

The Psychodynamics of Australian Settler-Nationalism: Assimilating or Reconciling With the Aborigines?

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Settler-nationalism is a form of nationalism that must face specific cultural dilemmas as a result of the dispossession of indigenous peoples. Since the Second World War, Australia has attempted to come to terms with its past of dispossession and to find ways to incorporate Aborigines within national imaginings, and within the nation itself. This paper argues that there are two modes of settler-nationalism—termed assimilationist and indigenizing—that compete to organize the national reality, including relations between the settler and indigenous populations. Kleinian object relations theory is drawn upon to delineate the emotional structures of the two modes of nationalism. Implications for indigenous rights, in particular for Aboriginal land rights, are examined.

KEY WORDS: settler-nationalism, Australian Aborigines, reconciliation, object relations theory, affect

The opening ceremony for the Sydney Olympics in September 2000 presented to the world a series of images deemed representative of the Australian national experience. There was humor and irony, with parading lawnmowers and corrugated iron, indicating that Australia was proud to celebrate its own distinctive nationality. The ceremony celebrated Australia's cultural diversity, with representations of Aboriginal culture playing a prominent role. The climax of the ceremony involved the Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman lighting the flame. The significance of that choice would be lost on few Australians. For many commentators in the Australian media this was a potent symbol, both of what the national identity was like, and of a process of reconciliation that had been officially going on—backed by the Australian government—for almost 10 years. The fact that Freeman went on to win the women's 400-meter gold medal was felt by some Australians as itself a

powerful symbol of reconciliation, signaling a new way of thinking about their national identity.

This new understanding of Australian national identity is an important development in the history of Australian settler-nationalism. Historically that nationalism excluded Aboriginality and all other non-white identities. These other identities were thrust outside the moral community of the white Australian nation because, historically, national cohesion was equated with racial cohesion. In stark contrast to that view of Australia as a white nation, the new form of nationalism evident in public events such as the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics promotes a multicultural Australia, with Aboriginality and Aboriginal traditions afforded a special place. An example would be the guiding statements of the recently defunct Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. The Council called for “a united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity to all.” Indigenous people were seen as “central and integral to the cultural fabric” of the Australian nation (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 1995, pp. 2–5).

In this paper I focus on Australian settler-nationalism. Part of this analysis is specific to Australia, although close parallels with other settler societies such as Canada, the United States, and New Zealand are evident. Of more general interest for political psychologists, I present a theoretical model for analyzing nationalism and national identity that draws on Kleinian object relations theory. In particular, I analyze the ways that modes of thinking, feeling, and relating stemming from Klein’s paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions feed through debates about national identity and the correct way to deal with and understand settler/indigenous relations within the Australian nation-state. To suggest this is to reiterate a point made by Money-Kyrle (1973) when he argued that because the principal discovery of psychoanalysis was that “all conscious desires, feelings and beliefs are, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by unconscious processes,” then the main aim of the application of psychoanalysis to politics should be “to discover the nature and extent of whatever unconscious processes may influence our political desires, feelings and beliefs” (p. 23).

Settler-Nationalism

Theorists of colonialism and post-colonialism have pointed to an important distinction between settler-colonial societies and those colonized societies that emerged from the European invasion of densely populated regions. In the latter, indigenous populations were usually settled agriculturalists who lived in villages and had societal structures that Europeans recognized. In these situations the indigenous populations were typically more organized and able to defend themselves, which meant that their interests had to be at least partially accommodated, even as their societies were exploited materially by the invaders. European colonizers exploited societies like India, China, Java, and Japan for labor and material

goods, and used them as a market for surplus European goods. The primary aim was thus not to settle European populations, although this was usually an outcome. The settler-colonial form typically emerged in regions that were less densely populated, where populations were nomadic, as in the Cape of South Africa, in North America and Australia. A prominent feature of all these societies was the almost complete displacement of indigenous nomadic societies, primarily through the introduction of commercial agriculture and by military means. "Exceptions could be cited," Donald Denoon has argued, "but in general nomadic people have been lucky to survive the shock of European settlement, whereas the complete annihilation of settled communities has rarely been attempted, and even more rarely accomplished" (Denoon, 1983, p. 27; see also Wolfe, 1999).

The study of nations and nationalisms that arose in "the new world" must be sensitive to the cultural dilemmas produced by the formation of nations based on dispossession. Whether settler societies counted or discounted indigenous peoples in their national scenarios or myths, the fact of indigenous presence conditions settler forms of nationalism. This influence is not simply rooted in the past, but continues to shape contemporary forms of nationalism. Settler-nationalism, with its particular conditions of emergence and relations with indigenous populations, has had to face specific dilemmas. This is especially pertinent to the Australian case, for two major reasons.

First, unlike the United States—where the dominating racial division at the level of public consciousness and political life remains that between African Americans (and more recently other "colored" non-indigenous groupings) and the white settler population—Australia's preeminent racial division is between the settler population and its relatively small indigenous population. As the Canadian political scientist Peter Russell has pointed out, reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians has a claim to being *the* central contemporary political justice issue for Australians (Russell, 2000, p. 25). Russell suggests that the movement for reconciliation in Australia is unique among the four settler societies (the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia) in which English speakers became the dominant population (Russell, 2000, pp. 26–27). In none of the other English-speaking settler societies have indigenous people gained such a significant symbolic status. That symbolic significance is played out in debates on the nature of Australian national identity.

The second point relates to the prominence of the historical memory of indigenous dispossession: Europeans invaded Australia only a little more than 200 years ago (in 1788). Indigenous populations across the country were dispossessed of their lands in an extended and gradual process that lasted well into the 20th century. Indeed, it can be argued that dispossession is a continuing process in Australia. In June 1992 Australia's High Court ruled that native title (traditional Aboriginal title) could still exist in various parts of the country to the extent that various governments had not ruled specifically to dispossess the original Aboriginal owners (through the granting of land titles, or through legislation). Some

Australians welcomed the Mabo decision (taking its name from one of the principal litigants in the case, the late Eddie Mabo), but it was at the same time the subject of a hostile conservative campaign of opposition. The Keating Labor government passed a Native Title Act, which sought to reach a compromise between indigenous and non-indigenous interests. The Mabo ruling was elaborated with the High Court's Wik decision of December 1996, which ruled that in certain circumstances native title could coexist with pastoral leases. This legal situation demands complex negotiations between various indigenous and non-indigenous groups over the exact title to, and interest in, lands. Notably, in this respect, Australia's current conservative federal government, under Prime Minister John Howard, has passed legislation that, its many critics argue, allows dispossession to be effected on pastoral leases where there is some doubt about Aboriginal rights over land.¹

The indigenous therefore remain as an unavoidable "problem" for Australian settler-nationalism, and settler/indigenous relations are an important feature of the political system and of mainstream political debate. The indigenous present a cultural dilemma handled in different ways, as I will show, by different forms of settler-nationalism.

In the last half-century the Australian nation-state, built on the dispossession of its original inhabitants and land owners, has felt increasingly pressured, and inclined, to make some amends for that past of dispossession, violence, murder, and rape. To a certain extent this reflects a worldwide phenomenon of restitution, discussed for example by Barkan (2000) in his book *The Guilt of Nations*. But it is not simply that. It is a feature of a process of decolonization, experienced in different ways by indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. For non-indigenous Australians this has meant the gradual severing of ties with Britain and the movement toward post-colonial independence. This cultural shift involves a reassessment of the past and a re-invention of national identity. As I argue below, it has also given rise to a new form of nationalism in a less triumphant and more self-reflective, mournful, and reparative mode. That shift has also involved the movement of the indigenous from a state of virtual moral invisibility to one of high moral and political visibility in the contemporary period (see Moran, 1998). For the indigenous, this has meant decolonization primarily in relation to the settler-Australian state (Russell, 1996). This involves a re-invention or a reclaiming of Aboriginal identities and an ongoing struggle and negotiation with the state over status, rights, and obligations.

It would be naïve, however, to underestimate the importance of movements of resistance to that transformation of Australian identity. Australia recently witnessed the rise of an angry populist movement led by an independent MP, Pauline Hanson. Initially elected to Parliament in 1996, Hanson went on to form her own political party, called Pauline Hanson's One Nation, that gathered approximately

¹ *Mabo v. State of Queensland* (no. 2), 3 June 1992; *Wik Peoples v. State of Queensland* (1996), 141 ALR 129; Native Title Act, 1993; Native Title Amendment Act, 1998.

1 million votes across Australia in the 1998 federal election. Hanson and her followers felt that the Australian nation, which had “done so much to civilize” the Aborigines, was being denigrated for its past “well-intentioned” actions. Instead of that nation taking an apologetic stance toward the indigenous, she and her supporters argued that Aborigines ought to be thankful for being brought into the modern world with all its benefits. The fighting stance adopted, and assertions of “true” Australian identity involved in such responses to the complexities of a decolonizing society (and of a transforming identity), reveal that such an identity is experienced as embattled, in a state of alarming decline, and about to be swamped and left behind. The exclusivism, in contrast to the inclusivism of other nationalist tendencies, is often concealed behind arguments that all—Aborigines, non-whites, and Asians—are welcome in the nation, as long as they adhere to “our” values, norms, and way of life. Occasionally that exclusivism surfaces more explicitly. During her 1996 election campaign Hanson was quoted as saying that she “would be fighting for the white community, the immigrants, the Greeks, whoever, it doesn’t really matter—anyone apart from the Aboriginals and the Torres Strait Islanders” (cited in Dodson, 1996, p. 191). She subsequently dedicated her election victory to the “white community” (cited in Howard, 1997, p. 84).

