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To Settle the Settler:
Pathologies of Colonialism in New Zealand History Films
1925 – 2005

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Abstract

Social pathologies are thoroughly intertwined with colonial history. From the colonial project's drive to categorise and treat indigenous disorders, to postcolonial theorists' attempts to understand the psychological effects of (de)colonisation, psychology has provided a lens through which to investigate the (post)colonial condition. For the most part, these psycho-colonial investigations have focused on *either* the colonised or the coloniser, *or* on the relation between them, thus remaining silent on the nature of the settler subject. Unwilling to identify as the coloniser, and unable to identify as the colonised, the settler occupies an ambivalent subject position, in which traditional psychological investigations of colonialism are confounded. Furthermore, too often, postcolonial theorists have recourse to certain pathologies, such as anxiety, melancholy or trauma, without a thorough awareness of the intricacies of the disorder itself. This study is grounded in the belief that, when it comes to understanding the psychical structure of the settler, we need to read colonial disorders anew. With this in mind, my research returns to Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to work through the (post)colonial disorders of the settler subject. Lacanian analysis provides us with one of the most complex languages through which to examine subjectivity and has a long history of association with the discourse of (post)colonialism; it thus provides us with a point of re-entry through which to approach a psychoanalytic exploration of settlement.

This examination will be carried out through analysis of New Zealand settler narratives; in particular, films that return to a specific time in New Zealand's early settlement period: the New Zealand Wars (1843-1972). The Wars occurred in response to what many Māori understood to be breaches in the Treaty of Waitangi (signed in 1840), and were instrumental in forging the identities of both Māori and Pākehā as peoples. Narratives of the New Zealand Wars have been repeated throughout New Zealand's cinematic history, and act as crucibles for the formation of Pākehā (white settler) identity at the time of their making. As 'veils of fantasy' (in Slavoj Žižek's words), films provide us with a back-door into knowledge; by paying attention to what is *not* said about colonial history, to the unspoken and the unspeakable in these films, my research attempts to reveal something about the concealed unconscious structure of the settler subject in New Zealand society.

Dedicated to
Susan Claire Lacey
and
Michael Paul Lacey

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Key to Psychoanalytic Volumes	vii
Table of Illustrations	viii
Glossary of Māori Words.....	ix
Introduction: Unsettled Territory	1
Chapter 1: An Oceanic Feeling:	
Mapping the Contours of Psycho-Colonialism.....	2
Part I: From Colonisation to Nationalism	22
Chapter 2: The Impossible History of Colonisation:	
Locating Settler Trauma in <i>The Te Kooti Trail</i> (1927).....	23
Chapter 3: A Case of Mistaken Identity:	
Settler Identification in <i>Rewi's Last Stand</i> (1940).....	62
Part II: Postcolonial Disorders	93
Chapter 4: Nervous Conditions:	
Settler Anxiety in <i>Pictures</i> (1981).....	94
Chapter 5: The Nation that it was to Become:	
Repetition Automatism in <i>Utu</i> (1983)	121
Part III: Signs of Decolonisation	152
Chapter 6: Tribunal of Love:	
Fantasies of Reconciliation in <i>River Queen</i> (2005).....	153

Conclusion: Homecoming	176
Chapter 7: Analysis Interminable.....	177
 Filmography.....	 181
 Works Cited	 183

Key to Psychoanalytic Volumes

When citing texts by Sigmund Freud, I have used the Standard Edition and included a shortened title of the work in parentheses. Full bibliographic details for each work are provided at the end of the thesis.

When referencing works by Jacques Lacan, in-text citations follow this formula: Seminar: Lecture, Page. For example, the third page of the fifth lecture in his *Seminar on Identification (IX)* will appear as: (IX.5, 3).

The bibliography contains full references for the following, and less utilised, works:

I	1953-54	<i>Seminar I: Freud's Technical Writings</i>
II	1954-5	<i>Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory</i>
VII	1959-60	<i>The Ethics of Psychoanalysis</i>
VII	1960-61	<i>Transference</i>
IX	1961-62	<i>Identification</i>
X	1962-63	<i>Anxiety</i>
XI	1964	<i>The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis</i>
XX	1972-73	<i>Encore</i>

Works in the *Ecrits* will be signalled by an 'E', followed by the page number (English version). The copy used is the W. W. Norton 2006 version, the first complete edition in English.

Table of Illustrations

Figure 1: <i>The Te Kooti Trail</i> : Poster advertising the film's release in New Zealand	48
Figure 2: <i>The Te Kooti Trail</i> : Dedicated to the 'lost legion' of settler soldiers.....	50
Figure 3: Narrative structures in <i>The Te Kooti Trail</i>	52
Figure 4: Preface: historical origins in <i>The Te Kooti Trail</i>	57
Figure 5: Eric Mantell discovers he has been betrayed by his brother	58
Figure 6: <i>Rewi's Last Stand</i> : Ariana and Robert	81
Figure 7: <i>Rewi's Last Stand</i> (1925): Programme created for The Strand Theatre.....	89
Figure 8: Lacan's Framework of Anxiety (X.1, 8)	98
Figure 9: Lacan's New Framework of Anxiety (X.25, 9).....	106
Figure 10: Walter Burton in his studio	116
Figure 11: Publicity still from <i>Pictures</i>	118
Figure 12: Repetition of intersubjective structures in Poe's "The Purloined Letter"	127
Figure 13: British soldiers appear on the brow of the hill in <i>Utu</i>	134
Figure 14: A moment of madness: Williamson holds his quadruple-barrelled shotgun.....	136
Figure 15: Repetition of intersubjective structures in <i>Utu</i>	143
Figure 16: Te Wheke declares <i>utu</i> on the Pākehā	145
Figure 17: Sarah O'Brien throwing pages of her diary into the ocean in <i>River Queen</i>	165
Figure 18: Opening credits of <i>River Queen</i>	167
Figure 19: <i>River Queen</i> : Sarah and Boy	169

Glossary of Māori Words

Ariki	High chief
Iwi	Tribe, bone, race, people, nation, strength
Kaitiaki	Guard, protector, trustee
Maniapoto	Ngati Maniapoto: A tribe based in the Waikato-Waitomo region of New Zealand's North Island
Māoritanga	Māori culture, Māori perspective, Māori way of life
Moko	Tattoo
Ngā Puhi	A northern tribe, spanning from South Hokianga, to the Bay of Plenty, and south to Whangarei
Pā	Stockade, fort, stronghold
Pākehā	Non-Māori, European, Caucasian
Taiaha	Long club, wooden weapon
Tapu	Sacred, forbidden, confidential
Taurekareka	Slave, prisoner of war, scoundrel
Te Reo	The voice, language, or speech of the Māori
Tohunga	Expert, specialist, priest, artist
Turangawae wae	Place to stand, domicile, home
Tūtū ngārahu haka	Posture dance performed by men before going into battle
Utu	Reciprocal or equivalent act
Waiata	Chant of lament
Whakapapa	Genealogy, cultural identity, family tree

All definitions are sourced from P.M. Ryan's *Dictionary of Modern Māori*; full bibliographic details can be found at the end of the thesis.

Introduction:
Unsettled Territory

An Oceanic Feeling: Mapping the Contours of Psycho-Colonialism

“Such is the case of the man who retreats to an island to forget, what? He has forgotten.”

(Lacan, “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”, *Ecrits*, 24)

For me, there is some degree of dissonance in the thought that, as Sigmund Freud was writing his *Interpretation of Dreams*, some remote sections of New Zealand were still embroiled in the New Zealand Land Wars. Nothing could seem more distant than the image of Freud, cigar in hand, sitting at his desk in Vienna and developing his theory of *Traumdeutung*, and Te Kooti Arikirangi eluding colonial troops in the mountains of Te Urewera, Aotearoa New Zealand. At the same time, and in another part of the world again, Auguste and Louis Lumière were busy inventing the cinematograph, soon to exhibit the first moving images to an audience in Paris. At first glance, it seems there is little to connect these events – Freud’s discovery of the unconscious, colonial New Zealand, and the birth of cinema – apart from their temporal coincidence. Yet, in certain, occulted ways, these three events are intimately connected.

This study is an attempt to illuminate the nature of their relation, to survey the contours of their connections. It is an effort to explore the role of colonialism in shaping settler¹ subjectivity in New Zealand through cinematic narrative. Attending to the unsaid and the unsayable of colonial trauma in New Zealand settlement films, it is my contention that we

¹ Settler colonialism can be differentiated from what is generally referred to as occupier colonialism. It involves long-term, or complicit, settlement of the region by the colonisers and their descendants, and results in a quite different dynamic than that of occupier colonialism. ‘Settler (post)colonialism’ or ‘settlement studies’ is increasingly becoming a separate and distinct branch of (post)colonial studies, one that pays attention to the unique context, history and temporality of the settler subject and settler narrative. This is discussed in more detail on page 9.

may be able to understand better the unstable, fragile identity of the white settler (Pākehā) in New Zealand. It is commonplace to hear the claim that Pākehā have no identity, or that – if we do – it is unstable, insecure, and fraught with difficulty (see, for example, Bell 2006; Turner 2002; Williams 1997). Comedian Ewen Gilmore expressed the feelings of many Pākehā when he commented in 2000 that: “My family has been in New Zealand for 150 years, on both sides of the family. I have no claims to anything in Britain, and there has been no Māori blood in the family, so I have no identity” (qtd. in Bain 2000, 11). Māori filmmaker Merata Mita has suggested that it is this perceived lack of identity that characterises Pākehā filmmaking in New Zealand, giving rise to a “white, neurotic” film industry.² This ‘white neurosis’ of Pākehā identity, the pathologies associated with it and their symptomatic expression in film-texts, becomes the subject of analysis in the chapters that follow.

First, however, it is worth drawing in contours of the map, paying particular attention to the places where the three areas meet, in order to chart my journey. I have borrowed the title for this chapter from Freud, who used the term ‘oceanic feeling’ in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) to describe the sense of boundlessness between the ego and the external world. As Ranjana Khanna notes, “the term was derived from Romain Rolland, who on reading Freud’s text on religion, *The Future of an Illusion*, had corresponded with him calling for a broader understanding of feelings afforded by religious experience” (2003, 91). For me, its signification is three-fold. First, at a purely textual level, it consociates two central signifiers of this thesis: ‘Ocean(ia)’, as a geographical region encompassing New Zealand, and the ‘feelings’ associated with living here. Second, it signals the relationship between the individual and the cultural (or the ‘external world’) that is an overarching concern of my work. And finally, it signals, at a personal level, the sense of overwhelming boundlessness I have experienced in relation to the theoretical horizon of this work. Drawing from discourses of Lacanian psychoanalysis, (settler) postcolonialism, and film theory, and at a wider level, from discourses of nationalism, memory, history and ideology, this is also an attempt to navigate a route through a number of – at times – disparate ideas, without getting lost in the

² She writes: “The notion of the white man or woman at odds with his/her environment, with his/her country and himself/herself, has been the theme of many New Zealand films... What I find curious is the way that these films repeatedly fail to analyse and articulate the colonial syndrome of dislocation that is evident in such works. What appears on the screen are the symptoms of a deeper malaise... [and] what becomes clear [in many Pākehā films] is the absence of identity and how driven by fear and repression these films are” (Mita 1992, 47). I also refer the reader to Sam Neill’s documentary, *Cinema of Unease* (dir. Sam Neill and Judy Rymer, 1995), wherein he traces New Zealand’s (and particularly the Pākehā’s) brooding, dark and uneasy cinematic self-representations.

ocean of theory. What follows then, is not an exhaustive mapping of each area that constitutes and informs my thinking, but rather the points at which they become mutually applicatory.

The Madness of Colonisation / The Colonisation of Madness

The trope of cartography introduced above is by no means accidental. From Freud's 'discovery' of psychoanalysis and his description of female sexuality as a 'dark continent', to the overwhelming presence of the landscape (both psychical and physical) in New Zealand film, to the very act of colonisation itself, my research has been shadowed by geographic metaphors. Of course, I am far from the first to notice this. Psychoanalysis and colonialism, in particular, have often been brought together through this very metaphor. Ever since Freud borrowed the phrase 'dark continent' from Welsh explorer Henry Morton Stanley, who used it to describe Africa, colonialism and psychoanalysis have been (often unhappy) bedfellows. Indeed, one could go even further, and argue that Freud's description was symptomatic of a much deeper relation. Khanna, in her book *Dark Continents*, argues that psychoanalysis itself is a "colonial discipline... [that] brought into the world an idea of being that was dependant on colonial political and ontological relations" (2003, 6). For her, "psychoanalysis could emerge only when Europe's nations were entering modernity through their relationship with the colonies" (2003, 10), indicating a link between colonialism and psychoanalysis that runs far deeper than a catchy turn-of-phrase.³

Using Martin Heidegger's term 'worlding', Khanna describes the process whereby psychoanalysis brought into the world 'unconcealed' colonial beings (colonisers, settlers), and their 'concealed' opposites (the colonised, the weak, the poor).⁴ She writes:

³ Similarly, Nicholas Dirks articulates the manner in which colonialism was intricately related to systems of knowledge. He writes: "Colonial conquest was not just the result of the power of superior arms, military organisation, political power or economic wealth – as important as these things were. Colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule as it was by the more obvious and brutal modes of conquest that first established power on foreign shores... Colonialism was itself a cultural product of control" (1996, ix). See also: Cohn 1996; Keller 2007; McCulloch 1995; and Bhugra and Littlewood 2001.

⁴ According to Khanna, Martin Heidegger describes 'worlding' as "the production of art in the space between earth and world" (2003, 3). Referring to Heidegger's work in "The Thing", she quotes: "The world presences by worlding. That means: the world's worlding cannot be explained by anything else, nor can it be fathomed through anything else... As soon as human cognition here calls for an explanation, it fails to transcend the world's nature, and falls short of it". She elaborates: "If 'actual language' is 'the happening of this saying,' then art is not so much an object that represents something already existing. Rather, it is an event or a condition for the possibility of coming into being. Worlding performs the 'unconcealedness of being' because it brings new ways of being in the world, along with the attendant concealedness of the earth that occurs simultaneously" (2003, 2).

The development of psychoanalysis brought into existence a new way of being in the world for men and women across the globe in its rendition of modern national selfhood. Just as some were spoken into existence through the discipline, others were created, or worlded, as its underside, rendered as the earth, or as primitive beings against which the modern European self, in need of psychoanalysis, was situated. (2003, 2-3)

The process of “worlding psychoanalysis”, she argues, is predicated on a fundamental strife. That is to say, in its rendering of the colonised Other as the underside of the European Self, psychoanalysis is not only shaped by, but *shapes*, colonial violence. As she suggests, reading psychoanalysis ‘against its grain’, that is to say, symptomatically as a colonial discourse, allows us to understand the co-implication of colonialism with psychoanalysis.

In her introduction Khanna references an earlier text by Jacques Derrida, one that continues our cartographic theme. In 1981, Derrida received an invitation to speak in front of the International Psycho-Analytic Association (IPA); the paper he delivered was entitled: “Geopsychanalysis: ‘... And the Rest of the World’”. The title comes from a quote – a remark, a *‘bon mot’* he says – embedded in the IPA’s proposed Constitution of 1977. It read: “The Association’s main geographical areas are defined at this time as America north of the United States-Mexican border; all America south of that border; and the rest of the world” (1998, 65). Taking this ‘rest of the world’ as his starting point, Derrida points out that psychoanalysis is oblivious to the world outside (Western) Europe and the Americas. For Derrida, the language of the IPA’s document betrays a sort of colonising desire – he even uses the term “psychoanalytic colonisation” – for virgin territories, as yet unanalysed:

It suggests that for psychoanalysis there are continents, semi-continents, peninsular entities – some of them peninsulas thickly settled by psychoanalysts and psychoanalysis, others as yet virgin, half-continents black or white; and that is more or less one dark continent only, and one more or less dark – dark, that is, uncleared or unexplored land is dark, black like femaleness, like a sex, like the skin of some people, like evil, like the unutterable horror of violence, torture, and extermination. All this made me wonder whether it might not be possible to adopt a sort of ‘map-reading’ approach to psychoanalysis. (1998, 67)

In this speech, he also calls the IPA to task for their apoliticism, for their refusal to speak in any way other than the most abstracted about politics and world events.

Indeed, these two observations, that psychoanalysis is both apolitical and a colonial/masculinist discourse, form the basis for most anti-psychoanalytic critiques (see, for instance, Greedharrry 2008; Loomba 2005; Parry 2004; Spivak 1999; Stoler 2002). Elizabeth

Abel sums up this stance when she writes (in the context of feminism, although it is equally applicable to postcolonial theory):

The traditional indifference of psychoanalysis to racial, class and cultural differences, and the tendency of psychoanalysis to insulate subjectivity from social practices and discourses runs contrary to a feminism increasingly attuned to the power of social exigencies and differences in the constitution of subjectivity... Psychoanalytic accounts of subjectivity... have lost [their] material groundings and with them the possibility of interpreting (and thereby promoting) social change. (1990, 184)

Nonetheless, psychoanalytic interpretations of colonialism (or, conversely, postcolonial analyses of psychoanalysis) persist in the social sciences. Most often, these psycho-colonial analyses are performed in the service of postcolonial ethics and/or politics, revealing the insidious psychological effects of colonisation on colonial beings (Bhabha 1990, 1994a, 1994b; Fanon 2008; Lane 1998; Nandy 1983, 1993, 1998; Rose 1996, 2007; Seshadri-Crooks 2000). For me, this *ambivalence* of psychoanalytic discourse – its function as a kind of discursive double agent – is just as revealing as the specific nature of the arguments themselves. Dating back to Frantz Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952), psychoanalysis has been understood as both a discourse of colonialism, as well as a tool *against* it. Fanon's work in *Black Skin, White Masks*, for example, politicises Freud-Lacanian psychoanalysis for the Algerian anti-colonial movement. In this seminal text, Fanon seeks to understand and explain the psychic effects of colonialism on the colonised, reconsidering the self-other relation inherent to psychoanalysis in terms of the colonial context. Within the colonialist regime of representation, Fanon argues, the black man becomes the repository of all that the white man has repressed; as he famously put it: "The real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man" (2008, 161).

However, and as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, Fanon's text is, itself, marked by a fundamental ambivalence. It appears torn, or split, within itself, unable to fully realise or resolve the central hypotheses of the text. In the preface to a recent edition of *Black Skin*, Bhabha comments: "To read Fanon is to experience the sense of division that prefigures – and fissures – the emergence of a truly radical thought that never dawns without casting an uncertain dark" (2008, ix). For Bhabha, the "awkward division that breaks his line of thought keeps alive the dramatic and enigmatic sense of the process of change" (2008, ix.), a rupture that is best heard in another of Fanon's aphorisms: "*The Negro is not. Any more than the white man*" (2008, 231). As Fanon makes explicit on a textual level, the coupling of

psychoanalysis with colonialism is not a straight-forward matter; while, on the one hand, it opens up an entirely new continent of knowledge, it has never been a peaceful co-habitation. Indeed, one could say that Fanon reveals, at a textual level, the violence of the process of ‘worlding’ described by Khanna.

For his part, Bhabha elaborates the conceptual and textual ambivalence he detects in Fanon’s work, and makes it a central theoretical tenet of his own. Bhabha’s *oeuvre* represents the internalisation of the dissemblance between psychoanalysis and colonialism, positing it as a fundamental part of the postcolonial condition. Like Fanon’s work before him, psychoanalysis is, in the hands of Bhabha, both a tool of colonialism and a weapon against it. From a purely textual (rather than clinical) perspective, Bhabha uses psychoanalysis as a discourse against itself, employing it in order to write against the Eurocentric framework of colonialism from within. Throughout *Location of Culture* (1994a), in particular, Bhabha uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to emphasise that colonial discourse is not simply a matter of truth and deception, but rather a complex, ambivalent process of interaction, in which simple binaries are revealed as nonsensical.

Thus, as Mrinalini Greedharri points out, “despite the problematic inheritance of racialised thinking, on the one hand, and the relative unimportance of race and racism to mainstream psychoanalytic theory on the other”, psychoanalysis remains one of the most important and recurring methodologies in colonial critique (2008, 4). In particular, psychoanalysis provides one of the most sophisticated and developed theories for the understanding of subjectivity and identification for scholars today. As Bhabha argues, with the dissolution of traditional identificatory categories of class and gender during the twentieth century, we have become more attuned to other subject positions (such as race, sexual orientation, geopolitical locale, and so on). In this intellectual climate, Bhabha continues, psychoanalysis, particularly in its Lacanian guise, provides a framework through which we can understand subjectivity in a way that does not essentialise identity. In particular, he argues, the psychoanalytic understanding of the decentred subject allows us to focus on the production of subjectivity in and through cultural difference (1994a, 2).⁵

⁵ He writes: “These ‘in-between’ spaces provide the terrain for articulating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (1994a, 2).

The psychoanalytic approach is, most often, part of the repertoire of critics who foreground cultural approaches to colonialism (Greedharry 2008, 5-6). With a sensitivity to the realm of the emotional, the pathological and the affective, psychoanalytic critiques of colonialism provide an additional dimension to purely economic, material or political accounts.⁶ For the editors of *Postcolonial Disorders* (2008), understanding colonialism through the domain of psychoanalysis allows for an emphasis on “pathologies, modes of suffering, the domain of the imaginary, [and] forms of repression” that form a central dimension of colonialism as lived experience (Good et al. 2008, 2). Leela Gandhi, for her part, links this psychoanalytic approach to colonialism with an *ethical dimension*. For Gandhi, the critical lesson of Lacanian psychoanalysis for postcolonialism is that we should not try to therapeutically ‘get over’ colonial history. As Lacan taught us, by the end of analysis, we need to pass beyond our desire to be cured, or to learn full knowledge about our unconscious, but rather discover, for ourselves, the inherent lack in our own being. Thus, for Gandhi, a psychoanalytic approach to colonialism can teach us to ‘accept our own lack’ as colonial beings (2010).⁷

By and large, psycho-colonial discourses have, following Bhabha, highlighted a number of symptoms or pathologies. As a result, the language of cultural approaches to postcolonialism is haunted by terms such as *anxiety* (Bhabha 1994b; Lawson 1998; Moran 2002; Sugars 2005); *guilt* (Lu 2008; Rymhs 2006); *melancholia* and *mourning* (Attwood 2005; Khanna 2003; Margaroni 2003; Rymhs 2006; Sorensen 2007; Sugars 2004; Turner 1999); *trauma* (Burrows 2008; Craps and Buelens 2008; Lloyd 2000; Meek 2005; Rothberg 2009); and *the uncanny* (Gelder and Jacobs 1998; MacDonald-D’Costa 2009; Mishra and Hodge 2005). However, and as Good et al. have pointed out, the use of psychological/psychoanalytic terms for understanding group processes under colonialism remain undertheorised (2008, 3). That is to say, when it comes to understanding (post)colonial experience and psychic phenomena, the psychoanalytic origin and knowledge of the disorder itself often vanishes under the larger project of postcolonial critique. As such, for example, we often hear about ‘postcolonial anxiety’ without an in-depth analysis of what, precisely, this ‘anxiety’ entails. This study is an attempt to return to these pathologies of colonialism with an emphasis on the pathologies themselves. Just as Lacan reread Freud, my study is an attempt to reread Lacan, as the often

⁶ I am not suggesting that psychoanalytic accounts of (post)colonialism are somehow more important than other approaches. Rather, it is my opinion that it is one of a range of possible approaches to the analysis of colonialism, meant to complement, rather than replace, other approaches.

⁷ See also Simone Drichel’s “The Time of Hybridity”, in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 34, 6 (2008): 587-616. Although this article does not treat Gandhi’s engagement with Lacanian ethics, it provides an excellent account of her theory of postcolonial ethics in general.

unacknowledged point of origin of many of these psychic disorders, through an understanding of (settler) postcolonialism. It is an attempt, to refer to the example above, to understand better the ‘anxiety’ in what we have come to call ‘postcolonial anxiety’, or the ‘trauma’ in ‘postcolonial trauma’.

Settler Origins

Notwithstanding some recent scholarship (Johnson and Lawson 2000; Sugars 2004, 2005), most analyses of colonial pathologies rely on the *relation duelle* between the coloniser and the colonised. This is coeval with the majority trend in postcolonial theory in general, which has traditionally been based on analyses of occupier-colonialism. During the past decade or so, however, efforts have been made to distinguish and describe different kinds of colonies.⁸ At a general level, historians of colonisation have identified two types of colonies: colonies of *occupation*, and colonies of *settlement* (Johnson and Lawson 2000, 360).⁹ Colonies of occupation include most of the European colonies in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Typically, they involved the use of military power to control indigenous populations, as well as the installation of political regimes to impose and maintain rule over the native inhabitants. In such cases, colonialism was undertaken for trade or military advantage, and those in power usually remained distanced from internal governance or acts of land confiscation or seizure (Elkins and Pederson 2005, 2). In colonies of occupation, decolonisation was very often violent and/or revolutionary, usually involving the indigenous population reclaiming democratic rule and restoring indigenous social and cultural practices and institutions (Johnson and Lawson 2000, 360-61; Loomba 2005, 13).

Settler colonies, on the other hand, involved long-term or permanent colonial settlement; this is what Mishra and Hodge have described as “complicit” (post)colonialism (2005, xi-xii). Lorenzo Veracini emphasises the *progressive narrative* of the settler state, with its origins in indigenous dispossession followed by multicultural inclusion (2006, 2). This progressive narrative of the settler nation is usually characterised by a distancing, or disavowal, of

⁸ Generally dated as 1989, with the appearance of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, Eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin. London and New York: Routledge, 1989.

⁹ Johnson and Lawson also signal several other ‘types’, such as plantation colonies and mixed colonies. As Johnson and Lawson have noted, “it is clear that even within the overseas imperial expansion of a single European nation, many different arrangements were made for the management of colonial relations” (2000, 360). Leela Gandhi also outlines the distinct types of colonialism. Based on Nandy’s descriptions, she provides the distinction between chronologically distinct types or genres of colonialism: “The first was relatively simple-minded in its focus on the physical conquest of territories; where the second (settler) type was more insidious in its commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves, cultures” (1998, 15).

colonial origins, predicated on the desire of the settlers to deny complicity with colonisation. I will return to the characteristics of the settler narrative in a moment, but for now, it is worth noting, along with Elkins and Pederson, that the ongoing presence of the colonisers and their descendants in the settler nation, results in “a very different dynamic than occupier colonialism” (Elkins and Pederson 2005, 2).

This dynamic is particularly evident in the imaginary construction of the settler subject. Indeed, as Lawson points out, the term ‘settler’ itself indicates a kind of postcolonial longing to be seen as distinct and separate from colonial origins (1998, 27). Unwilling to identify as coloniser, and unable to identify as colonised, the settler subject occupies an identificatory position somewhere ‘in-between’. It is this kind of unstable, interstitial positioning, as both colonised and colonising, that has led critics of settler postcolonialism to highlight the ambivalence of the settler subject. As Lawson has argued, this ambivalence gives way, within the settler, to a feeling of lack, of instability and, paradoxically, *unsettlement* (1998, 155). It is this fretful identity that is the common experience of Pākehā settlers in New Zealand, described by Gilmore as being ‘without identity’, or Mita as a ‘neurotic’ one. Further, the ambivalent identity of the settler subject, and the ‘different dynamic’ of settler colonialism, problematizes earlier psycho-colonial models of interpretation. This research, then, is also an attempt to go some way to reconsidering psycho-colonial dynamics for the specific situation of the New Zealand settler.

As Julian Thomas has argued, the ambivalent identity of the settler requires a particular relationship to history (1999, 115). Simply put, because the settler identifies as both coloniser and colonised, colonial history becomes a problematic matter. Alan Lawson has pointed out that, in settler societies, the colonial past remains unfinished at a *narrative* level. This is evidenced, Lawson says, by the fact that stories about colonial history and early settlement keep being recirculated, as well as how easily they are “reactivated, recognised and read” by settler society (2000, 19). As Thomas says of the Australian situation: “The early period of white settlement has been regarded as a special source of information about Australia – a key witness, as it were, in the continuing arguments about the country’s character and destiny. ‘The entire man is, so to speak, to be seen in the cradle of the child’” (1999, 118). Similarly, in the Canadian context, Cynthia Sugars notes the national obsession with identifying Canadian ‘firsts’. For her, such attempts seek a foundational narrative for Canada’s white

origins, representing a desire for an “ab-originality that is not aboriginal” (2005, 178).¹⁰ Lois Parkinson Zamora has identified this desire as an “anxiety of origins”, an anxiety that, she says, characterises New World cultures, and appeals to the need for legitimisation on the part of the settler (1997, ix).

From this perspective, stories of early settlement function to legitimise the settler presence, as well as delegitimise indigenous prior claim. Due to the reliance upon historical narrative, says Lawson, the settler is, by and large, a *narrativising* being: “The settler, it increasingly seems to me, is above all a teller of tales. It is in narrative that settler subjectivity calls itself into being and it is in narratives that it can be located and its symptomatic utterances analysed. The settler... is ‘essentially’ a narrating subject” (2000, 27). Certainly, in the New Zealand context, national history has become a national obsession. For a country with a population of just four million, New Zealand produces an overabundance of history books, many of which take the entire ‘Story of New Zealand’ as their subject matter. It seems our national appetite for history crosses over into the realm of film, literature, television, and fine arts too, as we seek to lay a claim to belonging that extends as far back as the days of early settlement.

These narratives of legitimisation, however, reveal a certain paradox. While they testify to the obsession with settler origins, producing an abundance of historical material, they also rely on a kind of *historylessness*. Historylessness or forgetting, Veracini argues, has become a common trope in settler societies (2007, 271), and is related to the utopian visions of places like Australia and New Zealand. For the early settlers, New Zealand was conceived as a *tabula rasa*, a utopian space without a history, where the settler-coloniser could start afresh. As part of this process, Veracini suggests, new settlers were/are required to leave behind Old World traditions, such as history and politics (2007, 272). As such, settler societies often appear to be always projected into the future, conceived as an imaginary community which is always yet to come into being, always under construction (Lamb 1999, 80-1; Thomas 1999, 124; Turner 1999; Veracini 2007, 271-2). This act of collective amnesia about certain aspects of our past allows settlers to hold on to a sense of belonging and construct a legitimate narrative of occupation.

I would like to suggest that the instability of the settler subject, as well as of the settler narrative, is predicated on a foundational trauma for the settler. This is *not* the trauma that

¹⁰ She goes on to say: “the urge for origins has long been an obsession in Canadian cultural history, perhaps because such origins are a chimera” (2005, 178).

Stephen Turner identifies in “Settlement as Forgetting” as the trauma of dislocation from the Old Country (1999, 20); but, rather, *the trauma of colonisation* itself. As I discuss in detail in the following chapter, colonisation may be said to manifest in different traumatic symptoms for the Māori and the Pākehā. For Māori, as colonised, trauma likely consists of the loss of land, language, identity, self-determination, as well as oppression by the Government, the media and other institutions, giving rise to what Hon. Tariana Turia has described as a “Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder” (qtd. in MacDonald 2003). However, I would like to suggest that Pākehā also experience a kind of trauma, one that is more insidious, occulted, and unspoken. This settler trauma is inscribed as colonisation itself, and presents the settler subject, and the settler narrative, with an *impossible origin*. Descended from colonisers, but unable and unwilling to maintain this genealogical link (due to our ongoing presence in the country), this origin takes the form of an enigma, a lack, an empty place, and an unrepresentable origin. Settler narratives, upon which we pin our claim to belonging, continually return to the early days of settlement, but – in order to secure a legitimate sense of identity as Pākehā – must occlude this original colonising act. However, as the basic lesson of psychoanalysis teaches us, when we repress something, the original point of trauma, we are condemned to repeat it. In this way, settler narratives such as the kind we encounter in the films that follow, are testimonials of this originary settler trauma, through which we tell ourselves, over and again, the impossible story of belonging in New Zealand.

Settlement Films

This is the fantasy space inhabited by each of the films in this study. Each, in their own way, covers over the trauma of colonisation for the settler, and reveals an unfulfilled desire for legitimacy. The five films in this study all return to a particular colonial scene: the New Zealand Wars (1843-1872).¹¹ All of them chart the emergence of the settler subject and deal,

¹¹ The preeminent historian of the New Zealand Wars, James Belich, places the main body of the Wars between the years of 1843 and 1872, although he dates the “real end” of the Wars at 1916, with the police invasion at Maungapohatu. According to Belich, this was New Zealand’s own civil war, and is one of the most decisive moments in our history, despite the fact that official history has longed reduced it to a series of ‘clean little fights’. The Wars are now generally accepted to be decisive in actually forging the identities of both Māori and Pākehā as peoples. As Belich contends, “the Wars helped *make* Māori and Pākehā, lumping Māori tribes into a people and splitting the Pākehā settlers off from the old British. They were New Zealand’s great Civil War – the grand clash of two peoples” (“Documentary”). The Wars have played a leading role in the many and proliferating histories of New Zealand, being remembered, returned to, repeated throughout the ages and acting as a barometer for the issue of race relations in New Zealand, as well as the identities of Māori, Pākehā, and ‘New Zealanders’ (1986); see also Belich’s *Making Peoples* (1996); Binney, Bassett and Olssen’s *The People and the Land: Te Tangata me te Whenua* (1993); Alan Ward’s *A Show of Justice* (1995); Paul Moon’s *The Edges of Empires: New Zealand in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (2009); and Danny Keenan’s *Wars Without End* (2009).

in their own way, with the unfinished narrative of colonisation. First in the series is Rudall Hayward's 1927 feature, *The Te Kooti Trail*, which I read through Lacan's notion of trauma. Here, I present my argument that it is the act of colonisation that functions as the constitutive trauma for the Pākehā – an unrepresentable, unspeakable origin that permeates subsequent settler pathologies. The next film is another of Hayward's, *Rewi's Last Stand*, released to New Zealand in 1940. Considering the dynamics of identity construction in this film, I chart the construction of the settler subject from colonial being to Pākehā settler. Founded on Lacan's concept of symbolic identity, I argue that, in order to exist as a *settler*, we must retrospectively erase (or forget) our history as colonisers – an erasure, like the act of colonisation itself, which condemns us to continually insist upon its concealment. Taken together, both of these films chart the emergence of settler identity in New Zealand from the period of colonial fealty to nascent nationalism.

The next two films in this series are products of the early 1980s. It should be noted that, between the time of 1940 and the late 1970s, New Zealand had little feature film industry to speak of, releasing only three films (all by John O'Shea) during this time. Various social, political, cultural and economic factors converged in the late 1970s, which gave rise to a renewed enthusiasm for local cinema;¹² *Pictures* (dir. Michael Black, 1981), and *Utu* (dir. Geoff Murphy, 1983) were part of this cinematic New Wave.¹³ Both films engage with the current social and political climate in New Zealand, which was experiencing what Ranginui Walker has described as a "Māori cultural renaissance" (1990, 209) and a disintegration in the Pākehā construction of the national imaginary.¹⁴ However, the treatment of these issues for the settler subject varies considerably from one film to the other. My analysis of *Pictures* turns on Lacan's notion of anxiety, arguing that settler anxiety is not, as it is commonly understood, a feeling of uncertainty about our sense of legitimacy. Rather, and following Lacan, I argue that the anxiety evident in this film is about absolute certainty: the certainty that the colonial past is too close to the present, and the need to retreat into the fantasy of liberal politics in the present. My analysis of *Utu*, on the other hand, engages with the

¹² For more on this, see *Contemporary New Zealand Cinema: From New Wave to Blockbuster*, edited by Ian Conrich and Stuart Murray (2008), in particular, section one: "Industry and Commerce" (pp.17-101).

¹³ A note on the timing of the release of both films: both films were made almost simultaneously. *Utu*, however, was released to New Zealand audiences first, in 1983. The director and producer of *Pictures*, in order to avoid direct comparison with *Utu*, and in order to obtain international testimonials, decided to release the film overseas first (in 1981). This explains why, in my chapter on *Pictures*, which is dated prior to *Utu*, reviewers are able to compare the film directly with *Utu* (even though it appears that it was released after *Pictures*).

¹⁴ For more contextual analyses on New Zealand in the late 1970s and 1980s, see: Bell 2006; Fox 2009; Murray 2008; J. Pollock 2004.

construction of the settler narrative itself through Lacan's concept of repetition automatism. Here, I suggest that *Utu* posits the contemporary political instability of the nation (in the 1980s) as a repetition of events set in motion during the New Zealand Wars. In this case, I suggest, the film constructs a retrospective narrative of nation, in which events in the past are seen as the direct cause of psychic and political effects in the present.

The final film in my series, *River Queen* (dir. Vincent Ward, 2005), returns to the so-called reconciliation of conflict in the New Zealand Wars (Tītokowaru's War) and overlays it with a model of reconciliation between Māori and Pākehā in the present. Here, I engage with Lacan's notion of love, and consider how love provides the fantasy space in which decolonisation can effectively be imagined. However, as Lacan teaches us, love is a lure, a deception that covers over the impossibility of complete and harmonious relations between people. Like its predecessors, *River Queen* functions as a fantasy space, which both plays out and feeds into the settler's desire for legitimacy. Indeed, despite approaching each film from a different starting position – trauma, identification, anxiety, narrative temporality, and love – each analysis interacts and overlaps with the others in certain ways. Taken as a whole, this study creates an elaborate net of signification around the notion of the settler subject, which always appears to come to the same place and in which – by the end of the study – we will have inscribed the very experience of settlement at a discursive level.

No Mere Analogy

Now that I have detoured around the five films, we must return to the terrain of psychoanalysis. Like postcolonial theory, film studies shares an intimate – yet equally fraught – history with psychoanalysis. I will resist diving into the history of Lacanian film theory here, and focus instead on the more philosophical concern of what is known as 'applied psychoanalysis'.¹⁵ I mentioned earlier that one of the 'oceanic feelings' that constitute this study is the relationship between the individual (as subject of the unconscious) and the cultural (the realm of ideology, politics and texts) – precisely, what is at stake in applied psychoanalysis. From my own experience, and as Jean-Michel Rabaté points out (2001), clinical psychoanalysts are often troubled by what they see as a simple application of psychoanalytic theory to cultural texts. For them, psychoanalysis provides the method through which the subject – the individual subject of the unconscious – is able to realise the

¹⁵ For more on Lacanian film theory, see: Jean Louis Baudry 1975; Mary Ann Doane 1987; Mladen Dolar 2006; Henry Krips 1999; Todd McGowan 2000, 2005, 2007; McGowan and Kunkle 2004; Christian Metz 1982; Laura Mulvey 1988; Jacqueline Rose 1986; and Kaja Silverman 1988, 1995.

nature of their own subjectivity (desires, fantasies, constitutive lack) through the transferential relationship with the analyst. While psychoanalysis provides the framework, the analytic scene itself is absolutely unique, different from one patient to the next, and thus impossible to apply to the cultural domain.

Of course, the commonplace and traditional counterargument is that Freud himself used his psychoanalytic knowledge to understand culture, particularly in *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva* (1907), *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* (1910), *Totem and Taboo* (1912-1913), *Thoughts for the Times of War and Death* (1915), *The Uncanny* (1919), *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930), and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). However, and despite this, the relationship between the individual subject and culture in psychoanalytic discourses continues to plague scholars to this day; there is a long history of 'applied' psychoanalysis, but no clear agreement on just how (or why) it becomes applied. Indeed, for scholars working in the terrain roughly designated by the term *cultural psychoanalysis*, it seems that the gap between the individual and culture is fundamentally *traumatic*, resistant to full knowledge or comprehension.

For the most part, and as Good et al. point out, this relation is often figured simply in metaphorical terms. They write:

The social and the psychological are often brought together through the assertion or the sleight of hand of metaphorical linkages: psychotic individuals linked metaphorically to mad crowds, as in popular discourse; traumatic memory as individual and communal; anxiety, insecurity, paranoia, and dissociation of whole societies as well as individual experience. (2008, 3)

To this we might add Tom Nairn's well-known description of nationalism as a pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as neurosis in the individual (1977, 347), or Slavoj Žižek's analysis of nationalism as "the eruption of enjoyment into the social field" (1993, 202). Shoshana Felman, for her part, has suggested we speak not of 'applied psychoanalysis', but the 'implication' of psychoanalysis with other forms of knowledge in a way that is mutually dependent (1987). Whereas Nancy Chodorow's approach represents the "both-and" (rather than "either-or") school of thought, which merely synthesizes

(Post)colonialism with psychoanalysis (and within this, a range of psychoanalytic theories) with little or no justification (1999, 2-3).¹⁶

Bhabha's approach, on the other hand, is more sophisticated, and, I believe, follows most closely the example set by Lacan. Bhabha places the individual and the cultural unapologetically within the same ontological space. Indeed, within the text itself, Bhabha often moves without warning or explanation between the site of the subject and that of society, reminding us that the two cannot be thought separately. Consider, for example, the following passage:

The wider significance of the postmodern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonised, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities. For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasant and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees. It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond I have drawn out: 'Always and ever differently the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways of men to and fro, so that they may get to other banks... the bridge *gathers* as a passage that crosses'. (1994a, 6-7; emphasis in original)

As this text indicates, Bhabha creates a textual space in which the 'boundaries' of the subject and society become permeable. While, according to traditional Eurocentric epistemologies, the subject and society exist as separate entities (the subject is on one side of the 'bank', society on the other), Bhabha creates a space that, like a bridge, crosses between the two, back and forth, to and fro. In this crossing, this interstitial space of the 'post' modern and 'post' colonial, we may move *beyond* the binary divisions of the individual and the world. As psychoanalysis – as a traditional Eurocentric discourse aimed at the individual – comes into contact with the colonial, the intimate meeting of the two, dissonant worlds provides precisely the kind of ambivalent space in which to enact the psychic processes at work in colonialism.

¹⁶ Chodorow writes: "I investigate how we can reconcile an apparently incompatible method and theory: on the one hand, a clinical method that is directed to unravelling, and that documents incontrovertibly, the particularistic uniqueness of each individual psyche and life history and each analytic pair in the unfolding of the treatment and, on the other, a theory that purports to explain and describe how the psyche functions in all humans.... Throughout, I tend to adopt a both-and rather than an either-or theoretical stance in response to the tensions and contradictions I address. I have always been a theoretical synthesizer" (1999, 2-3).

Lacan himself always asserted that he was ‘anti-applied psychoanalysis’, especially when it was applied to art and literature. As Rabaté writes, “under the guise of a ‘return to Freud’, he was the first to criticise what passes as ‘psychobiography’ and ‘deep psychology’, even if this was the mode in which Freud himself worked” (2001, 183). However, Lacan himself drew heavily on literature, art and poetry in his Seminars; indeed, his Seminars are notable for the almost complete *absence* of his own clinical case studies. Looking closely at his Seminars and writings, it becomes clear that, when Lacan ‘reads’ literary texts, he does so in the same way as he would a patient. Not only does this secure his claim that the unconscious is *written*, but emphasises the fact that psychoanalysis is, at the most basic level, an experience of reading and writing. While any work may lend itself to a psychoanalytic criticism, Lacan’s own method suggests that the work itself is *equivalent to* the unconscious; as Bhabha’s text demonstrates, the difference between one and the other is a fantasy of Eurocentric, Enlightenment knowledge. In Lacan’s own words:

The literary work fails or succeeds, but this failure is not due to the imitating effects of the structure. The work only exists in that curvature which is that of the structure itself. We are left with no mere analogy. The curvature mentioned here is no more a metaphor for the structure than the structure is a metaphor of the unconscious. It is real, and, in this sense, the work imitates nothing. It is, as fiction, a truthful structure. (qtd. in Rabaté 2001, 4)¹⁷

Against those who construct a metaphorical relation between the subject and the cultural, Lacan insists that fiction itself *reveals* the unconscious in its very structures. Seen in this light, Lacan’s war on applied psychoanalysis can be understood as a charge against the naiveté of the concept itself for, as he shows us in every Seminar, there is nothing ‘applied’ about reading fiction psychoanalytically. Like the subject him/herself, it is, ‘as fiction, a truthful structure’.

Thus, as Žižek teaches us, we need to be aware of the fictional structure not simply as a fantasy space, but what the fantasy itself conceals; he writes:

The psychoanalytic notion of fantasy cannot be reduced to that of a fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation; the first, rather obvious thing to add is that the relationship between fantasy and the horror of the Real it conceals is much more ambiguous than

¹⁷ I have relied on Rabaté’s citation here as this text is yet to be translated into English. The quote appears in a preface that Lacan wrote for Robert Georgin’s book, *Lacan*, from 1977, entitled “C’est à la lecture de Freud...”, and can be found on page 16 in the original text.

it may seem: fantasy conceals this horror, yet at the same time, it creates what it purports to conceal, its 'repressed' point of reference. (1997, 4)

Cinema, as the fantasy scene *par excellence*, provides the perfect space in and through which to attempt to locate the horror of the Real. To do so, as Žižek suggests, we need to pay attention not only to what the fantasy *reveals*, that is to say, how it plays out our desires on the screen, but to what it *conceals*: what is left unsaid, what is absent, what is subjugated and hidden – those points in the film-text where it begins to unravel and expose something of its truthful structure 'from behind' the fantastic *mise-en-scène*.

In the films that form the basis for my own analyses, then, I attempt to locate, or glimpse, the Real (horror) of colonialism as it is revealed and concealed by the fantasy on screen. According to Žižek, fantasy is "a primordial lie, a screen masking a fundamental *impossibility*" (1997, 20), and it is precisely the *impossibility* of the settler position that my analyses are directed towards. As subject, the settler cannot identify as either coloniser or colonised, left to occupy the shifting, unsettled ground in between. In its narrative form, the settler is both obliged to remember at the same time as s/he is required to forget. Both of these ambivalent double-binds refer to the original act of colonisation, and mark out the settler subject as a fundamental *impossibility*. These films, then, as narratives of settlement, mask this impossibility at the same time as they point to it, attempting to resolve the fundamental antagonism of the settler position. In this way, and reading them as one would a patient, they open the back door to the unconscious structure of the Pākehā settler subject.

Lacan's approach to fiction was often to take the naïve approach, asking "basic" questions such as: Why do we tell stories? Why do we write? Why do we read? What touches us in this process? Why do we like certain texts and not others? Why do we read the same story more than once? (Rabaté 2001, 3). In many ways, then, this thesis is an attempt to answer some of the basic questions about New Zealand cinema: Why do Pākehā filmmakers repeatedly return to narratives of settlement? What function do these narratives fulfil? What is it we enjoy about consuming these stories? The answers that emerge from the film analyses that follow are remarkably consistent. The films, as fantasies of settlement history, offer a safe haven in which to explore the ambivalence of settler identity. They fulfil a collective appetite for settler history, and an ongoing search for an origin that is consistent, coherent and which offers us access to a sense of legitimacy, as 'white natives', or 'also indigenous'. In addition, they offer a non-threatening space upon which to cathect the disordered elements of

subjectivity, in which scenes of guilt, culpability and shame offer us respite from the affective experience of unsettlement.

However, in so doing, they retrospectively inscribe the colonial origin of New Zealand as a site of trauma. The repetition of films of settlement – the fact that they keep returning to the same scene – registers colonisation as a *missed encounter*. In each of the films, colonialism itself, as a betrayal of one group of people by another, is the repressed Real that eludes us within the settler narrative. What we find instead are stories of the New Zealand Wars, in which sovereignty is fought and won, rather than forcefully and deceitfully taken. As a basic principle of psychoanalysis, however, we know that what is repressed always returns, continually hauling the subject back to the place of the Real, in an attempt to see what was originally missed. The attempt to glimpse the Real trauma of colonisation in these filmic fantasies is predicated on the knowledge that, when one confronts trauma, it becomes possible to insert it into a chain of signification at a Symbolic level, making sense of an event that had previously been unavailable to conscious knowledge. In each of the analyses in this series, then, I attempt to catch sight of the Real, or at least inscribe its place, within fantasies of the New Zealand Wars – films that, I argue, register the settler trauma of colonisation in another place, and in another time.

