

The Representation of Aboriginality in the Novels of Peter Temple

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Abstract: Identity politics is fraught with difficulties. Of few places is this truer than in Australia when it comes to the representation of Aboriginality. On the one hand the absence or invisibility of Aboriginality in Australian life and culture maybe interpreted as a deliberate exclusion of a people whose presence is uncomfortable or inconvenient for many Australians of immigrant origin. Equally, the representation of Aboriginality by non-Aboriginals may be seen as an appropriation of identity, an inexcusable commercial exploitation or an act of neocolonialism. Best-selling and prize-winning South African-born author Peter Temple appears to be very much aware of these pitfalls. In his crime novels, written between 1996 and 2009, he has obviously made the decision to grasp the nettle and attempt to represent Aboriginality in a way that would be as acceptable as possible. This paper traces the evolution of Temple's representation of Aboriginality through the three major Aboriginal characters present in his novels: Cameron Delray (*Bad Debts*, 1996; *Black Tide*, 1999; *Dead Point*, 2000; and *White Dog*, 2003), Ned Lowey (*An Iron Rose*, 1998) and Detective Sergeant Paul Dove (*The Broken Shore*, 2005 and *Truth*, 2009).

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We are accustomed, in crime fiction, to tarnished heroes. These are men, such as Philip Marlowe, or Lew Archer, who drink too much, are rather too prone to violence and are incapable of settling down with the perky redhead/blonde/brunette who throws herself into their arms. Yet these men, apparently, have a code, a set of rules which may not be broken. In the oft-quoted words of Raymond Chandler: “if he is a man of honor in one thing, he is that in all things” (198). There is a contradiction here which may be summed up in one word: hypocrisy. Chandler’s heroes are, on closer inspection, dirty beyond redemption. They are racist, sexist and homophobic, unloved and unloving,

alcoholic sociopaths committed to a corrupt system sustained by seedy politicians, lawless cops and the undeserving rich.

Dashiell Hammett – arguably the greatest practitioner of the American hard-boiled tradition, and among the first to make the transition from short story to novel – mercilessly deconstructed the genre's infatuation with power, violence and death in *Red Harvest*. Yet he is the exception. Despite Chandler's hagiography of Hammett in “The Simple Art of Murder”, the former seems to have been quite unaware of the latter's subversive intentions. Chandler's heroes are firmly embedded in the corrupt, masculine world of twentieth century America. Friend of the rich and powerful, Philip Marlowe is borne along by a string of rich clients and a cooperative police force: the criminals being the depraved and twisted – which often translates as women, non-whites or homosexuals.

Many later crime writers such as Joseph Hansen, Walter Mosley, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, George Pelecanos and James Sallis (to name but a few) have deliberately, like Hammett before them, sought to deconstruct the genre and lay bare its prejudices and, in particular, its Medieval model of masculinity. Among such writers from outside the United States are to be found a generation who may loosely be termed postcolonial because of the countries they are from, and which they write about, and because of the issues that are raised in their work. Such writers include the South Africans Deon Meyer, Mike Nicol and Roger Smith, the Scot Ian Rankin, the Irishman Ken Bruen and, the subject of this article, South African-born Australian Peter Temple. Their fictional detectives – often ex-policemen turned private detective – are men of acknowledged frailty. They struggle to understand themselves, the validity of their work, and their capacity to do it well. Like their American contemporaries, they are plagued by self-doubt and beset by alcoholism, loneliness and depression.

