

The Ned Kelly *memory dispositif*, 1930 to 1960: Identity Production

Laura Basu

School of Culture and Communication

In recent years ideas about memory, individual and cultural, have been taken up enthusiastically, both within the academe and popular culture. From Homi Bhabha's 'On global memory'¹ to successful movies thematising crises in personal memory such as Memento, we do appear to be in the midst of a 'memory boom'. Recently, the crucial importance of media and communications has been acknowledged by the field of memory studies. Scholars have in particular begun to analyse the roles played by literature², film³ and television⁴ in memory construction, transmission and circulation. Likewise, memory studies is fortuitously moving away from conceptions of memory as a static object and has begun to examine remembrance in terms of performativity and process.⁵ To better understand how a culture remembers, and how memories are forged by and within cultural products, it is useful to examine how particular cultural memories form, and develop over time across media texts, always involving intricate relationships between past and present.

This article will explore the workings of aspects of a *memory dispositif*, by which Australian bushranger Ned Kelly is invested with certain unstable and shifting meanings between 1930 and 1960, through a network of cultural texts. The term *dispositif* usually designates a constellation of heterogeneous elements within a system. For Foucault, the ensemble can consist of ‘discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid.’⁶ Foucault’s use of the concept, moreover, emphasises ‘the nature of the connection... between these... elements’,⁷ the interplay between which results in specific historical formations producing power structures, knowledge and subjectivity. Deleuze describes the *dispositif* as ‘a tangle, a multilinear ensemble’, again stressing the importance of the lines and traces between any given configuration of elements, ‘like vectors and tensors’.⁸ A *dispositif* is relentlessly transmutable and, crucially, ‘has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent* need.’ It therefore has a ‘dominant strategic function’.⁹ Thinking in terms of *memory dispositifs* allows us to move beyond considering individual texts or media as they relate to cultural memory, to examine not only how conglomerations of various texts, media technologies or genres interact with each other to form, develop and proliferate memories, but also the relationships between these primary discursive texts and other areas of a society or culture. These systems of relations effect memories which, though unstable, fulfil a strategic function at a given moment; power permeates the *dispositif* and, as will be seen, is thoroughly bound up with both knowledge and, most importantly here, identity.

After a brief introduction to the Ned Kelly case, I will focus on a set of *temporal* and *political* relationships that particular groups of texts generate and are enmeshed in, and the identities that they effect, to develop the memory of this bushranger in the period 1930 to ’60. The article will comprise two sections: the first part deals with chapters dedicated to Kelly within the genre of the social or cultural history of Australia, which proliferated during this period. It will describe the relationship of Kelly to the white national identity being manufactured during this phase, its reliance on the articulation of tradition, legend and truth. The second part examines the identities that are retrospectively invested in Kelly himself, specifically by two histories

or biographies of the gang, the relationship of those identities with both the past of the Kelly gang and the presents of the texts’ productions, and the political ramifications of their temporal positioning. As will become evident, the two parts are greatly interrelated; the textual groupings dealt with in each section develop their own relationships with the historical personage of Ned, yet always in conjunction with each other, to develop the Ned Kelly memory *dispositif*. The overarching theme of the article, and the ‘dominant strategic function’ of the *dispositif*, concerns Kelly’s relationship to the production of a white Australian national identity during the period.

NED KELLY, AUSTRALIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE QUEST FOR A WHITE NATIONAL IDENTITY

1.

Ned Kelly was born in 1855 to Irish, working class parents. His father, ‘Red’, was transported for cattle theft, while his mother, Ellen, immigrated with her family. Kelly was part of a large clan, which settled in Victoria as selectors, where its members were in constant conflict with the police. The real trouble started in 1878, when police constable Fitzpatrick accused Ned and members of his family of assaulting him. Ellen Kelly was imprisoned for the offence, on unreliable evidence. To escape arrest, Ned and his brother Dan fled to the bush, where they were joined by Joe Byrne and Steve Hart. The situation deteriorated in October 1878, when the men ambushed and killed three policemen at Stringybark Creek near Mansfield. Now legally declared outlaws, the four men became known as the ‘Kelly gang’. During the following eighteen months, the gang staged two elaborate bank robberies, at Euroa and Jerilderie. Events came to a climax in June 1880 when the Kellys faced a dramatic showdown with police at Glenrowen, where the gang wore its now iconic homemade armour. Ned was captured at this time, and the others were killed. Ned Kelly was put on trial, and hanged on 11 November 1880, at the age of twenty-five.

