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on PEDAGOGY, TRAUMA and DIFFICULT MEMORY: REMEMBERING NAMATJIRA, OUR BELOVED

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■ Abstract

One of the projects engaged in within the text *Rethinking Indigenous Education* (RIE) (McConaghy, 2000) was an analysis of the colonial regimes that are reproduced within Indigenous education, often despite our emancipatory intentions. Through a detailed critique of the various competitions for epistemic authority in the field, the book explores the structural processes by which certain knowledges are legitimated as "truths" and the material and symbolic effects of these. The focus of the book was on the imagined worlds of various traditions of knowing Indigenous education and their claims to authority. It was a "how" rather than a "who" story that dealt with theoretical assumptions, broad-brush policy and curriculum inquiry and that attempted to avoid the identity politics that had gripped Indigenous education for more than a decade. Importantly the book also suggested that rather than being cumulative, critique is a process that needs to be ongoing, done again and again. This paper, *Remembering Namatjira*, has sought to move beyond the main projects of RIE, many of them structural in nature, to an analysis of more intimate aspects of Indigenous education. It addresses some of the "who" issues, not in terms of representation politics, who can know and speak what, but in terms of the psychic difficulties that we attach to knowledge in Indigenous education. Whereas RIE drew upon postcolonial and feminist insights, this paper considers the contribution of psychoanalysis to thinking through some of the more intractable issues that remain unexamined or under-examined in the field. Among the issues addressed are the fundamental dilemmas around our ambivalences in education; the notion of pedagogical force (and transferences, resistances and obstacles to learning); the work of ethical witnessing; and issues of difficult knowledge, or knowledge and memories that we cannot bear to know. Central to the work of rethinking Indigenous education again, in moving beyond deconstruction, is the process of making meaning out of the ruins of our lovely knowledges (Britzman, 2003), our comfort knowledges, about what should be done in Indigenous education.

■ Introduction: Curriculum and Difficult Memory

In a context of history wars and contestations over what constitutes a socially just national response to the dispossession of Indigenous Australians, a related set of challenges has emerged in Australian classrooms. These challenges have to do with the difficult work of remembering, or rather, remembering well. Freud (1894) observed that when we remember, it is not the past that is invoked, but rather, our crises in the present. Thus the current Australian history wars, involving such prominent Australian historians as Mann (2003a, 2003b), Windschuttle (2002a, 2002b), Macintyre and Clark (2003) and others, are not contestations over history as much as they are testimonials to the social challenges of the present. Similarly, when we encounter the history of the nation and the life stories of Indigenous Australians in social science classes around the country, it is not the past we are encountering, but rather, our ability to engage ethically with social issues in the present. Our capacity, or rather our willingness, as both teachers and learners, to engage with complex social debates and difficult memories is arguably the most pressing issue in Australian schooling today.

Some curriculum knowledge, it would appear, is too much for us to bear. Some remembering is simply too difficult or too painful. Thus, for the characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1989a), the days of post-slavery are spent avoiding the pain of remembering. What is it that makes some memories unbearable? Which knowledges are too difficult, too awkward, and too dangerous to know, to teach and to learn? What defences do we mount in order to deal only with what is comfortable and comforting to know? Is good pedagogy and good curriculum only that which consoles – not that which provokes? Such issues are at the heart of thinking through the work of collective memory and curriculum knowledge in shaping our imaginaries of self, other and nation. They are crucial to any critical analysis of the work of the contemporary curriculum in schooling, particularly in places where self, other and nation are contested notions. In this paper I explore the issues of remembering and forgetting in relation to the pedagogical force and teaching dilemmas surrounding Albert Namatjira's life and work. In remembering Namatjira, or remembering him well, insights into the nature of the relationship between schooling and difficult memory emerge. At the heart of this relationship

between schooling and difficult memory are two inter-related dynamics: teaching-learning intersubjectivities, or the work of locating the self in relation to others; and the work of locating the self within knowledge (Pitt & Britzman, 2000). Both of these dynamics are significant in explorations of the curriculum, in this instance, in considering teaching-learning encounters with the memory of Albert Namatjira.