None of this is to be found in the works of that earlier generation of crime writers, men such as Chandler, Ross Macdonald and their many disciples, including Mickey Spillane, and Robert B. Parker, or the dwindling number of diehard twenty-first century imitators such as Lee Child, whose heroes insist on a moral rectitude which, when examined, boils down to inanity and hypocrisy. Inanity, because humanity is infinitely complex: solipsism and obstinacy is not heroism. And hypocrisy, because the hard-boiled genre's dissemination of misogyny, racism and homophobia, and the celebration of violence are not the pillars upon which a just society is built. Peter Temple's heroes, then, are truly flawed, demonstrably weak and convinced of their own inadequacy and guilt - yet they endure: “Who speaks of victory? To carry on is all”¹ exclaims Stephen Villani, the jaded protagonist of *Truth* (376), but even that endorsement of survival is deflated with the warning: “Just don't talk about it” (376), as he heads off for breakfast.

Temple's heroes are burdened with guilt before the novels even begin. As a consequence they are unable to assume the moral superiority, the adherence to the masculine code that characterises traditional detective fiction, because they have already transgressed: they are fallen. Post-lapsarian, their aims are modest – perhaps to redeem themselves – but ostensibly merely to survive without harming others. “How to be a halfway decent person. That's the main question in life” (171) is Ken Berglin's message

to Mac Faraday, the protagonist of *An Iron Rose*. Faraday, now retired from the police following a botched operation in which a woman was killed, had been trained by the Americans. "They tell you you can't do this work without a sense of moral superiority?" (168) asks Bergin, cynically. "Few hundred times", replies Faraday (169), and the attentive reader understands that the allusion is not only to the American police, but to Raymond Chandler and the pantheon of American hard-boiled writers whose heroes enjoy lives untroubled by guilt and self-doubt.

Contemporary society has developed three quite simple indicators of injustice and discrimination: the prevalence, or absence, of racism, sexism and homophobia. All three are endemic in traditional American hard-boiled fiction, which is why recent writers have deliberately subjected the genre to interrogation and deconstruction. But these indicators are of particular interest to postcolonial scholars in that colonial societies were often built precisely on one, if not all, of these prejudices (including, of course, the USA). Racism is inevitably of particular significance, given that most, if not all European empires of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries justified themselves by an assumption of racial superiority. Discrimination based on concepts of racial identity is, then, central to postcolonial theory and, not surprisingly, to postcolonial literature. Edward Said made this evident in his ground-breaking postcolonial study *Orientalism*, which laid the foundations for the discursive treatment of academic structures of colonial domination, highlighting how racist binaries underpinned coloniser/colonised relationships so as to enthrone white imperial power. Said, a Palestinian-American author, speaks of the academic production of knowledge in disciplines such as anthropology, cartography or literature which, when dealing with the Orient, are inspired by "a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate or even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world" (1995 [1978]: 12). Said specifies that this "will" is structurally bound to the process of western self-definition against the colonial Other:

... the development and maintenance of every culture requires the existence of another, different and competing alter ego. The construction of identity –for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, is finally a construction –involves establishing opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from 'us'. Each age and society recreates its 'Others'. Far from a static thing then, identity of self or of 'other' is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies (1995 [1978]: 332).

The construction of the colonial Other in Said's *Orientalism* has had its particular equivalent in the process of Australian nation-building through the dehumanisation of the Indigene, in which the application of the legal concept of *Terra Nullius* or "a land belonging to no-one" served to dispossess the Aboriginal Nations of their rights and land (Reynolds 2003: 14). Hodge and Mishra see this as "the unjust act of an imperial power whose direct beneficiaries [white settlers] have still not acknowledged that

injustice, nor succeeded in constructing a viable alternative basis for their legitimacy” (1991: x). The racist binary that has written the original inhabitants out of the continent and its History operates along lines that Hodge and Mishra describe as an Australian equivalent of Orientalism – ‘Aboriginalism’ (1991: 27-30). Aboriginalism as a variant of Orientalism has still not disappeared as a discourse of Western control and domination in post-colonial times, and arguably keeps informing the relationship between settlers and those settled – to the detriment of the latter. Given that crime fiction is burdened with an ugly history of racism, in its postcolonial manifestation, representations of identity of all kinds become particularly fraught. It will be interesting, then, to observe how Peter Temple, a white man from South Africa, and the most lauded crime writer in Australian literary history, deals with the representation of Aboriginals in his work.

