

Fallacies of Interpretation: Teaching Benang

Gabriella T. Espák

Copyright © Gabriella Espák This text may be archived and redistributed both in electronic form and in hard copy, provided that the author and journal are properly cited and no fee is charged

Abstract: Reading Kim Scott's *Benang* concludes my one-semester course on Indigenous literature, whereby I attempt to eliminate five fallacies of interpretation that students encounter while talking and writing about Indigenous knowledges. These are: anachronism, emotional appeal, (lack of) authenticity, politicisation, and othering. I will suggest a complex method of reading, discussion, and course development to avoid these traps. *Benang* can be used in class, in accordance with my approach to Indigenous literature, because, uniquely, the author showcases these traps as faults of the invading culture, and uses them as literary techniques, rather than fallacies of interpretation.

Key words: *Benang*, Indigenous literature, interpretation

Introduction

Who am I, the protagonist of Kim Scott's *Benang: From the Heart* (1999) keeps asking throughout the 500-page novel, until his psychological and physical journey and discovery of family and people's history lead him to answer: I am, we are. Survival skills have ensured more than 60,000 years of continuity for Aboriginal Australians, whose culture must be the oldest continuous civilisation on earth. The author commemorates their 20th century tragedy in his multiple award-winning novel, which cannot easily be categorised into genres: it could be seen as a historical novel, family saga or bildungsroman, sociography or autobiography, fact or fiction. When we attempt to identify genre-specific elements of the text, it escapes limitations. We realise that Harley, the protagonist, is not a stand-alone individual, but one in the stream of Aboriginal spirit. As a novel, *Benang* transgresses and unites genre borders. As story and history, it embodies the spirit of the Benang people: it comes from the heart.

Reading *Benang* concludes my one-semester course on Indigenous literature. The course is constructed in *quasi*-chronological order: we proceed from creation myths through life narratives towards protest writing (see a more elaborate discussion of these categories below). Ideally, by the end of the semester, students would develop a cultural, historical, political understanding of Aboriginality. Usually, they have little difficulty in understanding interracial and intercultural encounters as expressed in historical documents and literature, however, when it comes to reading *Benang*, many of them block down. "Why Is *Benang* a Hard Reading?" a student asks in the title of her essay, and she argues for the following answers: because of the disturbing topic, the

unusual language, the hybrid style, the undeterminable genre, the complex narrative, the hidden paradoxes, and the reader's clumsy position (Varga 2008). Of all of these, she singles out the "shifty, snaking narrative" (Scott 1999, 22), which "includes time shifts, gaps, changes of scenes [and so] renders the reading process difficult" (Varga 2008).

Such intricacies of postmodern narratives have been aptly dealt with in literary theory. Nonetheless, I argue, it is not the literary features, i.e., not the text of the book itself that makes *Benang* a "hard reading." Rather it becomes one by obstructions in the process of interpretation. Therefore, in my course I attempt to eliminate five fallacies of interpretation that students encounter while talking and writing about Indigenous knowledges. These are: anachronism, emotional appeal, (lack of) authenticity, politicisation, and othering. I will suggest a complex method of reading, discussion, and course development to avoid these traps. *Benang* can be used in class, in accordance with my approach to Indigenous literature, because, uniquely, the author showcases these traps as faults of the invading culture, and uses them as literary techniques, rather than fallacies of interpretation.

Anachronism

A common fallacy of interpretation occurs when students apply their own value systems to a different historical and geographical context. Their initial notions of Indigeneity are connected to the concept of a traditional—thereby primitive—lifestyle, kinship patterns, and spirituality, which, however, they also consider as exotic and truly authentic Indigenous culture. As students do not anticipate a surviving, transformed Aboriginal culture of today, they may treat Aboriginality as if frozen in time. Contemporary Aboriginality has a handicap, therefore. When contemporary Aboriginal literature does not match students' expectations about modern and postmodern writing, they are likely to conclude that it represents traditional patterns. If, however, such literature does not match students' prescriptivist approach, they are at a loss, having few critical tools to judge whether the given text should be praised or criticised for what it seemingly lacks. Rather than understanding that traditional patterns have transformed, transferred, and survived into modernity, students do not consider such continuity at all. Consequently, when they are exposed to Aboriginal art forms that cannot be labelled as primitivist or traditional (for example, literature that is not "creation myths," and painting that is not X-ray or desert dot painting), they often assume, in a prescriptivist manner, that the piece of art is lacking in Aboriginal quality. Then, some students consider the work insufficiently Indigenous, and believe that the author may be affected by British (that is, white Australian) coercive assimilation. Such a view also assumes that British (white Australian) culture is superior, and Aboriginal culture is inferior.