Given the renewed interest in Namatjira's art in Australia and within the global art world it is timely to consider how it is that we remember and teach about his life. Our engagement with Namatjira often takes place through various textual forms, including reproductions of his art, biographies and, increasingly, the museum. The museum is emerging as a significant site for teaching-learning encounters in contemporary schooling and society. Curriculum texts present significant challenges both in terms of authorship and readership. Both authorship and readership require a consideration of what it is we can bear to remember, in this instance, about Namatjira's life and times. Further, and linked to our tolerances for difficult knowledge, it is necessary to consider to what extent the history of Australian slavery and the complicity of the various twentieth century Australian governments and churches in this slavery constitute unteachable components of curriculum knowledge.

■ Visiting Indigenous Australia

School children visit Indigenous Australia through the curriculum in various ways. Muecke (1999) suggests the need for protocols for "visiting", in addition to the protocols in place for conducting research and negotiating with Indigenous communities. These "visiting protocols", he suggests, should guide us in our best behaviour and train us to imagine the place and experiences of the other. Following Muecke's lead, this paper argues for the development of "witnessing protocols" for encountering the lives and testimonials of Indigenous Australians.

In July 2000 I visited the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct in Central Australia. The Precinct is a museum of life on the Hermannsburg Mission, a mission run by the Lutheran Church from the 1870s until the 1980s. Central to the story of the mission is the life and art of Albert Namatjira. Albert Namatjira was a prominent Indigenous Australian artist who lived and painted between the 1930s and the 1950s. At the height of his career he was presented to Queen Elizabeth II and his works are part of the Westminster collection, among notable others. Within the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct is a special gallery of Namatjira's work, memorabilia of his life and some of the art of his brothers and children who are now known as the Hermannsburg School. This School is considered to be extremely significant in Australian art history (Hardy et al., 1992; Morphy, 2000).

Several hundred thousand visitors, many of them from Germany, visit the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct each year, a number remarkable given the remote location of this tiny Indigenous town. However, rather than benefiting from this insurgence of tourism, life in the town remains difficult and impoverished with petrol sniffing rife amongst children, and unemployment and alcoholism contributing to high levels of domestic violence and family destitution. The tourists are ushered into the pristine surrounds of the Precinct for a tour and afternoon tea and then leave to continue to enjoy the splendour of Central Australia. Despite the tourist presence the harshness of life in postcolonial Australia continues unabated.

■ The Materiality of the Curriculum

Many things are interesting about the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct. The economic imbalances, although a feature of many cultural tourism locations around the globe, remain curious as the local Indigenous council controls the Precinct. The people who work in the Precinct, however, are non-Indigenous. Hence in this place there are disparities around issues of control and management and the focus of economic benefit, disparities that have been a feature of life in Indigenous Australian communities for many decades. Linked to these material conditions in this small isolated community is an interesting story about the difficulties of history, curriculum and intersubjectivity that will be explored in this paper. Somewhat curiously, though the Precinct is the property of the local Indigenous council, the histories celebrated there are not. The Northern Territory Government's Conservation Commission and the Lutheran Church curated the museum displays, although this information is nowhere displayed. Indeed the current non-Indigenous management of the museum had no idea of the individual identities of the authors of the displays, nor of the legitimating conditions of authorship.

Whose stories are represented in the museum; what versions of life on the mission are privileged? What understandings will visitors take away with them? What protocols of witnessing are suggested through the museum displays? Importantly for the lives of the Hermannsburg people, what is the relationship between these dynamics of witnessing and the material conditions of their everyday lives? In short, it is interesting to consider not only the representation politics of the museum - in terms of authoring and reading practices - but also the relationship between the cultural politics of the Precinct and the pedagogical force of its curriculum knowledge. In general terms, the force of the curriculum provides the reader - the witness - with a call to social action, indeed, compels them to respond, and thus is a significant aspect of the materiality of the curriculum.

■ On Pedagogical Force and the Curriculum

Such questions as whose stories and what understandings emerging from the curriculum relate to both the rhetorical and other strategies employed in the museum texts and the reading sensibilities of the tourists. The issue of museum display authorship is important: museums are social texts and in this sense they have much in common with public monuments, royal commissions, and the more commonly acknowledged social texts of public media, including newspapers, television, magazines, and so on. The issues of identity and representation – whose texts, whose memories – have been largely ignored by museums in Australia. For example, it is interesting to note the absence of information of curatorial authorship on displays in the new National Museum of Australia in Canberra, despite its pretension to engage more openly with the contestations of the postcolonial and postmodern condition (Morgan, 2002). Australia is not alone in this. For example, the Canadian National Museum of Civilisation in Ottawa also presents text as largely uncontested; as social fact or common knowledge. Interestingly, in post-apartheid South Africa, where representation and identity wars have been waged for several bloody decades, the National Museum of Culture in Pretoria is attempting to reconstitute the national imaginary, to re-present national history with some sense of accountability and an acknowledgement of the links between knowledge and power. Hence its displays are clearly authored and curated and the public is invited to engage with the authors of its texts.