It has been particularly problematic for non-indigenous writers to incorporate Aboriginal voices in their narratives without being accused of abuse of white privilege and usurpation in representation. There are plenty of examples of major writers struggling with the issue of entitlement: David Malouf with *Remembering Babylon* (1993), Kate Grenville with *The Secret River* (2006) and Gail Jones with *Sorry* (2007), all try to maintain a respectful distance while dealing with Indigenous subject matter, yet all have received serious criticism, and had their motives questioned. Obviously, such criticism is fed by long years of a dominant white culture deciding what Aboriginality was, or should be, usually in a disempowering fashion. This has placed contemporary non-indigenous authors in an impossible bind: if they ignore the Aborigine in their novels, they seem to be denying their very existence – a reiteration of Terra Nullius – but if they do give them a voice, they are unlikely to please everyone, simply through the mere appropriation of Aboriginal representation, or through depictions unacceptable to Aboriginal tastes and concerns. Thus, in a Foucauldian analysis of an important academic debate on discourses of Aboriginality carried out in the *Oceania* journal in 1992 and 1993, Carolyn D’Cruz argues that:

The matter of who speaks for and about whom is possibly the most sensitive and impassioned issue circulating within discourses of identity politics. More often than not, before confronting any other qualifying prerequisite to speak, a speaker must satisfy the criteria of bearing the marker of identity that one is speaking about. In various public spaces in Australia, both issues – the right to speak and the question concerning what constitutes authentic Aboriginal identity – are debated with burning regularity (2001).

One means, then, by which Australian writers in general deal with the representation of Aboriginals is simply to ignore them. Another is to portray them as honorary Europeans, happily adapted to white customs while retaining a few quirky characteristics of their own which usually involve a pre-enlightenment relationship with nature and an unerring sense of direction. This quiriness is essential to remind the reader that the Aboriginal, for all his new-found refinement, has not quite made the full transition. Examples of the first kind of crime writer are Garry Disher and Shane Maloney; of the second, Arthur Upfield, creator of the widely acclaimed Detective

Inspector Bony, short for Napoleon Bonaparte, of the Queensland Police, whose novels, published between the 1920s and 1960s were successfully adapted to television in the 1970s. Upfield, in the words of Stephen Knight, “is at once respectful and contemptuous of Aboriginals” (122), indeed, Bony is uncomfortably evocative of Homi Bhabha's idea of mimicry, which he describes “as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (Bhabha 85).

Peter Temple's representations of Aboriginal men (there are no Aboriginal women in his work) attempt to avoid both traps with mixed success. Firstly, there are only three Aboriginals portrayed at any length in Temple's novels: Cameron Delray, enforcer for a shady gambler named Harry Strang in the Jack Irish novels (*Bad Debts*, 1996; *Black Tide*, 1999; *Dead Point*, 2000; and *White Dog*, 2003); Ned Lowey, a smallholder from rural Victoria in *An Iron Rose* (1998); and Detective Sergeant Paul Dove in *The Broken Shore* (2005) and *Truth* (2009). It can be argued – as no doubt Garry Disher would of his novels set in the Peninsula region of Victoria – that there are few Aboriginals in South East Australia, and those that do live there rarely impinge on the lives of settler Australians, and therefore their apparent absence is more a representation of a particular kind of contemporary Victorian reality – indeed, an indicator of their invisibility – than a deliberate exclusion. For Temple, then, to include Aboriginals in his novels is a deliberate act. Furthermore, the three aforementioned Aboriginals are represented in consciously different ways as though Temple were experimenting, rather gingerly, with politically acceptable alternatives to the kind of conventional representation of Native Australians by white authors such as Arthur Upfield.

