (but not in their claim to land). This sometimes occurs to an extent that White opinion shifts and it is the 'darug custodian' representation which is judged 'authentic'.

Everyday Talk.

'darug custodians' do not generally use 'standard'¹³¹ English in their everyday communications. More commonly, 'darug custodians' speak a version of English which may be described as Aboriginal English. As well as in everyday communications, this Aboriginal English is used, along with their own version of Darug Language in Welcome to Country ceremonies.

In education, Aboriginal Englishes are becoming more recognised as reflective of fundamental and consistent cultural and linguistic differences, not only between 'standard' English and Aboriginal English, but of the world views contained in the different dialects. It is argued by researchers such as Cahill and Collard (2003) and Malcolm et.al. (1999) and supported by the *Deadly Ways to Learn Consortium* (2000), that Aboriginal Englishes are different dialects of 'standard' Australian English. Dialects have been conceptualised linguistically, as the uncultivated speech of the masses (Holm 2000:2). They are generally understood by linguists to be regional variants of a language with minimal lexical, grammatical and phonological differences

¹³¹ It must be recognised that there are multiple versions of English spoken in various communities within the Australian state. When I refer to 'standard' English, I mean versions which are commonly understood by most English speakers.

from the dominant language. A dialect can *almost* be understood by a speaker of the parent language, but meanings can be elusive and understanding is based on somewhat different sets of assumptions. Thus, in the case of Aboriginal Englishes, although 'we' (speakers of the dominant - or 'standard' - form of English) may hear and think that 'we' understand, the words 'we' hear may have entirely different meanings for the speakers.

There are more than one kind of Aboriginal English. There are many different Aboriginal Englishes across Australia because there are both many different Aboriginal languages and varying histories of contact. These different Aboriginal Englishes are based on dialects of English with the inclusion of ideas, values, philosophies and world views from Aboriginal languages which are untranslatable into English. Many of the Aboriginal words for these ideas have been retained in different forms within Aboriginal Englishes (Yallop 1993, Crowley 1993, Troy 1993, Eades 1993). Most commonly, 'darug custodians' speak a version of Aboriginal English which includes 'old' south-eastern Aboriginal words such as *'gubba'* for non-Aboriginal people, which may come from a corruption of the 19th century English term 'governor' (Yallop 1993, Troy 1993, Crowley 1993, Eades 1993). They also increasingly include words from 'Darug Language' such as *didgeri gore* for 'thank you', *kutukalung* for 'turtle'. 'darug custodian' *Dreaming*, as I mention in Chapter Eight, is referred to by them, as *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang*. These words are unique to 'darug custodian' Aboriginal English, although they also use words that are common to many Aboriginal Englishes including 'mob' for a group of related people, 'deadly' for very good, and 'flash' for pretentious.

'darug custodian' Aboriginal English is spoken by both Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal community members and is constantly changing and adapting to accommodate the many different forms of English which come into the community through peoples who come from different places. New words, expressions and grammar are brought into the community, sometimes picked up as a fashion, used for a time and discarded or accommodated as part of the on-going development of a 'darug custodian' Aboriginal English. 'darug custodian' identity is expressed through this emerging language.

'darug custodian' Aboriginal English claims a 'likeness' to 'other' Aboriginal Englishes in that many words, expressions and ideas are shared between Aboriginal Englishes. So, although there are specifically Darug words used in the 'darug custodian' version of Aboriginal English, many 'non-darug custodian' Aboriginal peoples understand and relate more to the 'language' than to 'standard' English. This has the effect of linking not only Aboriginal peoples who use Aboriginal English, but also linking the many non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians' who use the language to 'non-darug custodian' Aboriginal people. An example of this occurred a few years into my fieldwork when I began using 'Aboriginal English' expressions without always realising it. I needed to visit the Redfern Aboriginal Legal Aid Centre with an Aboriginal colleague who was indistinguishable from White. Redfern has a proportionately large Aboriginal population and is notorious as part of Sydney with 'social problems'. Although technically claimed as 'Darug Land', no 'darug custodians' currently live in Redfern and I have few social contacts there. I parked my car a few blocks from the centre near public parkland where a number of people in the park, who appeared to be Aboriginal, began to make their way toward us. They looked curious, if not menacing. I expressed my apprehensions about leaving the car to my colleague who immediately told me to 'chill'. As we got out of the car my colleague said to the most

senior of the men who came toward us:

Ya mind watchin' th' sista's wheels for us Unc?
We's got biznus wit fullas up th' centre.

FN 02022003.

After a few culturally pertinent questions such as where we were from, whether we knew certain people and if we had any cigarettes, it became clear that the group assumed that both my colleague and myself were Aboriginal from the way that we spoke and interacted. There was a general sense of astonishment when I told them I was White. We were running very late for the meeting when we were finally able to leave the group behind. There had been a long and convoluted conversation which eventually led to an explanation as to why I spoke Aboriginal English and the qualities and character of my relationships with certain people who were known and respected by certain people in the group. The long 'chat' created a sense of community between my colleague, myself and the group of Aboriginal people, that I am sure, would not have been possible had I not been able to use 'Aboriginal English'.

But, 'darug custodian' Aboriginal English is not only 'like' other Aboriginal Englishes. Aboriginal Englishes also share a strong likeness to more 'standard' English (Yallop 1993, Eades 1998, 1991, Kaldor and Malcolm 1991). This likeness to 'standard' English, rather than claiming a similarity between Aboriginal peoples and Whites, asserts difference, because although Whites think they can understand 'Aboriginal English', many of the meanings are elusive. Aboriginal people can understand 'standard' English, but 'we' need to be taught Aboriginal English.

The most radical differences between the Aboriginal English spoken by 'darug custodians' and 'standard' English are generally located in different meanings for the

'same' word. These differences are most clearly apprehended in dialogue with 'darug custodians'.

Many of my own friends and extended family have been shocked to hear me, and members of my nuclear family, in unguarded moments, dropping 'g's', referring to 'fullas' (fellows), 'them mob' (that group) and 'whitefullas' (white people). My friends, work colleagues and students would be even more surprised to hear me in dialogue with 'darug custodians'. To illustrate, I have transcribed a brief conversation between a White 'darug custodian' Elder, Uncle Sam, a young Aboriginal woman 'darug custodian', Lana, and myself at a state event which both Custodian and Tribal members attended:

Lana: All them bastard gubbas dun know nuthin' 'bout nuthin'. They's all the same that mob.

Kristina: Whoa on there, watch out who ya callin' gubbas.

Lana: (laughs). Ya know what I mean. Sorry Unc (to Sam). Youse two aren't really gubbas.

Uncle Sam: Gubbas is what gubbas does. Them fullas over there (Tribal members), them mob is more gubbas then this council mob.

Kristina: That Jamie fulla, he's s'posed ta be an Elder.

Lana: E's a fuckin'¹³² gubba. Ya done get ta be a Elder juz by bein' fuckin' old ya know sista.

This example of the different phonology and syntax used by 'darug custodians' also describes the different world-view that their language embodies. The exchange may seem to contradict my claim that 'darug custodians' are trying to find ways for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to morally and justly engage with each other. I would argue, however, that moral and just engagement does not always necessarily involve harmonious and friendly attitudes. On the contrary, anger, disagreement and

¹³² Swear words are generally used liberally by most 'darug custodians' more for emphasis than as adjectives. There are those, like Alma, however, who has never uttered a swear word in my presence.

arguing are, in fact, ways of being together inclusively - in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal societies. This exchange reveals the contentious and unstable nature of the category 'White', or 'gubba', as well as the instability of the category 'Aboriginal' within 'darug custodian' culture.

Darug 'Language'.

As discussed above, there are two differing versions of what is claimed to be Darug 'language' currently under revival. Because the stakes are high in the two claims to Darug Language proper, it is important to clearly understand the differences. I bullet point to summarise each below.

'darug custodians' are involved in what they claim to be language revival which:

- * Is a project for community members only and does not involve in-put from White researchers or other 'outsiders'.
- * Is only ever spoken by Darug descendants in Welcome to Country speeches.
- * Is not understood by *anyone* - even those who speak it. The speeches are translated from English into Darug Language *in writing*, learnt by the speaker, and spoken in the ceremonial context. People do not converse in this language. If the speaker of Darug Language is asked the meaning of a speech, they can present the written English version, but they cannot give a word by word translation without recourse to written word lists, vocabularies and other documents.

These characteristics demonstrate that the 'darug custodian' version of Darug 'Language' does not conform to linguistic definitions of a language at all. Although used as a 'sacred' language in ways that have some similarities with the ways in which Latin is used in High Catholic mass, or ancient Hebrew in many Jewish rituals, the 'darug custodian' version of Darug Language is also unlike these examples because *nobody* understands Darug Language without the aid of written sources. It is

also well documented that many 'traditional' Aboriginal communities use a 'special' 'sacred' language only in ceremonial contexts (Stanner 1976, Myers 1986, von Sturmer 1987). Yet, the literature also demonstrates that like 'High Latin' and Hebrew, these languages *can* be used and understood by those who are taught them. This is not the case with the 'darug custodian' version of Darug 'Language'. 'darug custodians' cannot talk among themselves in this language, and in fact, the language is only ever used in contexts where 'darug custodians' are addressing a wider White, 'non-darug custodian' audience.

In this sense 'darug custodian', Darug Language might be identified as a ritual performance. 'darug custodian' Darug 'Language' is designed precisely to *demonstrate* the contemporary presence of Darug people and *not* be understood as a language. It is literally not possible to speak back to the 'darug custodian' version of Darug.

But 'darug custodians' do not accept judgments that their ceremonial language is not a language. 'darug custodians' not only claim that they do 'have' language because 'we' (members of the dominant society) and Aboriginal peoples 'with' language represent Aboriginal languages as primary signifiers of 'authentic' culture and identity, but also because their language is claimed as revived tradition. It is a ceremony, part of the spectacle of Welcome to Country and 'darug custodian's' prideful performance of 'authentic' difference and Indigeneity.

As I have said, Darug Tribals are also engaged in reviving a form of Darug Language. Its characteristics include:

- a) it is being developed with the help of a team of White academics.
- b) It is *never* used in Welcome to Country ceremonies.

- c) It is being reconstructed from historical documents which include grammatical, phonetic and various other details of a Darug Language which was spoken shortly after contact with Whites.
- d) People other than Darug Tribal Aboriginal members have intimate knowledge of the emerging language and it is theoretically possible that in the future the language could be learnt and used for everyday communication.
- e) Progress on reconstruction of this language is used as evidence in land claims.

Darug Tribal linguistic revival is taken seriously by White academics¹³³

because it is not ritual performance, but an attempt to revive a language as it was spoken by Darug ancestors.