The notions of partial histories, multiple histories and the difficulties of representing these in museums pose interesting dilemmas for schooling, particularly in the social sciences and the teaching of history, citizenship and Indigenous studies. This is particularly so as museums, both real and virtual, are playing an increasingly prominent role in these curricula. The Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct is interesting as an exemplary site to examine issues of colonial remembering and forgetting. The story of colonial strategies and technologies presented here appears as a largely benign one; as a struggle of god-fearing law-abiding White citizens working side by side with Indigenous Australians in the soul-destroying task of taming the desert. Water, or the lack of it, features in many of the displays. Heroic narratives abound. Albert Namatjira is presented as one of the success stories of the mission. Largely absent are the stories of slavery, brutality, punishment, discipline, control, regulation and dehumanisation that were a feature of daily mission life (Rowse, 1992). Also absent is the story of the government's withdrawal of financial support for the mission during World War II because German missionaries ran it. This action subjected both the Indigenous and German residents of the mission to severe deprivations (Rowse, 1992). Thus, although a

church-run mission, various Australian governments have been deeply implicated in the oppressions that took place there.

In many ways the rather sanitised version of Hermannsburg history that is presented to hundreds of thousands of overseas visitors who make the journey to the Precinct each year echoes the versions of history that are still taught in many Australian schools. Since the "Indigenous Histories" project that was funded by the Federal Government as a bicentenary project in the 1980s, there have been significant gains in the acknowledgement of these partial histories and the inclusion of Indigenous and other minority histories in our curricula. Significant in this journey was the struggle to replace the term "settlement" with the term "invasion" in school curricula. However, contestation around curriculum language and the particular narratives that certain curricula privilege is never waged and then forgotten, but like critique itself, needs to be ongoing. Sustained curriculum inquiry is an activity that is required again and again. The curriculum remains a key instrument in the formation of collective memory and national identity and a key strategy for attending to issues of how we imagine ourselves, both collectively and individually.

■ Difficult Knowledge

It would appear that our curricula are simply not able bear the weight of certain knowledges. Certain knowledges are too difficult (Pitt & Britzman, 2000) or too awkward to be taken up easily within the curriculum. Such difficulties are not cognitive so much as they are emotional and psychic in nature (McConaghy, 2003). Further, the difficulty inherent in certain curriculum texts relates to both the work of authoring and reading. Thus in analysing the curriculum of the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct, it is necessary to consider both practices of authoring and reading.

In thinking through the issue of what histories the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct could have presented, why it privileged some and not others, what the call to social action was in the authoring and reading practices associated with the museum texts, the notion of difficulty in knowing is relevant. As Pitt and Britzman (2000) have suggested, the crises of curriculum knowledge, as well as arising from interested and unjust material conditions and social relations, have to do also with relations beyond the reach of cognition, and at some level, beyond discursive operations. That is, there are crises of representation that take place both in the external conditions and the internal dynamics of understanding. The latter, the internal conditions, are characterised by the play of the conscious and the unconscious (Britzman, 1998). Difficulties with curriculum knowledge are thus social and psychic in nature. Education, argues Britzman, is an exemplary site where the crises of the internal psychic mechanisms and the external social conditions meet. Such crises are linked to our passionate

attachments, fears, desires and investments in certain constructions of social reality. Thus, there are significant emotional and material investments associated with the Precinct in both the telling of history and the reading of history, for curators and tourists alike. The stories told and read there are predictable and comforting. They are the stories we tell and want to believe in order to console ourselves in the face of knowledge too dreadful to bear. It is simply not possible that the various government and church involvements in Hermannsburg were other than benevolent and benign. Indeed, as the story goes, despite all manner of assistance, in the end Namatjira could not escape – could not be saved from – the burden of his Indigeneity. Such a story belies a deep sense of crisis, not only a crisis of Indigenous lives disavowed, but a crisis of human understanding. Such crises act as obstacles to active and ethical witnessing.