Cameron Delray, generally known as 'Cam', is introduced in *Bad Debts* (1996) as “Aboriginal/Scottish/Italian” (59) while in *Black Tide* (2007) he is an “Australian minestrone of genes, dark and dangerous broth”. Temple is doing a number of things here. Firstly he is demonstrating the ethnically heterogeneous nature of modern day Australians; they are a mixture of races and origins, and to pretend otherwise is either foolish or politically indefensible. Secondly he is highlighting a particular kind of mixture: Aboriginal – which, as the name implies, is representative of the first human inhabitants of Australia. Scottish, in representation of the British, the first European colonists of Australia – but mediated by the fact that Scotland, like Australia, was a non-Metropolitan region of the British Empire. Thus Scotland foreshadows the Metropolitan disempowerment and colonial empowerment later to be experienced by Australian Aboriginals in ways that did not favour the First Nations (John Hartley quoted in Batty 1998, Hodge and Mishra 1991: xv). And Italian, in representation of one of the most significant waves of European immigration into Australia in the twentieth century once the country was no longer ruled directly from London; a representative of a people relatively unburdened with the ambiguous colonial heritage of dis/empowerment (Gunew 1990: 111).

Finally, the fact that Cam is not a fullblood Aboriginal opens up a series of other questions about identity and place. Perhaps, as happened to so many Aboriginal Australians and African Americans, one or more of his ancestors was raped by European settlers and gave birth to a child of mixed race – what has gone down in Australian history as the practice of ‘black velvet’ (Collingwood-Whittick 2000: 53).

Perhaps (though this is less likely), he is representative of a harmonious melting pot whereby love, or personal, social and economic interests combined to bring his more recent ancestors together as a family. And, as a man of mixed heritage, how should Cam behave? With whom should he identify? Temple avoids Arthur Upfield's representation of Detective Bony as a neat amalgam of European rationality and Aboriginal divination, a static form of hybridism that merely confirms known stereotypes, and presents us, instead, with a tall, dark, handsome man at ease with himself and the world, powerful, dangerous and feared, yet cultured and knowledgeable, successful with women and an aficionado of fine wines and good food. In short, Cam is rather too good to be true, and his egregious completeness looks all too like an attempt by Temple to present an Aboriginal (and Scot and Italian) in as positive and unsteretyped manner as possible: an authentic model of political correctness.

Cam has literary antecedents. US writer Robert B. Parker (1932-2010), author of forty novels centred on the private detective Spenser, introduces a character named Hawk in the fourth novel of the series, *Promised Land* (1976). Hawk is black. He is tall, dark and handsome, at ease with himself and the world, powerful, dangerous and feared, yet cultured and knowledgeable, successful with women and an aficionado of fine wines and good food. But, like Cam, he is also a subordinate. Hawk is Spenser's best friend, yet the rules of the hard-boiled detective genre require that someone – in this case Spenser – be the protagonist. Spenser receives the clients and takes on the cases. Hawk helps him out. In the case of the Jack Irish novels, Cam is actually Harry Strang's subordinate, but he frequently helps Irish out, either with or without his employer's blessing. Cam, like Hawk, is usually needed for strongarm work, contradicting their creator's insistence on their many non-physical virtues: unlike the main characters, Irish and Spenser, who agonise endlessly over the morality of their actions, Cam and Hawk have no moral qualms when it comes to putting a bullet in the enemy. Ethics are a luxury they seem happy to do without.

One significant difference between Parker's treatment of Hawk and Temple's of Cam is that the latter rarely refers to Cam's Aboriginality. Parker makes much of Hawk's blackness and his struggle to carve out a place in contemporary American society. Cam's Aboriginality is usually mentioned once in a novel, though in *White Dog* (2003), not at all. Presumably this is because neither Temple himself, nor writers in general, make reference to their characters' whiteness (should this be the case): we take whiteness as normative; other shades are, literally 'Other', and need to be pointed out. Temple's reluctance to do this with regard to Cam is, then, political – he is attempting to normalise difference. Yet to fail to acknowledge his Aboriginality at all would render it invisible and would also be of political significance, though of quite a different kind. Temple's infrequent references to Cam's Aboriginality are his means of resolving the dilemma as best he can, which takes us back to the *Oceania* debate on authenticity mentioned above.

