

FERALITY: A LIFE OF GRIME

Graham St John

feral *Adjective.* wild, or existing in a state of nature, as animals (or, sometimes, plants). having reverted to the wild state, as from domestication. *Colloquial.* disgusting; gross. *Colloquial.* excellent; admirable. *Noun.* a person who espouses environmentalism to the point of living close to nature in more or less primitive conditions and who deliberately shuns the normal code of society with regard to dress, habitat, hygiene, etc.¹

A glance at the recent (1997) edition of *The Macquarie Dictionary* reveals 'feral' to have attracted a curious raft of meanings. Indeed, this signifier has itself gone positively feral — a bewildering semiotic circumstance in which, it is certain, the media has conspired. In daily newspapers youth, politicians, artists, businessmen, academics, even towns, are reported to be going or to have 'gone feral'. What are we to make of this popular metaphorical blitzkrieg? Since there is an explicit association with wildness, I think it reasonable to assume insinuations of 'marginal', 'erratic' and 'unpredictable'. Yet, differential evaluation of such states has given rise to a most complex adjective, one mobilised for different purposes. For one thing, 'feral' may signify 'promiscuous', 'provocative', 'aggressive', 'hostile', 'dangerous'. It may even be used to indicate moral recession, the dissolution of civilisation, culture, or the 'natural order'. For example, in response to the disappearance of Moe infant, Jaidyn Leskie in June 1997, *The Age* ran a front page feature on this La Trobe Valley town which had apparently 'lost almost everything that gave its life cohesion; which connected it to its past and the

workaday world governed by social norms and taboos ... [D]eeds are taking place that seem unhinged, bizarre, verging on the feral. The natural order has been upset'.² Yet quite infuriatingly, in other contexts the same word means 'charismatic', 'eccentric', 'enigmatic', 'excellent'. A truly protean repository of meaning, colloquially, feral has thus come to designate social phenomena which may be sources of fear *or* subjects of desire — not an altogether inappropriate label for Australia's recent and most ambivalent self-marginals, who have 'cut loose from common or garden varieties of human'³ and 'fled the suburbs for a life of grime in the forests'.⁴

The Macquarie now declares the noun to accommodate the human feral, a truly fascinating and timely addition. Yet my curiosity is incited by the apparent open-endedness of this new noun. Who are these people? What else may constitute shunning 'the normal code of society' besides 'more or less primitive' 'dress', 'habitat' and 'hygiene'? In what ways has 'society' registered the presence of such persons?

This nascent noun intimates something of the presence of an antipodean eco-radical millenarianism, a localised hybrid of international post-seventies movements responding to the global context of Reaganomics and Thatcherism.⁵ 'Feral' designates an Australian youth milieu connected with grassroots resistance actions (old-growth logging and uranium mining blockades) mounted over the past fifteen years. Adherents express dissonance from 'the parent culture' and, in acts of local defiance and identification, seek anarchist and ecological alternatives. A desired merger of planetary awareness with decentrist associations is well captured by 'think globally — go tribally', the maxim of Nimbin's Tipi Village Sanctuary operated by the Star Earth Tribe. The ethos was effectively mediated by Michael Murray in his insightful documentary *Going Tribal* first broadcast on SBS in May 1995.

While other labels have included 'born again' or 'new age hippie', 'bush punk', 'eco-warrior' and 'crusty', according to Nerida Blanpain (from the band-collective *Earth Reggae*), 'rat people' was applied prior to 'feral'.⁶ The application is exclusive to Australia, a circumstance deriving from the unique historical response to, and cultural interaction with, introduced/domestic species running wild and turning pestilent across the breadth of the continent — becoming a nuisance largely on account of their spatial transgressions.

Introduced species have received a somewhat ambivalent reaction in Australia. For instance, traditionally regarded as a threat to the farming and grazing industry and indigenous species, rabbits and cats have been consequentially vilified. However, the dingo — released into Australia around 4,000 years ago and long suffering Euro-Australian vilification (achieving 'vermin' status) — has, according to Nick Smith, recently achieved the celebrated status of 'native

Australian': it has been transformed into 'our wild dog'.⁷ As the diversity of popular reception indicates, the identity of the human feral is cloaked in a corresponding ambivalence. Quite simply, they may be loathsome or lovable. The polarity is fully acknowledged by *The Macquarie* where, colloquially, 'feral' may be either 'disgusting; gross' or 'excellent; admirable'. There is much to be gained from an analysis of these extremes.