■ Curriculum Crises

In her discussion of the difficulties of teaching about the holocaust, Shoshana Felman (1992) presented the holocaust as not only a crisis of history but also a crisis of education. Felman challenged us to consider what it means to learn from these crises of history and education: to learn from an understanding of the particular breakdown, the breakdown of meaning, of ethics, of notions of civility and human sensibility, but also to delve deeper into the nature of understanding itself. One of the areas of knowledge in which human understanding finds itself most challenged is the knowledge of trauma. As Felman argued, the twentieth century was the most traumatic of any time in human history. We live in times of great social and psychic trauma, and as with the century before it, the twenty-first century has commenced in traumatic mode. Although Australia is many thousands of kilometres away from the events of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, the Australian Children's Protection Service established a counselling service for Australian children affected by the raids. Australians, of course have been deeply affected by their own direct experiences of the bombings in Bali in October 2002, in which many young Australians were killed and injured. In relation to these events, helping children to deal with the trauma of the post-raid hysteria and hate crimes taking place currently against Muslim communities and children in Australia has emerged as a significant issue for Australian schooling (Bendle, 2002).

Contemporary Australia is a place not immune to trauma. From bus stop shootings, toilet block suicides, and distraught fathers stabbing their own children, to the horrors that we can only begin to imagine currently being experienced by unaccompanied children in Australian refugee camps, children in Australia are increasingly experiencing traumas in their daily lives. In addition, the intergenerational psychological, physical and social traumas experienced by the Stolen

Generations are now well documented (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). These traumatic conditions create many challenges for education. They challenge us in relation to how we teach about the events in New York, Washington and Bali; how we teach about suicides and terrorism and the plight of refugee families; how we teach about hate crimes, gay bashings, genocide, ethnic vilification, and biochemical warfare; and how we begin to explain the systematic shaming and abuse of Indigenous children for many decades under a policy of their "care and protection".

The challenges for teachers in understanding these events at both a cognitive and affective level are significant. At issue is how we bear witness to these traumas, especially those experienced by children, and what it is that we will accept as sufficient call to social action (McConaghy, 2003). Should we be silent or active witnesses, and if one and not the other, what are the conditions in which it is possible to make ethical choices about responsible and appropriate witnessing? Why do we sometimes remain silent witnesses to other people's trauma; are we more tolerant of the traumas of some social groups and not others? If so, what are the axes of social group identification around which our active witnessing cohere? It would appear from the "history wars" and the "sorry debates" that Australians as a nation are incapable of acting ethically in response to the traumas experienced by Indigenous Australians. Postcolonial theory has attempted to explain this incapacity through an analysis of colonial regimes, their logics and strategies (McConaghy, 2000). However, this paper argues that what postcolonial theory leaves unexamined, or examined inadequately, is a more intimate story of colonial and postcolonial incapacity. This more intimate story can in part be explored through the lens of psychoanalysis, specifically its elucidation of trauma theory and its contributions to understanding the significance of affect, and self and other relations, in teaching and learning encounters.

■ Teaching about Trauma: Remembering and Forgetting Australian Slavery

Trauma is by definition unspeakable (Freud, 1922). This observation has been confirmed in recent scholarship on the Jewish holocaust (Caruth, 1996; Felman, 1992). Toni Morrison (1989b, p. 1) describes such events of history as "unspeakable things unspoken". In addition to being unspeakable, trauma has two other significant dimensions: it has a repetition compulsion, a compulsion to be relived over and over again but without ever fully encountering the traumatic experience, the lost object of our affections; and trauma requires a testimonial. Further, such testimonials require witnessing. Thus trauma involves a crisis in two senses: one the crisis of giving testimony; the other the crisis of witnessing the testimony. Although there are challenges for the survivors of trauma to speak of their experiences, the

challenging task of bearing witness to traumas is rarely acknowledged, particularly within education. Some notable exceptions include the important research on schooling and trauma by Simon (1992), Simon et al. (2000) and Robertson (1997). Hence in recent years the children of holocaust survivors, friends and family members of those who have died of AIDS, the ancestors of Irish famine victims and survivors of war, the friends of refugees, and the children of the Stolen Generations, have begun the difficult task of understanding the full extent of the horrors experienced. In relation to Indigenous Australians' experiences of colonial traumas, a number of biographies, autobiographies, plays and other texts provide significant testimony to such experiences. Some notable early examples include *My place* (Morgan, 1987), *Don't take your love to town* (Langford Ginibi, 1988), *Aunty Rita* (Huggins & Huggins, 1994), and many others. These testimonies written by Indigenous Australians are significant in assisting with the transmission of the memory of trauma from generation to generation (Felman, 1993).