Ironically enough, the postmodern doctrine of cultural relativism, which some students live by, unawares, may also produce a fallacy of anachronism. Briefly, "[t]his doctrine [of cultural relativism] holds that all cultural systems must be approached (and assessed) as if they are equally good and valid, when situated within their historical and environmental context" (Fleras and Elliott 1992, 57). If the theory of cultural relativism is applied—that is, Aboriginality is appreciated in its own context, not inferior to the colonisers' culture, but suitable and valid on its own—then texts can be approached by close-reading and evaluated also on their own terms. This method works well in the classroom: it stirs our sense of justice. What happened in the past and whether it indeed

happened as it is described in the book can be analysed rigorously, with a historian's imagination. Our discussion, however, may easily lead to a slippery area, to contemplate whether what happened was good or bad (for example, the exclusion of people categorised as Aborigine from settlements, see Henriette's story in the book). I find it anachronistic to think that people in other eras operated with our present-day positive/negative values. Even today, value-based (moral) judgements are rarely consented with unanimously, unless they have achieved legal protection, for example in human rights and equal opportunity legislation. For long, this was not the case, so our interpretation of Indigenous texts must consider historic hierarchies of values as well.

Applying this approach, I see the fallacy in students failing to grasp that colonialists could not possibly be cultural relativists. Accordingly, students will have to understand that Indigenous texts (at any age)¹ are often written from a self-imposed inferior authorial position, and colonial (as well as many postcolonial) non-Indigenous critical encounters also reflect a self-imposed superior position.

Emotional appeal

Much Aboriginal writing can be categorised into three groups: mythical texts, autobiographical texts, and protest writing. By the category of mythical texts I refer to narratives of the Dreaming. Eleonore Wildburger claims that the "Dreaming is a spiritual concept, based on metaphysical conditions which are not open to all-embracing definitions" (2003, 27). In-class situations, however, require at least a brief definition to facilitate interpretation. This is what we use: the Dreaming involves a spiritual relationship between people and the land, which forms the basis of traditional society. It takes form in stories and artefacts. It is law, expressed in a collection of mythical stories. Autobiographical texts, as a category, include all life-writing in a broad sense. For conducting discussions of life-writing in class, I have found Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) particularly useful. The third group, protest writing, expresses Aboriginal claims of land, identity, and political voice, since the mid-1960s (Fleras 1999, 187-234, *passim*).

Autobiographical and protest writing, especially, tend to appeal to the emotions, either because of their topic, or because of their author. Such topics include the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families (i.e., stolen generations stories), the criminalisation and incarceration of Aboriginal youth, domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, poverty; identity quests to recover the integrity of Aboriginal selves; and the struggles to integrate into a postcolonial, multicultural society.

The dedication of the Parliament's *Bringing Them Home* report (published after an investigation between 1995-97) indicates the depth of emotions involved in bringing stolen generations stories to light:

This report is a tribute to the strength and struggles of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by forcible removal. We acknowledge the hardships they endured and the sacrifices they made. We remember and lament all the children who will never come home. We dedicate this report with thanks and admiration to those who found the strength to tell their stories to the Inquiry and to the generations of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people separated from their families and communities. (Australia, HREOC, 1997)

Such were the grievances around Aboriginal criminalisation that another Parliamentary investigation, into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody [RCADC], published two reports on this topic (1988, 1991). The RCADC became the most comprehensive sociological survey of the dark side of Aboriginal life in white Australia because—upon demands by Aboriginal people who felt dismayed by the lack of retributive recommendations against police violence—the commission extended its area of research beyond the mere investigation of deaths in prison or police custody to social, cultural, and legal factors, as acknowledged background of the deaths (Espák *Federal*, 2003, 94-5). By the end of the semester, students would be familiar with Aboriginal socio-economic indicators and gruesome statistics. They can be asked to elicit overt and covert examples of racial discrimination in the novel, either in open discussion or in a quiz. (The quiz also works well when it is preannounced, simply to encourage reading.)