In some areas, ferals are loathed due to ostensible dangers posed to both local propriety and property. Byron Bay is exemplary. According to Murray, the Byron Shire Council regards them as the latest in a long line of pests: '[t]here are feral cats, dogs, rabbits, even feral peacocks up here, now it's feral people'.⁸ Realtor, David Gordon complains: 'Byron's tipped too far feral. Ferals have nowhere to live, sleep on the beach, don't wash, do heavy drugs and resort to petty crime. They're bad for business'.⁹ In Gordon's view, their proximity threatens property values and intimidates tourists. And, local service station owner and councillor, Warren Simmons, knows the score: 'ferals have a long way to go. They call it busking but it's just begging to me — they're hopeless. I saw one fellow on the footpath with his knackers hanging out of his trousers. We don't want that'.¹⁰

Such impropriety frequently earns ferals appellations like 'dirty' and 'filthy'. These designations are applied by residents of logging communities who are often disturbed by this alien sartorial and odoriferous presence. To avoid the perils of similitude, distinctions are forever maintained. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a logger's wife railed against ferals while defending her own ragged bearded, scruffy haired husband with 'he doesn't have holes in his clothes and he's wearing underpants'.¹¹ It might be supposed that reactions are stimulated by a shared abhorrence for the putative insanitary and unsightly disposition of eco-radicals. Yet this would discount the principle reasons why forest hinterlands have become locales of fierce vilification.

During the nineties, Australia's native forests have become classified 'war zones', with the forest industry holding conservationists responsible for damage to machinery, cutting power lines, slashing tyres, planting hoax bombs and spiking trees, and with a corresponding escalation of anti-environmentalist lobbying, harassment and abuse. Though no evidence has implicated environmental organisations, men like Col Dorber, head of the Forest Products Association, are keen to discredit environmentalism as a reservoir of unlawful and nefarious goings on, a front for serious criminality. And ferals are *the* diabolical miscreants, green devils — a threat to the moral fabric. In a 1995 Radio National report, 'Feral Peril', Dorber announced: 'what we're talking about is terrorism ... They really will stop at nothing. Today it happens to be forestry, but tomorrow it could be anything. And that's what the community ought to be frightened about'. That local environmentalists are perceived to have embraced 'monkey wrenching' or eco-sabotage techniques originally advocated, but later disendorsed, by

America's eco-apocalyptic Earth First!, steels the resolve of the forest industry.¹² 'We've imported that international bandit like culture into this country', claims Dorber. 'The way that the environmental movement has turned the protection of forests into a religion means that we will have some religious wars, with a lot of casualties'.¹³

According to Radio National producer, Kierstin Garrett, 'I was told that the terrorists are being trained in the forests around Lismore in northern NSW. This is where the ferals nest and breed. Up north. Deep in the hippie hinterlands'. The 'silent shadowy forces in the forests theory', reported Garrett, is endorsed by Peter Cockran, state National Party member for Eden-Monaro (in the south east of NSW). In Cockran's view, 'we're talking about vast areas of land from the tip of Cape York to the south of Victoria. They go in, no doubt, under the cover of darkness. They are well trained in guerrilla type tactics and they have little chance of being caught'.

These fears of green guerrillas moving from state to state, murmurings of ferals trained as saboteurs lurking deep in the bush, have fuelled local conflicts all along the eastern seaboard. Take Orbost, 'Victoria's premier timber town'. A frontier settlement in Victoria's far East Gippsland, Orbost is struggling to come to terms with the inevitable demise of an unsustainable logging industry. Eco-radicals, who resort to civil disobedience (eg. blockades) when all other avenues of protecting high conservation value forest have failed, are not only subject to allegations of 'sabotage',¹⁴ or labelled 'extremist fanatics' committed to 'acts of terrorism',¹⁵ they are State sponsored 'spongers' callously disrupting the livelihood of timber workers.¹⁶ As a consequence, these pestilent 'blow-ins' receive local condemnation and are targets of persistent harassment and abuse.

