



laboratorio dell'immaginario
issn 1826-6118

rivista elettronica

http://cav.unibg.it/elephant_castle

TRASPARENZE

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giugno 2020

CAV - Centro Arti Visive
Università degli Studi di Bergamo

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Transparency as Immanence. Post-Colonial Un/seeing of Indigenous Presence

The call for this issue outlined several possible meanings of “transparency”, as signaled by the use of its plural form in the title. Here, I come to terms with this concept as a possible modeling device or archetype reflecting the ways in which Indigenous cultural and political representation has been experienced, defined or, more frequently, denied in Australian colonial and post-colonial history. Before venturing into a closer examination of the notion of transparency in this specific context, it seems necessary to explore it in theoretical terms, considering how complex, subtle, and pliable this concept is. These preliminary considerations will hopefully show how “transparency” fits the historical and localized perspective that I have chosen, *i.e.*, how it can be applied to Australian history and culture.

In *Transparency Society* (2014), Byung-Chul Han argues that transparency accounts for an obsession with “making visible”: it is the crystal cage of a society that compulsively exposes its own subjects, in a dynamic that includes bodies and behaviors, and that can be evocative of pornographic exhibition/ostentation. Transparency also implies being able to constantly witness adherence to the norm; it thus verifies and validates a conformism that in many ways serves the purposes of capitalistic consumerism. In this perspective, transparency places itself along a line that is continuous with the Foucauldian concept of knowledge as power. Nevertheless, it is highly questionable whether realities seen through the crystal cage of transparency actually get any closer to a supposed ‘authenticity’.

Ambiguity is one of the paradoxes that come with transparency intended as a tool, and as a method of social control.

In José van Dijck's 'medical' perspective, on the other hand, it is the body that becomes the center of an obsession to *see through*. In this sense, transparency is again a means, a vehicle for knowledge, an agency that allows us to see what is not evident in 'plain sight'. The anxiety to *see through* the body informs technological research aimed at making the body transparent. It becomes a real obsession and leads to the concept of the transparent body as a "mediated body", *i.e.*, "a cultural construct mediated by medical instruments, media technologies, artistic conventions, and social norms" (Van Dijck 2005: 5). Van Dijck focuses on how "making the body transparent" has been a coveted goal pursued over the last five centuries:

Between the early 15th and the early 21st-century, a plethora of visual and representational instruments have been developed to help obtain new views on, and convey new insights into, human physiology. From the pen of the anatomical illustrator to the surgeon's advanced endoscopic techniques, instruments of visualization and observation have mediated our perception of the interior body through an intricate mixture of scientific investigation, artistic observation, and public understanding. Each new visualizing technology has promised to further disclose the body's insides to medical experts, and to provide a better grasp of the interior landscape to laypersons (*ibidem*).

And he draws some interesting conclusions which confirm the fact that transparency is a complex concept, when she asks herself the following question:

But has the body, as a result, become more transparent? Transparency, in this context, is a contradictory and layered concept. Imaging technologies claim to make the body transparent, yet their ubiquitous use renders the interior body more technologically complex. The more we see through various camera lenses, the more complicated the visual information becomes.

Both philosophical reflection and the practice of medical investiga-

tion deal with transparency as a multifaceted and highly suggestive concept, one which is endowed with very eclectic articulations. In fact, it seems to problematize the act of seeing, rather than guarantee thorough, 'crystal-clear' vision. In the perspective of Byung-Chul Han and José van Dijck, transparency is located in the medium, rather than the object. It could be said that it is an agency, *i.e.*, the site of a process/modality of *going through* something that leads to a new vision, more or less satisfactory, intricate or indiscreet, of something else. While keeping in mind this sense of the word, the focus of my interest is oriented towards another possible meaning of the concept of transparency. I examine transparency as something that *resides* in the object/subject of investigation, and that can be defined as something other than *agency*, that is, as *immanence*, an intrinsic way of being, or *being perceived*. This immanence of transparency is actually intended in a metaphorical way, but its consequences are deeply rooted in reality.