Know thyself

Ranjana Khanna has pointed out that postcolonial studies has always proceeded with a mandate to ‘know thyself’ (2006). This study is, then, on one last level, an attempt to do just that. As Khanna suggests, postcolonial theory has, at its best, required one to be aware of one’s own place in the discourse. The relationship between knowledge, author and subject becomes, in the field of postcolonial studies, highly politicised, and it is necessary, I believe, to ‘show one’s hand’. For my part, and as it may already be clear, I identify myself as a Pākehā settler. On one side, my family arrived in Okains Bay, in the South Island, by assisted passage in 1850. Fleeing the workhouses in central London, my ancestors made a living for themselves as brickmakers and gradually purchased enough land around Okains Bay to establish a homestead there. On the other side, my grandparents left London after World War II, arriving in Picton in August 1947. My grandfather made his living as a shoemaker, furniture maker, and local politician, and always appeared to me happy in his new identity as a New Zealander. My grandmother, on the other hand, never let go of her Englishness, always referring to London as ‘home’, carefully maintaining her Cockney accent, and

devoutly followed the scandals of the Windsors. These grandparents never returned to England, and, for the most part, never saw their parents or siblings again. When I use personal pronouns in this text, I am identifying myself as a white Pākehā settler, with (varying) generations of history in New Zealand. I am also negotiating that oceanic space between myself, as an individual, and the wider cultural group of Pākehā to which I (imaginarily) belong.

Because my work concerns itself with the settler psyche, it could be argued that I am perpetuating the Orientalist mode of analysis described by Edward Said. Indeed, in the chapters that follow, the Māori are Othered, side-lined, and marginalised within the text; they are very much positioned *in relation to* the figure of the settler. However, it is my sincere hope that, rather than seeing this as yet another act of colonial power relations, it is an attempt to understand better the perpetuation of colonialism within the structure of the settler subject. That is to say, it is my intention that, in turning the settler subject into my object of knowledge, I may bring into question the role that colonialism has played, and continues to play, in shaping settler identity. Moreover, this marginalisation of the Māori is an act that comes largely from the film-texts themselves. Although all but one of the films take as their central subject leading Māori figures, particularly the Māori prophets, the films are essentially about Pākehā identity, by Pākehā directors, and often for Pākehā audiences (particularly the early films). Rather than preserve this simple Orientalist binary, then, it is my intention that this work will be taken as a critique, from within, of Western systems of knowledge and identity.

The mandate to ‘know thyself’ is just as relevant to the study of psychoanalysis. Both Freud and Lacan’s discourses are thoroughly marked by autobiographical confessions, personal asides, self-doubt and anxiety. Indeed, as Felman has pointed out, the advent of psychoanalysis occurred through Freud’s act of *self-analysis*; the inception of psychoanalysis is, she writes, “both a narrative and a theoretical event, as a narrative, in fact, of the advent of theory” (1992, 14). The inclusion of my own personal response to, and coming-into-knowledge of, psycho-colonial concepts is thus an attempt, in and through my own text, to ‘know myself’. It is, I believe, an almost necessary approach to Lacan, who, as I have suggested, confounds ordinary approaches to knowledge and understanding. As he so eloquently, and frustratingly, demonstrates in his texts, knowledge is never what it seems; one cannot “tell the truth about the truth” (IX.1, 6). It is also, I believe, an attempt to

discursively perform my own concern with the emotional, pathological nature of the material I am working with. It is very easy to, on the one hand, advocate *for* a theory of affect while, at the same time, writing from a distanced, un-affected position. By including myself in my text to the extent I do, I am attempting to – if not confound certain traditional methods of knowledge and understanding – at least draw attention to them.

With the outline of the map now sketched in, we can move on to filling in the details. The journey that follows is as much personal as it is theoretical, charting the landscape of my own fantasies and fictions as it attempts to ground them in academic knowledge. By revealing something about my own fictional structure, I hope that I am able to read and write some truth about the nature of Pākehā subjectivity at a more general level, constructing a bridge between the ‘I’ of the individual, and the ‘we’ of culture. In so doing, I hope that I go some way in making this particular island, in the South Pacific in the ‘rest of the world’, not such an uncharted territory.

Part I:

From Colonisation to Nationalism

The Impossible History of Colonisation:
Locating Settler Trauma in *The Te Kooti Trail* (1927)

“Go to the Colonies or to the Devil!”

(Richard Mantell, *The Te Kooti Trail*)

Reading and Writing Trauma

Since the early 1990s, trauma has been the concept *de jour* in many university Humanities departments. ‘Trauma Studies’, or ‘Holocaust Studies’ as the field is also known, has been attributed with returning an ethical dimension to the end-times of postmodernism, and is one of the major categories through which events of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been interpreted. As a result, the literature on trauma is inconceivably vast, impossible to cover. Although the main focus has been on the Holocaust, other areas, such as (childhood) sexual abuse, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, The Vietnam War, September 11, the case of the Stolen Generation in Australia, torture and the War on Terror have also featured strongly, particularly in recent years.

In my research on New Zealand culture and cinema, I had noticed that the word ‘trauma’ had been used on occasion to describe the nature of our history, and of colonisation and settlement here, both in relation to Māori *and* Pākehā. Many New Zealanders will recall the controversy sparked by the then-Associate Māori Affairs Minister, Tariana Turia, when, in August 2000 at a speech delivered to the New Zealand Psychological Society conference, she described European colonisation as “traumatic” for Māori. She went on to refer to Pākehā settlement as a “home invasion”, which had led to what she had termed “Post-Colonial

Traumatic Stress Disorder” (qtd. in MacDonald 2003, 386).¹ Further, and this is where the controversy truly arose, she equated Māori experiences with those of the European Jews; both, she argued, had suffered from a “holocaust” (MacDonald 2003, 386). For Turia, the healing of the Māori people would only come about once there was an “acknowledgement of the holocaust suffered by many Māori tribes during the Land Wars” (qtd. in McDonald 2003, 386).

Avoiding the ‘Māori-holocaust’ question for now, it seems very possible, if not unquestionable, to find agreement with Turia’s claim that the nature of the Māori people living under colonial settlement might well be described as traumatic. While this is, unfortunately, an area that has not been well explored by academic scholarship to date, this is not what I am primarily concerned with here. Rather, what I am interested in is whether one might be able to talk about a *settler* trauma, and what the nature of this trauma might entail. An emerging subset of Trauma Studies has coalesced around the notion of (post)colonial trauma, of which settler trauma forms one branch. For this group, trauma and its effects can be experienced collectively, transmitted to the wider community and passed on from one generation to another. As Cathy Caruth argues, individual trauma has the “core” of the trauma of a larger history (1996, 71).² Analyses of settler trauma, in particular, often highlight the intergenerational element of trauma. For these critics, settlers, or the descendants of the colonisers, experience trauma as a structural relation necessitated by contemporary socio-political and material conditions (Macassey 2009, 86). In intergenerational cultural trauma, the ‘unclaimed experience’ of colonisation is made worse by the fact that those who experienced/perpetrated the initial trauma are no longer alive. Vijay Mishra has described this as a “secondary trauma”, made present through a “deferred appropriation” and marked by *Nachträglichkeit* (2007, 115-118).³ For Mishra, the traumatic core originates in the act of colonisation itself, and is thus constituted in a structural relation with the past as it is experienced discursively in its aesthetic texts (Mishra 2007, 12-13; Macassey 2009, 87).

¹ Post-Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PCTSD, has become something of a catch-cry for the postcolonial movement for many indigenous people and their supporters around the world (Mishra 2007, 109).

² See Erikson 1995; Kirmayer 1996; Robben and Suárez-Orozco 2000; Eyerman 2001; Alexander et al. 2004; E. Ann Kaplan 2005. See also Olivia Macassey, *Torn Stitches of the Heart: Post-Imperial Trauma and Colonial Heritage Romance Cinema, 1979-2005*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2009. pp.82-98.

³ *Nachträglichkeit* is a Freudian term, used to describe deferred action, or sense of ‘afterwards-ness’, as it is often translated. The concept is elaborated in more detail on page 32 of this chapter.

In the New Zealand context, Stephen Turner argues that present-day settlers suffer the after-effects of the trauma experienced by our predecessors. For him, the early settler experienced both the trauma of dislocation from the home country, and the trauma of unsettlement in the new one. In his understanding, this original trauma has been forgotten (repressed) by subsequent generations of settlers, which has, in turn, given rise to a melancholic condition of the settler. As he argues, our inability to remember the trauma of history means that we are condemned to live in a perpetual present, without knowledge or understanding of our past (1999). Allen Meek's notion of Pākehā settler trauma assumes a slightly different form. For Meek, the repression of the historical actuality of colonisation for the indigenous peoples has given rise to an ambivalent state in the present-day settler. This ambivalent state, he argues, manifests in a desire to "support indigenous resistance to colonialism while also exorcising a certain fear that those who have been violently repressed will return to take their vengeance" (Meek 2005, 50). For this reason, Meek claims, New Zealand cinema experiences a repetition of images of giants (such as Peter Jackson's *King Kong* remake in 2005), which represent the primordial other of mythic time, a spectacular form of repression of the indigenous Māori (2005, 50).

To me, however, such accounts of 'Pākehā trauma' did not quite answer all my questions, nor did it match what I, personally, experienced as (what may or may not be) settler trauma. Could colonialism really be just as traumatic for Pākehā as it was for Māori? Or, if not 'just as traumatic', could New Zealand's history perhaps be traumatic in a different way for Pākehā? Is it really the New Zealand Wars that are the actual site of the trauma, or might it be located somewhere else? There were very few answers to be found in any previous mentions of Pākehā or settler trauma, and, the more I researched, the more I had an inkling of why this might be. To even approach the notion of Pākehā trauma, one comes up against a number of initial obstacles, many of which are of a personal nature. I questioned how appropriate it was to begin to investigate the nature of Pākehā trauma when there was so little work done on Māori trauma, when surely this is a more pressing concern. I was, very often, overwhelmed with guilt about this research question, and whether it might not just be an attempt to 'cash in' on the popularity of trauma studies in my own work. In fact, no sooner had I begun asking the question of Pākehā trauma, I realised I had stepped onto an ethical minefield.

This research necessarily took me on a devastating detour through Holocaust material, compelling me to sit through the nine-hour Claude Lanzmann epic *Shoah* (1985), and even re-visit films such like *Schindler's List* (dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993), as well as the spate of

recent Holocaust-themed films, such as *The Reader* (dir. Stephen Daldry, 2008) and *Good* (dir. Vicente Amorim, 2009). Hours of time was spent reading through survivor and perpetrator testimonies, leaving me feeling overwhelmed with emotions – grief, sorrow, disgust – which are difficult, impossible even, to describe. Dominick LaCapra calls this state “empathetic unsettling” (2001, 41), although perhaps that is a rather restrained term for it. Working through such material left me feeling even less-inclined to propose the term ‘settler trauma’, for, compared to such overwhelming and undeniable traumas, how bad, really, do Pākehā have it?

Compared, even, to other settler and/or postcolonial nations, New Zealand does not even seem to have a large, foundational event upon which to attach, or cathect, all of this provisionally designated trauma. Australia had the Stolen Generation, South Africa had Apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, both of which have given rise to a significant amount of material and research on national traumas. In both these cases, and others, the nation has been able to invoke what Jill Bennett and Rosanne Kennedy (2003) call the ‘therapeutic ethic’, which, at the very least, gives one something firm to ‘hold on to’. In New Zealand’s case, and as Turner has argued, there is no one event in our history that marks it as traumatic as such. There are the New Zealand Wars, which Turia says are traumatic for Māori, but I was unsure whether these occupy the same traumatic place in the memory of Pākehā. This all felt very much like unsteady territory.

The Site of Trauma

Nevertheless, I *had* stepped onto the minefield, and whether or not it was appropriate for me to do so, I decided that some of these questions might be worth following. And so I persevered, and, through all the emotion surrounding this material, something else became clear. That is, the strong emotion I felt for the material on trauma did not often translate into the discussions of it. That is to say, the actual content of these discussions was not usually reflected by the writing on it. What was, by all accounts, a highly enigmatic, affective yet unknowable thing became, in the re-presentation of it, an aphoristic, easily defined concept. For example, Caruth writes that trauma is what “remains unknown in our very actions and our language” (1996, 4), it defies our knowledge and our witnessing of it (1996, 5), and “resists simple comprehension” (1996, 6). And yet, she goes on to give a clear definition of this supposedly *indefinable*, inexplicable concept. She writes: “In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the

response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (1996, 11).

This paradox can be found in the majority of theoretical texts on trauma, which simultaneously note its incomprehensibility while containing the concept within a strict definition. That is to say, there seems to me to be some kind of gap, or *dissociation*, between the material on trauma and its inscription. For a field that is all about trauma, the concept seemed strangely *absent* from the texts themselves.

LaCapra has already gone some way in thinking through this problem, pointing out that the affective aspect of trauma is often ‘numbed’ in the writing of it. He says:

Trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel. Working through trauma involves the effort to articulate or rearticulate affect and representation in a manner that may never transcend, but may to some viable extent counteract, a re-enactment, or acting-out, of that disabling dissociation. (2001, 42)

In recent years, however, some literature on trauma has attempted to ‘transcend’ this distance between affect and representation. Within the field, it is possible to detect a split between psychoanalytically informed work and an anti- or non-psychoanalytic approach. This split is present at the level of writing itself. Psychoanalytically informed work on trauma has lately given rise to a certain style of writing, in which the author often puts him or herself into the text, and strict academic conventions are loosened.⁴ Clearly, this is in order to shift the focus from History to memory and testimony and from authority to the individual, in an attempt to break through the limits of knowledge and understanding and reflect, textually, the nature of trauma itself. It is a style of writing that attempts to get closer to the concept of trauma, to inscribe trauma at the level of the text itself, or, in the words of LaCapra, it is a discourse that “emulates its object” (2001, 185).

On the other hand, and as non-psychoanalytic thinkers argue, there are convincing ethical reasons for maintaining this gap between affect and representation. For this group, psychoanalytic writing on trauma *gets too close* to the trauma of the other. In this way, the argument goes, psychoanalytic writing displays an inappropriate level of mastery and appropriation over the trauma being discussed. Kali Tal, for example, writes of Felman and

⁴ This is most apparent in several canonical texts on trauma, such as Dominick LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001); and *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Ed. Cathy Caruth), 1995, particularly Kai Erikson’s chapter, “Notes on Trauma and Community.”

Laub's work that it is not only dangerous, but is "an appropriative gambit of stunning proportions". Tal goes on to argue that their work outrageously shifts the focus of attention from the survivors of the trauma to "those who came in contact with the survivor's testimony" (1996, 53-54). Similarly, Monique Wittig argues that psychoanalytic writing on trauma seems to consider itself to have complete mastery over trauma, possessing privileged access to the 'full meaning' of it (Wittig, 1990). For this group, the writer must attempt to represent and understand the trauma of the other without vicariously appropriating or identifying with it. As a result, the writing on trauma from this group maintains a gap between itself and the concept, working within the detached, traditional language of academia.

However, this debate surrounding the proximity to trauma, and whether one should, in fact, keep one's distance, seemed to me to be missing something. Besides the ethical dimension of the debate (although not taking away its importance), I wondered if it is even possible to inscribe trauma at the level of the text or, in Lacanian terms, to access the Real by way of the Symbolic? Is writing itself the best way to try and understand trauma? And why, at last, do we want to constantly try to understand trauma, when we know that it is, as a concept, that which precisely *resists* comprehension? LaCapra has suggested avenues other than academic theory might better serve us in our quest for representing trauma. For him, modern art and literature, in particular, might be a better path through which to approach trauma. He writes: "Various modes of signification provide relatively safe havens for exploring the complex relations between acting out and working through trauma. Some of the most powerful forms of modern art and writing... often seem to be traumatic writing or post-traumatic writing in closest proximity to trauma" (2001, 23).

For LaCapra, (modern) art or literature might better be able to represent trauma since it potentially has greater access to *affectivity*, something that academic theory has little claim to. He goes on to say,

Historiography is subject to constraints different from those of literature, or at least fiction, despite the important features those modes of discourse share (notably with respect to narrative procedures). The counterpart is that at least certain forms of literature or art... may provide a more expansive space (in psychoanalytic terms, a *relatively* safe haven) for exploring modalities of responding to trauma, including the role of affect and the tendency to repeat traumatic events... many commentators would agree with Caruth in thinking that the literary (or even art in general)

is a prime, if not the privileged, place for giving voice to trauma as well as symbolically exploring the role of excess. (2001, 185)

However, despite this seeming resistance that trauma displays for the theories of it, I wondered if there might be more to it. I became interested in what, precisely, this relationship was between the affect and its representation in theory. Returning to both Freud and Lacan's work on trauma, I thought that the relationship between the concept and its representation might prove instructive on how one might come to an(other) understanding of trauma itself.

The Colophon of Doubt

Moses and Monotheism (1939) is one of the first great works on trauma, as well as being Freud's last full completed work. It takes as its subject matter the introduction of the Egyptian god Moses into the Jewish religious tradition. Contradicting the story told in the Bible, Freud argues that Moses led his followers from persecution into freedom, only to be killed by them at a later point in an act of rebellion. Freud claims that, years after the murder of Moses, it was these rebels and their descendants who took Moses as their saviour, thus becoming known as the Jews. Freud insists that, after a period of latency following the murder, it was the guilt felt by the Jews that prompted them to form their religion. This act, says Freud, was an attempt to find some kind of peace from the torment, or trauma, of the collective memory of the murder.

This text is deeply tied to Freud's own historical realities at the time of its writing. First begun in 1934, *Moses and Monotheism* is "an attempt to explain the Nazi persecution of the Jews through reference to a past, as represented by Moses" (Caruth 1996, 13). In a letter to Arnold Zweig, dated 30 September 1934, Freud gives a full account of the book, as well as reasons for not publishing it. First, Freud doubted whether his argument was sufficiently well developed but, more than this, he feared the reaction from the Roman Catholic hierarchy, who were at that time dominant in the Austrian government. Over the next few years, as World War II pressed in, Freud continued working on the text, although he constantly expressed his dissatisfaction with it, in particular, with the third section of the text. Nevertheless, the first essay was published at the beginning of 1937, and the second essay at the end of that same year. The third part of the text was, however, held back from

publication, only passing for print after Freud's departure from Austria for London in the spring of 1938 ("Moses" 4).⁵

James Strachey, in the preface to the Standard Edition, notes that, in reading this text, one is likely to be struck by its inconsistencies. He warns the reader that the text is characterised by, "a certain unorthodoxy, or even eccentricity, in its construction: three essays of greatly differing length, two prefaces, both situated at the beginning of the third essay, and a third preface situated half-way through that same essay, constant recapitulations and repetitions" ("Moses" 4). Strachey notes that this is unusual for Freud, who is usually meticulous in his writing. Freud himself constantly apologises for these irregularities throughout his text. For example, in the second prefatory note to the third essay, he tells his reader: "No less than before, I feel uncertain in the face of my own work; I lack the consciousness of unity and belonging together which should exist between an author and his work" ("Moses" 58). Strachey goes on to explain that the inconsistencies in Freud's writing are due to the "circumstances of the book's composition", which he describes as a "long period – four or more years – during which it was being constantly revised, and the acute external difficulties of the final phase, with a succession of political disorders in Austria culminating in the Nazi occupation of Vienna and Freud's enforced migration to England" ("Moses" 58).

Indeed, throughout all the prefaces, notes and personal asides, it is possible to detect a constant struggle between the internal conflicts and the external ones. For example, in the first preface to part three, subtitled "Vienna, before March 1938", Freud confides that, even though this third part of the text will be held back from the public, he will write it down anyway. He admits that, at this point, he "has little or nothing to lose", and that the political and social dangers posed by the writing of this text are made worse by "another obstacle" – the "weakening of creative powers which goes along with old age" ("Moses" 54).

Similarly, in the second preface to part three, subtitled, "London, June 1938", when he is free from the persecution he experienced in Vienna, he reflects:

The quite special difficulties which have weighed on me during my composition of the study relating to the figure of Moses – internal doubts as well as external obstacles—have resulted in this third and concluding essay being introduced by two different prefaces, which contradict each other and indeed cancel each other out. ("Moses" 57)

⁵ The book was printed a few months later, first in Holland, and was then translated into English the following March (1939).

And that, further, despite now being free to publish the final essay of *Moses and Monotheism*, he remains imprisoned by the self-doubt that has plagued him during the entire writing process of these three essays.

This text as a whole, and particularly the three prefaces which punctuate it, are of great interest to me for a number of reasons. The three prefatory notes, as well as the repetitions and recapitulations within the material, allow the reader some insight into the construction of the text itself. Rather than, for example, erasing the first prefatory note to part three (“Vienna, before March 1938”), once his situation had changed, Freud chose to leave both prefaces in, despite the fact that they ‘contradict each other’ and ‘cancel each other out’. Further, due perhaps to the fact that Freud believed his third essay would be repressed from the public, during his own lifetime at least, his first prefatory note reads rather like a very private diary entry, full with the sentiments of hesitation and uncertainty. Rather than presenting the reader with a finished, refined end product, Freud offers us a text which is marked by its own, traumatic, construction.

As Felman and Laub have argued, Freud’s writing, particularly in the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *Moses and Monotheism*, marks the beginning of a new discursive event, which “occupies an unprecedented place in the history of culture” (1992, 14). For them, Freud’s writing, as both narrative and theoretical event is, in fact, a *narrative of the advent of a theory* (1992, 14). By occupying the positions of both the doctor and the patient in his own writing, Freud creates the ‘psychoanalytic dialogue’ or the ‘psychoanalytic praxis’, in which “the doctor’s testimony does not substitute itself for the patient’s testimony, but resonates with it” (Felman and Laub 1992, 15). Through this dialogue, as Felman and Laub say, Freud makes present his discovery that “it takes two to witness the unconscious” (1992, 15). Freud’s writing thus operates as a kind of *unconscious testimony*, one that may be differentiated from the manifest content of the writing itself.

Felman and Laub define the process of testimony as “that of bearing witness to a crisis or trauma” (1992, 1). As a witness, one is called, involuntarily, to “a strange appointment” (1992, 3), at which no one else can take your place; this is the inescapable burden of the witness. The testimony is not, however, a completed statement of events. In Felman and Laub’s words, the testimony “seems to be composed of bits and pieces of a memory that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance” (1992, 5):

Testimony is, in other words, a discursive *practice*, as opposed to a pure *theory*. To testify – to *vow to tell*, to *promise* and *produce* one's own speech as material evidence for truth – is to accomplish a *speech act*, rather than to simply formulate a statement. As a performative speech act, testimony in effect addresses what in history is *action* that exceeds any substantialised significance, and what in happenings is *impact* that dynamically explodes any conceptual reifications and any constative delimitations. (Felman and Laub 1992, 5; emphasis in original)

That is to say, the testimony does not give a totalised, full understanding of the event, of 'what really happened'; it always exceeds the frame of reference, does not proceed to a neat conclusion, does not bear a self-transparency of knowledge. In the testimonial, language is always in process, on trial (1992, 5).

In this way, speech is, in itself, an unwitting or unconscious testimonial, bearing witness to a truth that exists beyond language. In speech, "the speaking subject", in the words of Felman and Laub, "constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, *not available* to its own speaker" (1992, 15). It is possible to see a form of unconscious testimony at work in Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*. At this point, it is interesting to note the etymological origins of the word *testimony* itself. In scriptural language, testimony refers to the Mosaic Law or Decalogue as inscribed on the two tablets of stone; what is now popularly known as the Ten Commandments was originally referred to as "the two tables of testimony" (*King James Bible*, Exodus, 31:18). More specifically, the testimony referred to the ark, or chest, in which the tablets and other sacred memorials were contained. The testimony, then, was that which *concealed*, or hid from view, something most precious. One could say, then, that the contemporary sense of the word 'testimony' contains within it this other, less apparent history. Just as the testimony (in the original sense) conceals the precious object, so too does the (contemporary) testimony contain with it the (most precious) truth of the traumatic experience. In both cases, the testimony is what enshrouds the venerated thing (truth) within.

While Freud himself does not ever refer to this connection in his own work on Moses, you could say this his own testimonial also bears within itself an unspoken, concealed truth. In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud compares the history of the Jews with the structure of a trauma. Trauma, for Freud, always has the structure of *Nachträglichkeit*, or 'afterwards-ness'. That is to say, trauma is to be found in the return of the event after a period of delay, or latency. In the event of a trauma, the individual may walk away 'apparently unharmed', only to find the trauma impose itself again, repeatedly, in the actions and nightmares of the

survivor (Caruth 1996, 4). This is what Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, describes as the structure of the trauma neurosis, mapped out by him in this way: 1) early trauma; 2) defence; 3) latency; 4) outbreak of neurotic illness; 5) partial return of the repressed (“Moses” 78).

Not only, however, does the survivor not fully experience the traumatic event at the time of its occurrence, the very nature of trauma means that it is impossible to experience at the time; that is, there is an inherent latency within the event itself. As Caruth explains:

The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can never hence be fully known, but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all. And it is this inherent latency of the event that paradoxically explains the peculiar, temporal structure, the belatedness of historical experience: since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in another place, and in another time. (1995, 7-8)

Freud’s central insight into trauma, therefore, is that the impact of the traumatic event lies precisely in its belatedness, in its refusal to be simply located, and its repeated appearance outside the boundaries of any single place or time (Caruth 1995, 8-9).

When one considers this traumatic structure next to the structure of Freud’s own text, *Moses and Monotheism*, certain similarities become obvious. What intrigues me about this text is the way in which multiple traumas seem to overlay and repeat each other. As Freud’s manifest content shows, the original traumatic murder of Moses led to the formation of the Jewish religion, based on the guilt experienced by his followers. This, argues Freud, is the basis for the contemporary persecution of the Jewish people under Nazism, which he understands as a repetition of this first, original, trauma. However, the present reality of the Jewish people, and the developments of World War II, clearly impact on Freud himself, although on this latter topic he has little to say.

What most compels me as I read this text is the gap between the two final prefaces. The first, entitled “Vienna, before March 1938”, finds Freud writing under increasingly strained conditions, in fear of publishing what he knows quite well to be controversial subject matter. The second preface, “London, June 1938”, finds him in “lovely, free, magnanimous England”, where he is now living as “a welcome guest” and is “once more able to speak and write” (“Moses” 57). The space in between, where there is no writing, consists of about two months. It was during this time that Freud and his family left their country of birth, about

which Freud has only this to say: “In the certainty that I would now be persecuted not only for my line of thought but also for my ‘race’ – accompanied by many of my friends, I left the city which, from my early childhood, had been my home for seventy-eight years” (“Moses” 57). As Caruth argues, Freud’s own trauma here is the trauma of *departure*, signalled simply by the two small words, “I left” (1996, 13-15).

This gap between the second and third prefaces reminds us that trauma cannot be experienced directly, that there is no possibility of representing the trauma, that it resists full knowledge and understanding. Freud’s own trauma, the trauma of departure, sits in this empty space between the two inscriptions, after March 1938 and before June 1938. Indeed, in the Standard Edition, the editors have left a blank page between the two parts of the text, as if in homage to the (missed) trauma experienced by Freud in this intervening space. Moreover, what follows in the third essay is but a *repetition*, with minor alterations, of the second essay. It is as if this third and final essay is registering the after-effects of Freud’s absented trauma. It may be read as another attempt to go back to the origin, of Moses and the Jews, to re-discover what Freud feels he has missed there the first time, in an attempt to understand his present experience. Indeed, it is as if the structure of the entire text is enacting the very process of trauma that Freud is attempting to communicate.

The text thus, it can be argued, testifies unconsciously to the trauma, Freud’s traumatic departure, while retroactively displacing it onto another trauma: that of the Jewish people. While Freud’s own testimony, as well as the very structure and the content of the text, all point to Freud’s trauma, the actual site of this trauma is left blank, unrepresented. It thus acts as an *unconscious testimony* to his own crisis, testifying to the impossibility of direct access to trauma. Like the ark that housed the Decalogue, Freud’s text conceals what is, arguably, a deeper truth of the text; the historical reality of Freud’s own circumstance, as a Jew and as a psychoanalyst, at the time of his writing. Thus, we can say that Freud’s writing both leaves in-tact, and testifies to, the trauma that sits at the heart of the text. However, the trauma is not ‘there’ to be seen within the text itself, there is no language which can represent the Real trauma of this text. Rather, it exists as the underside of language; it may be found hidden *within* the very text itself.

I, too, have Seen

It is in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964) that Lacan revisits Freud's approach to trauma. Although he had touched on the concept in previous Seminars,⁶ Lacan had remained somewhat silent on the concept of trauma until this point. This is unusual considering the centrality afforded to trauma in Freud's work, situating it as he did at the heart of the psychoanalytic praxis. It is in the first series of lectures that Lacan addresses trauma, and the attendant concepts of repetition, fantasy, and the Real. In particular, Lacan is interested in this very aspect of Freud's work: how one encounters trauma, situated at the level of the Real, in language. This is carried out through a re-reading of Freud's analysis of the dream of the burning child, which appeared in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. However, despite the fact that Lacan does not once refer directly to Freud's other major text on trauma, *Moses and Monotheism*, there are numerous veiled references to it throughout the first part of the series. Of particular interest are the structural similarities between the two texts, as well as the historical realities that gave rise to them.

The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis was delivered at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 1964. The conditions leading up to this Seminar would inform the very material and nature of this Seminar series. Beginning in 1962, the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) carried out a complicated negotiation that would determine the status of Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP), of which Lacan was one of the founding members, within its organisation. Lacan's practice and teaching was proving highly controversial for the indeterminate length of his sessions, as well as his critical approach to psychoanalytic orthodoxy. By 1963, at the end of Lacan's *Seminar on Anxiety*, a conclusion was reached. The continued place of the SFP within the IPA was dependent on the removal of Lacan from the list of SFP training analysts. Lacan immediately left the SFP, feeling betrayed by his colleagues and followers, and formed his own school, the École Freudienne de Paris (EFP).

The first Seminar, delivered on 15 January 1964, opened to an audience of academic celebrities (Lévi-Strauss, Louis Althusser, Fernand Braudel), as well as a new and younger crowd. In the first lecture, entitled "Excommunication", Lacan addresses the historical context of this Seminar. The similarities with Freud's own experience at the time he wrote

⁶ See *Seminar I: Freud's Papers on Technique* (pp. 34-35; 44; 189; 191; 197; 232; 283); *Seminar II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and the Technique of Psychoanalysis* (p. 85); and *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*.

Moses and Monotheism are apparent. Lacan begins the lecture by confessing to the audience of his *traumatic departure* from the IPA, “to which I had in fact devoted my life” (XI.1, 1). He then pays homage to Braudel, the Chairman of the section of the Hautes Études, who appointed Lacan to appear before this audience. Without this offer, says Lacan, his position would be that of a “*refugee otherwise reduced to silence*” (XI.1, 2; emphasis mine). He claims that his teachings have been subject to censorship by the IPA; that they have attempted to *silence* him, to repress his knowledge. He tells us:

In reminding you of all this, I am not indulging in personal reminiscence. I think you will agree that I am having recourse neither to gossip nor to any kind of polemic if I point out here what is simply *a fact*, namely, that my teaching – specifically designated as such – has been the object of censure by a body calling itself the Executive Committee of an organisation calling itself the International Psychoanalytic Association. (XI.1, 3)

Lacan goes on to claim that this censorship “is of *no ordinary kind*” (XI.1, 3; emphasis mine), since it amounts to a ban on his teaching, “which is to be regarded as nul [sic] and void as far as any qualification to the title of psychoanalyst is concerned” (XI.1, 3).

Further, he likens the psychoanalytic community, particularly the IPA, to a *religion* from which he has been excommunicated (as the title of the lecture indicates). He says that his own excommunication from psychoanalysis is unusual since it is one that is “without repeal” (XI.1, 4). He goes on to say that such a major, irreversible excommunication is only present within one other group: the religious community. Following this train of thought, he muses, “yet the question indubitably does arise – what is it in that community [psychoanalysis] that is so reminiscent of religious practice?” (XI.1, 4). And that, further, just like Moses, he has been subject to the most intimate *betrayal*, although he will not speak the word as such: “There was nothing particularly exceptional, then, about my situation, except that being traded by those whom I referred to just now as colleagues, and even pupils, is sometimes, if seen from the outside, *called by a different name*” (XI.1, 5; emphasis mine).

Thus, as I mentioned above, while Lacan does not ever directly refer to Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, there are clear similarities and references to this text throughout this lecture. While the motif of religion, and of betrayal, points us in the direction of Freud’s text, Lacan seems at pains to compare his own situation here to Freud’s at the time of writing *Moses and*

Monotheism.⁷ Both psychoanalysts experienced a traumatic departure after a life-long devotion (Freud from his Vienna, Lacan from his SFP). This state Lacan likens to that of a ‘refugee’, in need of assistance from others (Braudel for Lacan, London for Freud). In fact, this entire first lecture, “Excommunication”, sits outside the true beginning of the series, operating in a similar way to Freud’s prefaces in *Moses and Monotheism*. Like Freud, Lacan’s ‘preface’ testifies to a trauma, a trauma which is most acutely felt through the threat of being *silenced*.⁸

Moreover, aside from these contextual similarities, the two texts share a structural affinity. In the very first lecture, Lacan calls this his “new phase” of teaching, and there is a palpable sense here of the beginning of something new. The very theme for this series, the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, is enough to indicate Lacan’s intention here. He is returning to the very base, the very basis, of psychoanalysis, in which he is asking “the very same questions: ‘*what is psychoanalysis?*’” (XI.1, 3), “what are the fundamentals... of psychoanalysis... which amounts to saying – what grounds it as a praxis?” (XI.1, 6). To reiterate this, Lacan explores, in a rather ludic manner, the various senses and implications of the word ‘fundamental’, a word which echoes across the entire series in its various guises (‘base’, ‘bottom’, *fundamentum*...). That is to say, Lacan is here returning to the *origins* of psychoanalysis, repeating the same questions the Freud himself asked in the very beginning (and later, in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* of 1933).

This is interesting considering what had come before. As I mentioned, Lacan’s excommunication took place just as he was finishing his *Seminar on Anxiety*, in the academic year 1962-1963. Following this, his next scheduled Seminar was supposed to be on *Les Noms du Père*, the *Names of the Father*. However, he only managed to deliver the very first lecture on this topic before he was silenced by the IPA. It was only in the following year that Lacan began teaching again, with his *Four Fundamental Concepts*. Like Freud before him, then, Lacan’s work in the *Four Fundamental Concepts* points towards a gap, a silent space, which is the site of the trauma. What we have in both cases is a void, an empty space (the blank

⁷ See also Lacan’s reference to Freud in the next lecture. He says, “that one man, a discoverer, Freud, said, there is the country where I will take my people” (XI.2, 33) – thereby connecting Freud to Moses himself. And later, Lacan says, “it is important to know who one is calling... it is the subject who is called – there is only he, therefore, who can be chosen. There may be, as in the parable, many called and few chosen, but there will certainly not be any others except those who are called” (XI.4, 47) – a sentiment which echoes the claim of the Jews as the ‘chosen people’.

⁸ Note the way in which Lacan constantly returns to the theme of silence in this text – a ‘refugee reduced to silence’; of being ‘censured’, and he even finishes the session with a discussion of the silence of the hysteric patient.

page, the two absent months, the silent year), which both registers the place of the trauma, and leaves it unattended. In both cases, the trauma compels a repetition – in Freud’s case, of the second essay, in Lacan’s case, of the fundamentals of psychoanalysis – that can only register the after-effects of the absent trauma.

For both Freud and Lacan, then, the trauma can only be registered textually (or in speech) as a *missed encounter*. The traumatic experience, in its inherent latency, in the fact that it can never be fully experienced at the time, can only ever be missed by the subject. This is why the subject is condemned to repeat it; since the traumatic experience itself is missed, the subject continuously repeats the trauma in an attempt to return to it, in an attempt to know or understand it. As Lacan says, “we are dealing with an *encounter* – a missed encounter: an appointment to which we are always called with a Real that eludes us” (XI.5, 53). This appointment, the calling out to the subject, is what *hauls* the subject always back to the same place, condemned to repeat the experience over and again. In the very word *Wiederholen* – the repetition compulsion – Lacan notes the way in which *holen* is very closely related to this other one: *haler*, to haul. In repetition, says Lacan, what we find is “a hauling of the subject, who always drags his thing into a certain path because he cannot get out of it” (XI.4, 51). The subject, thus, is continuously dragged back to the Real, to the forever missed place of the original trauma.

However much one thinks, then, of this original trauma, conscious thought will never be the route into it. Knowledge, thought, writing – all of which exist in a Symbolic capacity – can only ever register the missed encounter, and not, emphatically, the encounter itself. This is precisely the place where Lacan begins his *Four Fundamental Concepts* Seminar series proper. His opening lecture on “The Freudian Unconscious and Ours” begins with a poem, “which has no relation to what I am about to say, but which is related to what I said last year” (XI.2, 17). He proceeds to read a poem by Aragon, entitled “Contre-chant”.⁹ This poem, he says, is *an homage* to the missed Seminar, and is “dedicated to the nostalgia that some of you may feel for that interrupted Seminar” (XI.2, 17). From this we can deduce that the Symbolic may express the missed reality in words, that it may act as an homage to the missed reality, but in and of itself, the Symbolic cannot have direct access to the Real. The Real is, in fact, the very limit of the Symbolic, that which defines the borders of the Symbolic realm. In

⁹ In vain your image comes to meet me/And does not enter me where I am who only shows it/Turning towards me you can find/On the wall of my gaze only your dreamt-of shadow./I am that wretch comparable with mirrors/That I can reflect but cannot see/Like them my eye is empty and like them inhabited/By your absence which makes them blind.

Lacan's words, "the Real is that which always comes back to the same place – to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks... does not meet it" (XI.4, 49).

The Symbolic, that is, can never directly represent, or access, the Real. The Real, the trauma itself, is impossible to represent. In fact, says Lacan, the Symbolic actually *blinds* us to the Real. Throughout Lacan's discussion of trauma, the Symbolic is associated with the image of flames, or of burning. He says, for example, "nothing can be grasped, destroyed, or burnt, except in a Symbolic way, as one says, *in effigie, in absentia*" (XI.4, 50). The relation between the Symbolic and the Real, then, seems to be caught up in a devastating game of cat and mouse. While the Symbolic cannot represent the Real, any attempt to actually do so in fact destroys it; it creates a barrier to the Real. In Lacan's words, the Symbolic is like a flame, it blinds us to what is there (the Real) behind.

In his analysis of the dream of the burning child, for example, Lacan writes, "what encounter can there be henceforth with that forever inert being – *even now being devoured by flames* – if not the encounter that occurs precisely at that moment when, by accident, as if by chance, the flames come to meet him?" (XI.5, 58; emphasis mine). On first glance, this sentence seems odd for its strange grammatical temporality – 'even *now* being devoured by flames'. On closer inspection, however, it could be read as Lacan's own enactment of how one cannot get too close to the Real.¹⁰ 'Even *now*' as he is speaking (or as we are reading) these words, the Real is being engulfed, destroyed by the Symbolic's attempt to represent it. This sentiment is repeated later, when Lacan tells us, "this sentence [father, can't you see I'm burning?] is itself a firebrand – of itself it brings fire where it falls – *and one cannot see what is burning*, for the flames blind us to the fact that the fire bears on the *Unterlegt*, on the *Untertragen*, on the Real" (XI.5, 59; emphasis mine). That is to say, any attempt to represent the Real in the Symbolic is condemned, paradoxically, to blind us to it.

What place, then, can trauma, as a concept, occupy in a text? Whether the style of writing attempts to 'emulate its object', or tries to get too close to it, there is no possibility of giving the reader direct access to it here. Any discussion of trauma, one's own or another's, may serve as an homage to the trauma, but it also serves to shield us from it. In the words of Caruth:

¹⁰ This is the very warning of anxiety, which tells us we are too close to the Real, that we need to retreat back into the world of fantasy. See my analysis of *Pictures* in Chapter 4.

Trauma... is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or a truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (1996, 4)

Like both Freud and Lacan's traumatic departures, the empty spaces left in place of their respective traumas might actually speak more, through the silence, than any overt discussion of it. Similarly, the spaces left open in the texts, the testimonies, the colophons of doubt, what is left unsaid, may allow the reader to glimpse the presence of the Real, there behind, while acknowledging the impossibility of re-presenting it; in the words of Ruth Leys, "trauma is conveyed performatively in the gaps or aporias... something that cannot be grasped or represented" (2000, 288). Or, as Vijay Mishra writes, "language is capable of bearing witness only by a failure of witnessing or representation" (2007, 268). While the text may register the *effects* of the trauma, in a belated manner, through the appearance of repetitions, recapitulations or contradictions, this is not the real site of the trauma as such. That is to say, while trauma must be mediated by the Symbolic, it is not at the level of the Symbolic that one can come into contact with the Real of the trauma.

Can't You See?

If we do not locate trauma in the Symbolic, "where," as Lacan asks, "do we meet this Real?" (XI.5, 60). If the trauma cannot be directly located in or through language, might there be another place we can encounter it? As both Freud and Lacan show, while trauma remains unavailable to consciousness, it constantly intrudes, through repetitions, on sight. In particular, these traumatic repetitions often take the form of recurring dreams or nightmares, in which the traumatised individual is made to experience, once again, the original trauma. And it is precisely here, in the dream, or the *fantasy*, that we may seek the Real. Lacan himself says this quite plainly in his fifth lecture, "Tuché and Automaton", when he tells us: "The Real has to be sought beyond the dream – in what the dream has enveloped, hidden from us" (XI.5, 60). Indeed, in order to demonstrate this relationship, between the Real and the *fantasy*, Lacan returns to Freud's dream of the burning child, which points us in the direction of the Real.

In fact, Freud's infamous dream of the burning child is not his own. Introducing it in the seventh chapter of his *Traumdeutung*, Freud gives us a small amount of background information about this particular dream:

Among the dreams which have been reported to me by other people, there is one which has special claims upon our attention at this point. It was told to me by a woman patient who had herself heard it in a lecture on dreams. *Its actual source is still unknown to me.* Its content made an impression on the lady, however, and she proceeded to ‘re-dream’ it, that is, to repeat some of its elements in a dream of her own, so that, by taking it over in this way, she might express her agreement with it on one particular point. (“Interpretation” 509; emphasis mine)

Thus introduced, Freud goes on to give an outline of this “model” dream:

A father had been watching beside his child’s sick-bed for days and nights on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which his child’s body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it, and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours’ sleep, the father had a dream that *his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: ‘Father, don’t you see I’m burning?’* He woke up, noticed a bright glare of light from the next room, hurried into it and found the old watchman had dropped off to sleep and that the wrappings and one of the arms of his beloved child’s dead body had been burned by a lighted candle that had fallen on them. (“Interpretation” 509; emphasis mine)

At first, Freud says that the explanation of this dream is “simple enough”, and concurs with the lecturer’s interpretation (the glare of light shone through the open door into the sleeping man’s eyes and led him to the conclusion that he would have come to had he been awake). But, after recognising the dream as a “process with meaning... that can be inserted into the chain of the dreamer’s psychical experience”, he wonders why such a dream occurred at all when “the most rapid possible awakening was called for” (“Interpretation” 510).

The dream thus poses the question for Freud: in the context of a violent reality, why dream rather than wake up? (Caruth 1996, 94). Freud initially answers that this dream, like the other he discusses, fulfils a wish for the father (despite its direct representation of the child’s unwished-for death). By showing the child, in the dream, as once again alive, even if in flames, the dream fulfils the father’s wish to see the child as alive one last time. “For the sake of the fulfilment of this wish”, writes Freud, “the father prolonged his sleep by one moment” (“Interpretation” 510). Should he have awoken from this terrifying dream, he would have “shortened the child’s life by that one moment of time” (“Interpretation” 510). As Caruth writes, “it is thus not so much that the father simply ‘doesn’t see’ the burning corpse (‘father, don’t you see’) – he does see it – but rather that he cannot see it and be awake at the same time (1996, 95).

However, after suggesting this original interpretation, Freud, dissatisfied, returns to this dream later on, after a long and “strange digression” (D. Miller 2001, 245). In this second interpretation, Freud returns to the enigmatic nature of the dream’s delay, and comes to the hypothesis that the father’s dream might well tell us something about the very nature of consciousness itself. That is to say, it represents a desire that is common to all sleepers: the desire to *sleep*. Freud writes,

All dreams... serve the purpose of prolonging sleep instead of waking up. The dream is the *guardian* of sleep and not its disturber... thus the wish to sleep (which the conscious ego is concentrated upon...) must in every case be reckoned as one of the motives for the formation of dreams, and every successive dream is a fulfilment of that wish. (“Interpretation” 571)

Thus, for Freud, the specific wish behind the dream of the burning child, to once again see the child alive, is bound to a more base desire – in Caruth’s words, “the desire of consciousness as such *not to wake up*” (1996, 97).

The dream, then, functions in such a way that it *avoids* the traumatic reality outside. As a prolongation of sleep itself, it protects the dreamer against the horror of awakening. Darian Leader, in *The New Black*, describes how he has encountered this in his psychoanalytic sessions. In his analysis of children, he writes, he has noticed how they will often quite literally *fall asleep* when the material gets too traumatic for them (2008, 42).¹¹ But is this not a paradoxical conclusion? How can the dream both re-enact, visually, the individual’s trauma, as well as act as a defence against it? How can the dream both let the dreamer *see* the trauma, as well as *blind* them to it? If the dream is the privileged site for the re-staging of the original trauma, why does the traumatised person retreat from waking reality into the dream world in order to avoid the memory of the trauma itself?

In Lacan’s analysis of the dream of the burning child,¹² it is this apparent contradiction that catches his attention. Lacan tells us that Freud was struck with a “fever” – plagued by a burning question – that is, “what is the first encounter, the Real, that lies behind the fantasy?” (XI.5, 54). For Lacan, the Real was Freud’s ‘object of concern’ (even though Freud of course

¹¹ “Often a baby will scream and cry and then suddenly, from one moment to the next, fall into the deepest sleep. We usually say that the infant has cried itself to sleep, but at times the sleep might be a defence against the pain of frustration or disappointment. Working with young children, I have observed on a few occasions how they can literally start to fall asleep in sessions when difficult material is coming to light. They will immediately forget what question has been asked or what theme was being discussed” (2008, 42).

¹² See chapter 5 of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, “Tuché and Automaton” (pp.53-64).

did not call it as such), and particularly the function of the fantasy in relation to the Real.¹³ In both Freud's analyses of the burning child and the Wolfman (where he first articulated the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*), Lacan tells us that it is the question of the Real that *hauls* Freud into the direction of his research. This research took Freud to the threshold of understanding the relation between the Real and the fantasy, says Lacan, but was left there as a seeming contradiction, an unresolved question. As Lacan puts it:

Our experience then presents us with a problem, which derives from the fact that, at the very heart of the primary processes, we see preserved the insistence of the trauma in making us aware of its existence. The trauma reappears, in effect, frequently unveiled. How can the dream, the bearer of the subject's desire, produce that which makes the trauma emerge repeatedly – if not its very face, at least the screen that shows us that it is still there behind? (XI.5, 55)

It is this paradox, however, that leads Lacan to his primary insight into the appearance of the traumatic Real. Since the trauma in its origin is always a missed encounter, any belated encounter with it (which Lacan calls the *tuché* – the encounter with the Real¹⁴) can only be staged as repetition in fantasy. The fantasy is, in fact, the only place where the individual may encounter the Real and not, as we have seen, in the Symbolic. On the one hand, the fantasy provides an escape from the traumatic reality of everyday life, a place where the traumatised individual can retreat from the horror of waking life. However, on the other, what the traumatised may encounter in the dream is a reality that corresponds more closely to the traumatic Real than the reality outside the dream. Just as Freud intimated, then, the very function of the fantasy is, by nature, paradoxical. Indeed, when one looks closely at the very word 'paradox' itself, one can see that it contains within it the very relation of the Real to the fantasy. From Ancient Greek, the prefix *para* means 'beyond', or 'irregular, disordered, improper or wrong'. And indeed, the Real is that which is *beyond* the fantasy – that which is disordered or improper within it; the place which both hides and reveals the traumatic Real within.

In his analysis of the dream, Lacan locates the *tuché*, the encounter with the Real, in the words expressed by the child: *Father, can't you see I'm burning?* Because the grief-stricken

¹³ In fact, Lacan writes: "He [Freud] applies himself, *in a way that can almost be described as anguish*, to the question – what is the first encounter, the Real, that lies behind the fantasy?" (XI.5, 54; emphasis mine). Note here the use of the term 'anguish' – etymologically related to *angst*, or anxiety. We know from his previous *Seminar on Anxiety* that this affect is the signal of the overproximity of the Real.