It is difficult to ascertain the intentions of those who voted for Hanson’s party—for example, many may have been registering a protest vote against Australia’s two major parties. However, national opinion polling suggests that indigenous issues evoke levels of anger, division, and even despair in the wider community. This needs to be weighed against the apparent empathy and hope that seemed evident during the mass walks for reconciliation in Australia’s major cities in 2000. National surveys show that although most Australians want some sort of reconciliation between settler and indigenous Australians, there is disagreement and division over what is required and the best way to bring that reconciliation about. For example, Australians sharply disagree about the way that settler/indigenous relations should be handled, especially by governments. This is evident in nationwide opinion polls that divide the population over the issues of a national apology to the indigenous for past treatment (with less than half the population supporting any form of apology), and of the signing of a treaty between the Australian government and indigenous peoples (see Newspoll Market Research, 2000). The concept of a treaty is opposed by many non-indigenous Australians (see Johnson, Sweeney & Associates, 1996) and by Australia’s current conservative prime minister, John Howard.

Recent qualitative research suggests that many non-indigenous Australians have a “deep suspicion about the possible impact of the reconciliation process” itself. Many fear compensation in relation to any form of national apology to the indigenous. They also fear further Aboriginal land claims through any recognition of prior Aboriginal land ownership (Irving Saulwick and Associates, 2000, p. 36). In the most recent national survey on attitudes to Aborigines and reconciliation, a majority of the population was against the granting of any specific rights to

indigenous Australians (Newspoll Market Research, 2000). This was also clearly evident in recent qualitative research, where many argued that the indigenous should be treated in exactly the same way as everybody else. In the view of many non-indigenous Australians, the indigenous, unlike successful immigrant groups, had not made enough of an attempt to “be like us” and had not been prepared to help themselves, instead relying on “handouts” from government. Many respondents blamed white Australian society for “creating” a handout mentality among the indigenous, brought about “through a misguided sense of guilt about the past, through the false acceptance of ‘politically correct’ ideas introduced by ‘do gooders,’ and for want of any better ideas about how to co-exist with Aborigines” (Irving Saulwick and Associates, 2000, pp. 35–36). That would seem to suggest that the notion of the “tapestry” nation—evident in statements on identity by some political leaders and commentators, and by the organizers of events like the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony—is an elite phenomenon that has not taken hold in the general populace.

At the political level, there are significant movements within Australia that wish to turn the clock back in Aboriginal affairs, arguing that the more “enlightened” attitudes since the late 1960s, and the small steps taken by governments in recognizing Aboriginal autonomy and land rights, were wrong-footed. We should return, it is argued, to the ideals of assimilation. Such critics claim that recognition of indigenous status, and any rights stemming from it, is mistaken and ultimately detrimental to everybody, including the Aborigines whose interests it is meant to serve.²

I argue that a major division within Australian settler-nationalism underlies these different views on, and feelings about, settler/indigenous relations. There are two specific settler-nationalist modes for organizing the national reality and national identity, and these modes have profound implications for settler/indigenous relations. These I term *assimilationist* and *indigenizing* settler-nationalisms. They are rooted in different views of the nation, different feelings about the past, and different understandings of national subjectivity. Within those modes of settler-nationalism, I argue, individuals experience different anxieties about the transformation of Australian national identity.

Theoretical Model

National communities are different from small groups or from larger groups such as churches or armies, but they share certain group features and can be thought of as group-like entities (Alford, 1994, pp. 12–14). Psychoanalytic insights concerning the functioning of groups and the nature of identity can be used to explore

² In 2001 a new right-wing organization calling itself The Bennelong Society, and counting among its prominent members two former ministers for Aboriginal affairs and several public intellectuals, made such claims that were widely reported in Australia’s media.

the nature of national identity, the way that national communities behave, and the ways that individuals interact within their nation. One must proceed cautiously when negotiating the shifts in analysis between individual psychological process and collective social processes. At the same time, one must recognize that individual psychology is always at the same time social psychology. Although “the inner world is not reducible to the external and intersubjective one,” Wolfenstein has argued, “it is none the less populated by it” (Wolfenstein, 1990, p. 152). This is apparent in Kleinian object relations theory, especially where it has been used in the study of groups (see Alford, 1989, 1990; Bion, 1961; Cash, 1996; Jaques, 1955; Menzies Lyth, 1988). As Young (1994) has written, inspired by the work of Bion and other group relations theorists, the “principles which apply to the inner world of the individual also help to illuminate the inner world of the group. . . . The group is at work in the inner world of the individual, and the most primitive level of the individual has its grip on the group” (p. 91).

Klein’s most important theoretical innovations concerned the pre-Oedipal phase of human life. From the very beginning of life, the individual experiences intensely conflicting passions. Klein argued that in the infant psyche exist all the passions that infuse the adult world: love, hate, guilt, destructiveness, envy, sadism and masochism, omnipotent feelings, fears of persecution, and so on. Each of these is directed at self and mother, which are at first difficult for the infant to distinguish: a partial merging, a flow of inner and outer “part-objects” through the processes of projection and introjection (Klein, 1988a, pp. 262–289). For the infant, immediate others—mother and father—serve as the early introjected objects set up inside the infant and making up the infant’s inner world. Klein argued that the breast served as the first introjected object—taken in as both a good and a bad object (Klein, 1988b, p. 2). Klein referred to this process as splitting: The child splits itself, others, and the world into good and bad in the earliest phase of life. The “bad breast” is itself a creation of the infant’s phantasy. This has sources in the infant’s own psyche—the destructiveness associated with the death instinct—but also results from experiences of frustration. Because the infant does not immediately get what it wants, it feels intense aggression toward the breast. It projects these feelings outward, thus creating the bad breast. The problem for the infant is that its own creation—the bad breast—becomes an aggressive threatening object that terrorizes the infant. As the process of separation and emergence of the self unfolds, phantasies, some of them terrifying, are played out against the mother and, through her, the world. Not only does the infant see these persecutors in the world; he or she introjects them into the ego. Persecution is inside, so to speak, and no amount of projection will free the infant of the anxiety and dread this produces.

That phase of intense splitting into good and bad that usually occurs for the first 3 or 4 months of life Klein called the paranoid-schizoid position. It is paranoid because the leading anxiety is that the persecutory object or objects will get inside the ego and overwhelm and annihilate both the ideal or good object in the process of being set up there, and the self in its entirety. It is schizoid because the leading

defense against such persecutors involves splitting (Segal, 1986a, p. 26). Klein argued that paranoid anxiety was “counteracted by extreme and powerful defences, such as splitting, omnipotence and denial” (Klein, 1988b, p. 85), and by a process related to all of these that she called projective identification, where the individual attempts to control the internal and external world by projecting parts of the self outside into others (Klein, 1988b, pp. 1–24).

In the course of normal development, the child shifts to the depressive position. This is a movement toward a lessening of the propensity to split the self and the world. The self, the mother, and others are now seen more as whole objects that contain both good and bad, toward which one feels both love and hatred and a sense of regret for things felt and done. Through the gradual mastering of the dilemmas, anxieties, and desires of the depressive position, “splitting and projection decrease and the drive towards integration of the ego and the object can gradually take the upper hand” (Segal, 1986a, pp. 67–68). There is a new and increasingly dominant form of anxiety experienced by the child at this stage: that through its own aggressive impulses, its sadistic attacks, it has destroyed good things—the good breast, the good mother, the goodness inside, and so on. The child enters a state of mourning; it feels sorrow and concern for the things it has attempted, in phantasy, to destroy. Its main response to this situation is reparation. Other responses include a return to the paranoid-schizoid position and the defenses of splitting and projection if depressive anxiety is too overwhelming (Klein, 1988b, p. 143) and the manic defenses of denial, omnipotence, and contempt as a way of avoiding guilt.

Reparation in the Kleinian tradition refers to the way that the individual seeks to repair, in phantasy and through actions, what it believes it has earlier destroyed or attempted to destroy. Reparation is both defensive and creative: It defends the individual against being overwhelmed by guilt and depression, and is the basis for innovative acts of reconstruction. From the inception of the depressive position, acts of reparation are engaged in to repair imaginary (and real) damage done by the aggression of the self. In the earliest phases of life, for example, if these reparative acts are perceived as restoring the mother or the breast (damaged or injured by the infant’s destructive and sadistic phantasies), the seed is planted from which will grow the sense of separateness, and the capacity to feel love, concern, and responsibility for others. As such, reparation is closely associated with the grasp of complex reality, and contradictory emotions, that the individual experiences within the depressive position.