This particular idea of transparency is especially consistent with Australian colonial and postcolonial history, although it could apply to other environments affected by colonialism, once the necessary distinctions have been made in order not to reduce this critical view to "yet another colonial strategy" (Tree 1993: 264), and in order to safeguard the specificity of each social, historical, cultural, and political situation. Yet, as I said, this perspective seems remarkably consistent with the Australian context where, starting from the inception of the colonial era, the bodies, traditions, cultures, languages of the original inhabitants have thinned out to a diaphanous and transparent state, following the systematic denial of their legitimate political and cultural representation. From the very beginning of colonial rule, the colonized's representative role has begun to fade, to the point of dissolving into transparency, and of becoming the epitome of a situation in which "transparent" finds its synonym not so much in "crystal-clear", but rather in "see-through". In fact, the very presence of the colonized subject and body vanishes in the eyes of the colonizer: they are literally 'seen-through' *as if* transparent. Transparency can be the agent that allows the gazer to *see through*,

but what happens if it is instead the very focus of the gaze *to be made transparent*? My thesis is that, in the case of colonial dynamics, subjects and their bodies become transparent because they are not culturally 'processable', since coming to terms with them would put at stake the imbalance of power that is necessary to create, justify, and preserve the colonial *status quo*. There is of course a preposterous element in this dynamic, since Indigenous bodies and subjects are not *truly* transparent; they are just treated as if they actually were by those who hold a dominant position. Accordingly, transparency as a supposedly immanent condition of the object of the gaze, inevitably erodes the very concept of Indigenous legal, political, and cultural representative role.

This article is only partly based on sociological and anthropological premises and does not aspire to deal with the specificities of legal issues; it is instead a philosophical reflection on certain assumptions concerning intercultural relations in situations characterized by an imbalance of power, as is clearly the case in colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial contexts. Given these theoretical premises, I wish to focus on the role of literature in shedding some light on the contradictions of transparency as it has been defined so far, and even in loosening certain cultural and historical knots. It makes sense, therefore, to start from the consideration of the concept of a "terra nullius" as a symbolic founding element of modern Australia. The colonization of the Australian subcontinent begins with the assumption that the land is "nobody's land", a definition which does not imply the actual absence of a population but rather the absence of any 'recognizable' (i.e., westernized) human and cultural sovereignty. This tackles the paradigm (and paradox) of a situation closely inter-related to the premises and outcomes of colonialism, a situation in which sovereignty is denied to and exercised against the inhabitants of a territory who populated this land and lived according to their own system of laws, customs and traditions for many thousands of years, before the arrival of the invaders. In fact, in the aseptic legal jargon imported by the colonizers, the colonized seem to disappear from sight, although remaining present and continuing to be there. They become *transparent*, and this is the first step in a long series

of negations *in* presence. The long process of material and symbolical dispossession, together with forced removal, physical elimination, cultural devastation, alleged "protection", all the way through to the White Australia policy and "assimilation" in the twentieth century, seem to follow exactly this pattern: Aboriginal culture, and its representative role in the Australian land, fade into transparency, become something that exists without being acknowledged, something that is there without being seen or made visible, sometimes also at the level of self-awareness.

Contemporary Indigenous literature has played, and is still playing, a pivotal role in highlighting these dynamics. It has helped to give back substance and 'opacity' to bodies, subjects, and their stories, in a slow process that has gradually rescued them from their forcibly induced state of transparency as invisibility. In a poem by Charmaine Papertalk Green, *Walgajunmanha All Time*, the importance of writing, i.e., "walgajunmanha", is asserted in the Wajarri language of Western Australia, and reinforced in the reiterated epistrophe at the end of each stanza, the first going as follows:

We write about our existence pre-invasion / And that has made us visible
 We write about our existence during invasion / And that keeps us visible
 walgajunmanha

walgajunmanha

walgajunmanha

(Papertalk Green 2019: 25).

These lines seem to describe exactly the process of being brought back to sight from a position of invisibility in as far as writing snatches away the transparency and recovers presence, by upholding the representative role that had been denied since the inception of the colonial period. In this poem, the use of Wajarri language contributes to the powerful decolonizing effect expressed in the poetic content, by the subject of the poem.¹

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 1 On the importance of language revitalization, along with storytelling, for decolonization see the valuable Wirlomin Project (*Noongar Language & Stories Project*, <http://wirlomin.com.au/>).