¹⁴ Lacan borrows the term '*tuché*' from Aristotle, who used it in *Physics* to elaborate his theory of the function of chance as cause. In Lacan's usage, *tuché* becomes translated as "the encounter with the Real" (XI.5, 53), the traumatic Real to which we always return *as if by chance*.

father cannot comprehend the actual cause of the son's death, he is condemned to come face to face with it in the dream. This dream encounter, in which the son takes his father by the arm and cries out to him to *see what is happening*, comes closer to the traumatic Real than what is happening in the next room. The very words, 'can't you see', are a demand, from the place of the Real, for the father to glimpse the Real there behind the fantasy of seeing the child alive once more. In the words of Lacan, "it is not that, in the dream, he [the father] persuades himself that the son is still alive. But the terrible vision of the dead son taking the father by the arm designates a *beyond* that makes itself heard in the dream" (XI.5, 59). For Lacan, there is "more reality in this message", emanating from inside the fantasy, than in the noise of the falling candle in waking reality. It is this message, from the *beyond* of the dream, which corresponds more closely to the Real than reality ever could.

Why then, Lacan goes on to ask, does the father *wake up*? In his analyses of the dream, Lacan suggests that Freud's questioning of why the father sleeps, contains within it another, more pressing question: how and why does the father wake up? Strangely enough, for Lacan, it is not the fact of the falling candle, in waking reality, which causes the father to wake. In fact, it is this 'small piece of reality' that enters the dream and gives rise to the encounter with the Real. Rather, for Lacan, *it is the dream itself* that wakes the sleeping father; that is, the awakening occurs from within, rather than from without. For Lacan, it is the words of the child, spoken in the dream, that compel the father to wake from the dream. Thus, as Caruth has argued, the dream is not so much the fulfilment of a wish (to see the child alive once more, as Freud has it), but it is rather than the dream *goes against* the father's wish, dragging the father back to the horrific reality of the son's death. Caruth writes: "What does it mean, in other words, that the father's dream achieves not the desired resuscitation of the child, but the dreamer's awakening to the child's death?" (1996, 99). The dream, in Lacan's analysis, becomes not a function of sleep, but rather a function of *awakening*.

As Caruth points out, this is a "paradoxical awakening", an "awakening not to, but against, the very wishes of consciousness" (1996, 99). The father, hearing the words in the dream, attempts to *respond* to the child's plea for him to see by waking up. Again to refer to Caruth, "the father's awakening to death is not simply a moment of knowledge or perception, but rather, Lacan seems to suggest, a paradoxical attempt to *respond, in awakening, to a call that can only be heard within sleep*" (1996, 99). What wakes the father, Lacan argues, is that *other reality*, the Real, that is hidden behind the fantasy; or, to put it even more plainly, the father is awoken by the dream itself (XI.5, 60). However, as Lacan points out, awakening

works in ‘two directions’, it is, in Caruth’s words, a ‘paradoxical awaking’. What the father wakes up to is yet another representation, which is not, as we know, the Real. This other representation, reality itself, because governed by consciousness, leads us further from the truth contained in the Real. Awakening, then, for Lacan, is actually a way in which the dreamer is *distanced* from the encounter with the Real, despite the fact that the trauma itself occurred in reality. Thus, it is only the dream that can bring the subject into an encounter with the Real, in which the trauma calls out for understanding, calls out to be seen. On the contrary, awakening into reality, itself another form of representation, brings the subject also into a traumatic reality, the dreamer wakes ‘in another fright’, but this time, there is little, if any, chance of coming into contact with the trauma in any meaningful way.

An Accidental Origin

Before using this dream as a model for my own film analysis, I would like to briefly mention the place that this dream occupies in the history of psychoanalysis itself. In Freud’s very first introduction of the dream, in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, he tells us how he came in contact with the account of the dream. Importantly, and as I quoted above, Freud mentions that *its actual source is still unknown to him*. The dream thus passes along a chain of dreamers, from the unknown father, to the lecturer, to the woman patient, to Freud, Lacan, on to numerous subsequent analysts, as well as to myself. Each in turn, like Freud says of his woman patient, makes the dream their own. It seems that, because the dream has no known owner, it can become the property of everyone who encounters it. However much, as Freud says, the dream offers no obstacles for interpretation, the dream is, in itself, *unanalysable*. While the child calls out for the father to *see* what he has missed, there is something in the dream that Freud himself cannot see, nor was he ever able to. As David Miller explains, Freud knows nothing about the original dreamer, and so “he cannot recover the infantile scene that for him must be transferred onto the recent experience reflected in the dream” (2001, 245). That is, because Freud cannot analyse the dreamer, the father, he can never truly understand the dream itself.

It is this anguish, this *anxiety*, that Lacan detects in Freud’s interpretation of the dream. Freud’s anguish is that he cannot see the Real, he is unable to get to the kernel of the dream in order to finally make sense of it. The dream itself, then, operates for Freud precisely in terms of Lacan’s *tuché*: in which the original moment is forever lost. As Victoria Pedrick suggests, Freud detects that the originary moment of the dream is there, somewhere behind the dream, but he “cannot see it through the flames” (2007, 169). “This absence of an

originary moment of the dream”, as David Miller writes, “not only serves the immediate purpose of [Freud’s] argument, it enables Freud, or anyone, to appropriate the dream...supplying its missing origin from their own associations and redreaming the dream to identify with its haunting questions” (2001, 246).

This is exactly what Lacan himself points out, when he notes that this dream, as the first psychoanalytic attempt to understand trauma, is itself without origin, or, perhaps better, only has a false, or represented, origin. He muses: “Is it not remarkable that, at the origin of analytic experience, the Real should have presented itself in the form of that which is *unassimilable* in it – in the form of a trauma, determining all that follows, and imposing on it an apparently accidental origin?” (XI.5, 55). That is to say, the dream itself, in which the origin is missing, acts in precisely the same way as trauma operates for the individual: an encounter, forever lost, which hauntingly returns, over and again, crying out for an impossible analysis.

The Te Kooti Trail

Although Rudall Hayward’s 1927 feature, *The Te Kooti Trail* does not fall into the category of ‘trauma cinema’¹⁵, I believe it offers rich material through which to begin to understand the inscription of trauma in the New Zealand settler narrative. Awakened by the Freudian-Lacanian concept of trauma, my reading of *The Te Kooti Trail* shows how this film registers, belatedly, the after-effects, and after-affects, of colonisation for the settler, in another place and in another time. Attending to what is re-presented in the film, at the Symbolic and Imaginary levels, my reading aims to glimpse the traumatic Real of the settler within this early nationalist narrative. As I noted in my previous section, to confront the traumatic Real is to insert it into a chain of Symbolic signification, to gain some understanding of it at a conscious level. To remain blind to the Real means one is compelled to repeat it over and

¹⁵ Like many other psychoanalytic concepts, trauma has crossed over into film studies, becoming one of the most widely discussed aspects of contemporary cinema. Susannah Radstone, one of the pre-eminent scholars of trauma and film, has argued that cinema is a privileged site for exploring traumatic experience. As Radstone remarks, cinema, more than any other medium, is most equipped to reproduce the vicissitudes of memory; “in form”, she writes, “the viscosity of cinema shares much with memory’s images of the past” (2000, 81). In fact, as Janet Walker has argued, this close proximity between cinema and trauma has led to the development of a new genre, which she calls ‘trauma cinema’ (2001, 213-214). Trauma cinema emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, and is defined by Walker as a “group of films, each of which deal with a world-shattering event or events of the past, whether public, personal, or both” (2001, 214). Such films are characterised stylistically and narratively as non-realist, they favour “vivid bodily sensation over verbal narrative and context”, and are typically non-linear, fragmented, aurally non-synchronous, and constructed around repetitions, rapid editing and strange angles (2001, 214). That is, they attempt to imitate the nature of traumatic memories themselves.

again, without a clear understanding of why this might be. My reading is divided roughly into three parts, each of which has been influenced by the first section of this chapter. In the first part, I attend to the temporal structure of the film, noting the manner in which the temporality of the Real returns to interrupt the Symbolic narrative of nationalist progress. The second part focuses on the film's preface which, like both Freud and Lacan's texts, reveals the effects of its own traumatic structure. Finally, I will look to the two moments of manifest trauma in the film, Eric Mantell's departure from England and the revenge-killing of Monika, in order to inscribe the Real site of trauma in the film.

The Te Kooti Trail was Hayward's third feature film, following *My Lady of the Cave* (1922), and his first version of *Rewi's Last Stand* (1925). A silent historical epic, *The Te Kooti Trail* depicts the physical resistance to the incursion of Pākehā into Māori territory in the nineteenth century. Set in the Bay of Plenty in 1869-1870, near the end of the Wars, the film is adapted from a newspaper serial written by Frank Bodle, which is itself based on (what Hayward describes as) the 'official' history of the New Zealand Wars by James Cowan (1922). The film dramatises the attack on a mill settlement, called Mill Farm, by the Māori political, religious and military leader Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki and his followers, most notably the 'half caste', Baker McLean (or Peka Makarini). While most of the occupants of the farm are killed, one survivor, Monika, is then executed after refusing to tell Te Kooti the location of a haul of buried ammunition. The local Pākehā military, led by Gilbert Mair and accompanied by the 'three legionnaires', fail to prevent the attack, but persist in tracking Te Kooti through the North Island, where they finally come face to face. However, in this final battle of the film, it is not Te Kooti who is killed by Mair, but Baker McLean, the villainous half-caste. The film ends with Te Kooti, saddened and weak, retreating from sight.

Making (Pākehā) History

The temporal structure of the film reveals two opposing forces, which work against each other and create a central chronological tension within the film. On one axis, the film constructs a linear, teleological narrative of historical progress. This may be understood as the time of the Symbolic, and is associated with memory, history and consciousness. The manifest, Symbolic temporality is, however, undercut and interrupted by the presence of another, concealed temporality. This other temporality is the time of the Real, and is characterised by repetition, recapitulations and the continual return of the same. In the relation between the two temporalities, and in the very presence of the temporality of the

Real, we may begin to detect the place of the Real within this early settlement narrative, and go some way in understanding the nature of trauma for the settler.

It is worthwhile looking first to the Symbolic time of the film. *The Te Kooti Trail* consciously operates as a mnemonic technology of nationalist identity. The lesson of the film is that New Zealanders must look to details from our own settler past (and not Britain's past or to Romantic 'Māoriland') in order to fix a national identity in the present and future. As Stuart Murray and Sam Edwards have said, "Hayward's [early] work... often seems to will a society into being, and as such it provided a series of models for local audiences that helped to shape the wider feeling of being 'at home' as the often-anxious community developed ideas of self-representation" (2007, 36).¹⁶ Hayward's early attempts at filmmaking thus provide the analyst with abundant material for investigating original models for the imaginisation of Pākehā identity.



Figure 1: The Te Kooti Trail: Poster advertising the film's release in New Zealand; Courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive

¹⁶ In many ways, the subject matter introduced by Hayward in these pioneering films has been repeated throughout the subsequent history of film in New Zealand until the present day. The ideas of nation and of identity that were pioneered by Hayward in the early days anticipate the concerns of later New Zealand films, in particular the New Wave filmmakers in the 1970s and 1980s, who, in forging a national industry, took up again the themes and concerns we find in Hayward's early features.

On the Symbolic plane, the film goes to great lengths to establish itself in closest proximity to the modern notion of historical truth and accuracy. I will discuss the film's preface in detail shortly, but it is worthwhile pointing out here that the opening six intertitles mimic the nature of a (scholarly) historic text. After introducing the film and the director, an intertitle appears acknowledging the help of the citizens of Whakatane. Following these acknowledgements, the film announces its debt to historian James Cowan, "for the facts upon which this film is based". The film also acknowledges the work of Frank H. Bodle, whose "fictional" account of this historic event appeared in several newspapers around New Zealand. Hayward then provides the viewer with a 'Producer's Note', signed authoritatively in his own hand. The note mentions the attempts made to reproduce the story as accurately as possible, based on the historical facts available to them, and the decision to re-enact the story on the actual historic locations, using descendants of the people involved.

The historical veracity is extended into the narrative proper. Introducing particular battles or skirmishes, an intertitle appears which names, dates and locates the event (for example, the final battle of the film occurs at "Tumunui, Feb. 7, 1840"). This drive to historical truth is mirrored by the camera's gaze. Refusing to assume the perspective of one or more of the characters, the camera has unrestricted access to all people and events. During the siege at Mill Farm, for example, the spectator is able to witness events from both inside the besieged camp, as well as from deep within Te Kooti's lines. Simultaneously, as Taranahi runs to Mair to raise the alarm, the camera tracks the three legionnaires through the North Island. In its declination of individual perspective, the camera assumes an historic gaze – presenting itself as the all-seeing eye of history – with privileged, and objective, access to the events of the past. This is enforced by the repeated use of the Iris technique of filming, in which events appear as though through the lens of the telescope. All of this serves to distance the spectator from the events, reinforcing their status as history, as well as emulating the detached, objective view of historical records.

Not only does the film position itself at the level of the historic text, it also possesses characteristics of memory. The film makes repeated appeals for monuments to be erected in honour of the forgotten soldiers who "made the pathways safe" for future settlers¹⁷ and, in many ways, the film itself operates as a monument to the settler past.

¹⁷ Hayward states that, as a direct result of this film, he would like to see a monument erected in the name of Jean Guerrin, the Frenchman who managed Mill Farm: "I only hope that this humble effort may awaken greater

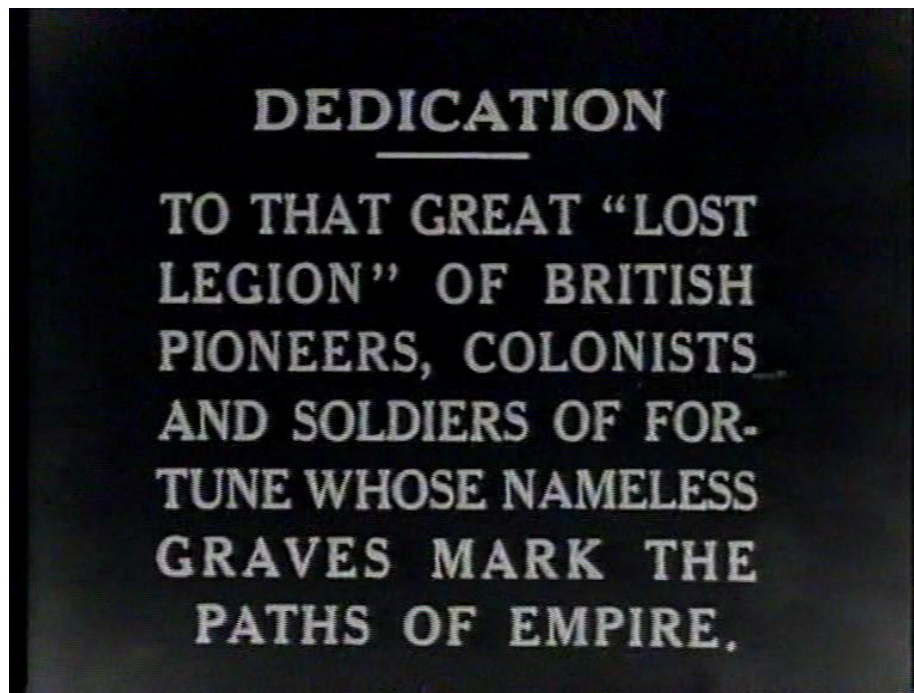


Figure 2: The Te Kooti Trail: *Dedicated to the 'lost legion' of settler soldiers*

Indeed, the opening sequence of the film, set in Northumberland, England, in 1864, serves as a warning against forgetting one's national history. In this scene, we encounter a small gathering – Eric Mantell, his brother Geoffrey, both men's love interest Alice, and the Reverend Winslow – looking upon the ruins of Hadrian's Wall. The Reverend narrates the story of the "lost and forgotten" Ninth Legion, who ventured from this site into darkest Scotland, to quell the rebellious Picts. As the Reverend indicates, this legion, although forgotten in public memory, are the real heroes of British-Romanic history. This tale of the Ninth Legion prefigures the action to follow, establishing it as the historical precedent of the settler soldiers in New Zealand. Jules' dying words, "there is no honour – no glory in this – only ze grave in ze bush – where I go – lost – *forgotten*", act as a direct repetition of the morality of the Reverend's tale in the New Zealand context.

Clearly, then, the film establishes itself as a mnemonic technology of national remembrance. Imitating both the structure of the scholarly historic text, as well as appealing to popular

public interest in the history of our dear country, and perhaps cause some suitable monument to be placed on the nameless grave of heroic Jean Guerrin." This is matched by the final shot of the film, which shows the monument to Gilbert 'Tawa' Mair, on lakeside Rotorua.

national memory, the film grounds itself in the narrative of national development. Its version of history follows the Westernised/colonialist narrative of continual progress, wherein the European settlers tidied up the messy business of inter-Māori violence and ‘made the pathways safe’ for generations of future settlers. The task of the spectator is to remember the national past in order to understand how we have progressed as a nation, and construct a collective sense of belonging grounded in local settler history. However, as we have seen in the discussion of trauma above, trauma cannot be accessed through the pathways of conscious memory. In remembering one’s past, one is destined to come up against a limit, which is the Real. As Caruth writes, “perhaps the most striking thing about traumatic recollection is the fact that it is not simply memory”, and that trauma is “largely inaccessible to conscious recall and control” (1995, 151). Memory itself, that is, is completely unable to access trauma. Since the trauma is not fully integrated as it occurs, the traumatic event cannot become, in the words of Pierre Janet, “narrative memory”; trauma cannot be integrated into a completed story of the past (Caruth 1995, 151).

I am not, therefore, primarily interested in the pathways of narrative memory constructed in the film. Rather, my focus lies in the points at which that path becomes interrupted, where we lose focus or when we find ourselves back at the same narrative place once again. This other, concealed path, as I have suggested, indicates the temporality of the Real, and may offer the spectator greater access to understanding the Real trauma of colonisation for the settler. In McGowan’s words, the temporality of the Real “is immersed in the continual return of the Real rather than the narrative of Symbolic progress... [I]t is rooted in what does not advance or go forward, in what blocks our progress. It is a time without future or past” (2007, 58). In *The Te Kooti Trail*, there are three moments, or scenes, of repetition: the Roman’s presence in England and Scotland; the British (and French, and Irish) presence in New Zealand, and the presence of (‘present-day’) Pākehā in New Zealand. Each moment, as we have seen, outwardly reflects the historical narrative of progress, from one to the other, to the other, and so on. However, rather than read them in this linear fashion, one could also see how they are marked by a repetition, a constant ‘looking-back’ in an attempt to locate the originary moment of settlement in New Zealand. That is, just as the small gathering at Hadrian’s Wall are looking back to the Romans, so too are settler-soldiers looking back to the British, so are the ‘present-day’ audience looking back to the New Zealand Wars of the 1860s and 1870s, so too am I looking back to the 1920s.

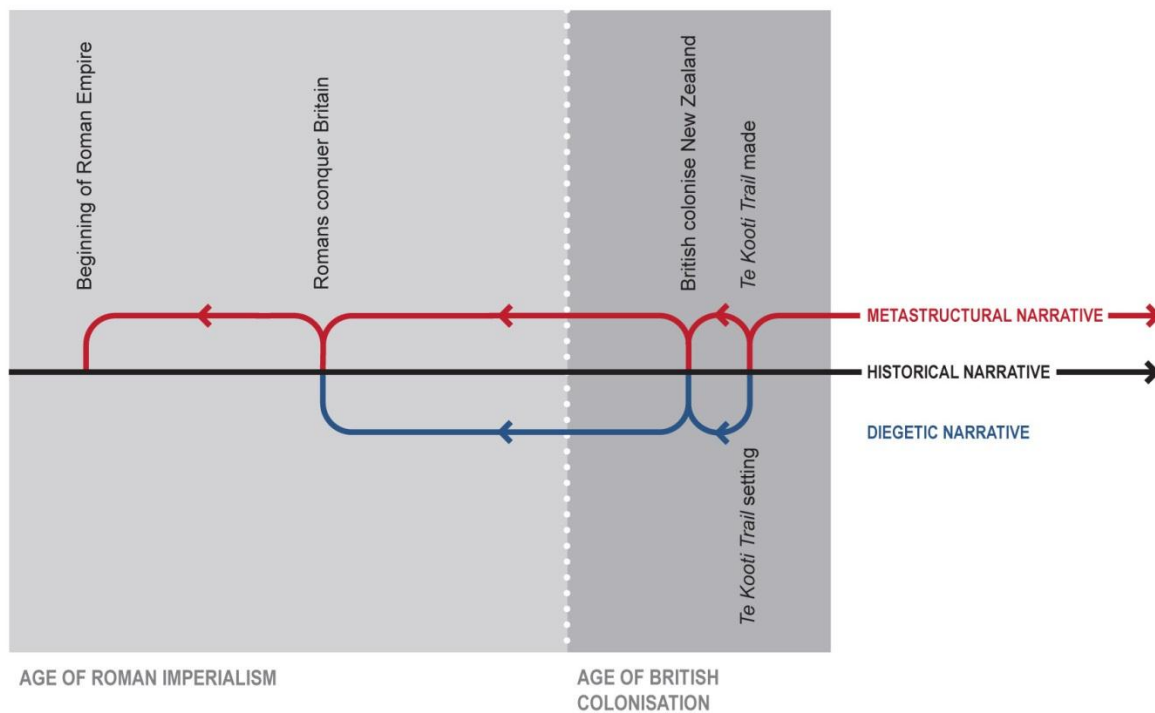


Figure 3: Narrative structures in The Te Kooti Trail

Within this structure, as the above diagram shows, the film's temporality moves simultaneously in two directions. The straight-line of the horizontal narrative indicates the time of the Symbolic: moving from the distant past (with its origins in the Roman Empire), into the recent past (the age of the British Empire), and into the diegetic present (the end of the New Zealand Wars). However, we also find the presence of another, backwards-looking and repetitive temporality, indicated by the red and blue lines. These lines represent the temporality of the Real: the red line above the axis showing the metastructural temporality of the film, in which the film looks forward from the 1920s, at the same time as it looks back to the 1870s, and in which the characters look back to the Roman Empire. The blue line below the axis indicates the Real diegetic temporality, in which the film fantasmatically returns to the colonial scene, which repeats the opening sequence at Hadrian's Wall. Here, one finds a continual movement, not only forward, but also *backwards*, as if in constant search for something lost at the origin. Indeed, these criss-crossing lines of narrative seem to be mapping the entire space of the film, as if looking for something that remains out of reach. Further, while the film seems determined to march forward, from history to the future, this

other, backwards-looking movement constantly undermines this attempt. The presence there of this secondary structure, marked by repetition, suggests that we cannot properly move forward, until we find what it is we have lost in this structure. That is to say, locate the Real trauma that compels these repetitions.

The constant intrusion or interruption of this latter structure upon the first indicates the presence of the Real. As we have seen, trauma cannot be remembered, it can only make its presence felt in repetition. Trauma then, in its compulsive repetition, continually works as a disruptive force *against* the linear flow of history. As Mishra argues,

Trauma repeats itself compulsively without historical teleology. History cannot be written without trauma (both at the level of the individual and the group), but trauma cannot be part of historical form because trauma disrupts the linear flow of historical narrative with its, history's, basis in an originary moment. (2007, 118)

Likewise, for Slavoj Žižek, trauma is “a pure chimerical entity which has in itself no ontological consistency... a point of failure of symbolisation, but at the same time never given in its positivity” (1989, 169). Like the Lacanian Real, it “cannot be inscribed... [although] we can inscribe this impossibility... [it] is nothing but the impossibility of inscription” (Žižek 1989, 172-3).

A connection can be made here with the film's repeated return to the theme of death. The film opens with several lines from New Zealand poet Arthur H. Adams' poem “The Dwellings of the Dead” (1899). Even if one does not make the connection between these lines and the poem's title (it is not given by the film), the melancholic presence of death makes itself felt in the quoted lines:

*They came as lovers came,
All else forsaking,
The bonds of home and kindred proudly breaking;
They lie in splendour lone –
The nation of their making
Their ever-lasting throne!*

The poem registers the trauma of displacement from the Old Country, and the nostalgic longing to return at the time of death. It reflects the theme of (British) sacrifice and

remembrance that is the overarching concern of the film, and pre-shadows the “unknown deaths” of the Ninth Legion as well as Jules’ burial (in a nameless grave) in the remote New Zealand landscape at the close of the film. However, it is interesting to note that, at the time of writing, the poet Adams had yet to visit England and is thus, as Harvey McQueen has argued, a celebration of a “second-hand, second-generation vision of the mother country” (1993, 11). In fact, Adams penned this work soon after leaving New Zealand (and an illicit love affair with a Māori woman) to live in Australia (Wattie 2007). In this series of displacements, in which a memory and longing for New Zealand is displaced onto England, we begin to sense a particularly New Zealand desire. Indeed, in its metonymic movement – which Lacan associates with the movement of desire – we may detect a longing for settlement and for home. If the place one is buried is the ultimate sign of home, then this poem registers not only the desire to belong, but also an affective unsettlement.

Further, because Adams is writing about the memory of a place he has never experienced, the poem operates largely at the level of fantasy. From Lacan’s analysis of Freud’s dream of the burning child, we saw that it is only through the fantasy that the Real can be glimpsed. Thus, ‘in behind’ the manifest desire for England expressed by the poem, we are able to glimpse the Real trauma for the Pākehā settler: the impossibility of belonging to the country in which we find ourselves. I will speak more of this in the following sections, but to return once again to the traumatic temporal structure of the film, I would like to suggest that this theme of death works also on the axis of the temporality of the Real. Both Freud and Lacan associated death – and in particular the death instinct or death drive – with repetition. Indeed, what Lacan called in his earlier lectures the ‘death drive’ (following Freud) later became referred to as *repetition automatism*.¹⁸ Briefly, the death drive exists in opposition to the life drive (or pleasure principle), and yet is entirely inseparable from it. While the life drive indicates progress, the death drive is what disrupts, ruptures, repeats and divides. In *Book II*, Lacan explicitly links the death drive to the repetition compulsion, and argues that that which has been repressed by the subject returns in the death drive (II.14, 171).¹⁹

¹⁸ My chapter, “The Nation that it was to Become” (Chapter 5) elaborates the concept of *repetition automatism* in more detail.

¹⁹ Lacan: “We are beginning to see why it is necessary that beyond the pleasure principle... there exists the death instinct. Beyond the homeostasis of the ego, there exists a dimension, another current, another necessity whose plane must be differentiated. This compulsion to return to something which has been excluded by the subject, or which never entered it, the *Verdrängt*, the repressed, we cannot bring it back within the pleasure principle” (II.14, 171).

The repeated and melancholic presence of death in *The Te Kooti Trail*, introduced first by the Adams poem and carried through the entire narrative, is a constant reminder – a *memento mori* – of the Real trauma of the settler. The spectre of death throughout the film constantly returns, like a revenant, to haunt and disrupt the Symbolic narrative of national progress that the film is so concerned with. Like Adam's poem, it registers the unsettled nature of the settler (for if a ghost is anything it is a sign of unrest) who longs to find peaceful rest in a ground one knows to be home. The signs of repetition in the film, of the presence of death, and the backwards-looking gaze of the film, disclose the presence of a Real trauma in behind the Symbolic narrative of progress. As we saw in both Freud and Lacan's text, this structure – the belated structure of *Nachträglichkeit* – inscribes the place of trauma somewhere at the origin of this narrative, out of reach and unknowable to representation. It propels us back to the site of the original trauma despite our best collective efforts to progress as a nation, and signals the existence of something which has been silenced.

Prefacing Nationalism

So far, I have suggested that the temporality of the film, which is caught up in a tension between the Symbolic and Real, betrays the presence of a trauma at the heart of the settler narrative. In my discussion of the Adams poem, I have already gone some way in describing what this trauma might entail, suggesting it is bound to a feeling of unsettlement and unbelonging. I would like to now look at the preface of the film in more detail, in order to elaborate the nature of settler trauma. In my previous section, I noted how the opening of the film assumes the nature of a history book, with acknowledgements, a Producer's Note, influences, and a poem to set the tone. Taking my lead from Freud and Lacan's texts, in this section I read the film's preface in greater detail in order to attempt to locate signs of its traumatic construction.

Recall that one of Lacan's notions in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* was that Freud was traumatised by the dream of the burning child. Freud's trauma, according to Lacan, was that he did not know the origin of the dream, and so was unable to produce a final, authoritative interpretation of it. Because he could not supply the origin, Lacan says, the dream continues to be re-dreamt, offering itself up to analysis by a long line of other 'dreamers'. In the opening of *The Te Kooti Trail*, we may detect a similar anguish about the nature of the origin. This anguish, or anxiety, takes the form of an almost obsessional commentary of the numerous origins for the film. The very first intertitle presents us with the film's title and

proudly proclaims: “Made in New Zealand for the World”, thus clearly establishing itself as originating in New Zealand. The fourth intertitle – the ‘Producer’s Note’ – posits the film’s origins in Cowan’s historic research, and also the stories told to him by Captain Gilbert Mair (whom Hayward met on a boat to Kapiti Island). It also emphasises that the filmmakers re-enacted most of the scenes on the actual historic sites, and using the descendants of historical figures. Following this, Hayward dedicates the film to the lost legion of soldier settlers who fought in the New Zealand Wars. The next intertitle, which gives the lines of the Arthur Adams poem, turns to one of the original pioneers of New Zealand writing in order express the tragedy and heroism of sacrifice for the nation’s sake. And finally, the film opens in Northumberland, England, as place of origin for most of the European settlers to New Zealand.

On one level, and as I have suggested, this opening sequence imitates that of a written text. However, it also displays an obsession with origins – from New Zealand as origin for the film; to Cowan and Mair as origins for the historic facts; to the real-life people (settler soldiers) who began this narrative; to the pioneer settler poet; and finally to England as the Old Country for most Pākehā settlers. This overabundance of references to the origin or to multiple origins, I would like to suggest, points us in the direction of the Real trauma for the New Zealand settler. Cynthia Sugars has noted that settler societies have a difficult time imagining their origins. Such societies, she argues, lack the illusion of a “timeless authority” that would serve to legitimise their presence in the new land (2006, 694). From this difficulty, she writes, emerges a contradiction: “More history is demanded by an assertion of the lack of it. But this lack itself becomes an obsession, resulting not in absence but its opposite: a pervasive fascination with history and a strong belief in its importance” (2006, 694). This argument is echoed in the work of Lorenzo Veracini, who says that settler societies are haunted by “the inability to remember and the incapacity to do anything else” (2008, 371). For these critics, then, settler societies’ ‘will-to-forget’ (in Stephen Turner’s words) the history of their country leads, paradoxically, to an obsession with remembering it.

It is precisely this obsession with national origins that is on display in the opening of *The Te Kooti Trail*. What this repeated insistence of the origin conceals, I believe, is the absolute *impossibility* of the (historic and national) origin for the settler. As a settler subject, colonisation itself must be repressed in order to live-on in the new country, and in order to legitimise a sense of belonging. It is colonisation that occupies the central core of the traumatic Real for the settler, as that which has been expelled from the Symbolic and

Imaginary constructions of nationhood and narrative. Because of this repression, the settler narrative lacks an origin; or, more accurately, the impossibility of the settler origin gives rise to a lack at the beginning of the settler narrative. Due to this originary lack, I would like to suggest, we find the over-proliferation of signs of origin, such as the kind we find in the opening of *The Te Kooti Trail*, which are written over and again in an attempt to conceal the traumatic lack at the core of the settler narrative.

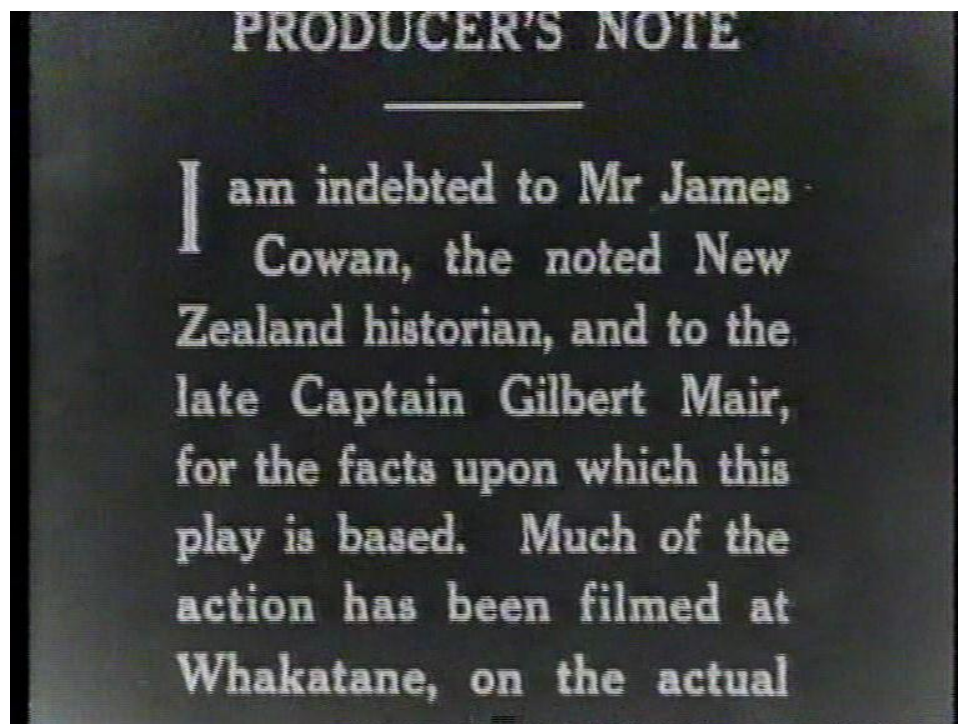


Figure 4: Preface: historical origins in *The Te Kooti Trail*

The Two Traumas

The trauma of colonisation for the settler is inscribed in another place in the film-text: in the gap between the two represented ‘traumas’ of the narrative. Both manifest traumas coalesce around a trauma we are already familiar with – that of *betrayal* – and motion towards the other, Real and absented trauma of colonisation. The first traumatic event occurs in the opening scene, in Northumberland, England. Eric Mantell, the younger brother, is in love with Alice, a beautiful yet fortuneless young woman. As the younger sibling, Eric has no right of inheritance, which will go to his elder, villainous brother Geoffrey. Geoffrey is also in love with Alice (although Alice’s heart belongs to Eric), and hatches a plan to frame Eric

for theft and secure Alice's hand. All goes according to plan, as Eric appears to have sufficient motivation for theft, and he is sent in disgrace to New Zealand; as his father tells him: "Take that money and go to the Colonies or to the Devil!"



Figure 5: Eric Mantell discovers he has been betrayed by his brother

Eric's trauma, like Lacan's, is of an intimate betrayal, this time of a filial relation. Shortly after this event, Eric leaves for New Zealand, to take his place as one of the nameless settler soldiers.²⁰ The second trauma of the film occurs in New Zealand, and is also bound to a betrayal; however, this time, it is a *refusal* to betray that eventuates in the trauma. Te Kooti and his followers have attacked the small settlement of Mill Farm. Seven brave men and women, led by Jean Guerrin, have dug themselves in to defend their settlement against hundreds of rebellious warriors. Guerrin, experienced in the art of warfare, has been systematically accumulating ammunition, in preparation for such an occasion. He decides to bury some of it, in case Te Kooti succeeds in storming the settlement. If the ammunition

²⁰ Interestingly, Eric's last name, 'Mantell', has its etymological origins in the Old English 'Mentel' or 'Mantal', which referred to a protective garment, blanket or cloak. Like the testimony, then, the 'mantal' is that which conceals/protects something within – a theme that reappears throughout *The Te Kooti Trail* and provides us with yet another link to the concept of trauma.

should get into the hands of Te Kooti, Guerrin tells Monika, he could go on raiding peaceful settlements for years to come.

Monika, the younger sister of Guerrin's wife, Erapeti (Peti, or Betty), is the only one to witness the burial. Guerrin makes her vow that, no matter what the circumstance, she will never reveal the secret. After Te Kooti's men successfully break through the mill's defences, killing most of the inhabitants, including Guerrin himself, Te Rangi discovers Monika and Erapeti's hiding place. Begging to be saved, Te Rangi sees the Christian cross around Erapeti's neck, and decides to spare the two women. The villainous half-caste Baker McLean, however, is displeased with this, and reminds Te Rangi that Te Kooti spares no one and takes no prisoners. The two women are brought before Te Kooti to plead for their lives. Erapeti appeals to Te Kooti that "thy people and my people are related". Te Kooti replies that the lives of the sisters will be spared if they reveal the place of the buried ammunition; he tells them: "I need more cartridges to drive the white men from our lands, as the Atua [God] has commanded." Monika speaks up, telling Te Kooti that only she knows the location of the buried ammunition, and she has sworn not to tell.

Just when it seems that Te Kooti will show mercy on the women, Baker McLean suggests "a judgement worthy of your wisdom, prophet". McLean's suggestion is the following: either all three are killed (the sisters and Te Rangi), or Te Rangi takes Erapeti as his wife and kills the sister Monika with his own hand. Monika remains true to her word, and offers herself as sacrifice in order that her sister may live. The murder of Monika is treated by the film in a highly emotional, affective way. The camera zooms in to a close up as the two sisters embrace – Monika's bravery making the moment all the more tragic. The sisters exchange their final words, spoken in Māori, and translated into English. Monika asks Erapeti: "Will the suffering be long?". Erapeti replies, "no sister, it will be quite brief". The spectator is given another close up of Te Rangi's hand, gripping a weapon, shaking uncontrollably. Throughout the scene, the film builds tension by cross-cutting to Mair's men, as they race towards Mill Farm in a doomed attempt to intervene in the siege. Facing away from her executioner and looking into the eyes of her sister, the camera moves in to a close-up of Te Rangi, as he raises his hand high, gripping the weapon, and brings it down with great strength on Monika. The camera then resumes its normal, detached perspective, retreating from the scene as Monika lays slain between Te Rangi and Erapeti.

As the emotional and dramatic high point of the film, this sequence represents the second traumatic moment in the narrative. However, unlike the first traumatic event, this one is brought about by a *refusal* to betray. Monika could have revealed her secret, and thus spared herself, but she chooses to remain true to her word and to Jean Guerrin, and her sacrifice, the film suggests, saved the lives of many settlers. The film thus inscribes betrayal – particularly an *intimate* betrayal – as the central trauma of its narrative. However, in the movement from the first traumatic betrayal and the second, something quite instructive happens. As a thematic repetition of the first trauma, Monika's execution – her refusal to betray – displays a desire to make right the first traumatic betrayal. It operates retrospectively to work through the first betrayal, fantasmatically making right what was originally wrong. Within the fantasy space of the film, the original trauma is thus covered over in the second, repeated moment. Moreover, while Monika's killing is represented as the emotional centre of the film, she forgives her executioner, Te Rangi, in advance, telling him: "I forgive you, Te Rangi – it is better that I should die than all we three – be swift then." Her death, the film suggests, is necessary for the future safety of generations of settlers, and it is to us that she speaks her forgiveness.

In the fantasised resolution of the original traumatic betrayal, we may glimpse the Real traumatic core of the film. Symbolically and Imaginarily, *The Te Kooti Trail* inscribes intimate betrayal as the trauma of the film, although it works to resolve and close down this trauma within the fantasy scene. In so doing, however, it alerts us to another intimate betrayal – the unspoken and unrepresented Real trauma of the film – the trauma of colonisation. Settler colonisation is, it may be argued, an example of intimate betrayal on a collective level: the betrayal of Māori by the Pākehā, and the promise articulated in the Treaty of Waitangi. This is a trauma that is only registered belatedly, however, as subsequent generations of Māori and Pākehā become bicultural partners in the nation. The trauma of colonisation is thus, we could argue, a retrospective trauma: one that provides an impossible origin for the settler, and compels us to repeat, over and again, settlement stories in order to write a fantasised narrative of belonging, such as the kind we find in *The Te Kooti Trail*.

In my understanding, colonisation in New Zealand was, and continues to be, traumatic for both the Māori and Pākehā settlers. Their traumas would, however, be of a vastly different nature. Since the time of early settlement, the Māori have been subject to the loss of land, language, culture, identity and self-determination – traumas that settlers cannot possibly lay claim to. Both forms of trauma have come to inform the basis for both New Zealand society

and the psychic structure of Māori and Pākehā alike. However, it is more than obvious that colonisation and settlement has been beneficial for one group over, and at the expense of, another group. For the Māori, I would like to suggest, colonisation takes the form of an ongoing, prolonged and systematic trauma: the trauma of living under colonial power.

For the Pākehā, on the other hand, it is colonisation itself, as the most intimate form of betrayal, which carries the weight of trauma. However, the act of colonisation only becomes traumatic for the settlers *après-coup*, *nachträglichkeit*, after the fact. This is because, as settlers, and unlike many other (post)colonial countries, we must continue living-on in New Zealand, continue trying to find a sense of place and belonging here. The very fact of settlement thus requires us to conceal the act of colonisation within the fantasy of settler-nationalism. This paradoxical act, while enabling the settler to consider New Zealand as home, simultaneously drags – *hauls* – us back to the place of the original trauma. This is the burden of the settler, and the traumatic Real of New Zealand history – a trauma to which all the films in this series testify.

A Case of Mistaken Identity:

Settler Identification in *Rewi's Last Stand* (1940)

"I spent my boyhood in the far north, among your ancient friends, the Ngā Puhi... We opened our veins. The blood ran as one."

(Robert Beaumont, *Rewi's Last Stand*)

Recollections of a Psychoanalyst

On the first day of his ninth Seminar, *L'Identification*, Lacan recounts an earlier conversation with one of his students. Upon hearing that identification was to be the subject for the coming academic year, this student apparently displayed some degree of apathy. "So this year you are doing identification", Lacan mimics the student, "and this with a pout: 'the all-purpose explanation'". He goes on to recount how the student allowed "there to pierce through at the same time some disappointment about the fact in short that something rather different was expected of me" (IX.1, 2-3). Lacan goes on to announce:

Let this person be under no illusions. His expectation, in effect, of seeing me avoid the topic, as I might say, will be disappointed, because I hope indeed to treat it and I hope also that the fatigue which this topic suggests to him in advance will be dissolved. *I will indeed speak about identification itself.* (IX.1, 3; emphasis mine)

It appears that Lacan did not have to wait long in order to receive some degree of absolution about his choice of topic. At the beginning of the following lecture (22/11/1961), he recounts that many students expressed satisfaction with the first lecture, that he received some degree of retrospective justification:

You have been able to see, to your satisfaction, that I was able to introduce you the last time to the remarks we are going to make this year by means of a reflection which, in appearance, might have

seemed to be a rather philosophical one because it dealt precisely with a philosophical reflection, that of Descartes, without it giving rise on your part, it seems to me, to too many negative reactions. Far from it, it seems that I have been trusted as regards the legitimacy of what might follow from it. I am delighted at this feeling of confidence which I would like to be able to translate as saying that you at least sensed where I wanted to lead you by that. (IX.2, 1)

Indeed, and as he promises, Lacan does ‘speak about identification itself’. In fact, the greater part of the first ten lectures discusses nothing other than identification, or more precisely, a range of possible approaches to identification. The first of these approaches assumes the formula ‘A is A’ (or, variously, ‘A = A’). This basic formula, he tells us, is “the most common form of subject experience,” and has acted as the foundation for an entire history of thought about the nature of Being (IX.4, 1). In order to illustrate this formula, he refers to a Celtic tale about a farm owner and his servant. He recounts the story:

I take a Celtic legend which is not at all a legend, which is a piece of folklore taken from the testimony of someone who was a servant on a farm. On the death of the master of the place, of the lord, he sees appearing a little mouse, he follows it, the little mouse goes around the field, she comes back, she goes into the shed where the agricultural implements are, she walks on these implements: on the plough, the hoe, the spade and the others, then she disappears. After that the servant, who already knew what was involved as regards the mouse, had a confirmation for it in the apparition of the ghost of his master who says to him, in effect: I was in that little mouse, I made a tour of the property to say goodbye to it, I had to see the agricultural implements because these are the essential objects to which one remains attached longer than any other, and it is only after having made this tour that I could free myself from them etc...” (IX.3, 9)

This example, one of many in this Seminar, is designed to centre our attention on an understanding of identification in which one being can be identified in, or as, an other. As Lacan explains: “the relationship of this ‘it is him,’ with the ‘it is him again,’ this is what for us gives its model and register to the most simple experience of identification. Him, then him again... in ‘him again’ it is the same being who appears” (IX.4, 2).

It is this formula, Lacan argues, that constitutes the whole era of Cartesian thought (IX.3, 9). As Ian Parker has pointed out, “Lacan spends quite a bit of time in this Seminar tackling the underlying historically specific supposition of this view of consciousness”, a view that is manifested in the ‘subject supposed to know’ (2007, 42).¹ Parker goes on: “There is in every

¹ The term ‘subject supposed to know’ (*sujet suppose savoir*) was introduced by Lacan in 1961 in order to designate the illusion of self-consciousness (in German, *Selbstbewußtsein*), which is transparent to itself in its act of knowing. This illusion is born in the mirror stage, and is put into question by the psychoanalytic praxis.

self-identity the supposition that $A = A$ ” (2007, 42). Or, in Lacan’s words: if we consider identification to be A is A , then the Other is the “refuse dump of the representative representations [*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*] of the supposed subject of knowledge” (IX.1, 11). It is this putative subject, in full possession of a knowledge that is self-transparent, that is designated by the Cartesian formula. At least, this is how Descartes’ monadic subject has been interpreted by a history of thinkers, largely based on that lapidary expression ‘I think therefore I am’. Lacan situates Descartes’ subject in the larger context of the Classical tradition, stemming from Parmenides, Plotinus, through to Hegel, in which “knowing is engaged with respect to itself” (IX.2, 9). This tradition, which is always directed towards an idealisation (ego-ideal), presentifies a model of identification in which the subject is presumed access to a full and complete mode of Being. Here, the second A of the ‘ A is A ’ formula is posited as the subject of knowledge, the idealised model with whom to identify.²

There is still one further tradition of identification that Lacan discusses in the early part of this Seminar. That is, his own model of Imaginary identification, presented in its most “extreme form” in his Mirror Stage Essay (1936) (IX.2, 2). This is precisely the model of identification with which Lacan’s students would have already been familiar, and which Lacan supposes provoked the kind of reaction he witnessed in the disappointed student. One of his very first comments on the first day of the Seminar draws attention to this:

In order to specify what I understand by [identification], I would say that when one speaks about identification what one thinks about first is the other to whom one is identified, and that the door is easily opened for me to put the accent, to insist on the difference between the other and the Other, between this small other and the big Other, which is a theme which I may indeed say that you are already familiar. (IX.1, 3)

As Lacan recounts, his early theories of subjectivity – from his doctoral thesis on self-punishing paranoia”, “*De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*” (1932) until the beginning of his Seminar series at St Anne’s Hospital (1953) – focused on the subject’s *Imaginary* dimension. This first theory of subjectivity was based on a fundamental belief, one that would hold firm throughout Lacan’s entire career: that the ego is an Imaginary construction and is to be distinguished from the subject of the unconscious. Indeed, as far back as 1953, Lacan was aware that “if the ego is an Imaginary function, it is

Psychoanalysis demonstrates that knowledge cannot be located in any particular subject but is, in fact, intersubjective (Evans 1996, 196-197).

² If we were to follow Lacan’s lead here, and apply the language of set theory to identification, we would say that the second A stands in for the One – not the 1 of mathematics, but the One of the classical monadic subject.

not to be confused with the subject” (I.15, 193). It is the ego *qua* Imaginary function that Lacan was concerned with during his early career, a form of identification that Lacan calls, in this Seminar, the “organic effect of the image of our fellows, the effect of assimilation” (IX.2, 2).

We can see, then, that Lacan fulfils his promise: he does speak about identification itself. Indeed, not only does he speak about identification, he presents us with an abridged history of the various incarnations of identification since Classical Greece, as well as the mode(l) of Being to which it has given rise. Apart from his own early theory of identification, this tradition is presented to us as a solidarity between unity and totality. His historic-philosophical narrative begins with the fifth century BC metaphysical monist, Parmenides, whose doctrine pivoted on the idea of ‘the One’ as the only true Being, indivisible in space and time (Audi 2006, 646-7). Plotinus, too, is invoked by Lacan, whose theories were similarly based on the concept of the One. For Plotinus, the One is a supreme principle, and cannot be adequately conceived in language or thought. Like Parmenides’ One, Plotinus’ One is a transcendental Being, in perfect unity with itself (Audi 2006, 714). Descartes’ Cartesian subject, which provides the entry point for the entire Seminar, is well-known to us for its conception of the self-identical subject of knowledge, whose act of conscious thought assures its existence.