The Politics of Different Talk

The Tribal political project and the Custodian political project to which the two different 'language revival' efforts are applied are also very different. In the Tribal case, language revival contributes to the ways in which they comply with rules concerning native title and substantiating claims based on particular kinds of Western knowledge. The activity of 'darug custodians', on the other hand, are independent

¹³³ There is a large and burgeoning literature related to linguistic and cultural revival, not only in Australian Aboriginal societies, but in Indigenous and other marginalised groups all over the world. In New Zealand, the work of Sissons (1993), Spolsky (2003), Webster (2002), Sinclair (1990) and Dominy (1990) deal, in different ways with Maori cultural and linguistic revival called *Maoritanga*. In Canada Damas (2002), Vick-Westgate (2002) and Proulx (1997) describe aspects of cultural revival among Inuit and Cree. Lane (2003) and Castle (2001) report on Celtic and Gaelic revival in Ireland and Britain. Ceaser (2002) is concerned with the Indigenous language, Guarani, in Paraguay. Maliangkay (2002) is concerned with cultural revival in Korea, Golstein and Kapstein (1998) in Tibet, Gorenburg (1999) and Smith (1998) in Siberia and Mekuria in Ethiopia. In the Australian Aboriginal context, authors engaged in this work include Eades (1976); Capell (1970); Dixon (1976); Walsh and Yallop (1993); Wurm (1972); Ross (1987); Nampinjinpa, Uni (1994); Vaarzon-Morel (1996) and Murray (1991). Many of these base their accounts and records of linguistic and cultural revival on their own observation, participation and recording of surviving Aboriginal languages and cultures as well as on the testimony, collaboration and investment of Aboriginal stakeholders in the projects. In the case of Ross (1987), Nampinjinpa, Uni (1994) and Vaarzon-Morel (1996), Aboriginal people's own languages and accounts are produced in their own words and edited and translated by either Aboriginal authors themselves or White editors. See Rhydwyn (1996) for an account of some of the problems connected with various practices of 'writing Aboriginal people's stories'.

expressions of identity. They ignore the effect of their work on Tribal members and their White supporters. They ignore the consequences that publicly speaking their version of 'Darug Language' might have on native title claims. That is, they have become more concerned with certain practices and voicings of identity than they are with complying with the rules of native title. The Custodian project is a creative and eclectic construction to ritually affirm an identity in the present, whereas the Tribal project is one of building an evidence based reconstruction of the past. 'darug custodians' take their claims, in their own terms and voices, directly to those who will, to some extent, listen to them, as the ethnographic example I describe below demonstrates.

Speaking Difference at the Centenary of Federation.

As I have said, 'darug custodian' Darug Language Welcome to Country ceremonies have become more and more popular in non-Aboriginal contexts in recent years. This has proven, in some circumstances, to be highly problematic. One example was when Alma was asked to perform Welcome to Country at a number of Centenary of Federation events during 2001. The year-long celebrations generally took the form of tributes to various colonial figures, achievements, developments and ideals. That is, they were celebrations of the various projects constituting the British colonisation of what was at that time, and arguably still is, a large number of different Aboriginal homelands.

To celebrate the Centenary of Federation, Alma was invited by a local government council in western Sydney to produce a Welcome to Country ceremony for the benefit of a gathering of dignitaries from Australia and overseas.

It is likely that the invitation sprang from a certain insensitive blindness to the

significance of such an occasion to Aboriginal peoples. In either case, there was a lack of recognition that Welcome to Country ceremonies are, as I discuss above, by their nature, verbal land claims. As well as asserting such claims, the ceremonies are gestures of goodwill. Welcome to Country ceremonies both claim traditional ownership of country which has never been relinquished, and also offer to engage in productive relationships with those who have since come to that land. They are offers of peaceful and productive cohabitation on the condition that Aboriginal traditional ownership is first acknowledged and respected.

The invitation to make such a gesture when the point of the occasion was precisely a rejection of Darug ownership of land and the domination of that land and Aboriginal people cannot, in my opinion, be justified. This is not, of course, to say that all projects related to reconciliation are 'bad', but that conceptualisations and the forms that reconciliation take need to be carefully scrutinised by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples to prevent the events from merely reproducing hegemonic systems.

'darug custodians', far from approaching such an invitation with contempt agreed to participate. At that time I did not know better than to try and explain to 'darug custodians' that I thought that the invitation was insulting. Alma and other Elders told me that 'darug custodians' never refuse an invitation to speak, no matter what the context. These invitations have become, ironically, crucial opportunities for the affirmation (in an oppositional way) of 'darug custodian' identity. Alma has told me that she would speak at a *Ku Klux Klan* meeting if she were invited to do so, so strong is her commitment to being heard. I have since heard younger 'darug custodians' complain to Elders about the political contexts of their own invitations to speak. All

requests to refuse an invitation are denied and it is explained that generations of silence need to be 'spoken up' for. 'Talkin' up' to people means not letting others, particularly Whites, dominate narratives with their own voices and versions. 'Talkin' up' sometimes requires that Aboriginal peoples need to assert themselves in culturally inappropriate, or personally distasteful ways, in order to be heard at all.

As it turned out, this particular invitation was an opportunity, fairly grasped, to represent 'darug custodian' identity. This was done through the version of Darug Language which the audience soon realised, *cannot* be understood. 'darug custodian' identity is represented by 'darug custodian' Darug Language as 'authentic' and irrevocable difference. Below is Alma's speech as she claims she made it to the dignitaries:

Tiati murra Daruga pemel,
Koi murra ya pemel ngalaringi bubbuna.
Ban nye yenma wurra nang.
Nye dice gai dyi ya nangami dyarralang.
Ngalaringi tiati ngalaringi nangami gai.
Gu-ya willy angara gu-nu-gal da gu-nu-gal
da la-loey gnia tarimi gi-nu-gal.
Jam ya tiati ngalaringi eorah jumna.
Mittigar gurrung buruk greene da Daruga
pemel.

Transcript provided by community leaders.

The Aboriginal English spoken by all 'darug custodians' is used in Welcome to Country ceremonies to 'translate' Darug 'Language' as part of the speech. This is, in fact, an inversion of how Darug 'Language' is constructed. I need to make it clear here, that although Darug 'Language' cannot be spoken and understood between speakers as a form of communication, and cannot be understood and spoken back to

by an audience, it can be written. As I have said, *all* speeches in 'darug custodian' Darug Language are translations from an 'original' English transcript. That is, the speaker writes a speech in English, and then, usually using word lists and dictionaries 'substitutes' Darug words for the English ones. The Darug words are then read, or sometimes memorised and spoken back to the audience as a speech. Those who speak the language in Welcome to Country speeches cannot verbally translate the Darug Language speech back into a kind of English without recourse to the 'original' English transcript. I know this because when I asked Alma to translate she could not. Instead, she gave me a written transcript of what she said is the English 'translation':

This is Darug lands, land of the ancestors.
spirits walk among us spirits who have been
here since the Dreamtime. Our language and
culture has been past down in a unbroken line
which has been going on for ever. In the language
of our ancestors, welcome to Darug lands.
Didgeri gore.

Transcript provided by community leaders.

Like most 'darug custodian' Welcome to Country ceremonies, this speech was received by the audience with great enthusiasm. Spirited applause, much head nodding and warm smiles are common responses from White audiences to Welcome to Country. Whether the White visitors at this particular Welcome to Country ceremony recognised 'darug custodian' 'Darug Language' as a representation of contemporary 'darug custodian' identity or not, they clearly enjoyed the privilege of hearing a language that represented 'authentic' difference. Listening to this 'language' allowed access to an enjoyable and non-threatening Aboriginality for White people who may have no other means of crossing paths with Aboriginal peoples. Perhaps it

also has the effect of assuaging the guilt of White people who can point to such examples of survival and be comforted by this evidence against the sometimes purported genocide of Aboriginal peoples¹³⁴.

However, the speaking of 'darug custodian' 'Darug Language' was not enjoyable and pleasing to everyone. Standing at the back of the room two Tribal Darug descendants, who had also been invited to the reception by the Council, turned their backs on Alma and her speech. One of these Darug descendants had previously described the 'darug custodian' version of 'Darug Language' to me as 'gobbledy gook'.

A week after the speech, Alma received a letter from one of these Tribal men in which he claimed that he possessed documented evidence that Alma was not a Darug descendant. He claimed that previous genealogies which defend Alma's claims to Darug descent were wrong and that he possessed proof that Alma's Aboriginal heritage could be traced to another language group entirely.

Alma and other 'darug custodians' frequently experience attacks on their 'authenticity' from Tribal members. This was the first and only time in my experience, however, that the attack was made in writing. 'darug custodians' are very familiar with the power of documents to change their collective fate. After all, it is on 'our' (the dominant society's) documented evidence of Darug descendant's genetic heritage that the existence of 'darug custodians' depends. If these documents are proven to be wrong, the grounds of Darug descendant and 'darug custodian' identity are displaced. Alma was devastated. She rang me and tearfully read out the letter. It was a serious attack on Alma's 'authenticity' as a genuine Darug descendant and a

¹³⁴ Lattas (1990) also makes this point.

pivotal identity in 'darug custodian' society. The author clearly realised that other 'darug custodians' 'authenticity' depends on Alma and other senior Darug descendant 'darug custodian's' ability to substantiate their genealogies. In challenging Alma's 'authenticity', he also challenged all of Alma's extended family's 'authenticity', leaving very few Darug descendant 'darug custodians' as a foundation of 'darug custodian' identity.

It appears that the letter and the behaviour of its author at the Welcome to Country ceremony were linked. Welcome to Country is recognised by *all* Darug descendants as a symbolic land claim. That an 'authentic' land claim should be conducted in an 'inauthentic' language - or 'gobbledy gook' - is clearly viewed, by Tribal members, as a travesty. A travesty which moved the Tribal man to refute the *only* signifier of Alma's Darug descendant 'authenticity' that is universally recognised - her genealogy.

Nearly four years have passed since these events and the letter writer has still to produce the evidence he claimed to possess. The documents that Alma possesses which support her Darug descent remain legitimate. It appears that the speaking of 'darug custodian' Darug Language, whether it is claimed to be 'inauthentic' by its critics or not, is still taken very seriously as a representation of identity. That White people seem to be increasingly convinced and impressed by 'darug custodian' Darug Language 'authenticity' is clearly seen as a threat by those who challenge its 'authenticity', for this recognition confers power to represent identity, to represent a particular claim to identity through a difference called 'darug custodians'. And it appears that 'darug custodians' are very aware of this as Alma explained:

We are Darug people. We are modern Aboriginal people, but.
We can prove it [Aboriginal heritage] the Whiteman's way, they
never *really* believe us, but. But when we speak in the Darug -
then they believe us.

EW FN 0205

Paradoxically, speaking Darug 'language' is also 'the Whiteman's way'. It satisfies White people's insistence on and respect for 'authenticity' in terms of Aboriginal 'tradition'. Yet, Alma's words demonstrate that 'darug custodians' *know* that 'we' (members of the dominant society) are suspicious of our own methods of determining Darug 'authenticity'. 'They' know that 'we' worry that mistakes can be made in genealogies and other records. 'darug custodians' also know, however, that it is the speaking of their own, genuine, authentic language that *makes* 'us' recognise their difference. Even if 'we' (the dominant society and Tribal members) do not believe in Darug descendants' ability to prove their 'authenticity' our way, nonetheless 'darug custodian' Darug 'Language' does not allow us to deny genuine 'darug custodian' difference. In other words, sometimes 'we' White people, recognise 'darug custodian' difference *more than* Tribal member's difference because they make public spectacles of it. They appear to be living proof of on-going cultural and linguistic continuity in ways which insist upon Aboriginal presence and identity as 'real'. But, such public recognition is not enough to generate or guarantee official state recognition. That has been 'sewn up' by native title rules.

Conclusion.

Judging by the increasing popularity of 'darug custodian' Darug 'Language' Welcome to Country ceremonies, Whites enjoy access to what they might mistakenly interpret as the 'pure primitivity' of 'darug custodian' Darug 'Language'. This is a 'safe' mode of accommodating Aboriginal difference and pride in difference. It also

accommodates Aboriginal claims as the original peoples of the country while simultaneously containing that difference (cf Cowlshaw 2002, 2004 in Australian contexts and Sissons 1998, 2005 in a New Zealand context). In short, White audiences have nothing to lose by appearing to support such claims.