It should be noted that Temple likes to play with the identities of other characters, not just Cam's. Jack Irish himself, the series' protagonist, is deliberately named to confuse. Most people, on learning his name assume that he is an Anglo-Celtic Australian, a member of the historically dominant British colonial power. In fact, we discover his

origins are quite different. Asked by a Catholic priest in *Bad Debts* which part of Ireland he is from he replies:

‘Not a well-known part,’ [...] ‘The Jewish quarter of Hamburg. My great-grandfather's name was Isadore Reich. He ran away to sea and jumped ship in Melbourne. When he wrote his name down as I. Reich for his first employer, the man pronounced it as I. Rish. That's what he became. Irish. I'm thinking of changing it back’ (133).

This passage beautifully encapsulates Irish's (and, we assume, Temple's) position with regard to identity and Australianness. Few of us, perhaps none, are what we seem; we are rarely what other people assume us to be. And in any case, we have the power to choose, if we wish, to be what we want. Jack Irish can be Anglo-Celtic, or Jewish, or both. Cam can do the same. Or at least he could, if he were not black.

Temple's infrequent references to Cam's Aboriginality are not always confined to brief descriptions of his mixed ancestry. He also uses Cam as a means of exposing Australian racism. In *Dead Point* (2007), the only reference to Cam's Aboriginality comes during an investigation when he introduces himself to a potential witness as 'Bruce', a generic name for white Australian males. The witness, the uncouth operator of an earth mover called Rick Chaffee, replies: “Bruce's not a coon name, [...]. You look like you got a bit of coon in you” (127), before going on repeatedly to call Cam a ‘boong’ (128-9). Cam responds by breaking his collar-bone and nose before forcing him into his (Chaffee's) car and piling rocks and stones onto it with the earth mover while calling him 'bubba'. Chaffee's resistance, of course, is futile, and he gives up the information Cam requires.

Cam (like Hawk) uses his superior physical powers to overcome his enemies. Indeed, as readers, we assume that these powers were necessarily and painfully acquired as a response to the hostile, racist world in which he lives, and we accept with satisfaction Chaffee's thoroughly-deserved beating. In order that Cam (and Hawk) does not become typecast as a mere thug, the trappings of culture, good taste and refinement are necessary to round out his character, yet there remains something troubling about him: his super-powers are still insufficient to raise him to the level of Jack Irish, as the taint of moral ambiguity clinging to him confirms. But this is all rather heavy-handed and, not surprisingly, Temple experimented with quite a different representation of Aboriginality in *An Iron Rose* (1998).

In keeping with Peter Temple's policy of portraying Aboriginality positively in his work without constantly drawing attention to it as difference, Ned Lowey, in *An Iron Rose* (1998) is depicted as a heroic figure whose ethnicity is referred to only once: “I remember my surprise at two things. One was that Ned was Aboriginal” (84), says Mac Farraday, the novel's (white) protagonist. Ned had been Mac's father's best friend but, as Mac goes on to say: “My father had never mentioned it” (84). Farraday's point here (and, presumably, Temple's), is that Ned's ethnicity was irrelevant to Mac's father, and therefore unmentioned. For Mac's father, Ned had been “the still point” (84), a moral compass and model of masculinity that sustained him throughout his unsettled life. “I had been hearing about Ned as far back as I could remember, things like ‘we need

bloody Ned Lowey for work like this', or 'Here's a little trick Ned Lowey showed me', or, at picnic races, 'Back Ned Lowey riding sidesaddle against this lot'" (84).