However, while Lacan presents to us these images of unity and totality, it seems he does so in order to break them apart. The basic model of identification, ‘A is A’, is raised by Lacan precisely in order that he may distance himself from it. For him, its apparent simplicity hides a number of problems, and it is only insofar as we question this formula that we can begin to grasp what is involved in identification (Chiesa 2006, 78). The ‘A is A’ model of identification is referred to by Lacan variously as a “mythical form”, a “false island” (IX.1, 1), a “false coherence”, and a “stigma” (IX.4, 4). It is in the latter sense that he connects this understanding of identification with a *belief* – belief in the sense that it assumes a religious or theological force. Of the ‘A = A’ model, Lacan asks: “why separate it from itself in order to replace it there so quickly?” (IX.1, 3).

As for Descartes’ subject, Lacan brings to bear – in a retroactive logic – psychoanalytic knowledge on the Cartesian subject so that, by the end of his analysis, we *doubt* not only the Cartesian formula itself, but our own knowledge of it. As a psychoanalyst, he says, he is most concerned with the ‘I think’ half of the formula. “If we *consider it retrospectively*”, Lacan

says, “we cannot say that we contemplate thinking only” (IX.1, 5). He makes the following objection which, he thinks, has never been made, which is that Descartes’ ‘I think’ is not (necessarily) a thought, since “a thought in no way requires that one thinks about the thought” (IX.1, 7). If we were to take Descartes’ formula at the level of common knowledge, Lacan says, we would come to the conclusion that “it would be necessary for the subject to be careful to think at every instance in order to assure himself of being” (IX.2, 5).

Finally, when it comes to his own model of Imaginary identification, Lacan does not quite dismiss it, but he certainly distances himself from it. In the fifth lecture, Lacan suggests that the revelatory power of Imaginary identification has weakened. This has occurred by way of a certain over-familiarity (perhaps over-identification) with his model, and while it has not lost its critical force, it has become over-worn. He writes: “It is because of that alone [the effect of familiarity] that our mastery seems to weaken in the instrumental use of the images as revelatory” (IX.5, 5). Indeed, he metaphorises this model of identification as an “old ghost”, “and”, he goes on, “we are not necromancers” (IX.5, 6). For him, Imaginary identification is “the old rope from the store of accessories”, and his continued reliance on it would deny the “living core” of the Freudian discovery (IX.5, 6).

In speaking thus of nothing but ‘identification itself’, Lacan in fact is engaged in a process of self-distancing; in which the subject, *qua* subject-of-knowledge, vanishes – quite literally – before our eyes. While he declares, repeatedly, that he is, or at least will be, formulating a model and understanding of *Symbolic* identification, at no point during the early part of the Seminar does Lacan present this to us in positive terms. As Ian Parker has remarked, “we have in Lacan’s discussion so far an emphasis on the marking of something that is not, an emphasis on negativity” (2007, 45). Symbolic identification, as a concept, thus occupies an empty place, a void, or – to employ the language of set theory (the reasons for which will become clear) – is an ‘empty set’. What we find instead is a proliferation of stories, examples, apologies, histories, legends and even personal experiences about identification. Lacan’s every thought or idea is illustrated, or *tested*, for us through reference to a tale. Hence we find the already-mentioned Celtic legend of the farm owner; we are also presented with Lacan’s recounting of his relationship to his dog, Justine; the story of the Marquis de Sade and the recording of his ejaculations on his bedpost; the retelling of de Saussure’s 10.15 express train; the *fort/da* game; the Chinese calligraphy hung on Lacan’s wall; and the hunter who records his kills on the rib bone (which Lacan himself encounters on a visit to the museum).

All of this gives the effect of an over-abundance of signifiers; here, as in Lacan's treasured Chinese calligraphic work, the letter assumes value as an *objet d'art*, emphasising the written-ness of the history of identification; the signifier-ness of the concept of the One. Indeed, throughout *L'Identification*, Lacan has recourse to what appears, at first, to be an odd description of the signifier: that it is "fecund" (IX.4, 4). However, this is precisely what we encounter in working through this Seminar: a 'fecundity' of the signifier, which produces, brings forth, gives birth to, a string of other examples, stories, histories and so on. In this over-abundance of examples, which seem to continually defer Lacan from speaking about Symbolic identification, it seems that he is involved in a process of addition; that is to say, while Symbolic identification itself appears as an empty set, Lacan continually adds to this empty space, or supplements it, with examples of the One. A constitutive lack, then, *qua* Symbolic identification, is shown to produce a series of signifiers that seem to constitute the One. Or, to put it another way, a minus-One is, repeatedly in his discourse, supplemented by a series of Ones.

Moreover, this effect only occurs retrospectively. It must be commented that, for the most part, and in a way that is not unusual for readers of Lacan, one feels one is walking a path blindfolded. Up to a certain point in the Seminar, we are led to mistake one form of (mythical or false) identification for Symbolic identification, so that, in reading the Seminar, one feels as if we are following an epic tale of mistakes. Of course, Lacan tells us that this is precisely what he is doing, that he is not "telling us the truth about the truth" (IX.1, 6), which is of the order of (yet another example he mentions): the "I am lying" (IX.1, 7-8). In both cases, we encounter an affirmation of the contrary, so that what is in fact negated is presentified to us in positive form. In any case, it is only at a certain, belated point in the Seminar that we can begin to grasp the meaning-effects of the discursive negation.

This retroactive logic is sign-posted for the careful reader throughout Lacan's Seminar. One of the very first comments he makes in the first lecture is that, very often, the effects of identification are easy to recognise, since they may be "justified retrospectively" (IX.1, 1). It is this logic that is inherent to his tale of the disappointed student, too, in which his decision to treat identification this academic year was justified retrospectively by his students after the first Seminar. Further, Lacan tells us several times that his analysis of Descartes' subject is a "retroactive evaluation" (IX.2, 5), and that he is "considering it retrospectively" (IX.1, 5). Indeed, as he says quite clearly at one point: "If I underline it in passing, you can be sure that it is not for the pleasure of it, it is because we will rediscover – *and this we can only do*

retrospectively – its meaning” (IX.3, 6; emphasis mine). In fact, and this may have been picked up by the reader of *my* text, Lacan is often shown to be *recounting* a tale, or story, or personal experience; returning again to give an account of the experience from a later point in time. If we are to take this one step further, and follow in the concept of the One, we could say that Lacan is, quite literally, *re-counting*: that, in creating effects of meaning *après coup*, he is re-counting a lack-of-One, or empty set, so that it makes One.

At this point in his Seminar, when one is able to begin to construct retrospective meaning of his discourse of the One, we can begin to see emerge precisely what has been missing: Symbolic identification. For it is, as we are told, precisely the *effects* of the signifier which are involved in the production of the subject; that the formation of the subject is dependent on the existence of the effects of the signifier; as Lacan writes: “Nothing supports the traditional philosophical idea of a subject, except the existence of the signifier and its effects” (IX.1, 5). This relationship, between the subject and the signifier, will be elaborated shortly, but for now it is worth noting that, not only do Lacan’s multiple examples/stories/tales provide the support of the lesson (in which, he tells us, he ‘tests’ the theories of identification), they also provide the support for the subject itself. That is to say, in the ‘fecund’ over-production of signifiers, Lacan is creating for us the production of the subject *qua* One, which is, moreover, revealed to be nothing other than the *effect* of signification.

A Matter of In-Difference

In his reading of this Seminar, Lorenzo Chiesa writes that Lacan’s breaking of the solidarity between unity and totality allows him to work with parts: “From the inexistence of totality as a One follows the possibility of thinking the part as ‘partial system’” (2006, 68). In particular, he works with one aspect of Freud’s theory of identification: partial, or regressive, identification. Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), widely considered to be his most detailed theoretical discussion of identification (Parker 2007, 37), outlines three modes of identification. While the first and third types of identification hold little meaning for Lacan in this Seminar,³ the second type forms the basis for his development of the concept of Symbolic identification.

³ The first mode of identification is identification with the father, which Freud calls ‘typically masculine’. From this ‘primordial identification’ there arises desire towards the mother, at which point the father becomes the rival. This first account remains fixated on what Lacan calls Imaginary identification, and is thus not of the type that interests Lacan in this Seminar. Freud’s third mode of identification leaves aside any object-relation to the person being copied. Freud provides the example of the school boarding house, wherein one girl received a

In *Group Psychology*, Freud turns to the example of a small girl in order to consider identification as it occurs in the structure of a neurotic symptom. He asks us to suppose that the small child develops the same painful, or ‘tormenting’, cough as her mother. In this case, identification here may come from the Oedipus complex, in which case it “signifies a hostile desire on the girl’s part to take the mother’s place, [whereby] the symptom expresses her object-love towards her father” (“Group Psychology” 106). This, according to Freud, brings about the girl’s realisation, influenced by a sense of guilt, of her desire to take her mother’s place: “You wanted to be your mother, and now you *are* – anyhow so far as your sufferings are concerned” (“Group Psychology” 106).

A second adaptation of this second type of identification is where the symptom is the same as the loved person. Here, Freud gives the example of Dora, who, in imitating her father’s cough, presentifies identification in place of the loved object; as Freud writes: “Identification has appeared instead of object-choice, and that object choice has *regressed* to identification” (“Group Psychology” 106-7). That is to say, in this type of identification, the object-choice recedes, turns back, into identification (which is why this type of identification is often labelled ‘regressive’), and often assumes the form of a neurotic symptom shared by both parties. As Lacan writes: “In the measure that the object refuses love, the subject, by a regressive process... is capable of identifying himself to the object which, in his call for love, disappoints him” (VIII.24, 11).

Freud notes, and this becomes central to Lacan’s Seminar IX, that in both cases (the first and second variants of the second, ‘regressive’ identification), identification is partial and extremely limited, only borrowing a *single trait* from the person who is its object (“Group Psychology” 107). This single trait is based on identification with the signifier, in this case the neurotic symptom, and forms the very basis of Symbolic identification. It seems that Lacan has been considering this since the end of the previous Seminar, on transference, when he commented that “identification always occurs through the *ein einziger Zug*” (VII.24, 12); that is, the ‘single trait’, as it is referred to in the English versions of the essay. In this, his ninth Seminar, Lacan takes up this *einzigiger Zug* and elaborates it as the *trait unaire*, or *unary trait*.

letter from a secret love, which sends her into a hysterical fit. The other girls in the house, desiring a secret love affair too, are likewise sent into a hysterical fit under the influence of a sense of guilt that they also accept the suffering involved in this love affair.

One of the more slippery terms in this Seminar, the unary trait is Lacan's explicit attempt to echo the function of the 1 in set theory (Chiesa 2006, 74). For Lacan, the unary trait is an operation, a process or an instrument, by means of which identification is made possible. Already, we see appear an emphasis on the unary trait as that which *acts upon something else*: the 'function' in set theory is defined as a "procedure"; an 'instrument' is, by definition, used in the performance of an action, a 'thing through which something is done or effected'. Indeed, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'unary' itself as 'of an operator, operation or *transformation*, involving or operating on a single element'.⁴ The unary trait, then, by this initial definition, is a *procedure of the One*, or a *function or operation in the service of the One*.

That is to say, the unary trait is *not* a One, but an operation that constitutes the One. Lacan explicitly denies, as we have seen, that he is working within the philosophical tradition of the One. Rather, and as we see emerge here, it is the 1 of mathematics that he is concerned with:

I am not in the process of directing you towards the one of Parmenides, nor the one of Plotinus, nor the one of any totality in our field of which such a great fuss has been made for some time. It is indeed a question of the 1 which I called earlier that of the primary teacher, the one of 'pupil X, write a hundred lines of 1's for me', namely *strokes*: 'Pupil Y, you will get 1 in French'. The teacher, in his notebook, traces out the *einzigster Zug*, the single trait of the sign which has always been sufficient for minimal notation. This is what is in question, the relationship of this with what we are dealing with in identification. (IX.3, 1)

Lacan thus describes the unary trait as a count, a single stroke, literally, that which produces a /. It is this initial count, or /, that is the *first relation* of the subject to the signifier. "The unary trait begins with the function of counting" writes Lacan, thus signalling the manner in which the unary trait, as an operation, is the initial activity of the signifier in relation to the subject (IX.12, 3).

To return to our earlier definition, the unary trait is, thus, that which operates in the service of the 1; it is what *produces* the 1 as a stroke, /, or a series of 1s as many strokes, ///. At this stage, as Chiesa remarks, there is no second count, or *addition*, that counts the strokes as 1s; which is to say, there is no second count that can count the first count as an *operation* (2006, 75). For Lacan, then, the operation of the unary trait, the first count of the / + / + / is distinct from the second count of the 1 + 1 + 1. In order to differentiate these two counts, Lacan

⁴ The structure of the sentence 'the unary trait is an operation' thus prefigures Lacan's later claim that "there is no tautology" (IX.4, 4).

draws on several (additional) tales. The first of which is the mention of the small child, who may well be able to count up to three without being able to operate with numbers: “Two and three are in this case nothing but a repetition of the / produced by the unary trait, and should be distinguished from the number 2 and 3 understood as $1 + 1$ and $1 + 1 + 1$ ” (Chiesa 2006, 75).

A more elaborate example is Lacan’s description of the series of strokes carved on a rib bone, which, he recounts, he discovered on a recent visit to the museum of Saint-Germain: “How can I tell you the emotion that I felt when bending over one of these glass cases I saw on a thin rib-bone, obviously the ribs of a mammal... a series of little strokes: first two, then a little interval and afterwards five, and then it recommences” (IX.4, 8). Lacan illustrates his notion of the unary trait, as a first count that does not require numbers, by invoking the scene of this early hunter:

I am a hunter [...] I kill [an animal], it is an adventure, I kill another of them, it is a second adventure which I can distinguish by certain traits characteristic of the first, but which resembles it essentially by being marked with the same general line. At the fourth, there may be some confusion: what distinguishes it from the second, for example? At the twentieth, how will I know where I am? (IX.4, 9)

As Chiesa explains, like the child who counts without numbers, the primitive hunter can initially distinguish the second hunt from the first by certain Imaginary, intuitively qualitative traits, which are then Symbolically presented as a stroke / on a rib-bone. However, Chiesa continues, as soon as this occurs, his two adventures are marked by a line which seems in its appearance to be the same, which leads to signifying sameness (in the series of strokes, //). “Although qualitative difference is never eliminated completely, the fact that each ‘adventure’ is, for a limited time, intuitively experienced as new proves to be all the more secondary inasmuch as quality is precisely what is overshadowed by the signifying in-difference of the traits //” (Chiesa 2006, 76). Or, as Lacan explains,

Here we see arising something which I am not saying is the first appearance, but in any case a certain appearance of something which you see is altogether different: each one of these traits is not at all identical to its neighbour, but it is not because they are different that they function as different, but because the signifying difference is distinct from anything that refers to qualitative difference. (IX.4, 9)

In simple terms, what this amounts to saying is that, without a second count, which retrospectively replaces $/ + / + /$ with $1 + 1 + 1$, marking signifying difference as such equals nothing other than signifying sameness, an absolute *in*-difference.

It is only when this retroactive operation takes places, when the first count is replaced by the second count, that we see the birth of the modern Cartesian subject. This adds the final dimension to our early explanation, that the unary trait is an operation in the service of the One: as a first count, as the initial Symbolic relation between the subject and the signifier, the unary trait *produces* the One, which is nothing but a retrospective *imaginarisation* of the One. As Alain Badiou puts it in *Being and Event*, the One, which is not, can only be the retroactive and *fictive* effect of a structural count, the count-as-One (2005, 90). It is the point at which representation (retrospectively) replaces presentation, or, as Chiesa puts it, “the relation between the two counts, the counting-as-One of presentation and the forming-into-One of representation, is to be conceived of in terms of a relation between structure and metastructure, between situation and the state of the situation” (2006, 73).

At this point, it is worth pausing to consider the history of the term ‘identity’ itself, as Lacan elaborates it. For Lacan, identity is a process of ‘meeting oneself again’, of a redoubling of the same being. There is little choice but to quote Lacan at length here, since his arrival at this conclusion passes by way of a textual excavation that is difficult to condense:

In a way each tongue contributes, as compared to the general history of the language, vacillations which are proper to its own genius and which render one or other of them more propitious for highlighting the history of a meaning. Thus it is that we can pause at what is the term, or the substantival notion of the term, of identity (in identity, identification, there is the Latin term *idem*), and this will go to show you that some significant experience is supported in the common French term, which is the support of the same signifying function, that of the *meme*. It seems, in effect, that it is the *em*, the suffix of the *i* in *idem*, in which we find operating the function, I would say of the radical in the evolution of Indo-European at the level of a certain number of Italic tongues; this *em* is here redoubled, an ancient consonant which is rediscovered then as the residue, the remainder, the return to a primitive thematic, but not without having collected in passing the intermediate phase of etymology, positively of the birth of this theme which is commonplace in Latin *met ipsum*, and even a *metipissimum* from the expressive low Latin, pushes us then to recognise in what direction here experience suggests we should search for the meaning of all identity, at the heart of what is designated by a sort of re-doubling of *moi-même*, this myself being, as you see, already this *metipissimum*, a sort of *au jour* of *aujourd’hui* which we do not notice and which is indeed there in the *moi-meme*. (IX.1, 4)

In the structure of self-identity, traced through Lacan's ancient and etymological paths, we see emerge a notion of identity in which the self is doubled over, folded back on itself, so that it is the same being, twice presented. However, and as Lacan remarks, we 'do not notice' this process of redoubling so that, after the second 'meeting' of oneself, the first is, essentially, forgotten.

This amounts to saying that, as a final operation, the second count (which Imaginarily produces identity) erases the first Symbolic count (as unary trait). Since the passage from the first count to the second count is that which produces the modern subject, it becomes necessary for the subject to erase, or efface, this passage; as Lacan writes, "what the subject is trying to make disappear is his own passage as subject" (IX.9, 3). Let us turn to one final example of Lacan's in order to make explicit this operation: the tale of Robinson Crusoe in his discovery of the footprints on the island where he thought himself alone:

A footprint, a track, Friday's footprint on Robinson's island: emotion, the heart racing before this trace. All this teaches us nothing, even if from this racing heart there results a whole lot of stamping around this trace; this could happen on coming across any animal tracks but if coming on it unexpectedly I find the trace of something *whose trace someone has tried to efface, or if I no longer find the trace of this effort*, if I have come back because I know... that I left the trace, that I find that, without any general effacing of the traits of the configuration, one has well and truly effaced the trace as such, then I am sure I am dealing with a real subject. (IX.9, 3; emphasis mine)

It is the very act of erasure, Lacan suggests, that makes the unary trait what it is. As Christian Dunker puts it: "It is because it can be erased or blotted out, according to our wishes, that a trait is a trait" (2006). This effacement of the trace is, precisely, the erasure of the process whereby the subject becomes, Imaginarily, the Cartesian, monadic subject. In Chiesa's words, "what is at stake in the gap that separates these two counts is nothing less than the birth of the subject's identification as modern Cartesian subject, split between consciousness and the unconscious" (2006, 75). This re-writing (or redoubling) of the subject-as-One can, however, only ever be achieved retrospectively, after the second count has been performed on the first. In the second count, the unary trait as stroke vanishes, as though there had only ever been the second count, the count of the count, which constitutes the subject's Imaginary identification. Negation is, therefore, the fundamental characteristic of the unary trait, since it only exists for us, retrospectively, as a trace. This is why, for Lacan, the unary trait is an instrument of identification, since it performs in the service of the One, the One with whose effects we, retroactively, identify.

It is this process that Lacan has alerted us to through the very structure of his text. Like the footprints Crusoe discovers on the island, Lacan is leading us down on a path, we are following in his footsteps, unsure where it leads. Indeed, Lacan motions towards this quite clearly at several points in his text saying, for example: “There is a footprint. Already I led you along this trail, strongly tainted by myth” (IX.4, 3). And later: “Let us start from the track in order to track down our little affair” (IX.9, 3). Indeed, you may recall Lacan’s description of identification (of identification as ‘A is A’) as a ‘false island’, in which we miscognise ourselves as a complete subject of self-identity. In this ‘false island’ of Lacan’s text, then, in which we – like Crusoe – are tracking Lacan’s footprints, we have become aware of the way in which these traces are, as we have seen, continuously negated. That is to say, Lacan, in his presentation, and then effacement, of the concepts of identification, is precisely performing what occurs in the process of Symbolic identification: an erasure of the path that we have taken to arrive at self-identity. That is to say, Lacan *negates* the (conceptual, textual) path towards identity and, in so doing, is able precisely to present to us, *in its absence*, the concept of Symbolic identification itself.

What we discover, then, in Lacan’s elaboration of Symbolic identification, is that the subject is essentially the product of a mis-count. The subject initially (in-)exists as subject-of-lack, or – to continue the metaphor of set theory – the subject originally exists as a -1, or empty set. It is only in the operation of Imaginary identification, of the second count, that the self-identical subject can appear. That is to say, in the process of identification, the subject mis-counts her/himself as One, which appears in the place of the minus One, in which the lack is, retrospectively and fictively, replaced by a positive value. It is this mistake, or ‘error in counting’ that constitutes the subject *qua* subject of knowledge. As Chiesa writes:

Identification proper is then the subject’s retroactive counting of himself, a -1, as a 1. More specifically, the second count concomitantly brings about in a retroactive way the conscious subject’s primal repression of himself as the un-conscious un-present -1 *and* his unconscious ‘seeking’ (or, desiring) himself as that very same un-conscious un-present -1, that is, the enunciation of the nothing, the void-set. (2006, 87)

As Chiesa points out, what occurs in the second count of identification, is the *repression* of the first count, of the subject *qua* lack. The subject as an ‘error of counting’, then, is a subject who represses his or her initial lack-of-being, and who counts her or himself as always already a One. In this understanding of identification, the subject as minus One must be repressed, or effaced, in order that the subject achieves this Imaginary wholeness.

Finally, because the first count is repressed, it is thus condemned to be repeated by the subject (precisely, repetition automatism⁵), in which the unconscious signifier of the unary trait re-appears throughout the subject's life. In the previous chapter, I outlined the structure of trauma as it appears in the subject's life. Here, then, we can understand how repetition makes emerge the repressed signifier of the unary trait that appeared as a first count – “only the number is lost”, says Lacan, but the subject is condemned to repeat the behaviour designated in and by the first count, and without any apparent motivation (IX.6, 1). In (mis)counting her/himself as a One the subject is, therefore, fated to repeat its own unconscious history as a minus One, in which Imaginary re-presentation must continually insist upon, and retrospectively write over, the subject's own constitutive, Symbolic lack.

There are clear associations, then, between Lacan's concept of trauma and his understanding of the subject's Symbolic identification. In both concepts, we can see how an originary lack, or void, comes to be replaced by a series of Imaginary projections. In the previous chapter, I suggested that the colonial origin of the settler narrative is posited as a traumatic kernel of the Real – an impossible origin that compels a repetition of fantasies of settler origins, stories which betray a desire for belonging. This is not too far removed from the process at work in Symbolic identification, in which the subject's constitutive lack is retrospectively replaced by an Imaginary identification as a whole and complete identity. In my introduction, I noted that the Pākehā settler subject has long been figured in terms of lack or absence, as a group who lacks a firm sense of history and identity. In the following analysis of *Rewi's Last Stand* (1940), the second film by Rudall Hayward in my series, I would like to suggest that the settler's colonial history and identity, as the traumatic kernel of Pākehā history, functions in much the same way as Lacan's 'empty set' or 'minus 1'. Because colonial identity cannot be counted as a component in settler identity, it becomes repressed, retrospectively replaced by the Imaginary identity of the Pākehā-settler.

The first part of my analysis will foreground the theme of adoption, following a line of questioning posed by the film: is identity something one is born into, or something one adopts? The film provides two, contradictory answers to this, one that applies to the Māori, and another applicable to the settler; in the dynamic between these two identificatory options, we may discover the Imaginary construction of the identity of the Pākehā, and reveal certain truths about the desire of the settler. This will move into a discussion of genealogy and

⁵ I take up the concept of the repetition of the signifier, or *repetition automatism*, as Lacan calls it, in my discussion of *Utū*, in Chapter 5.

history, suggesting that the film retrospectively overwrites a sense of historylessness for the Pākehā with a newly constructed, fictive narrative of nationalism. However, in so doing, the film paradoxically retains a claim to historylessness, enabling the settler to forget our colonial past while simultaneously ‘remembering’ an Imaginary nation. Finally, using the character of Beaumont as a vehicle, I will analyse the shift between the first version of *Rewi’s Last Stand* (1925) and the second (1940), suggesting that, in the passage from one to another, the colonial identity of the central character becomes – quite literally – erased. Reading these examples through Lacan’s conception of Symbolic identity, I will suggest that the film allows the spectator to witness the repression of the settler’s colonial history and identity, and the construction of a new, Imaginary, identity as – precisely – *settlers*.

Rewi’s Last Stand

If Rudall Hayward is considered the pioneer of New Zealand film, then his second version of *Rewi’s Last Stand* (1940) is generally considered his most accomplished work. Bruce Babington echoes a popular sentiment when he writes: “Hayward’s greatest achievement is in the local film genre of the New Zealand Wars... [and] the later *Rewi’s Last Stand* (1940) is the most popular of [these]” (2007, 67-75). However, it is only very recently that critics arrived at this view; for a long time, Hayward’s work was largely ignored or forgotten by all but those who had a specialist interest in him. As Sam Edwards and Stuart Murray note, “Hayward’s work has received little critical commentary” (2007, 36), a lack that is only now being corrected. It is perhaps because Hayward’s early New Zealand War films, *The Te Kooti Trail* (1927) and *Rewi’s Last Stand* (1940), anticipate concerns that would reappear during New Zealand’s New Wave of cinema that his work has now received some attention. In an attempt to re-find the origins of these nationalist concerns, then, Hayward’s early films have emerged as ur-texts of an emerging national and cinematic identity.

Rewi’s Last Stand tells the tragic story of a cross-racial romance, set against the backdrop the Waikato Campaign of the New Zealand Wars. Ariana, a ‘half-caste’ woman has been adopted by the Missionary settlers, the Morgans, after the death of her high-ranking Maniapoto⁶ mother, and the disappearance of her white father, a captain on a whaling boat. Here, she meets Robert (Ropata) Beaumont, a New Zealand-born trader, with connections to both the Māori and British. As New Zealand prepares for war, the Waikato tribes begin a process of

⁶ ‘Maniapoto’ refers to the *iwi* (tribe) Ngati Maniapoto. The *iwi* is based in the Waikato-Waitomo region of New Zealand’s central North Island.

reclaiming all of their ‘half-caste’ children, of which Ariana is one. Beaumont and the Morgans attempt to smuggle Ariana out of the Mission Station, but their path is crossed by Maniapoto warriors and, after a *taiaha* (long club) battle between Beaumont and Tama, Ariana is forcefully taken from Beaumont. In an attempt to rescue her, Beaumont joins the Forest Rangers, a band of guerrilla bush fighters, where he discovers a man he believes to be Ariana’s estranged father, ‘Old Ben’. On a mission to deliver despatches to the Māori tribes, he discovers Ariana, who has taken her place among the Maniapoto tribe. However, after one night together, she refuses to leave with him, and he returns to the military camp alone. Meanwhile, the war is gathering pace, with British soldiers systematically out-performing their Māori counterparts. In the final, climactic scene, the British forces arrive at the Maniapoto stronghold, where Rewi and his people decide to make one last stand against the tide of white settlement. It is a doomed attempt, and after three days of battle, the British succeed in storming the *pā* (stockade, or fort). Beaumont and Old Ben struggle to find Ariana in the bloody aftermath, eventually tracking her – wounded and dying – to the riverside. After a brief reconciliation with Beaumont and Old Ben, she dies in her father’s arms.

Adopting History

Identity and identification constitute a central theme in *Rewi’s Last Stand*, and many critics of the film have noted the manner in which the film offered itself as a model for the identity of Pākehā settlers during the formative years of nationalism. Martin Blythe, for example, suggests that, in the central romance between Beaumont and Ariana, the film attempts to resolve the “national dilemma” of race relations in New Zealand: “The racial romance between a Pākehā man and a Māori woman offered a solution to an existential problem, a means to regain Utopia by marrying the foreigners to the natives” (1994, 34). Blythe argues that *Rewi* develops a thesis on the possibility of integration, of “common identity despite racial difference” (1994, 43). This ‘common identity’ is, he suggests, neither British nor Māori, but rather a best-of-both-worlds option; an aggregate that is metaphorised in the relationship between Bob and Ariana.

This interpretation is not dissimilar to more recent analyses by Babington (2007) and Edwards and Murray (2007). As I mentioned in my discussion of *The Te Kooti Trail*, Edwards and Murray have noted the manner in which Hayward’s work appears intent on ‘willing a society into being’, and thus provides a point of identification for the emerging settler subject. In particular, like Blythe, they stress the model of “benevolent” race-relations

proffered by the film and, like Blythe, base their analysis on the central romance between Ariana and Beaumont. Because Beaumont grew up among the Māori *iwi* (tribe) of Ngā Puhi,⁷ and because he forms a relationship with Ariana, they suggest, Beaumont operates as an ideal New Zealander, combining the most desirable traits of the British and Māori. In this way, they argue, *Rewi* produces a utopic vision of New Zealand, in which “gender and racial relationships come together in an image of a benevolent population settling the new land” (2007, 37).

Babington’s interpretation similarly reads the character of Beaumont as a trope of idealised race relations in New Zealand. Babington gives this summary of the character:

Bob Beaumont, the ideal colonist, is presented affirmatively: a trader, connecting both small town and city New Zealand, civilized yet also a man of action eager to join up to fight, and undertake dangerous missions on his own. Fluent in Māori (the first words he speaks in the film are in *Te Reo* [the Māori language] and he translates the Orakau exchange for ‘Old Ben’), his Māori credentials include having an impressive ability to fight with the taiaha (wooden weapon). (2007, 77)

As a “happily two-sided figure”, Babington argues, Beaumont not only provides the vehicle through which the film is able to explore ‘both sides’ (Māori and British) of the war, but emerges as the solution to the anxious identity of the Pākehā settler in New Zealand.

In each of these analyses, what we find is a fantasmatic shutting down of the complexities of identification in the film. Indeed, we could even say that such interpretations are performing precisely the process of imagining identity described in the first part of the chapter, whereby an initial or original instability (located within the film-text itself) is retrospectively replaced with a whole, complete identity (in the understanding of Beaumont as ideal settler). The concept of identification in the film is more unsettled and paradoxical than these interpretations suggest, particularly when viewed through the lens of Lacanian Symbolic identification. Rather than presenting the viewer with singular model of identification (in the form of Beaumont as ideal settler), I would like to suggest that the film offers *two* possibilities – options that appear incommensurable to each other.

On the one hand, *Rewi* suggests that one is able to *adopt* an identity; that identity is fluid, unfixed and subject to change. On the other hand, the film suggests that one’s identity is

⁷ The Ngā Puhi *iwi* is the largest populated *iwi* in New Zealand, with over 120,000 members. The *iwi*’s boundaries stretch from South Hokianga (in the north-west), to the Bay of Islands (in the east), and south to Whangarei.

determined by birth and bloodline; that identity is fixed, unchanging, and anchored in familial history. The first notion, that identity is unfixed, is associated with Beaumont and Old Ben (as Pākehā), and exists on an Imaginary level. It suggests that Pākehā are able to adopt a new identity, as settlers, and thus retrospectively overwrite their own, colonial identity. The second notion, that identity is fixed, is associated with Ariana and the Māori, and exists on the plane of the Symbolic. In the dynamic between these two poles, we may detect the construction of settler identity in its Imaginary form, and what – in this process – has been repressed. Further, in the oscillation between these two notions of identity, the desire of the settler emerges as the paradoxical desire to both adopt a new identity, at the same time as fixing it firmly in a sense of history.⁸

The theme of adoption is introduced early in the film, and is initially associated with the character of Ariana. Ariana is, quite literally, adopted by the white Missionary family, the Morgans, and has become, by all external markers, white. Assuming (adopting) a British accent, Ariana is presented in the opening scene in a long, white Victorian dress, conventionally beautiful by Western standards. Her most striking feature is her snow-white skin, which assumes an angelic glow that almost obscures the contours of her face. As Beaumont breaks the news that the Maniapoto tribe are reclaiming their ‘half-caste’ children, a lengthy dialogue ensues that emphasises the notion that she has, by all accounts, become white; as Mr Morgan tells Beaumont: “She’s been brought up in our ways, *she’s one of us*.”

However, very quickly, the notion that Ariana can adopt a new identity as Pākehā becomes replaced with another one: that she has no choice but to remain tied to her Māori heritage. This theme is introduced – again in an exchange between Mr Morgan and Beaumont – in the second sequence, as the group leave the Mission Station. The two men pause to take “one last look” over the country, and Mr Morgan proclaims: “20 years ago... all this was virgin country, the Māoris were cannibals. All that wheat came from a few handfuls of seeds.” Beaumont’s reply is instructive: “It’s going to take more than a war to destroy what you’ve done. The seeds too widespread, *the roots go too deep*.” Ariana’s own ‘deep roots’ to her Māori heritage are revealed in the following sequence, as she and Beaumont play a flirtatious game of hide and seek in the forest, shortly before she is taken by Tama. Here, Ariana’s white dress assumes the look of a wedding gown, and – as she moves with ease through the natural

⁸ To be clear, I am not suggesting that the concept of a decentred identity is an Imaginary construction in general. Rather, I am suggesting that, *within the logic of the film*, decentred subjectivity exists in an Imaginary capacity.

landscape – the film suggests a symbolic marriage between Ariana and the land (as a metonymic image for the indigenous Māori). The initial reading of the white dress – which appeared in the first sequence as a marker for Victorian Britain – now becomes a symbol of her status as indigenous, as wedded to the land and to her Māori history.

During this encounter in the forest, Ariana teasingly calls Beaumont “taurekeka”, meaning ‘slave’, or more accurately, a captive taken in war. Overtly, the insult recalls the fact of Ariana’s high rank as Māori chieftainess, but it also foreshadows Ariana’s kidnapping in the next scene, as she becomes a ‘war captive’. In this sense, the film suggests that Ariana is a slave to her own history and background as Māori. However, while Ariana is initially taken against her will, she soon comes into her own realisation that her rightful place is with the Maniapoto, especially during times of War. After Ariana arrives, as captive, to the Maniapoto settlement, she is taken to meet with her grandfather, Rewi. Rewi reminds her of her proud lineage, recounting Ariana’s *whakapapa* (genealogy) as stemming from a long line of Māori chiefs and chieftainesses. Rewi asks Ariana to ‘return to herself’, telling her that she was sent to the Mission Station to “learn the ways of the Pākehā, not to give them your heart”. Ariana’s ‘return to herself’, in her process of redoubling, she remembers what has long been repressed – her history and identity as indigenous; it is a process which attempts to break open the shell of her Imaginary, *adopted*, identity as Pākehā, and reclaim her Symbolic history as Māori.

The film posits this Symbolic process, of reclaiming one’s concealed history, as a natural and correct phenomenon, at least where it concerns Ariana. After this sequence, where Ariana and Rewi meet again, the narrative perspective and focus shifts away from her onto Beaumont, cementing his place (and the nature of Pākehā identity) as the central concern of the film. For the most part, the film returns to Ariana only in those moments when her story crosses Beaumont’s, positing her as an appendage (or other) to the narrative proper. However, there is one moment in the film where the narrative returns to Ariana independently of Beaumont. As both the British and Maniapoto prepare for the ‘last stand’ at Orakau, the spectator is presented with Ariana – dressed in traditional Māori attire – carrying out duties among her tribespeople. What is most interesting, however, is that this sequence is presented in a sort of ethnographic, documentary-style form. For the first time in the film, an omniscient narrator (the voice of Hayward himself) speaks directly to the spectator, interpreting and explaining the images on screen. As the camera assumes a detached, objective gaze, the narrator takes us through the games and rituals of the Māori. Moreover, the narrator tells us that “Ariana has

taken her rightful place as a tribal leader in entertaining the visitors”. Breaking from the fictional, subjective nature of the film in general, this documentary-style sequence asks the viewer to accept Ariana’s decision to stay and fight with the Maniapoto as the right, and *correct*, decision.



*Figure 6: Rewi’s Last Stand: Ariana and Robert;
Courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive*

The naturalness of her place among the Māori is emphasised in the following sequence. Beaumont re-discovers Ariana, at which point the film returns to its fictional mode, and the two spend a romantic night together in the riverside undergrowth. While Beaumont assumes

she will gratefully return with him to Auckland, she has different plans. As she breaks the news to him that she has decided to stay and fight alongside her people, she tells him: “*I can’t change what’s in me*”. Ariana’s identity shift has now become more than external. Her accent changes from the false British accent of the opening sequence to a New Zealand English, inflected with a Māori accent. Further, the childlike awkwardness of the first scene has now been dropped, her skin assumes a more natural hue, and she appears more self-confident, as a woman in charge of her own identity. According to the film’s logic, then, while Ariana may have temporarily assumed a new, adopted identity as Pākehā, her roots as Māori go ‘too deep’. Of course, one of Lacan’s central theses over the course of his career is that the human subject is decentred; as the subject-of-lack, any sense of fixed, essentialised identity, such as the kind associated with Ariana, is revealed as a fiction of the ego, located in the Imaginary. However, within the structure and logic of the film, Ariana’s fixed identity is aligned with the Symbolic plane. The film reveals her original – adopted – identity as Pākehā to be nothing other than a temporary, Imaginary construction. This initial, Imaginary identity then gives way, as the film progresses, to a more truthful one (according to the film’s logic), one that returns to and encompasses what was originally repressed: her history and identity as Māori.

The Paradox of Memory

It is this sense of history, of the ‘natural and correct’ ties to one’s past and one’s family, that assumes the function of the unary trait for the Pākehā characters in the film. That is to say, for the Pākehā settlers, what is repressed is the sense of historically based identity that Ariana re-discovers, a Symbolic identity that is, in a movement counter to Ariana’s development, retrospectively replaced by an Imaginary identity as settlers. While Ariana claims that ‘she can’t change what’s in her’, it seems that, for the characters of Beaumont and Old Ben, no such constraints apply. Beaumont, as Blythe et al. suggested, is a ‘happily two-sided’ figure, one that adopts a number of traits from the Māori. For his opening lines in the film, Beaumont borrows from *Te Reo* (the Māori language) to greet his friends at the Mission Station. Further, in the scene of the *taiaha* battle, Beaumont reveals that he grew up among the northern tribe of Ngā Puhi, that he was, in essence, *adopted* by them. As they prepare to fight, Beaumont tells Tama: “I grew up in the far north among your ancient friends, the Ngā Puhi. I am a Ngā Puhi. We opened our veins, the blood ran as one”. During this sequence, we are presented with a series of match-shots between Beaumont’s face and Tama’s, as if to highlight the similarity between them, and cement Beaumont’s symbolic status as a ‘half-caste’.

Beaumont is also able to move freely across the racial and geographic borders of the film. Accepted by both the Māori and British, Beaumont is the classic figure of the 'Pākehā-Māori', a symbolic contact zone between the two identificatory groups. Trevor Bentley describes the figure of the Pākehā-Māori as someone who originally identified as white (usually a whaler or sealer, or a settler who had been enslaved by the Māori), but had come to adopt many aspects of Māori life, culture and identity. As 'culture-crossers', Bentley goes on, Pākehā-Māori occupied a "special position in New Zealand history, [marking the place] where Māori and Pākehā culture merge" (1999, iv). Not only does Beaumont fit loosely the category of the Pākehā-Māori, as a figure who can cross between both sides with ease, he is also shown as a figure constantly *crossing* the New Zealand landscape. He is chosen by his military leader to despatch declarations of war to the Māori tribes because of his intimate knowledge with the landscape, and is repeatedly represented in wide angle shots, moving across the screen on horseback in the way that contextualises him as a natural part of the landscape (and mirrors the representation of Māori on horseback). Beaumont's identity, then, is constructed around the notion of *mobility* – around his ability to cross between sides, to constantly adopt a different identity according to his surroundings and become a natural part of whichever landscape he inhabits.

As if to emphasise his identificatory mobility, Beaumont's name is continually changing throughout the course of the film. Referred to variously as Robert, Ropata (the Māori transliteration of Robert), Bob, and Beaumont, the very changeability of his name expresses his ability to assume, or adopt, different identities. It is also the case that very little of Beaumont's personal or familial history is given in the film. While Ariana's lineage is repeated three times throughout the course of *Rewi*, we know very little about Beaumont's. Apart from the *taiaha* sequence, where Beaumont reveals his connection to the Ngā Puhi tribe, there is only one other reference to Beaumont's family background. When he arrives at the Forest Ranger camp, the leader mentions in passing that he knew Beaumont's uncle, who was also a trader. This detail is inconsequential to the narrative, however, and may easily be missed entirely by the spectator.

The other significant Pākehā character in the film, Old Ben, experiences a similar sense of rootlessness. Described variously as a "drifter", a "rolling stone" and an "old schooner of a sea captain", Old Ben belongs nowhere, to no-one, and is seemingly without history. Although he has found a new identity and sense of family with the Forest Rangers, the temporary and mobile nature of the military camp means that it is not a legitimate

replacement for any real sense of belonging. Further, and most importantly, Old Ben is often represented as drunk. When Beaumont arrives at the camp, Old Ben volunteers to assist him in preparing his gear, insisting that he obtain a bottle of rum so that he can cure the leather on his boots. Most of the liquor ends up being consumed by Old Ben, however, and as he becomes increasingly more intoxicated, he begins to reveal disconnected fragments of his history as a sea captain to Beaumont. In his drunken state, Old Ben is represented as living in a constant state of the present, as ‘though drinking to forget’ the troubles of his past. At a metaphoric level, we could say that his drunkenness reveals an unwillingness on the part of the Pākehā to remember our history, a willed collective amnesia which manifests itself in what Stephen Turner has described as a ‘perpetual present’, or ‘living without history’ (1999).

The two central Pākehā characters, then, while vastly different in personalities, possess certain similarities in their identity-construction. Both Beaumont and Old Ben are presented as more or less without history, disconnected from their family and able to adopt a range of different identities. This is in direct contrast to Ariana (as indigenous), who initially possessed a borrowed identity (literally, adopted as Pākehā) before discovering a more ‘honest and truthful’ knowledge of herself. This gives rise to two, opposing outcomes. On the one hand, this sense of fixed identity, such as the kind Ariana (re-)discovers, is established as the object of settler desire. No matter how much they are in love, Beaumont cannot access this core of Ariana, this *agalma* that he sees in her, but cannot reach or possess.⁹ At an allegorical level, this accounts for Beaumont’s desire for Ariana, since she represents an indigenous identity and relation to New Zealand to which he can never, independently, claim ownership. Her refusal to return with him to Auckland, and her new-found assertion of herself as a woman and as Māori, is ‘what is in her more than herself’, to use Lacan’s words, and thus exceeds Beaumont’s mastery over her. What is left is an unfulfilled desire to obtain this core of being that represents her natural and correct relationship to New Zealand which, since this is precisely what is lacking in the settler, constitutes his (Beaumont’s) desire.

On the other hand, paradoxically and at a more occulted level, this rootlessness of settler identity allows the Pākehā characters to disavow their colonial origins. As Lacan outlined in

⁹ *Agalma* comes from the Old Greek for ornament, small statue, jewel or precious object; something that is found hidden inside something else. In his *Seminar on Transference (1960-1961)*, Lacan uses this concept to describe the Imaginary form of love, in which one person (the lover) believes their beloved to be in possession of the *agalma* – this precious object that constitutes the beloved as special and worthy of love. For more on the *agalma*, refer to Chapter 6, “Tribunal of Love”.

the *Seminar on Identification*, what is repressed in identity is the Symbolic passage by which Imaginary identity (as Cartesian subject) was formed. Both Beaumont and Old Ben, as characters lacking history, who have no family origins, they have effectively *erased* their own passage by which they became settler subjects: their own genealogy as colonisers. The film shows that what becomes repressed, in the process of becoming Pākehā, is the assertion of an unbreakable connection between identity and history, such as the kind displayed by Ariana. This trait becomes, for Beaumont and Ben, the Symbolic unary trait for their own Imaginary identity, a trait that must be repressed or disavowed in order to function as, precisely, settlers. Thus, while Beaumont and Ben are presented as rootless and historylessness, this is a preferred construction of identity than one that would have them return to their colonial roots, and see themselves as directly descended from their colonial forebears. In this way, Pākehā identity, as it is presented in *Rewi's Last Stand*, is thoroughly Imaginary: from the 'present', it retrospectively replaces a colonial identity with a newly adopted national one. In this process, colonial history becomes repressed, destined to return in traumatic symptoms.

In fact, there are several signs, or 'traces' as Lacan called them, of the settler's prior identification with the coloniser. As Old Ben's drunken monologue suggests, fragments or traces of one's history have the tendency to re-emerge in the present, disrupting the coherent fiction of ego-identity. One such trace in the film is the image of the old coin. Beaumont spies one hanging around the neck of Ariana just before she is taken, threaded onto a flax necklace. Ariana tells him that it is the only reminder she has of her father, the only trace left of his existence. Later in the film, Beaumont spots the same coin in the possession of Old Ben, who has fashioned it into an earring. Beaumont makes the obvious connection, and the coin becomes the vehicle through which father and daughter can eventually be reunited. The image of the coin is telling, as it points us towards the theme of *exchange*, which is precisely the mechanism at work in Imaginary identification. As Pākehā, both Beaumont and Old Ben have exchanged their identification with the coloniser for a new, Imaginary identity as settler. It is this very process of exchange that has now become effaced and which returns – as a trace – in fragments of images, such as the old coin. The coin acts as a reminder for Old Ben, not to *remember* his history, but to *remember to forget* it, so that he may avoid the guilt of his past.

Another reminder of an effaced colonial history emerges during the mid-section of the film. As the colonial troops, including the Forest Rangers, approach the Maniapoto *pā* in

anticipation of the last stand, the film presents us with a close-up of the Mission Station sign. However, this time it is overwritten – in thick chalk or paint – with the details of the military regiment that has taken up camp there. The sign thus acts as a palimpsest of colonial history, in which the past (of colonisation as the ‘civilising mission’) is replaced – literally, written over – with a new history, that of the New Zealand Wars. In this new history, the story of colonisation is substituted with the story of warfare, in which the British/settlers assert sovereignty over New Zealand and establish their place as a ‘legitimate’ presence in the country. However, the sign – like the coin, Old Ben’s drunken ramblings, and settler identity itself – reveals signs of a history that has been repressed or overwritten, a past that continues to assert itself despite all attempts to conceal it.

On a wider level, we can see that a similar process of Imaginary identification functions for the national narrative itself. That is to say, the newer, adopted identity of New Zealand as a *nation* comes to overwrite/repress the history of New Zealand as *colony* so that, in effect, history itself is redoubled (it ‘meets itself again,’ as Lacan says). What this redoubling of history achieves is an effacement, or repression, of the colonial past so that New Zealand can be Imagined by the film as ‘always-already’ a bicultural nation. This process, which may be described as a sort of ‘retrospective nationalism’ comes to replace the past that existed then for the place that existed in the film’s present, as it entered a period of overt nationalism. Just as Beaumont and Old Ben are able to forget their colonial past, and construct a new Imaginary identity as Pākehā, the film itself provides a fantasy space in which the spectator is able to forget their colonial history in order to exist as Pākehā *as if it had always been this way*.

This retrospective construction of a national identity in *Rewi* is reflected in many of the reviews at the time of film’s release. Most reviews of the 1940 version of *Rewi* stress the film’s patriotic credentials, encouraging the New Zealand audiences to ‘get behind the film,’ as though it were a sports team one could cheer on.¹⁰ For example John Grierson, quoted in *The Dominion* (1940), had this to say of Hayward’s film: “It is more important that New

¹⁰ Hayward, as much entrepreneur as filmmaker, tapped into this popular, patriotic feeling and released a full page press sheet, advertising the film (“At last!” the advertisement states in true Hayward style, “an honest press sheet!”). Describing it as “New Zealand’s first genuine super-feature” (even though this was the phrase he used to describe both the first *Rewi* and *The Te Kooti Trail*), the advertisement states that it is “a page from our country’s history that will appeal to every sporting New Zealander”. And, further, that “every patriot worth the name should see this thrilling Historical Epic of Rewi Maniapoto and the Dogged Brown Heroes who fought and died at Orakau for the land they loved so well.” At the time of its release, then, both the public and the filmmakers themselves emphasised the nationalist spirit of the film, appealing to all those who consider themselves ‘sporting’ New Zealanders.