This chapter reveals the irony of how the substantive claims of Tribal people, who eschew any attempt to dramatically assert claimed identity in performance, is taken as threatening to Whites because of its land claim agenda. That Custodians' make the 'same' claims to identity and land, but do so ritually are not just acceptable to Whites, but encouraged. The way that 'darug custodians' 'get away' with making land claims through non-threatening performativity can be understood as a reflection of their social organisation generally. Darug descendants are privileged in being the *only* 'darug custodians' who can make public speeches. This is largely because Whites, and Tribal members would not accept such claims if they were made by non-Darug descendants. In private, however, non Darug descendants are able to behave or 'act' like Aboriginal custodians of Darug land to a certain extent, but they cannot claim to *be* Darug. Their relationships with Darug descendants, land and ancestors must be denied even though (or perhaps because) it has the *potential*, in a context other than post colonial Australia, to make them an 'ethnic group'.



i) The camp ground at Euroka Clearing.



j) Men remove the bark.



k) and carve the 'totem'.



l) Women grout the 'totem'.



m) 'Spirit of the Dreamtime' by Edna Mariong Watson.

Chapter Eight

Messing With Ceremony.

'Are you animal - or vegetable - or mineral?' He said, yawning at every other word. 'It's a fabulous monster!' The Unicorn cried out, before Alice could reply.

Lewis Carroll (1968:240)

In Chapter Five, I argued that 'darug custodians' do not, in any sense, have a place in which to make themselves heard independently of others. They need to make and re-make themselves in space that is always already occupied, defended and contested. In Chapter Six I demonstrated how 'darug custodians' were able to achieve a certain degree of recognition through interjections made through dance at the Centenary of Federation pageant at Parramatta. In Chapter Seven, 'darug custodian' interjections can be clearly heard in the political use of their own version of Darug Language.

But, 'darug custodian' articulations are not only fashioned - aimed - in relation to 'messing up' the articulations of others. 'darug custodians' do try to make their own, private, community - social - articulations, but, they must always 'work out' their social world in the full presence of 'outsiders'. As this chapter reinforces, 'darug custodian' privacy does not and cannot exist. Colonial history, dominant discourse and White people are always already there, whether it be in bodily or representational form. 'darug custodians' can only ever make their claims in the full presence of 'us' (the dominant society).

'Our' presence is a condition of 'darug custodian' existence. Even if colonial history claimed, as 'darug custodians' themselves do, that it is the other way around - 'darug custodians' do not have the resources, the infrastructure or the power to exist

independently. Without 'us', 'our' representations of who and what 'we' are, and who and what others are in relation to 'us', 'darug custodians' cannot 'make' themselves. They cannot make representations which are only about themselves because colonial history, discourses and White people are already here.

In this Chapter, I use the ethnographic example of a particular 'darug custodian' ceremony to demonstrate the kinds of judgments, difficulties and struggles that 'darug custodians' always face in making themselves visible to 'non-darug custodians'.

Burial tree ceremonies, as I show in this chapter, are part of a revived version of the post-contact religious cult of *Baiaime* which is common to many Aboriginal peoples in the south-eastern part of Australia.

'Traditional' Urban Aboriginal Religion.

Before I describe the 'darug custodian' Burial Tree ceremony, it is important that I provide some conceptual and historical background material so that the reader can understand the context of the ceremony, and its significance to 'darug custodians'.

I would argue that one of the main reasons why many 'non-darug custodians' judge 'darug custodian' collective practices as 'inauthentic' is because it has been widely documented, represented and subsequently believed, in various non-Aboriginal discourses, that urban Aboriginal 'traditions', especially urban religious traditions are, today, defunct.

Tench (1788) and Collins (1788) began the depressing tale of the social and religious obliteration of south-eastern Aboriginal societies which was picked up more recently by historians such as Reynolds (1988, 1989, 1998), Aplin (1988) and Goodall (1995); by sociologists and political scientists such as Broome (1996), Rowley (1972)

and Jacobowicz (1994); by linguists such as Eades (1976), Troy (1990, 1993), and Walsh and Yallop (1993); by economists such as Dagmar (1978) and Altman and Nieuwenhuysen (1979) and by anthropologists such as Stanner (1968), Berndt (1962), Barwick (1962), Reay (1964), Gale (1977), Williams (1988), Rumsey (1993) and Sutton (1998), to name a few.

Until quite recently, accounts of urban Aboriginal peoples in every discipline associated with Aboriginal Studies discount the possibility of surviving Aboriginal religious practices in cities or close to country towns¹³⁵. Recently, however, due largely to the crucial importance of being able to demonstrate 'tradition' and 'on-going connections to customs' in land rights and native title claims, anthropologists have been testing the waters of exactly what counts as 'tradition' and 'on-going connections' showing that legislation leaves a great deal to interpretation when it comes to these terms¹³⁶. Recent anthropological work in this area argues for ways of perceiving 'culture' and 'tradition' by recognising specific kinds of continuity in various urban and rural Aboriginal cultural forms which may have been previously discounted because they have changed over time. Among these new approaches are those of Gaynor Macdonald (1988, 2001, 2004), Evelyn Powell (2001) and Helena Onnodottir (2001) (as well as my own work). These newer ethnographies are set against discourse which has allowed Aboriginal tradition to be placed only in past practices which may only be continuous in areas remote from the polluting effects of Western

¹³⁵ Jeremy Beckett's (1996, 1993) insightful comparisons between earlier 'sacred' and more recent 'profane' relationships between Aboriginal people, place and non-Aboriginal people over time in western New South Wales demonstrate how some Aboriginal peoples who are dispossessed of their *Dreaming* make places for themselves in specifically Aboriginal ways.

¹³⁶ See Beth Povinelli (2002) on the lack of definition in legislation of exactly what a 'tradition' might be.

civilisation and which are said not to exist in the modernity of Western towns and cities.

It is undeniable that all 'darug custodians' are, to lesser and greater extents, dislocated from their heritages. Even White settler 'darug custodians' as I describe in Chapter Three are alienated from their heritage in that they identify and are identified by other White people as 'pseudo-Aboriginal' by virtue of their association and relationships with Aboriginal 'darug custodians'. Darug descendant 'darug custodians', however, are not physically displaced from their 'traditional' country. The deterritorialisation that they have suffered is somewhat different from that of other 'darug custodians'. Darug descendant 'darug custodians' have been forcibly separated from religious systems¹³⁷ which gave particular meanings to their connection to land. Darug descendant 'darug custodians' claim today, however, that some non-negotiable knowledge, rituals and 'stories' have survived and are being implemented in their contemporary quest with other 'darug custodians' to experiment with new ideas about spirituality and land. These ideas, as I demonstrate below, are adaptations of past and present beliefs, histories, relationships and politics. I contend that these ideas are embraced equally by the greater community of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians'.

Do 'darug custodians' have *Dreaming*? In my opinion, what is important is that 'darug custodians' themselves say that they do and that they perform ceremonies and tell stories which are connected with a spiritual world-view that, as this chapter shows, draws from Aboriginal heritage. 'Having' *Dreaming* also produces particular effects for 'darug custodians'. Ceremonies associated with *Dreaming* effect particular

¹³⁷ Both pre-contact and later religious cults such as the cult of *Baiame* which I say more about below.

transformations, transitions and confirmations and assert and support culturally binding beliefs as the ethnographic example I describe below demonstrates.

But, perhaps as importantly as effecting ritual transformations and affirming identity within the group, as I argued in Chapters Six and Seven, 'having' *Dreaming* is also a primary marker of 'authentic' Aboriginality according to dominant discourses concerning what constitutes 'real' Aboriginal tradition. It cannot be a real Aboriginal painting if it does not have a *Dreaming* story. It cannot be a real Aboriginal dance if it is not a *Dreaming* dance. People are not really Aboriginal unless they 'have' *Dreaming* stories. So, if 'having' *Dreaming* contributes to the 'authenticity' of 'darug custodians', then the interpretation of what counts as *Dreaming* becomes less an analytical problem than a political problem. That is, academic arguments including those of Rumsey (1994), Merlan (1994), Maddock (1988), Turner (1988) and Austin-Broos (1994) among others, concerning what, precisely, 'counts' as myth and what constitutes history are less important in the 'darug custodian' context than the political advantage that 'darug custodians' gain from calling their 'stories' *Dreaming* stories. In other words, if Aboriginal peoples can convince 'us' - the dominant society - that they have *Dreaming*, that is, that they are spiritual, they are thought to be 'authentic'. This is because 'we' (the dominant society) believe dominant discourses which 'essentialise' Aboriginality and conceptualise it as the binary opposite of Westernness. 'We' (Westerners) cannot escape our own traditions of thought which place 'real' Aboriginal people into the category of 'primitive'. Aboriginality is conceptualised as 'spiritual', while Westernness is conceptualised as 'material' (or modern). This kind of binary opposition serves to substantiate the identity of Aboriginal peoples for the purposes of native title. The irony of this is that 'darug custodians' know that they

cannot win a native title claim under current law because they have tried and failed. But just as 'we' (Whites) can afford to believe in 'darug custodian' Darug 'Language' because 'we' are not threatened by it, 'we' might also be able to believe in 'darug custodian' *Dreaming* for the same reason. The political advantage that 'darug custodians' gain from 'having' *Dreaming* is that it affirms their claims to identity as difference and allows them to symbolically make land claims. They are narratives supporting claims to distinctive identity.

The issue of what constitutes different types of narrative remains for academic debate, and of course, that *does* carry weight in the practical context of land for example. But, whether I call 'darug custodian' 'stories', 'myths', 'narrative histories' or 'darug custodian' *Dreaming* stories does not *analytically* matter in this work, because they are both all of these things and none of them¹³⁸. These stories belie categorisation. They do not fit into anthropological, historical or mythological analysis.

¹³⁸ The debate surrounding the issue of how to analyse and differentiate among forms of Indigenous narrative, especially in the context of changing forms throughout colonialism and postcolonialism, has raged in anthropology. See, for example, Terence Turner (1988) and Francesca Merlan (1994) who both argue that 'myth' can be understood as:

the formulation of 'essential' properties of social experience in terms of 'generic events', while history' is concerned with the level of 'particular relations among particular events', we need not restrict ourselves to seeing myth as charter for a social order distinct from western influence.

Anthropologists including Taussig (1980), Hiatt (1975), Hill (1988), Maddock (1988), Merlan (1994), Rumsey (1994), Bird Rose (1988, 1984), Austin-Broos (1994) Beckett (1993, 1996), Sissons (1991), Macdonald (1998, 2003) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) have contributed to a large body of work which has illuminated differences between the ways that Indigenous peoples represent the colonial past and the ways in which that past is represented by the dominant culture. This work also serves to problematise the manner in which those differences have been represented and understood historically. These contributions have helped anthropology in being able to move on from conceptualisations of 'real' cultures as being rigidly bounded and 'pure'. They have also allowed for the awareness that different peoples present different modes in which to represent the processes, interactions and negotiations of colonial power relations.

They fail, necessarily, to live up to the criterion demanded to reach the status of 'myth' proper, or *Dreaming* story. Yet they also, necessarily, perform the same kinds of effects. Thus, what *is* important, in my view is that 'darug custodians' call these stories their *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang (Dreaming)*. Whether this is right or wrong from the point of view of anthropological theory, and whether anthropology can ever understand these stories better by calling them something else, does not affect the cultural and political power of these stories to articulate 'darug custodian' identity.

'darug custodian' *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang* revolves around stories, beliefs and rituals concerning what is claimed to be a Darug ancestor figure, *Baiame*. The name *Baiame* is not arbitrary. The belief in an 'All-Father' inhabiting the heavens by Aboriginal peoples in south-eastern Australia was first documented in 1875 at Wellington Valley Mission. Here, the Rev James Gunther says (in Swain 1993:127):

There is no doubt in my mind that the name Baia-mai ... refers to the Supreme Being; and the ideas concerning Him by some of the more thoughtful Aborigines are a remnant of original traditions prevalent among the ancients of the Deity.