Kelly remains an icon for Australia, more than 125 years after his execution, and the story has been repeated interminably, in almost every existing medium. The case is thought of as a highly controversial, factually ambiguous and emotionally fraught one. Even recently, Ned Kelly scholars remind us that ‘125 years after Ned’s

death, opinions are usually either black or white. In general terms, the masses see Ned as either a merciless killer who unforgivably chose to take up arms against society, or as a national hero who was the embodiment of the Australian spirit.¹⁰

It was the press from the Australian colonies that laid the foundations for the Kelly memory, while it was reporting on the events as they were taking place. There were heterogeneous voices concerning the Kellys; however, the ability of the press to incorporate all of them amounted to a totalising force, which allowed for Ned to be taken up in a number of different ways but almost all within the boundaries set by the mainstream press. Although the press was generally very anti-Kelly, it set up a binary opposition between forces—those of ‘law and order’ on the one hand and of the Kellys on the other—who were perceived as having many sympathisers linked to the ‘lower orders’. A powerful binary opposition was therefore produced *internally* to the press, and it was this internal dialectic that contributed considerably to the production of an enduring site of memory, fuelled by tension and controversy. The press can therefore almost be seen as its own quasi autonomous *dispositif*, but only due to its ability to cannibalise and incorporate other, disparate, media and voices.

After around 1882, when the furore around a Royal Commission report about the affair had subsided, press interest declined since the events were no longer current. At this time the story was dispersed into various printed matter, plays and, from 1906, into film. The dominant mode of Kelly representation until the 1920s was the police memoir, based in lived experience and first-hand memory, and obviously very anti-Kelly. The most striking feature of all these texts is their hostility towards each other; they ferociously insist upon their own truth and resolutely deny the veracity of those that preceded them. This belligerent insistence upon truth paradoxically fuelled the myth of Ned Kelly, generating the heat, tension and ambiguity that enable the mythological. The system of relations within the *dispositif* at this time thus produced an unexpected consequence—the eruption of the Kelly myth.

11.

Between 1930 and 1960 Ned Kelly was taken up by a multitude of media and genres: Kelly histories and biographies, chapters devoted

to the gang in histories of Australia, at least two films, collections in song books and recordings, juvenile literature and comics, and various newspaper articles. This was also the time in which Ned entered the territory of ‘high culture’, with Douglas Stewart’s verse play (which was also broadcast on the radio), in 1942, and Sidney Nolan’s first series of Kelly paintings, first exhibited in 1948. These products were disseminated against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the recovery from it beginning in the mid ‘30s, the Second World War and its aftermath, leading into the suburbanite 1950s. This period is a significant one for the development of the Kelly memory, which was ‘ideologically’ suited to the times.¹¹

From around 1930 Kelly migrates out of first-hand living memory, although the events remain relatively temporally proximate. Perhaps this temporal positioning helps to explain the dynamic of the memory during this phase, in which pro-Kelly representations begin to proliferate without diminishing the contested constitution of the site. This dynamic is related to a parallel tension concerning the ongoing cultural search for a white national identity. Cultural products from this time demonstrate an increasing confidence in a white Australian identity, rooted in a unique tradition but simultaneously reveal insecurities as to the stability of that identity, due to the relatively short duration of such a tradition.

A great number of Ned Kelly representations of all genres from this period are concerned with the enduring memory of Kelly, his status as Australian legend. Whereas the products from previous phases consisted in immediate memories (memoires, eyewitness accounts) or predicted future memory (predictions or affirmations of legacy), here they begin to discuss Kelly explicitly as part of the Australian tradition and long-term national memory. By 1942 Clive Turnbull is able to assert: ‘Ned Kelly is the best known Australian, our only folk hero... In a community whose vista is still cluttered with the shoddy and... second rate only one figure is larger than life-size... Surely it is a remarkable man who can thus impress himself upon the national consciousness, who in sixty years can pass into legend!’¹² Even explicitly anti-Kelly texts aver the bushranger’s impact upon the national imagination. In a social history published in 1953, Kylie Tennant explains that the gang ‘made the most permanent impression upon the public memory... Today men who know nothing of their country’s history will express admiration in the term “As game as Ned Kelly”...