Inscriptions on the Bonang Road linking Goongerah — home of GECO (Goongerah Environment Centre) and CROEG (Concerned Residents Of East Gippsland) — to Orbost, disclose a regional passion-play. Splashed on the bitumen near a logging coupe T-intersection, I noticed: 'If you can't get it up, chop it down', and elsewhere — in reference to a local mill operator — 'Bob's big, but his pecker aint'. While such slogans are an attempt to squeeze loggers where it hurts, counter-graffiti like 'Greenies — taxpayers liabilities' profile the position of forest industry workers defending their livelihood. What's more, down in the coupes one may witness semiotic standoffs between eco-radical tribesmen and women cloaked in the screenprinted insignia 'old growth — fucken oath', and the owners of V8 utes and 4-wheel drives whose rear windows display the blunt philosophy: 'shoot ferals'.

Despite such folk demonisation and antagonism, there are indications that ferality is respectable, indeed admirable. It seems that a process of indigenisation may be the source of such admiration, and, as a goal and apparent consequence of this

lifestyle, a source of its allure. After all, ferals have been celebrated as 'Australia's new nomads'¹⁷ and 'the self proclaimed guardians of our environment'.¹⁸ And, the title of a *Woman's Day* article, 'Feral Aussie families: they live in trees and eat wattle seeds', seemed to champion the authentic native positioning of this new Australian.¹⁹ As postcolonial re-evaluations of nature take place globally, there is growing local evidence of the valorisation and defence of indigeneity. In feral reconciliations with nature, we are perhaps witnessing a subterranean manifestation of the kind of redemptive strategies which have been located in nationalist discourses.²⁰ For instance, the didgeridu, an Aboriginal icon now widely embraced by 'alternative lifestylers', is often perceived as 'a bridge to facilitate the journey of white Australians back to the land' and is thus an 'instrument of expiation'.²¹ Their mutual ambivalence effecting an attractive partnership, common preference for dingo companionship among ferals also enhances an experience of reconciliation and (re)connectivity. Such an alliance symbolises 'true' continental inhabitation.²²

At 23, Quenda is an exemplary postcolonial primitivist. Suspecting she was conceived at Nimbin's Aquarius festival in 1973, she claims she knows 'how to shit in the bush' — where she has dwelt most of her life.²³ In 1996, Quenda became involved with the Timbarra Protection Coalition (TPC), an organisation committed to preventing the development of a gold mine on northeast NSW's Timbarra Plateau. The mining project, undertaken by Ross Mining, is regarded as a threat to both clean water systems and already endangered species, and imposes restrictions on local Bunjalung from accessing sacred sites. Quenda spends weeks at a time on the Timbarra Plateau laying hair-tubes designed to 'trap' the hair of endangered species like tiger quoll. The hair is transported to Coffs Harbour where positive identifications are used to restrict mining operations by increasing costs in the form of necessary permits. A state welfare recipient, Quenda says she's 'working for Australia'.²⁴

Extended inhabitation of regions, especially forests, arouses an ecological consciousness and local defence. In their becoming *of* the land, in their reconciliation with nature, *terra-ists* like Quenda are Australia's newest chthonic others. This is not to say, however, that they are our new *autochthones*, who, 'in their search for *Lebensraum*' occupy the space of Aborigines. To dismiss ferals as 'neo-imperialists', as have some recent cultural critics,²⁵ is misleading. For, what are we to make of those who respect the cultural and political authority of indigenes? I want to enlist the Northern Rivers band *Earth Reggae* to clarify my point. Their song 'Always Was Always Will Be' features the lines:

Ain't no mystery
What we're standing on
Always was, always will be
Aboriginaland.²⁶

The same CD features the track, 'Indigena', the chorus of which runs:

State what you are
And then stand tall and strong
For it's not to skin colour but to land
That we belong.²⁷

Juxtaposed, the lyrics suggest that while acknowledgment of prior and continuing Aboriginal occupancy is never in doubt,²⁸ conscientious Earth-orientated descendants of recent migrants too claim their human right to inhabit place. The message of *Earth Reggae* seems to be: 'while we respect the rights of First Peoples, this land is *our place* too'.