Linked to these Indigenous Australian testimonies of hardship and dispossession, is a testimony to the global phenomenon of black slavery called *Beloved*, a fictional account of post-abolition Afro-American slaves written by Toni Morrison (1989a). Morrison's Nobel Prize Winning novel commences simply with the dedication: "60 million lives and more". In her writings, both fiction and non-fiction, Morrison addresses the issue of how the language of history so often renders the sufferings of millions mute. Our histories, she argues, are so often "dumb, predatory and sentimental" (1997, p. 268).

Morrison's observations connect us back to the Hermannsburg Cultural Precinct. Here and elsewhere we are challenged to reconsider the ways in which we remember Australian colonialism and the lives of Indigenous Australians. How well do we remember Australian slavery and the lives of Indigenous slaves, of Pacific Islander slaves, of the many thousands of indentured labourers who worked for little or no pay or had their wages withheld and never to be paid? The Aborigines Welfare Fund in Queensland holds more than \$25 million in wages withheld from Indigenous workers on Queensland Aboriginal reserves, which to this day remain unpaid (McConaghy, 2000). Australian history is littered with traumatic events and traumatic lives. From the atrocities revealed in John Pilger's (1987) *The secret country* to the life stories of cruelty and hardship in Indigenous autobiographies, we have considerable evidence of the barbarisms and extreme contradictions of the Australian colonial project.

And yet our pedagogies and curricula and the languages of teaching remain largely inadequate to the task of teaching through and about such difficult knowledges. Instead we so often slide back into an easy story of binary oppositions, fantasies of benevolence and inclusion, and heroic narratives of success and tolerance. We maintain the fiction of a necessary link between

Australian citizenship and our own civility and we forget that this country, like others, was founded on a history of black slavery and racial vilification that challenges this fiction of civility in fundamental ways.

■ Namatjira: Our Beloved

In Morrison's book *Beloved*, Beloved is the character that represents the ambivalence of post-traumatic survival. Beloved is both present and not present, knowable and unknowable, speakable and unspeakable. There is a sense in which the character of Beloved resonates with our memory of Albert Namatjira. While his art has survived, so much of his life story remains too difficult to know. As with Beloved, Namatjira's life represents the ambivalence of post-traumatic survival, and in his death, the impossibility of this survival. In Australian public life he was both present and absent; in civic life he was both an insider and an outsider. He was celebrated and denigrated, affirmed and denied, loved and hated. As a prominent Indigenous person living in the first half of the twentieth century he bore the full wrath of Australian colonial ambivalence. This is the entry on Albert Namatjira in Howard Morphy's (2000, p. 426) seminal book *Aboriginal art*:

Albert Namatjira (1902-1959). An Arrente man, Namatjira grew up at Hermannsburg Mission, southwest of Alice Springs. He was a skilled stockman and craftsman making implements for sale through the Mission. After expressing a desire to learn to paint, in 1936 he accompanied the artist Rex Battarbee (1893-1973) on a painting trip to Palm Valley, in the hills not far from the Mission. His first one-person show was held in Melbourne in 1939 and exhibited regularly after that. He also taught others to paint, many of them his close kin. He was awarded the Queens' coronation medal in 1953 and was presented to her in Canberra in 1954. He was made an Australian citizen in 1957, which gave him the right to buy alcohol. This led to his arrest for supplying it to his relatives. He was sentenced to two months detention at the settlement of Papunya in 1958 and died the following year.

Some other details of Namatjira's life are relevant to consider. After he was presented with Australian citizenship and moneys from the sale of his paintings he sought leave from the Protector of Native Affairs to buy a house in Alice Springs. This he was denied. He had been presented to the Queen, had his art acquired for the royal collection, been feted by the Australian art world, won numerous art prizes, was presented with a new car by the Ampol company, even mobbed for his autograph in a Sydney shopping centre, and yet he was denied social proximity to White families. Namatjira was reported as having been emotionally disturbed and saddened by the

decision to deny him home ownership. His life became increasingly fraught by double standards, by simultaneous exclusions and superficial inclusions. Citizenship presented numerous obstacles and dilemmas for Namatjira for it meant giving up, in legal terms, his status as "an Aborigine".