The process of deconstructing the principle of “terra nullius”, the symbolic origin of transparency as invisibility, takes place in writing, or “walgajunmanha”, as well. This aberrant doctrine was legally rejected by the landmark 1992 Mabo Decision. The High Court of Australia acknowledged the land rights of Indigenous people in the person of Eddie Mabo in the Mabo vs. Queensland case, finally dismantling the original colonial assumption of Australia as “terra nullius”. Nevertheless, the question of land rights is still far from being resolved; at present, the central issue involves a yet to be ratified treaty. Australia is the only Commonwealth country that does not have a treaty with its Indigenous people, a fact that speaks to the continued denial of the existence, prior presence on the land, and colonial dispossession of Aboriginal people.²

A recent book, Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu* (2014), deals with the theme of the relationship between Indigenous people and the land in the pre-colonial epoch, highlighting the ‘blindness’ of the newcomers in hastily decoding, to their own advantage, the situation they found. In Hughes-D’Aeth’s words:

Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu* [...] provides the most concerted attempt to answer the question about the quality of the country – in particular, the interface between human and nature. Because of the oral quality of Aboriginal societies, many of these questions have traditionally been considered to fall beyond the province of history proper, and into the study of pre-history (archaeology) and anthropology (Hughes-D’Aeth 2018).

Pascoe’s book demonstrates that:

The whole distinction between the farming colonist and the hunter-gatherer indigene is based on a radical, and frankly self-serving, misunderstanding of the way that the Indigenous peoples of Australia lived in their countries. Pascoe assembles a persuasive case that Indigenous Australians farmed their land, lived in villages, built houses, harvest-

² This is a very topical issue in Australia today. See, for example, the Path to Treaty program in Queensland: <https://www.datsip.qld.gov.au/programs-initiatives/tracks-treaty/path-treaty/about-path-treaty>.

ed cereals, built complex aquaculture systems — possibly the earliest stone structures in human history — and led the kind of sedentary agricultural lives that were meant only to have arrived with Europeans in 1788 (ibidem).

Dark Emu bridges archaeology, anthropology, archival history, Indigenous oral tradition, and “other more esoteric but highly revealing disciplines such as ethnobotany and paleoecology” (ibidem). In so doing, Pascoe disassembles the narrative of “terra nullius”, bringing back into sight what had been swallowed by transparency in the colonizers’ gaze on the land, and its people.

Relying on the theoretical and factual premises I have provided so far, I will now consider some contemporary literary texts that deal with these issues, starting with a novel that focuses precisely on the phase of the first colonial contacts. All the novels I consider share a position of liminality between history and fiction, and all have been written by Indigenous authors. They are recent or relatively recent texts, and each in their own way triggers reflection on the question of representing, problematizing, and overturning the dynamics of diaphanization that I consider a persistent model in the colonial history of the country.

Kim Scott’s *That Deadman Dance* (2010) is set in the southwest of Western Australia. Partly-historical and partly-fictional, the narrative covers a timespan of about two decades, between the years 1826 and 1844. But the events are not chronologically arranged and the narrative constantly moves back and forth in time. The main focus is on daily interactions between a growing group of British settlers, American whalers, and the Noongar community in a newly established colony; the protagonist is a Noongar boy, Bobby Wabalanginy, who comes of age as a witness to the ongoing changes in social relationships, and their devastating consequences for his people over the years.

The novel interweaves the beautifully wrought character of Bobby with the model of transparency as invisibility and lack of cultural and political representation. In fact, Bobby’s story of identity (re)construction remains invisible in the gaze of the intradiegetic “whitefel-

las"; even during the performance preceding the bleak epilogue, and with a few exceptions, it can be said that they cross Bobby's presence without seeing it. This model of transparency is established at the very beginning of the novel, when one of the newcomers, Geordie Chaine, first appears on the fictional scene, as he approaches from sea the land he intends to take possession of, and thrive on:

Geordie Chaine gripped a timber rail caked with salt, his nerves as tight as any rigging, and speared his attention to the immense gray-green land beyond the shore. Empty, he thought. Trackless. Waiting for him. A few columns of smoke were visible in land. Even as his wife touched his bicep and insinuated herself into his arms, Geordie Chaine ground his teeth beneath his tam-o'-shanter cap (Scott 2010: 15).

An interesting element in this passage is the characterization of Chaine, his pervasive tension and predatory gaze. He is far from a passive observer: as he lays his eyes on the "immense gray-green land", he "spears" it, thereby symbolically making it his prey. He perceives it as empty, untrodden, and has already made it his own. His gaze dissolves the columns of smoke, the traces of a presence that should overturn his assumptions, into transparency. In this "terra nullius" he is coming to, there is clearly no room for anyone but himself, and his own entrepreneurial greed.