Baiame and his cult as it was practised late in the nineteenth and around the turn of the twentieth century is referred to in Manning (1882:160-170), Cameron (1885:364-5), Howitt (1904: 440-504), Mathews (1905, 1899, 1897, 1894) and Lang (1899:53) with later authors including Berndt (1947), Elkin (1975:143), Lane (1978:233), Kolig (1987:255-6), Maddock (19982:127) and Swain (1997) also making reference to the cult. But, apart from using the name *Baiame* there is only one current practice performed by 'darug custodians' that has any resemblance to those described in the literature. This practice is the carving of dendroglyphs: images in trees. But although 'darug custodians' do carve images in trees, the form of the carvings and the

rituals associated with them bear no resemblance to the cult of *Baïame* as it is documented in the literature.

Dendroglyphs seem to have been carved exclusively in the south-east of the continent and are described by Lane (1978:233) as highly abstract geometric designs although some depicted European things such as trains, ships, horses, cattle, pigs and effigies of Europeans themselves. Lane suggests that these carved trees may have served to represent *Baïame*'s camp and gifts. Regardless of conjecture about the form and significance of dendroglyphs in the past, 'darug custodian' dendroglyphs, 'darug custodians' tell me, are contemporary 'totems'¹³⁹ which represent 'darug custodians'. All 'darug custodian' dendroglyphs are images of turtles. 'darug custodian' use of turtle images is not totemic by any definition because 'darug custodian' society is not segmented through a kinship system and relations between different groups of people are not represented by different emblems. Some people claim that the turtle was a pre-contact totem for the Boorooberongal clan¹⁴⁰ of Darug speakers. Even those who dispute the turtle's 'authenticity' as a pre-contact totem, however, still recognise its significance as a symbol of identity for contemporary 'darug custodians'. Turtle images and no others are used by 'darug custodians' as dendroglyphs.

The carving of the turtle image into the tree is part of a ceremony which is believed, 'darug custodians' tell me, to facilitate the transport of the spirit of a recently deceased community member from this earthly realm into the spiritual realm in the sky

¹³⁹ As I said in Chapter Five, 'darug custodians' do call this emblem their 'totem'.

¹⁴⁰ All Darug descendants are descended from the Boorooberongal clan which, according to (1993), inhabited the foothills of the Blue Mountains prior to colonisation. As I explain in the thesis Introduction, Kohen has managed to identify more than 5,000 living Darug descendants from seven ancestors, including Yarramundi, a Boorooberongal clan ancestor.

which is presided over by *Baiame*. I say more about the role of dendroglyphs and the Burial Tree ceremony in my ethnographic account later in this chapter.

Non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians' who have spoken to me about their beliefs tell me that although the cult of *Baiame* and the ritual aspects of his worship are suspected to be adaptations of Christianity, *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang* (*Dreaming*) makes more sense to them than Christianity. In an interview, Norman, a young, non-Aboriginal 'darug custodian' man told me that he often spent time thinking about *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang*. His thoughts, he said often focused on *Baiame*:

Well, 'e sounds an hell of a lot like God or Jesus doesn't he? I mean like in church. I wonder about that ya know? Are Aboriginal Gods s'posed to be like church Gods? I dunno. But I reckon *Dyaralang's* (abbreviation of *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang*) on th' right track. There's none of this 'gotta do this, or ya off ta hell' type stuff. Ya know?

GM (9/3/02)

It also seems that some 'darug custodians' consider their own inclusion in ritual to be more for the benefit of their Aboriginal children than for themselves. The same man told me in another interview that:

Oh, reckon I'm just a ring in, but I feel like it's a really, really great thing. It's such a privilege to be part of all this. I'm so proud that me kids can grow up with culture.

GM (VC exhib.)

Although some 'darug custodians' appear to be suspicious of the 'authenticity'¹⁴¹ of the stories associated with the cult of *Baiame*, they seem to also

¹⁴¹ That is, that they question whether the cult of *Baiame* is a 'pure' Aboriginal cult, or a conflation of Christianity and earlier beliefs, reproducing dominant logic conflating 'authenticity' with cultural 'purity'.

objectify *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang* which appears to be inextricable from stories related to the *Baiame* cult. *Ngalaringi Nangami Dyaralang* is referred to, by 'darug custodians', as a 'thing' that is important to maintain. The stories are often re-told and represented, mostly through paintings but occasionally in dance. Tradition can be seen here as a modern political project. This modern political project is even more extraordinary when it is realised that it probably embodies fragments of earlier Aboriginal religious traditions which may be no less political in their attempts to account for and mitigate the damage done to those earlier practices by colonisation. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians' join together as one group in reactivating this project.

Having *Dreaming* and Being Catholic.

Yet, when asked, the vast majority of 'darug custodians' say that they are Roman Catholic. As I have said, many non-Darug Aboriginal community members have come from country towns where they lived as fringe dwellers after the dissolution of missions and reserves. Many of these peoples have told me that their association with the Holy Family Catholic Centre at Laverton is an extension of long term associations with the Catholic church. In other words, many people's families had been on Catholic missions and had continued their association with the church after that era. Although 'darug custodian' Darug descendants do not have a history of missionisation they do have a history of intermarriage with English and Irish Catholic convicts and free settlers.

However, I do not think that this history is all that makes 'darug custodians' claim to be Catholics now. The Holy Family, as I explained in Chapter Two, has become very much a community focus because some important community

ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and Christenings are performed there. Many 'darug custodians' are recipients of Catholic welfare available through the centre. Holy Family also provides transport, a venue and programs which allow 'darug custodians' to engage in social interaction with each other and other local Indigenous peoples. In other words, Holy Family and Catholicism provide 'darug custodians' with much valued resources, but as I explained in Chapter Three, arguably the *most* valuable of these resources are potential new members of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation. Holy Family is an important source of new membership for the community because it facilitates contact between 'darug custodians' and other Indigenous people who live on Darug land and may be searching for culturally appropriate ways to make more meaningful connections with that land.

It may seem that being Catholic and having *Dreaming* might be an impossible contradiction. But clearly 'darug custodians' do not recognise this contradiction. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, 'darug custodians' routinely include reference to *Baiame* in their Catholic rites (although I have never witnessed any reference to Catholicism in rituals associated with *Baiame*). It seems that the political and social value of *having Dreaming* is equal to the social and political value of *being Catholic*. Both are indispensable to the survival of 'darug custodians'. Having *Dreaming* 'authenticates' 'darug custodian' Aboriginality and claims. It also provides important symbolism relating to 'darug custodian' identity. Being Catholic provides valuable material resources, and arguably even more importantly, precious new members without whom the community would have a hard time reproducing itself over time.

The Burial Tree Ceremony.

It had been six weeks since Uncle Sam passed away and the community had

done their crying. Because Uncle Sam was a Vietnam veteran and a long serving, high ranking police officer, a state funeral had been performed in the days after his death. The funeral had been attended by some community members although they had been thwarted in their desire to participate in the proceedings. The only signifier of Aboriginal identity that was allowed were the little ribbons in red, yellow and black that the deceased's sisters wore pinned to their jackets. There had been considerable disgruntlement in the community since that day. Many people told me they thought it was disrespectful that the deceased was not honoured with an 'Aboriginal funeral'¹⁴². People argued among themselves about whether the funeral was an honour which should be embraced, or an act of control by the state. It was largely agreed to be the latter, given that the deceased's Aboriginal identity was not mentioned at the funeral, and his contribution to the state as an Aboriginal person had, therefore, not been recognised.

The Burial Tree ceremony gave 'darug custodians' the opportunity to redress what may have been considered, by some, to be state intervention in 'darug custodian' business. It also had the effect of affirming group identity by articulating the Aboriginal 'darug custodian' identity of the deceased. 'darug custodians' can usually arrange for an 'Aboriginal funeral' for deceased community members, but, Burial Tree ceremonies are performed in addition to other ceremonies, not only when the dendroglyph is originally constructed, but regularly so that the dendroglyph can be maintained.

It was explained to me that 'Uncle's' spirit had used the time between death

¹⁴² 'Aboriginal funerals' in the Australian state are not autonomous affairs. 'Traditional' funeral rites are only permitted in so far as they are legal. Consequently, 'Aboriginal funerals' are conducted within the parameters of legal requirements concerning the disposal of the body. Ritual practices surrounding the burial vary enormously according to the people conducting the proceedings.

and ceremony to re-visit all of its favourite people and places. The ceremony would put an end to the spirit's wandering this world and facilitate its movement into another realm. On a cold winter's morning I was invited to Euroka Clearing in Glenbrook National Park in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, to participate in the Burial Tree ceremony which, it was said, would send 'Uncle's spirit to the 'sky people'.

It is not possible to drive vehicles close to the site of the Burial Trees at Euroka Clearing. When I arrived at the closest car park, across a small dry creek bed from the site, I had a clear view, however, of the six trees¹⁴³ that had earlier been scarred; of an open space (clearing) for camping; of the already burning fire in the middle of the clearing and of thirty or so 'darug custodian' adults and about fifteen children. 'darug custodian' adults were engaged in making and drinking tea, preparing food, chatting with each other and generally milling about. Many of the children were busy chasing the numerous Eastern Grey kangaroos that have been introduced to the park and constantly haunt Euroka Clearing.

As I approached the site I was warmly greeted with the usual jokes and teases that I habitually trade with appropriate people, and the more respectful greetings that are reserved for Elders. The general ambience was far from the sombre mood that might be expected of a funeral rite. There was a general air of anticipation if not excitement - something was going to happen.

'darug custodians' themselves, refer to all of their more formal gatherings as

¹⁴³There are only eight Burial Trees at Euroka Clearing because the Burial Tree ceremony has only been performed for Darug descendant 'darug custodians' over the last twenty years. However, it seems that this is set to change. When I recently asked four Elders if a Burial Tree ceremony would be held for Kevin (Alma's White husband) when the time came, they said that the decision would be made at a meeting, but they were all sure that would be the case. They were equally certain that the ceremony would be held for a number of other non-Darug descendant 'darug custodians' when I listed their names.

'ceremony', including social gatherings.¹⁴⁴ As I have said, 'darug custodians' themselves claim that the Burial Tree ceremony involves ritual acts, such as the carving and grouting of the tree, which are considered to be essential for the spirits of the recently dead to pass from the earthly realm into the spiritual realm of the 'sky people'. Ritual must surely be understood to be in essence, a specifically communicative action - an action that affirms culturally binding meaning and emotion. These acts, as I recount below, are also said, by 'darug custodians' to achieve other transformations, transitions and confirmations such as the transformation of the tree into an emblem of 'darug custodian' identity as dendroglyph.

The first 'ritual act' constituting the Burial Tree ceremony for 'Uncle' was the choosing of a tree which would serve as an appropriate focus for the ceremony by a group of Elders, both men and women. Burial trees are always estimated to be older than two hundred years and are species known for their longevity. The tree for this particular ceremony was chosen within a grove of trees which exhibit the re-worked scars of earlier Burial Tree ceremonies. The first 'darug custodian' engraving ceremony occurred twenty years ago when Alma's mother passed away. The designs are regularly¹⁴⁵ re-grooved and re-grouted with white ochre paste so that even though the first ceremony to mark the passing of a 'darug custodian' may have occurred some time ago, 'renewal ceremonies' are regularly repeated and the engravings in the trees always look reasonably 'fresh'.

¹⁴⁴ Questions concerning the correct definition of ritual and ceremony, including their cultural significance and meaning have long been debated in anthropology. After a period of comparative neglect, the debate again flared in the late 1960s and early '70s, arguably largely in response to the work of Victor Turner and the challenge that his approach presented to earlier and contemporary structural approaches, perhaps most famously characterised in the work of Claude Levi-Strauss.