■ Curriculum Ambivalence and Moral Anxiety

Many authors have described Namatjira's dilemmas as the dilemmas of living in "two worlds" (indeed, Joyce Batty's book written in 1963 is called *Namatjira: Wanderer between two worlds*), an over-used metaphor that has limited explanatory potential. Much more relevant to an understanding of the increasingly traumatic life experienced by Namatjira are the notions of colonial mimicry and colonial ambivalence as developed by Homi Bhabha (1994) (for a fuller discussion of Bhabha's (1994) notion of mimicry in relation to Australian colonialism see McConaghy, 2000). These are complex notions that help to explain the events of the past. But perhaps more importantly these concepts also may help us to understand our current awkwardness with certain versions of history. Nowhere is this awkwardness better expressed than in the inability of certain sectors of Australian society to offer an apology for the sufferings experienced by Indigenous Australians. The reluctance of Australian teachers to embrace postcolonial revisionist histories in their curricula is a further example.

Colonial mimicry refers to the desire of the colonists to produce a colonial subject who is almost but not quite the same as the colonial self. There is a point at which successful mimicry turns from flattery to menace. Thus, Namatjira's full participation was not allowed to be complete: there were limits to his social acceptance. Although Namatjira was celebrated as an artist, a number of art critics suggested that his artistry was simply a product of his "innate" artistic ancestry (Mountford, 1949), that is, it was suggested that his skill was not an aspect of his own agency but the result of some genetic pre-disposition over which he had no control. Another critic (Hall, 1962, p. 17) suggested that Namatjira was a "robot painter": "For twenty-three years he made no progress, and showed no sign of imagination. Each of his pictures was something of a replica of a previous one. His aboriginal imitators show a similar lack of originality". Such sentiments, of course, echoed the theories of the day - that Indigenous Australians were inherently inferior, of poor intellect, learnt merely through imitation and observation, and were inhibited by cultural deficits. Victor Hall (1962, p. 17) made another observation that hints at a sense of difficult knowledge around Namatjira's experiences. He writes: "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a black man to crash through the white gates - and survive ... As soon as he is 'assimilated' - like Namatjira - his troubles will really begin" (Hall 1962, p. 17).

The moral anxieties surrounding our memories of Namatjira's life today have continuities with the moral anxieties surrounding Namatjira during his own lifetime. Often expressed in terms of cultural loss and decay, anxieties around cultural change reflect more fundamental human anxieties around identification and ultimate survival. Although Namatjira's success was our success, tragically for him the obstacles to his success were also our success. This story has been repeated many times over in relation to prominent Indigenous Australians, for example, Kuminjayi Perkins, Neville Bonner, Noel Pearson, Cathy Freeman and others. Like Namatjira and others before her, Freeman's success in winning Olympic gold was the success of the nation. And yet, as with Namatjira, Freeman's childhood under the oppressive regimes of Bjelke-Peterson's Government in Queensland (Kidd, 1997) and the conditions still lived by Indigenous Australians in country Queensland remain for many of us as difficult or awkward knowledges.

How do we remember Albert Namatjira and the traumas of his life? Perhaps a more challenging issue is, how can we remember him better? Martin Nakata (1998, p. 7) writes of the ways in which Torres Strait Islanders are so often positioned in histories that are discontinuous from their own. Nakata here is drawing attention to the issue of standpoint, an issue discussed and theorised at length by feminist standpoint theorists. The basic idea of standpoint theory is that how one views the world is connected with one's social positioning and experiences. We could better attempt to understand Namatjira's life from his own standpoint, his own social positioning and from the point of view of histories that are continuous rather than discontinuous with his own. In bell hook's (1994) terms we could bring our empathetic knowledge to his experiences. We could attempt to suspend the difference between our selves and him as other, as Deborah Britzman (1998) suggests, in order to think "more than our selves". Each of these strategies attempts to negotiate both the intersubjective dynamics of teaching and learning and the location of the self with respect to knowledge. Standpoint theory, empathetic knowing, imagining more than the self, are all strategies for attempting to deal with one of perhaps the most challenging issues for education today. This is the challenge of the intersubjective in learning. At the heart of the problem of intersubjectivity, significantly in both colonial and non-colonial contexts, is the problem of ambivalence.

Ambivalence refers to the simultaneous love and hate relationships we develop with objects, including people, in our identifications of self in the social world (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1973, p. 27). Freud in *Civilisation and its discontents* (1930) described our tendency for both eros (life/creation) and thanos (death/destruction). Ambivalence is a powerful notion that has explanatory potential for understanding many of the traumatic conditions of our times: violently contested divorce, hate crimes, ethnic vilification, terrorism, slavery, and the

inhumane treatment of refugees. Colonial ambivalence in our context refers to the simultaneous derision and desire on the part of the colonists towards Indigenous Australians. The notion of ambivalence helps explain our difficulty when confronted with knowledge of our own lack of civility in the present as well as the past.