Zealanders should have produced this film that that they should see one hundred films from Hollywood. It is a good film, and I am surprised how near to producing a Cecil B. de Mille spectacle Mr Hayward has come” (“Presentation”). Another 1940 piece from *The Dominion* states that there is “a real New Zealand flavour about the whole show”, which puts it “positively in the ‘must-see’ class” (“Opera House” 16). Perhaps the best expression of this patriotic imperative is expressed by W. G. Monckton, in a letter to the *New Zealand Herald*:

Sir, – At a time when so much is being said in dispraise of moving pictures, it is a pleasure to note the production of a really valuable, historical picture in ‘Rewi’s Last Stand’. Films like this teach history better than any book can do, because they give the spirit of the time and those who lived in an age that is in danger of being forgotten. They inculcate the best type of patriotism by helping to form a living link with the past. (“Letter”)

The final line of Monckton’s letter, while pointing out what film ‘at its best’ can achieve, is of course precisely the function of the psychoanalytic praxis. As Monckton suggests, historically based films like *Rewi* have the ability to construct the present through recollection of the past. However, in the film, as in the therapist’s office, what we are in fact ‘remembering’ is nothing other than a fantasised fiction of the present projected backwards into the past, constructed through ‘empty speech’ on the plane of the Imaginary.

Thus, the ‘living link’ that *Rewi* forges with the past is grounded in the ideology of 1930s-1940s nationalism and is designed, as Monckton points out, to instil a sense of patriotism in its viewers. The film does, in fact, draw the viewer’s attention to its own construction of history as a retrospective narrative, although it still lays claim to historical veracity. From the very opening titles, the film makes it clear that it is located ‘now’, in the time occupied by the audience. Emphasis is placed on the film as a *re-enactment*; like *The Te Kooti Trail*, *Rewi* goes to some length to film events on their original historic locations, with many of the (minor) cast members descended from early settlers. As the opening lines tell us:

In New Zealand, after the Māori Wars of the ‘Sixties, men of famous British regiments took up land and became soldier settlers. Near one of the towns they founded, Te Awamutu, the townspeople filmed recently, these pages from rough-hewn history, re-enacting on the actual locations, the parts played by their pioneering forefathers.

The film’s original script, from 1937, clearly reveals just how important the notion of re-enactment was to the filmmakers. The 1937 script includes a full cover page, which states, in capital letters:

This production is largely founded on fact. In the historical sections no effort has been spared to give an accurate representation of characters and events and wherever possible the dialogue has been preserved in accordance with official records. In this connection the producer is indebted to the Te Awamutu historical society & to numerous historians & individuals for their kindly co-operation. ("1937 Script")

The opening shot of the film is of James Cowan's book, *New Zealand Wars: A History of the Māori Campaigns and the Pioneering Period*, described by Hayward as the "official history" of the Wars ("Publicity Kit"). An unknown hand flicks *backwards* through the pages, to arrive at the chapter where our story is to begin. Later in the film, particularly during the battle scenes, the same book re-appears, each time showing the pages flipping backwards through time. This narrative distance is signalled in one of the very opening intertitles, with the use of the word 'Pakehas' ("In the struggle for possession of the land of promise, the 'Pakehas' [white men], found the Māori tough and chivalrous"). The term 'Pākehā' did not exist during the time of the New Zealand Wars, and is thus a supplement, *after the fact*, of the terms European/settler/British. At another moment, and as I have indicated, the film shifts into documentary mode, in which the intrusion of the narrative voice reminds us of the distance between the viewing present and the represented past.

The film thus, like *The Te Kooti Trail*, presents us with a double temporal structure: the diegetic present of the late 1860s, and the viewing present in the early 1940s. From the viewing present, the film casts a retrospective view over the nation's history, in which the nation that it has become supplements the colony that it was. In the process, the film 'goes over again' the nation's past and, in this process, erases the history of colonisation. The present-day spectator, then, is able to 'meet oneself', or at least one's historic counterpart, in the figure of Beaumont, in which all history of colonisation has been erased. This is the process Lacan traces in his understanding of Symbolic identification and reveals the fact that Pākehā identity is an Imaginary construct, one that represses colonial identity, and is always directed towards an idealisation. In the final section of this analysis, I would like to investigate further the process of erasure, or repression, identified by Lacan as fundamental to identification. For this, I would like to turn my attention to the first version of *Rewi's Last Stand* (1925) as well as to the surviving 1937 script, in order to consider what has been lost, or written out, in the movement from one to the other.

The Strand Picture Mirror



Miss Nola Casselli as "Cecily."

"REWI'S LAST STAND"

**An Epic of the Battling Sixties,
founded on Historic Fact.**

Written and Produced by
RUDALL HAYWARD
round the historical narratives of
JAMES COWAN

as published in his books, "*New Zealand Wars*"
(two volumes, N.Z. Government print) and
"*The Old Frontier*."

Period 1863-64.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

Dr. Wake	Mr. Frank Nemo
(an early Auckland surgeon)	
Cecily Wake (his daughter)	Miss Nola Casselli
Miss Jessica Wake ..	Mrs. P. Millington
(Cecily's maiden aunt)	
Colonel Greig	Mr. Eric Yates
(a British Army officer)	
Kenneth Gordon	Mr. Edmund Finney
(a young Englishman)	
"Colonel" Dobby	Mr. Fred Mills
(the Colony's prize crank)	
Mrs. Wake	Miss Cadia Taine

Historical Characters.

Sir George Grey ..	Mr. Wightman McCombe
(at the age of 49)	
Rewi Maniapoto ..	Chief Abe
(the hero of Orakau)	
Hitiri Paerata	Chief Mita
The Hon. Mr. — ..	Mr. H. Bentley
(a Cabinet Minister)	
Von Tempsky	Mr. Alexis
(leader of the Forest Rangers)	
General Cameron ..	Mr. Chas. Archer
Lieutenant Colonel McDonnell ..	Mr. W. Surrell
Takiri (a Maori maid) ..	Miss Tina
Also 700 others.	

Photography by MR. FRANK STEWART.
Also Special Scenes by Mr. Edwin Coubay
and Mr. J. Makepeace.

Settings by Edward Armitage, Jack Goessi,
and Cecil Todd.

Furnishings and Antiques by Andrews & Clark
Ltd. and G. and W. Alexander.

*Figure 7: Rewi's Last Stand (1925): Programme created for release at The Strand Theatre;
Courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive*

Erasing Colonisation

The 1940 version of *Rewi's Last Stand* was originally intended as a straightforward remake, with sound, of the first version. While only very little remains of the original film, from archival records and surviving fragments of the film we know that the two versions ended up being quite different. In the first *Rewi*, our hero is Kenneth Gordon, who is described in the film's programme as "a young *Englishman*". The programme's plot synopsis tells us:

The winter of 1863 found the settlement of Auckland living in constant fear of being wiped out by hordes of Māori rebels from the King Country. Sir George Grey, England's great Pro-Consul, has been sent out to handle the colony's momentous problems. Dr. Wake, an Auckland surgeon, and his daughter, Cecily, meet a young Englishman, newly arrived from England, and the two become fast friends. ("Programme")

In the second *Rewi*, however, Englishman Kenneth Gordon becomes Robert (Ropata) Beaumont, a “trader”. In the passage from the first to the second *Rewi*, then, our white protagonist – as his occupation suggests – *trades in* (or to recall a previous notion, *exchanges*) his identity as an Englishman for that of a Pākehā. From the 1925 version, we can see that, in a rather literal manner, Beaumont’s genealogy (both filmically and literally) as British is effaced; only traces remain of Beaumont’s filmic predecessor, Kenneth Gordon, as well as his identity as English in the second *Rewi*.

Interestingly, in the 1937 script of *Rewi’s Last Stand*, there is a suggestion that Beaumont was involved in the trading of rifles and tomahawks to the Māori. One of the early film intertitles, subsequently removed, states: “Unscrupulous traders had placed in the hands of the Māori – the rifle and the tomahawk... Centuries of inter-tribal warfare had made him hardy and courageous... a brilliant warrior and strategist” (“1937 Script”; ellipses in original). Further on in this early script, as Beaumont is introduced into the narrative, there is a note: “Robert Beaumont, one of the traders who had profited from Māori warfare...” All traces of Beaumont’s unscrupulous history are erased by the final version,¹¹ however, allowing him to operate fantasmatically as the ideal settler. As I mentioned in my earlier discussion, this fantasmatic, Imaginary identity of Beaumont as settler constitutively denies or frustrates attempts to fix him to a colonial identity – a process literalised in the comparison between earlier versions of his character and the one finally presented to us on screen.

Retrospective Identity

In the film’s attempt to present a whole, complete Pākehā subject (Beaumont as the One of New Zealand identity), the settler’s history and identity as colonist has been replaced. *Rewi’s Last Stand* offers us two options for identification: one that is firmly grounded in history, in which identity is fixed and immutable; and another that is mobile, continually evolving and subject to change. While Ariana-as-Indigene is associated with a fixed identity, Pākehā identity, the film suggests, is unfixed and decentred. This dual identificatory system is, however, troubling for the settler: on one hand, it presents an identity that is grounded in long history and self-confidence (Lacan’s ‘subject of knowledge’) as the desire of the settler. Lacking a firm identity that would legitimise the settler’s presence, the Pākehā desires more than anything this model of identity, which would allow us access to a knowledge that always

¹¹ There is, of course, a possibility that this was included in the original cut of *Rewi’s Last Stand* (released to New Zealand audiences), which no longer exists.

appears to be lacking: knowledge of who we are and where we call home. On the other hand, the settler's adopted identity fulfils a useful function: it allows the settler to forget our colonial history. While Ariana/Māori are able to remember – in fact, *must* remember their history in order to ground their identity in the present – the settler is shown to have no such ties; we are, in effect, historyless. This enables the Pākehā to conveniently forget, or erase, our own history, and *whakapapa*, as coloniser, and imagine ourselves as 'always-already' Pākehā. This is because, as I outlined in the previous chapter, colonisation functions as the traumatic kernel of the Real for Pākehā; it is the 'empty set' or 'minus One' that must be fantasmatically written over by a new, retrospective identity.

This retrospective identity, which exists both for the settler in particular and for the nation in general, enables the settler to supplement the lack of fixed identity experienced in relation to the Indigene with fantasies of history. *Rewi's Last Stand*, and indeed all of the films which takes the New Zealand Wars as their subject matter, thus rewrite history in order to fantasmatically cover over this traumatic minus One at the core of the settler narrative and settler identity. The settler is thus able to bypass, Imaginarily, that which we know we can never possess, and which activates our desire as settlers: the kind of connection to history, and self-assuredness of identity, we detect in the Indigene. By replacing the nation that exists in the present for the colony that existed in the past, the settler is able to reconstruct him/herself as Pākehā (or settler) and not, emphatically, as a British-colonial subject.

Further, the ongoing struggle for a stable Pākehā identity, the strategies of legitimisation and fictions of belonging that repeat throughout our history, can thus be read as *traces* of the repressed colonial past. Because, following Lacan, we could argue that Pākehā identity, as a fiction of the One, represses its colonial identity, it is forever condemned to repeat itself. The lack that sits at the heart of Pākehā identity, a lack which is retrospectively covered over by fictions of the One, constantly re-emerges to destabilise this constructed identity, forcing us to keep writing and re-writing it throughout history. In a film which invites us to remember our Imaginary *national* history, that insists on the validity of New Zealand's past as a subject for feature films, we discover the concealed trace of another history: the process by which the Pākehā subject has come to replace the British colonial one, and thus, temporarily and imaginarily, find a way to belong in New Zealand.

By reading *Rewi's Last Stand* through Lacan's concept of Symbolic identification, then, I have attempted to re-present the un-presented lack that sits at the core of Pākehā identity. It is

an attempt to make present what has been erased, forgotten or, in some cases, literally decomposed. While keeping hold of the film's Imaginary projections of identification, in which Beaumont operates as the idealised One of national identity, I have attempted to reveal the concealed history of this identity construction, to re-introduce into the chain of signifiers the unary trait, that which functions in the service of identification. Shifting from a purely Imaginary understanding of identification to one that takes into consideration the Symbolic effects of identification, we can begin to trace the passage by which we 'count ourselves' as Pākehā, in and through the very fictions we construct of who we are.

Part II:

Postcolonial Disorders

Nervous Conditions:

Settler Anxiety in *Pictures* (1981)

“Everything is unsettling.”

(Helen Burton, *Pictures*)

Anxiety as Object

The path by which I have approached this chapter has been a long and detoured one. It began with the idea of reading Michael Black’s 1981 film *Pictures* through Lacan’s *Seminar X: Anxiety* (1962-63). The first step took me to Lacan’s Seminar, as I worked systematically through the text, negotiating what has come to be known as one of the most difficult of all his works,¹ in an attempt to understand the notion of Lacanian anxiety. However, this first step proved not quite so straightforward. As I closed the Seminar, I found myself confused and overwhelmed by the many different and semi-formed theories of anxiety circulating in my head and in my notes. In an attempt to clarify Lacanian anxiety, I then read through numerous other texts on this notion, from Renata Salecl’s cultural theory of anxiety (2004), to Roberto Harari’s clinical analysis of the term (2001), and many more besides. Still, I felt my object of study was eluding me, playing a game with me; as soon as I felt I might be approaching an understanding of Lacanian anxiety, by the next text, or in the following days, I seemed unable

¹ Lacan’s *Seminar X: Anxiety* was given in the academic year of 1962-1963. Much has been written on the historical context of this Seminar, as it coincided with the International Psycho-Analytic Association’s (IPA) move towards expelling Lacan from his own society, the Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP) (see Shepherdson 2001; J-A. Miller 2005). It has been said (J-A. Miller 2005) that Lacan deliberately ‘held back’ in this Seminar, as a result of the discussions surrounding his psychoanalytic practices. Following this Seminar, Lacan was dismissed from the SFP, and his next scheduled Seminar series, “The Names of the Father”, was cancelled after just one lecture. The next full series was *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Seminar XI), held at the École Normale Supérieure, which is understood as a re-evaluation, in a more accessible style, of the major psychoanalytic concepts for an audience that consisted of many new faces. Accordingly, many theorists of Lacan, such as Roberto Harari, Charles Shepherdson and Jacques-Alain Miller, have described this period as a cut, or break, in his career, noting also that his style changed from the dense, obscure and difficult style of his early and mid-career, to a less rhetorical style beginning with the *Four Fundamental Concepts*. Refer also to my Chapter 2.

to accurately describe what this concept was. This was a highly frustrating process and, needless to say, I was struck with anxiety; how was I to begin writing when my central object of study, anxiety, remained out of reach, ungraspable? I pushed on; books and notes filled my desk, as I surrounded myself with theories of Lacanian anxiety. This, in itself, was a safe space to inhabit, for the more I read, the more I attempted to ward off the anxiety of beginning, as well as, at the same time, believing that I was getting closer to knowing my object. Of course, by this time, I had expected to experience some of what Lacan was teaching as I worked through his Seminar – this is his art. Still, I could not bring myself to overcome it. I felt that I could not stop reading until I had fully and sufficiently grasped this object of enquiry, until I held it firmly in my grip. Certainly, the anxiety appeared interminable.

The repeated emphasis on the term ‘object’ here is not without a certain degree of reflexivity on my part. As many theorists of Lacanian anxiety foreground, what this Seminar is about is a reconceptualization of the object. This is a point I will arrive at shortly. For now, however, I would like to dwell for a moment longer on anxiety itself as an *object of knowledge*. In order to do so, it is helpful to turn to the relationship between Freud’s theories of anxiety, and Lacan’s treatment of them in this Seminar; the way that Lacan himself treats anxiety as an object of enquiry. Much has already been written on what has been canonised as Freud’s ‘two theories’ of anxiety. Indeed, most texts on Lacanian anxiety give a more or less detailed discussion of the genealogy of anxiety in Freudian psychoanalysis.² As such, I do not wish to spend much time discussing Freud’s theories here, as I believe they have already been well documented. To reiterate, my focus is on the way that Lacan *relates to* Freudian anxiety as an object of study in his tenth Seminar.

In Seminar X, Lacan is most concerned with Freud’s later work on anxiety, elaborated in his 1926 study *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. Here, Freud radically reconceived his earlier theory, in which anxiety was understood as the result of repression, and came to understand it as that which *caused* repression. Freud concludes his essay by arguing that anxiety must therefore be considered a signal or reaction from the ego in an attempt to protect itself from a perceived danger. As Jacques-Alain Miller mentions (2005), Freud’s *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* structures the entire development of Lacan’s *Seminar on Anxiety*. The three

² For in-depth discussions of Freud’s two theories of anxiety, see: Charles Sheperdson’s introduction in Harari’s text, *Lacan’s Seminar on Anxiety* (2001); Renata Salecl’s *On Anxiety* (2004); and Joan Copjec’s “Vampires, Breast-feeding and Anxiety” (1991).

terms that constitute the title of Freud's essay are subjected by Lacan to a series of etymological excavations, giving rise to a number of interlinking affects: emotion, impediment, dismay, embarrassment, and so on. As Miller points out, through these terms, Lacan constructs an etymological grid which borders the notion of anxiety and provides the limit points to the text. Roberto Harari has similarly noted the influence of Freud's essay on the structure of Lacan's Seminar, noting a repetition of the tripartite structure (signalled by Freud's title) throughout the Seminar (2001, 7).

For both Freud and Lacan, the notion of anxiety is a crucial one as it brings together a number of different concepts. Compare, for example, Freud's comment in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-1917) that: "The problem of anxiety is a *nodal point* at which the most various and important questions converge" (393; emphasis mine), with Lacan's opening comment in Seminar X that:

Anxiety is very precisely the *meeting point* where you will find waiting everything that was involved in my previous discourse and where, together, there await a certain number of terms which may appear not to have been sufficiently connected up for you up to the present. (X.1, 1; emphasis mine)

Anxiety thus, for both Freud and Lacan, acts as a kind of *rendez-vous* point between a number of different psychoanalytic points. However, as Lacan later notes, there is no point trying to locate anxiety somehow in the 'middle' of this network of concepts. He writes, "if you try to look for anxiety here, you won't find it... you will quickly see that the bird has flown, if indeed it was ever there. It is not to be sought in the middle" (X.1, 6).

Lacan does not, for the time being at least, go on to tell us how to corner anxiety. In fact, one of the defining structures of this text is its status of putting ideas *in suspense*, of always gesturing towards the future, akin to an anxious expectation or condition of waiting. At this point in his Seminar, Lacan refers directly to Freud's study, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, noting the way in which Freud refuses to discuss anxiety directly (a comment to which he wryly adds, "thank God"). Following Freud, Lacan leaves a space open in the place where anxiety should be, declining to categorise it as a fixed and knowable object. Lacan tells us, "when we go into this text [*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*], you will see what is to be seen in relation to anxiety, each mesh, as I might appropriately put it, has no meaning except precisely by leaving the void in which anxiety is" (X.1, 6). This is coeval with the function of anxiety as a nodal point, not in the sense of an object or middle point, as though it is a knot

tying everything together, but rather, in terms of an enigma, a void or nothingness, at the centre of psychoanalysis. As Shepherdson writes, “anxiety is not merely an object to be categorised, but an enigma to be pursued – a perpetual question that runs through the entire analysis and eventually takes on the status of a guiding thread” (2001, xviii).

Lacan demonstrates this precisely by attempting, before his audience, to construct a net of signifiers, in which to entrap anxiety. This net he weaves on the basis of the three signifiers that make up Freud’s text: inhibition, symptom and anxiety, and the series of connecting terms I referred to earlier.³ Each of the other terms in the grid (besides ‘inhibition’, ‘symptom’ and ‘anxiety’), are ‘discovered’ by Lacan through their etymological relations. The meaning-effect of *emotion* is derived from the removal of the ‘e’: *motion*, which signals movement or impulse. However, for Lacan, (e)motion does not imply that the subject finds itself in full possession of free movement; rather, that the person who ‘falls’ into the state described as *emotional* is seen to be suffering from a certain decrease in movement (Harari 2001, 17). As an emotional individual, the person finds him/herself in a state close to the symptom (indicated in the schema below), which is understood here as a lack of control or efficacy of will. Lacan points out that an even greater degree (difficulty) of this alteration is presented in the case of *dismay* (*émoi*). The French word *émoi* designates a person who does not know what to do, someone who lacks action. Inhibition, Lacan points out, is made worse by *impediment* (*empêchement*), which has its Latin roots in *impedicare*, meaning to make an obstacle of, or to be trapped. Difficulty here is much worse than mere inhibition. An even greater difficulty is to be found in the term *embarrassment* (*embarras*), which – Lacan ingeniously notes – punctuates the ‘bar(r)’, which is precisely the condition of the barred subject (Harari 2001, 18-19).

³ As Harari points out, Lacan’s intention in constructing this grid is to situate the three elements – inhibition, symptom, anxiety – inside a matrix where there is a certain order in which the elements do not imply one another. The vertical axis refers to ‘movement’, which is a concept that Lacan borrows from Freud’s text, *Inhibition, Symptom, Anxiety*, which is that each of the three properties possess a function of movement – particularly, of stopping or halting movement. The horizontal axis, which denotes difficulty, comes from Freud’s observation in his study that, simply put, all three phenomena exist on a sliding scale of difficulty, from the occasional irruption into daily life, to the absolute interruption of one’s ability to live a daily life. As Harari says, the logic of the schema is “simple to read”: The directional arrows of the vectors represent increasing difficulty and movement. The schema thus stands for relationships and relations. For example, what Lacan will call *emotion*, he will locate at a point implying *greater movement* beyond the point of stoppage or halting, which he called *inhibition* (2001, 16; emphasis in original). In order to construct all the terms in the grid, Lacan focuses on the etymological roots of the words; as Harari explains: “This is a recommended way of discovering how the terms selected are inscribed in each *lalangue*. Words, as we know, are not untainted. They have a history and carry a tradition; these are not hidden signifieds (meanings) only accessible to philologists or those with keys to etymology. Reference is not beyond the words themselves; it is in them” (2001, 17).

Systematically, then, and based on these etymological connections, Lacan constructs the following grid:

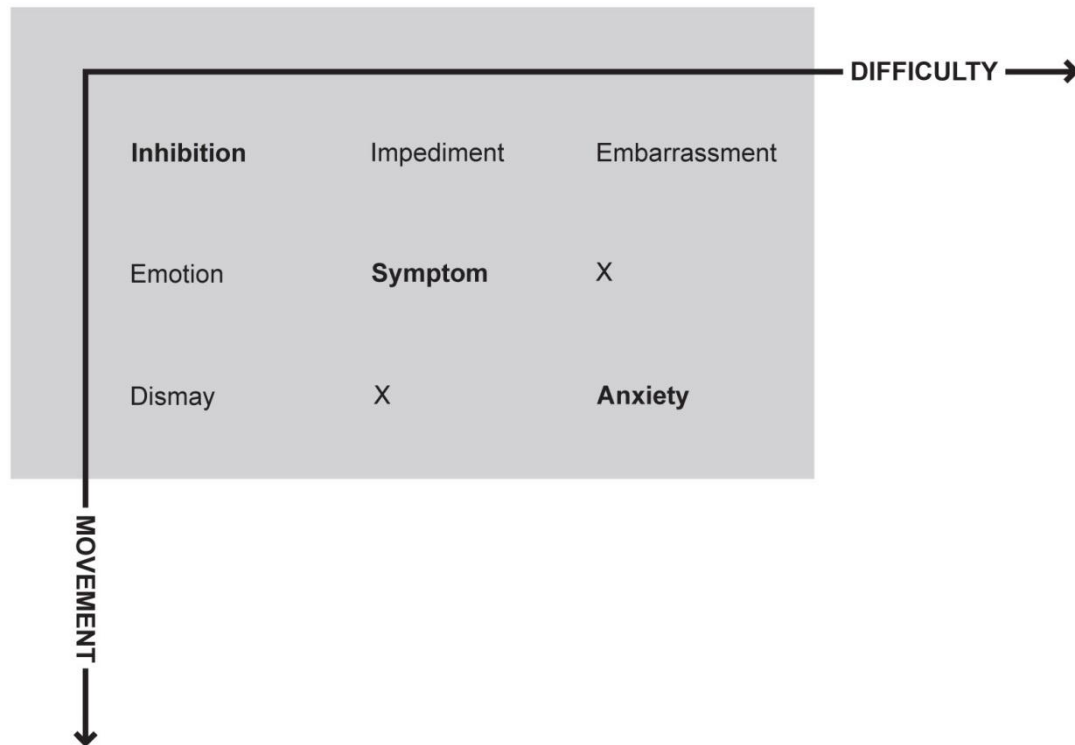


Figure 8: Lacan's Framework of Anxiety (X.I, 8)

At this moment in his Seminar, as Jacques-Alain Miller writes, this grid proves useful for the fact that, in it, “you can see the game of catch it displays” (2005, 20). According to Miller, this grid is presented in order to make us believe that the signifier can envelope anxiety. Indeed, we are seduced into this way of thinking through Lacan's bewitching display of etymological connections, which tightly consociates all the terms in the grid. In this ‘net’, to draw on Lacan's word for Freud's text, it seems that Lacan will be able to “trap the fish of anxiety” (J-A. Miller 2005, 20). However, it becomes clear that Lacan creates this net of signifiers precisely in order to then move away from it, to create a sense of *distance* between a purely descriptive approach to anxiety, and what will come to take its place by the end of the Seminar.⁴ As Miller notes, “this is why it seemed to me that this was the tone Lacan

⁴ In a quite literal distancing, Lacan does not refer again to this grid until the very final lecture (3/7/63). At this point, he reconstructs the grid of anxiety, but with a number of differences. All terms except anxiety have been replaced by new ones, in which the *concept of anxiety* occupies a different place to anxiety proper. This move,

wanted to give to the beginning of his *Seminar on Anxiety*, a confrontation of anxiety by means of the signifier – what followed, to the contrary, showed that this is not truly how the fish will be caught” (2005, 20).

Harari, too, notes the way in which Lacan creates a sense of distance between us and anxiety as an object of knowledge. For Harari, one of the functions of suspending a definition or location of anxiety is in order to distance himself from the dominant philosophical theories of the concept circulating in post-World War II Europe. The *Seminar on Anxiety* was delivered at a time when European, and especially the French, cultural atmosphere was dominated by existentialist thinking. Indeed, Lacan himself, in the early part of his Seminar, engages with the topic of anxiety from an existentialist point of view. However, in the same manner as he displayed his ‘net of signifiers’, it seems that Lacan did this in order to (also) differentiate himself from philosophies of anxiety (Harari 2001, 5). As Harari argues, “Seminar X does indeed take its own starting point arising from philosophical discourse... it simulates and pretends to belong to it, then distances itself from that discourse” (2001, 5).⁵ That is, he engages with this philosophical backdrop of anxiety in order to create a certain “opaque distance” (X.1, 5) between psychoanalytic anxiety and philosophical anxiety. Like Jacques-Alain Miller, then, Harari emphasises the way in which Lacan refuses to be drawn into a definition of anxiety. Instead, argues Harari, Lacan “limits himself to referring to something that can be supposed by experience: we all suffer” (2001, 7).

From both of these examples, we can detect that Lacan is playing a certain kind of “psychodramatic game” with us (X.1, 4), leading us through “false doors” in our approach towards anxiety (X.2, 2). Initially, Lacan provides us with an outline of the concept of anxiety, as though tracing its shape or circumscribing it in a place. However, almost as soon as he offers us this object, he retracts it, leaving only a trace or negated presence behind. Jacques-Alain Miller draws attention to this when he writes: “This is what Lacan constantly practices, a distancing of the reference” (2005, 16). This is why, Miller goes on, we find repetitions of passive and hesitant grammatical structures, such as “what one calls...”, “what I call here...”, “for us...”, “if one might say...” (2005, 17). All of this produces, Miller

as I understand it, is designed to draw our attention to the gap between the description of anxiety (a Symbolic relation) and anxiety itself. This is a point I will discuss in further detail as the chapter progresses.

⁵ Initially, Lacan’s discussions of anxiety refer to Søren Kierkegaard’s seminal text, *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844), but he soon draws in Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Leon Chestov, Nikolai Berdiaeff, and Jean-Paul Sartre, and all within the space of the first meeting. But, while drawing from these thinkers for “the psychoanalytic appropriation of what is deemed pertinent” (Harari 2001, 6), Lacan goes on to say that none of the definitions of anxiety offered by these thinkers is appropriate.

argues, “in effect, a slight tremulousness, but which responds exactly to what was necessary to make it [anxiety] emerge as an object not like the others” (2005, 17).

In creating a distance between the audience/reader and the object (anxiety), Lacan produces in us a state of anxiety. For, as it is with fear or phobia, once we have an object of reference, it can be rationalised and located in a certain place in the external world. As Harari writes, “once you have an object, there is a certain relief... it is easily understandable” (Harari 2001, 32). Lacan’s refusal to presentify anxiety as an object of study brings us to the realisation that anxiety is something that escapes both the Symbolic and the Imaginary. That is, anxiety does not belong to the Symbolic world of representation, nor to the Imaginary world of identifiable, specular objects. Anxiety, then, is not an object that can be known or defined, scopically at least. Like Lacan, I cannot grasp it long enough to be able to offer it to you as something knowable. It is not a signifier and it cannot be interpreted (Jacques-Alain Miller ventures to add that anxiety is not even a concept). Rather it can be thought of as the route, the path I take towards an object (albeit a very special object, the *objet petit a*, which I will arrive at momentarily). Thus, in my attempt to define anxiety as object, I have in fact traced the path towards an object that does not exist.

Not Without an Object

‘Anxiety’ is the title of Lacan’s Seminar, but, we might ask, is this title somewhat misleading? We have already established that anxiety is not the object of enquiry in this Seminar, but rather the *route* to the object proper. As Miller writes, “the *Seminar on Anxiety* does not make anxiety its theme, its object, but it does situate it as its path” (2005, 31). We hence arrive at the question: where is this path leading us, or, to put it another way, towards what is anxiety approaching? The simple answer is that anxiety is the route to the *objet petit a*. However, while this may be stated quite directly, the explanation requires some more time. As Miller states, “to speak of anxiety, and especially of anxiety as the route of access to the *petit a*, requires delicacy, a special delicacy, precisely because it is not an object like the others” (2005, 15). This, then, would suggest that anxiety *does* in fact, have an object, even if this object has a special status.

To put it another way, and in Lacan’s words, “anxiety is *not without* an object” (X.7, 4; emphasis mine). This is perhaps the most famous of all the aphorisms which punctuate this Seminar, and directs us towards the crucial relationship between anxiety and its object: “It is the formula on which there ought to be suspended this relationship of anxiety to an object”

(X.7, 4). While Lacan states that, in his *Seminar on Anxiety*, he is following in Freud's path quite closely, stating on several occasions, "anxiety is a signal, just as Freud says" (X.8, 3), there is (at least) one major difference: while Freud considered anxiety to be *without* an object (involving the perceived loss of an object), Lacan insists that anxiety is *not without* an object. This statement, as Lacan himself points out, seems to be in absolute opposition to the common understanding and experience of anxiety, which appears to the one suffering to be utterly objectless. As Salecl explains:

The usual perception is that we fear something that we see or hear – that is, something that can be discerned as an object or situation. Fear would thus seem to concern what can be articulated. In contrast, we often perceive anxiety as a state of fear that is objectless, meaning we cannot easily say what it is that makes us anxious. Anxiety thus seems to be an uncomfortable affect, more horrible than fear because it is unclear what provokes it. (2004, 18)

This is what, as Harari points out, links anxiety to nervousness: the presumed absence of an object. The subject is nervous or suffers anxiety without knowing from what or why (2001, 31).

However, Lacan tells us early in his Seminar that we should be wary of what this experience of anxiety might teach us. He warns us "not to believe too much in what [we] can understand" (X.2, 3). Understanding, he tells us, is a 'false door', which can be deceptive, and we should not confuse our *experience* of anxiety with a presumed *understanding* of it. That is, because anxiety is an affect, it comes to us in what appears to be an unequivocal manner: a suffering, with well-known symptoms (loss of breath, heart palpitations, vertiginous unbalance, and so on), which seem unattached to any object, image or representation. Or, as Miller writes, "because it is the good old anxiety, it is known and felt... it appears, it is felt, one is bothered by it" (2006, 10). But, Lacan stresses, just because we may experience this, does not necessarily mean that we understand it, it does not necessarily lead to the truth of the experience of anxiety: "What we can understand is often seen as unequivocal when that thing is an affect – but there is a danger because what we understand is not necessarily what we should believe in, is not necessarily the truth" (X.2, 3).

From this warning, Lacan proceeds to interrogate this common (mis)understanding of anxiety, and turns Freudian anxiety inside-out, by constructing the object of anxiety: *the objet petit a*. To begin, the grammatical structure of the first, and repeated mention, of the object of anxiety must be noted: *anxiety is not without an object*. As Lacan tells us, "this relation of

‘not being without having’ does not mean that one knows what object is involved – it means that the object is obscure” (X.7, 4-5). Or, as he sums up later in the series,

Anxiety, we have always been taught, is a fear without an object. A chant in which, we could say here, another discourse already announces itself, a chant which, however scientific it may be is close to that of a child reassuring himself. For the truth that I am enunciating for you I formulate in the following way: ‘it is not without an object’. Which is not to say that this object is accessible along the same path as all the others. (X.10, 1)

The aphorism, notably, does not say that anxiety has an object, but, in a rather elliptical manner, draws our attention to the logic of negation. This is similar to the process by which Lacan first traces the object of anxiety itself, then retracts from it, putting it before our eyes before taking it away, leaving only its trace. The use of the double negative, the ‘not without’, is employed, according to Harari, in such a way that “accounts for the *obscure, imprecise condition of the object at hand*” (2001, 33). In this manner, the object is characterised as something that is very far from being obvious or self-evident.⁶

The *objet petit a* emerges as the result of the formation of the subject. As I noted in the previous chapter, Lacan makes a fundamental distinction between the subject and the ego. The subject (the barred subject of the unconscious) is written by Lacan with a slash through it, indicating that the subject is divided between (unconscious) knowledge and speech. The ego produces a field of the Other as an effect of successive identifications, beginning with the mirror stage. It is from this field of the Other that the subject of the unconscious is produced, meaning that both the subject barred and the ego arise from the same place, the place of the Other. However, the subject does not come out of this field of the Other unscathed. Rather, as Harari notes, the subject emerges from the Other having left a fragment, the *objet a*, which falls away as a remainder (2001, 135). To put it simply, then, the *objet a* is what is left over after the subject is produced from the Other.

As a logical progression of this process of division, the Other – the whole Other – becomes barred, or split (since it has ‘dropped’ the *objet a*). “Consequently”, as Harari explains, “*an Other with a lack, linked to anxiety, appears, which we should point out, in the final instance, is what should be called... the unconscious*” (2001, 136; emphasis in original). The subject of the unconscious and the *objet a* are now both located in the field of the Other. This is, precisely, the structure of the (neurotic) fantasy, which Lacan describes as ‘the barred subject

⁶ For a full discussion of the multiple ways in which the double negative of the ‘not without’ structures much of Seminar X, see Harari, 2001, pp. 33-36.

in relation to the *object petit a*' ($\$ \diamond a$).⁷ We can thus understand the manner in which desire is directed. While it may appear that, when we desire, we desire the whole Other, what it is truly directed towards is the *objet a*; as Harari writes: "To desire, then, the Other, A, is never to desire more than *a*" (2001, 137). The *objet a*, then, is what supports the desire in the fantasy; it is always to be located in the field of the Other and ensures the constitutive lack within the subject.

Since this *objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire, safeguards the alterity of the Other by localising the lack (*le manqué*) in its place (in the field of the subject), the Freudian notion of object-loss is, for Lacan, misleading. Rather, as Weber points out, the *objet petit a* is constituted by its ability to *be lost* (or more precisely, to be 'ceded'). Anxiety therefore, continues Weber, arises not from the loss of an object, but rather from the loss of this loss (1991, 159). Or, to reiterate in the words of Shepherdson: "While Freud appears to formulate anxiety as a response to separation or loss, Lacan insists that anxiety is not a response to the loss of an object, but rather arises when lack fails to appear" (2001, xxxi). The etymology of the term *anxiety* is a clue to this. Derived from the Latin *anxius*, from *angere*, anxiety originates in the meaning 'to choke', indicating a narrowness of breath or sense of suffocation.⁸ That is, as its own concealed history indicates, anxiety is not a relation to a (perceived) loss, but rather the overwhelming proximity of the object, as though it is sitting on one's chest, making it difficult to breathe.⁹

This physical reaction serves us as a warning that we are coming too close to the *objet a*. Normally, as Copjec argues, we are at a safe distance from the *objet a*, there is a proper space between ourselves and the object-cause of our desire. She writes: "When we are at some remove from it, the... object *a* appears as a lost part of ourselves, whose absence prevents us from becoming whole; it is then that it functions as the object-cause of our desire" (1991, 35). However, Copjec continues, it is inevitable that, at times, we will run into the object *a* – come

⁷ This *matheme* designates the neurotic fantasy, and indicates the subject's response to the enigmatic desire of the Other. The *matheme* is to be read: 'the barred subject in relation to the object'.

⁸ Lacan makes an obscure reference to this on the first meeting of the Seminar series, where he re-writes the graph of desire. He notes, almost as an aside, that it resembles the solar plexus. He points out: "Of course, I am not claiming by that to deliver its secrets to you, but this curious little homology is perhaps not as external as one might think and deserves to be recalled at the beginning of a discourse on anxiety" (X.1, 2). By this, Lacan signals both the biological and theoretical places we will come back to later in the Seminar, when he introduces this notion of anxiety as the feeling of experiencing a lack of the lack.

⁹ While I do not wish to dwell on it here, it should be noted that Lacan explicitly links this experience to the feeling of the *Unheimliche* – the 'uncanny' – in Freud's work. For Lacan, the singular experience of the uncanny is precisely the moment when something appears in the place of the lack; where the lack should be, we find an object. Anxiety, Lacan stresses early in this Seminar, is "linked to everything that can appear at the place of [the lack]; and what assures us of this... in *Unheimlichkeit*" (X.4, 4).

a little too close to it – and anxiety is the signal that warns us to take our proper distance once again. Copjec, in a way that has clear resonances with Freud’s theory of the uncanny, says that: “When our distance from the [object *a*] is reduced, it no longer appears as a partial object, but – on the contrary – as a complete body, an almost exact double of our own, except for the fact that this double is endowed with the object that we sacrificed in order to become subjects” (1991, 35).

Thus, it is the approach of that which we sacrificed in order to become subjects, that which ‘fell away’ and became the *objet petit a*, that anxiety registers. This ‘presentification’ of the *objet a* threatens the perceived coherence of the subject by confronting us with our own lack, by appearing precisely in the place of the lack. While Copjec here links it to the concept of the double, Lacan likens this to the notion of the mother, specifically, the maternal womb. That is, anxiety is linked not to the nostalgia for the maternal womb, but its imminence, “something that will allow us to glimpse that we are going to re-enter it” (X.4, 10).¹⁰ Thus, whether this lack of the lack is conceived in terms of ‘too much mother’, as it is popularly written, or the appearance of the double in the place of the lack, we must conceive of anxiety as the signal-reaction to the over-proximity of the object *a* there where it should not be – in the field of the subject. This overwhelming nearness of the *a* has the effect of putting the subject itself, in the very core of its being, into question (Weber 1991, 160), threatening the perceived coherence of the subject.

Because anxiety is not a response to the loss of an object, it is thus distinguishable from the affects of mourning and melancholy, both of which are responses to object-loss. According to both Freud and Lacan, mourning is the process of the separation of the object, which no longer exists. Through the act of mourning, the subject is able to detach him or herself from the lost object, to accept the loss of the object. In a state of melancholy, on the other hand, the subject insists on the narcissistic identification with the lost object, internalising it (Salecl 2004, 25). Thus, while melancholy and mourning are both reactions to the loss of an object, anxiety signals the danger of the over-proximity of the object (*a*), when the lack itself is lacking.

¹⁰ Lacan: “What provokes anxiety? It is not, contrary to what is said, either the rhythm nor the alternation of the presence-absence of the mother. And what proves it, is that the infant takes pleasure in repeating the game of presence and absence: this possibility of absence, is what gives presence its security. What is most anxiety-provoking for the child, is precisely this relation of a lack on which he establishes himself, which makes him desire, this relation is all the more disturbed when there is no possibility of a lack, when the mother is always on his back” (X.4, 10).

The Certainty of the Real

Lacan mentions several times throughout this Seminar that anxiety is a signal of danger; this is the argument Freud arrived at in the conclusion of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. For Lacan, this signal is extraordinary because it works without the use of any signifiers. As Copjec writes, “because a signifier can always be negated, the message that it sends can always be doubted” (1991, 26). Rather than operating as a signifier, as Lacan tells us, anxiety is an affect, and, as such, it cannot be doubted. To phrase this another way, and as Jacques-Alain Miller writes, “what does not deceive is what does not become signifier – it is the Real remainder” (2005, 63). As a result, and contrary to the popular conception, and experience, of it, Lacanian anxiety is connected to absolute certitude; anxiety is that which cannot be doubted. Returning to Copjec’s analysis of Lacanian anxiety, she says quite simply that, because anxiety does not deceive, because it is not a signifier, it is the Real (1991, 26). Or, in Miller’s words, “anxiety is a path which envisions the Real” (2005, 46). Thus, we arrive at our second aphorism of this Seminar: *anxiety is that which does not deceive*.

We must, therefore, position the object *a* in the register of the Real. This is the order, for Lacan, of that which escapes representation, understanding and knowledge; as I discussed in Chapter 2, it is the trauma of what cannot successfully be integrated into the Symbolic. The object *a*, as we have already seen, is also that which is the cause of desire, the lack that drives desire to seek out (replacement) objects. For Lacan, the blank place of the *objet a* is essential to this structure of desire. However, the subject erects a barrier between us and our desire, making it difficult, if not impossible, to confront this lack directly. This is because, as Jacques-Alain Miller points out, in order to reach the *objet a*, we must travel along a rather long and detoured path, the path of anxiety itself. As Lacan tells us, “there’s no doubt an obstacle to, and objection to seeing [the *objet a*] directly because in order to reach it, we must go by a rather complicated path. This roundabout path is anxiety” (X.6, 4). Thus, in order to avoid the trauma of being confronted with our own object-cause of desire, the ego generates a signal that is most unequivocal, that has no room for doubt: the signal of anxiety, directed towards the subject, and indicating its proximity to the Real. This is, emphatically, not to say that there is no deception involved in the *objet a*; but rather, anxiety as a *signal* does not lie; anxiety cannot deceive the subject. Shielding us from the trauma of the Real, anxiety is thus what drags us back into reality, into the specular world of *familiar* objects. Unlike Oedipus, Lacan tells us, we do not need to tear out our eyes and throw them to the ground in order to avoid the horror of the Real; we do not need to blind ourselves in order not to see. For,

anxiety, warning us to return to the world of objects, instructs us to *exchange the object a for something else, a false object a: the specular image i(o)*. That is, the specular field, to which we cannot help but return, invites us to miscognise the object *a* for a replacement object, the imaginary object *a*, the specular image *i(o)* that is reflected in the mirror (X.25, 8).

In the very final lecture of his *Seminar on Anxiety*, Lacan returns, with a difference, to his net of signifiers, which he presented at the outset of this series. Here, the grid of ‘inhibitions, symptoms and anxiety’ (the terms are indicated on the left-hand side of the grid) is redrawn, with a number of changes:¹¹

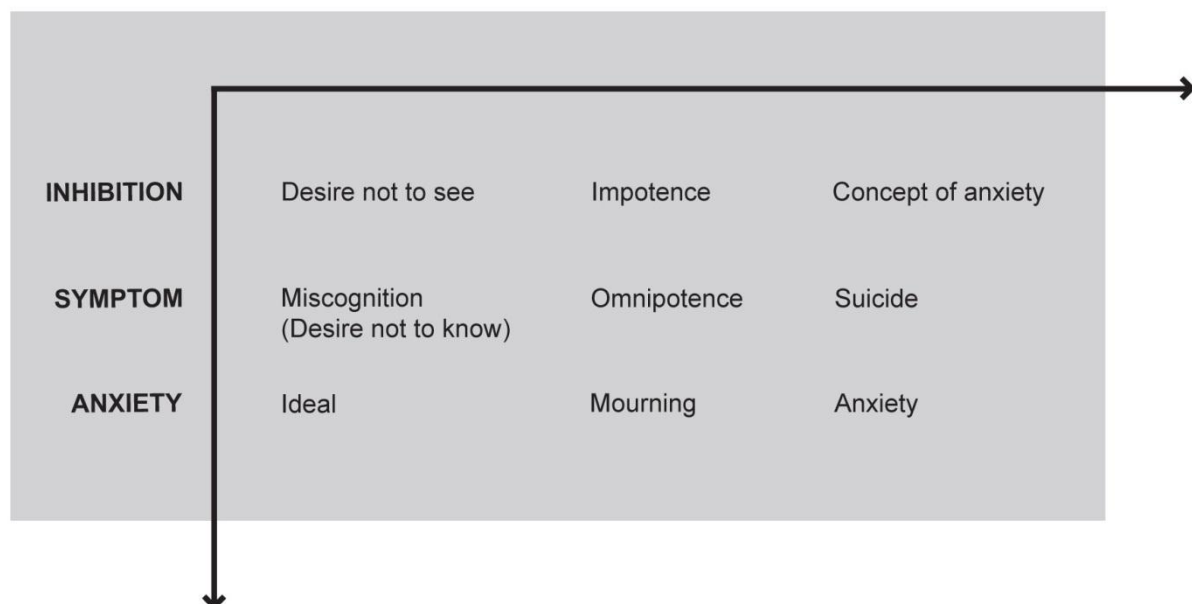


Figure 9: Lacan’s New Framework of Anxiety (X.25, 9)

There where there was embarrassment, we find the *concept of anxiety* – the only hold that we can have on anxiety – “the only final comprehension as such of all reality” (X.25, 9). Not only is Lacan pointing out, in his own veiled humour, that this failure to take hold of our object is an ‘embarrassment’, it is distinctly removed from anxiety itself; indeed, it is an

¹¹ Recall that, in the original framework, the elements were positions according to increasing intensity along the horizontal axis of *difficulty* and a vertical axis of *movement*. In this grid, we arrive at each of the terms by way of a lengthy discussion on the ‘floors of desires’, namely the partial objects of the voice (superego), the gaze (scopic drive), the phallic, the oral and the anal drives. For a full explication of this second grid of anxiety, refer to Harari’s *Lacan’s Seminar on Anxiety* (2001), particularly pages 256-266.

inhibition that stops us from truly knowing it. We can conclude from this, then, that at the very limit point on any meditation on anxiety, such as this Seminar itself, we can only ever have the concept of anxiety, unable to move outside or beyond the specular field.

Lacan's entire Seminar has taken the form of a path, or a series of paths, towards the *objet petit a*. However, this object is not, after all, the final destination point. Rather, in the final gasps of this Seminar, Lacan leaves us with a rather detailed discussion on the act of *mourning*. Why is this? At all times throughout the Seminar, Lacan has continuously motioned towards the end of this path, the path we have come to know as anxiety, repeatedly pointing out that we will end with a new concept of the *object a* and an understanding of anxiety. What we find here, however, is the falling away of this discourse, in fact, the explicit and acknowledged *failure* of this discourse and, in its place, mourning. This, in itself, indicates to us that, what we have taken as the object *a* for some time now, as we have been working through this meditation of anxiety, can only ever be the false object, the specular object: the *concept of anxiety* as such. This is because, as we know, mourning involves the actual loss of an object (a loved person), an object that is definitively *not* the object *a*. This turn towards mourning by the end of this Seminar, then, seems to indicate that we have ended our discourse on the object *a*, it is now *lost* to us, leaving us only to mourn this object-loss. Retrospectively, then, we come to realise that our object of knowledge has only ever been this specular object, this false object that has masked our 'true' object, which we still do not hold in our hands, the *objet petit a*.

On a wider level, then, it is possible to see the way in which Lacan has designated for us the place of the Real in relation to the Symbolic. In order to establish itself, the Symbolic must evict the Real; the Symbolic must say that the Real is absented, to declare its impossibility (Copjec 1991, 28). This is precisely what we find Lacan to be doing throughout this Seminar, declaring the impossibility of finding the *objet a*, as the Real, within the Symbolic. This impossibility is, however, what shields us from the terrifying Real. As Copjec articulates: "[The] Symbolic... [is a] rampart against the Real; the Symbolic *shields* us from the terrifying Real. *It is the word itself*, or the symbolic itself, which is our salvation" (1991, 28; emphasis mine). In many ways, then, this beginning, the text that I am now writing, is an attempt to quieten the anxiety involved in this project. That is, this chapter is in itself a defensive strategy, which is attempting to transform the elusive object of anxiety into something "circumscribable", to "corner it" (X.1, 5). What I have discovered along this path,

however, is that this is an impossible task that I set myself, and one in which I can only, necessarily, fail.