Accordingly, Aboriginal authorship tends to be personal and outspoken; and it is identifiable, rather than implied, as follows from the genres of autobiography and protest. Female voices (most often by mothers and about mothers) predominate. An exception from the latter statement, but not from the preceeding ones is *Benang*. “I wanted the novel to be moving (...) it’s no good if it doesn’t move people” (Midalia). Students have difficulty distancing themselves from these topics and authors, even if a considerable geographical distance stands between them, for fear of appearing untouched and unmoved by the personal calls and by the severity and tragedy of the human rights issues discussed. As an escape, they tend to moralise in sweeping ethical statements, mostly in the concluding paragraph of their essays, or cite the *Bible* to take a moral stand on their behalf. To avoid this, I have introduced a project “How would you teach about [eugenics / stolen generations / citizenship, etc.] through *Benang*”, which can even be used, optionally, instead of essay writing.

Authenticity

The third problem, authenticity or the lack of it, is more an obstacle to interpretation, than an interpretive fallacy itself. Often, students turn to authoritative critical voices (such as the *Bible*, mentioned above) because they feel insecure about their right to speak on Indigenous issues. Teachers and researchers of Aboriginal Studies, especially white (male) European academics, share this feeling, which arises from wanting to undo a long history of abuse of Aboriginal knowledges.² Who has the right to speak, and teach, about Aboriginality, thanks to postcolonial power-theory, has become an overpoliticised, controversial question.

I reject the exclusivist, essentialist position of some Indigenous people that non-Aboriginal outsiders should not discuss Aboriginal knowledge (Hollinsworth 1995, 91)—so that they do not reproduce abusive colonial power relations –, and I claim that trained, culturally sensitive scholars, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, age, race, belonging, should have access to an audience to transmit their interpretation of Aboriginal knowledge. I endorse Wildburger’s notion of intersubjectivity, which “implies that representations of Indigenous Australian identity are also relevant for a European researcher, if s/he is aware of her/his participation as a subjective, active

involvement in ongoing intercultural encounters” (2003, 38). Raising cultural awareness is the lecturer’s task, to point out that there is much to improve, from “tolerance”³ towards “understanding” and “sharing.”

In fact, this is the issue tangentially hit by the same student essay cited above:

[I]t is very hard for the reader to define his/her own position while reading the novel, which again makes the understanding difficult. The text is definitely a self-reflexive one and Scott never lets you forget that you are reading a novel. The frequent addresses like “dear reader” (Scott 1999. 43), “your concern” (22), or “share with you” (36) constantly make you aware of your position. Despite this attitude, however, the reader has to face the problem that maybe s/he is not part of the intended audience. As one scholar put it: “... at this point in history, he [Scott] must write for a predominantly white, educated audience, while he would like to be writing for Aboriginal readers” (Midalia). (Varga 2008)

A fallacy of interpretation may result from pretended authenticity, when the reader (critic, student, teacher) does not consider that s/he cannot appropriate the voice of an Indigenous person. Prescriptive statements about cultural practices and proposed solutions to fictional or real societal problems are likely to arise from such an assumed authentic position. Typically, sentences with the modal verbs “should,” “should not,” and “can,” “cannot” indicate that the writer is trying to give advice from a critical position where s/he may not have authority.

In accordance with the argument above, if we accept that authentic readings exist, we still need to face the problem of authenticity of the writing (text) itself. This we cannot control in class—however, it is possible and necessary to discuss factors that contribute to an Aboriginal identity. Such a discussion would illuminate a wide social, cultural, legal, and historical background, which should be understood by the time the course demands literary interpretations of the text. If the problem of essentialising an authentic Aboriginality is then revisited while discussing *Benang*, then, by reverse argument, we can argue that a not essentialised, “not authentic” reading position should also be valid.