These different ways of thinking, feeling, and relating Klein deliberately called positions in order to distinguish them from simple developmental phases (see Ogden, 1992). Klein argued that the positions remain active throughout adult life, albeit modified along developmental lines. Moreover, individuals in certain situations have access to the far more primitive early object relations and ways of feeling and experiencing stemming from these positions. Individuals unconsciously make use of the different defenses (and modified versions thereof) that had become operative in their developmental history as they make sense of and

respond to the outside world. This is perhaps most apparent where events or situations in the outside world give rise to intense anxieties and mirror earlier experiences. In her study of the nursing profession in a British hospital in the 1950s, Menzies Lyth noticed how the “objective situation confronting the nurse bears a striking resemblance to the phantasy situations that exist in every individual in the deepest and most primitive levels of the mind.” Menzies Lyth argued that the “intensity and complexity of the nurse’s anxieties are to be attributed primarily to the peculiar capacity of the objective features of her work situation to stimulate afresh these early situations and their accompanying emotions” (Menzies Lyth, 1988, pp. 46–47). The suggestion is that these phantasies can achieve a collective form over time, through collusive action between individuals, and that through such collusive action collective defenses are created to deal with them. There is a relationship between individual and collective anxieties; they connect up in complex ways.

Theorists of group relations, beginning with Freud, have sought to explain the complex relationship between individual psychological process and group life. The concept of identification was central to Freud’s analysis of group psychology. Individuals in a group identified with each other. An early form of identification, involving idealization of an object—in Freud’s view typically a father figure—was of central importance to this argument. The leader of a group was idealized as something greater than the individual’s own ego, and through identification the leader was taken in as an ego-ideal. All individuals in a group did the same thing, and thus were identified with each other. A group was “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego” (Freud, 1985a, p. 147). In nations, co-nationals partake of a complex series of identifications: with each other, with national leaders and idealized national heroes (the greater national selves that serve as the image that each individual strives toward), and with an abstract or imagined nation. The nation also serves as a social form of an ego-ideal (typically embodied in a leader), and is identified with in that way (Freud, 1985b, p. 96).

The nation as social institution is among other things a social defense system. Drawing on the psychoanalytic group theory of Jaques and Menzies Lyth, Cash has explained that social institutions and their cultural mechanisms are “media for the binding of depressive and paranoid anxieties.” In other words, individuals make use of social institutions (including their nation) as defenses against different forms of anxiety. Jaques argued that “one of the primary cohesive elements binding individuals into institutionalized human association is that of defence against psychotic anxiety.” It was not only that; other functions included “the equally important expression and gratification of libidinal impulses in constructive social activities, as well as social co-operation in institutions providing creative, sublimatory opportunities” (Jaques, 1955, pp. 478–479; see also Cash, 1996, pp. 76–77). Nations serve these other functions also. A nation provides an outlet for the

expression of passions; it gives the individual a way of expressing himself or herself culturally. To have a national identity is to be the inheritor of a cultural tradition; it gives one a cultural orientation, and that is undoubtedly an important feature of national identity.

The nation also acts as a container of individual anxieties; the nation helps to contain personal fears by taking them on and dealing with them at a group level. Paranoid-schizoid or persecutory anxiety, for the individual, involves fears about individual identity: that the individual is being threatened and attacked by persecutors. The fear in persecutory anxiety is that the ego, or identity, will be destroyed as a result of that multifarious persecution. The nation helps the individual to avoid these anxieties by allowing him or her to project these anxieties outward until they become shared public anxieties. In effect, this means that private anxieties are handled by the group—in this case the nation—as if they were external (see Alford, 1990, pp. 11–12). The group reinforces the private defenses of splitting and idealization. The persecutors, and the badness, are all outside, in the international environment especially, although there might also be persecutors and traitors, those who want to damage the nation, within the nation's borders, even “masquerading” as citizens who love their country. This is the world of spies, internal enemies, agents of influence, and so on. Alford argued that we project anxiety, aggression, and bad parts of ourselves outward onto the screen of the large group, to be deflected elsewhere. Large groups, like nations, are particularly adept at helping the individual to defend against his or her paranoid-schizoid fears. This is one of the reasons why nations, in general, act so badly, particularly toward other nations and groupings that stand outside the nation physically, politically, or morally. As Alford (1990) pointed out, the large group also contributes its own set of anxieties. There are specific anxieties one only experiences as part of a group, including the nation. Most notably, being a member of a nation produces fears about national “enemies” and what they want to do to us, gives rise to fears about the maintenance or disintegration of national identity, and may lead to a form of depressive anxiety “in which the individual doubts that the group to which he belongs is able to foster and protect the values that he and the group cherish” (Alford, 1989, p. 59).

The defensive nature of social institutions, including nations, helps explain the emotional intensity with which identities are fought over, particularly where identities are undergoing change or transformation. For if Jaques, Menzies Lyth, and following them Alford and Cash, are correct in arguing that institutions perform the function of defending members against psychotic anxiety, then changes or threatened change to an institutional form—including a national form—are likely to unleash anger, fear, and despair as the particular fusing of individual and social form breaks down. Jaques argued that this was one of the important reasons “for the intractability to change of many social stresses and group tensions.” This could often be explained as “the ‘resistances’ of groups of people unconsciously clinging to the institutions that they have, because changes in social relationships threaten to disturb existing social defences against psychotic anxiety” (Jaques, 1955,

p. 479). This sort of resistance and unleashing of anger, as I show below, is exactly what has happened in Australia as it has been transformed over the last half-century from a “white” to a multicultural nation.

At the same time, one must recognize that the unleashing of fear and despair and the intractability of conflict are not the only outcomes of threatened change or crisis. Situations of change and crisis also stimulate creative responses. In this respect, the Kleinian concept of reparation—with its emphasis on creatively rebuilding what has been destroyed; in putting the self, people, and worlds back together in new ways—is useful (see Alford, 1989; Klein, 1988a, 1988b; Segal, 1986b).³

Australian Settler-Nationalism

The desire for and belief in a “white Australia” was the dominant expression of Australian settler-nationalism from its beginnings in the 19th century and for a large part of the 20th century. From its inception in the middle of the 19th century, “white Australia” contained a strong strain of paranoia. White Australian nationalism involved a split between the potential and realizable paradise within the Australian colonies, and the damaging, threatening, covetous otherness outside. Partly as a result of its position at the bottom of Asia, and partly because the Australian nation emerged around the same time that Japan rose as an economic and military power in the region, Australians feared that “Asian hordes” would overrun Australia and “swamp” the white settler population. As that would suggest, white nationalism made ready use of the thinking and feeling characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position, especially in terms of the splitting between an idealized white Australia and a demonized world of racial others. “White Australia” was a nationalist assertion of pride in the character of the Australian community. It was an expression of new world faith: By virtue of being free of the problems affecting the old world—especially its mixtures of peoples or “races” existing within the same territories—Australia had a supposedly unique chance to perfect its community through acts of careful social engineering. Australia was not going to be a “melting pot” nation like, for example, America. As far as possible it was going to be free of the racial conflict and division that had been the American and South African experiences. By the 1890s Melbourne’s major newspaper *The Age* could editorialize:

The problem of Negro citizenship in the United States is given up by the philosopher as unsolvable. . . . In Australia, fortunately, we are free from this race problem. The Aborigines were of too low a stamp of intelligence and too few in number to be seriously considered. If there had been any difficulty, it would have been obviated by the gradual dying out of the

³ Alternatively, see Cash’s analysis of the ways that crises stimulate both defensive and creative tendencies within ideological formations (Cash, 1996, pp. 120–123).

native race. What we have to be afraid of is that, from our geographic position, we shall be overrun by the hordes of Asiatics. (Cited in Markus, 1979, pp. 259–260)

The powerful fantasy of harmony and democratic expansion through unity and purity of race stood at the heart of Australian settler-nationalism.

White Australia encoded specific racial ideas and fantasies about what held a nation together. It encapsulated not only the hopes and dreams of settler-nationalists, but also their most potent fears and hatreds. This style of imagining of political community had important implications for those people who were not white: All efforts were made to exclude them, and where they could not be excluded from the territory, they would not be regarded, or treated, as fully fledged citizens of the white national democracy. Australia's White Australia Policy, agreed upon by all mainstream political factions after Australia's federation in 1901, was given effect by immigration restriction acts and acts relating to citizenship, voting rights, and rights to social benefits. It was effective in the restriction of the growth of non-European, non-white populations in Australia for the long period of its operation until 1973.

The rich fantasy structure of white Australia, which included an elaborate race ideology as well as concepts of civic virtue, democracy, egalitarianism, and freedom, is not only of historic interest; it is the background, and at times the stumbling block, to efforts since the latter part of the 20th century to reorient national identity away from notions of race or the "kinship of blood." Its influence is still evident in the expressions of fear and rage from those in the white settler community who feel that the form of their nation is being deliberately altered: "Asianized," made "artificially" multicultural or forced into an apologetic, mournful mode in relation to the indigenous. Guilt is experienced by some as persecutory, an imposition from internal or external enemies whose aim it is to bring the nation down and to destroy all that it has stood for.

For the present purposes I concentrate only on the issue of Aboriginality and the ways that it has shifted, as an object within national imaginings, over the course of the 20th century. This is not to deny the impact on national imaginings of the transformation of the ethnic makeup of the population through successive waves of immigration. However, I do want to emphasize the specificity of settler/indigenous relations. The study of these should not be subsumed under the study of the broader issue of multiculturalism. In this regard, the meaning of "assimilation" was very specific for the indigenous. It involved social engineering by Australian state and federal governments with an explicit nationalist rationale.