¹⁴⁵ I have been told by a number of 'darug custodians' that this ritual should be repeated twice a year, but has occurred much less frequently in my experience.

'darug custodian' men were busy removing a large, oval shaped piece of bark from the chosen tree so that the turtle design, which would be carved into the flesh of the tree, would have a 'new', 'clean' space. When I asked Uncle Marvin, one of the senior men removing the bark, whether the bark's removal would damage the tree he replied:

We never hurt trees. You know that Kristina. Told ya that before, thousands o' times. Why do ya keep askin'? How come ya always ask things ya already know? Got memory problems or somethink?[Does not wait for reply]. Jes' look at them other fullas [trees] what we done before. They's all lookin' good. I told ya before we choose these trees 'cause they're older'n two hundred years. More'n whitefullas bin 'ere. They bin missin' us them oldfullas [trees], they bin missin'. They bin cryin' for us. Ceremonies. I tell ya what really hurts these oldfulla trees. They bin taken away frum us - frum their own real people. Now we're back an' these oldfullas [trees] need to get that whitefulla stuff off 'em. We gotta clear a space for the old ways again. Got to take off the whitefulla bark. It don't hurt 'em.

VDO EC.

It seems that by removing the bark that 'belongs' to 'whitefullas', 'darug custodians' 'open up' the tree to make a space for their own stories to be told. They make a 'clearing' on the tree, in time, in space in which to put their own story.

The National Park where 'darug custodians' perform the Burial Tree ceremony is regularly visited by groups of international tourists and their local guides who can be confident of sighting wild-life including introduced Eastern Grey kangaroos and many bird species. The Burial Tree ceremony was in progress when a group of about twenty tourists accompanied by a tour guide unexpectedly encroached on the proceedings. These unwanted and unexpected on-lookers crowded about the tree as the men were carving. Yet, no matter how unwelcome such encroachment on 'darug custodian' practices may be, the tourists were 'entitled' to be there. As part of a

National Park, Euroka Clearing is 'public place', not 'darug custodian' place. The tour guide, employee of a private tour company and unknown to 'darug custodians', proceeded to present an authoritative commentary to the tourists explaining (wrongly) that the carved trees delineated a space for dance and claimed that Aboriginal ceremony is no longer performed by urban people. In other words, the tour guide denied the existence of 'darug custodian' ceremony at the very moment of its expression. The dismissive utterances of the tour guide, however, provided the opportunity for a senior Darug descendant woman and sister of the deceased, to exhibit the ways in which 'darug custodian' performance and 'darug custodian' identity exists as that which is negotiated between 'darug custodians' and 'non-darug custodians' as well as between 'darug custodians', Auntie Val literally took the high ground by standing above the tourists on the high side of a slope. I was initially surprised that this role fell to her, rather than to one of the men carving the tree. It became clear on consideration that it was most appropriate that it was a senior Darug descendant and close relative of the deceased such as Auntie Val, who should claim the authority to speak about 'darug custodian' culture in this context. Auntie Val's speech to the tourists was designed to silence them and make them listen. Regardless of how impossible Auntie Val's claims may have seemed to the audience, there was no space for a response. Below is a transcript of Auntie Val's speech:

Excuse me. This is *not* a dance ground. This is a ceremonial ground and you mob are standing in it and watching a burial tree ceremony. This is the place where our people are taken by Baiame to be with the sky people. This is my brother. Over there is my mother. That one up there is me. We are Darug and we have always had ceremony here. It's jest that you lot don't know about it.

(EC VDO03trans 1.)

Aunty Val's words are a political claim to country and to relationships with country and other 'darug custodians' past and present. It was an explanation of the proceedings which included an explanation of beliefs associated with the cult of *Baiame*. The use of *Baiame* stories by 'darug custodians' were revealed, in this context, as political linkages to a tradition that is used as a claim to 'authenticity' in relations with 'non-darug custodians' according to the rules of native title. They are, of course, more than that, the link to the cult of *Baiame* is also inextricable from 'darug custodian' ritual practice and from their emerging performance of *Ngalarangi Nangami Dyaralang* (see graphic (m)).

As her final words, Aunty Val (EC 03 trans1) reiterated: 'we have *always* told our stories and performed our ceremonies. You fullas jes' don't know about them.' Aunty Val's claims were a demonstration of how emergent 'darug custodianness' *must*, in many contexts, necessarily take shape against and within the very terms of denial that most 'non-darug custodians' assert. Rarely, if ever, do 'darug custodian' performances attract a totally or unanimously positive or supportive response from *all* those who witness them. I have never attended a 'darug custodian' occasion that has not involved at least some questioning of 'darug custodian' 'authenticity' by 'non-darug custodians'. But, 'darug custodians' take opportunities to mitigate negative judgments by affirming their identity in response to those negative terms. However, when I asked a number of 'darug custodians' what they thought about the tourists' intrusions their responses were mainly ambivalent. Most people saw the political necessity of explaining their presence and practices to White people, but no-one I asked was happy about what was considered to be a rude intrusion. Alma insisted that:

I jes' hate it. We can't never jes' be left alone. At least Aunty told 'em what was what but. At least it give us a chance to show 'em we're still 'ere.

AJ 072003.

Aunty Win's response was even more poignant:

Whitefullas never see what's in front o' their noses. They's jes' gotta be told. Nothin' else for it. Jes' gotta be told. But it's exhaustin'. I git so tired o' tellin' 'em. Why can't they jest leave us alone?

PJEC 072003.

Eventually the tourists became engrossed with a mob of kangaroos and moved away from the ceremonial ground while the men continued their work. The removal of a shield shaped piece of bark from the tree opened a large, smooth space for the men to begin carving the turtle design (see graphics (j) and (k)). The 'turtle carving' was an exclusively male activity. Only women grouted the carving with white ochre¹⁴⁶. Although I have repeatedly asked, I have never been given an explanation for this division of labour except that it is 'traditional'. I have never witnessed 'darug custodians' negotiate the gendered roles they take in the Burial Tree or re-grouting ceremonies. Men always do the grooving of the wood and women always apply the ochre.

After the men had finished their work, they retired to the fire for a cup of tea and a smoke while the women set to work collecting white ochre from a nearby creek, grinding it into powder, mixing it with water and grouting it into the turtle image in the tree. The transformation of the tree into a symbol of 'darug custodian' presence and identity is achieved when the women finish their work. The spirit of the deceased now

¹⁴⁶ I explain the significance of white ochre from Euroka Clearing in Chapters Six and Seven.

has a portal through which to pass from this realm to the sky. The tree is permanently marked with the image of the turtle which represents 'darug custodians'¹⁴⁷.

Conclusion.

'darug custodians' claim that the Burial Tree ceremony involves acts, such as the carving of the tree, which are considered essential for the spirits of the recently dead to pass from the earthly spiritual realm into the spiritual 'sky people' realm. This enacts other transformations, transitions and confirmations such as the transformation of the tree into an emblem of 'darug custodian' identity as dendroglyph. It also joins 'darug custodian' men and women in the combined task of 'opening' and transforming the tree. This 'private' ritual is a profound example of how, by privileging the identity of Darug descendants, all 'darug custodians' can become 'of Darug land. Practices and stories related to the cult of *Baiame* invoke the ancestral spirits of Darug land and relationships between Darug and non Darug Custodians facilitate the relationships between Darug ancestors and all 'darug custodians'. As this chapter demonstrates, this is sometimes done before the eyes of those who deny the 'authenticity' of the acts and the reality of their effects. Both Darug descendant and Non-Darug descendant 'darug custodians' are constantly reminded that they can only take their claims of custodianship of Darug land and culture as far as the dominant culture will allow.

¹⁴⁷ As I have repeatedly emphasised, Tribal members do *not* engage in any ceremony other than Welcome to Country. They do not carve dendroglyphs and do not identify with a 'totem' or emblem.

Chapter Nine

'Ethnogenesis' and the Emergence of 'darug custodians'

'Who are you?' said the Caterpillar. This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I - I hardly know, sir, just at present - at least, I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

In this chapter I discuss the concept of 'ethnogenesis' and how it is related to the phenomenon of the emergence of 'darug custodians'. The concept concerns the (re)emergence and development of 'ethnic groups' in the modern world, usually within nation-states which had previously 'incorporated' various peoples into their borders, as I explain further below.

'Ethnogenesis' relies on conceptualisations of 'ethnicity' to analyse the emergence, formation and development of 'a people'. This process, according to Blu (1989:2) and Roosens (1989:96) depends primarily on a group sharing ideas about themselves as 'a people', the collective desire of a group to be a 'we'. Concepts of 'ethnicity' are derived from a set of theories based on the assumption by theorists and members of such groups that people can be classified into mutually exclusive bounded groups according to physical and behavioural differences which are also, following Barth (1969:13), considered to be 'determined by ... origin and background'. Barth (1969) argued in his ground breaking work that what is crucial in understanding the phenomenon of 'ethnic groups' is the construction of social and cultural boundaries by the selective use of cultural attributes. The cultural differences asserted to mark such boundaries in relations with competing or dominant groups can often be quite slight as Barth (1969:21-27) demonstrates, and great social and political force can be sustained by manipulating small cultural differences.

According to Barth, the creation of ethnic boundaries depends on the manipulation of cultural attributes. But the psychosocial aspect of the emergence of ethnic groups, or 'ethnogenesis' - the collective desire to be a 'we' - cannot develop without some concrete foundations which are recognised by members of the group and the dominant culture when the group emerges within a nation-state. These foundations are usually determined, not by the group but by the dominant culture and are often based on genetic descent as the accounts of Blu (1989) and Sider (1979,2003) of Lumbee, and Roosens (1989) of Huron demonstrate. My account of the emergence of Darug descendants in Chapter Two also illustrates that the rules of the Australian state concerning who counts as Aboriginal determine who is accepted as Darug. These rules are both genetic and social. If one cannot substantiate one's claims to Darug descent genealogically, one is not accepted as Darug either by the Australian state or by other Darug descendants.

As I have said, the concept of 'ethnogenesis' includes attempting to understand the relatively recent (re)emergence of ethnic minority groups who had previously been 'absorbed' into nation states (Diamond 1974:9). Manning Nash (1989:1-9) provides an historical framework for such phenomena arguing that over the last five hundred years the nation state has become the most potent, maximal and enduring form of social and political organisation. Nation states, however, have grown from the wreckage of empires, blocks of cultures and 'peoples' which have been 'absorbed' into its borders. This means that nation states are often comprised of more than one 'people' and there is frequently much cultural diversity within one nation-state. As Roosens (1989:9) points out, until the early 1970s researchers on social change generally assumed that the kind of direct and continuous contact that different cultures sustain as part of the same nation would result in general acculturation, or

more precisely, a 'melding' into the one culture of the nation state: the old 'melting pot' metaphor. The character of change has proven to be much more complex as researchers continue to report that although some cultural differences are, indeed, disappearing, some are persisting in new ways while new differences are emerging.

According to Barth, 'ethnic groups' are a form of social organisation in which participants use particular cultural traits from their common past, their common descent, their tradition - which may or may not be historically verifiable - to assert their difference from a dominant group. He insists that ethnic self-affirmation or, sometimes, denial is always related to social and/or economic interests. That is, an 'ethnic' group will only emerge or disappear if it is in the interests of the group to do so. Ethnic groups are thus always, to some degree, oppositional to a dominant society or to competing groups because they do not identify as part of that society or group and usually have some kind of claim against it.

The mobilisation of an ethnic group depends on the success of its leaders in drawing on affective elements related to descent and in being 'carriers' of a distinctive tradition or heritage to inspire the loyalty and the passions of members of the group. That is, the collective pride in ancestors and group responsibility to 'carry on' traditions of the ancestors are deployed in political ways. Members of the group are 'called to arms' against the hegemony of the dominant society by appealing to their 'common blood' and 'glorious traditions'.