Politicisation

Protest writing targets non-Indigenous colonial legacies, including all forms of white authority and superiority in power. Since the early 1970s, there has been a movement to deconstruct the colonial vista: the works of conventional historians came under attack, and new historians began to fill in “the great Australian silence”⁴ by giving voice to the Aboriginal experience of the past of the continent. Aboriginal “return” was accompanied by a corresponding acknowledgment that they had been there prior to the British, and so the event of colonization came to be interpreted as invasion rather than discovery, settlement, or occupation. Overall, the legitimacy of the British claiming the land of Australia was brought into question. The new paradigm represents the coming of the Europeans in terms of dispossession, violence, racial discrimination, destruction, exclusion, exploitation, and extermination (Espák 2003, 154).

A belated constitutional change (after the referendum of 1967) allocated equal political rights to Indigenous people, but nevertheless did not automatically involve equal treatment, end of discrimination, or access to land rights. Even so, the greatest historical significance of the referendum was that it acknowledged the presence and survival of Indigenous Australians, and after long decades of protection and assimilation, politically overruled the general assumption that the Aborigine were a dying race. It did not, however, affect the doctrine of *terra nullius*, the foundation stone of Australian law and history, that proclaimed the land belonging to no one at the time of white occupation. Much remained to protest about, then,⁵ and emerging Aboriginal literature (poetry and drama, predominantly) became a loudspeaker in the land rights movement.⁶

The fallacy of interpretation in this category [politicisation] derives from students' understanding too little of the dynamics of the politics of Indigeneity (the political background to land rights and reconciliation), and their use of a populist approach. Discussing obvious parallels with the Roma (i.e. Gypsy) minority's socioeconomic situation in Hungary and potential racist reactions in society might help personalise students' understanding of *Benang*, but it might also derail interpretations unless the differences between minority groups' claims and rights are clarified.⁷ As legal issues, due to lack of jurisprudential and jurisdictional guidance, have become targets of party politics and governmental negotiations, political rhetoric in the media might distract their attention from objective interpretations.

Othering

Once they get a surfacing insight into the land rights movement, stolen generations, and Aboriginal deaths in custody, students tend to identify with the radicalism of some texts about these issues. However, the contrary can happen too, that they distance radical texts, 'othering' them. As a counterreaction to too much "black armband history," distancing and noninvolvement (that is, 'othering') will surface as interpretive fallacies. In less benevolent cases, this approach can push class-discussion into an unproductive direction, where Aboriginality is rendered to an unknown continent and unknowable past, therefore irrelevant to today's Hungarian student.

Such very negative situations rarely, but randomly, occur. (I presume that students' respect for the lecturer's involvement refrain them from openly declaring if they do not care.) More frequently, good-intentioned attempts are made to overcome Hodge and Mishra's notion of Aboriginalism (1991, 27), which they analyse "in terms of the contradiction of suppressing the colonised people, the 'Other,' and being at the same time fascinated by their culture, without allowing the owners of this culture to talk on their behalf" (Hodge and Mishra cited in Wildburger 2003, 71). The following quotation from an undergraduate thesis (with grammar uncorrected) indicates the student's unbridged distance from the (post)colonial Other, her fascination, and her (unsuccessful) attempt to allow Indigenous art and people to talk on their own behalf.

Fortunately, the twentieth century—especially from the seventies with the establishment of Papunya school—provided a way for Aboriginal artists to express themselves, and as a consequence, the reputation of Aboriginal art has strengthened, and even more artists have emerged on the stage of Aboriginal art. It is not easy to understand the art of Indigenous Australian

people, but it is worth paying attention to their way of thinking, because we may learn from them a lot. (Kincses 2006)

Another example is the smart student. She enrolled for my Indigenous literature course after having completed a survey course on Australian culture/literature that included one 100-minute Aboriginal session. She admitted in the end that only after the second course, and especially after reading *Benang* did she manage to give up her strong initial resistance to the depressingly overwhelming “black-armband” view generated by the texts. Very few students make such efforts, indeed. For those who do, however, it is worth investing energies in conscious course design. Non-populist in its language and narrative, *Benang*, in my practice, has proved a particularly convincing text about the “other side of the frontier” (Reynolds 1982).