The Kellys have become the Australian symbol for toughness and cool audacity.¹³ Tennant concludes her section on Kelly with the hope that he may lose his place in the active national memory: ‘The bushranger remains a semi-mythical figure... fading into the forest of tradition, where the modern Australian is quite willing to leave him.’¹⁴

As the above quotation demonstrates, many of the commentaries on Kelly’s position within the national tradition form chapters in social or cultural histories of Australia. During the 1940s, and particularly throughout the post-war 1950s, these histories began to proliferate, and they almost always feature the Kellys. A A Phillips writes in his cultural history: ‘Despite our uneasy shame about him, Ned Kelly... lives. He has a literature as long as your arm... and he pops into vernacular speech as the natural symbol of Ulyssean rebelliousness.’¹⁵

Beginning in the 1890s, even before Federation, a national myth was actively being written, versified and painted into the culture, revolving around the figure of the bushman. Russell Ward, in *The Australian Legend*, describes the bushman of the myth as:

a practical man, rough and ready in his manners... He swears... consistently, gambles heavily... and drinks deeply on occasion... He is usually taciturn... stoical... and sceptical about the value... of intellectual pursuits generally. He believes that jack is not only as good as his master, but... probably a good deal better, and so he is a great ‘knocker’ of eminent people, unless... they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority—especially when... embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and... will stick to his mates through thick and thin.¹⁶

Ward’s history was published in 1958, among a host of other such histories with titles such as *The Australian Tradition* (1958), *Australia: Her Story* (1953) and *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954). These works comment back upon that myth-making process and attempt to locate the social practices, beginning with the white invasion of the colonies, that allowed for the bushman to be adopted so fervently by cultural producers in the previous century. Ward writes: ‘This book attempts to trace the historical origins and development of the Australian legend

or national *mystique*.’¹⁷ The flourishing of the genre of the social history at this time demonstrates an increasing confidence in an Australian culture, necessarily based in a pride in Australian history. Or, perhaps more accurately, shows a *desire* for that type of confidence and pride, at a time when Anglo-protestants were beginning to stop calling Britain ‘home’.

In *The Australian Tradition*, for instance, Phillips coins the phrase ‘the Cultural Cringe’, to define an intense Australian inferiority complex over its culture. He discusses an ABC radio programme in which paired musical performances were broadcast, one by an Australian and one by an overseas musician. A listener would then guess which one was which, the idea being that the listener often guessed wrongly, since the local performer would be no worse than the foreigner. Phillips writes: ‘This unexpected discovery was intended to inspire a... glow of patriotic satisfaction.’ The author later intervenes: ‘the dismaying circumstance is that such a treatment should be necessary, or even possible; that, in any nation, there should be an assumption that the domestic cultural product will be worse than the imported article.’¹⁸ Phillips describes the purpose of his book as ‘the illumination of the evolving personality and... traditions of the Australian community, as reflected in the works of our writers.’¹⁹ Both the ABC broadcast and the Phillips intervention clearly exemplify the dual tendencies of confidence and insecurity in the cultural tradition and its accompanying national identity.

The chapters in these social and cultural histories handling Ned differ from the Kelly histories of previous phases, which were based in first-hand memory. The truth-myth dynamic alluded to earlier is altered accordingly, and this has implications for the ongoing production of white national identity throughout 1930 to ‘60. John Frow writes that ‘textual meaning is carried by formal structures more powerfully than by explicit thematic content;... what texts do and how they are structured have greater force than what they say they are about; and... genre—by which I mean the kinds of talking and writing, of imaging and structured sound—is perhaps the most important of the structures by which texts are organised.’²⁰ I would argue that the genre of the social or cultural history organises specific relationships between Kelly, the Australian myth and the white Australian identity, which are correlated to the temporal positioning of the memory during this phase. The social or cultural history

is generically necessarily removed from immediate memory, and therefore from the type of truth status with which it is invested. In the earlier first-hand accounts, this insistence upon truth and the denial of myth was in fact an indispensable element in the development of the Kelly myth. Truth, then, produced myth.