I demonstrate in my comparisons below between 'darug custodians', Lumbee, Huron and Darug Tribal, that the process of 'ethnogenesis' has been crucial in enabling 'darug custodian' emergence even though, as I argue, only a small minority of Darug descendants are an 'ethnic group', the majority of the group acting as supporters in various ways.

Roosens insists that Huron cultural 'revival' is primarily a result of deliberate Huron strategies to create a counter-culture based, initially, on biological filiation with Native American ancestors. 'Ethnogenesis' proceeds from this biological beginning, according to Roosens (1989:47), 'to the ways in which people feel themselves to be a people and how they continue to maintain themselves as such, if necessary in the face of contrary 'facts''. So, regardless of contradictory evidence produced by outsiders concerning the history, traditions, qualities and characteristics of Huron ancestors, Huron create their own history, traditions, and espouse qualities and characteristics that they claim make them unlike the dominant society and more like their avowed ancestors.

Roosens describes the ways that Huron have become a self-conscious people over a twenty year period, beginning with very few cultural relics of a Native American past. Although a relatively small population of about 1,000 people, Huron leaders, unlike 'darug custodians', have been politically radical at a national level. Huron political leaders militantly took leadership of the *Association des Indiens du Quebec* which comprised approximately 30,000 Indigenous Canadians representing 50 reservations and have become fully accepted as an Indigenous nation by other Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state.

Huron political leaders are characterised by Roosens as 'hard talkers'. They employ sloganistic language in newspapers, when making speeches on radio, television and in live public forums, openly engage in constructing ideology, and support spectacular actions such as protests and road blocks. From Roosens' account it is reasonable to summarise that Huron 'ethnogenesis' proceeded partly from a biological foundation which supported the creation of 'a people'. Then, political

deployment of the affective reaction that the experience of belonging to an 'ethnic group' aroused in Huron, a 'new tradition' developed based on how Huron in the present want to represent their Native American ancestry, becoming a militant political force.

Like Huron leaders, some groups of Lumbee are politically militant. This is in contrast to both Darug Tribal and Custodian leaders who, as I elaborated in Chapter Two, are politically active in the sense that they attend meetings with government representatives, campaign for their various claims through letters and email and even organise peaceful protests, but have never occupied state buildings, burnt barns or even used sloganistic language as Sider describes of some Lumbee groups.

According to Sider (1976, 2003) and Blu (1989), when the first European settlers, Scots, arrived in Robeson County, North Carolina, in the early 1700s, the area was already occupied by people whose descendants are now called Lumbee. These people employed European farming technologies, spoke English¹⁴⁸ and lived in log cabins. They were not regarded as Europeans, Blacks, or as 'tribal' Native Americans, but as a distinctive people. Numbering only a few hundred at first European contact, their numbers increased with an influx of displaced Native Americans from other areas who later claimed to be Lumbee. Due to their early formation as a people, which is different from other post-contact southeastern Native American confederacies such as Cherokee and Creek who were placed on reserves, Lumbee status as Native Americans has been constantly challenged by Whites. After enjoying inconspicuous prosperity as small land holders, Lumbee were disenfranchised in 1835 and given the status of 'Free Persons of Colour', losing many

¹⁴⁸ Unlike the Gaelic speaking Scots.

political and civil rights as well as much of their land. This had the effect of forcing them into the same economic position as Blacks, although Whites also strategically accepted their Native American status to discourage Native American-Black alliances (Sider 1976, Blu 1989).

Under the leadership of their Lumbee hero, Henry Berry Lowrie, they rebelled for ten years from 1864 to 1874 (Sider 1976). This rebellion took the form of extensive civil disobedience and lawlessness secured by an armed alliance with Blacks. After 1874 they were recognised by the United States government as Native American and given schools and other special rights which separated them politically and culturally from Blacks. In return for the special treatment Lumbee allied themselves with local conservative Whites. Accommodation was based on a system of Native American-White co-operation where Native American leaders 'delivered' the vote, usually for the White incumbent in return for special favours, either for the locality such as road or school repairs, or of an individual nature such as helping people get jobs or welfare (Sider 1976:164).

By the early 1960s Lumbee became dissatisfied with this system when they witnessed the early success of Black militance in other parts of the South which heightened their political consciousness, making them more aware of the disparity between what they wanted and what they were receiving from the county and the state (ibid.).

From 1964 through to the 1970s a newly emerging group of Lumbee political leaders attempted to form a political alliance with Blacks to win back control of county political offices. This alliance failed in the 1970 Democratic Party elections after Blacks were successful in gaining seats and Lumbee failed to make any gains (Sider 1976).

Shortly after the 1970 elections Lumbee called a 'Red Power' meeting in Pembroke. This was a new form of public assertiveness where there were Native American war dances and speeches calling for economic sanctions such as boycotting businesses which did not employ Lumbee and establishing a Lumbee bank, schools and businesses (Sider 1976, Blu 1989).

This was the beginning of a new political form which encouraged Lumbee cultural articulations and did not involve alliance with either Whites or Blacks. But Lumbee are divided into two political factions, one group, which Sider calls the 'political nationalists' engage in highly militant behaviour such as attacking property and occupying public buildings (Sider 1976:169), the other faction which Sider calls the 'cultural nationalists' aim to free themselves from the old stigma of Native American identity by publicly presenting a positive Native American image with dance, handicrafts and other traditions. Sider (1976:167) argues that the militant behaviour of the 'political nationalists' has been a factor in the decline of White opposition to the cultural expressions of 'cultural nationalist' Lumbee. Blu (1989) insists that such pervasive factionalism has been constructive in the Lumbee case because of an absence of formal arenas of competition and in the presence of strong orientations in individuals to work for the benefit of the group (1989:2).

In summary it seems that Lumbee 'ethnogenesis' has developed through many historical phases from recognition of common descent, integration of 'outsiders' who later claim to be Lumbee, rebellion against state legislation to make them 'disappear', political alliance with Blacks, political alliance with Whites, to autonomous political-cultural action against the dominant society.

In both the Huron and the Lumbee cases, the 'key' features of their 'ethnogenesis' are:

1. Claims to 'original' common descent from Indigenous ancestors.
2. Cultural 'renaissance' affirming commitment to a common traditional past and creating shared ideas about themselves as 'a people'.
3. Both militant and accommodating political activity in relation to the dominant society.
4. A geographic place of 'belonging'.
5. Recognition of their status as 'a people' and as representatives of Indigenous nations by the dominant society.

Of these 'key' features, Tribal and Custodian Darug descendants exhibit the first two and part of the third and fifth. They are politically active, but as I explained in Chapter Two, they are not powerful enough to make militant demands on the Australian state. They lack the federal and state recognition as Indigenous representatives that both Lumbee and Huron have achieved. Lumbee and Huron represent themselves and other Native American peoples at state and national levels. In Australia, Land Councils¹⁴⁹ have the power to do this, not separate groups of Indigenous peoples, and as I explained in Chapter Two, those who identify as Darug descendants are such a small and powerless group that they are easily ignored by Land Councils that are supposed to represent them if their claims are not expedient to the interests of the Land Council.

Tribal and Custodian Darug descendants, in contrast with Lumbee and Huron, are virtually invisible politically, socially and geographically and are in such powerless positions in relation to the dominant society that they are forced to obtain any possible advantage through influence rather than demands. In other words, their relations with

¹⁴⁹ Since the recent disbanding of the national representative body ATSIC.

the dominant society are generally accommodating rather than militant.

I explained the history of the emergence of Tribal and Custodian Darug descendants in detail in Chapter Two. Here, I want to summarise the key features of their 'ethnogenesis' in the brief way that I have for Lumbee and Huron in order to make some generalisations. As I explained in the Introduction, Darug descendants share a common genetic and historical heritage, so the primary, objective, 'factual' basis of their 'ethnicity' is satisfied. But the vast majority of Darug descendants do not identify themselves as such and thus are not part of a Darug 'ethnic group'. Most of the people who do identify as Darug descendants are members of the same community, Darug Tribal, and they affirm their 'traditional' on-going 'connection' to common ancestors through engaging in academic research. This traditional 'connection' is then used politically to make claims against the Australian state for recompense for past dispossession. Can the Tribal community be called an 'ethnic group'? I think they can for a number of reasons. According to Barth, it is not the extent of cultural difference that creates a boundary between ethnic groups, but the boundary itself. It is the selective use of some degree of cultural difference which asserts a boundary. Darug Tribal use their cultural practices of collective research which is grounded on their distinctive origin and background as predominantly Darug descendants to create a boundary from the dominant society and other 'ethnic groups'. As well as this, Tribal members express a collective desire to be a 'we' by making representations of their group identity by preparing land claims, attending meetings of the Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation, and in representing their Corporation at 'official' and social events organised by government and private agencies of the dominant society.

A tiny group of people who also identify as Darug descendants practice what

Sider would call 'cultural nationalism' and engage in spectacular public displays of their own version of Darug cultural practices. These few are not Tribals. The 'fact' of Darug descendant Custodians' 'ethnic origin' is recognised by Tribals but is not enough to bring Tribal and Custodian Darug descendants together as an 'ethnic group'. Even though Custodian Darug descendants share with Tribals the identity of Darug 'ethnic origin', they cannot be part of the Tribal community because they behave in ways that Tribals consider 'inauthentic'. Custodian Darug descendants are not part of the Tribal 'we'. Conversely, Custodian Darug descendants do not want to be part of a 'Darug Community' that does not represent Darug culture in the performative way that has so recently become their tradition, which Tribals reject as 'inauthentic'.

Only the 'core' group of Darug descendant 'darug custodians' are an 'ethnic group'. Most members of the 'darug custodian' community are not part of that 'ethnicity' because they cannot ground their collective identity on the necessary prerequisite of common descent. They do, however, imagine themselves to be a 'we'. That 'we' is constituted by Darug descendants who do not have the numbers to reproduce their traditions on their own, and a community who identify with them. Both Darug descendant 'darug custodians' and non-Darug 'darug custodians' represent their idea of the traditions, qualities, values and philosophies of Darug ancestors. The success of this project depends on Darug descendant community members privileging their Darug descent above all others, and also on non-Darug community members privileging Darug descendants as community members. Because non-Darug 'darug custodians' support the claims of Darug descendants to history, culture and land in Sydney, they cannot claim shared ethnicity with Darug descendants. To do so would undermine the grounds of Darug claims: on-going continuous 'connections' to Darug ancestors and their traditions. Even if all 'darug custodian' community members were

linked by a non-Darug ethnic origin - Irish for example¹⁵⁰ - this 'fact' must be 'shelved' so that the claims of Darug descendants can be emphasised. Being 'darug custodian' depends on one's relationship to those who claim traditional Aboriginal ownership of Sydney and Darug land. In this sense, the survival of 'darug custodians' as a politico-cultural group depends on their *not* being an ethnic group. They are, rather, a group of people whose cultural and social core are Darug descendants, but who are all engaged in reconstructing a Darug being, a Darug world. Non-Darug 'darug custodians' are auxiliaries in the 'ethnogenesis' project, sharing with Darug descendants the vitality of community in the midst of suburban lives that, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three, are often characterised by their being marginalised, alienated or discriminated against because of their generally low status in the dominant society.

Jocelyn Linnekin and Lin Poyer (1990) demonstrate how Pacific Islanders traditionally have used different models of 'belonging' or kinship than the 'Mendelian'¹⁵¹ model favoured by Western societies. The analogies of the 'Mendelian' and the 'Lamarckian'¹⁵² models that Linnekin and Poyer have developed are both biologically based. The 'Mendelian' model, however, is much more rigidly biological than the 'Lamarckian' model. Linnekin and Poyer's 'Lamarckian' model, like that of the French naturalist, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's actual model, refers to a concept of

¹⁵⁰ I explain in Chapters Two, Three, Eight and Nine that many 'darug custodians' Black and White are also of Irish descent.