The human tendency towards ambivalence in interpersonal relationships helps explain how we can claim superior moral positions when committing grossly uncivil acts. Importantly it also suggests ways to think beyond curriculum exclusions and inclusions to the awkwardness of some knowledges, and the limits to what curriculum narratives we can bear to encounter at particular moments in time and place. But there is another side to difficult knowledge, one that suggests the possibility of learning. Indeed, the moments of difficulty could signal not only a crisis in learning but, in addition, an opportunity for learning.

■ Transference and the Problems of Witnessing

What are the moments of difficulty around learning? And linked to this, what are the moments of difficulty around witnessing? Culture has become code for what is difficult in Indigenous education. It is a term used to exoticise and objectify. In teaching, culture is a term often associated with our "awful thoughts and emergencies" (Britzman & Dippro, 2000, p. 34). Culture is the usual suspect when our analyses fail us. Our attention to the problems of culture in education, our fetish with cultural differences and cultural styles has deflected our attentions from the big questions of history and the intimate questions of teaching and learning in difficult contexts. Such questions relate to what Pitt and Britzman (2000) refer to as the difficulty of knowledge and the knowledge of difficulty. The work of schooling requires engagement with both the difficult knowledge – collective memory, trauma, justice, genocide, survival and oppression – and our knowledge of what is difficult in teaching and learning encounters, knowledge in relation to which, they argue, our existing languages are impoverished. How do we explain Windschuttle's difficulties with the notion of Indigenous Australian genocide; how do we explain the inadequacy of the text in the museum at Hermannsburg; how do we explain classroom refusals? Ambivalence explains such phenomena in part, but what it omits is an account of the specifics of love and hate: why some objects and not others produce certain affects.

Transference is an important psychoanalytic concept that gives us access to insights about the problem of specific refusals and crises in learning and witnessing. Transference is the notion of bringing past encounters – histories of conflict – to bear on new social situations: we transfer the emotions generated in the previous encounter to the new (Britzman & Pitt, 1996). Lacan (1973, p. 210) observes that transference begins as soon as there is "a subject presumed to know" – a teacher, an

author, an authority figure. Further, the subject presumed to know acquires my love. In my encounters with the knowing subject, my love motivates my learning. Importantly, it may also obscure my learning, particularly if the subject presumed to know does not live up to my fantasies, thus becomes an object not of love and admiration but of disappointment or hate. As Felman (1993, p. 31) writes, the question of love is always linked to questions of knowledge. Learning is an emotional as well as an intellectual or cognitive encounter. In addition to this love encounter, encounters with learning are always "new editions of old conflicts" (Freud, 1974, p. 88). When encountering a text or learning situation we bring to our reading practice an expectation of being surprised and delighted, or alternatively, a skepticism, even resistance, from our previous histories of learning.

The significance of transferences in learning and witnessing is in alerting us to the work of emotions and histories in learning, impacting both on our openness to learn and our refusals. Thus the theorists of the 1970s who suggested that the quality of the relationships between Indigenous children and their teachers were crucial to learning and those who observed passive resistance on the part of Indigenous learners, were correct in their observations. But they were also wrong in attributing these dynamics to some essence of "Indigenous culture". What they were observing were particular psychoanalytic histories of learning (Britzman, 1998, 2003). Thus psychoanalysis establishes memory and personal histories as central to both learning and obstacles to learning.

■ Memory and Obstacles to Learning

Both Marx and Freud observed that memory was the key to social transformation. For Marx memory provided the motivational force to sustain a transformational social vision. For Freud, the past enters the present through transferences. Abnormal attachments to the past (neuroses) and non-productive repetitions of the past (traumas) obscure human capacities to appropriate the past productively for the present. Freud thus pathologises what in the present we may refer to as mis-readings of the past. Perhaps a more fruitful way forward through the history wars in the present, through our mis-readings of texts and our inability to witness appropriately is through the Lacanian interpretation of the work of remembering and forgetting (Lacan, 1975, p. 110 in Felman, 1997, p. 26). Our resistances to knowledge, he argues, are not related to a lack of information but to a refusal to know, "a passion for ignorance". At the heart of this passionate refusal is an incapacity on the part of the individual to acknowledge that one is implicated in the knowledge. When Mick Dodson (2000) delivered his "Corroborree 2000" speech he was attempting to connect his own childhood to the childhood of Prime Minister Howard, seven years his senior. His aim was to show how, in a personal way, Howard was implicated in