Yet for Mac the fact that Ned was Aboriginal had been a surprise. As if, unconsciously, he had been assuming that such a paragon would be white. The theme of racial stereotyping remains unspoken, yet present, throughout the novel, which begins with Lowey's apparent suicide by hanging. As Mac goes through Ned's house, tidying up and sorting out his few possessions, he comes across three six-week-old newspapers all of which refer to the discovery of the skeleton of a young girl in a mineshaft. As Mac pursues the story he becomes increasingly disturbed: "A girl with a broken neck, a naked girl, thrown down a mineshaft and the entrance covered. I couldn't get it out of my mind" (52). Further enquiries reveal that the girl had been an inmate of Kinross Hall, a home for young girls sent there by the courts for prostitution, drug offences or for being homeless. And that Ned had worked there as a maintenance man:

A naked girl, neck broken, thrown down a mine shaft, some time after
1984. A naked girl, beaten, by a lonely roadside in October 1985.
Ned worked at Kinross Hall in November 1985.
And never set foot there again. Until a few days before his murder
(120).

Temple plays subtly with the reader. Are we to believe that Ned was the murderer? Is this what Mac believes? Or does Mac insist on referring to Ned's suicide – the act of a guilty man – as murder, because he cannot bring himself to believe that Ned could have been a repentant child-molester and killer? Why does Ned return to Kinross Hall days before his death? Had someone discovered his guilt? As the evidence seems to mount up Mac's "treacherous inner voice said: What do you really know about Ned?" (191).

By the end of the novel Ned is proven innocent; Ned had also been investigating the girl's murder and was, for that reason, murdered himself. Through the figure of Mac Farraday, a man with no reason to believe in anything but good of Ned Lowey, Temple weaves a tale around our unspoken fears, drawing us toward assumptions that prove unfounded, and thus revealing our tendency for preconception and prejudice.

Ned Lowey, however, is not the protagonist of the novel. Mac Farraday is. Like Cameron Delray in Temple's Jack Irish novels, and Hawk in Robert B. Parker's Spenser, the black man remains secondary. He is also, like Parker's Hawk, something of a stereotype – in this case, that of the wise black man. The Aboriginal sage. The noble savage. Before Mac ever contemplates the possibility of Ned's culpability, he is "the still point" (84), the man with a gift for nature, animals and quiet wisdom. This is a not uncommon white perception of blackness and Aboriginality. The Afrikaaner journalist and writer Rian Malan in his highly controversial book *My Traitor's Heart* (1990) describes something similar: "Americans and Europeans had their Hindu gurus; we had our wise old Afs [...] Almost all things South African were tawdry and third-rate except notional noble savages" (56-7). Yet, as an older man, Malan recognises the absurdity – racism even – of his youthful preconceptions with regard to Africans, and the fact that he was "oblivious to the squalor and misery around us" (56). Likewise, the Aboriginal

scholar Marcia Langton notes that most White Australians construct images of Aboriginality through static colonialist stereotypes rather than actual contact with the Indigenous. These racist stereotypes are evidently hard to break through for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike, and any renegotiation of representation takes place in a discursive field in which stereotypes are strategically inserted and problematize communication (1993: 33-5).

The third of Temple's representations of Aboriginality, however, is more complex, as though the author were aware of the stereotypical nature of his earlier attempts. Detective Sergeant Paul Dove in *The Broken Shore* (2005) and *Truth* (2009) inspires a mixed response from his colleagues and, consequently, from the reader. It is not always clear whether he is totally committed to his work, and his loyalty to his fellow officers and the police force in general is questioned; his capacity for hard work doubted; his courage and professional competence challenged, and he is constantly depicted as a prickly outsider. In other words, he is a perfectly ordinary person. Yet, as Marcia Langton suggests above, being Aboriginal, he is judged by a different, more unforgiving, standard.