The story of the next twenty years records contacts between whites and Indigenous people, economic exploitation, and progressive colonial expansion into the area historically defined as "the friendly frontier", as Scott, a descendant of the Noongar people of Western Australia, remarks in his concluding "author's note". As a matter of fact, the model of development he illustrates is always the same in different territories, and it mirrors what had happened on the Eastern shore, colonized at the end of the eighteenth century as an 'uninhabited' land; the dynamics of transparency and the denial of cultural and political representation are confirmed up until the desolating epilogue. In the end, Bobby, the enthusiastic cultural 'mediator' who has devoted himself to keeping alive the contacts between his own people and the newcomers, dances with his usual outstanding technical skill, and stages a performance in which he un-

dresses, getting rid of his western clothes and 'strata'. The act is highly symbolic, it summons the other's gaze, in a way that corresponds to a cardinal mode of communication in Bobby's culture.

His gesture of offering himself without filters to the eyes of 'the other' is for him a form of relationship and interaction, articulated in artistic performance, and synergetically supported by the compelling words of sharing and friendship he concomitantly utters. All these elements, he considers essential to properly experiencing the local "genius loci":

Because you need to be inside the sound and the spirit of it, to live here properly. And how can that be, without we people who have been here for all time? [...]

Bobby knew he was a storyteller, dancer, singer, could dance around a spear and make a song to calm any man. Yes, Bobby Wabalanginy believed he'd won them over with his dance, his speech, and of course his usual tricks of performance-and-costumes stuff (ivi: 394).

But both his performance and his words fade away in transparency, they remain *literally transparent* to the eyes of almost everyone present, and the book ends with a gesture of violence that is as gratuitous as it is symbolic, the killing of Menak's dog, who throughout the story had been an emblem of friendly relationships between whites and blacks, a "transitional object" of cultural interaction:

He was particularly pleased with the red underpants, worn as a concession to his audience's sensibility.

Suddenly, he felt no fear but a terrible anxiety. Faces – other than those of Jak Tar and Binyan – had turned away from him. Bobby felt as if he had surfaced in some other world. Chairs creaked as people stood, coughing. Cheney led them to their feet. Figures at the periphery of Bobby's vision fell away. He heard gunshots. And another sound: A little dog yelping (ivi: 395).

In this disheartening finale, the reduction to transparency functions to legitimize the exercise of colonial power, which recognizes only its own knowledge.

Similar dynamics are to be found in Claire G. Coleman's dystopian novel, significantly titled *Terra Nullius*, a book that revives the original annihilating doctrine not in the present, but in an alienated (in every sense of the word) future, that corresponds to the novel's time of the story. The turning point in chapter 10 projects the trauma of the invasion onto the whole of humanity, transforming into universal dystopia the *topos* of colonialism as an alien attack that is found in the images of Michael Cook's *Invasion Series* (Cook 2017).

This is a very suggestive novel; at the beginning, and then for quite a long part of the story, it 'deceives' the reader by placing them in what appears to be the 'typical' narrative line of the (post)colonial tale, accounting for the restrictive, coercive, and allegedly 'protective' policies adopted by whites towards Aboriginal people. Subsequently, the watershed in chapter 10 universalizes this situation into the dystopia of the whole of humanity as the Earth is colonized by aliens, in a game of mirroring aimed at creating a new short circuit of identifications, evocative of the overwhelming Lacanian process of self-identification in the "other". Transparency now projects itself as a totally dehumanizing practice, and as the paradigm of the new course on planet Earth after the arrival of the invaders. Humans are in fact the new slaves, but this assumption can't possibly be uttered, and it falls into the territory of the unsaid, and *unseen*; it is not representable because humans are no longer considered persons, therefore, in a sick sort of syllogism, in their transparency *as* persons, they cannot be considered slaves either:

'There is no slavery', said the officials of the colony when asked by the government back home, 'we are perfectly aware that slavery is illegal'. That was their official stance, 'no slavery here'. The reports from the media on this planet were different, even those he managed to read on the ship; natives were not allowed to have money yet they were forced to work. The natives cannot be slaves, their reports read, because they are not people. Slavery will not be tolerated (Coleman 2017: 2159).

The bitter irony of this segment is that it obviously echoes Australian history: the destiny of the original inhabitants of the Australian subcontinent now overlaps, in *another* dystopian narrative,

with that of humanity as a whole. Mankind is the new victim of the same aberrant assumptions according to which the invaders faced a space without bodies, or rather with transparent bodies, deprived of any representative role whatsoever. They become transparent "non-people", as is remarked in one of the pseudo-documental epigraphs opening the chapters of *Terra Nullius* that reinforces the parallel between the dystopic fictional universe and Australian history:

Terra nullius was a legal fiction, a declaration used to justify the invasion of Australia and subjugation of its people hundreds of years ago by the United Kingdom, a more technologically advanced people. In translation from the long-dead language Latin it means 'Nobody's Land' or 'Empty Earth'. There were people in Australia when the United Kingdom came; there had been for tens of thousands of years. The declaration of terra nullius had the direct effect of defining the native inhabitants as non-people. I use that term now because in your colonization you have done that exact same thing (ivi: 1829).