This is not to suggest that the desire of Euro-Australian self-marginals to be connected to native landscapes and peoples is devoid of complications. For one thing, some make unverifiable claims to Aboriginality based on 'emotional connection' or 'feeling for the land'. Often the indigenes worthy of 'kinship' and support are conceptualised as noble-environmentalists, who, essentialised as such, are potential sources of 'ecological salvation'.²⁹ Practically legitimating the occupation of an essentialised other, late 'black hippy' Burnam Burnam once held the view that some white environmentalists, like those protesting uranium mining in Kakadu, 'are more Aboriginal than most urban Aboriginals in their treatment of, and respect for, mother earth — and in their personal relationship with her'.³⁰ Voicing a similarly perilous sentiment, though apparently aware of the inevitable paradox, at the Australian Rainbow Gathering held at Om Shalom in north east NSW in November 1996, human-sculpture activist Benny Zable had it that many feral activists were 'non-Aboriginal Aboriginals'!

A further complication arises with the invocation of wilderness. Though some articulate a desire to be 'at one with the wilderness' — meaning 'pristine', 'untouched' nature — others recognise the limitations of this ill-fated concept. This recognition matches the growing acknowledgment of prior indigenous occupation and, therefore, a humanised landscape. As Noel Pearson and others have begun articulating, 'wilderness' simply 'reiterates the logic of *terra nullius*', ultimately serving the interests of bioprospectors.³¹ Today, knowledge of prior occupation and dispossession — our 'black history' — is superseding the blind invocation of 'wilderness'. This awareness confers emotive value upon a beleaguered landscape, elevating the commitment to its defence.

GECO, for instance, is a grassroots ecotribe defending East Gippsland's Goolengook Forest and recognising the Bidawal's prior occupancy. One member, Belalie, regards the logging communities relying on the local native forest industry as 'hostile':

[T]hey're living on massacre sites. It's just an area of such dark history. It's an area where colonisation continues. They continue to destroy the sacred things. They continue to wipe out the native species. It's the same attitude which [early settlers] approached this country with ya'know, and it's just ongoing.³²

Goolengook Forest is an enchanting temperate rainforest, habitat of hundreds of rare and threatened species. With the signing of the Regional Forest Agreement, against the recommendations of Department of Natural Resources and Environment botanists and other prominent scientists, the forest has been exposed to clearfell logging, slash burning and government subsidised export woodchipping. Over several years, such desecration has strengthened the resolve of antipodean *terra-ists* who've established a community of resistance to combat the loss of natural and cultural heritage.

Discussing *terra-ism* drives us closer to unearthing the *process* underwriting the feral project. After all, the 'real business' here is not simply *being* ('existing in a state of nature, as animals [or, sometimes, plants]'), but *going* ('having reverted to the wild state, as from domestication') wild. To go wild means to *become* less cultivated. Implied here is a voluntary traversing of the borders of Culture (cultivated, predictable, bound) and thereby, becoming 'closer to Nature' (uncontrollable, animal-like, wild). This is not to say that the process could be completed — after all I've never met any one fitting the description of 'the wild boy of Aveyron'. But I think the process — which is both *trespassory* and *transitional* — underscores the ambivalent human condition of *ferality*.

The process is fundamentally risk-laden. As we have seen, the *trespassory* process is hazardous as revealed in the classification of ferals in and around towns like Byron Bay and Orbost as 'bloody pests', 'rat people' and 'terrorists'. At root, it is far less their physical hygiene and appearance that, in such cases, earns them most disfavoured status, than their chosen anomalous position astride the Nature/Culture divide. This means that, for locals, they are socio-spatial transgressors, essentially matter out of place. Furthermore, they're 'dirty' as they stray from dominant cultural patterns: as they dissent from rampant materialism; as they disengage from the formal economy and domestic consumption patterns; as they threaten land values, the logging industry and the livelihood of forest workers.