These later histories are both cultural and social. They examine the Australian *legend*, and the cultural traditions that expound it over time; they concurrently describe the *social contexts* that engendered the legend. They do not deny myth but attempt to locate the truth behind the myth, the truth of the myth. In this case, therefore, myth generates truth; the genre, in dissecting myth, produces a new truth of the Australian identity, which has a real historical grounding behind its mythic portrayals. The fact that they are histories, and purport to be *about* myth instead of being its primary producers, generates a distance or removal from it. However, this generic 'scientific' distance effects a domination of that identity-myth in truth-form, which is allied to its temporal relation to the Kelly events. A *dispositif* is always historical; however, this crucial importance of the temporal element would be an added dimension or emphasis for any development of the concept of a *memory dispositif*. Deleuze describes what he calls 'lines of force' within his *dispositif*; perhaps we might begin to think about *temporal* lines of force.²¹

To conclude this section, the Kelly representations from this period are increasingly positive about their subject, positing him as a crucial part of a long-term Australian memory; however, the Kelly memory is by no means undisputed or stable at this time. This tension is correlated to the texts' unstable attitude towards the existence and consistency of a unique white Australian tradition and identity, and debates about Kelly tend to revolve around the extent to which he should be involved with that tradition and identity. The social and cultural histories that proliferate in this phase, and in which Ned always features, are temporally and generically removed from immediate memory and the truth techniques accompanying it. They do not attempt to deny the mythic and are explicitly concerned with it. It is the temporal distance which allows for the generic 'scientific' distance from and concern with legend. However, this distance and this concern with myth produce a new truth, the truth of the myth of an ongoing Australian identity forged in the years after white invasion and modelled on the figure of the bushman, with Ned Kelly now at its centre.

DEFERRED IDENTITIES

1.

The appearance of *The Inner History of the Kelly Gang* in 1929 was a milestone in the development of the *Kelly memory dispositif*, since it was, in short, the first straightforwardly pro-Kelly statement outside of oral tradition. More importantly, this historical biography was the first text to posit the gang's behaviour into an explicitly political context—one of class conflict, land disputes, police misconduct, and imperial rule. *Inner History* initiated Kelly into the dominion of the working-class hero, and throughout the 1940s and '50s this type of representation began to dominate. It is almost entirely in print that this sort of portrayal is manifest; more specifically it is found in histories and biographies of the gang, and chapters in histories of Australia. These were the very genres that were most profoundly anti-Kelly in previous decades.

Specific identities began to be explicitly attributed to Ned. Those identities constitute a particularly politicised form of the outlaw tradition, akin to Eric Hobsbawm's *Social Banditry* idea, but before his highly influential book was written. The various strands of this overarching political outlaw identity are difficult to separate from each other, but they can be listed as: persecuted, working-class, anti-establishment and, in this case, Irish.

These identities remain with Kelly today. In fact, they are very close to those which Ned attempted to bestow on himself at the time of his outlawry. They were denied him at the time, outside of oral tradition; they had always been there implicitly but had been either lost through censorship or inverted by the press, which insisted that although Ned *posed* as a hero of the people he was in reality a common criminal and a coward, thereby manufacturing a rupture between how the outlaw *pretended* to be and how he actually was. The texts of 1930 to '60, fifty to eighty years *further* away in time from the affair, are actually much *closer* in terms of identity to Ned's own representation of himself. These identities are, then, *deferred*, only able to reveal themselves with the 'mellowing patina of age'.²² While these identities are explicitly political, even radical, they are in no way able to generate political action with regard to their subject, since the temporal lapse between their production and the Kelly events is much too great.