Under assimilation policy between the 1930s and the 1960s, Aboriginality (as culture, and as group life) was considered a retarding and bad influence. In effect, policymakers felt that it had to be dismantled, through industrial training and so on, in order for Aborigines to take their place as full moral members of the

Australian nation. The way that Aboriginality had to disappear is encapsulated in the following official government statement on assimilation policy:

The policy of assimilation means in the view of all Australian governments that all aborigines and part-aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. (Hasluck, 1961, p. 1)

Cultural homogeneity, now separated from notions of biological racial homogeneity (a major ideological tenet of white Australian nationalism), was of central importance to the nation envisaged under this assimilation regime. Statements like the above display depressive position tendencies: assimilation as the reaching out to and inclusion of indigenous people within the goodness of the nation. The historical roots and motives standing behind assimilation were, however, more complex, involving paranoia, destructiveness, and negative views of Aboriginality and Aboriginal group life.

Paranoia about Aboriginality and Aboriginal cultural forms was, for example, apparent in statements by important government officials with responsibilities for Aboriginal affairs. As the assimilation policy was taking shape in Australia just before the outbreak of the Second World War, A. O. Neville, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, said the following at a major government-sponsored conference:

An important aspect of this policy is the cost. The different States are creating institutions for the welfare of the native race, and, as the result of this policy, the native population is increasing. What is to be the limit? Are we going to have a population of 1 000 000 blacks in the Commonwealth, or are we going to merge them into the white community and eventually forget that there were ever any aborigines in Australia. . . . I see no objection to the ultimate absorption into our own race of the whole of the existing Australian native race. (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937, p. 11)

Cecil Cook, the Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, raised the specter of the rise of a “black race” in the Northern Territory that would “swamp” the whites, possibly driving them out or even absorbing them, if protection policies were too strictly adhered to. He argued that “unless the black population is speedily absorbed into the white, the process will soon be reversed, and in fifty years, or a little later, the white population of the Northern Territory will be absorbed into the black” (Commonwealth of Australia, 1937, p. 14). Cook’s answer, which he kept pushing for at the conference, was a more positive breeding process aimed at getting rid of Aboriginality. Cook represented the paranoid element of white Australian

nationalism in an extreme form. In a letter written to the Association for the Protection of Native Races (APNR) of New South Wales in 1931, he spelled out the rationale for control of marriage and other relations between the races in the Northern Territory in paranoid racist terms:

In the Territory, the preponderance of coloured races, the prominence of coloured alien blood and the scarcity of white females to mate with the white male population creates a position of incalculable future menace to purity of race in tropical Australia, and the Federal Government must so regulate its territories that the multiplication of multi-colour humanity . . . shall be reduced to a minimum. The future of this country may well be doomed to disaster. (quoted in Wise, 1985, p. 178)

Similar views can be found in the official reports Cook wrote as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory throughout the 1930s.

Absorption and assimilation policies thus gave expression to both destructive and reparative desires, and responded to either explicit or veiled guilt feelings among white settlers. From one angle and for some in the settler community (including the two government officials just quoted), Aborigines remained “bad part-objects” that were to be destroyed or got rid of, only now in a more rationally coordinated and scientific manner than in the days of frontier “dispersal”: Absorbing the indigenous meant the gradual dissolution of Aboriginal blood, and thus of any trace of Aboriginality that had survived the initial frontier conflicts. In this way the purity of white Australia could be preserved.

Such thinking received a certain level of group sanction, as the above quotes from government officials suggest. In other words, Aboriginality was a socially sanctioned bad object: It could carry the load of projected bad impulses and parts of the self, and also serve as the object of a shared form of persecutory anxiety.

Another important strain in assimilation, however, had to do with a conception of humanitarian or nationalist responsibility for those whose land was taken, and who continued to reside within the borders of the national state. Typically this was voiced along the lines of “We will fail our own conception of ourselves as a great socially progressive, egalitarian nation if we fail to bring the Aborigines into our community through lifting them to a higher state of culture and existence.”

Assimilation policies paved the way for the gradual inclusion of the indigenous into the Australian nation after their long period of exclusion. As part of this process Aborigines moved, at least somewhat, from a position of being outsiders to the nation to a position where they were now deemed to be part of the nation. Bringing Aborigines into the “goodness” of the nation was, as I’ve suggested, itself a reparative gesture; it was in another sense an act of restoration—Aboriginal humanity was restored where it had been maligned and used as the basis, through race stereotyping, to cut Aborigines off from the nation.

This reparative tendency intensified once assimilation policy lost legitimacy and was replaced by integration and self-determination policies after the 1960s. In

this latter period Aboriginality and Aboriginal cultural forms themselves started, albeit slowly and tentatively, to become good objects for the nation. Aborigines were to be drawn into the Australian nation as full moral members but without the necessary destruction of their Aboriginality. Their Aboriginality was now, again albeit in a limited sense, honored. Instead of being “relics” of the “stone age,” Aborigines were now considered representatives of the oldest continuous human culture on Earth.

In contemporary Australia, with regard to settler/indigenous relations, the depressive anxiety is that, as a result of revelations about the terrible treatment of the indigenous, and increasing awareness of the way this feeds into their current plight, non-indigenous Australians’ own nation (their “good object”) is not being preserved in its goodness. The feeling is that the nation is not living up to its own most cherished ideals, and has not been able to foster them in relation to Aborigines. Moreover, because the indigenous have moved, as part of the historical shift explained above, from being “bad objects” to “good objects,” there are also fears concerning their cultural and physical preservation that are tied up with non-indigenous preservation. In other words, the indigenous now occupy an important place in those intersecting inner and outer worlds of objects that define subjectivity and intersubjectivity within the frame of the nation. To some degree (and, most important, to some degree publicly), Aboriginality has become a good object to be incorporated by the nation, and also to be nurtured, preserved, and honored. The preservation and enhancement of the national identity depends on the preservation of this good object.

Two Modes of Settler-Nationalism in the Contemporary Period

In analyzing the structural features of the two modes of settler-nationalism, I place special emphasis on their affective dimensions. At the same time, I argue that the two nationalisms order the past differently, drawing out different emphases and implications for the present. They are social-historical productions drawing on the history, among other things, of relations between settlers and the indigenous. These two nationalisms are modes for constructing reality. They are available for political movements and for individuals as ways of being national. They are thus not simply intellectual positions taken up, but ways of living and organizing information and events. They involve beliefs and ideas, but at the same time they involve predominant emotional structures that draw individuals and groups to them as they live their national subjectivities. Most important, they handle and experience persecutory and depressive anxieties in different ways, with implications for the way that they read settler-indigenous relations and “what should be done” to make them better.

For assimilationist settler-nationalism, changes to the ethnic makeup of the Australian nation since the Second World War, and the shift in government policy from assimilation to indigenous self-determination, are sources of an anxiety about

national identity that is sometimes experienced in a persecutory manner. In a sense, people within this mode experience their nation object, and thus their national identity, as under threat from those who promote multiculturalism, and from those who impute shame or guilt in relation to past dealings with the indigenous community. This frequently gives rise to a combative approach when dealing with settler/indigenous issues, and an air of suspicion or even paranoia concerning the intention of others in national debates on indigenous issues.

Indigenizing settler-nationalism, on the other hand, tends to welcome and promote those changes to Australian national identity and government policy as important and necessary in order to improve relations between the settler and indigenous communities. Indigenizing settler-nationalists experience the transformed relations with the indigenous, and the revelations of revisionist colonial histories, as something to be confronted rather than dismissed or played down. They experience a form of national depressive anxiety (alluded to above) in its full force, and thus feel compelled to act, symbolically and practically. Critical voices from within assimilationist settler-nationalism provoke their anxiety that the nation (and thus their sense of national identity) will be ruined or, alternatively, that they will remain unable to experience a desirable form of proud national identity.⁴ Other underlying fears are that the damage done in the past to the indigenous will flood the present and ruin it. This gives rise to guilty feelings that may be overwhelming and result in a form of melancholia where the nation is perceived as irredeemably bad. On the other hand, it gives rise to a reparative impulse that may open the way for a more constructive dialogue between settler and indigenous Australians on issues such as compensation for past treatment, indigenous self-determination, and land rights.⁵

In the remainder of this paper I will fill out these claims about the two modes of settler-nationalism through the use of examples drawn from public and private discourse. I will consider assimilationist settler-nationalism first.

Assimilationist settler-nationalism, which drew on the myths of white Australia, has for the most part dropped the race categories from its repertoire as they fell into disrepute in the period since the Second World War. In that same period its ascendancy began to falter, and as a consequence since then it has been expressed in a more defensive and reactionary manner, at times explicitly responding to the emergence of its competitor, indigenizing settler-nationalism. It has been transformed in the process. In response, for example, to versions of the national story

⁴ At the time of intense national debate during 1997 after the High Court's Wik decision, Defenders of Native Title groups sprang up across the country. At public meetings, speakers got up and expressed intense fears for their country should the Howard government introduce legislation that went against the spirit of the Mabo and Wik High Court decisions. They spoke of being torn at their very core, of being in mortal or spiritual danger, and emphasized their feelings of solidarity with the indigenous against the federal government.