Yet this same risk-laden, but more specifically *transitional* process, is highly sought after, as it is seen to be ultimately rewarding. For one thing, the Culture/Nature transgression is one of reconciliation. Human improvement is the result of a *re-place-ment*, an implied 'return'. This point is taken up briefly by Hakim Bey, who proposes that what he calls 'the temporary autonomous zone'

(or TAZ) ‘involves a kind of *ferality*, a growth from tameness to wild(er)ness, a “return” which is also a step forward’.³³ The process of *return* here is a contemporary rite of passage from ontological detachment into an ecologically conscientious lifestyle and identity. They are a people in transit, career liminaries embarked upon a journey of sustainable living often involving a fairly disciplined anti-consumption ethic. The ‘wildness’ assumed is therefore a highly cultivated predilection. Many are simultaneously undergoing detachment from the ‘parent culture’ while seeking an alternate or ‘authentic’ form of ‘settled life’.³⁴

Take Bandicoot who, in his mid twenties, has been mounting tree-sits in the threatened Goolengook Forest north of Orbost since 1997. Raised in Melbourne’s eastern suburbs, Bandicoot eventually worked nine-to-five as a building hardware salesman. His recollections are that of inherent detachment:

My life took me away from the earth. It put me into a four bedroom house, it fed me. You know, meat and three vegetables every night. Showed me a TV. Taught me how to live and how to protect myself ... to put a roof over my head, and a doona around me. And I wasn’t exposed to the outside. And when we did it was in a car, you know, and in a cabin.³⁵

Yet, with a ‘desire to understand more about the earth’, Bandicoot shed his suit, grew dreadlocks and gravitated towards the rainforests of East Gippsland. ‘Out there’, he reveals somewhat skittishly, he found ‘something magical’, a ‘specialness’. And, with a realisation that we are ‘of the earth’, he has become ensconced in the forest’s defence. With nose bone and faded ‘old growth — fucken oath’ screen-print singlet, he constructs tripods, cantilevers and platforms for high tree-sits. Bandicoot’s nascent eco-activism sees him travelling between forest and city on a regular basis to gather support. This movement, from detachment, to an awareness that ‘you’ve gotta live in a nice harmonic balance’ with nature, coupled with the constant migration between forest and city, makes for an identity that is uniquely liminal and remarkably uncertain.

At the same time, being perceived as social and spatial transgressors is desirable. Living ‘on the edge’ is a perennial source of credibility in youth subcultures. Being ‘radical’, unconventional, a freak, prepared to risk all, accords acceptance and accolades from within, so long as gestures continue to shock and horrify those without. This is the case for ferals, for whom pestilence is the passport to excellence. By this, I mean to say that engagement and confrontation are paramount. One must be seen and heard. They’re a spectacular lot. Decked out in *feralia* — a green style of punk confrontation dressing — itinerant fire dancers and performers of Earthen theatre, they brazenly barrack for nature. Their purpose, unlike that which has been described of ravers, ‘disappearance’,³⁶ is provocation and resistance through daring and *direct action*. This may be achieved variously: from haranguing senses to harassing corporate and

government eco-vandals; from cultivating crustiness to protesting in the guise of 'black wallabies' (activists loose in live logging coupes).³⁷

In a *Hot Wired* web site offering advice on 'how to go feral', Sean Doyle claims that to be feral thou shalt 'espouse peace and love ... but don't take any shit, and never turn the other cheek'.³⁸ Inciting direct action, Non Violent Direct Action, this is a declaration on the part of radical ecologists, of disassociation from hippy forbears — who are often unfairly dismissed as weak and passive. As such, theirs is an acute 'risk identity'. Yet, it differs from that which is, according to Kevin Hetherington, cultivated by new Travellers. The latter are said to actively embrace chaos by 'putting themselves in danger from the things others fear so much: transientness, eviction, ostracism, placeless identities, poverty, harassment and uncertainty in one's life'.³⁹ Not a directionless and 'placeless' pursuit of hedonistic excess, the feral project, taking the form of ecologically conscious counter-development action, is a *terra-ist* life-strategy of (re)connection and defence.