Conclusion

How can the frequency of the aforementioned fallacies be minimalised?

As to accessing the texts: a combined method of close-reading and cultural/historical reading needs to be applied. Close-reading allows the text to speak on its own behalf (and, by transition, allows the Indigenous voices to be heard). In this way, authenticity, the right to speak, remains with the Aboriginal author. Close-reading alone, however, is not adequate, because our students lack the cultural, historical, and political background knowledge to understand all textual references. Close-reading, then, needs to be supplemented with a more global, cultural/historical reading. While the former has more scope for analysis, the latter can synthesise the accumulated critical information. This complex approach to texts presumes conscious course and class planning from the lecturer.

As to course planning: a tutorial (seminar) course on Indigenous literature needs to include introductory lectures on the ethics of studying Indigeneity; traditional and modern Aboriginal society, highlighting the continuity between them; and the politics of Indigeneity. It is better to construct the course from the mythical texts, through the autobiographical, towards the protesting political, to enable students to accumulate more cultural knowledge before they plunge into the most complex works. As to class planning: discussion needs to revisit key ideas of these lectures when relevant to the selected texts. My playing the devil’s advocate and pushing for extremist positions in debates has proved a very profitable preparation for student essays. The time seemingly wasted on synthesis rather than analysis of text reserved them “factual” textual elements to write about, and much of the emotional charge of their reactions could be moderated too.

What problem areas can be sorted out this way?

Anachronism: The introductory lectures will highlight transition and continuity between traditional and modern Aboriginality, indicating that continuity is the key to Aboriginal survival.

Emotional appeal: Besides moderated discussions, objectivity (as required for interpretations) can be achieved by devoting some part of the session (an introductory five minutes) to personal reactions, to filter out overcharged emotions. When it comes to essay writing, however, the lecturer should declare that in essays it is unnecessary to moralise.

Authenticity: Keith McConnochie and Wendy Nolan suggest that for a balanced Indigenous course, inviting an Indigenous guest speaker (involved, not admired as a curiosity) is advisable (2006, 69-70). They, however, write this in the Unaipon School⁸ of the University of South Australia. Unfortunately, such a degree of authenticity is not likely to be available for us, so an introductory lecture about the ethics of indigeneity should do. A code of research ethics should include information about terminology, historiography, and the right to speak on Aboriginal issues.

Politicisation: After a sound background lecture on the politics of Indigeneity, this area can be further explored via the Internet. Current affairs is an easily accessible research area, assisted by accessible databases, a list of which should be provided for the students, and independent discoveries encouraged.

Othring: Individual tutorial discussion (if not in class, then in office hours, potentially disguised as essay draft tutorial) can filter out distancing reactions, and identify if a block of understanding originates from emotional, moral, or factual grounds. Our aim should be to elicit a more meaningful rationale of understanding Aboriginality than “because we can learn a lot from them,” as quoted from a student thesis earlier.

If we can preclude and remedy the problem areas of anachronism, emotional appeal, authenticity, politicisation, and othering, our course on Indigenous Studies may indeed become a catcher of students for Australian and Postcolonial Studies too. By the time students arrive at their last reading of Kim Scott's *Benang: From the Heart*, they will recognise how white colonists, during the history of Australian-Aboriginal race relations, fell into the traps they have learnt to avoid. Writing *Benang* also as a critique of coercive assimilationist policies, Scott's text avoids interpretive fallacies only to highlight their existence in white-Indigenous relations. Not that the novel is immaculate (it is too long, for example, as reviewer John Donolly also observes), but it highlights traps and avoids them. Himself a teacher, Scott, thus prepared the ground for teachers.

NOTES

¹ Aboriginal Australian culture is predominantly oral. With few exceptions Indigenous texts have been published since the 1960s only, either as transcriptions, or self-produced.

Autobiographical writing (including life writing) and protest writing predominate in Aboriginal literature.

² The desire to be politically correct and adhere to a “black armband” view of history is a recent phenomenon in academia. For the paradigm-shift in Australian historiography between the late 1960s and early 1990s, see Espák, “*Mabo*”. For “history wars,” consult MacIntyre and Clark.