The Broken Shore (2005) is set largely in the fictional Victorian town of Cromarty, in which relations between the Aboriginal and white communities are experiencing one of their periodic bouts of unrest. Petty crime, presumed to have been committed by young Aboriginal men, combined with the growing influence of a local campaigning Aboriginal politician, Bobby Walshe, has only served to inflame the small town's endemic prejudices and institutionalised police racism. Into this environment Detective Sergeant Paul Dove is sent because, in his own words, "they want a boong present" (97) or, in the words of a local police hard man: "Jesus, not enough coons here [...] We have to import another black bastard" (95). Despite warnings from more experienced officers, the local white policemen attempt to detain three young Aboriginal men as they are driving home. As a consequence two of the young men die and the third ends up in hospital. Dove has been deliberately left out of the loop – his attempts to prevent the shooting ignored. This behaviour only serves to alienate Dove further. He is already, according to his previous boss, Inspector Stephen Villani, "all chip and no shoulder. Doesn't want to be white, doesn't want to be black" (182), and at various times Dove plays up to this image. Yet the chip on Dove's shoulder seems to be perfectly justified. Indeed, the only means by which the novel's protagonist, Detective Joe Cashin, is able to befriend him is by revealing his own links to the Aboriginal community. "Welcome to Boongland" says Dove, and for the first time laughs with "real pleasure" (298).

Dove's behaviour is interesting in that he clearly does have a chip on his shoulder, is both defensive and aggressive and mistrusts his white colleagues while, at the same time, the reasons for his behaviour are quite obvious – the police force and virtually every white Australian that he encounters are ingrained racists. Dove, therefore, unlike Cam Delray, or Ned Lowey, who are blessed with extraordinary powers of wisdom, strength, taste and cool, is a normal man. Were all Aboriginals like Cam and Ned there would be no need for concern about discrimination, Aboriginal rights, poverty, police brutality or any of the other factors bedeviling Aboriginal life in Australia. They would

be running the country. But Aboriginals are like everyone else, and this is Dove's role, as an Aboriginal Everyman.

Towards the end of *The Broken Shore* Dove is shot during a botched arrest. Ironically, it is this event, more than any other, which earns him a grudging respect from at least some of his colleagues. In *Truth*, Dove reappears much as he was in *The Broken Shore* – unloved and unlovable. “Not a mixer” complains a fellow officer. “The Abo chip. Still, the boy took a bullet” (295). Another officer makes a similar comment later, though slightly more respectfully: ““An indigenous officer who’d now be the only non-bludger [non-shirker] on the force,’ said Moxley. ‘What happened to the wound as a ticket to the Gold coast on full disability pension?’” (*Truth* 319). Nevertheless Dove still has to prove his worth on a day to day basis. At the beginning of *Truth* he makes the mistake of asking for assistance, rather than dealing with a murder case himself. For this he is reprimanded by his superior, Villani who makes sarcastic reference to Dove’s qualifications: “Honours degree of any use here?” (13), he enquires. However, by the end of the novel with the villains either dead or captured it is Dove who is allowed to make the arrest. In this sense Dove is an example of the raw, inexperienced, over-sensitive policeman – a staple of police procedural fiction – and which comprises a *bildungsroman* subplot to complement the main story. But in *The Broken Shore* and *Truth* this subplot is complicated by Dove’s Aboriginality.

Temple also likes to play with the existing stereotypes regarding Aboriginals – the kind much favoured by Arthur Upfield whose hero, Boney, has an unerring sense of direction. Dove, who dislikes being asked to drive (“Nice to be your driver” he sarcastically tells Cushin in *The Broken Shore* 292, presumably equating the role of chauffeur with that of servant), is soon moved out of the driving seat once he has been transferred to Melbourne because he invariably gets lost. In *Truth* this becomes something of an ongoing joke: “Villani and Dove sat in the car eating salad rolls bought by Villani on the way back to Preston, he could not trust Dove not to get lost” (*Truth* 194).