the facts of Dodson's difficult childhood. Howard and others, of course, have always refused to acknowledge a personal connection with the facts of Indigenous dispossession, poverty and oppression. In forgetting the facts of both past and contemporary Indigenous disadvantage, the knowledge is not forgotten at random – rather, a censorship is imposed (Felman, 1997, p. 26). Freud (1924, p. 225) described forgetting as being the result of “inner resistances”, but there is a sense in which such resistances are also socially shaped – that is, forgetting involves certain taboos, censorships (social and personal) and individual incapacities to locate the self with respect to certain knowledge. Following Freud, Lacan and Felman, central to the work of Australian schooling is analysis of where our resistances to certain knowledges are located, and an identification of what fuels these passions for refusing meaning.

■ Teaching and Learning Encounters with Difficult Memory

What is the work of psychoanalysis in relation to questions of history and education (Britzman, 2003)? Educational problems are both structural and intimate in nature, that is, educational problems are located in the socio-political and psychological realms. In developing a psychoanalytic “point of view” with which to consider the major problems confronting curriculum and the teaching of Indigenous studies, it is possible to consider the forces at work, the powerful fears and desires that have shaped Australian material and symbolic contexts. Rutherford's (2000) analysis of the formations of a “White Australia” using Freudian and Lacanian insights is a useful example. Central to the work of developing both a relation between self and other, and self and the curriculum in postcolonial schooling contexts is an understanding of the nature of crises in teaching and learning that are produced in our encounters with difficult memory. In a context of historical and contemporary trauma, both testimonies and witnessing are crucial to learning. Further, our witnessing is a response to a successful call to action, a call that is not always heeded. Indeed, Australians have a poor track record of ethical response in relation to the testimonies of trauma provided by Indigenous Australians and socially marked others.

The challenges of Indigenous education and the teaching of Indigenous studies are not cultural in nature. For many decades our attentions have been diverted by culturalist agendas in research and teaching. What is required in Indigenous education are longitudinal empirical studies supported by innovative conceptual research that consider the structural relationships between spatialised poverty (poverty linked to place) and trauma and the ensuing challenges for both teachers and learners in such contexts. Determining what teacher's responses to complex socio-historical challenges are and what they should be, identifying children's specific cognitive and emotional challenges with respect to both

their interpersonal relations and their relationship with the curriculum are issues central to new research agendas in Indigenous education. Our challenge is to develop appropriate pedagogies, forms of assessment and curriculum to deal with difficult memory and complex social problems. In dealing with these challenges we will be addressing the two significant dynamics of schooling: the dynamics of self and other, referred to here as the intersubjective dynamics of teaching and learning; and the dynamics of locating the self in relation to knowledge, an intrasubjective process. Both teachers and learners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, are challenged to engage with both the intersubjective and intrasubjective dynamics of education. These dynamics are made all the more challenging, not by cultural issues, but by poverty, trauma, loneliness and fear. The affective (the emotions), rather than the cognitive (the intellect), realms of teaching and learning remain largely unexamined in Australian education.

■ Conclusion

This paper has attempted to draw attention to four issues confronting education in an age of trauma and difficult memory. The first concerns the need to continue to attend to the crises of representation in curriculum, particularly those affective crises that occur outside (or along side) the discursive and the cognitive realms. The second points to the urgency of better theorising the intersubjective in education, particularly in these new times when our attachments to identity categories are contributing to an environment of heightened interpersonal conflict. The third suggests the need to better understand ambivalence and the place of love and hate, and derision and desire in learning and remembering. The fourth argues for the development of teaching and curriculum languages and narratives that better deal with difficult knowledges. What is required are approaches to pedagogy and curriculum that can tolerate awkward ideas and that will assist us to speak the unspeakable. Too often, as teachers, when we erase controversy and trauma from the curriculum in the name of protecting children we rescue ourselves from dealing with uncomfortable knowledge and the realisation of our own ambivalences. However, it is important to teach the story of Beloved in Australia, the story of the reality of incarcerations and deprivations of liberty, of the cruelties delivered to Namatjira and other prominent Indigenous Australians, and to teach histories that are continuous, rather than discontinuous, with our lives. These are the significant challenges to teaching and learning in our times.

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