In the foreword to *Inner History*, Gerald C Stanley writes: ‘As Peter Lalor... found it necessary to give armed resistance to police tyranny in Ballarat, so Ned Kelly and his followers... faced... a similar alternative. For his part in shooting down the armed forces of tyranny... Peter Lalor was... acclaimed the popular hero of his day. For a... similar resistance to persecution Ned Kelly was hanged, but, now that time has dispelled the mists of prejudice from the scenes of the Kellys’ activities, their names are coming to be held in far higher respect than those of their official persecutors.’²³ Persecution of the gang becomes a central aspect of the story at this time. Importantly, the Kellys are portrayed as being representative of an entire section of the working classes, and ‘official tyranny’ assumes far-reaching political ramifications. Kenneally writes of Kelly: ‘The hand of the law was against him and his. Sooner or later the authorities would seek him out and crush him. Well, it would be a battle henceforth. He would forsake the peaceful ways of a miner... and live in defiance of the law. The perjured evidence of Fitzpatrick... awakened in him all the combative instincts of his race.’²⁴ Ned’s ‘race’ is Irish—of Ned’s father the author remarks, ‘He was a man whom the landlords... regarded as a menace to the continuation of the injustices so maliciously inflicted on the people of Ireland... Like other patriots, he was charged with an agrarian offence... With jury packing reduced to a fine art, the ruling class in Tipperary had no difficulty in securing his... transportation to Van Dieman’s Land.’²⁵

Almost twenty years later Max Brown’s *Australian Son* was published. Like *Inner History* it was both successful and controversial, and has been re-printed many times. *Inner History* basically marked the end of first-hand accounts of the story, as by that time most of the participants and eye witnesses had died. By 1948 representations were displaying growing confidence in an Australian tradition, and Ned Kelly’s place within it. In the foreword to his biography, Brown writes: ‘I cannot remember when I first heard of Ned Kelly... I can imagine that good Queen Victoria... was the perfect emblem of the dominant,... righteous British Empire of the loud steam age in which they lived... Yet I suspect that behind the name of evil given these young men was a certain worth little understood then or now, which... put the seal of manhood on the young Australian nation.’²⁶

Brown’s story is essentially a social history of Australia, through the lens of the Kellys. He discusses transportation, the gold rush,

the Eureka stockade, industrialisation, the Selection Acts, as a background to the circumstances of Ned’s birth and childhood; in all cases, ‘there is little doubt where the Kellys stood—they were at the bottom of the social ladder.’²⁷ One longish section of the book is worth repeating, to give a flavour of the identities with which Brown invests Kelly:

Who were the prophets of [Kelly’s] day? They were sharp businessmen... soldiers and trade representatives to subjugate the world to their will. The bravest of them could watch the Union Jack flutter to the breeze in some foreign land with tears in their eyes... for they believed in the machine and their mission to turn unhappy mankind into a herd of milch cows. But Kelly... knew only too well what they had done to his own family, and blood and bone he was of the Australia that had shown its true colours at Eureka and was carrying on as best it knew the age old struggle waged against the princes of Europe. Yet again came the thoughts that would not let him go... of the cocky farmers ground under by poverty and the eternal pin-pricking of the authorities... Back came the spirit that had characterised Ireland from the days when its chieftains had refused to knuckle under to English power... —of hatred for authority, of fear and contempt for its traitors.²⁸

In the above passages several identities intermingle as they attach themselves to Kelly. We have the persecution of Ned and his family, and his response to it; the conditions that enabled the oppression and the response, conditions characterised by imperial domination of land and peoples, to which Ned and his tradition are in natural opposition. Here, a poor and disenfranchised Ned becomes explicitly anti-imperialist, even socialist, and essentially Irish in his rebellious ‘hatred of authority’. These overlapping identities are invested in Ned, based in a version of his history and traditions. They are also versions of the traditions and history of Australia. But Ned had to wait half a century before he was allowed to inhabit that context which he attempted to articulate during his lifetime; the political identities he wished to embody are temporally deferred and can find no expression in political action to alter the contingencies that engendered the Kelly events.

11.

We have established that many of the texts from 1930 to '60 effect deferred identities, based in the perceived historical conditions that enabled his outlawry in the late 19th century, which are invested in Ned too late to induce any action to change those conditions. But what of the *present* conditions of these texts' productions (1930 to '60)? 'Presentism' is a common theme within the field of cultural memory. Astrid Erll discusses 'the selectivity and perspectivity inherent in the creation of versions of the past according to present knowledge and need', reminding us that 'there is no such thing as a "testimony of a past that was", but only "testimonies of a past as experienced and remembered in social contexts"... Remembering always takes place in the present, and is merely a re-presentation of the past, never the past itself.'²⁹ A *memory dispositif* can thus be seen to involve symbiotic relationships between past and present, in which our history determines 'present knowledge and need', which in turn governs how we reconstruct our past. It is obvious that these representations of Ned Kelly and his saga relate to the current conditions of their productions. Max Brown writes: 'Was it the Second World War which gave me a realisation of the validity of my own country? Was it that in the men with whom I lived I found a certain unique Australian character—a promise and threat, which had found expression in... Kelly many years before?'³⁰ In a post-war edition of *Inner History*, Kenneally appends one of his sentences with the following statement, in parenthesis, '(Australian prisoners of war in Germany, in 1944, were granted a holiday to celebrate the birthday of Ned Kelly, King of Australia.)'³¹