A final point about voice needs to be made. The traditional hard-boiled fictional detective is a first-person narrator. So much so that this has become a defining characteristic of the genre as exemplified by Dashiell Hammett’s *Continental Op*, Raymond Chandler’s Philip Marlowe, Ross MacDonal’s Lew Archer or Mickey Spillane’s Mike Hammer. Lee Horsley, one of the most respected scholars engaged in the analysis of crime fiction, argues that voice is crucial as “an element in most white-authored examples of the genre” (202). Consequently “a transformation of voice is seen as crucial in detaching a novel’s centre of consciousness from the ideology and racial identity conventionally associated with the genre” (202). However, to avoid being nothing but the “voice of the subaltern”, whose agency Gayatri Spivak questioned (1988), it is essential that difference is overtly signalled through consciously manifested and specific language use, as a resistance to convention, perhaps at times through ironic mimicry (Horsley 201-2). Horsley offers the example of the black American crime writer Barbara Neely, whose black heroine, Blanche White (the irony of her name is beautifully blatant), undermines the genre’s conventions on many levels (race, gender, class), but there are many other examples in crime fiction, most notably Walter Mosley,

whose hero Easy Rawlins speaks with the distinctive and authoritative voice of a black man from the deprived neighbourhood of Watts in 1960s Los Angeles, or the multi-voiced narrations of Jamaican writer Marlon James's Booker-prize winning novel *A Brief History of Seven Killings* (2014).

Peter Temple's Aboriginal creations Cam, Ned and Dove are all subordinated by the literary genre in which they find themselves. By definition Jack Irish, Mac Farraday and Joe Cashin are the protagonists, just as Spenser is in the crime novels of Robert B. Parker: they are the detectives, they are the heroes, they have the voice. The genre's insistence on a powerful first-person narrative emphasises this subordination, which can only be overcome by a transference of voice. It might be argued (and here we return to D'Cruz, referenced above) that only an Aboriginal writer can create an Aboriginal first-person narrator, but there are plenty of examples of writers who defy this kind of restriction. The highly respected American author James Sallis, whose postmodern detective fiction centres on the first person narrative of Lew Griffin is a case in point. In an interview included in his Lew Griffin novels *Long-Legged Fly* and *Moth*, he is asked whether he has run into trouble as "a white writer writing about blacks" (174). He replies that he has not, though confessing that there have "been some very surprised faces at signings, when they realise I am not black" (174). Indeed, as the interviewer goes on to remark, the "whole argument is slightly ridiculous" (174) as authors cannot possibly be restricted to creating characters coinciding with their own race and gender. Temple, of course, does not give his Aboriginal characters a narratorial voice (nor, incidentally, does Arthur Upfield), but in *The Broken Shore* and *Truth*, the novels which include his most complex Aboriginal character, Dove, he does not give it to the novels' protagonists, Joe Cashin and Stephen Villani, either – they are third-person narratives. This contributes to detaching, in Lee Horsley's words "the centre of consciousness" from "the ideology and racial identity" (202) of the protagonist.

The representation of Aboriginality by white writers is fraught with danger, as Temple is clearly aware. Even Dove's incompetence at finding his way around greater Melbourne in a car may be interpreted as a dubious reflection on Aboriginals' inability to adapt to urban life. Temple, however, is clearly determined to seize the nettle, deciding that the absence of Aboriginals in his writing would be a falsehood and a capitulation to white Australia's history of denial with regard to the country's first people. Perhaps his next Jack Irish novel will be a Cameron Delray novel.² A decision that would not please everyone, especially those who believe that only Aboriginals have the right to represent themselves.

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¹ “Wer spricht von Siegen? Überstehn ist alles” “Requiem für Wolf Graf von Kalckreuth” Rainer Maria Rilke.

² Other crime writers, the American novelist Robert Crais, for example, have converted their original protagonist’s sidekick into the hero in later novels.

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