Once again, transparency is in the symbolic realm, but its consequences are well rooted in the factual, in the vicissitudes of a culture and the rights of its people. The eye of the colonizer may perhaps vaguely perceive the presence of the bodies of the colonized, but it does not recognize their political and cultural significance, thereby making non-people of them, as Wirlomin-Noongar-Australian Coleman cleverly points out.

If we move on in time to consider narratives of Indigenous cultural and political representation set in the second half of the twentieth century, the transparency paradigm is confirmed, and the original sin of invisibility casts a long shadow over the potential for self-acknowledgement, as illustrated in Sally Morgan's autobiographical novel *My Place*. The novel specifically articulates transparency in the invisibility of the Indigenous cultural background for the vicissitudes of an entire family in twentieth-century Australia. At the same time, the text demonstrates how it is precisely through the act of writing that those transparent cultural identities and belonging come back to life, refracting light so as to show the design of a newly forged, and

fulfilled, cultural self-awareness.

Morgan, an Indigenous Australian writer and artist, and descendant of the Bailgu people of the Pilbara region of Western Australia, tells the story of the reconstruction of her *mulba*³ past. This past had been violently denied by the settlers and therefore removed and reduced to transparency in the lives of the main character's parental figures. These figures have in fact replaced their own Aboriginal heritage with a (self-)attributed and alleged Indian origin, which in turn has faded away after many years spent as Australians, albeit in a marginal social position, over the 1950s and 1960s. The text reconstructs their denied past, and revitalizes its main lines of development, along a personal and collective path full of cultural agnitions (Di Blasio 2005).

My Place, published in 1987, *i.e.*, a year before the celebrations for the bicentenary of the foundation of the first colonial settlement in Australia, has given visibility to a voice from the margin. In fact, the novel unexpectedly achieved bestseller status, reaching the top of the sales charts. Its starting point is precisely the invisibility/transparency of aboriginality, through the dynamic of introjection of the original colonial mechanism; its aim is to restore Aboriginal visibility. The narrative is structured in four different moments, which gather the life-stories of Arthur, Gladys and Daisy Corunna together with the experience of the writer's own (re)construction of her identity. The lives of three generations of women, marked by a process of forced homologation by an alien and prevaricating culture, are brought back to light and rescued from transparency. Thus, as already said, the text offers multiple 'agnitions', and in this sense the most stimulating narrative parallels can fully realize themselves at various levels of discourse. In other words, the homologation of the protagonists finally reveals itself as alienation (and when the reader understands this, a fundamental agnition has taken place in their aesthetic and ethical conscience). What appeared to be "integration"

³ "Mulba" is one of the many different words, in many different languages, Indigenous people have adopted in order to name/refer to themselves outside the range of colonial, and generic, definitions. It is used for "person" or "people" in the Pilbara region.

becomes, for those who suffer it, a path towards the loss of identity, culture and language (Langton 1977).

The central agnition in the text is undoubtedly the one that 'transforms' Australia as a nation into an Aboriginal "dissemi-nation", to use Homi K. Bhabha's terminology (1994). This is the juncture where the voice(s) in the text intersect, in a broader picture, with the many different, and denied, stories of the people of the vast Australian subcontinent. The narrative voice rescues the Aboriginal culture and past, makes of both a form of cultural memory, and contributes to bringing them back into sight and life. From this rite of passage comes the painful and, at the same time, happy construction and acquisition of a new, visible identity and a representative cultural role. This is one of the deepest senses of these forms of writing, to recover what the hegemonic culture had doomed to the invisibility of transparency.