However, as I have experienced, with thanks to Lacan, the path towards this realisation is one that is characterised by anxiety. It has become clear, in following this path, that anxiety *as object*, the *object of anxiety*, is not a cognitive object; in Lacan's formulation, anxiety is that which puts cognition itself into question (X.17, 2). Cognition, as Weber argues, has been traditionally construed on the field of knowable objects constructed according to the model of narcissistic identification with the mirror image, with the *i(o)* (1991, 161). In this field, the subject is supposedly transparent in his or her own act of knowing, a miscognition that comes into effect from the time of the mirror stage. "The extent of this illusion", writes Lacan, "which in itself radically constitutes the illusion of consciousness, [applies] every kind of knowledge which is motivated by the fact that the object of knowledge will henceforth be constructed, modelled, on the image of this relationship to the specular image" (X.5, 5-6).

By contrast, as we have seen, the *objet a*, and likewise anxiety as an object of knowledge, cannot be contained within this cognitive structure found in the mirror image. It is precisely for this reason, Lacan argues, that what we understand to be knowledge of the object at hand will always be insufficient (X.5, 4-5). Rather, it seems to be that it is not the knowing, the presumed understanding of the *concept of anxiety* that matters here, but rather the *experience* of the object of knowledge. At one point in his Seminar, Lacan writes of the object *a* that it is to be detached as experience, "which is the dimension of the strange, of something which in no way can allow itself to be grasped, as leaving before it the subject transparent to his knowledge" (X.5, 5-6). In this way then, not only can we approximate an understanding of the object *a* through the experience of negation, but also the *objet petit a* as object of study as what Lacan calls the "emergence of an unknown as experienced" (X.5, 5-6). It is precisely this lack of certain reference points, this path that we have taken – *experienced* – in attempting to reach an understanding, which is the dimension of anxiety itself.

Pictures

As Stuart Murray has pointed out, the anxious nature of New Zealand society during the 1970s and 1980s was matched by New Zealand filmmaking during this period (2008, 169). The 1981 film *Pictures*, directed by newcomer Michael Black under the watchful eye of producer John O'Shea, offers us a textual example of settler postcolonial anxiety in 1980s New Zealand, and thus a privileged site in which to elaborate Lacanian anxiety. The film's

subject matter is the conflict between the Māori and British colonial forces during the 1870s and 1880s. Based on the real-life biographies of the Burton Brothers, early colonial photographers in Dunedin from the late 1860s, the story depicts the gradual realisation of both brothers of the brutal reality of the colonial project in New Zealand. Walter, the elder and first of the two to emigrate from Britain, accompanies the Railway surveyor, John Rochfort, on a trip into the central North Island. On this trip, Walter witnesses and photographs brutal scenes of Māori dispossession and degradation by the colonial forces. Upon his return to Dunedin, as he prepares to show these “shocking” pictures, the authorities warn him against their display, arguing they depict the colony “in a bad light”. He complies, but caves in to depression, alcoholism and eventual suicide.

Meanwhile, his brother Alfred arrives in New Zealand with his wife, Lydia. More business-minded and compliant than Walter, Alfred produces acceptable images of the colony. Beginning with a trip into Central Otago with the Māori guide Ngatai, Alfred takes some picturesque landscape photographs, which gain immediate approval. He soon accompanies Rochfort on another expedition, along the Whanganui River and into the heart of the King Country, where Alfred witnesses the same brutal reality – the deprivation of the Māori at the hands of the colonisers – that so distressed his brother. Alfred continues to take his acceptable, romantic photographs of the Māori, but is clearly changed by the experience. On his return to Dunedin, he is awarded with a gold medal by the local Geographic Society, but his refusal to make an acceptance speech signals his non-compliance with the colonial project.

My analysis of *Pictures* foregrounds the film’s, and the filmmaker’s, anxious relation to history. Attending to archival records about the film’s production, as well as to moments within the film itself, I suggest that *Pictures* displays an anxious historiography, one that reveals an ambivalent and unsettling relationship to the past. On one hand, the film attempts to represent colonial history in a fair and honest way, showing the past from a neutral (that is, biased neither to the Māori nor Pākehā) perspective. On the other hand, however, the film expresses a desire to communicate the politics and attitudes of the present (the 1980s). As a result, the concerns of a New Zealand postcolonial nation – such as Land Rights, self-determination, freedom of information and gender politics – become grafted onto the colonial scene. Following Lacan’s understanding of anxiety, I suggest that, in this ambivalence of this historic narrative, we may detect a particularly postcolonial anxiety; that is, in those moments when the Real horror of the colonial scene *gets too close*, the film retreats into the present,

displacing attitudes of the present onto the past in a way that both stages, and relieves, the guilt of the settler.

New Zealand the Way it Was

At the time of the film's release, there was an almost universal praise by New Zealand critics for the film's 'fairness' and 'balance' in depicting the country's colonial past. Ivan Butler's review in *Films and Filming*, claimed that the film was "obviously designed to show the unacceptable face of colonialism", and that "a balance was fairly evenly maintained" (1982, 34). Peter Wells, writing in the *Listener*, said this:

One of the things I liked a lot about this film was its honesty in stating what is involved in a colonising process. On the one hand, for the conquered race, a loss of land, a threat to identity, even life. But for the conquerors, a loss is involved too, as well as a slow and painful process of realisation. (1983, 30)

Nick Roddick, from the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, similarly praised the film's even-handedness:

The reassessment of history is never an easy task, especially a history as clouded with noble self-deception as that of the colonisation of New Zealand. All credit, then, to *Pictures* for tackling the subject, and for bringing to its reassessment a remarkable clarity and a considerable complexity of perspective... *Pictures* deserves to be seen, not only for its very real qualities, but for the way in which it faces up to the realities of New Zealand's – and, by extension, Britain's – colonial past. (1982)

Consistently placed alongside *Utu* (dir. Geoff Murphy, 1983), *Pictures* emerged from the reviews as the more considered, effective and powerful of the two films.

During the production of the film, the filmmakers themselves appeared to be highly aware of the similarity, in content at least, to Murphy's *Utu*, and of maintaining what they believed to be a 'fair balance' in the portrayal of the past. Black, in an interview in *The Otago Daily Times*, said: "*Pictures* should balance *Utu*. It is more serious, thought-provoking, and doesn't rely entirely on action. *Utu* showed the Māori point of view; *Pictures* is more understanding towards the Pākehā" (Wakefield). O'Shea, in an article in the *Auckland Star*, pointedly titled "This movie is not *Utu*", said this: "Now that *Utu* has given the public the Cowboys and Indians version of the Land Wars, the way has been cleared for *Pictures*" (Warner). In a letter to his daughter Barbara in 1982, O'Shea reveals his desire for a larger number of Māori to see the film since, he says, it represents New Zealand in a more balanced, conservative way (than *Utu*, one presumes). He tells her:

While [*Pictures*] is continuing the sell quietly and well abroad, the two main chains here are proving very difficult. Kerridge-Odeon want to start the film in the Berkeley Cinema at Mission Bay, rather than Queen Street. That's a 'blue rinse area' – and though we want the affluent middle classes to see the film, the commercial potential is not that good if we can't also bring in a wider swathe of audience. Especially the Māori audience – many of whom would, I feel, like to see their point of view put forward in a rather more restrained and conservative way than is usual. Their attitude is too often left in the hands of vehement activists. (O'Shea "Letter to Barbara")

At the time of its release, the New Zealand advertisements for the film stated: '*Pictures*, the way New Zealand was'. In fact, much of the publicity surrounding *Pictures*' New Zealand release highlighted the historical authenticity of the film, in particular, the historical fidelity to *mise-en-scenic* detail. For example, the filmmakers took pains to point out to reporters that all the props used in the film were antiques, on loan from local museums, and the cameras used in the film were the very same as those used by the Burton Brothers themselves. As O'Shea writes, "It is the aim of Pacific Films to give the film as authentic a look as possible within the limits of time and money" (O'Shea "Unpublished").

Seeds of Anger

At the same time as the film sets out to portray an honest representation of the colonial past, the film has clear ties to its present time of making. From its earliest conception, *Pictures* was intended to be a film that exposed the historic origins of the present postcolonial troubles. Indeed, one of the early titles that were suggested was *Seeds of Anger*, although O'Shea passed it off as being too 'obvious' and 'crass'. Nonetheless, the discarded title signals the centrality of contemporary concerns for the film. In a letter to a London reporter, O'Shea clarifies the relationship between the film's historic content and the present:

Pictures tries to uncover some of the paths that were taken in New Zealand, and find where the seeds of anger were planted along the way – the pragmatic European intent to drive the country forward, ignoring Māori hesitancy about 'progress'. Like all period films, *Pictures* is a fiction – it looks at the past with an almost contemporary consciousness, with a keener awareness of sexism, racism, and incipient political repression than was evident at the time. Maybe we'll get slammed for that – 'history' is a bit of a sacred cow. (O'Shea, "Letter to Mike")

At the same time that Black and O'Shea were making *Pictures*, O'Shea penned an article for *The Listener*, inspired by some of the themes of the film. Although the article was never

published – it was rejected on the grounds that that magazine ‘had recently included... quite a lot of material on various aspects of Māori/Pākehā relations’ (according to editor Tony Reid) – the article proves a telling insight into some of the concerns occupying the filmmakers. In it, O’Shea expresses his desire to explore the roots of the “deep dismay that pervades [the] country” during this time. In particular, he writes, it is the Pākehā who experiences a kind of postcolonial anxiety (although he did not use this term), brought on by a lack of strong foundation in New Zealand. He writes:

As eloquent and articulate Māori friends told me of their joys and sorrows, one could not help but be conscious that no Pākehā has found his *turangawaewae*, his place to stand, that place where you have a past, present and a future... It’s a lucky Pākehā who knows he has a present and a future in New Zealand. But for all Pākehās [sic], the past is paper thin. The brevity of the Pākehā past here can gradually, especially as one grows older, become oppressive... (O’Shea “Long Bright Land?”)

It can be said, then, that *Pictures* was intended from the beginning to provide Pākehā with a foundational narrative, a kind of textual *turangawaewae* upon which to construct a strong identity. By facing up to the past in an ‘honest and balanced’ way, the film suggests, present-day Pākehā may thus shake ourselves free of our colonial ghosts, and move on into the future with a new sense of belonging and surety.

However, the narrative that *Pictures* provides displays the kind of temporal instability discussed in my introductory chapter. On the one hand, it attempts to give us an authentic representation of the past, while simultaneously bringing us back into the viewing present. In moving between a narrative of conflict (of the New Zealand Wars), and a narrative of peaceful co-existence (in the present and projected future), the film discloses the kind of historiographical anxiety I have already described as common to settler societies. History is the support for the settler’s desire for legitimisation, which takes form in the fantasy space of the film. However, when the proximity to the colonial scene proves too close, too uncomfortable, the film takes its distance once again by retreating into the present. We are thus invited to exchange meaningful historical confrontation for something that we can identify with: the present-day liberal attitudes of postcolonial, bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand.

Several scenes, in particular, display an ironic distancing between *what* is represented and *how* it is represented; that is to say, the attitudes expressed *in* the film, and the attitude *of* the film. The first of these moments occurs early on, as Rochfort, Alfred and Walter gather at the

local pub. Because Alfred has only recently arrived in New Zealand, he knows little of the political situation in the North Island, or Rochfort's railway project. Here is a section of dialogue from the conversation:

Rochfort: These Māoris are like children. They think if they're mischievous enough we'll go away and take our railway with us.

Alfred: Has it finally been decided yet?

Rochfort: The line's halfway up the island now, then it branches out to Napier and New Plymouth. I think it would be better – shorter – to push a main trunk-line up the centre of the island. It's only 400 miles that way. But they don't want a bloody railway. Not up the coast, not up the middle, not anywhere.

Walter: Not everyone sees things our way.

Rochfort: It's not their land we're taking! No, the Māoris are all a bit rum.

The scene is shot from behind the bar, distanced from the three men. The dark wooden frame of the bar, with its horizontal surface, two vertical pillars and false ceiling, operates in much the same way as a proscenium arch does in the theatre: providing a 'fourth wall' that distances the action from the audiences, and makes one aware that one is watching – not life as such – but a representation of it. This framing device serves to distance the film itself from the typically colonialist opinions expressed by Rochfort, creating an ironic gap between the scene and its filmic representation.

In a later scene, following Alfred's return from the Whanganui expedition, the local Geographic Society host an awards dinner in his honour. Introducing Alfred and his achievements, the President of the Society stands to deliver a lengthy speech. In it, he imagines a New Zealand of the future ('our' New Zealand), looking back to the colonial past. Again, the film creates an ironic distance between his speech and our position (the New Zealanders of the present), in which we recognise what the true 'irony' is. Here is a section from the speech:

It is of course one of the great ironies of life that our work in bringing enlightenment and civilisation to the backward races is so often misunderstood. The nobility of our intentions are all too often misconstrued by those we seek to help. We know that, in the future, these same Māoris who protest our endeavours will come to understand and appreciate our gifts, and gratefully accept our guidance. And in the future, as we look back, we will have the photos of Alfred Burton to show us how far such a primitive people have progressed.

The opening lines of this speech cut into the previous scene, as Burton and Ngatai rescue Rochfort from slavery and certain death at the hands of the local Māori. Rochfort is seen hiding in the water near the riverbank, holding onto tree branches, reduced to bare life, uncivilised. In this juxtaposition, the film creates an ironic distance between the words and the image, so that it is not the Māori who are revealed as ‘savage’ and ‘backwards’ but, the film suggests, the Pākehā. The ‘great irony’ mentioned in the President’s speech is not that their actions are unappreciated at the time, but that the ‘civilising’ actions of the settlers are, in effect, *uncivilised*. At an extra-textual level, the use of the word ‘protest’ crosses over in the politics of the present, where, as the spectator knows, protests are being held in order to draw attention to, and make right, precisely the kinds of decisions made by Rochfort and his peers at this time in history. In the future, as *we* look back, it is not the attitudes and actions of the settlers who are justified, but, *ironically*, the resistance of the Māori against these very actions.

At other times in the film, the cinematography emphasises the extremity of the views expressed by the ‘colonial’ characters (such as Lydia and Rochfort). For example, after Alfred and Ngatai have returned from their Central Otago expedition, Alfred invites Ngatai in to clean himself. Ngatai’s bath is, however, intercut by Lydia’s shrill voice, coming from the stairway outside: “Really, Alfred, I don’t care how much he helped you, I don’t think we should be inviting natives into our home... and taking a bath!” The camera shifts to the conversation between Alfred and Lydia and, as it does so, assumes an odd perspective. Positioned as if from the top of the stairs, we are given almost a bird’s-eye view of the scene, looking down onto the crown of Lydia’s head and a diminished-looking Alfred below. While, from this position, the camera’s gaze is somewhat aligned with Lydia (looking from behind her head as if down at Alfred), the perspective is not. Indeed, the extremity – indeed, *absurdity* – of the camera’s perspective highlights the extremity of her views on the ‘natives’. The film thus invites us not to see things from her perspective, but rather see the *absurdity* of her perspective.

Indeed, the film draws our attention to the manner in which representation – any representation – is dependent on individual perspective. In another scene, Alfred accompanies Rochfort and the artist Justin Paton on a trip up the Whanganui River. As the group pause on the bank of a river, the film camera pans along the activity, showing first Burton as he sets up his photography equipment, then Paton as he prepares to sketch the scene, and finally Rochfort, as he peers at the land through the lens of his surveying

equipment. In its repetition of ‘lenses’ (one could argue that Paton’s sketching is another version of a lens), the film draws the spectator’s attention to the politics and mechanisms of representation. Any view, the film suggests, is dependent on the perspective of the one looking, as each individual brings their own ‘way of seeing’ to the scene in front of them. In so doing, the film draws attention to its own status as representation, its own politics of the image, reminding us of the gap between history and its contemporary perspective on it.

In one of the final scenes of the film, Lydia tells Helen that they are returning to London, since life here is “too unsettling”. Helen’s reply – “everything is unsettling” – certainly proves accurate for the film’s relationship to the past. On one level, as I have suggested, the film asserts that its representation of the past is balanced, objective and fair. The filmmakers were quick to point out to the media the attempts made to recreate the colonial scene as accurately as possible. However, as the above examples from the film show, it reveals contemporary, liberal (in some cases, at least) attitudes about race relations, the politics of land confiscation, and colonisation in general. The film’s relationship to the past is thus, as Helen and Lydia suggest, *unsettling*, constantly moving between the past and the present. In this ambivalence, we may detect an anxious relationship to history, and particularly, the ‘brutal face of colonisation’ that the film professes to bring us face to face with.

Anxiety of the Image

Nowhere is this anxious relationship to history more apparent than in the Burton Brothers’ photos. Walter’s ‘Māori War Series’, upon which the entire narrative pivots, are presented as the real, brutal, uncovered face of European colonialism. Presenting them to his peers back in Dunedin, the following dialogue ensues:

James Gilchrist (Superintendent Colonial Secretary’s Dept.):...And you intend to exhibit these?

President of Geographical Society: It’s an outrage!

JG: You know that we couldn’t possibly permit it.

PGS: I’ve never seen such disgusting photographs.

Walter Burton: That is exactly the way it was.

PGS: Who wants to know that?

JG: Good God, man, be sensible. These pictures show the colony in a very bad light.

WB: These are the best photographs I’ve ever taken.

Walter Burton's photographs are contrasted to the other genres of photography presented in the film – studio portraiture, the picturesque landscapes, and the Romantic 'Māori at Home' series – which are clearly marked out as staged, constructed and false.



Figure 10: Walter Burton in his studio

However, while the film goes to great lengths to prove its historical authenticity, using copies of the real-life Burton photos and even re-staging certain photographic scenes, no such 'Māori War' photos ever existed. This was first pointed out in Sandra Coney's 1983 review, and is worth quoting at length:

I was fascinated, though, by the revelation of this particular episode in colonial history. Having an interest in New Zealand photography, I was surprised I had not heard of the suppression of these early photos. Since photos are shown during the film which are recognisable as Burton Bros photos... I did not doubt the authenticity of the photos showing brutality to Māori prisoners. But when the book on New Zealand photography I consulted had no mention of these events, I decided to enquire further. John Turner, lecturer in photography at Auckland Elam School of Fine Arts, who has worked on the Burton Bros glass plates, confirmed what I was beginning to suspect. No such photographs were ever taken, or suppressed.

This is a profound sort of lie... *Pictures* takes real people, a real piece of history, then builds a lie into it, a lie which is not insignificant or peripheral, but is the moving force for the whole film. By this breathtaking act of artistic dishonesty, director Michael Black and screenwriter and producer John O'Shea have distorted history to Pākehā advantage. (1983, 44-5)

Indeed, on close inspection, it becomes clear that, when we see Walter's photos on screen, they are merely a mixture of images from Alfred's lauded 'Māori at Home' series from 1885.

This proves interesting in light of the portrayal of the Māori Wars in the film itself. There is very little filmic portrayal of the Wars, confined solely to a few brief moments right at the beginning of the film, showing Walter taking his pictures. Indeed, looking back over the early versions the screenplays, and the correspondence between the director, producer and co-writer Robert Lord, it becomes clear that all references to the Wars were progressively omitted. In early drafts, for example, the first two scenes of the film go into some detail to portray the Wars, giving dialogue to the soldiers and the Māori prisoners. In fact, the second scene, a 'bush montage', originally described "a series of scenes of ravaged North Island villages and of Māoris [sic]" ("Screenplay"). Further, early screenplays include references to real-life historical events that took place during the Wars. For example, as they share a drink at the hotel bar, Rochfort tells Walter of the 'Hursthouse' incident:¹² "He was ambushed near Te Kumi. Some half-crazed Māoris [sic] pulled him off his horse. Locked him and his assistant in a whare for days. No food. No drink. And that was just the beginning. The things they did to them. It makes my blood boil" ("Screenplay").

By the final cut, and with practically all references to the Wars taken out, the viewer is left to confront the Wars only obliquely, through Walter's 'Māori Wars Series', which, as we know, did not ever exist. The unpleasant parts of colonial history, that which the film claims to bring us face to face with, are thus only ever really represented in Walter's photos, a product entirely of the 1980s. Rather than bring the viewer face-to-face with the colonial past, then, the film takes flight from any uncomfortable history, retreating into the present. This is a history that legitimises the settler by projecting backwards a contemporary liberal attitude, one that provides a site for identification in the present. In this way, history – the traumatic history of colonisation – takes its 'proper' distance once again. Within the fantasy space of

¹² Charles Wilson Hursthouse was a Captain in the New Zealand militia and performed survey work in Taranaki and the King Country. He served in the Taranaki Rifle Volunteers at Waireka and Mahoetaki and in several other engagements, and later was an officer in the Military Settlers Force and Volunteer Militia Scouts (Cowan 175). The incident referred to by Rochfort in the screenplay is based on a real-life account, in which Hursthouse and several others were captured at Te Uira by the prophet Te Mahuki and his Tekau-ma-rua movement. He was later rescued and went on to write several accounts of early settlement in Taranaki.

the film, the postcolonial anxiety of colonial history is managed, restrained and controlled, giving space for the postcolonial settler to remember to forget our problematic past.



Figure 11: Publicity still from *Pictures*; Courtesy of the New Zealand Film Archive

However, while the film provides Walter's images as the false *objets a* of colonial history, the extra-diegetic ceding of these objects (the fact that they did not ever exist) leaves behind it an empty space. In this movement, this ceding of the object, the outline of the Real object of anxiety may be glimpsed, but never grasped. That is, the film signals the Real trauma of colonisation as that which can never be represented; it will never be pulled into the Symbolic world of representation to appear in photos or on screen. Just as we saw in Lacan's *Seminar on Anxiety*, these photographic objects are presented as a lure, tempting us to believe we can grasp our object of anxiety. However, in the same way that Lacan went on to retract these

lures, our objects of anxiety are taken away. We are left with only their vague outline, the trace of their presence. This trace allows us to glimpse, momentary, the place of the Real object of anxiety, without ever being able to grasp it, or know it as a cognitive object. It is possible, then, to see that the film contains within itself its own negation, its own place of the Real – an empty space that will always remain outside the borders of knowledge or interpretation.

Finally, then, what I have discovered in the analysis of the film *Pictures*, through the Lacanian notion of anxiety, is the absolute inability to (re)present, know or interpret the object of anxiety. The anxious images of colonisation, presented to us in *Pictures*, can only ever be false objects of anxiety. As earnest as the film appears to be in its depiction of our colonial past, it absolutely fails to present what it claims to: the Real trauma at the heart of settler anxiety. What it offers instead is a way to *avoid* this trauma, a branching off from the path of anxiety onto that other path, the one of identification. What we encounter along this other path are the false objects, such as Walter's Māori War photos, which allow for our anxiety to diminish.

In these false objects of anxiety, the nation finds possible sites of identification. They reflect back to us, the Pākehā settler, a precarious identity, one based on guilt and grounded in conflict. However, despite this shaky, unsettled identity reflected in this film, it still provides the settler subject with a way to bypass a confrontation with the true object of anxiety, the *objet petit a* in the dimension of the Real; which is, precisely, the 'uncovered, brutal' face of colonisation. While films of settlement, like *Pictures*, might be built on an anxious path, on the settler's anxious relation to the past in the present, it does not actually lead us to our true object of anxiety: colonisation itself. Rather, it provides us with a stage upon which to play out national fantasies of guilt and culpability, such as Alfred's guilt in his complicity with the colonial project. The film, in its attempt to re-present the past in a more 'balanced' way, might very well have good intentions, but it cannot, in the Lacanian understanding at least, really bring us face to face with the trauma of our colonial past. The discomfort about our colonial past, often experienced as anxiety, leads us repeatedly down the path of history. However, what we find here is not what we are, ostensibly, searching for: the traumatic Real of colonial history, in order that we may make sense of it. This object remains perpetually out of reach and, in its place, we encounter a series of false objects of anxiety. Through such false objects, the settler subject may fantasise, in numerous different guises, themselves in the

return to the colonial scene but, since these will only ever be false objects, we experience only the continual *loss* of the object.

What we are left with, I would like to suggest, is the experience of mourning. Indeed, the film's ending is designed to elicit a melancholic response in the audience, one entirely constructed around the notion of *loss*: Walter's treasured glass plates are destroyed, he commits suicide, Alfred abandons photography. The film's postscript leaves us with the news that: "The photographic plates of the Burton Brothers are now housed at the National Museum of New Zealand, *where they are slowly decomposing.*" One of the final images in the film is a still composition – almost painterly – of Helen. Sitting alone in a darkened room, mourning her husband's death, Helen is left only with memories and the experience of loss. The image of Helen mirrors the position of the audience, likewise sitting in a darkened room, burdened by a feeling of loss, left with only memories of a shameful past. Rather than allow us to glimpse the Real of colonisation by way of the filmic fantasy, then, the settler's anxious relationship to history draws us back into the present, where we are left to mourn a history of the nation that we can never truly know.

The Nation that it was to Become:

Repetition Automatism in *Utu* (1983)

“Why do we fight, tribe against tribe? 30 years ago, they dug a Māori bullet from my grandfather’s leg. On and on it goes. And always the Pākehā sides with those who best advance his cause. Will we still face each other across battle lines in 100 years?”

(Henare, *Utu*)

This is the Text that Jacques Built

The sub-title above has been borrowed from a footnote in Barbara Johnson’s article “The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida” (1977, 461). Johnson’s article gives a brilliant account of Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” (1955), in which he discusses Edgar Allan Poe’s short story, “The Purloined Letter” (1845), and Derrida’s subsequent discussion of Poe’s story as it is treated in Lacan’s Seminar in “The Purveyor of Truth” (1977). If the reader already finds themselves somewhat disorientated in the previous sentence, I make no apologies. It is precisely this circular, repetitive structure that I aim to draw attention to from the start, for it illustrates the concept of *repetition automatism* that I wish to take up in this chapter. I find the footnoted joke from Johnson’s text particularly useful when entering into Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”. The reference pitches us *in medias res*, as it were, but in many ways, this is the best place to begin. As Johnson points out, when looking at this Seminar, it is often difficult to determine just how many texts we are dealing with. Indeed, more than any other of Lacan’s works, his “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” seems to exist within what Jean-Michel Rabaté calls a “sort of metatextual vertigo” (2001, 42); or, as Johnson puts it, it is a text “riddled with a constant, peculiar kind of intertextuality” (1977, 458). Johnson’s reference, which of course itself refers to another text, opens us onto an entire network of intertextual associations, from Seneca to Crébillon to Poe to Lacan to Derrida to Johnson, and propulsively to Žižek. Indeed, from the moment one first

approaches Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", one finds oneself caught up in a long line of associative texts, both prior to, and following, Lacan's.

The architectural metaphor is also fitting. The text that Jacques built in 1955 stands slightly apart from much of his other work, as it centres almost entirely on one work of literature (in contrast to a range of literary, philosophical and artistic texts). This may go some way in explaining why the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" has been discussed so thoroughly in cultural theory discourses, as it offers itself up so readily to non-clinical analyses. Like Jorge Luis Borges' garden of forking paths, Lacan's text is constructed from a long line of literary references, which lead the reader through a space constructed largely of other texts, which seem to repeat and echo each other in numerous and uncanny ways. To concede to the metaphor, the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" has also been subject to ongoing renovation, which only compounds the repetitive, circular structure we have already found ourselves within. In this structure, each text in a way repeats the one before it, just as Lacan repeats Poe, Derrida repeats Lacan repeating Poe, Johnson repeats all three, and so on. Lacan would, no doubt, be highly amused at such a structure, which in itself enacts the very concept of repetition automatism that he is presenting for the first time in this Seminar. Johnson herself points to this pattern: "No analysis – including this one – can intervene without transforming *and* repeating other elements in the sequence, which is thus not a *stable* sequence, but nevertheless produces certain regular effects" (1977, 457).

The collection of essays, *The Purloined Poe* (1988), registers the effects of this sequence quite precisely. Bringing together a number of critical responses to Lacan and Derrida's discussion of "The Purloined Letter", the collection counts as one of the most sustained engagements of the question of the purloined letter (and the numerous other questions it raises). As the editors write,

'The Purloined Letter' (about an observer being observed without observing that she is being watched in turn)... has evoked a major ongoing debate in contemporary letters. For in 1955 the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan made public an interpretation of the Poe story that not only revealed a radically fresh conception of psychoanalysis but challenged literary theorists. If Lacan is generally counted among the major influences on poststructuralist criticism, it is primarily because of this one essay, which he presented for reasons of purely psychoanalytic interest. Its far-reaching claims about language and truth, however, provoked a vigorous response from the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. His critical essay spawned other essays, and the debate was on. (Muller and Richardson 1988, vii-viii)

The effect of a collection such as this, written about a text that is about another text which produces other texts, and so on, can be somewhat disorientating. Such a chain of references seems to compel the reader ever forward, from one story to the next, if only to arrive back home at Jacques' text, albeit with greater understanding as to how it has been built.

Typically, Lacan takes much care in constructing this Seminar, so that, in its very form, it textually enacts the very lesson he wishes to communicate. In the "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", Lacan refers twice to Poe's narrator as a "prestidigitator", a term meaning one who performs magic tricks for entertainment, which is etymologically derived from the French for 'nimble fingers'. Anyone who received a box of magic tricks as a child will know how this works: the aptly named 'trick' is in fact a choreographed visual deception, which occurs in full view, and which is designed to fool the audience into thinking that what they have seen is magic. This is a deception that, it could be said, the audience enters into willingly. It is possible to see Lacan himself as the prestidigitator of his own text, as he performs for the attuned reader the very trick of repetition automatism, so that, on closer inspection, the truth of this Seminar appears in the final lines as if 'by magic'. Of course, one cannot underestimate Lacan's wit here, and the one example of the term 'prestidigitator' from the text confirms its intertextual modality, referring simultaneously to the (magical) revelation of truth in literature, the very purpose of psychoanalysis, as well as to the (nimble-fingered) act that precipitated Poe's narrative.

Indeed, the more I investigated these texts, the more I found myself being caught up in, or perhaps blindly following, a seemingly ongoing chain of associations, in which, I wondered, would I ever arrive at the end? It is at this point that Lacan's central lesson in this Seminar reveals itself: that is, one is always at the mercy of the signifier, but, moreover, it is only once the end has been reached that one can realise oneself *to have been* at the mercy of the signifier. The text thus produces the *effects* of fate, in which one retrospectively makes sense of everything that has gone before as though it has been predestined. The multiple senses of the word *fate* always involve the direction towards a final outcome, often in terms of the end of one's life or the developments of a series of events. It follows then, that in the Seminar, the point at which meaning arrives is the very final line, when Lacan writes: *a letter always arrives at its destination*. Prior to this revelation, the Seminar has kept us in suspense, *en souffrance*, as to its message. From this point of arrival, the reader is then able to return to the beginning, retrospectively making sense of everything that happened prior. It is only from the end point that the reader can trace all the paths the Seminar took to get 'here', and read them

as if they were always already determined by this final outcome. The Seminar produces the effects of fate precisely because of this structure, in which, from the end, one returns to the beginning and re-reads the (textual) path not as contingent, but guided as if “by a hidden hand of fate” (Žižek 1992, 13).¹

In navigating through the above texts, therefore, and countless others that draw on them, we are in fact performing precisely that which Lacan teaches us in his Seminar. This is perhaps the greatest lesson: when the reader realises that they are, themselves, actively involved in the phenomenon they are attempting to understand. In this chapter, I wish to investigate further the process that is at work here. However, rather, than focusing solely on the reader’s relationship to Lacan’s Seminar, I hope to show how a nation can be affected in a similar way, through a different text. In my reading, I will demonstrate that *Utu* (dir. Geoff Murphy, 1983) turns on a similar structure as the one Lacan finds in Poe’s tale. In particular, I am interested in the way the film posits New Zealand in the present as the direct outcome of a fate determined 100 years earlier, during the end of the New Zealand Wars. This is what I will refer to as the ‘short circuit of history’,² by which the film invites the spectator to understand the events of the 1970s and 1980s as a repetition of an existing historical structure. By inviting the viewer in the present to write a retrospective historical narrative, the film is, I will argue, searching out a hidden fate of the nation, one that was determined in the past, the effects of which we are experiencing in the present. Like Lacan in his Seminar, however, I am presenting my conclusions before my introduction, and we must take a step back to where these concepts were first put into circulation.

¹ See also Lacan’s *Seminar V: The Formations of the Unconscious (1957-1958)*, where he writes: “This notion of the present is going to be extremely important... A discourse is something which leads somewhere, has a fabric, a texture, and not only does it take time, not only does it have a dimension in time, a certain density which means that we cannot in any way be satisfied with the instantaneous present, but in addition all our experience, everything that we have said and everything that we are capable of making present immediately by experience – it is quite clear for example that if I begin a sentence you will not understand its meaning until I have finished, since it is after all absolutely necessary (it is the very definition of a sentence) that I should say its final word if you are to understand the relevance of the first – this shows us in the most tangible way what we can call the retroactive action of the signifier, precisely what I repeatedly tell you is given in the text of the analytic experience itself, on an infinitely greater scale in the story of the past” (V.1, 6).

² The concept of the temporal ‘short-circuit’ is borrowed from Slavoj Žižek (1992, 13).

Introduction to *Repetition Automatism*

In the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”,³ Lacan reconsiders Freud’s notion of *Weiderholungszwang*, generally translated as the *compulsion to repeat*, or *repetition compulsion*. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud links the concept of the compulsion to repeat with the death drive. For Freud, the existence of the repetition compulsion provided explanation for what he saw as the tendency of the subject to expose him or herself over and over again to painful and distressing situations, in an apparent disregard of the pleasure principle.⁴ In the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”, Lacan revises Freud’s concept of repetition compulsion from a Symbolic standpoint. Rather than localising repetition compulsion as occurring solely within the individual, Lacan proposes that, when we repeat, we are repeating an internalised *social structure*. To put it another way, the relationships we forge with our parents or caregivers in infancy, the position that we occupy in relation to our mother and father, for example, are repeated as we age. Thus, not only is a certain internal behaviour ‘automatically’ repeated in our later years, we also reproduce the kinds of relational structures formed in childhood. However, not only do we repeat certain intersubjective relations, we also repeat the signifiers that form the Symbolic basis for these structures. It is instructive, then, that Lacan also describes repetition automatism as the ‘insistence of the letter’, pointing to the manner in which, in repetition, certain signifiers or letters repeat despite the subject’s conscious attempts to repress them. Thus, in linking the compulsion to repeat to the Symbolic structure of the signifying chain, Lacan arrives at his theory of *repetition automatism*.

In his Seminar, Lacan uses Poe’s short story “The Purloined Letter” as an allegory of this phenomenon. It appears that almost every analysis of this Seminar falls into a similar pattern, that of summarising the plot of Poe’s tale at the beginning of the analysis. Rabaté, who also follows in this path, although somewhat begrudgingly, notes that “the trick of this story is that it is impossible to summarise it without grossly distorting it” (2001, 44). Indeed, it is often the case that when one does so, as in the case of Marie Bonaparte (1988, 101-132), the re-reading becomes the target for new criticism or analysis (Felman 1988; Johnson 1977). However, I believe that what Rabaté calls a ‘gross distortion’ can in fact be a productive site

³ Lacan’s ‘Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”’ was given on 26 April 1955. The Seminar was written up and dated as complete in Guitrancourt and San Casciano between mid-May and mid-August 1956. It was published the following year in *La Psychoanalyse II*.

⁴ As a basic Freudian concept, a person is condemned to repeat something when he or she has forgotten the origins of the compulsion. Psychoanalysis, accordingly, can assist the subject to remember the origin, thereby allowing the patient to break out of the repetitive cycle (Evans 1996, 164).

of analysis, and rather than attempting to return to Poe's story in isolation, I have chosen to engage with a series of texts on the subject. To do so, I believe, enters into the spirit of Lacan's Seminar, as it recognises that, in repeating the tale, one is already caught up in the Symbolic network. Johnson draws attention to this process and, as such, her method of engaging with Poe's story involves "quoting Derrida's quotation of Lacan's paraphrase of Poe's narrations" (1977, 461). Although I am not concerned with Derrida's critique of Lacan's Seminar here, I will engage in a similar process. That is, rather than retelling Poe's tale and Lacan's interpretation of it, I have purloined what I believe to be the most significant elements (for my own purpose) within a series of texts. I will remind you of my motive here: I am specifically interested in the relationship between repetition automatism and temporality, and my own contribution to, and engagement with, this subject will be so directed.

The Letter Detoured

Poe's story is composed of two scenes: the drama itself, and its narration at a later point in time. This is mapped onto what Lacan calls the primary scene (the original drama) and its repetition (the narration). Each scene involves three characters, comprising a triad. In the first: the Queen, The King and the Minister. In the second: the Minister, the Prefect of Police and Dupin. I will avoid here going into plot details, but suffice to say that in the first scene, the Queen receives a compromising letter, which is then taken by the Minister in full view of the Queen. In the second scene, we learn how Dupin managed to retrieve the letter from the Minister's house, which has already been thoroughly searched by the Prefect and his police, and where, as Dupin tells us, the Minister has hidden it in full view. In each triad, there are three different subject positions, all of which are related to the notion of the 'glance' [*le regard*]:

1. The subject who sees nothing.
2. The subject who sees the first seeing nothing.
3. The subject who sees the first two glances and leaves what should be hidden exposed.

From the first scene to the second, the same structure comprising the three subject positions is repeated. However, in each scene, a different character comes to occupy a different subject position. The repetition from the first scene to the second can be illustrated as follows:

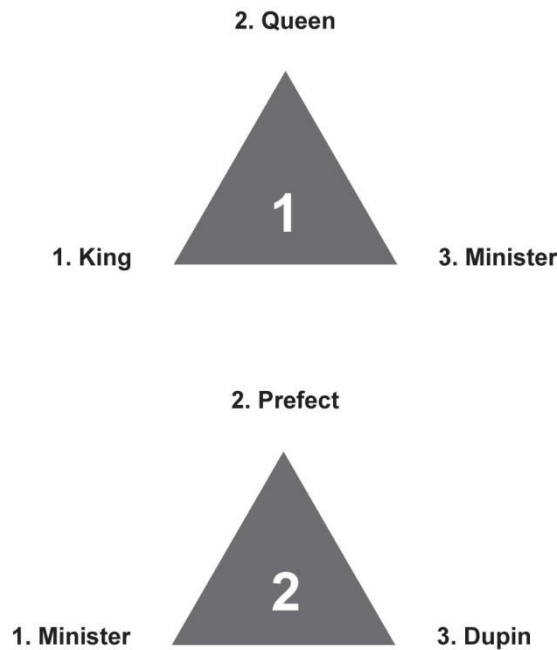


Figure 12: Repetition of intersubjective structures in Poe's "The Purloined Letter"

The diagram clearly shows a process of relay or displacement from one subject to another, which could theoretically continue indefinitely. This is particularly visible in the case of the Minister who, in the first triad, occupies the third position of 'he who sees all', but in the second triad, shifts to the first position, of 'he who is blind'. The displacement of subjects between structures is not arbitrary. What determines the displacements of the subjects between structures is the *place of the signifier* in the triad.

It is the purloined letter itself, as operant of the signifier, which determines the different subject positions in the triadic structures.⁵ The displacement of one subject for another between structures is not based upon any external similarities, but the position of the letter in the triad. To quote Johnson: "It is neither the character of the individual subjects, nor the contents of the letter, but the *position* of the letter within the group, which decides what each person will do next" (1977, 464). The fact that we never actually come to know the contents of the letter, nor who sent it, does not have any bearing on this process. It is, rather, the *effects* that are produced by the letter – its functioning within the structure – that matters. The very fact that we know nothing of its contents or sender highlights its status as signifier, since it

⁵ Lacan is of course manipulating the multiple senses of the word 'letter' here, simultaneously referring to both the letter as written correspondence, and alphabetical character as smallest possible signifier.

produces effects of meaning without its meaning ever being revealed. Johnson translates from the French a passage that was omitted from the English version: “The letter was able to produce effects *within* the story: on the actors in the tale, including the narrator, as well as *outside* the story: on us, the readers, and also on its author, without anyone’s [sic] ever bothering to worry about what it *meant*” (1977, 464; emphasis in original).

The purloined letter, then, operates for Lacan as an allegory of the signifier. His reading of Poe’s tale demonstrates that it is the Symbolic order that is constitutive for the subject, since the subject receives their “decisive orientation... from the itinerary of the signifier” (E, 7). Repetition automatism, according to Lacan, is an intersubjective event in which subjects, “more docile than sheep, model their very being on the moment of the signifying chain which traverses them” (E, 21). What matters is not the series of Imaginary projections between each place in the structure, but the careful mapping out of a Symbolic structure, which determines each subject’s position within it. This Symbolic structure can be understood as a chain of effects, determined by the revolving displacement of a signifier, whose signified remains inaccessible (Rabaté 2001, 50). While Lacan still stresses the importance of the intersubjective relation in this Seminar, it is always within the context of an intersubjective *complex*, or, more precisely, an intersubjective repetition, since there is no one place in the structure that can be understood in isolation from the other two (Rabaté 2001, 50). The three subject positions are caught up in a repetitive process that – *literally* – ensures that the letter, whose trajectory the subjects are following, will eventually return to the same place. Thus, on first reading, it seems that, because the subjects are subjected to, or “*en souffrance*” of, the trajectory of the letter, a *letter will always arrive at its destination*. It is on this notorious line that Lacan concludes his “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”.

Fate and the Fantasy of Teleology

But is it that simple: can this line be read ‘to the letter’, as has been done by numerous critics in the past? Is Lacan displaying such unswerving faith in the postal service that, once a letter has been sent, it will always turn up at the correct address? Who is the correct addressee – is it the person whose name appears on the envelope, or does the letter always belong to the sender? And, finally, is Lacan arguing that we are all, in following in the path of the letter, *subject to* the trajectory predetermined by fate? This one line raises numerous questions, and a multitude of essays that attempt to answer them.⁶ Rather than delving into this debate

⁶ See, for example, Harvey 1988; Leader 1997; Žižek 1991, 1992.

directly, I would like to offer my own interpretation of this line. I suggest that this sentence is designed to fool the reader, at least initially, into reading the line for its message, in search of a hidden signified. To do so – to seek out the signified – would argue (along with Derrida) that Lacan is writing in favour of teleological determinism; that is, a letter, from the moment it is put into circulation, is already guided by a pre-existing outcome.

On closer inspection, however, we could say that the sentence reveals itself as a deception. Psychoanalysis is, as I suggested in my introductory chapter, the art of reading deception for the truth encased within it. This sentence – *a letter always arrives as its destination* – is doing just this. The reader, throughout this Seminar, has been trained to read this final line not for what it claims to mean, but for its hidden truth. It is only when one gets to this point in the text that one realises this has been occurring all along. Lacan has inserted a series of clues throughout the Seminar (for we are, remember, working with a detective story) for the reader to find, so that when we arrive at the final line, we will be able to *retrospectively* make sense of the entire Seminar through this one sentence.⁷ Further, if one takes note of this retrospective effect, we are able to finally make sense of why it is that a letter always ends up where it belongs. This is because, in this Seminar, the ‘letter’ belongs with the reader, since it is at this point, when the reader comes to the end, that the Seminar finally makes sense. Thus, the entire structure and form of Lacan’s Seminar is directed towards this one point, and is designed, not so much to ‘speak’ the lesson of the seminar, but to ‘reveal’ it through its discursive strategy.

I mentioned earlier that it is possible to read Lacan as the prestidigitator of his own text. Like the magician, the truth of this text is disguised – in full view – by an elaborate ruse. However, the signs of the text’s construction are littered throughout, and one only needs to read carefully to find that its true lesson is revealed at the end. Lacan refers throughout his Seminar to the text that Dupin leaves behind in the place of the purloined letter. The text, taken from Crébillon’s *Atrée*, reads:

— *Un dessein si funeste,*
S’il n’est digne d’Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

— *A design so deadly,*
If not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyeste.

⁷ This is comparable to the retrospective logic of Symbolic identification, where identification proper is only a retrospective result of the effects of the signifier; see Chapter 3.

The reference is to the revenge of King Atreus of Mycenae against his brother Thyestes. Thyestes had seduced King Atreus' wife, to which the King retaliated by killing his brother's son and serving him to Thyestes at a banquet. These lines are given at the very end of Poe's tale, followed only by the sentence, referring the reader to the original text: "They are to be found in Crébillon's 'Atrée'."

These lines from Crébillon's play can be seen to operate in the place of what is ostensibly the 'true' subject of the tale, the purloined letter. Just as the structure and characters of the tale are doubled, the 'Crébillon' letter is itself the double of the Queen's purloined letter. Thus, while we have been following, like the characters themselves, in the itinerary of the purloined letter, our path becomes interrupted, and we end up following the path of this second letter. At the point at which the purloined letter is back in the hands of the Queen, it has begun a new process of signification; signification is passed on from the purloined letter (which is now devoid of signification) to the second, 'Crébillon' letter. Further, while we never discover the contents of the purloined letter, the tale ends at the very point that it discloses the contents of this second letter. Thus, it is possible to read back through Lacan's Seminar that this is the point at which the letter truly arrives at its destination, when the reader is confronted with the lines from Crébillon.

The story of Atreus and Thyestes is commonly thought of as one of the most atrocious revenge stories in the history of Western literature. This would seem to sit at odds with Dupin's character, since he is presented throughout this tale, and the previous two in Poe's trilogy, as cool and reserved. This final line, then, interrupts from the narrative as a highly violent moment in an otherwise emotionally detached story. We learn at the very end of the tale that the Minister had wronged Dupin in the past while, ironically enough, in Vienna. These lines, then, will direct the Minister to the fact that it was Dupin who has tricked him; thus, Dupin's revenge on the Minister will be served. The end of this story compels us to make retrospective sense of the narrative, rewriting, from the final destination, the entire path we have traversed in order to get here. From the end point, it appears as though all events prior to the final revelation led precisely to this point; that, through all the possible contingencies of events, this is exactly where the story was *destined* to end up.

Lacan's Seminar repeats the structure of Poe's story; the effects of this are multiple. First, it reveals the very process of repetition automatism that he has identified in Poe's story. By extension, this places us, the reader of Lacan's Seminar, as the 'docile sheep', haplessly

following in the path of the signifier in order to reach its final destination: *the letter always arrives*. Just as Poe's story reveals the truth in its final lines, so too does Lacan's. It is only at this point that we can make retrospective sense of Lacan's Seminar, and, in so doing, realise that we have, all along, been helpless in following the path of the signifier. The Seminar demonstrates that, while the circuit of one letter has reached its final point, thus shutting down signification, signification has already been passed on to another letter. Again, this is precisely what is occurring in Lacan's Seminar. Once we have reached the end of the text, signification has stopped, but the final line refers us back to the beginning, thus beginning a new process of signification. It is this metonymic structure of the signifying chain that determines the intersubjective structure, and, by this process, requires that the same structure be repeated.

Further, Lacan shows us, though it is never stated as such, that the true destination of this Seminar is with the reader; once we have reached the end, the signifier has found its place, the letter has arrived. It is only from this point that we can work backwards, and make sense of the fact that, as Žižek paraphrases Johnson's conclusion: "A letter arrives at its destination *since its destination is wherever it arrives*" (1992, 12). Rather than presenting us with a teleological determinist view of the subject's place in the Symbolic, Lacan is, in fact, revealing the *illusion of teleological determinism* (Žižek 1992, 13). The effect of fate is produced by a circuitous path, since it determines that one must circle back to the beginning in order to make sense of the path one has taken. Thus, one is not only following blindly in the path of the signifier, one is compelled to repeat this path: signification does not stop at the point at which meaning arrives ("*a letter always arrives at its destination*"), but sets one on another path. A structure of C-A-B-C, then, appears as A-B-C, in which we disregard the (present) point of arrival (C) in order to willingly enter into the teleological illusion.