Many of the texts dealt with here endow the outlaw with deferred socialistic identities based in a working-class Australian history. With the expansion of universities after the Second World War, and the development of Australian history within them, came an immense impetus to study Australian labour history. In the 1940s and '50s a group of radical historians, later referred to as the Old Left, began to research the history of the Australian labour movement. They were influenced by Marxist theory, and intended to recover the experiences of the 'submerged bulk' of ordinary people. These labour histories accompanied the above-mentioned social and cultural histories also often produced by left-leaning writers and academics, which sought to identify an Australian tradition and identity of rebellious and anti-establishment workers, much influenced by Irish transportation and

immigration. These developments help to explain the nature of the identities retrospectively invested in Kelly at this time.

However, while these institutions were producing leftist Australian *histories and traditions*, in practice during this time the labour movement was markedly lacking in Marxist or even socialist tendencies, and rebellious anti-authoritarianism was hardly its defining feature. I would argue that, just as the potential political impact of the deferred identities invested in Kelly is neutralised in relation to the past, the identities are equally politically 'safe' in relation to their present. During this time workers' movements were being systematically incorporated into the dominant capitalist system, a political trend identified by some of the labour histories themselves.³² Equally, neither the socialist movement itself, nor the trade union movement fared well during this period; and Industrial relations by this time had become a specialised component of company management.

Furthermore, while these representations relate to current concerns—and it is said that all memories are about the present—they are, regardless, *about* the past. They do not use the past to historicise the present, but rather nostalgically project current fears and desires onto the past. These identities are thus generated in the present, in line with present concerns, and can have no impact upon the past conditions to which they pertain; they are simultaneously invested in the past and can have no impact upon that present either. They are floating in a neutral politico-temporal zone.

The question of the Irish identity is slightly different. Rather than hovering in a politico-temporal wasteland, this deferred identity actually functions to overwrite other current ethnic and racial identities existing in 1930 to '60. An unsettled question in Australian historiography involves the relationship between the Catholic Irish and their descendents, and the Anglo-Australian Protestant establishment. On one side it is claimed that the Irish were systematically disadvantaged, and excluded from the central sources of power before the Second World War. But it is also claimed that the Irish exerted a 'galvanic' influence on Australian life and identity. In tandem with the bushman figure, the Irish were seen as being innately 'predisposed to challenge and dissent', and thus emerged as the main carriers of a radical temper in Australian politics. After the War, Australians of Irish descent were more skilled than their

predecessors; they were more mobile, earned higher incomes and endured lower unemployment levels than other Australians.³³

Meanwhile, many post-War immigrants, particularly unassisted southern European migrants, faced discrimination and deprivation on their arrival in Australia. As much hostility as they faced, however, they were considered to be a far more desirable alternative to the 'yellow flood' from Asia which was feared could break out at any moment. This is to say nothing of the position of Indigenous Australians at this time. Assimilation had been the aim of government policy towards Aboriginals since the late 19th century, and was the declared objective from the 1950s, defined at a federal and state gathering in 1951 in the statement that 'all persons of Aboriginal blood or mixed blood in Australia will live like white Australians do'³⁴. In practice this meant the forced removal of over 100,000 children, a practice designed to break down separate Aboriginal identity. Meanwhile, the expansion of universities and production of history did not signify increased attention to Aboriginal history or the history of Indigenous-white relations. While there were a few attempts at this, historiography until the 1960s tended to ignore the existence of Indigenous inhabitants altogether. Although the Irish of Ned Kelly's day almost certainly experienced severe injustice, in line with British Imperial rule in Ireland, the Irish in Australia from the current phase were not only integrated but the Irish influence was being celebrated. It could therefore be argued that the deferred identities which the Kelly texts effect include an outmoded Irish radicalism that is in fact a function of a continuing white Australia policy, positing a deferred Irish subaltern identity over and on top of multiple present-day subaltern identities.