¹⁵¹ Named after the Moravian monk, Gregor Mendel, who 'discovered' the principle of the 'either/or' in the units of inheritance. Mendel's work with garden peas led to the development of the term 'gene' for these units.

¹⁵² Named after the French naturalist, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who argued for the concept of 'accumulated inheritance'. This theory claimed that an individual's accumulated experience is transmissible to their children.

biological and environmental factors working together. It allows for recognition of relationships based on factors including geographic origin - people from the same place may be accepted as relatives, geographic movement - people who move to the same village may be accepted as relatives, cult - people with the same religious beliefs may be accepted as relatives, and many other possible social factors. As is extensively cited in the so-called 'traditional' Aboriginal literature¹⁵³, many Australian Aboriginal groups do not exclusively base their relationships with each other on genetic factors. But even if 'darug custodians' have ambitions to become such a 'Lamarckian' society and recognise kinship based on a combination of genetic and non-genetic factors, the fact remains that when Australian Aboriginal groups want to be recognised by the dominant Western society, it is on the terms of the coloniser that such recognition must be made. 'darug custodians' do not possess the political and economic power to support a community independent of the dominant society.

Unlike 'Mendelian', or Western assumptions about ethnicity which view genetic inheritance as the primary determinant of a person's identity, 'Lamarckian' perspectives as they have been characterised for Oceania, include recognition of 'belonging' to place as an important determinant of a person's identity. This 'belonging' is not so much a question of where one is 'from' as where one is 'of' (Poyer 1990:129, Howard 1990:267). Successful adaptation to a place in these terms requires being in the good graces of the spirits of that place which is equivalent to being genealogically descended from them and acquiring their essence (Howard 1990:267, Watson 1990:39). 'darug custodians' relate to Darug country by paying homage to Darug ancestors, by 'connecting' to the spirits of the Country, by relating to

¹⁵³ The Aboriginal kinship literature is enormous. I only scratch the surface in citing Stanner (1976), Munn (1964), Maddock (1972) and Meggit (1974).

Darug Land not as genealogical descendants of Darug ancestors, but *through* genealogical descendants of Darug ancestors (cf Watson 1990 in a Papua New Guinea context and Flinn 1990 in Micronesia). This is an example of the emergence of a potentially 'Lamarckian' social and cultural group in urban Australia in the sense described by Linnekin and Poyer (1990).

In a pre-colonial context the multi-faceted nature of the 'darug custodian' community might have gradually been submerged, or muted by force or practical necessity as people shared a Darug social and cultural world fusing them into one Darug people. Understanding 'darug custodians' in this 'Lamarckian' sense, makes it possible to consider the *potential* for Darug descendant and non-Darug descendant community members to join over time as an 'ethnic' group¹⁵⁴. In post-colonial Australia, however, such a development is not viable for various reasons including the political and economic limitations of the community in supporting its members in relation to the dominant society.

Conclusion

The concept of 'ethnogenesis' explains the phenomenon of the emergence and on-going development of 'a people' usually within the context of their having been previously oppressed and de-cultured by a hegemonic nation-state. This chapter has explained that although 'darug custodians', as a whole, are not an 'ethnic group', their emergence and on-going development as a community centres on the 'ethnogenesis' of Darug descendants.

Regardless of what we call them, 'darug custodians' are now engaged in activities which typify the beginnings of 'ethnogenesis' where a group identifies with

¹⁵⁴ See, for example, Watson (1990:17-42) who uses the 'Lamarckian' model to analyse the nature of group identity formation and change in Papua New Guinea.

ancestors and mobilise as 'carriers' of a proud tradition. Darug descendant 'ethnogenesis' creates for non-Darug 'darug custodians' a 'core group', an almost sacred thing for respect and veneration , an anchor for the whole Custodian community.

Conclusion

*'You can really have no notion how delightful it
will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the
Lobsters, out to sea!'
But the snail replied 'Too far, too far!' and gave
A look askance -
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would
Not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not could not,
Would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not could not,
Would not join the dance.*

Lewis Carroll (1968:111)

There is no doubt that state celebrations of Aboriginal identity as a vital part of the expression of multiculturalism have been important in giving rise to, facilitating and sustaining the emergent cultural group I call 'darug custodians'. The cultural practices which the community call 'traditional' help to hold the group together, articulate and affirm their new collective identity, and make claims to land. But the 'drivers' of this process of cultural emergence are the on-going relations between community members and the dominant society and between community members.

By becoming 'a people', Darug descendants not only saw a chance of being officially recognised as Aboriginal people through new state policies concerning Indigenous Australians, but also a chance of transcending their subject positions as 'generic Aboriginal people'. They saw a way of becoming 'new people' who, rather than inhabiting the fringes of White society, can at least momentarily, occupy centre stage in their own new social world. But although Darug descendant 'darug custodians' identify as 'ethnically' Darug, they do not culturally identify as 'the same' as Tribal Darug descendants. They could not become a cultural group with Tribals because Tribals do not tolerate their cultural practices and because Custodians will

not give these practices up. Yet 'darug custodian' Darug descendants are so few in number they also could not become a cultural group on their own, so they have endeavoured to become a community with a multifaceted group of non-Darug people who support their claims and identify with them as custodians of Darug land and culture as they produce it.

Darug descendants' White partners who are mostly positioned as low status members of the dominant society, saw a way of elevating both their Aboriginal partners' and their own social positions in White society, as well as a way of achieving status in their own new community that is not possible for them in White society. They have not *become* Aboriginal, although they sometimes act as if they have. They do not claim Darug identity, although they claim a relationship with Darug people and land. White spouses of Darug 'darug custodians' are still 'working class Whites', but they are also 'darug custodians' and their children are considered, by them and the rest of the community, to be Darug. In this way, White 'darug custodian' spouses are connected to Aboriginal community members by 'blood' and enjoy a special status within the community which is different to other White members.

Maori community members gain access to paid work through belonging to the community as well as status as Indigenous people that is not generally possible for Black immigrants in White Australian society. As well as this, Maori living on what is claimed as Darug land can justify their habitation of Darug land in a morally acceptable Indigenous way. Maori 'darug custodians' are fiercely proud of their Maori identity and, although they sometimes participate in ceremony, they are arguably the least active members of the community outside of working on archaeological digs. Of all community members Maori are least involved in the running of the Corporation and

rarely attend meetings. However, they are extremely interested in 'darug custodian' cultural practices and their political effects and at social gatherings often counsel community leaders in light of their experience of *Maoritanga* at social gatherings.

Non-Darug Indigenous Australians living in Sydney can gain a status within the 'darug custodian' community that is not possible for them in White communities. They may even be able to gain status that is not possible in their own communities of origin. They are also able to account for their habitation of what is claimed as Darug land in a culturally appropriate and morally justifiable way. Many non-Darug Aboriginal people are only occasionally active members and rarely attend meetings, but these people are still extremely important to the community as they provide vital numbers when needed. Because different people in this 'group' attend different events at different times, cultural events have varying mixes of members. At all events there is always a 'core' group of members from the Darug descendants, spouses and some stalwarts from the non-Darug Aboriginal 'groups', but there is an unpredictable character to every occasion depending on which members from the non-Darug Aboriginal 'group' attend. This makes gatherings especially interesting and allows for different ideas, opinions and experiences to be aired and discussed.

The 'group' of non-Darug Aboriginal people is the most sociologically complex because it is large and people come from a wide variety of Indigenous communities all over Australia. There is consequently a variety of levels of commitment to the 'darug custodian' community depending on individual members and their levels of activity in the community. Everyone I have asked, however, has expressed an emotional response to 'having' a relationship with the traditional owners of the land on which they now live. That is, belonging to the community seems to give non-Darug

Aboriginal people an unprecedented sense of belonging in and to Sydney.

Middle class White supporters may, in a small way, find a way of expiating, if not an historic guilt, then an historic sense of injustice that at least some of 'us' may have inherited. Membership of the community - even the kind of attenuated membership allowed middle class Whites - seems to provide at least some people with a sense of belonging. For others, like myself, it has provided some extraordinary insights into a new and still emerging world that has provided the data for my thesis. It has also sustained some important personal relationships as well as been a source of frustration and exasperating contradictions.

As political groups, both Tribals and Custodians are powerless. They are recognised as Aboriginal groups through their Corporations, but they are not represented by Land Councils and they are only able to gain the attention and recognition of government and other stakeholders through strategic influence and accommodation. Neither are in a position to make any demands and all relations with the dominant society are undertaken in competition with each other. This makes many interactions between Darug descendants and government or business representatives appear, if not friendly, then at least co-operative. Because Tribal and Custodian Darug descendants are joined together as 'The Darug People', are always jointly consulted for major projects including land claims, and both claim traditional ownership over the same land, they struggle to represent their cultural differences to outsiders. They compete for the goodwill of outsiders with hopes for preferential treatment over the other Darug group. They often do this by competing to accommodate the demands of some outsiders. Custodians, for example, always try to supply more, younger and fitter workers on archaeological digs than Tribals. Both groups have developed close relationships with certain academics, lawyers and

government representatives who are able to help one group rather than the other to further its own projects.

However, this kind of strategic accommodating behaviour does not completely conceal a deep-seated resentment directed toward the dominant society. Meetings of the Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation are often fiery affairs focussed on perceived injustice, humiliation or frustration imposed by a government official or department, a newspaper or an individual and how the community should respond. Many of the letters I am asked to write as Public Officer represent the community's response to such a situation (see appendix). The fact is, however, that the protests of Darug descendants, both Tribal and Custodian, are easily ignored by 'us' (the dominant society, especially the government). Traditional owners are supposed to be 'officially' represented by a Land Council, not by themselves, and when they are not, the government is under no official obligation to consult with them. They do not represent a large population of people, and there are frankly few votes in making Darug descendants happy.

Competition, hostilities and frustrations are not restricted to relations outside the 'darug custodian' community. I provided a sense of the kinds of hostilities and frustrations that all community members face in 'working out' their new ways of doing things between each other in Chapter Three. Many of these aggravations come from competing people's ideas about how certain things should be most appropriately done and by whom. But much of the internal bickering is silenced when the community needs to close ranks in questioning the frequent and intense attacks by stake holders outside of the group against the 'authenticity' of its practices and the identity from which those practices draw.

Processes of cultural renaissance, the (re)emergence of groups who had

previously been made to disappear and the revival of traditional cultural practices is not, of course, unique to Darug descendants. Their emergence is one of very many examples from all over the world making this comparative aspect central to my thesis. What may be different, perhaps quite unique, certainly within the context of post Mabo Aboriginal Australia, is the emergence of a 'non-ethnic' cultural group with custodial claims to land and tradition. Within twenty five years a self conscious community has been created not only from 'bits and pieces' of cultural relics but from a melange of ethnically different peoples. The Australian state and Indigenous Australian groups themselves demand common ancestry as minimal grounds for claims against the state. 'darug custodians' have complied with this demand by privileging Darug descent within the community. But non-Darug community members, although they do not claim Darug descent, behave almost as if it is their own. They valorise Darug ancestors, 'carry on' (re)invented traditions, and share ideas about being 'a people' based, instead of on genetic relationships, on social and cultural ones with Darug land, living Darug people, and Darug ancestors. This is more than 'ethnogenesis', although it does depend on ethnogenetic processes which allowed for the emergence of Darug descendants. This is more about a multifaceted group who 'use' an 'ethnic' core group of Darug descendants to anchor themselves as a wider community. Darug descendants are more than privileged in what they can and cannot say or do. They are almost made into a 'sacred thing': an 'object' for respect and veneration which draws the community together.