⁵ It can be shown, for example, that what I term indigenizing settler-nationalism has provided much of the intellectual, moral, and emotional support for Aboriginal land rights policies since the late 1960s, and for the official process of Aboriginal reconciliation (see Moran, 2000).

that reveal less honorable aspects of the growth of settler culture and consciousness, it is at times impatient, at other times defensive or angry. This mode of nationalism relies on a myth about the growth of Australian national culture that, for the most part, excludes the Aboriginal presence, and the impact of that ongoing presence for national identity. The narrative is dominated, structured, and given legitimation by the doctrine of *terra nullius* (i.e., that the Australian continent was an “empty” land, not owned by anybody else at the time of colonization). It is within this discursive regime that the “great Australian silence” about the process of dispossession of the Aborigines, which W. E. H. Stanner noticed in his survey of Australia’s generalist and popular histories, is most evident (Stanner, 1969, p. 24). Assimilationist settler-nationalism works to keep Aboriginality (although not individual Aborigines) out of the nation. This is because the national community is imagined as culturally (and in some examples either implicitly or explicitly racially) homogeneous. Aboriginality and its specific claims vis-à-vis the Australian nation-state are threatening because they carry disintegrative messages for this mode of nationalism. They invoke fears of illegitimacy (due to unconscious recognition of the crime of dispossession), national fragmentation, and warring tribes. Ethnic conflicts such as occurred in the former Yugoslavia, for example, are frequently invoked as arguments against multiculturalism and against Aboriginal land rights. Aboriginal claims also reverberate with fears about the transformation of Australia’s ethnic makeup, including the rise of Asian minorities, and reflect a sense of loss about an older Australian identity (see Dixon, 1999).

Klein’s notion of the paranoid-schizoid position—the defenses it typically draws upon, and the primary affects characteristic of its functioning—is helpful in explaining certain aspects of the way that assimilationist settler-nationalism responds to anxieties provoked by the confrontation with Aboriginal issues. Splitting, for example, is prevalent in different ways. There is the splitting of identities in accordance with eras of time. In arguments against land rights, for example, Aboriginality is consigned to the “stone age,” whereas non-Aboriginal Australian identity belongs to modernity (see Connolly, 1993). There is also a splitting of Aboriginal identity into “good” and “bad,” or “authentic” and “inauthentic.” Thus, most contemporary Aborigines are not considered “real” Aborigines. Evidence from focus groups and individual interviews indicates the prevalence of this way of thinking about Aboriginality. Many respondents made a distinction between the “full-blooded” authentic Aborigine somewhere in the outback—preferably as far away from the speaker’s location as possible—and the urban or rural town-dwelling “half-caste” who is “not really Aboriginal at all.” Respondents asserted that the latter were claiming Aboriginality only in order to receive special treatment by government (see Irving Saulwick and Associates, 2000, pp. 5, 8 and *passim*). The qualitative research indicates a strong tendency to denigrate Aboriginal leaders as “half-castes” who cannot, and do not, speak for “real” Aborigines.

Another prominent form of splitting involves the rigid separation of the past from the present. This is selective. Some elements of the past, like national

successes including bravery in war (the ANZAC tradition), are seen to feed directly into the present and to consolidate, and represent, contemporary national character. For the white settlers it is important to remember where one has come from and to dwell on the achievements rather than the negatives. For those of Aboriginal descent, however, it seems that there is too much dwelling on a past that will not enrich them. As the prominent Australian historian Blainey has put it, the “future of the Aborigines lies in looking to the 21st century, not to the 18th century” (Blainey, 1991, p. 125). One past enriches; the other is damaging and best forgotten. Dispossession and unjust policies toward the indigenous must be split off from the present, else they contaminate it with bitterness and “unhelpful” raking over of what cannot be undone. The argument is that if there were atrocities and sins in the past (and this is reluctantly admitted, if admitted at all), these have no real bearing on the present. The “badness” involved in dispossession, if it is at all recognized, is relegated to a past event.

Also expressive of paranoid-schizoid processes is the general air of persecution, involving the hunting out of national enemies and the call to arms in defense of the “besieged” nation. This response is most evident where those who raise uncomfortable questions about dispossession and poor treatment of the indigenous, or who support indigenous land rights, are accused of mysterious ulterior motives or of being secret (or unwitting) proxies for the forces of authoritarianism or communism. During the debate on native title after the Mabo ruling, a prominent Liberal Party leader from Western Australia, Bill Hassell, made the following claim (1993, p. 67):

Some opponents of Aboriginal land rights and Mabo have made a consistent mistake over a long period. Their mistake is to see these things in isolation, to see them as individual things, to see them as separate and isolated claims upon our society. If we are to come to grips with Mabo we must see it as part of a wider agenda. It is beyond my comprehension to work out why the High Court should, wittingly or unwittingly, have become a party to the fulfillment of that agenda. Being generous, one must respectfully assume that the High Court was simply misguided, that the majority of Judges confused their responsibilities as judicial officers with their personal ideologies, that they were not part of the wider long term agenda which will inevitably lead, if followed, to a divided and damaged, and some would say destroyed, Australian society. Put very simply, the wider agenda is to create an Aboriginal, separate, sovereign state geographically within Australia, but not part of, or tenuously only a part of, the Australian nation. Once more the Aboriginal people are being used by people whose aim is to weaken and destroy the nation we know, for reasons which can only be assumed to be as inverted, perverse and obscure as those which have driven Marxists and other totalitarian thinkers in all ages.

The paranoid style of thinking is here apparent. The acceptance of native title, or any other concession to indigenous rights, would lead by stages, Hassell claimed, to “the end of Australia as we know it” (Hassell, 1993, p. 77).

“Guilt” has been a potent presence for some time in discussions of the colonial past of Australia. What is of interest is not so much whether, in an intellectual sense, a concept of *collective guilt* can be sustained, but rather the way that guilt—and even its less psychologically painful compatriot “shame”—is so thoroughly repudiated by many who are situated within assimilationist settler-nationalism. Such repudiation involves an idealization of the past, and of national identity, that sees in any real admission of guilt the potential for the destruction of the loved nation object. Those who carry guilt messages, as I suggested above, are often demonized as enemies within, as the witting or unwitting lackeys of foreign interests, indicating the presence of persecutory anxiety.

To illustrate this form of response, I examine published speeches from a conference held in 1994, organized by a small group of leaders and members from the Uniting Church, calling themselves “The Galatians Group.” They had formed their association in response to a Covenanting Statement read at an assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1994. The covenanting statement admitted that the churches had done much wrong in the past, in their missionary work, and in their role within the broader colonizing process that had dispossessed and done violence to Aborigines. On the whole it reads as an attempt at reparation for past abuses, in a language that, while admitting the devastation experienced by Aborigines, was not overwhelmingly self-condemnatory. It engages explicitly at several points with the discourses of reconciliation emanating from the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. It is interesting in itself that most speakers at the Galatians conference read the covenanting statement as almost completely self-condemnatory, one respondent titling a section of his talk “Forgiveness for What?” and describing the covenant as “containing morbid expressions of contrition and guilt for the actions of others” (Milliken, 1994, p. 25). The prominent (then Australian Labor Party) politician Graeme Campbell, who also spoke at the conference, saw guilt as a gnawing sickness, and idealized the British colonists as far better than any other colonists the Aborigines might have had. He repudiated what he saw as an outrageous attack by the Uniting Church on the role of Christian missions in Australia, and on the Australian nation as a whole. The tone of his speech was generally triumphal and dismissive. Not only was there no need to feel guilt, shame, or regret in the present over the treatment of Aborigines in the past, or in the contemporary period; those colonists of the past had no real cause to feel guilt or regret for their actions either. The coming of civilization to Australia, he argued, was a great event. Even those early religious figures who pointed the finger in the face of massacre are castigated by Campbell; they began the rot that we were now witnessing, that guilt which is “gnawing at the vitals, not only of the churches, but of the country itself” (Campbell, 1994, p. 49).

Dr. Edgar French in his contribution to the conference analyzed the concept of guilt in its various distinguishable forms, and the calls to action that it provokes. He provided a broad explanation for the rise of guilt in Western societies, and what he saw as the dangers this presented for nations. Early in his address he singled out

Marxists as the first to successfully use the imposition of guilt as a political tool to destabilize nations and make them more amenable to revolution. This was in the form of the “guilt of imperialism”: the colonizers decimating the colonized. Thus, he presented his audience with a scheming enemy typical of the paranoid world. National guilt in any form was an irrationality, he argued. In contemporary Australia the enemies were the “media moralists” who, since the late 1950s, had constantly attacked “the values and sentiments of the colonial past” and “who have managed to insinuate the idea that the national heritage is constituted of things outworn and evil.” At one point in his address he referred to the process whereby a form of “moral guilt,” which called for reparative action, became instilled in the minds of those who, at the very most, should only feel what he termed “empathetic guilt” about a past they played no part in, as a “rape of a refined sensibility” (French, 1994, p. 60). Where there is rape there must be criminals. The experience of national guilt was, in his view, “a pathological condition wrought by an unscrupulous magnification and distortion of natural empathetic guilt” (French, 1994, pp. 60–61). The unscrupulous were the moral crusaders, but of their real intent French left his audience in the dark.

French claimed that there was no moral guilt attached to the nation, even in the past, because the settlement of Australia was an unstoppable feature of European expansion. “The European occupation of Australia,” he argued, “was implied in the logic of certain world-shaking developments of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which subsequently went on to produce the vast European diaspora that populated the North American prairie, the Brazilian pampas, the African veldt, and the Siberian steppe.” We were “part of that irresistible movement which, to be sure, might have been better managed wherever it took place, but which ultimately could not be denied” (French, 1994, p. 63). The real actions of Australian men and women toward Aborigines could not be held to moral account because they were part of that inexorable movement.