In 2011 the Wiradjuri writer Jeanine Leane published *Purple Threads*, the autobiographical story of Sunny's coming of age in a small sheep farm in a rural area of New South Wales in the Sixties and Seventies of the Twentieth century. Sunny is raised in an all-female Aboriginal family, with younger sister Star, extravagant and distant mother Petal, and the three central parental figures, grandmother "Nan" and Aunties Boo and Bubby. A form of meaningful cultural construction and representation, the novel narrates in a humorous and endearing tone many episodes in the childhood of the protagonist. Issues such as cultural and social discrimination, colonial violence, sexism, come to the fore in an act of unembittered denunciation, flanked with the rewarding sense of a proud and fulfilled belonging to the Aboriginal culture, which is expressed also in its vitalizing connection with nature. The importance of storytelling is underlined throughout the book as an essential instrument of this cultural upbringing. Leane also highlights this in her essay "Home Talk":

At home the women who raised me always told stories about people and places. They were like magpies too, gathering bits and pieces of lives known, things seen and heard, gems of wisdom carefully and lovingly hoarded in the archive of memory, to be shared as precious sto-

ries – lessons for life. 'Home-talk', we used to call it, because it was the talk that made us feel at home and the talk that had to stay at home. Most of these stories were shared at night, around a fire in winter or at the kitchen table in summer. Some of these family stories were told openly to us as children and some were told after we were meant to be sleeping, but I was a precocious child and I would pretend to be asleep on my makeshift bed, which was really an armchair, and listen for as long as I could. They weren't traditional Dreaming stories that many people associate with Aboriginal storytelling, they were the stories of how my grandmother and my many aunts had lived as black women and remembered who they were despite national and local efforts to 'breed out the blackness'. Some of the stories were funny, some confused me, and some were very sad, but one thing that emerged through all of these stories is that the women were talking about a different Australia to the one we learnt and read about at school. [...] As children we were always told to 'keep these stories at home', so people at school wouldn't laugh at us and so we wouldn't get into trouble for some of the cunning things the women did to get by. I picked up on a lot of common threads in these stories (Leane 2014: 215-216).

Various forms of reduction to transparency are reported in these words, and they also suggest ways in which storytelling is the antidote to this confinement in the greyish area of non-representation, even while it remains within the domestic womanly space of private storytelling. These stories prevent a dissolution of Indigenous culture into the transparency of the mainstream narratives, that have always elided the black versions of the story.

In an interesting episode in the novel, the girls' aboriginality seems to fade into transparency, when they move to Queensland, to their Irish paternal grandparents' farm, with Petal and Dinny, their father. Here, their being Aboriginal is essentially ignored, even unnoticed, and made almost transparent except in some half-mouthed, racist conversations that furtively occur between the whites. In one of these 'private' talks, Grandpa Paddy speaks the voice of White Australia, which literally aimed to wipe out any trace of blackness. He says of Petal:

'She's not a full blood', [...]. 'She's got some white in her. Looks to

me like she's less than half Abo. And the kids, you can hardly tell. One of them even looks a bit like our Dinny in the face' (Leane 2011: 74).

This interplay of words, subtraction and reticence to name corresponds to yet another form of transparency. There is a clear lack of agnition, through the use of the wrong words (such as the offensive "Abo", caught by the little girls, who don't know what it means and ask their mother, thereby undermining their grandparents' 'cover'). The situation eventually explodes into a fight that will be one of the reasons why the two family groups grow estranged and part. The girls' return home will allow them to continue along the path of emotional and cultural development, nurtured by the vitalizing stories of Nan and the Aunts.

While approaching the end of my argument, and trying to draw some conclusions, one can aptly recall that the act of writing crucially contributes to the making of the Aboriginal "dissemination-nation" as a visible political, social, and cultural entity. The Aboriginal voices that narrate and are narrated are rescued from the transparent unrepresentative role to which two hundred years of white domination have attempted to relegate them. In this way, literature offers an unprecedented angle of vision on reality, from the point of view of an extremely complex civilization, that can hardly be homologated and should not be obliterated. The linguistic medium used is mainly English, or its varieties of "nation language" (Brathwaite 1984), and the literary genres are mostly those of the western tradition (Di Blasio 2005; Brewster 1995). However, Indigenous Australian literature stands out as an exclusive and special phenomenon which, in its many complexities, sheds light on and makes visible the history and the cultural traits of its people.

This leads back to one of my starting points, *i.e.*, to van Dijk's perspective on the recognition of complexity as part and parcel of the attempt to make transparent what is not transparent. This paper is grounded on different assumptions than van Dijk's, but her point can still serve as its final statement. Transparency always comes with

a good deal of complexity, even when it is metaphorically connected to, and philosophically relevant for, the idea of the imbalance of power/knowledge typical of post-colonial cultures and societies. Once it is rescued from the imposed transparency of its non-representative role, Aboriginal culture becomes a multifarious and fascinating phenomenon, and seeing *through* it, seeing through the unseen, entails a complex, never-ending, ever-changing, and captivating process.

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