Any attempt of mine to coin a term for 'darug custodian' emergence has not done justice to this complex phenomenon. This is certainly an instance of 'ethnogenesis' as far as Darug descendants are concerned, but it is more. It is a process that has galvanised into a group people from different social backgrounds

who, for various reasons, experience a sense of marginality, alienation and humiliation as members of the dominant society. Different peoples have galvanised with each other and with a newly emerged 'ethnic group' to create 'a new people'.

The global, national and local forces which demand that marginalised groups all over the world be given due recognition and compensation may have begun this process, but it was the previously dispossessed, disempowered and alienated people themselves who created the new world they now partially inhabit. Other examples of the relatively recent (re)emergence of Indigenous peoples who are not recognised for the purposes of land rights and other compensation include, Huron in Quebec (see Roosens 1989), Lumbee in North Carolina (see Blu 1989, Sider 2003) and Alutiiq in Alaska (see Clifford 2004). I do not include Maori in this summary because they have never been made to 'disappear' as 'a people', although there were strong attempts by Pakeha (European) authorities to suppress Maori language use and culture up until the 1960's, making many, if not all of the 'factors' I list below apply to them. There are important differences between these groups and between these groups and 'darug custodians', the most important of these differences being that 'darug custodians' cannot be understood as an 'ethnic group'. But as well as this:

- 1). Lumbee and Alutiiq both have sizable populations, and even Huron are much larger than 'darug custodians' with a population of 1,000.
- 2). Lumbee, Huron and Alutiiq all predominate in geographic places, even those who do not have reserves live in areas dominated numerically by their own group.
- 3). Lumbee, Alutiiq and Huron are all nationally represented as Indigenous nations within the United States and Canada respectively.
- 4). Lumbee, Alutiiq and Huron have been or still are politically militant in their relations with the dominant society.

Some generalisations can be made about the necessary conditions for the emergence and on-going development of groups of people who were previously made to 'disappear'. These include:

- 1). National political conditions which recognise the claims of such groups as valid, or at least potentially valid, which support reinstatement of their status as a group as well as providing means to do so.
- 2). Groups need to be politically active and/or strategic in their power relations with the dominant society. In the case of Darug descendants this means being strategically accommodating, for Lumbee, Alutiiq and Huron this means including militant behaviour when necessary and/or strategic.
- 3). My thesis demonstrates that at least one 'line' of common descent is essential for emergence, but not all members of the group need to be 'ethnically' related.
- 4). My thesis also demonstrates that the beginning of 'ethnogenesis', the collective valorisation of ancestors and the 'carrying on' of tradition, depends on privileging one 'line' of descent above all others in the group, even if that 'line' does not belong to everyone, or even to the majority, in the group.
- 5). This beginning of 'ethnogenesis' which results in the (re)invention of culture is crucial for on-going development. This is when the group becomes distinctive and when the first articulations of their shared ideas about themselves as 'a people' are made.
- 6). The possession of land is not an essential condition for 'ethnogenesis', but those people with a place to call their own are advantaged.

It is highly unlikely under current laws, that any Darug descendants, either members of Darug Tribal Aboriginal Corporation, or Darug Custodian Aboriginal Corporation can win a native title claim. Although Darug descendants do qualify as

'genuine Aboriginal people' under the statutory definition of 'Aboriginal', and their family trees trace their ancestry to people who inhabited Sydney before White people came here, they cannot demonstrate 'on-going connection' to 'traditions and customs' that were performed before that invasion. So, no matter how 'authentic' Darug descendants can prove themselves to be using 'our' methods of documentation and research, they are ultimately stymied in any attempts to claim native title due to rules of on-going connection to traditions and customs. They can, however, 'play' at being Darug as much as they like, which furthermore, is encouraged by White dominated bodies.

Tribal people use a different strategy to verify their claims. Genealogical research, participation in attempts to reconstruct Darug Language and archaeological research are put forward as evidence of on-going culture. This approach to cultural revival is one which understands authentic culture to exist in the past and to be accessible through various forms of scientific investigation. This research has been put forward in a number of land claims as evidence of Darug descendants' 'authenticity'.

I explained in Chapter Two the irony of 'darug custodian' Darug descendants and Tribal members always being joined together as 'The Darug People' in land claims when they consistently represent themselves as different by sitting on opposite sides of a table, or demanding separate copies of documents for example. But, their differences are more than symbolic. 'darug custodian' Darug descendants seem to have taken the notion of 'cultural revival' to mean on-going contemporary development and innovation based on elaborating and extending surviving cultural fragments and 'borrowing' from other Aboriginal groups. As I demonstrated in

Chapters Five Six, Seven, Eight and Nine, 'darug custodians' have taken minute fragments of 'Darug Traditions' such as the use of ochre, language, and religion and commenced the project of re-constituting these 'bits and pieces' into new systems of meaning. I doubt that these cultural forms have ever been intended to convince a modern court of 'darug custodian' Darug descendants' 'authenticity'. I argue that whereas land rights and native title may have precipitated the emergence of Darug descendants as a self conscious group, the cultural practices that 'darug custodians' use to differentiate themselves have become such important cultural values that whether or not they contribute to, or indeed undermine, a native title claim has become immaterial.

Regardless of both groups' failure to attract the assumed benefits of native title, 'darug custodians' use the recent opportunities provided by state policies related to multiculturalism to make a spectacle of their difference. As I demonstrated, particularly in Chapter Seven in the context of Welcome to Country ceremonies, such spectacles are often successful. In these contexts, I argued that Darug descendant 'darug custodians' appropriate the pageantry of state articulations of 'cultural equality' to proclaim Indigeneity. In other words, they 'take the multicultural stage' to express what is special about them, what is *not* equal with all other cultures in Australia - their prior and continuing ownership of Sydney.

If the only people producing these 'new traditions' were Darug descendants it would be problematic enough because these practices cannot be proven to be on-going, continuous Darug traditions. In the case of 'darug custodians' this is even more problematic because non-Darug and even non-Aboriginal people participate in making articulations of group identity which support the claim of Indigenous ownership

of Sydney. In the Custodian community, non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians' are often behaving as if they were Aboriginal. This is not because non-Aboriginal 'darug custodians' claim to *be* Aboriginal, but because they claim relationships with Darug land, with living Darug descendants, with dead Darug descendants, and with the 'darug custodian' culture they participate in producing. These articulations of group identity both support the claims of Darug descendants, and also claim relationships with Darug descendants. That is, 'darug custodians' claim a custodial relationship with a particular part of Sydney (see map 2) and with some of those who claim to be the Aboriginal Traditional Owners of that land. This is done with the full knowledge that no Darug descendants can win a native title claim under the present law.

'darug custodian' identity is more than defiance of the dominant society's rules of 'authenticity'. It is more than opposition to 'our' ways of thinking and doing things. 'darug custodian' cultural practices are the prideful articulations of a new identity. They reflect the efforts of otherwise fragmented and culturally diverse people to make community which provides many of them with a dignity and a sense of self that is not achievable within the other communities they inhabit. My descriptions in Chapters Three and Four of the various 'non-darug custodian' communities that are simultaneously inhabited by community members show that without the positive values generated from the collective practices of the 'darug custodian' community, many community members would live worse lives than they do now.

'darug custodians' have some powerful strategies to support their survival. They use opportunities presented by the state to include articulations of Aboriginal identity in state narratives in spectacular, enjoyable and empowering ways. Ironically, although 'our' (the dominant society's) discourses of art, culture, history and language

decree that urban Aboriginal culture is one of cultural lack, 'we' ask for 'darug custodian' representations of 'primitivity' and 'tradition'. 'We' like 'darug custodian' articulations, even if (or perhaps because) 'we' do not believe them. Unlike land claims they are not threatening.

Darug Tribals use a strong base of committed Darug descendants to keep publishing the out-comes of their research. They keep making native title claims (three in ten years) and do not back down when it comes to asserting the 'authenticity' of their own representations. They also have kept their community a 'Darug' community, limiting membership to Darug descendants and their spouses to a much greater extent than 'darug custodians'. Consequently, because Tribal has many more Darug descendant members than 'darug custodians' they are a more 'purely' Darug group and are thus more recognisable to 'us' (the dominant society) than 'darug custodians'.

'darug custodian' identity is not only in relation to 'us'. It is *especially* in relation to us. It is only when 'darug custodian' difference from 'us' is apprehended that 'darug custodian' identity exists. Sydney is already saturated with 'our' meanings, 'our' symbols: us. Paradoxically, this makes for positive and necessary conditions for the repetition and insistence of 'darug custodian' articulations of identity precisely because of the very strength of the colonial/neo-colonial present. 'darug custodians' are driven to work, and work hard, to keep making and re-making their articulations because these expressions are momentary. Darug descendant Tribals or Custodians, unlike Lumbee and Huron, do not presently have the recognition or resources to build a Darug community centre, own a Darug bank, or run a Darug school. Even the burial trees at Eureka Clearing require constant re-carving and re-grouting for their markings

to remain visible. Ironically, this makes for - even allows - the emergence of 'darug custodian' articulations. This is especially clear in Chapter Eight when the tourist guide denied the existence of 'darug custodian' identity at the very moment of its articulation. That 'darug custodians' needed to counter the guide's denial and verbally articulate their presence and identity whilst in the process of making what was being denied, demonstrates the need for 'darug custodians' tenacity in constantly reproducing expressions of their identity and exerting the energy of oppositional processes.

This research was the first of its kind in modern western Sydney. The future holds many question marks for the people it concerns and there are many different pathways for future researchers to follow. How, and indeed, if 'darug custodian' culture develops from this early stage of its emergence will be a subject of enormous interest. Future scholarly accounts concerning 'darug custodian' cultural survival and the ways in which it develops, adapts and transforms would be of great significance to anthropology. It may even provide a model for 'practical reconciliation': how Black and White Australians can productively live together. Is this too great a claim for such a small group of people, or is the magnitude of their project indeed more important than their lack of numbers? Should both Tribals and Custodians survive, a comparative analysis could shed light on how and if each has needed to change and perhaps become more like the other in certain respects. If only one survives the reasons for this would be equally important.

As I explained in Chapter Two, it was not possible for me at present to work with both 'darug custodian' and Darug Tribal groups. This is unlikely to change while the two groups compete for the recognition and attention of Whites. I have observed that any person or group who attempts to work with both Tribals and Custodians is

forced to declare their loyalty to one or the other or is treated with suspicion by both. Once one is positioned as either a Tribal or a Custodian supporter, contact with the other group is strictly limited. This is as true for Commonwealth, State and Local government representatives as it is for researchers. This means that conducting comparative research between the two groups is not only practically difficult to manage, but ethically problematic. Future researchers might thus need to work with the two groups separately.

In this thesis I explore how the very recent practices of the Australian state which include Aboriginal peoples in official national narratives such as Welcome to Country are actually generative of new Aboriginal cultural forms. Welcome to Country, for example, was performed for the first time only twenty-five years ago and I do not believe that it would be performed at all if Commonwealth, State and Local governments did not request it. It would be fascinating to see whether Tribal versions of Welcome to Country become more 'primitive' over time due to popular demand, or whether 'darug custodians' begin to bow to pressure to change the form of their version of Darug language to one which is more 'authentic'.

Ultimately, the most important questions concerning 'darug custodians' and Darug Tribal people must be those related to justice and dignity. Has their emergence resulted in a better life? I would argue that it has. For all of the struggle, hostility and derision that Darug deal with, their collective practices and the communities they produce generate a prideful dignity that is new. Culture can matter more than land claims.

But, is it right that the same forces that bring groups of people into existence also deny them the ultimate recognition of their 'authenticity'? It seems to me that land rights and native title legislation is sometimes like a mother who gives birth to an