French went even further in his removal of morality from the past, citing the cause of maintaining national stability: We could not look at the past in terms of its morality because it might threaten the legitimacy of the nation. Such questionings of the past constituted a persecutory attack. Use of the term “invasion” to refer to the process of colonization—for example, in school texts—French saw as the fixing of “the mark of Cain on the unsuspecting children in the schools” (French, 1994, p. 64).⁶ If Australians admitted too freely to past blame, then they too would be dispossessed. It was simply not safe to entertain, let alone hold for any length of time, that sense of guilt.

⁶ He was referring to specific proposals in New South Wales at the time. Ironically enough, perhaps, assimilationists are less touchy over terminology where other peoples are concerned. Blainey used the term “invasion” to describe the 1850s drift of the Chinese across the “unguarded” border of South Australia into Victorian gold fields (see Blainey, 1984, p. 49).

In the same vein Blainey spoke of the dangers of reconciliation if it was not handled skillfully:

To my mind there is a special reason for trying to be constructive today. In handling aboriginal issues and aboriginal needs, Australia is sailing into rocky seas. Important parts of Australian life are at risk of being thrown overboard. Even Australia's independence is being endangered in the long term. (Blainey, 1994, p. 4)

And a little further on:

Guilt and reconciliation are becoming a sharp weapon for those who find it useful to deny the legitimacy and the morality of their nation. If you deny the legitimacy and the morality of your nation, you undermine it and you prepare it for changes cleverly imposed by others. That is why the Federal Government tries to manipulate the process of reconciliation. (Blainey, 1994, p. 5)

The whiff of government conspiracy is in the air; what these interests were, except squashing free speech in Australian democracy, Blainey did not say.

In Blainey's address, Aboriginal land rights in general, and the debate over Mabo and Native Title legislation in particular, were construed as a battle between those who would defend "one Australia" and those who would set about dismantling it. The statements of some of the judges of the High Court in Mabo are referred to as "astonishing"; Blainey argued that they would only encourage the growth of an already unhealthy feeling of independence among Aborigines, and ultimately a push for their own separate state. Blainey called up key fears about disintegration. An accusation of cowardice and even treachery infused his reading of politicians' responses. They were "silent" in the face of what he clearly found alarming statements from Aboriginal leaders. The statement that he cited, from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Dodson, was read by Blainey almost as a call to separation, when at face value it was not. In fact Dodson suggested three alternatives, and did not say which was the preferred one in his call for the right of Aboriginal self-determination:

In theory if certain conditions were satisfied, the right of choice may be exercised to form a separate independent state. (*By that he meant a separate nation.*) Equally, regional autonomy might be sought or full integration with the Australian state.

Blainey's interpolation (i.e., the italics) stressed the threat of national disintegration. For these expressions of Aboriginal independence and cultural assertions, he blamed not Dodson but all those non-Aboriginal Australians "who scoff at Australia's achievements":

Nothing does more to weaken Australia than the persistent attempts to deride its history and to deny its present legitimacy as a nation. The call for a republic seems odd in this context. Any independence that Australia gains by becoming a republic would be tiny compared to the loss of independence likely to stem from confused policies on aboriginal questions. (Blainey, 1994, p. 6)⁷

The defensive response of assimilationist settler-nationalism, illustrated in these examples, involves an idealization of the Australian nation and of the national past, tempered only slightly by the recognition that in the past some injustices might have been committed. This admission is predominantly played down, and it usually appears as part of a defense of the nation against those who, it is claimed, can see no virtue in the national past and the Australian nation. This very characterization of critics of the nation (frequently labeled “black-armed”) reveals the operation of paranoid-schizoid mechanisms. Certainly there are those who denigrate their own national community, scorning it in an outpouring of guilt and self-loathing; but they are counterbalanced by many others who point to the defects without seeing in this a wholesale disendorsement of the nation. What angers assimilationist settler-nationalists is the ambivalence: the way that critics of the nation do not share their idealization. In the eyes of assimilationist settler-nationalists, critics of the nation and its past become persecutors—enemies whose secret aim is to bring the nation down. In their view, attention should be focused firmly on the uniqueness of the Australian achievement, as if the nation really were in danger of collapsing should such criticisms be broadly paraded in public and accepted as truths. Guilt here is felt as persecution and provokes anger and resentment. It is denied or otherwise fended off.

This emotional underpinning of paranoia, fear, and resentment directs a certain response to indigenous issues. One can see this in a growing backlash in Australia in reaction to recent revelations contained in official reports such as *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry Into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children From Their Families* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997). That report detailed, through the use of extensive oral interviews, the devastation felt across Aboriginal Australia as a direct result of almost a century of government policies that orchestrated the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents. The conservative backlash has included claims by a former Liberal minister for Aboriginal affairs, Peter Howson, that Aborigines should be called “the rescued” rather than “the stolen generation,” and reference by former Labor Party leader and

⁷ Blainey’s assumptions about the sources of Aboriginal aspiration are even more curious given that he is a renowned historian. For as he must be aware, indigenous claims are now formed not only against the background of what goes on in their own nation-state, but in a context of developing international notions of indigenous rights, and forums within the UN. In highlighting the paranoia of his response, the choice of Mick Dodson is particularly revealing, for Dodson explicitly denies that indigenous peoples in Australia (or elsewhere in the world) desire the dismantling of the nation-states that enclose them (see, e.g., Dodson, 1996, pp. 192, 202).

former governor general Bill Hayden to a so-called “false memory syndrome” that impelled the indigenous to “fabricate” the trauma of family separation. This combative response involved a rejection of indigenous suffering, a refusal to hold that suffering, to examine it, and to empathize with it (for a more general discussion of the conservative backlash, see Manne, 2001).

Within this mode of settler-nationalism there is, nevertheless, empathy for the plight of the indigenous, especially in terms of the disadvantages associated with health, housing, education, and employment. In other words, although assimilationist settler-nationalism directs a combative approach to issues that reflect on the nation and the past, this does not mean that the plight of individual Aborigines does not arouse sympathy. A general tendency of the Howard government, for example, has been to promote the notion of what it calls “practical reconciliation,” by which is meant the pursuit of resolving the terrible levels of Aboriginal disadvantage. This emphasis on practicality is a form of reparation.

The emotional structure and response to the indigenous of indigenizing settler-nationalism does, however, form a contrast. I call it indigenizing settler-nationalism rather than simply “reparative nationalism” because of the way that it seeks, through embracing Aboriginality, to create for itself a more secure and legitimate national identity that can be shared by all the diverse groups that make up the Australian nation. The desire of indigenizing settler-nationalists is to become indigenous, in the sense of truly belonging, as Aborigines do, to the Australian continent: the fulfillment, in other words, of the nationalist desire for the nation to loom out of the immemorial past (see Anderson, 1983, pp. 42–43) and from a “national territory.” At the same time it is infused with a sense of mourning, and motivated by the need to work through the past in order to re-invent a better, more inclusive Australian identity.

This mode is underpinned by an image of the nation that registers and celebrates its cultural, ethnic, or racial diversity. The former administrator and advisor in Aboriginal affairs, the late H. C. Coombs, suggested a useful metaphor:

The Yolngu people of East Arnhem Land have a metaphorical image to illustrate the coming together of ‘peoples from far away’. Two streams of water flow into a coastal lagoon: one stream is tidal and salt from the sea; the other fresh from the rain on nearby hills. As the streams enter the lagoon there is, on the surface, the chaotic froth of their interaction which gradually establishes a recognisable pattern as the streams merge with the lagoon. But their separate identity is not wholly lost. At various levels the streams continue to exist, influencing and changing, but not destroying the diversity in the character of the lagoon. It is perhaps an image which Australians, white as well as black, could well incorporate into that of the Australian nation—of unity expressing and protecting diversity and autonomy. (Coombs, 1994, p. 230)

The nation is conceived as a container of diversity. The discourse is essentially forward-looking: The nation is in a process of becoming, and one of the only certainties is that tolerance of diversity is necessary for what it might become. It engages with the key Australian nationalist symbols: the nation of “the fair go,” mateship, egalitarianism, and tolerance; the democratic, socially progressive nation striding ahead at the forefront of a changing world. These symbols and ideas constantly recur in the discourse, although in a new alignment and infused with the spirit of reparation. The paradox it must manage to admit into public recognition, and not really attempt to dissolve, is this: that the nation is founded illegitimately (in relation to the dispossession of the indigenous), and yet is itself legitimate. One of the questions it leaves largely unanswered is this: If the nation is (and always *was*) so progressive and based on an egalitarian ethic—the notion of the fair go—how was it that Aborigines were treated so badly and for so long? Another is: To what extent was the very creation of this new world nation founded on, and dependent on, a refusal to acknowledge the rights and humanity of the Aboriginal other?⁸ It is ambivalent about its own nationalism, at one moment extolling the virtues of the nation, at another admitting the capacity of that same nation to commit terrible wrongs. The nation is in Klein’s sense a *whole object*. Although an idealization of the nation still surfaces, it is counterbalanced by a more sober view of the capacities of the Australian nation (and nations generally) to do wrong. There is an acceptance of national guilt or shame. It is recognized that the nation, as a historically continuous community, bears responsibility for the past and the present. This involves the recognition that the past feeds into continuing Aboriginal disadvantage, and that the nation has a responsibility in the present to alleviate that situation. Thus, the past is not split off from the present in the way that it is for assimilationist settler-nationalism.