CONCLUSION

I will here attempt to synthesise the sections above to describe the workings of the Ned Kelly *memory dispositif* during this phase. Between 1930 and 1960 Kelly representations across genres, but particularly in biographies and histories of the gang and Australian social and cultural histories, produce political identities which are retrospectively invested in Ned. During Ned's own lifetime the expression of these identities was politically radical, and was denied. Since they are deferred they are necessarily neutralised in terms of

their political impact upon the past. They relate to current concerns but are politically safe in the present also, because they are about past, do not use the past to historicise the present, and are no longer relevant to action within present conditions. The radical Irish identity is an outmoded subaltern one, which overwrites and effaces current existing subaltern identities themselves being denied at this time. The identities invested in Ned become part of an ongoing project to erect a unified white national identity, which found expression in social and cultural histories of Australia. This genre, in attempting to locate a truth behind the white national legend, produced that truth—the truth of the myth of the white identity, based in tradition. In short, via the system of generic and politico-temporal relations comprising the Kelly *memory dispositif*, certain radicalised identities become belatedly invested in Ned's Australian past, which in fact become the function of a conservative project to develop a safe, whitewashed Australian national identity in the present of the period. ❖

ENDNOTES

- 1 From a lecture given by Homi Bhabha at the University of Melbourne: 'On global memory: speculations on barbaric transmission', to be published by Melbourne University Publishing, Jan 2009.
- 2 For example see Ann Rigney, 'Portable monuments: Literature, cultural memory, and the case of Jeanie Deansí', *Poetics Today*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2004, 361–396.
- 3 For example see Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: the Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004.
- 4 For example see Andrew Hoskins, 'New memory: Mediating history', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2001, 333.
- 5 See Ann Rigney, 'Plenitude, scarcity and the circulation of cultural memory', *Journal of European Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2005, 11.
- 6 Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980, 194.
- 7 Foucault, 194, my italics.
- 8 Gilles Deleuze, 'What is a *dispositif*', in Timothy J Armstrong (trans.), *Michel Foucault Philosopher*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hertfordshire, 1992, 159.
- 9 Foucault, 195.
- 10 'Ironoutlaw' website: www.ironoutlaw.com
- 11 See Elwyn Lynn, *The 1946-47 Ned Kelly Paintings by Sidney Nolan*, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1968.

- 12 Clive Turnbull, *Ned Kelly: Being His Own Story of His Life and Crimes*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1942, 1.
- 13 Kylie Tennant, *Australia: Her Story*, Macmillan & Co Ltd, London, 1953, 187.
- 14 Tennant, 192.
- 15 A A Phillips, *The Australian Tradition: Studies in Colonial Culture*, Cheshire-Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1966, 136.
- 16 Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1965.
- 17 Ward, v.
- 18 Phillips, 112.
- 19 Phillips, ix.
- 20 John Frow, 'Genre worlds: the discursive shaping of knowledge', *Arena Journal*, no. 23, 2005, 129.
- 21 Deleuze, 160.
- 22 Phillips, 136.
- 23 J J Kenneally, *The Complete Inner History of the Kelly Gang and Their Pursuers*, The Kelly Gang Publishing Company, Victoria, 1969, 8.
- 24 Kenneally, 44.
- 25 Kenneally, 17.
- 26 Max Brown, *Ned Kelly: Australian Son*, Angus & Robertson, NSW, 1986, vii.
- 27 Brown, 21.
- 28 Brown, 37.
- 29 Astrid Erll, Wars we have seen: literature as a medium of collective memory in the 'age of extremes'. (unpublished).
- 30 Brown, vii.
- 31 Kenneally, 43.
- 32 See Brian Fitzpatrick, *The Australian People 1788–1945*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1946. Claims that labour movements have been incorporated have come under scrutiny in recent years. While it may be true that unions at that time still provided forms of resistance, compared to their constitution in previous decades it appears that they had lost much of their power of resistance. I think there is little doubt that the Labor Party itself was becoming incorporated at this time.
- 33 Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, 351.
- 34 Davison et al. (eds), 42.