³ Tolerance, although often celebrated as a societal achievement of multiculturalism, may involve ignorance. “I am fed up with being tolerated,” commented an angry Indigenous speaker at the National Diversity Conference in Sydney, 2000.

⁴ The expression “the great Australian silence” was created by the eminent Australian anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner in the 1968 ABC Boyer Lectures to describe a lacuna in historical and anthropological discourses.

⁵ Only in 1992 did the High Court of Australia declare the doctrine of *terra nullius* false, and opened the way for land claim settlements.

⁶ An Australian equivalent of the American Civil Rights Movement.

⁷ For a liberal political philosophy of minority rights and the difference between ethnic minorities vs. national minorities, see Kymlicka.

⁸ An Aboriginal Studies Centre, named after the esteemed anthropologist professor David Unaipon.

Works Cited

Australia, HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) (Apr. 1997) *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*. Reconciliation and Social Justice Library. Access: 24 Jan. 2007.

<<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/hreoc/stolen/prelim.html#copyright>>.

——— RCADC (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody). (1988) *Interim Report*. Canberra: AGPS.

——— (1991) *National Report*. By Elliott Johnston. Canberra: AGPS.

Donolly, J. (1999) Review of Kim Scott's *Benang*. *Australian Book Review*.

Espák, G.T. (2000) "Mabo and the paradigm shift in Australian historiography." *Anachronist* [Budapest]. 327-45.

——— (2003) *Federal Multicultural Policies and the Politics of Indigeneity in Canada and Australia between 1988-1992*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Debrecen.

Fleras, A. (1999) "Politicising Indigeneity: Ethno-politics in white settler dominions." P. Havemann (ed.), *Indigenous Peoples' Rights in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

Fleras, A. and J.L. Elliot (1992) *Multiculturalism in Canada: The Challenge of Diversity*. Scarborough: Nelson.

Hodge, B. and V. Mishra (1991) *Dark Side of the Dream: Australian Literature and the Postcolonial Mind*. Sydney: Allen.

Hollinsworth, D. (1995) "Aboriginal Studies – An epistemological no-go zone?" P. van Toorn and D. English. (eds), *Speaking Positions: Aboriginality, Gender and Ethnicity in Australian Cultural Studies*. Melbourne: Victoria University of Technology.

Kincses, J. (2006) "Australian Aboriginal art: Communicating a cultural message via visual representation: The tradition of Indigenous body painting." Undergraduate Thesis. U of Debrecen. (MS, n. pag.)

Kymlicka, W. (1995) *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. Oxford: Oxford UP.

MacIntyre, S. and A. Clark. (2003) *The History Wars*. Melbourne: Melbourne UP.

McConnochie, K. and W. Nolan (2006) "Re-visioning professional practice: Reconciliation, professional indifference, and Indigenous Australians." *HJEAS* 12 (1-2). 61-75.

Midalia, S. (n.d.) "Benang by Kim Scott: An interview." Book Club Notes, Fremantle Arts Centre P. Access: 11 May 2009.

<<http://www.fremantlepress.com.au/resources/bookclubs>> <benang bc notes.pdf>

Reynolds, H. (1982) *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*. 1981. Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin.

Scott, K. (1999) *Benang: From the Heart*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Smith, S. and J. Watson (2001) *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Stanner, W.E.H. (1969) *After the Dreaming*. The Boyer Lectures, 1968. Sydney: ABC.

Varga, Zs. (2008) "Kim Scott, *Benang: From the Heart*: Why Is *Benang* a Hard Reading?" Undergraduate essay. University of Debrecen. (MS, n. pag.)

Wildburger, E. (2003) *Politics, Power and Poetry: An Intercultural Perspective on Aboriginal Identity in Black Australian Poetry*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

Gabriella T. Espák is Assistant Professor in the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary. She has been teaching, researching and publishing on topics in Australian, Canadian and US social history since 1988, with special interest in issues of multiculturalism, minority rights and Indigeneity. She edited *ReVisions of Australia: Histories, Images, Identities*, a special double issue of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 12(1-2), 2006. <ieas.unideb.hu/espak>.