Where assimilationist settler-nationalism excludes Aboriginality from the nation—Aborigines enter the Australian nation as Australian citizens like everybody else—indigenizing settler-nationalism attempts to bring Aboriginality into the nation, in the service of a rapprochement between settler and indigene that will, at the same time, reestablish the legitimacy of the nation. In other words, it operates under the assumption that the nation needs to be made good, repaired, and that in its present form it remains diminished. Because people want to continue to feel pride in their national identity, they must engage in actions, both symbolic and practical, to repair and enhance relations between non-indigenous and indigenous.

An indigenizing concept of the nation is evident in many of the speeches of former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating, a political figure whose pronouncements in this regard are especially deserving of close analysis given the importance he gave to Aboriginal affairs and reconciliation during his prime ministership. In many ways his approach to Aboriginal issues exemplifies indigenizing settler-nationalism. In a speech titled “The Benefits of Diversity,” given in 1995 at a

⁸ This is one of the key questions that Australian culture must address, according to Smith (1980).

conference in Sydney, Keating posited Australia's diversity as a source of value, strength, and pride, but also posed the more sobering view that in the international context diversity had sometimes been a source of tension and failure, and often took "the form of tragic and intractable conflicts" (Keating, 1995, p. 264). The difference, however, between this mode of nationalism and that previously examined lies in the response to this potential threat. Rather than imagining that diversity could be kept out of the nation, the nation must find new ways to handle it, even to be enriched by it. Diversity is thus itself seen as inherently ambivalent, rather than as a metonym for cultural disintegration. The speech raised questions concerning the impact of globalization, especially in terms of the way it undermined traditional notions of national economic sovereignty. Keating pointed out that conflicts were breaking out at the sub-nation-state level, "the reflection of a world in which very often the *nation* and the *state* are no longer the same thing" (Keating, 1995, p. 265). The speech, then, was in part an effort to suggest new ways of thinking in a global sense—that is, beyond the structures that the United Nations set up to resolve and minimize major conflicts between nation-states. That is the speech's context, but my main interest is the way that it posits Australia and seeks to encourage an ethic of cultural diversity.

Keating suggested two responses to intractable conflicts and to the way that globalization had fundamentally changed notions of national control of internal affairs. One response was to rethink the state, and there were different ways to do this. One could rethink traditional state borders: Sometimes the only solution seemed to be the redrawing of those borders, to realign imagined community with state. Another way was to rethink what a state was altogether, and to accept some form of division of sovereignty within the same state. Yet another possibility was regional cooperation between states to solve economic and conflictual problems.

The second major form of response that Keating suggested was to rethink the nation:

The challenge in many cases is how we can create societies rich in cultural, racial and religious diversity in ways which encourage rather than compromise as sense of national identity. It is too glib to say that the answer lies simply in better understanding. The problems in the Balkans or in central Africa do not stem from a lack of familiarity with the culture of the antagonists. This means that the redefinition of the nation is a complex task. It involves economic and social development, justice, human rights, good governance, inclusive institution-building, tolerance, respect for difference, the strengthening of civil society. (Keating, 1995, pp. 266–267)

In defending the concept of the multicultural society, Keating extended its history back into the last century, using a language of inclusivism while, at the same time, not denying the dominance of the British (and Irish) heritage. It was the question, he argued, of how to see that the story of inclusive multiculturalism was a long one,

that the dominant Australian tradition, with its tolerance, egalitarianism, and its important liberal-democratic institutions, had provided the foreground for the rise of multicultural society. On the other hand he cautioned against idealizing that past, and that set of institutions. We must, he argued, use the best in those traditions as something that drives reform.

It is in this context of the proudly diverse multicultural society that Keating placed the Aboriginal/settler situation. The ongoing failure of this relation, and the fact of longstanding and continuing conflict between Aboriginal and settler communities, he saw as the great failure and threat to the multicultural society. However, unlike assimilationist settler-nationalists, he did not see indigenous claims as persecutory. As in Klein's depressive position, the stress is on repairing, on making what was damaged whole again. The underlying anxiety is that too much damage has been done; the other side of the constructive thinking about how to reorder the nation-state is the air of mourning and guilt, at times self-recrimination for neglect and wrongs done. "Until we succeed in our ambition to effect a permanent reconciliation with indigenous Australians," Keating argued, "our claims to have achieved a successful multicultural society will always be compromised" (Keating, 1995, p. 268). The notion of a new partnership based on mutual respect, tolerance, justice, and equity, he concluded, must replace old exclusions and attempts to assimilate.

In Keating's famous, and controversial, Redfern Park speech delivered on 10 December 1992, he did what to many ardent nationalists was the inexcusable: He admitted in no uncertain terms that the settler-national community had been capable of committing terrible crimes against the indigenous. It is worth quoting him:

Isn't it reasonable to say that if we can build a prosperous and remarkably harmonious multicultural society in Australia, surely we can find just solutions to the problems which beset the first Australians—the people to whom the most injustice has been done. And, as I say, the starting point might be to recognize that the problem starts with us non-Aboriginal Australians. It begins, I think, with that act of recognition. Recognition that it was we who did the dispossessing. We took the traditional land and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the diseases. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice. And our failure to imagine these things being done to us. With some notable exceptions, we failed to make the most basic human response and enter into their hearts and minds. We failed to ask—how would I feel if this were done to me? As a consequence, we failed to see that what we were doing degraded all of us. (Keating, 1993)

It was exactly this frank admission that so outraged some other nationalists. In the remainder of the speech Keating explicitly argued that, in the present, settler-Australians were not driven by guilt; they were not personally responsible for the

actions of others. Nevertheless, guilt is acknowledged in the past, and this had implications for the way settler-Australians should address indigenous issues. Thus, guilt is approached not with fear but in a spirit of reparation.

In the Redfern Park speech Keating spoke of bringing Aboriginal identity and culture fully into the nation. Such a task he saw as fundamental to proving, to Australians themselves and to the world, that Australia was a first-rate social democracy, that it really was “the land of the fair go and the better chance.” But he also considered this task to be a test of Australians’ self-knowledge, of “how well we know the land we live in” and its history. Achieving or not achieving this task would show how “well we recognize the fact that, complex as our contemporary identity is, it cannot be separated from Aboriginal Australia.” In speaking of the importance of the International Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (in 1993), he went even further:

. . . to bring the dispossessed out of the shadows, to recognize that they are part of us, and that we cannot give indigenous Australians up without giving up many of our most deeply held values, much of our own identity—and our own humanity. (Keating, 1993)

When one looks at this language closely, one can see elements of a process typical of this mode of nationalism: Aboriginality becomes necessary for the “healing” of white settlers (see Lattas, 1990, p. 51; Lattas, 1992, pp. 52–53; Moran, 1998). In Keating’s speech the explicit emphasis is on the healing of the whole nation. It is noteworthy that the nation itself is still, in part, idealized: There is a careful avoidance of any overt condemnation of the Australian nation itself. Rather, the speech attends to the making whole of an already great (though incomplete) nation. The nation itself is good, and has been good to its settlers, but they—not the formation of the nation—have let their Aboriginal brothers and sisters down. The speech is peppered with images, such as the one quoted below, that portray Australia as the good, just nation that Australians only have to live up to:

We non-Aboriginal Australians should perhaps remind ourselves that Australia once reached out for us. Didn’t Australia provide opportunity and care for the dispossessed Irish? The poor of Britain? The refugees from war and famine and persecution in the countries of Europe and Asia? (Keating, 1993)

Thus, Australian nationals have been guilty of tarnishing their own good nation object, and the only way to alleviate this guilt was through the reparative inclusion of the indigenous.

As a form of inclusivism, this can be distinguished from the individualistic inclusivism of the other mode of nationalism, which, as I argued, was premised on the disappearance of Aboriginal culture. Consider, for example, the following

statement about the need for reconciliation between the indigenous and the rest of the national community, taken from an interview I conducted with “Paul”:⁹

Now the one group that I feel haven’t found their place in the sun to the same extent, are the Aborigines. That we don’t yet, oh well it’s starting to grow, but we didn’t have much respect for their culture, or acceptance of it. And I think that, that one of the things which is really starting to appear in the Australian culture, is a recognition that Aboriginal insights into land ownership, Aboriginal spirituality, and these things are *so* Australian, that the land here always . . . makes it important—*imperative*—that you go down that track. That somehow this land here grabs you and does that to us. And that therefore we’ve got an awful lot to learn from Aboriginal culture, and to bring it into our own expanding culture. Culture keeps growing and developing and I think Aboriginal spirituality and Aboriginal understanding of land, of their own concern for the flora and fauna and so on—these have been great traditions which we can benefit from, if we absorb it, the way we absorbed Italian and Greek culture there in the post-war period. And now gradually the Muslim culture is starting to have some influence. So I would be hoping then that we can *maintain* that multiculturalism and in doing so begin to absorb more from the Aboriginal cultural heritage, which I think is very, is very strong and very deep. And it’s been underestimated for so long.