Rabaté, in his reading of the Seminar, detects something in the text that is "either a curious slip of the pen or a deliberate transformation" (2001, 53). He notes that, while Lacan quotes the Crébillon text numerous times in his Seminar, in the last reference, he changes the word *dessein* to *destin*:

— *Un destin si funeste,*
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

I have no hesitation in reading this textual change as a deliberate transformation on Lacan's part, in another example of the prestidigitator at work. This one small change reveals – hidden in plain view – the truth of the Seminar. Rabaté argues that “the single change of letter has transformed the ‘design’ of teleology into a fate determined by repetition” (2001, 53). I would like to make one additional, small transformation to this, and argue that it is the repetition that determines fate, not the reverse. The very structure of Rabaté's sentence here reinforces the teleological illusion Western readers operate within. Rabaté's claim that it is ‘fate [that is] determined by repetition’ still posits fate as the end point of repetition, a method of reading (the world, the text) from the beginning rather than the point where it ends. Since Lacan's own repetition of the Crébillon text changes the destiny of the text in the most literal sense, it is only through the repetition that fate can be revealed. It is not that the repetition is determined by fate, but that fate is revealed as an illusion produced through repetition.

These moments in the Seminar clearly indicate that Lacan is not only teaching his reader about the process of repetition automatism, he is also teaching us how to read his work; how it is that we can arrive at a meaning by both looking at the surface of his text (the change from *dessein* to *destin*, for example), as well as beyond the text to what it reveals.⁸ In this Seminar, Lacan is demonstrating the truth of his Seminar ‘from behind’ language, inserting clues into his text that can open on to a deeper understanding of the concepts presented in this text. My reading, a new addition in the chain of other readings, both doubles and changes the texts that have gone before. In so doing, I not only hope that my reading of Lacan's Seminar adds something to the existing literature, but demonstrates the structure of repetition automatism at a textual level. It is from this point that I would now like to turn my attention to the Geoff Murphy's *Utu*, and read this film through the concepts I have been investigating.

***Utu*: The shifting Grounds of Identification**

Murphy's 1983 film *Utu* is set in 1870, during the final stages of the New Zealand Wars. While the British have been declared the victors, the new colony still hangs in a precarious balance, with small groups of Māori resistance fighters scattered throughout the North Island. Colonial military forces are charged with shutting down any resistance, and stamping British

⁸ The “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” is positioned at the very front of *Écrits*. In the introduction, Lacan explains that this was done so that the Seminar can operate as an instruction on how to read the works that follow: “I am offering this reader an easy entryway into my style by opening this collection with “The Purloined Letter”, even though that means taking it out of chronological order” (E, 4).

Law on the colony. The film's story centres on a fictional Māori chief, Te Wheke,⁹ who has been serving with the British. After discovering that colonial troops have destroyed his village and massacred his people, Te Wheke declares revenge against "the white man". In the ensuing narrative, Te Wheke gains a following with other Māori and together they carry out attacks on white civilians, one of whom, New Zealand-born farmer Jonathan Williamson, begins his own campaign of revenge. Hunted down by colonial troops, headed by British Colonel Elliot and New Zealand-born Lieutenant Scott, as well as Williamson, Te Wheke is eventually captured and court-martialled for his crimes.

The film draws heavily upon the genre of the Western, although it problematises the straightforward good/bad binary found in most Westerns. While traditionally this genre invites the viewer to identify with the good characters, usually white, *Utu* shifts the viewer's identification between a number of characters, both Māori and Pākehā. The massacre of Te Wheke's village asks the viewer to initially side with Te Wheke. The audience's sympathy is immediately aligned with the villagers, as the camera assumes the gaze of a small girl, furrowing for grubs. With a series of close-ups on the girl's face, the spectator immediately becomes caught up in the emotional life of the girl, unable to remain at a distance from the scene. The girl is startled by the sound of a trumpet; she looks up and sees a group of British soldiers ride over the brow of the hill, rifles held high. The soldiers are placed in a position of dominance, looming over the camera threateningly, their rifles emphasised against the white of the sky. A common scene in Western films, it is normally the Indians (as the bad

⁹ The character of Te Wheke seems to be modelled on the historical figures Te Kooti and Riwha Titokowaru. Te Kooti Arikirangi was a Rongowhākāta leader, a military leader, prophet and religious founder. Born in 1814, Te Kooti attended the Whakato Anglican mission, acquired a mastery of the Scriptures, and had ambitions to become a preacher. However, he came into conflict with the mission, and became known as a turbulent youth associated with a group living at Makaraka, who had begun to take Pākehā possessions as *utu* (reciprocal or equivalent act) for grievances. In 1865, Te Kooti joined the government forces, but was arrested later that year on suspicion of being a spy and sent to a prison on Chatham Island. While here, Te Kooti experienced a series of revelations, on the basis of which he formed the Ringatu Church, with his fellow prisoners as his followers. Masterminding an escape, Te Kooti led his followers to freedom. His reputation as a military genius and religious prophet grew, as did his followers, and he subsequently became one of the most hunted men in New Zealand history (Binney 2007). Riwha Titokowaru was a Ngāti Ruanui leader, a military leader and prophet. Born c.1823, Titokowaru's life was a dialectic between peace and war. During his younger years he trained as a *tohunga* (shaman, expert, artist), drawn both to the Methodist faith and well as Māori religious traditions. He came to prominence during the Taranaki campaigns of the mid-1860s, at which time he also became leader of the new Pai Marire religion. After reverting to a campaign of peace and reconciliation between Māori and Pākehā, Titokowaru was drawn back in the New Zealand Wars. This later campaign lasted from June 1868 until 1871, and has become known by historians as 'Titokowaru's War'. Mythologised as the greatest threat to British settlement, Titokowaru perfected the fortified *pā* construction, which proved to be the Achilles' heel of the British. Titokowaru and his followers defended against a series of British attacks, before being mysteriously abandoned by his followers on the eve of an important battle (Belich 2007). Titokowaru's story forms one of the historic bases of Vincent Ward's 2005 film, *River Queen*, where he is represented by the character Chief Te Kai Pō. This film is discussed in the following chapter.

characters) who are seen descending from the brow of the hill, as they attack the white settlements. The film's reversal of this classic scene, in which the white characters occupy the antagonistic position, clearly marks them out as the 'bad guys'.



Figure 13: British soldiers appear on the brow of the hill in Utu

The camera again assumes the gaze of the girl as we witness, through her eyes, the brutal killing of her mother, shot in the back as she runs towards us. The camera then shows a series of killings in quick succession, all of them women and children, unarmed and unprepared for the attack. As Te Wheke arrives on the scene – at this point he is still fighting alongside the British – we take on his perspective as we look upon the horror the massacre. Registering the trauma of the situation, for these are “his people”, his reaction mirrors that of the audience’s own. As he moves through the destruction, a *waiata* (chant of lament) can be heard, emphasising the sadness and tragedy of the scene. Inviting us to identify with the Māori, this

scene seems to place the film in the tradition of the revisionist Western of the 1970s, such as *Little Big Man* (dir. Arthur Penn, 1970) and *Soldier Blue* (dir. Ralph Nelson, 1970).

The viewer's sympathy is twisted, however, several scenes later, when Te Wheke carries out a raid on the Williamson homestead. The Williamsons are clearly positioned by the film in the tradition of the 'good settlers' (such as Gilbert Mair, Robert Beaumont, and the Burton brothers). The first image of Williamson sees him farewelling a close Māori friend. The two exchange parting words, switching effortlessly between the Māori and English languages. The friend gifts Williamson a *kaitiaki* (protector), in the form of a carved lizard spirit, to hang around his neck. As the others leave, Emily and Jonathan decide to stay and protect their homestead, indicating the strength of the bond between them and the land. Their home is soon attacked by Te Wheke and his followers, however, and in the ensuing battle sequence, it is the perspective of Emily (and, to a lesser extent, Williamson himself), which is given priority. Te Wheke's 'killing' of Emily Williamson (she falls off the upstairs balcony as she is pursued by Te Wheke), and the brutal destruction of the homestead by Te Wheke's men, shifts the viewer's identification to the white settler, as we become increasingly fearful of the Māori rebels.

However, Williamson soon falls into semi-madness ("sometimes I'm mad... sometimes I'm not"), which means that the viewer can no longer entirely identify with him either, and he becomes instead a figure of pathos, amusement and spectacle. Following this, the narrative focus shifts to New Zealand-born (Pākehā) Lieutenant Scott and the articulate and educated Māori, Wiremu, fighting on the side of the British for (what he believes will be) the unity of the country. Along with the narrative focus, the viewer's identification shifts to these two figures, although one could argue that it finally comes to rest with Wiremu. The politics of this complex identificatory schema is highlighted by the film's constant refrain: "Whose side are you on?" (alternatively, "I thought you were on my side?", or "how do you know they're on our side?"). By inviting the viewer to identify with various characters in turn, both Māori and Pākehā, the film asks the viewer to consider their own site(s) of identification, what it means to be a New Zealander, and how the nation can transcend racial identification.



Figure 14: A moment of madness: Williamson holds his quadruple-barrelled shotgun

Geoff Murphy set about making *Utu* in the early 1980s, against a highly charged political and social background. Much academic attention of *Utu* makes note of its context, highlighting that the film is, in some ways, a response to this changing social climate. In particular, the critical response to this film has emphasised the way in which *Utu* problematises identification, and how this resonated with contemporary national politics. Kenneth Marc Harris, for example, reads *Utu* as an attempt to unite the nation following in the events of the Springbok Tour (1990, 38).¹⁰ Harris understands the shifting identification in the film as helping New Zealand to self-consciously build an awareness of who we are, and who we want to be, as a nation. Russell Campbell, on the other hand, argues that *Utu* takes a ‘tough approach’ to the social and political changes surrounding Māori-Pākehā relations in the 1970s and 1980s (1986, 9). Campbell goes on to say that, although the viewer may initially be

¹⁰ He makes a comparison between the making of the film and sporting events: “A hopeful spirit of united national achievement accompanied the film’s production and release, comparable almost to the atmosphere surrounding international sporting events in which the country is successfully competing. Attaining national unity is also at the centre of the filmmakers’ overt message...” (1990, 38).

invited to identify with Te Wheke, his subsequent actions mount up to an unequal brutality, so that any full identification with him is impossible. For Campbell, *Utu* thus falls back into the Pākehā point of view, essentially reinstating a national orthodox version of history. Most recently, Jonathan Rayner's analysis of the film, which also sees it as a replay of 1980s racial politics in an historic setting, comments that shifting identification in the film allows the viewer to construct an 'ideal New Zealander', comprising the three characters Wiremu, Scott and Williamson (1999).

Most of the critical attention surrounding the film therefore takes the following basic approach, although with differing stances: *Utu* adapts the Western genre to fit the New Zealand context; this adaptation gives rise to shifting points of identification, problematising the good/bad binary; and finally, that this shifting identification is a response to significant changes in New Zealand society at the time of the film's making. This is a fairly reasoned approach, and certainly the film does all of these things. However, it is clear that this line of argument misses a crucial component of the film: the film's structural framework. While this is hinted at through reference to the way in which the film plays out present issues in an historical setting, the complexities of this temporal structure has never been investigated in any substantial manner.

The Circular Return of History

Utu, like Poe's "The Purloined Letter", is structured by a doubling. This may seem questionable at first, since the film's diegesis is clearly contained within a period of eight months in 1870, across which the narrative moves causally and seemingly without repetition. Further, there is no omniscient narrator to provide distance between the drama and the narrative; the film is ostensibly compacted within one cohesive temporal framework. The comparison with the structure of Poe's story would thus seem to sit uneasily, since the narrative of "The Purloined Letter" clearly contains two scenes: the drama and its repetition. However, I would like to suggest that there *is* in fact a structural repetition operant within *Utu*: that of the film's present. Unlike Poe's story, however, the second, repeated structure is never represented as such within the film, and functions instead at a latent level. Nevertheless, the film's present, the early 1980s, plays a significant role within the film, ghosting the historical drama throughout the entire narrative.

Gaylene Preston's documentary, *Making Utu* (1982), reinforces this double historical structure. The documentary is introduced with the text: "100 years ago is today, the past is the

present, the future is now.” This sentiment is repeated in the interview with Merata Mita, who plays Matu in the film, and was one of the main advisors to the director. Mita points out that, “what’s manifested in this film is what’s happening today, where we have... Māori fighting Māori, we have Māori fighting Pākehā, Pākehā fighting Pākehā”. Similarly, Anzac Wallace (Te Wheke), comments, “the fight that happened then, that is portrayed in this movie, is happening today... the young people are going through that same thing again”. Thus, in the film, we are presented with the drama (1870), and its implied repetition in the present (1980); the two periods of time conveniently separated by a period of (more or less) 100 years.

Once were Warriors

While it seems this historical doubling was an issue that occupied the minds of the filmmakers, I would like to focus on the way in which this is manifested within the film itself. In particular, I will discuss two scenes from the film that exemplify this double structure. The first scene I wish to discuss takes place 15 minutes into the film, in which Te Wheke enters the Church and publicly declares *utu* (an equivalent or reciprocal act) against Pākehā. At this point, Te Wheke’s village has been destroyed, he has received a full *moko* (facial tattoo), and is somewhat of a lone ranger in his campaign of revenge. Identification still rests firmly with Te Wheke, evidenced by the fact that, for the majority of this scene, the viewer takes on his narrative point of view. The scene opens with a mid-close-up of the Vicar and the bell-ringer, dressed in black and looming over the camera. The vicar solemnly hands over his pocket watch to the bell-ringer, the predominant sound of the clock ticking suggesting the imminence of death, or an event waiting to happen. This is confirmed in the very next shot, in which the viewer assumes the perspective of someone we immediately presume to be Te Wheke, creeping through the scrub towards the Church.

Inside the Church, whose congregation consists entirely of Māori, the Vicar delivers two verses from the gospel of St Matthew, which tells of a traitor who defected from Jesus. It is worth quoting at length:

And behold, one of them which was with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck a servant of the High Priest and smote off his ear. Then said Jesus unto him, “put up again thy sword into his place, for all they who take the sword, shall perish with the sword”.

All they who take up the sword, shall perish with the sword.

Even as we are gathered here, the... messengers of Satan are at loose in this land. Satan, who goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. His messengers, who persist in their heathen blindness... following false prophets into the eternal fire of damnation, creep about through this land, amongst its dark places... But let us take heart. The enemies of God shall not prosper. The day of reckoning for all who take up arms against the servants of the one true God is never long delayed. For God himself has told us... all they who take up the sword, shall perish by the sword!

Of course, there is much here that can be elaborated upon, as it reflects many of the film's main themes. The traitor here, for example, refers to Te Wheke himself, who has recently defected from the colonial project. The fact that the Vicar refers to the messengers of Satan "creeping about", and Te Wheke is literally creeping about outside the church further establishes the direct link. However, rather than dwell on such a reading, I am more interested in the way in which Te Wheke, after beheading the Vicar in true Macbeth-like fashion, repeats the Vicar's lines, but with a difference.

Once Te Wheke takes to the pulpit, he immediately repeats the Vicar's biblical discourse, changing the message of peace into a call for Māori to be ready to take up arms:

He who lives by the sword, shall die by the sword. God's promise, not his threat. If we live like rats in the ferns of the forest floor, then so shall we die in the fire that burns them. A fire lit by the white man's lust for our land, and fanned by the breath of the Pākehā's words of God. Is this the Lord's plan? Perhaps the Vicar has other masters than God. What other choice does the Lord offer a warrior?

Imagine... imagine if you put aside your swords, your weapons, but not too far aside. Imagine if you took up the plough, took on the guise of farmers, traders, but were always ready. Could we put 10,000 warriors on the streets of Auckland, for just a few hours? Wait, be ready.

On one level, Te Wheke is repeating the Vicar's discourse, using the same words but with addition, and offering them a different meaning. More interesting, however, is the way in which Te Wheke's words repeat the events happening in the time of the film's making, the 1980s. Te Wheke's discourse reaches its climax in the line: "Could we put 10,000 warriors on the streets of Auckland?" For contemporary audiences, this could not help but conjure images of Land Rights and Indigenous Rights protests that were gaining momentum in New Zealand during the early 1980s, such as the anti-Springbok Tour march down Queen Street in

1981, or the series of Parihaka protests during this time.¹¹ While diegetically Te Wheke is inviting his Māori audience to follow him in taking up arms against the Pākehā in the struggle against sweeping land confiscation, this line speaks most strongly to contemporary audiences about what is happening in the present, or, as Wallace put it, ‘the fight that is happening today, with the young people going through the same thing’.

Within this temporal structure, events in the present are posited as the direct outcome of actions in the past. Throughout this scene, the viewer is constantly made aware of time. Indeed, the very opening shot establishes time as the central concern, when the Vicar hands the bell-ringer the ticking watch. This is echoed in the Vicar’s speech, when he claims that the “day of reckoning is upon us”. Shortly following this line, Te Wheke appears, holding the same ticking clock-watch from the first shot, asking: “What’s the time, Mister Wolf?” Finally, the presence of time is alluded to again in Te Wheke’s speech, when he tells his Māori audience to, “wait, be ready”. These references, combined with the constant tolling of Church bells throughout this scene, create an atmosphere of inevitability, as though the viewer knows something is about to happen, it is just a matter of time. Each reference signals a temporal delay: the time is *almost* here, we are just on the brink of something, we just need to wait a little longer. I would like to suggest that that time is *here*, in the film’s present, the 1980s. It is as though we, as a nation, had been waiting for this time for 100 years, in the meantime taking on the guise of normal, everyday citizens. The entire sequence, and particularly Te Wheke’s speech, appears designed to awaken generations of discontent, 100 years of waiting for change, all culminating in the present: the time to act is now.

The Desire of *Utu*

The second scene I wish to discuss takes place mid-way through the film. Te Wheke is gaining a large following. Some Māori who have been fighting with the British are defecting to Te Wheke’s side. Henare, a minor character, has begun a relationship with a Māori woman, Kura, who has left to join Te Wheke. Henare, after discovering her gone and finding his loyalty to the British challenged, decides to also join Te Wheke’s group, telling Wiremu he will be gone in the morning. The following dialogue ensues, some of which is spoken in

¹¹ Parihaka is a small town in the Taranaki Region of the North Island. During the 1870s and 1880s, the settlement – the largest Māori village in New Zealand – became the centre of a major campaign of non-violent peaceful resistance to British occupation of confiscated land in the area (King 2003, 211-225). British troops stormed the area and evicted the occupants, and the events became the subject of a major protest movement in New Zealand from 1980 onwards.

Māori, subtitled in English. I have used the English here, although I have indicated the parts spoken in Māori through the use of italics.

Henare: Kura's gone. So has her family. They've gone to join Te Wheke.

Wiremu: Does he want them?

Henare: Why do we fight, tribe against tribe? 30 years ago, they dug a Māori bullet from my grandfather's leg. On and on it goes. And always the Pākehā sides with those who advance his cause. Will we still face each other across battle lines in 100 years?

Wiremu: *Then stop.*

Henare: *Tomorrow.*

Lacan tells us that a question's answer is implicated in its very structure, and this is precisely what is at work here. The question Henare poses comes with a predetermined answer that finds recognition in the viewer: yes, this battle is still raging; we are living through it now. Again, the reference to the protest movement (particularly the Springbok Tour) is made explicit: 100 years on and the nation is still divided, still facing each other across the battle lines. The short circuit of history is thus drawn: the battle that was begun 100 years ago is still going, "on and on". The film thus creates a direct historical link, determining the events in the film's present as a direct outcome of events begun 100 years earlier.

The politics of identification raised earlier must be considered here. In the earlier Church scene, Te Wheke's campaign of *utu* is directed squarely against the white population: division is sharply determined along racial lines. In the first scene, identification still rests with Te Wheke; Māori are on the side of the good, Pākehā (or more accurately, the British) are positioned as bad. Despite the fact that this reverses the traditional Manichean binary, it is still nonetheless a familiar and simple structure. In the latter scene, however, the three central figures are occupied entirely by Māori: Henare, Wiremu and Te Wheke. Henare is strongly signified as Māori in the previous scene, in which he leads a group of other Māori in a *tūtū ngārahu haka* (posture dance performed by the men before going into battle). The fact that it is Henare who is killed in this scene by Te Wheke interrupts and transcends the previously simple racial binary, highlighting inter-Māori violence. The double historical structure carries this Māori-on-Māori violence into the present, highlighting the complex racial politics of the early 1980s in which racial issues were not divided purely along racial lines.

I have chosen these two scenes because they exemplify the double historical structure at work throughout this film. Both scenes posit the present as a direct outcome of events occurring in the past. However, if we are to return to Lacan's Seminar, we must now ask: what are the intersubjective relations occurring in these scenes? I drew attention briefly to the politics of identification at work in both of these scenes, and I would like now to explore this in relation to Lacan's Seminar. As mentioned, most readings of *Utu* highlight the changing identificatory pattern established by this film. This discussion has focused on the relationship between the viewer and the characters, highlighting the way in which the viewer's identification shifts from one character to another. In many cases, such as with Campbell (1986) and Rayner (1999), this has quickly been extended to an ideological interpretation of the film, in which shifting identification is linked to the establishment of an ideal New Zealander with whom both Māori and Pākehā are invited to identify. While I would also like to consider identification within a national framework, I would first like to draw closer attention to the intersubjective relations at work within the film.

I would like to suggest that identification in this film is complex because it introduces a third term: a middle position. While most Westerns operate within a binary opposition, *Utu* is structured by three subject positions:

1. Militant Māori.
2. Colonial British.
3. A middle figure, who crosses between them, forges a new way forward for the nation, and may be either Māori or Pākehā.

While the viewer is initially invited to identify with the first position, identification soon shifts to the third, where it remains for the rest of the film. However, no one character occupies this third subjective position; it is displaced in a kind of revolving process.

Specifically, it is Williamson who first occupies this position (in any substantial manner), which is then displaced onto Scott, and finally, Wiremu. This revolving identificatory pattern is repeated in the final court-marital scene, as each one, in the same order, claims *utu* against Te Wheke.

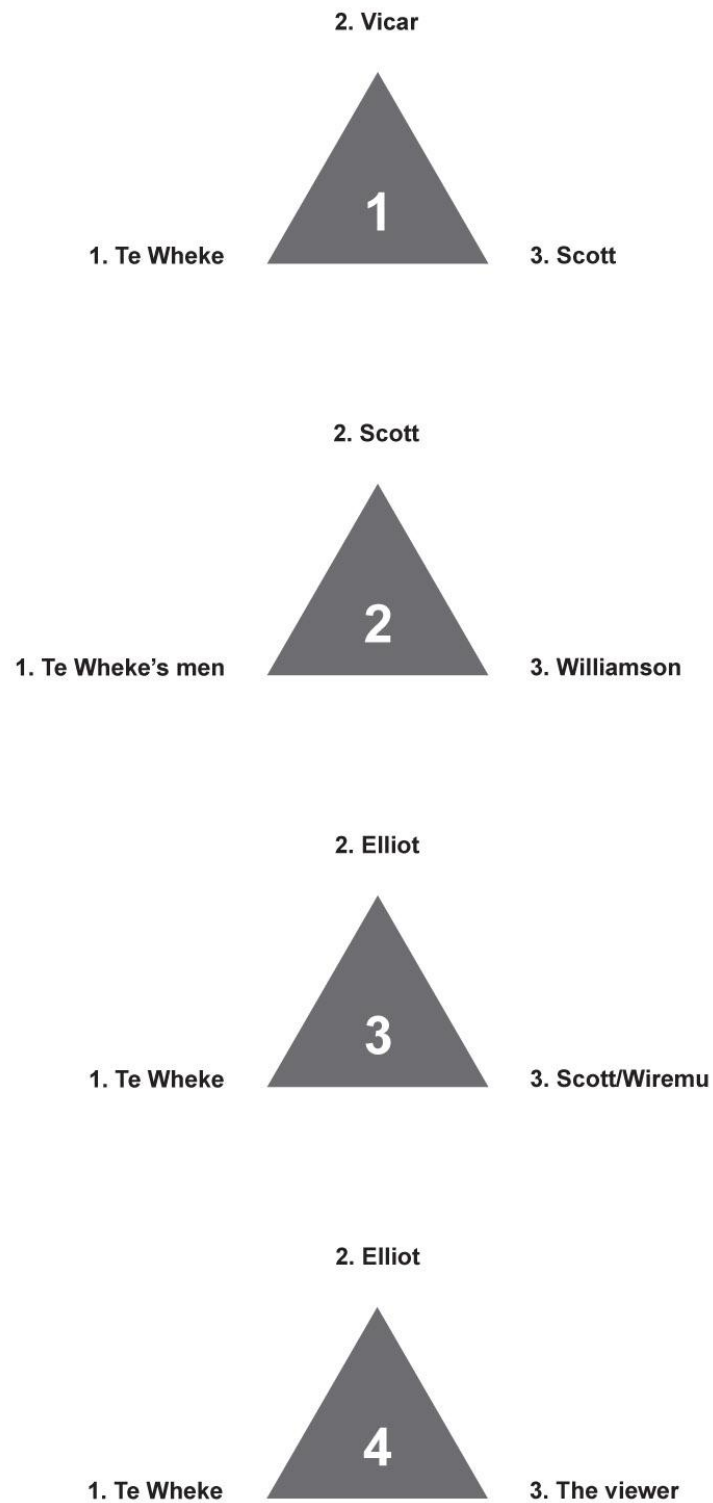


Figure 15: Repetition of intersubjective structures in Utu

The third position is ostensibly the ideal of the nation: it is the figure of someone who was “born here”, is often split between the languages of Māori and English, who wants to battle to stop and to unite the nation; it is also the position aligned with the perspective of the spectator. While the three figures who occupy this third subject position both do and do not share external similarities, it is their displacement in this triadic structure that is important. The character displacement between the three figures would seem to suggest that a repetitive structure is at work within this film. Indeed, this is how Lacan reads the drama of the purloined letter, with the internal displacement of characters highlighting the repetitive structure of the tale. While it is possible to draw a similar conclusion with *Utu*, finding internal repetitions (especially, as I mentioned, in the final court-martial scene), I am more interested in the way in which this repetition takes place between the diegetic time of the film and the period of the film’s making. That is, because the film positions the present as a repetition of the past, the viewer is themselves invited to occupy the third position. Thus, while the film constantly demands the viewer to consider ‘whose side we are on’ within the film, we are ultimately asked to take up this third position *ourselves* in the present. While the battle rages ‘on and on’, from 100 years ago to the present, the film asks the viewer to assume the third position (the ideal of the nation) and to stop the fighting: the ‘tomorrow’ of the film has arrived in the present, and it is now time, the film suggests, to end the cycle of violence.

The Utu Always Arrives at its Destination

Lacan, in the “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’”, tells us it is the signifier that determines the revolving subject positions in a structure, and the repetition of this structure in time. Since *Utu* is also structured by repetition, we must now address what it is, in the film, that determines this repetition. Lacan identified the purloined letter itself as operant of the signifier in Poe’s story. I would like to suggest that in the film, it is the concept of *utu* that determines the repetition of the structure, as well as the revolving subject positions within the structure. In Preston’s *Making Utu*, cultural advisor Joe Malcolm describes the concept of *utu* as “very simple: I give you something and you are socially beholden to reciprocate in one form or another at X point in time. At its complex form, it comes down to a bloodbath”. Ranginui Walker gives a more detailed description of the principle of *utu*:

There were several dimensions to the meaning of *utu*. At its simplest level, *utu* meant equivalence or payment. Gift-giving to others... was a widely practised custom in Māori

society that cemented social ties. But the gift set up an imbalance between the recipient and the giver. At a later date, equivalence was restored when the recipient gave a return gift... At a more serious level, *utu* meant a compensation for some injury. [A] misdemeanour... disturbed social relations for which the aggrieved party sought compensation. (1990, 69)

As both Malcolm and Walker suggest, even though the concept of *utu* operates on a principle of equivalence, it is often the case that it sets into motion a process of *unequal* exchange, or ‘imbalance’, in which it is difficult to know when or how to stop.



Figure 16: Te Wheke declares *utu* on the Pākehā

In the film, all characters become caught up in the process of *utu*. This is made explicit in the final scene, in which Te Wheke is court-martialled. After being sentenced to death by fire, a series of characters in turn step forward to carry out his execution. First Matu claims *utu* against Te Wheke for the death of her cousin and nephew. Next, Williamson steps forward,

and claims *utu* for the killing of his wife, Emily: “You took up the musket to answer the death of your family, the destruction of your home. *So did I.*” Following Williamson’s claim for *utu*, Scott comes forward, claiming he is “without prejudice”. However, his claim is inter-cut with scenes of Te Wheke murdering Kura, the woman he has come to love, and heightened by his antagonistic stance towards Te Wheke. Elliot too, while he too has already been killed off at this point, once claimed *utu* against Te Wheke: “I shall pursue him relentlessly and crush him, and any other brown bastard.” This scene operates at a micro-level as an indicator of the narrative structure of the entire film, in which the first wrong is attempted to be made right by a series of subsequent actions.

However, as the complexities of the word *utu* itself suggest, it is difficult to know when this cycle can come to an end; as evidenced in the film, once *utu* has been put into circulation, an entire chain of subsequent events are triggered. The film draws attention to the cyclical nature of *utu* throughout. Three different characters – Scott, Wiremu and Williamson – at the point at which they occupy the position of the third place in the structure, all cry out for the cycle of *utu* to stop. Throughout the film, the nature of *utu* is couched in financial terms, as a debt, a ledger, a balance. In the final court-martial scene, for example, Wiremu tells Matu that she cannot carry out Te Wheke’s execution, since this will lead to a new cycle of *utu*: “You claim *utu*... you would pay off this account with Te Wheke with a bullet in his head and then what? ... For you to settle this affair is to create new conflict.” While this cycle of *utu* is, of course, present in the film’s diegesis, its double historical structure indicates that the cycle of *utu* is still occurring in the present. This sets up a strange tension in the final moments of the film, in which it both fantasises a way out of this cycle as well as claiming that it is still occurring. I will return to this tension at a later point, for now, however, I wish to draw attention to the way in which all characters in the film are caught up in the cycle of *utu*, and how this determines their relative subject positions.

Lacan’s “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” teaches us that all subjects in a structure are always at the mercy of the signifier, following blindly in the path of signification. In reference to *Utū*, we can rewrite Lacan’s dictum that subjects “receive their decisive orientation... from the itinerary of the signifier”, as: *in the film, all characters receive their decisive orientation from the itinerary of utu*. Just as Lacan writes that it is the signifier that determines the place of the subject within the complex, as well as its repetition, the cycle of *utu* means that the characters are ‘beholden’ to carry out *utu* on he or she who has upset a balance (whether in terms of a gift or injury). It is the path that *utu* takes in the film, passed

from Te Wheke, to Williamson, to Scott, to Elliot, to Wiremu, that determines the three places in the triadic structure of the film. This demonstrates precisely that which we find in Lacan's reading of Poe's tale; that is, once the *utu* has been put into circulation, it will circle around, causing a revolving of subject positions, until it comes to its end, until signification has stopped. Here we find another interesting resonance between Poe's tale and *Utu*. Each text does 'stop' the itinerary, where that which we have been following (the purloined letter, or *utu*), finds its place, is returned to the original subject. This is enacted perfectly in *Utu*, where the film ends at the exact moment of Te Wheke's execution. Like the letter returned to the Queen, *utu* is returned to Te Wheke: the *utu* has, seemingly, arrived at its destination.

In both cases, the itinerary of the signifier seems to have stopped. Indeed, as mentioned, much is made of this need to stop the cycle of *utu* in the film. The entire court-martial scene is geared towards this goal, as no character who has previously been wronged by Te Wheke is able to carry out his execution for, as Wiremu tells us, this would only begin a new cycle of *utu*. All events of this film are directed towards this final goal, and once it has been reached, the film can end. However, there are two other elements at work here, both of which deny the closing down of signification, and effectively pass signification on to the viewer. In the very final moments of the film, it is revealed that Wiremu is Te Wheke's brother. Thus, by the film's logic, it is only Wiremu who can carry out Te Wheke's execution, since, Wiremu says, "I have no desire for *utu*, I have no ledger to balance, I am without prejudice". In Poe's tale, the Cr billon letter reveals Dupin's long-held desire for revenge against the Minister, requiring the reader to return to the beginning of the story (or trilogy), to make retrospective sense of the narrative from the final point; the end of the narrative changes everything that has gone before and invites a new, retrospective reading of the story. In a similar fashion, Wiremu's final revelation transforms all prior elements in the narrative, inviting the viewer to return to the beginning and commence the cycle anew. The end of the film both transforms and repeats the previous elements in the sequence. Thus, it is possible to see that, while the film's narrative provides what is the most final of all endings, the death of Te Wheke, signification is far from dead.

Perhaps more interesting, however, is what is occurring at a wider, historical level. I have already suggested that the film operates across a double historical structure, which repeats present events in a historical setting. In the second, latent structure (the present), the viewer is positioned as the third, middle subject. While within the film, signification is ostensibly shut down, it is, in fact, passed on to the viewer, in the present, since we have already been invited

to see the present as the direct outcome of these events in the past. Thus, while on one level, we are invited to make retrospective sense of the film's narrative, so too are we invited to make retrospective sense of the nation's history. The place at which signification arrives, I would like to suggest, is in the viewer in the present, and not at the moment at which the final *utu* is carried out on Te Wheke. Indeed, the film's ending passes signification from the past directly to the present, so that the viewer is 'beholden', in the present, to make right historic wrongs. The viewer is thus positioned as the true point of arrival of *utu*, and it is only from the present, the film suggests, that we can retrospectively return to the past to make sense of the course of history. Further, in so *recognising* the present as a repetition of the past, the possibility is created to correct historic injustices as well as *stop* the cycle of *utu*. Just as Scott, Williamson and Wiremu display a desire for the cycle to stop, it is now up to the viewer, occupying the same position in the structure, to end the fighting, and move forward, as a nation united.

The Fateful Arrival of History

The letter thus arrives at its destination in the viewer, in the present. The viewer is asked to see the events in the present as the outcome of a fate determined 100 years ago. However, in so doing, the film reinstates a kind of teleological illusion of history. That is, from the present, the viewer is invited to return to the past, and *from there*, see the present as a direct repetition of the past. So, while the present is offered as the latent repeated structure of the film, it is positioned as coming after the film's historic diegesis. The film thus establishes a short circuit of history, beginning from a point in the past and tightly drawing the historical narrative into the present. It is as if, through all the contingencies of history, we have found ourselves repeating the very same mistakes made 100 years ago. The present is, according to the film's structure, the fateful arrival of the events in the film.

I would like to take a short detour myself at this point, and ask you to recall the role of the three Witches in *Macbeth*. The reference is not in the least arbitrary, as the film itself makes repeated reference to *Macbeth*, likening both Te Wheke and Elliot to the tragic figure, as well as mimicking the play's Burnham Wood military tactic.¹² However, it is not these direct

¹² The first reference to *Macbeth* occurs during the destruction of the Williamson homestead. As his men destroy the place and property, Te Wheke sits alone, reading a copy of *Macbeth*. At later moments in the film, both Te Wheke and Elliot compared to the tragic figure, highlighting the manner in which their own ambitions have overridden their ability to make the best decisions for their people. Later, as Te Wheke prepares his siege on the British camp, he adopts the ingenious military tactic described in *Macbeth*, whereby his warriors disguise themselves as bushes in order to conceal their approach.

references that I am primarily interested in, but another one, operating at a more latent level. In the story, the three Witches, which are the doubles of the mythical figures of the Three Fates, appear to Macbeth, and reveal to him his fate. The figures appear at three points in the narrative, and each time set up the events to occur in the following Acts. Indeed, each event that the Witches prophesise does come true; it is as though they have privileged access to the future, and can see what is about to happen before it arrives. However, the question arises: do the Witches truly have mystical access to the future, or are they simply leading Macbeth on a certain path, so that he in fact carries out precisely that which they have shown him will happen? If Macbeth had not met the Witches, would events have taken precisely that turn, or would his fate have turned out differently?

In my view, the three Witches of *Macbeth* operate as the signifiers in repetition automatism *par excellence*. Whether they have privileged access to the future is immaterial, and Shakespeare's text itself never attempts to answer this question. What is important is that the Witches produce the *effects* of fate, so that, once the story ends, the reader or viewer can see that everything the Witches said would happen, did. *Utu* operates on this same principle. Once our nation's historic path has been revealed to us, we cannot help but see that events *took precisely this turn*. The film's true ending is not the point when Te Wheke is shot, but the present, at which point the viewer can look back upon events as read them as though they have been determined by a hidden hand of fate. Fate is always directed towards a final outcome, and in the case of the film, that point is the present, in which the viewer receives signification. It is only from this point that a certain, fateful historical narrative is revealed to us, finding ourselves as the endpoint of 100 years of a letter, or of *utu*, in circulation. However, rather than self-reflexively, as in the case of Lacan's Seminar, showing the reader this structure (which would be figured as B-A-B), the film denies this first point of signification; so that, history is offered within a traditional teleological fantasy, as simply: A-B. This reading of the film, then, exposes this fantasy of fate, revealing the way in which the film produces the effects of fate through repetition. It is not that we are blindly following in a path predetermined 100 years earlier, but that, from the present, we are invited to make retrospective sense of history from the place where it could not help but end.

The Fantasy of Resolution and the Desire for Justice

Several critics have commented that the ending of *Utu* is problematic. Russell Campbell, for example, argues that the end of the film falls back into inter-Māori violence, reinforcing a

predominant Pākehā point of view by safely distancing Pākehā from racial disturbances, and positing it is a 'Māori problem'. I would agree that the film ends on a tension, but not for the reasons Campbell identifies. I would like to suggest that the film's ending operates at the juncture of fantasy and desire, between repetition and resistance to this repetition. On one axis, the film provides a fantasised resolution to the cycle of *utu*, imagining a way out of imbalance and restoring order to the nation. However, on another axis, the film clearly shows that this desire for justice is still circulating, still alive in the present. In the film, the repetitive nature of *utu* has ended, while it has simultaneously been passed down 100 years to the viewer. The desire for justice is still in circulation.

Again, I detect a circular temporal structure operant here. The film projects back, from the present, a fantasised way out of the deadlock of *utu*. This fantasy is then re-projected forward, from the point at which it originated, to the future. Wiremu, who in the film ends in the third position, kills off both extremes: the British colonial figure of Elliot, as well as the militant Māori figure, Te Wheke. Since the viewer inherits this third position, the film suggests that we are to follow in the path of Wiremu: we are invited to disavow both extremes and forge a middle ground. The ending of the cycle, the film implies, will stop once this middle ground is taken up, once a nation's ideal identity is formed. This ideal identity is not based on race, but on common birth. At one point in the film, Scott asks Wiremu: "Whose side are you on?" Wiremu replies: "Same side as you, Sir. I was born here too". Thus, the film's fantasised resolution does not stop the drive for justice, but retrospectively projects a way that we can, in the present, stop the drive. *Utu* suggests that it is only once this drive has come to rest, once desire for injustice has been shut down, that the nation can move forward, Māori and Pākehā, in unity.

Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" teaches us to recognise that, in redoubling a story, we shift from the field of accuracy to the register of truth (E, 13). *Utu* can thus be read, not for how much we can learn about our nation's past, but rather for what, in re-doubling history, it can reveal to us about the truth of the settler unconscious. It is precisely in the double of history, in the place where the letter ends up, that we can begin to understand what the film may be revealing to us, 'from behind'; that is, its illusory search for a hidden fate. To return to the very basic principle of repetition automatism, an intersubjective complex is compelled to repeat when the origin of the compulsion has been forgotten. *Utu* offers the settler a fantasy of national origin specific to New Zealand in the early 1980s. By presenting to the viewer, in Imaginary form, an origin for the present repetition, the film offers a way out

of the nation's need to return to the colonial past, to repeat the same stories of settlement. Like the analyst who attempts to make the subject's compulsion to repeat conscious, *Utu* asks the viewer to *imaginarily* recognise the origin of present problems in order to, at last, move forward, no longer condemned to repeat the crimes of history.

Part III:

Signs of Decolonisation

Tribunal of Love:

Fantasies of Reconciliation in *River Queen* (2005)

“That bullet was small going in, and big coming out. Now it is easy to sleep on my old, old wounds. No one would remember, but the scars would last forever.”

(Sarah O’Brien, *River Queen*)

Words of Love

When it comes to love, many of us claim to be something of an expert. Even as it appears to us the most singular, unique experience (‘I have felt nothing like it before’, we tell our friends when we first experience it, or experience it anew), love has the ability to connect people in its similarity (‘I know exactly how you feel’, we commiserate with them when it fails). When it comes to expressing our feelings to the loved one, we may experience a similar paradox. While we try to capture the incomparable, singular feelings we have for them, words tend frustratingly to slip back into familiar phrases, clichés and aphorisms. Perhaps this is why, when it comes to expressing love, so many of us revert to poetry, literature, songs, and the like, as we draw on the words of another to articulate the most intimate of our own feelings. And there is certainly a wealth of sources to choose from. From books to films, songs to advertising, Western culture (at least) produces an overabundance of words of love; love is, quite literally, all around us.

This might be due to the fact that love assumes many different forms, appearing to us in a number of different ways, at times in quick succession. Thus, on one day, I might identify with the words of Slavoj Žižek, when he says: “*Love feels like a great misfortune, a monstrous parasite, a permanent state of emergency that ruins all small pleasures*” (qtd. in Greenstreet 2008). But, the next, respond equally strongly to Beyoncé’s lyrics: *It’s the way*

that you know what I thought I knew / It's the beat that my heart skips when I'm with you / Yeah but I still don't understand / Just how your love can do what no one else can.

In each case, I find a point of identification with the words – ‘yes, that’s exactly how *I* feel’ – but just as quickly, find them inadequate or no longer relevant. At which point, I look for more words of love, further points of identification, new modes of expression. Such expressions of love, whether our own or others, tend to *stop short*, to not take us far enough in explaining the force of the emotion. Love, you could say, is what registers the failure of discourse at the very moment we anticipate fulfilment. In fact, the over-abundance of the creative output on love acts as a kind of monument to this *failure* of expression, the failure of words when we most need them.

But I cannot make any claim to originality of thought here, either, since it is precisely this ceding of the object that characterises Lacan’s discourses on love. That is, in speaking of love throughout his career, from the first foray into love in his doctoral thesis, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (1932), until his *Seminar XX: Encore* (1972-73), Lacan never spoke *directly* about love. Each discussion of love is mediated through either another concept, or through myth or fiction. Lacan himself points to this in his *Seminar XX*, when he tells his audience (and note, by this stage, Lacan is referring to himself in the third person):

It seems that in his first ‘seminar’, as it is called, of the year Lacan spoke – I won’t beat around the bush – of nothing less than love. The news has travelled. It even came back to me from – not very far away, of course – a little town in Europe to which it had been sent as a message. As it was from my couch that it came back to me, I cannot believe that the person who told it to me believed it. Given that she knows quite well that what I say of love is assuredly that one cannot speak about it. ‘Talk to me of love’ – what a lark! I spoke of the love letter (*la lettre d’amour*), of the declaration of love – not the same thing as the word of love. (XX.1, 11-12)

One may find the origins of this unspeaking of love as far back as his doctoral thesis. In his thesis, Lacan transcribed several love poems, which he attributed to the patient Aimée, although it seems that Lacan himself was in fact the troubadour in question. As Jean Allouch has suggested, in naming Aimée as the writer of these poems, Lacan indicated that love has a place, and that place is in the transference, in this case, Lacan’s transference to his patient (2007, 82). Indeed, in the subsequent decade, and until the 1960s, many of Lacan’s forays

into love were displaced onto his formulations of (Imaginary) transference.¹ In fact, for Lacan in these early years, transference and love were one and the same. As he writes in his *Seminar I* (1953-54): “There is really no distinction between transference and what, in everyday life, we call love. The structure of this artificial phenomenon which is transference and that of the spontaneous phenomenon we call love, and more specifically, passionate love, are, on the plane of the psychic, equivalent” (I.8, 90).

In this early Seminar, love also appears in another form: that of the ego-ideal. For Lacan, when we love someone, we are, in fact, in love with our *own* ideals we imagine to be manifested in the other (the loved object). As he puts it: “That’s what love is. It’s one’s own ego that one loves in love, one’s own ego made real on the Imaginary level” (I.1, 142). Without going further in the direction of either of these two concepts – transference or the ego-ideal – I want to stress that, at this point, Lacan sees love as a phenomenon that takes place on an *Imaginary* level. Love, as an Imaginary phenomenon, is what opens the door to something else; in the case of transference, love opens the door to the very possibility of analysis itself, and in terms of the narcissism of the ego-ideal, love opens the door, in Lacan’s words, “to perfection” (I.11, 142).

It is not until the end of the 1950s, in his Seminar on *Ethics* (1959-60), that Lacan takes up again the notion of love in any significant way. Here, in Chapter 11, Lacan resuscitates the medieval notion of *courtly love*, a specific form of love which was linked to a “very precise poetic craft” (VII.11, 148). Briefly, the tradition of courtly love (or *fin amour*, ‘fine love’) originated in France in the eleventh century, and spread across Europe from around the thirteenth century. The domain of the European aristocracy, courtly love involved the (often illicit) wooing of a Lady through a highly ritualised process of seduction. This process included the extravagant, and highly artificial, pronouncement of love through poetry, song and verse. This was the world of the troubadour, extravagant gifts, and favours, where the Lady would only ever display the merest hint of interest in her prospective lover, since he was her *servus* – her lowly and faithful servant.

¹ In this, Lacan followed in the path opened up by Freud on the nature of love. It was in Freud’s *Dynamics of Transference* (1912) that he first conceived of the fundamental role love plays in the transference phenomenon. For Freud, transference was the engine of psychoanalysis, but could be either *positive* or *negative*. In its negative guise, transference took the form of erotic transference, in which love was, of course, a driving factor. In its positive form, transference took the form of repetition. Lacan himself toyed with these poles of transference early on in his career (replacing the terms with *Imaginary* as opposed to *negative* transference, and *positive* with *Symbolic* transference), before abandoning this simple division in his *Seminar on Transference*.

For Lacan, these ‘tribunals of love’ involved “perfectly coded points of reference”, in which the relations between the partners were governed by strict rituals and regulations (VII.11, 148). As Lacan says, more than anything, courtly love was a “poetic exercise, a way of playing with a number of conventional, idealising themes, which couldn’t have any real concrete equivalent” (VII.11, 148). The most important of these ideals, says Lacan, is that of the Lady, who operates not at the level of the individual, but as an abstract concept, one created by man’s sentimental attachments to love (VII.11, 148). As Lacan says, the Lady – the object of love – cannot be individualised; rather, she must remain close to the level of *allegory*:

The object or *Domnei* – as she is called – she is also frequently referred to with the masculine term, *Mi Dom*, or my Lord – this Lady is presented with depersonalised characteristics. As a result, writers have noted that all poets seem to be addressing the same person. The fact that on occasion her body is described as *g’ra delgat e gen* – that means that plumpness was part of the sex appeal of the period, *e gen* signifying graceful – should not deceive you, since she is always described in that way. In this poetic field, the feminine object is emptied of all real substance. (VII.11, 149)

For Lacan, the loved object must function at this abstracted, depersonalised level in order for there to exist so many rules around the notion of courtly love (VII.11, 148). That is to say, the loved object (the Lady) must be inaccessible – there must be obstacles to requiring this love – in order for there to be this elaborate ritual surrounding love. In other words, according to Lacan, man must be deprived of something in order for his desire to be activated – a desire that assumes the ritualised fantasy of courtly love.

In this way, Lacan elaborates, the loved object – “the object in front of us” – is our own *anamorphosis* (VII.11, 151). The concept of anamorphosis is introduced by Lacan in the previous session (“Marginal Comments”), and is used again in the first part of Chapter 11.² An art historical term, anamorphosis is a specific technique in painting developed during the early Renaissance, and refers to a distorted projection that requires the viewer to assume a certain perspective, or employ special devices, in order to see the image. The example to which Lacan most often refers is Hans Holbein’s painting *The Ambassadors* from 1533. As Lacan explains the phenomenon:

² His specific application of the concept of anamorphosis was famously refined later in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964).

Just go to the Louvre; you will see Holbein's painting of *The Ambassadors* and at the feet of one of the two men, who is just as well built as you or I, you will see an enigmatic form stretched out on the ground. It looks roughly like fried eggs. If you place yourself at a certain angle from which the painting itself disappears in all its relief by reason of the converging lines of its perspective, you will see a death's head appear, the sign of the classic theme of *vanitas*. (VII.10, 135)

In his discussion of courtly love, Lacan draws on the technique of the anamorphosis to demonstrate his idea that love is all about *one's own perspective*. That is to say, since the beloved object (the Lady) is 'emptied of all real substance', the lover must project his own ideal of love onto that space. The loved object, the Lady, thus assumes the form of the lover's own ideal; we could say that it is, in fact, *love* that is in the eye of the beholder. In this way, and as Lacan introduced in his *Seminar I*, love is intimately bound up with narcissism, since what one projects onto the beloved object is one's own narcissistic ideal.³ Like the anamorphosis, love is thus a point of illusion, a "point of reversal" (VII.11, 140), within which the lover witnesses his or her own re-projected ideal, and the point at which s/he becomes personally implicated in the scene of love.