Notions of progress and evolution are here given up in favor of a notion of cultural hybridity—taking the best values and achievements of all cultures—that is given a positive value and seen as the source of national strength. Where Paul speaks of “absorbing,” this means for him something very different from the notions of absorption, merging, and assimilation discussed previously. Identities are not exclusive; just as the indigenous draw now on sources provided by European cultures, so the Europeans in Australia draw upon Aboriginal culture. Nor does Paul denigrate the value or achievements of his own cultural tradition—Irish Catholic Australian—or the broader British tradition. The central strength of Australian culture, he argues elsewhere in the interview, lies in its capacity to absorb different influences and peoples without obliterating their differences. Of early Australia he says:

Now, I think that multiculturalism has gone so well in Australia because of the Irish and the Scots—and the Welsh to a lesser extent—but the Celtic peoples in Australia have maintained a cultural identity, which is different from the English one. And we were able to do that without any great tension—a little bit, the Catholic/Protestant stuff—but, the Celtic, no one was worried about the Scots parading around in kilts, or the Micks going

⁹ The name is a pseudonym. The interview was conducted in 1997.

to mass on Sunday, nobody worried about that. Or nuns walking around dressed up like Muslim women. . . . It was all taken for granted, that was the way it was.

Paul calls for the joining of cultures, recognizing the risks involved, but seeing no other way in a world never free from violence and conflict, or their potential. The land becomes the source of national values, the common inheritance. It is not that the value of cohesiveness is denied—Paul, for example, sees it as fundamentally important that all who live within Australia have a commitment to some unifying value, basically a commitment to respecting other cultures and to holding the society together—it is just that the solution offered by the assimilationists is found wanting. Of Blainey's view, Paul says:

I agree with Blainey on cohesiveness. I mean, I never had any great problems with Blainey's speech. I felt that what he was saying was an important point, I just disagreed with him, and the way you solve it is by . . . [*Blainey's concern with cohesiveness itself was not the issue, it was really the way he thought about that cohesiveness?*] Yes, and also the fact that he put up a barrier to stop any more migration. That, that he was trying to freeze things, as if you can freeze cultural development—I don't think you can. You could in the old days when people didn't travel, when people didn't intermarry, but all that's changed.

A similar understanding of the Australian nation, and of the place of the indigenous within it, is invoked in the writings of the Catholic priest and advocate of Aboriginal land rights and reconciliation Fr. Frank Brennan. The title of one of his recent books—*One Land, One Nation*—is a rephrasing of the old Australian nationalist catchcry “a nation for a continent, a continent for a nation.” The book itself is a reworking of the notion of “one people, one destiny” to incorporate an acceptance of cultural diversity absent from the original formulation. He calls for a real and lasting reconciliation between settler and indigenous Australians, a form of joining that allows a degree of ongoing cultural/political separation. He conceives of reconciliation as the erection of a bridge over a river on either side of which stand two peoples. “Across such a bridge,” he argued, “. . . the brave and fine could constitute ‘one land, one nation’ in which black and white entwined are free” (Brennan, 1995, p. xvi). Reconciliation, Brennan argues, will involve the “owning of the past” by non-Aboriginal people, a past that includes terrible wrongs done to the original inhabitants of the land. His vision of entwinement in the one nation suggests that each culture would enrich the other and thus the nation erected over them.

The fusing of Aboriginal with non-Aboriginal identities under the umbrella of the one nation is highly desirable for indigenizing settler-nationalists because, within this discourse, the settler self cannot do without the Aborigine. In the preface to an earlier book, Brennan stated that his book was written in the hope “that

Aborigines might belong again throughout this land; and those of us who are not Aboriginal might belong for the first time without shame" (Brennan, 1991, p. ix). Aborigines perform an important redemptive function: Only Aborigines can forgive the sins of the past. But the nation cannot let Aborigines go—secession is not what Brennan means by self-determination, otherwise he would not insist on the notion of "one people"—because the settler-nation needs the Aborigines in order to legitimate its connection with the land, and thus to give the nation itself legitimacy in the region. The stress on entwinement expresses an underlying wish that the settler-national self will become indigenized and so a true and legitimate heir to the land. In calling for constitutional recognition for Aborigines as the original owners of the land, and guaranteeing them a place in the democratic process, Brennan is not only extending justice to them; he aims to strengthen the nation and to give all settlers a more secure national identity:

It would be better for all Australians, on both sides of the river, if we could go into the next millennium committed to the legitimacy of "one land, one nation." Our shared commitment to the nation would forge a strong identity and a secure place for all who belong on this continent. (Brennan, 1995, p. xv)

A notion that he has repeatedly returned to in his writings is that Aborigines are the custodians of the only culture unique to this land. His nationalism requires a grafting of this unique culture onto one Australian identity. He argues that actual recognition of Aborigines as the inheritors and original owners of the land, and as custodians of this unique culture, is important for Aborigines but also for all Australians. "Such recognition," he claims, "would consolidate the national identity of all Australians" (Brennan, 1991, p. 160).

The call for true reconciliation between Aborigines and non-Aborigines is couched in terms of historical justice, but also of national cohesion. It is important to note, however, that unlike the response to unity and cohesion of assimilationist settler-nationalism—which called for a retreat to former positions and the principled stand on all issues—here cohesion is viewed as a positive challenge that calls for new ways of thinking and ordering the relations between peoples. For example, in Brennan's discourse it becomes imperative that Aboriginal demands are met within the nation, not simply ruled out, otherwise the threat of segregation might become a reality, which in Brennan's view would be bad for everyone. Reconciliation means a strengthening of the nation-state in terms of its legitimacy, the country's economic future and social stability (Brennan, 1995, p. 187). The threat of disunity is recognized but is not a pervasive fear.

On the other hand, there is a danger that settler-nationalists engage in a form of mock reparation (see Alford, 1989, pp. 34–35) where they overestimate the ability of their nation to "transcend" the past through their acts of reparation. In doing so, they might fail to recognize the real points of difference, inscribed by history, that continue to distinguish the interests of settler Australians from those

of the indigenous. In an address to the nation on the proposed legislative response to the Mabo decision in 1993, Keating seemed to suggest that his government might finally resolve the longstanding colonial dilemma, and that settler Australia could wipe the slate clean:

With the challenge of Mabo effectively met—with native title efficiently brought within our land management system, we can move on. We can move on to see Mabo as a tremendous opportunity it is. An opportunity to right an historic wrong. An opportunity to transcend the history of dispossession. An opportunity to restore the age-old link between Aboriginal land and culture. An opportunity to heal a source of bitterness. An opportunity to recognise Aboriginal culture as a defining element of our nationhood and culture—and to make clear that this Australia, this modern, free and tolerant Australia can be a secure and bountiful place for all—including the *first* Australians. (Keating, 1994, p. 238)

With this language of transcendence, of healing, of fixing things up once and for all, Keating's rhetoric suggested an art of the impossible. It was as if the past, "the history of dispossession," were still with us to be undone. A powerful fantasy, no doubt, and one that had the hint of a desire to be done with that bad past, so that Australians could "move on."

I have argued that indigenizing settler-nationalism supports notions of cultural diversity and recognition, and of historical justice for the indigenous as central to the maturing and improvement of the nation. I want to make one final point that reflects on the qualitative and quantitative research on attitudes of ordinary Australians discussed above. Indigenizing settler-nationalism has largely been an elite phenomenon in Australian political culture. One reason for this is that assimilationist settler-nationalism has always been on firmer political, cultural, and psychological ground and is thus always available as a powerful form of political rhetoric in response to the claims raised by indigenizing settler-nationalism. It is closer to commonsense notions about the equality of all, and to traditional Australian settler-nationalist beliefs about what holds a nation together (i.e., homogeneity). It rests on the kinship or familial notions of nationhood that stress cultural similarity and common descent as the basis for solidarity. The refusal of assimilationist settler-nationalism to recognize the legitimacy of Aboriginal land rights and to accept the need for the protection of significant Aboriginal beliefs about the land dovetails with the structural basis of capitalist development in Australia: radical access to land and minerals as saleable, exploitable commodities. In contrast, indigenizing settler-nationalism must argue against the grain of such economic logic, removing significant areas of land from the capitalist market.

Conclusions

In this paper, I have endeavored to indicate the power of psychoanalytic political psychology in the analysis of a specific set of political and social relations. I have attempted to show, through the use of historical and contemporary examples, how unconscious processes (interpreted here in terms of Kleinian object relations theory) infuse political desires and beliefs.

Such an approach, modified to take into account specific historical and political circumstances, could be used as an explanatory tool in a variety of situations (see, e.g., the analysis of the Northern Ireland conflict in Cash, 1996). Other forms of nationalism, including the nationalisms of settler societies such as the United States, Canada, and New Zealand, could be shown to have different strains within them. In understanding the structural features of these different strains, one needs to consider not only the specific ideas and beliefs, but also the characteristic emotions infusing them. It would be appropriate to think of the different ways that other nationalisms come to terms with the past (and especially the “bad” aspects of those pasts)—whether, for example, they experience persecutory or depressive anxieties in that confrontation. Similarly, such a methodology could be applied to the question of multiculturalism versus assimilation (or homogeneous national culture) in a variety of settings. This is one of the vital issues being debated in many polities in the period of globalization. A greater appreciation of the emotional dynamics of these important debates might help political psychologists to explain features of conflict and reconciliation not explained adequately by other approaches.

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