What I find most interesting about Lacan's discussion of love here is that it is mediated through another form of love: that of courtly love. This *other* form of love, as I outlined above, is itself characterised by strange and ritualistic behaviour, governed by a number of laws and expressed through literary sentiment. As Lacan admits, the "techniques involved in courtly love are that of holding back" (VII.11, 152), and this is precisely what Lacan is doing with the notion of love itself. Like the Lady, love as a theoretical object – an object of knowledge – is only introduced to us through the door of privation and inaccessibility. And, again like the Lady herself, love is not only inaccessible to us, it is encased within an 'artificial' and 'cunning' organisation of the signifier – of myth, tradition, poetry and verse.

The connection between love and transference re-emerges again most strongly in his Seminar of 1960-61, unsurprisingly, in his *Seminar on Transference*. In this Seminar, not only is the concept of love encased within a wider discussion of the transference, a series of literary and mythic texts are employed in order to discuss love. For example, in the very first lecture, Lacan introduces his *own* myth of love: of a hand that stretches towards a fire, at the approach of which a flame shoots forth, causing the hand to alight. For Lacan, this spontaneous phenomenon is a rare occasion, although entirely unpreventable. Lacan returns

³ As Lacan tells us, "the element of idealising exaltation that is expressly sought out in the ideology of courtly love is fundamentally narcissistic in character" (VII.11, 151).

to this myth several times throughout the course of this Seminar, using the image of the flame to signal the kind of ‘spontaneous combustion’ that is, as he understands it, the experience of love. He writes: ‘It is a complete miracle and is, in effect, the ideal image of a phenomenon imagined as being that of love’ (VIII.27, 4).⁴

Lacan also draws on a number of other myths or stories in this Seminar in order to indicate his idea of love. The most prominent of which is his reading of Plato’s *Symposium*. Indeed, practically the entire first half of this *Seminar on Transference* is dedicated to a detailed reading of the *Symposium*, which, Lacan tells us, is a “text about love” (VIII.2, 2), and can be read as the first example of analytic transference (VIII.1, 11).⁵ Briefly, in the *Seminar on Transference*, Lacan rewrites the analytic relation as follows: the analysand is the lover, or *erastes* – s/he who suffers from the feeling of lack; the analyst is the beloved, or *eremenos* – s/he who is presumed, by the analysand, to be in possession of the ‘thing’ that will ‘fill up’ the analysand, thus making them complete.

The *Symposium*, written by Plato in 360 B.C., is about a drinking party, in which a group of distinguished men gather to discuss the nature of love. Set in the tragedian poet Agathon’s house, the text takes the form of “a succession of paeans about love” (VIII.8, 4), both serious and satirical. While the text itself presents eight central figures, or speakers,⁶ Lacan focuses his discussion on the later part of the *Symposium*, where Socrates and Alcibiades take up the discussion. Early on in this Seminar, Lacan announces that Socrates operates as an ideal model of the analyst in this setting. Socrates, famously, announces in the *Symposium* that he knows nothing except how to recognise love: “Socrates claims to know nothing, except to be able to recognise what love is and, he tells us... to recognise infallibly, wherever he encounters them, where the lover is and where the beloved” (VIII.1, 4). Lacan, for his part, associates himself with Socrates: “As regards loving and knowing what it is to love, I must all the same, like Socrates, be able to testify on my own behalf that I know something about it” (VIII.1, 11). Alcibiades, on the other hand, is identified as the analysand, the figure of lack.

⁴ This Lacanian myth returns several years later, for the last time, in his *Seminar on Anxiety* (1962-63).

⁵ Lacan goes on, in the second Seminar of this series, to say that we can treat the *Symposium* as a “sort of account of psychoanalytic sessions” (VIII.2, 5).

⁶ In order of speakers: Apollodorus, Phaedrus, Pausanias, Eryximachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates, Alcibiades.

However, despite Socrates' claim to knowledge of love, when it comes time for him to speak, he does something curious: he speaks mainly through the voice of Diotima.⁷ That is to say Socrates, in speaking of love, *splits* his discourse in two, speaking mainly from a position that is separate from himself, a position that is not his own.⁸ Indeed, Lacan notes that Socrates' most profound ruminations on love are spoken through Diotima, which could be seen as somewhat odd considering, as we know, Socrates professes to be something of an expert on love. Why then, asks Lacan, does Socrates hand over his discourse to Diotima? Lacan tells us that the Socratic discourse, which is the discourse of the episteme, conceives of knowledge as self-transparent. However, this self-transparency reaches its own limit when the object of knowledge is love. Love, for Lacan, involves a knowledge that is excluded from itself, a knowledge that is constituted as unconscious. This certain knowledge of love eclipses the subject in order to subsist within an unconscious chain of signification. In this way, argues Lacan, there is a part of the knowledge of love that is fundamentally irreducible to understanding, something that will always escape the subject (VIII.8, 9). Lacan comes to the formulation, then, that when it is a question of the discourse of love, there will always be some knowledge that will escape. That is to say, we "cannot speak about [love] except by remaining in the zone of the 'he did not know' (VIII.9, 6).

Further in the *Seminar on Transference*, Lacan offers yet another myth, or image, of love. This time, he refers to it as the *agalma*: from the old Greek *agallo*, meaning *to adorn*, which Lacan interprets as a "precious object, a jewel, something which is inside" (VIII.10, 3). Lacan tells us that the notion of the *agalma* is introduced by Alcibiades, in his paean to love, when he claims that, in talking about love, one should not praise *love as such, but the other person*. Since the lover occupies the position of s/he-who-is-lacking, their desire is activated by that which they believe, or more accurately, *fantasise*, the beloved to possess. That is to say, the lover, in the position of lack, detects something in the beloved person which, they suppose, will make them whole, that will have the ability to heal their suffering. This 'something', believed to exist in the other, is precisely the *agalma*: the precious object imagined to be in

⁷ Diotima of Mantinea was a Greek Priestess and teacher of Socrates. Through Diotima, Socrates recounts a myth of the birth of love: love, in Greek mythology, is the child of Poros and Penia. Poros, the male, means expedient, clever, resourceful. Penia, the woman, means poverty, or more accurately, says Lacan, indicates a state of destitution that goes beyond poverty. At the feast of Aphrodite, Poros, drunk, falls asleep. Penia, destitute as she is, is left outside the feast, waiting for the moment Poros falls asleep. At this point, she enters the feast and gets pregnant to the sleeping Poros. The child to whom she gives birth is Love. It is upon this tale that Lacan constructs his mandate that 'love is to give what one does not have to someone who does not want it'.

⁸ This subjective splitting is referred to by Lacan as a *spaltung*, a term which echoes Aristophanes' formulation of love as a perfect circle, made up of the two subjects in the love relation. Lacan's term *spaltung*, clearly borrowed from Freud, implies a kind of splitting in two, or the division of this complete and round being.

the possession of the beloved. It is this object, Imaginary though it is, that the lover desires for, according to Lacan, it is believed to have the power to make them complete.

Lacan's next discussion on love appears in his *Seminar XX: Encore (1972-73)*, generally regarded as his most significant work on love, knowledge, and feminine sexuality. In this Seminar, Lacan tells us that what is involved in love – or more accurately – what we *think* is involved in love, is about 'making One' (XX.1, 5). That is, love is a desire to make One of two partners; as we so often hear of people in love: 'we are but One' (XX.3, 47). This ideal of the One, Lacan says, has been around for a long time – "people have been talking about nothing but the One for a long time" (XX.1, 5).⁹ From the beginning of this Seminar, Lacan places no value with this notion, except for what it might teach us about the Imaginary dimension of love. For Lacan, the myth of the One is a confusion, a deception, and a blindness; indeed, in saying that 'love is blind', we might say that what it blinds us to is not (as is popularly thought) the flaws of the beloved, but rather the fact that two will never be One. As Lacan tells us: "Everyone knows, of course, that two have never become one, but nevertheless 'we are but One'. The idea of love begins with that" (XX.3, 47). Or further: "People have been talking about nothing but the One for a long time. 'There's such a thing as One'. I based my discourse last year on that statement, *certainly not in order to contribute to this earliest of confusions*" (XX.1, 5; emphasis mine).

But, if love is nothing but this state of confusion or deception, aimed at making One (when One can never be made), why does this myth endure? And not only in our own time, but for centuries? For Lacan, love is there to make up for the fact that, between men and women, there can be no sexual relationship (*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*). By this, Lacan means that the relation between the masculine sexual position and the feminine sexual position is fundamentally impossible. That is, there is no direct, unmediated relation between the male sexual position and the female, because the Other (as signifier) will always be present between them as a third party. According to Lacan: "Between male and female human beings there is no such thing as an instinctive relationship because all sexuality is marked by the signifier" (qtd. in Allouch 2007, 88). As a result, says Lacan, "it will forever be impossible to write... the sexual relationship" (XX.3, 35).¹⁰

⁹ Compare, for example, Lacan's discussion of the history of the One in philosophy in his *Seminar on Identification*, which I discussed in Chapter 3.

¹⁰ For Lacan, there is no difference between what we understand to be heterosexual relations and homosexual relations. As long as one's access to *jouissance* is formulated by sexuation, one enjoys 'like a man' since one

What makes up for this fundamental impossibility of the relation between sexes is, for Lacan, love: “We must articulate what makes up for (*supplée au*) the sexual relationship *qua* non-existent. It is clear that, in everything that approaches it, language merely manifests its inadequacy. What makes up for the sexual relationship is, quite precisely, love” (XX.4, 45). Love, then, is an illusion, a fantasy of the One, which functions in order for us to believe that a harmonious relation between sexual partners can exist, when there is so much evidence to the contrary. Furthermore, because the fantasy of the One will only ever be a “mirage of the One you believe yourself to be” (XX.3, 47), that is to say, a narcissistic relation,¹¹ the beloved object is, from the outset, doomed to failure. This is why, Lacan concludes, “love is impossible and the sexual relation drops into the abyss of nonsense” (XX.6, 87).

What is most striking about the discussion of love here, beside the fact that it is mediated through yet another myth (the myth of the One), is the fact that it is associated with a position of *ignorance*. Love, for Lacan, does not know what it is, namely, nothing more than the impossible desire to be One. In Lacan’s words: “Love is impotent, though mutual, because *it is not aware* that it is but the desire to be One” (XX.1, 6; emphasis mine). Indeed, what is interesting about this Seminar, which claims to be about *knowledge*, is the fact that Lacan spends so much of his time talking about *stupidity*.¹² And it is, moreover, *love* itself that is associated with stupidity. To return, with addition, to a statement I quoted earlier:

...what I say of love is assuredly that one cannot speak about it. ‘Talk to me of love’ – what a lark! I spoke of the love letter (*la lettre d’amour*), of the declaration of love – not the same thing as the word of love (*la parole d’amour*). I think it is clear, even if you didn’t formulate it to yourselves, that in that first seminar I spoke of stupidity. (XX.1, 12)

will always reduce one’s partner to the *objet petit a*. As Bruce Fink explains: “I would like to suggest that we try to understand ‘phallic’ as ‘fallible’, to hear the fallibility in the phallus. Phallic *jouissance* is the *jouissance* that fails us, that disappoints us. ... Why? Because it reduces our partner, as Other, to what Lacan refers to as *objet a*, that partial object that serves as the cause of desire. ... To enjoy in this way, reducing one’s partner to *objet a*, is to enjoy like a man – that is, in the sense of someone characterized by masculine structure. Lacan even makes a pun here, saying that this kind of *jouissance* is ‘homosexual’, spelling it with two *m*’s, *homme* being the term for man in French. Regardless of whether one is male or female (those are the biological terms), and regardless of whether one’s partner is male or female, to enjoy in this way is to enjoy like a man” (2002, 37).

¹¹ As Lacan writes further on, in “A Love Letter”: “One sees in one’s partner what one props oneself up on, what one is propped up by narcissistically” (XX.6, 87).

¹² Dany Nobus and Malcolm Quinn, in their book, *Knowing Nothing, Staying Stupid*, associate this position of ignorance, or rather the ‘fall in knowledge’, with the dimension of the unconscious. As they write: “The unconscious is not *the* knowledge, the secret undercurrent of discourse, but *a* knowledge, the intractable Other of knowledge itself” (2005, 3). This is why love, like (or as) transference, is a mode of delusion which, despite itself, has the ability to open the door to the unconscious.

For Lacan, the dimension of stupidity is that which “doesn’t go far”, that which “stops short” (XX.3, 27). Like Lacan’s discussion of love in *Ethics*, which was marked by a *holding back*, Lacan’s discussion of love here *stops short*; that is to say, we never feel that we have ‘reached’ an understanding of love. Indeed, to put it bluntly, Lacan’s own discussion of love appears somewhat... *stupid*.

This dimension of Lacan’s own stupidity of love may be located in his constant use of slogans when talking about love. Indeed, *Seminar XX* is littered with a number of ‘love slogans’. I am thinking, for example of such statements as: “The *jouissance* of the Other is not a sign of love” (XX.1, 2); “Love... constitutes a sign and is always mutual” (XX.1, 4); “love is what makes up for the absence of the sexual relation” (XX.4, 45); and “love is a sign” (XX.2, 17). One may even extend beyond this particular Seminar, and note the way that Lacan has taken this billboard approach to love in a number of other Seminars. For example, “love is to give what one does not have to someone who doesn’t want it” (XI.18, 231); and “only love allows *jouissance* to yield to desire” (X.8, 3). Most, if not all, of these statements appear as proclamations which go against our natural experience of love. That is, they induce a response, not of knowledge of love, but rather, of non-knowledge – precisely: stupidity.

That is to say, while such slogans seem to suggest a straight-forward, simplicity of love, or the discussion of love, they also, at the same time, appear as somewhat *empty* statements. What are we to make of this? On the one hand, as we have seen above, all of Lacan’s meditations of love are filtered through discussions of poetry, myth and fiction. At the same time, he is intent on producing bite-sized statements on the nature of love. To me, all of this emphasises the *writtenness* of love; it appears very much in the tradition of writing, or, quite literally ‘before our eyes’ as that which is written. Indeed, Lacan himself came close to admitting this in a speech to the *Scuola Freudiana* in Italy in 1974, where he told his audience:

It is only with an analysis that one realises how sex comes to be embodied in this speaking being – but one thing in any case is excluded, and that is that the connection between one sexual being and another of the opposite sex can never be written... can never be written in any way that could give any logical substance to this connection. And it is because of this that love is only written thanks to a burgeoning, a proliferation, of detours, of quibbling, of late night meditations, of madness (why not say it?) that form such an important part of everyone’s life. (qtd. in Allouch, 2007, 88)

Or, similarly, as Roberto Harari explains:

The forms, manners and modalities whereby love arises and is established in the subject are inseparable from a certain discourse. *Love indicates culture, history, and hence signifiers*. As a phenomenon, no matter how spontaneous it might seem and although it claims to be a sort of emanation from the inside blossoming in the most intimate part of the subject, love is a fact of the signifier and is made up of signifiers. (2001, 149; emphasis mine)

For me, all of this serves to cover over the fact that *there is no theory of love*. Or perhaps, better, points us in the direction to discover for ourselves that there is no theory of love. As Allouch has pointed out: “Lacan was very careful not to produce a theory of love. This abstention is thus a part, almost one of the essential traits, of Lacan Love... [T]herefore, with Lacan, it is not a theory of love but rather an approach to love” (2007, 81-82). Indeed, through each of Lacan’s meditations on love, we are led to the understanding that love is that which covers over, or masks, an absence. In the case of the sexual relation, which can never be written, love – as that which produces an overabundance of writing – is what tries to make up for this absence. Love is what attempts to *supplement* the fact that, between two sexual partners, there is an impossible and irreducible gap. Or, love, in its guise as the agalma, makes us believe that there is something there, in the other, which can fill our own inherent lack. In all cases though, love falls short of its promise: to make us One, to make us whole, to lead us to full knowledge. However, in its very failure, what love aims for and what it cannot reach, it has the ability to reveal the very nature of our own desire, our own constitutive lack. As Rose-Paule Vinciguerra has suggested, “it is probably this failure that makes [love] so enthralling, for... it explores the confines of the impossible” (1999). It is this process, I believe, that is precisely what we find in all of Lacan’s formulations of love from the very outset. It is as if he is directing us to the knowledge that, like love itself, any discussion of the phenomenon is doomed to failure. It is perhaps for this very reason that, in the mode of tragedy, we are all condemned to be fools for love.

Reconciliation as Love

In what follows, I attempt to read discourses of reconciliation in *River Queen* (dir. Vincent Ward, 2005) through Lacan’s approach to love.¹³ This is not to ‘force the hand’ of

¹³ It could be argued that, between Lacan and political theories of reconciliation, we are dealing with different conceptions of love. On one hand, Lacan’s concept of love is based on love-as-*Eros*: the sexual, erotic dimension of human love. On the other, political theories of love-as-reconciliation emphasise the Christian notion of *Agape*: love as charity, or care for one’s fellow individuals. However, for Lacan, the different expressions of love (Platonic *Eros* and Christian *Agape*) operate as reconstructions of the same phenomenon,

reconciliation theories; love is already a popular trope among discourses of reconciliation that emphasise an emotional or affective approach (Gaita 2002; Hutchison and Bleiker 2008; Lu 2008; Lund 2003; O’Sullivan 2005; Prager 2008; Ure 2007, 2008); as Michael Ure asserts, “the recent emergence of the idea and practice of political reconciliation has brought renewed attention to the place of ... love in public life” (2007, 56).¹⁴ The presence of love within reconciliation discourses has been partly attributed to the dominance that South Africa has played in forming many contemporary ideas about reconciliation, particularly the Christian moral structure that underpinned the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Ure 2007). As Chairman of the TRC, ex-Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu was instrumental in introducing Christian precepts such as love, mercy and forgiveness into the South African process of reconciliation; these notions have also played a central role in thinking about reconciliation in many other national-political contexts (see Derrida 2001; Gaita 2002; Griswold 2007; Ure 2007, 2008). As Ure writes: “It has been widely noted that both theorists and practitioners of reconciliation often conceive it as a secular politics that is deeply marked by the legacy of Roman Christianity. This is clearly evident in the close identification of reconciliation with the Christian ethic of love and forgiveness” (2008, 286).¹⁵

This is a theme that is felt most strongly in the film *River Queen*. Here, love is offered as the vehicle through which New Zealand, as a nation, might realise the ideal implicit (but so far impossible) in the Treaty, allowing the settler to forget, or work through, the guilt of the past, ask, and accept, forgiveness from Māori, and move on into the future as an ideal decolonised nation. Through love, the film suggests, Māori and Pākehā may experience their ‘common humanity’, and thus overcome the historic rifts caused during the New Zealand Wars. Set in 1860s New Zealand, the film focuses on the story of Sarah O’Brien, a recent settler and

originating in the subject’s pre-Oedipal narcissistic choice of love object, and grounded in deception, ignorance and the Imaginary (Martínez-Ramos 2009, 162).

¹⁴ However, as Gibney et al. have argued, we should not reduce our understanding of reconciliation to merely a psychological state at the expense of political, social and economic understandings (2008). In light of this, it is not my intention to suggest that other – social, political, material – considerations of reconciliation are less important, merely that my approach is firmly within the psychological field, which should exist *alongside* (not instead of) other approaches.

¹⁵ Similarly, Raimond Gaita argues that it is *love* that is instrumental in acknowledging our “common humanity”, an acknowledgement that is fundamental to the process of reconciliation (2002, xvii). He writes: “The individuality that is basic to respect for a human being as such is the kind constituted by attachments, deeper and stronger than sympathy, most of which are forms of love” (ibid, xix). While Gaita acknowledges that “it is our religious tradition that has spoken most simply (and perhaps most deeply)” about love, he believes that the concept can stand apart from the Christian tradition. That is to say, as Gaita conceives it, love helps us to understand what he calls the “preciousness” of human beings, which in turn helps us to acknowledge our responsibility for the other – a crucial component in reconciliation. Gaita argues that, in most forms, love is tied to what is good, and thus must be seen as a positive and productive component of decolonisation.

daughter of an Irish surgeon posted to “the furthest military outpost” on the Whanganui River. After falling pregnant to Tommy, a Māori man, Sarah gives birth to her ‘half-caste’ son, Boy. At the age of seven, however, Boy is kidnapped by his Māori grandfather, Old Rangi, as *utu* for an act of trespass on sacred land. Over the course of seven years, Sarah searches the length of the Whanganui River, looking for signs of him. Lured by the possibility of seeing her son, Sarah (now a surgeon in her own right) goes to the village of ailing Māori chief, Te Kai Pō, where she finds herself drawn to a different way of life, and increasingly attached to Boy’s uncle, Wiremu. Torn between her love for Wiremu and Boy, and her own attachments to the European world, Sarah must forge her own future based on the decision she makes.

Signs of love proliferate in the film, and are explicitly linked to the theme of reconciliation. Structurally, the film progresses from an implied or latent space of pre-Symbolic unity (which is never present at such in the film, only suggested), to one of separation, which is reconciled through love (as a return to the previously unrepresented space of wholeness or unity). In the moments prior to the diegetic beginning, the film presents three, overlapping, scenes, each of which refers back to this prior, ideal state of unity. In the first, we see Sarah, facing away from the camera and looking into the ocean, flinging pages of her diary into the wind.



Figure 17: Sarah O'Brien throwing pages of her diary into the ocean in River Queen

She says: “All those times I were so sad, I thought I might despair.” While we do not yet know the source of her sadness, she goes on to say that her only friend, Doyle, told her to write down her thoughts, as a way of relieving them. “The point of it being”, she says, “you don’t feel yourself alone”. Indeed, the entire narrative may be read as the dramatic re-enactment of pages from her diary from a later point in time, a story which is intended to relieve her pain and draw her closer to another.

In the second pre-diegetic scene, Sarah and her father perform an abortion on a Māori woman, who has been shot by a British bullet. The operation is intended to save the woman’s life, and Sarah’s father takes the opportunity to teach his daughter:

Father: See, the thing is, a bullet makes a small hole going in, and a bigger hole going out. Do you see that?

Sarah: Aye. They say it hurts forever. Is that true dad?

Father: Hold the wound open with the spoon, and I’ll clean it out. Good girl.

Sarah: I know you learned from horses, dad, but be gentle. She’s in pain.

Father: Bring her in. Rotten lice is a sure way to make a woman bleed.

Sarah: Will she die if you don’t abort her baby?

Father: Those stupid Māoris are always getting themselves shot.

Sarah: They don’t go around shooting themselves, da.

Here, the image of perfect unity and original wholeness, that between a mother and (unborn) child, is destroyed, terminated. Sarah’s voice registers the pain of the separation that will be felt many times over by the mother should she recover: “*They say it hurts forever*”. At a wider level, the fact that the bullet is British indicates the separation between Māori and Pākehā, and introduces the scene of the New Zealand Wars to follow.

In the third pre-diegetic scene, hand-written pages (from Sarah’s diary) float just under the surface of water. The ink from the pen begins to lift off the pages, moving and curling in the water as the pages disappear beneath. Overlaid with these visuals, the film’s opening credits take shape, as though written in ink and lifted directly from the same diary pages. The ink appears as blood-red and, in fact, imitates precisely the appearance of blood in water, a connection strengthened by the dialogue between Sarah and her father as they operate on the woman. Separation is literalised in the image of ink lifting off the page, a bond that is – in the

most prosaic sense – considered unbreakable. The image also suggests a loss, of words, history, meaning, a loss that is, as we shall see, recovered in the final scenes.



Figure 18: Opening credits of *River Queen*

The introductory theme of separation, and suggestion of a prior state of wholeness, is carried into the opening scene of the film. We are introduced to the frontier family, Sarah, her father, her sister, and Private Doyle. The question remains unanswered: where is Sarah's mother? There is no mention of what became of her – did she choose to remain in Ireland, or perhaps she has died in the new land, as a result of the War, of sickness, or something else entirely? The point is, Sarah is a motherless child. Not only does this rhyme with the pre-diegetic scene of abortion, it highlights the separation between Sarah and her *mother* country, Ireland. For Sarah, the primary bond between self and country, like child and mother, has been broken. This is a separation that she must seek to overcome during the course of the film, and find a way to regain this original sense of unity.

Yet another manifestation of this theme is presented only a few moments later, as we see Sarah and her new-born child, Boy. The first shot of the two has them folded together, face to face, forming a kind of wholeness or self-completion reminiscent of Aristotle's whole beings. The viewer is distanced from the image of mother and child by an opaque cloth, suggesting

that the ‘Empire of Two’ is complete in and of itself, warding off any kind of intervention by another. As Sarah’s voice-over tells us, “with Boy there, I knew my place in the world, and for the next six years, him and I were happy, *inseparable*”. Prior to Boy’s kidnapping, however, the two are seen playing a game of hide and seek, as though literally playing out the narrative to follow, as well as the theme of separation/reconciliation. As Sarah and Boy play this game in the riverside undergrowth, the light possesses a golden, refracted quality indicative of a (mythical) ideal state of unity, prior to the separation.

From the beginning, then, the film repeatedly offers us images of separation, in which what was once One, or whole, has been destroyed, divided into two. From here, the entire narrative trajectory is directed towards the reconciliation of the two parts, in their various forms. At the most overt level, of course, Sarah’s quest is to be reconciled with her kidnapped son. Searching for seven years up and down the river, and moving between the Māori and British sides, Sarah is finally reunited with her Boy, who is living with Te Kai Pō and his followers. While the reconciliation itself is strangely undramatic, we may consider the *true* point of reconciliation to take place later in the film, when Sarah receives her *moko* from Boy. It is at this point when Sarah, Boy and Wiremu are reunited emotionally and symbolically, that they truly become a family unit. While the receiving of the *moko* by a Pākehā character is a common trope in films about Pākehā identity, a signifier of biculturalism, what is interesting here is that neither Boy nor Wiremu have one. However, as Bruce Babington has pointed out, Te Kai Pō *does* have one, and “this family distribution of tattoos is, in its lack, a sign of Māori movement towards European culture, and, in its presence, with Sarah, of Pākehā movement towards Māori” (2007, 9). Thus, as Babington has argued, while Sarah’s *moko* is a sign of unity with Māori, the *lack* of *moko* for Wiremu and Boy signal their unity with Pākehā. In this way, the film moves both Māori and Pākehā towards each other, signalling a point of in-betweenness, in which both may be united as One.

The reconciliation, through love, of Sarah, Wiremu and Boy has symbolic implications for the nation itself. Sarah’s rationale for receiving a *moko* is that, “we need to be a family”.¹⁶

¹⁶ According to Michael King, in Māori culture (as in any culture) the reasons people choose to become tattooed are complex, and difficult to isolate. However, King identifies several common features that can account for why Māori choose to take *moko*. Pre-European *moko*, he says, grew out of a social environment in which art, religion, war, foodgathering, lovemaking and death were an integrated part of the fabric of life. The symbols of art found in these *moko* were expressions of all these elements, relating them to one another. Post-European contact, tattooing became an expression of the unity of a threatened minority group. “At the most fundamental level,” King argues, “*moko* was an expression of identity... wearing the *moko* was like having your name written on your face in beautiful writing. We know that people were identified by their *moko*, sometimes... and were able to reproduce it accurately on documents like early land agreements in place of a signature” (1972; part

Employing the common metonymic process whereby the family unit stands in for the national unit, the receiving of the *moko* signals her identification with place and transformation from Irish to an indigenous identity – in which belonging is something that is engraved, not grafted, onto her very being. Her white garments recall a wedding gown, and her ceremonial walk into the river signals both a symbolic marriage to New Zealand – looked upon approvingly by Wiremu (representative of Māori) as he gives his consent – as well as a kind of rebirth/baptism as indigenous to New Zealand. At the exact moment as she is being reborn as a native New Zealander, a British bullet wounds her, further distancing white settler identity from its British Imperial heritage. Sarah moves further towards indigeneity as now she too can claim to be the victim of British colonialism. At the same time, her blood merges with the water, signalling the final act of unification with the new land. Her movement towards indigeneity and reconciliation with Wiremu and Boy suggests that, through love and common birth, all New Zealanders, Māori and Pākehā can find a way to belong here.



Figure 19: River Queen: Sarah and Boy

6). For men, *moko* were a symbol of his standing within the group, evidence of his tribe, rank, accomplishments and masculinity, and was strongly associated with fighting and war. For women, the *moko* was not associated with fighting, but rather a sign of beauty and expression of 'Māoritanga' (the Māori way). The female *moko* was also a mark of adulthood, an indication that women were ready to take on the pain and responsibility of childbirth. In some instances, the female *moko* was a commemoration of a special event, such as the death of a tribal elder or personal achievement (King 1972; part 6).

The film's denouement presents us with the ideal family/national unity *par excellence*. Sarah is seen tending the gardens, ten years older and emanating a sense of inner peace and well-being. A horse-drawn carriage pulls up, and a well-dressed man steps out; we recognise him instantly as Boy. As mother and son embrace, Wiremu looks over briefly, before joining them in the embrace. At this point, the film returns us back to the original, lost state of ideal unity – the mother, son, and father unit – but with a difference. All three, Sarah, Wiremu and Boy, have, in their own way, struggled with forging an identity against the division of Māori and British. Sarah, an Irish woman who flirted with 'crossing over' to the Māori side; Wiremu, a Māori man who, for a time, fought alongside the British; and Boy, a half-caste, pulled between the two. Each character, through their own journey, comes to forge their own, new, identity as a point somewhere in between these two extremes, an oscillation of identity that recalls Geoff Murphy's 1983 film *Utu*. It is the love that is shared between the characters that facilitates this exchange of identity, as each character fantasmatically exchanges one ego-construction for a new, idealised one: precisely, Pākehā as ego-ideal of the nation. As Doyle tells Sarah at one point in the film, it is love that "gives you something to fight for", and which has the ability to heal what was broken; after the pain of the Wars, through the bond of love, Māori and Pākehā will become 'but One'.

In this final scene, there is no diegetic dialogue. Instead, Sarah's voice, from another place and time, speaks to us, the viewer, directly. She says: *That bullet was small going in, and big coming out. Now it is easy to sleep on my old, old wounds. No one would remember, but the scars would last forever.* Her words return us to the very first lines spoken in the film, where her father tells her: *A bullet makes a small hole going in, and a bigger hole going out.* In the film's rhyming of the two scenes, which bookend the action proper, Sarah comes to take the place of the first mother, who loses her baby in the operation. Now, however, this initial scene of loss (abortion) is replaced, laid over, with another scene, one of perfect unity and reconciliation. The film replaces, or comes to fill in this initial loss, with an image of Oneness.

The final scene also returns us to the image of pages in the water. The repetition of the opening images in the final sequence brings us to an awareness that, although we did not know it at the time, the film began at the same point where we have ended. However, what was, at first, understood as an image of loss and separation, is now re-presented as one of fulfilment. That is to say, by the end of the film, we come to retrospectively understand that the entire film, the narrative action we have been following, is in large part a re-enactment

from these same diary pages. What was originally thought to be lost, then, is actually presented to us in positive form, precisely, in the story of the film. Sarah told us at the beginning that she wrote these words down so as ‘not to feel alone’. Sometimes, she says, she would show them to Doyle, but often he would not read them. However, by the end of the film, we realise that it is precisely we, the viewer, who has borne witness to her story; far from being lost, the story in fact is reconciled with her absent other (the viewer) so that it, too, becomes *our* story. This merging, this becoming-one of her story with our own, is signalled grammatically in the very final lines of the film, where she says: “The point of it being, you don’t feel yourself alone, and having written it down, you might better understand it, the story of *your* life.”

Love is Written

This somewhat haphazard navigation of the themes of love and reconciliation in the film is by no means accidental. What I have hoped to demonstrate, in jumping from one example to the next and on to another, is the way that the film offers up an *overabundance* of signs of love. In each case, what we may detect is the suggestion of an original state of perfect unity – such as New Zealand prior to the Wars, mother and son prior to the kidnapping – followed by the pain of separation, or loss. In this separation, one experiences the longing for reconciliation with the lost object, a yearning that is fuelled by the love for the (M)other. In the film, it is love that provides the impetus for reconciliation, and the drive to search out that which will, in the end, return you to that earlier state of total completion. The film thus provides a model for national reconciliation, in which Māori and Pākehā merge together as One, negotiate and resolve the differences between them, and acknowledge their common humanity in an ideal state akin to love.

But why, I would like to ask, do we get this almost hysterical proliferation of the themes of love and reconciliation? Why, when we begin to follow this mainstem, do we find it impossible to stop, turn back – suddenly noticing the way that love and reconciliation are everywhere apparent? Or, to put it another way, why is love written everywhere into the film-text? To seek out an explanation, we might return to what Lacan taught us about love. Remember that, for Lacan, love cannot be addressed directly, but is that which produces an abundance of signs – something he reproduces at the level of myth, fiction, as well as the ‘love-slogans’. Thus, love is *written*, and it is written because it must supplement that which

cannot be written, that which is impossible to write: the lack, or impossibility, of relations between partners.

Following Lacan, then, we could suggest that these signs of love in the film are, in fact, there to supplement, or cover over, an impossible relation. This relation, of course, is that between Māori and Pākehā in the film. The gap between Māori and Pākehā that has existed (at least) since the breaches of the Treaty, and which remains more than evident today, is over-written with the settler fantasy of love. Through the fantasy of love, the settler is able to put to rest the actions of our colonial ancestors, become re-united with a lost sense of identity, and to heal the pain of separation between Māori and Pākehā. In this fantasy, forgiveness has been granted, Māori and Pākehā are reunited as One, and thus may move forward into the future with all historic wounds healed; as Sarah tells us in the final scene, “now it is easy to sleep on my old, old wounds”. Through the fantasy of love, the settler might imagine a return to a perfect state, prior to the trauma of separation and betrayal.

Ultimately, however, this fantasy, like the fact of stupidity itself, stops short. In fact, in the film, all forms of writing are shown to be incomplete, to run out. Farthest along the River, for example, is where the ‘maps run out’. The *moko*, another form of writing, is intended to signify unity with Wiremu and Boy, but both these characters *lack* a *moko* themselves. And, likewise, as I have suggested, the film itself, in its attempts at Symbolic or fantasised reconciliation, stops short of its mark (*River Queen* has, in fact, gone down in New Zealand cinematic history as the most expensive failure of all time [Byrnes 2006]). Thus, like love itself, the film’s ‘falling short’ might reveal to us the nature of its construction, the kind of settler desire that is given shape in this fantasy of love. This desire, I would like to suggest, like the desire of the lover, is of fullness or completion. The Pākehā, experiencing an inherent lack, an incompleteness of identity, seeks out the indigenous Other as that which they imagine will provide them with a desired sense of full identity. This will, accordingly, offer the settler something that we imagine ourselves to lack, or perhaps to have lost: a legitimate presence in New Zealand. The Māori, positioned as the beloved, thus assumes the projected narcissistic ideal of the settler: offered up as that which will, ultimately, return us to a putative state of wholeness, where we feel united with the new land, at One with Aotearoa New Zealand.

History as Anamorphosis

If *River Queen* presents us with an image of reconciliation from the settler's own (anamorphic) perspective, it also, finally, presents us with its own narcissistic view of history itself. Although I did not mention it in my examples above, one of the historic bases for the film is the figure of Riwha Titokowaru, who becomes Te Kai Pō in the film. Titokowaru is renowned for his campaign against the British in the latter part of the New Zealand Wars, and, as Belich remarks, is "perhaps the greatest war leader either of New Zealand's peoples has ever produced" (1989, 2). The figure of Titokowaru is, however, shrouded in myth, speculation and mystery. On the eve of the great battle between Titokowaru's people and the British, dramatized by the film, Titokowaru and his followers disappeared. Said to be on the brink of victory, historians have, for generations, been mystified by this strange disappearance.¹⁷

The film provides us with its own interpretation. Throughout the film, as Chief Te Kai Pō is struck with illness, he experiences a prophetic dream (one that is shared by Sarah). In it, Te Kai Pō sees fragments of images: blood in the water; some of women from the *iwi* skipping; and himself making love to an unknown woman. As his allies show up to assist in his campaign, he sees this dream-woman: the wife of another chief. As he tells Wiremu, "my dream foretold of this woman, she is our fate". As prophesised, Te Kai Pō makes love to the woman, his face assuming an odd visage, as though he is both inside the dream and outside it. Following the diegetic love-making sequence, and as the allied forces prepare to leave, Wiremu scorns Te Kai Pō's actions, telling him, "we could have won this day". Te Kai Pō replies: "The battle? Yes. But winning the war? Never... We adapt or we die". Following this, Sarah explains the chain of events. In the only other moment of extra-diegetic narration (besides the opening and closing sequences), Sarah tells us: "Did his desire for the comfort of

¹⁷ James Cowan was the first to venture a theory in his 1923 publication, *The New Zealand Wars*. This theory was later adopted and adapted by James Belich, in his history of Titokowaru (generally considered to be the most authoritative version). This is how Belich puts it: "What happened at Tauranga Ika? Why did the great Titokowaru, at the peak of his powers, abandon his strongest pa and the prospect of almost certain victory? Some Ngarauru and Ngati Ruanui elders, now living, may know, but they are not telling, and their reticence is in itself instructive. We are left with the conventional historian's tools of probability, shreds of evidence, and speculation.... The least unlikely explanation is that of Kimble Bent. Titokowaru, Bent told James Cowan, 'Was detected in a liaison with another man's wife. This misdemeanour was, in Māori eyes, fatal to his prestige as an Ariki [high chief] and war-leader. He had trampled on his tapu [sacredness], and his Hauhau angel, who had so long successfully guided his fortunes, now deserted him. His run of luck had turned. A council of the people was held to discuss the cause celebre, and many an angry speech was made. Some of the chiefs went so far as to threaten Titokowaru with death. At length a chieftainness of considerable influence rose and quelled the storm of violent words. She appealed to the aggrieved husband's people not to attempt Titoko's life; but urged that the garrison should leave the pā – it would be disastrous to make a stand there after their Tohunga, their spiritual head and war-leader, had lost his mana-tapu. This met with the general approval, and on the night of the attack the people packed their few belongings on their backs and struck quickly into the forest'. (1989, 242-4)

women get the better of him, or did his dream warn him that he must provoke his people into retreat, and that way avoid a river of blood?" Of course, it is not simply the fact of his lust, but, as the film suggests, that Te Kai Pō could foresee the future of New Zealand: that Māori may win this battle, and the next, but eventually, Pākehā would be the victors.

This is the one anamorphic spot within the film text, and directs us towards an understanding of the film's perspective. Rather than remaining within its traditional, teleological development of history, at this one point, the film *reverses* its perspective. That is to say, while the viewer, for the most part, looks back from the present onto the past, at this moment in the film, the past looks forward, to us in the present. As with Lacan's interpretation of the anamorphosis, it is within this reversal of the film's gaze that we, as viewers, become personally implicated in the film-text. In so doing, the film presents to us, the viewer, a fantasised resolution of an historical trauma: the mystery of Titokowaru on the eve of the great battle. In its very structure of separation/reconciliation, then, the film not only provides the viewer/nation with a model of New Zealand identity and recovery from trauma, it also reconciles history with myth, filling in the gap in historic knowledge. However, like its model of national reconciliation, which is a narcissistic projection of the settler ideal, history itself is subject to the same distortion: twisting the past in order that it reveal to us, the settler, our own, concealed desires.

River Queen presents an image of New Zealand in which the two bicultural partners of the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori and Pākehā, return to a prior state of unity through love. Love, the film suggests, is the route through which we can heal what has been broken, and reconcile what has become estranged. It thus operates as a model for contemporary processes of political reconciliation, in which both Māori and Pākehā attempt to realise the promise inherent in the Treaty. Despite its remove from the politics of New Zealand decolonisation, Lacan's approach to love may offer us an insight into how reconciliation is imagined by the settler, which is to say, how it operates at the level of fantasy. As *River Queen* reveals, the narrative of reconciliation-as-love betrays a narcissistic reflection of the settler, who attempts to project an image of the Māori as their own ideal ego. Through a relation that mimics the phenomenon of love, the settler may come to imaginatively possess the agalma of New Zealand identity, that legitimacy of belonging that continues to elude the Pākehā. However, if love exists in order to mask a fundamental impossibility of relations, then the model of reconciliation presented in this film must necessarily stop short. In the end, *River Queen* falls back into the kind of relation to the past displayed by the early Hayward films, in which the

Real pain of colonisation is bypassed in favour of an imaginary, yet only ever temporary, fantasy of national unity.

Conclusion:

Homecoming

Analysis Interminable

“Is there such a thing as a natural end to analysis?”

(Sigmund Freud “Analysis Terminable and Interminable”, 219)

We have arrived at the conclusion but, it seems, very few conclusions can truly be made. If a conclusion is defined by its act of closure, of finishing, termination, or bringing forth of a final outcome, then this study must necessarily be without a conclusion. At this point, some readers may question the future direction for the Pākehā subject: how might one achieve a more stable identity? How can we alter this anxious relationship to history? How might we go about overcoming the originary trauma of colonisation? How might we mend this gap between Māori and Pākehā? Such questions would, however, be misdirected. To even attempt such a transformation would be to fall back into the realm of ego psychology, a fundamental ‘stupidity’ (to use Lacan’s favoured description of it), in which the patient is invited to reintegrate into the Symbolic space and reconstruct their own ‘life narrative’, with all elements firmly in place. This desire for closure and full knowledge achieves nothing except a retreat into the safety of the ‘imaginarisation’ of the ego, and runs counter to the psychoanalytic praxis in which I have been operating.

The structure of my study has been marked by repetition; as I signalled in my opening chapter, each analysis appears to return to the same place. Despite the fact that I began each analysis with a different concept, pathology or affect, the path designated by each lead me to the same (or at least, a similar) end. What we encounter is the fundamental lack, or impossibility of the settler subject, who is condemned (fated) to imagine themselves retrospectively in order to cover over the originary trauma of colonisation. For some critics, this will be seen as evidence of what is understood as the reductiveness of psychoanalytic critique – the ‘cookie cutter’ approach – in which a psychoanalytic framework is overlaid upon the text in order to achieve the same range of interpretations. Against this, I would like

to suggest a *symptomatic* reading of my own text; that is, to read my own discourse symptomatically, against itself, through the experience of Lacanian psychoanalysis. This may allow us to traverse the more obvious counterarguments mentioned above, and attend to more fundamental questions, such as: Where and how is the Real of colonisation inscribed in my own discourse? And, what compels the repetitive structure of my text?

As it is apparent in all chapters – although most explicit in Chapter 5 – the settler narrative, as a fantasy structure, is characterised by a temporal loop. The impossibility of the colonial trauma is inscribed in the settler narrative as a lack, an empty set or a ‘minus 1’ – that which utterly resists comprehension, knowledge and representation, and thus becomes part of the repressed of the settler subject. Because it is the point of the Real for the settler narrative, I have suggested, we cannot help but come back to it – whether this return is an unconscious attempt to master this traumatic kernel of history, or settle the desire for legitimacy, it appears that the act of colonisation is the un-representable location to which the settler narrative continuously returns. However, and as psychoanalysis teaches us, a traumatic event is never in and of itself traumatic *as such*. As Žižek explains, “it only becomes a trauma retroactively, by being ‘secreted’ from the subject’s Symbolic space as its inassimilable point of reference” (1996, 160). Colonisation-as-trauma, then, is in fact registered as an after-effect through narratives of settlement, such as the kind discussed in my film readings.

My own analyses, in this regard, can only be seen as existing within this Symbolic chain of signification. Indeed, discursively, my text enacts the same traumatic structure as the films themselves do. In each case, as I (cannot help but) approach my object through the path of knowledge, I am repeating the same fundamental fantasy, falling back into ego-centric modes of knowledge and cognition, an approach to truth which, as Lacan tells us, will always miss its mark. This is perhaps why my analyses echo the same repetitive structure that underpins the settler narrative. It could be that, in my own approach, I have – like the settler subject – inscribed colonisation as the traumatic kernel *après-coup*; only ever registering the effects of the trauma in my attempt to know it as a specular object of (re)cognition.

In this sense, we could say that my own text – following the path already inscribed by the settler narrative – has in fact *caused* the Real trauma of colonisation. The temporal loop that characterises my own text (and again, we can say the same of the settler narrative), is, in its retrospective, repetitive logic, positioning the *effect before the cause*. This is to say that, in its very attempt to know (to gain mastery over) the Real of Pākehā settlement, in our constant

looking back to colonial-settlement history (precisely, the aim of my own research), we are retroactively positing colonisation as the original trauma – that which lies inaccessible behind the disordered nature of Pākehā identity. This allows us to discern the fateful nature of the settler narrative since it is, by its very nature (and like the Three Witches in Macbeth), producing the cause in its own signifying effects. My own study is, then, testament to the seductiveness of the retrospective fantasy of the settler narrative; continually aiming for the Real while blind to the fact that it is, as I write, inscribed at the level of my own discourse. Like the purloined letter, the Real of colonisation has, all along, been hidden in plain view *within my own text*.

This may also account for the unconscious structure of the settler subject. In this same retroactive logic, it could be said that the settler subject, as subject characterised by lack, instability, and disorder, effectively *causes itself*. Furthermore, we could go one step further and argue that it is precisely this temporal loop that is constitutive for the (settler) subject, which reproduces itself over and over again by attempting to ‘cure’ itself (to ‘get over’ the plight of the Pākehā). From this perspective, we may depart from many psycho-colonial theories and argue not for a ‘therapeutic ethic’ of postcolonialism, in which the language and lessons of psychoanalysis are employed to heal the disordered colonial being. But rather, and as Leela Gandhi has advocated, that we ‘accept the lack’ that is the everyday experience of many colonial beings, settler or colonised, which is to say, we remain open to the radical enigma of our own desires, and let go of the search for a ‘deeper meaning’ of our experience. It means that we could enjoy the repetitive structure of our own narratives, not try to close them down or subject them to formalist approaches to knowledge, no longer seeking out a guarantee of our own existence in the post-colonising nation.

Dany Nobus has argued that psychoanalysis aims not at full and final comprehension, but rather for a “fall in knowledge”. This, he says, introduces us to the dimension of the unconscious: “The unconscious is not *the* knowledge, the secret undercurrent of discourse, but *a* knowledge, the intractable Other of knowledge itself” (2005, 3). “If there is any kind of end (aim, goal) to the psychoanalytic process”, he goes on, “it thus entails the analysand’s acknowledgement of the dimension of not-knowing” (2005, 4). At every moment, then, the psychoanalytic praxis pulls in the opposite direction to what a scholarly text such as mine aims for, namely, the attainment of knowledge. If my own psychoanalytic experience brings me to any kind of conclusion, it is the need to remain aware of the manner in which one comes into knowledge, and how this knowledge itself functions in its Imaginary, Symbolic

and Real capacities. It has been a journey which has charted my own coming into knowledge, my own attempts to suture the cracks of my ignorance, and to reveal, at some level, the fall of the knowledge that props up my own ego. In this way, and as Lacan was at pains to repeat throughout his long career, the unconscious is not to be discovered, somehow, 'beneath' language, or beneath the layers of ego, speech, and the processes of repression. We should not look for truth of the settler subject as somehow hidden in history films, or in other settler narratives. But rather, we should look for truth (*a* truth) on the very surface of these things: in what is concealed, before our very eyes, in the very texts we construct to tell ourselves the story of our lives.

Filmography

Primary Films

Pictures. Dir. Michael Black. Perf. Kevin J. Wilson (Alfred Burton), Peter Vere Jones (Walter Burton), Helen Moulder (Lydia Burton), Elizabeth Coulter (Helen Burton), Terence Bayler (John Rochfort). Pacific Films, 1981.

Rewi's Last Stand. Dir. Rudall Hayward. Perf. Frank Nemo (Dr Wake), Nola Casselli (Cecily Wake), Edmund Finney (Kenneth Gordon), Wightman McCombe (Sir George Grey), Chief Abe (Rewi Maniapoto). Hayward Pictures, 1925.

Rewi's Last Stand [The Last Stand]. Dir. Rudall Hayward. Perf. Ramai Te Miha (Ariana), Leo Pilcher (Robert Beaumont), Stanley Knight (Ben Horton). Frontier Films, 1940.

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