As indicated by the equal applicability of polar meanings attached to a most promiscuous adjective, and as demonstrated by differential national reception, ferality is a highly ambivalent condition. 'Disgusting' for a reactionary regional Australia fearful of and resistant to difference and a real or imagined threat to livelihood. 'Admirable' for a progressive metropolitan Australia who tolerate diversity and valorise indigeneity. On the one hand, ferality is a threat. Ferals subvert grooming and hygiene norms. They eschew production routines and the accumulation of property, endanger land values, and compromise the interests of the native forest industry and the State. As such, these postcolonials straying upon neocolonial frontiers, may be vilified as *pests*. On the other hand, ferality is 'excellent'. It implies transition, which, especially for those who embark upon this liminal career, is rewarding, a risk worth taking, a source of belonging and purpose. Here, ferality implies a redemptive return, a reconciliation (with ecology and indigines). Their activism represents resistance to exploitative practices and ecological imbalance; their ethical response an attempted resolution. They are *terra-ists* espousing a spiritual connection to place (local and, ultimately 'Gaia'). As such, their indigenisation is both local and planetary. Simultaneously socio-spatial transgression and biographical passage, a source of revulsion and attraction, here is a most enigmatic condition.

Notes

- ¹ *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 3rd edn (Sydney: The Macquarie Library, 1997).
- ² Paul Heinrichs, 'Jaidyn Leskie: A Little Boy Lost in a Lost Town', *Age*, 21 June 1997, p.1.
- ³ From interview conducted with Nelumbo, December 1995. Pseudonyms are used throughout.

- ⁴ James Woodford, 'Wild at Heart', *Sydney Morning Herald* (Agenda), 7 December 1994, p.17.
- ⁵ I have in mind groups like the eco-apocalyptic movement Earth First! which emerged in the US in 1980, and the Dongas and Flower Pot Tribes, notable examples of 'the nomadic indigenous peoples of Britain' emerging in the early nineties to oppose the construction of motorways through natural heritage sites. See George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance Since the Sixties* (London: Verso, 1996), p.137. Proclaiming land reclamation and desiring reconnection with the ancient Celts, the latter 'tribes' are eco-conscious offspring of multiple groups herded under the umbrella 'New Age Travellers'.
- ⁶ In Michael Murray, 'Ferals: The Call of the Wild', *Simply Living* 77, p.54.
- ⁷ Nick Smith, 'The Howl and the Pussycat: Feral Cats and Wild Dogs in the Australian Imagination', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, (forthcoming).
- ⁸ Murray, p.54.
- ⁹ Adrian McGregor, 'Playgrounds of the Rich and Feral', *Australian Weekend Review*, 31 May - 1 June, 1997, p.2.
- ¹⁰ Murray, p.58.
- ¹¹ P. McGeough, 'Inside the Loggerheads', *Sydney Morning Herald* (Agenda), 20 February 1995, p.9.
- ¹² On ecotage, see Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991). See also E. Hargrove, 'Ecological Sabotage: Pranks or Terrorism?', in *Radical Environmentalism: Philosophy and Practice*, ed. Peter List (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1993), pp.250-51. It should be pointed out that radical ecologists in Australia — partly because eco-tribes like GECO (mentioned below) have never condoned ecotage — have not been subject to industry sponsored opposition and violence or government intelligence operations on a scale experienced by Earth First!. See Judi Bari, *Timber Wars* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1994).
- ¹³ Kierstin Garrett (producer). 1995. 'Feral Peril', Background Briefing, ABC Radio National, 21 January.
- ¹⁴ Norm Huon, executive director of Victorian Association of Forest Industries, in 'Logging equipment damaged at Bendoc', *Snowy River Mail*, 15 January 1997, p.5. See also K Kaleb, 'Pointing the finger at phantom greens' *Snowy River Mail*, 29 January 1997, p.3.
- ¹⁵ Silvana Nagl, state co-ordinator for the pro-logging Forest Protection Society in 'Anti forestry activities have gone too far - claims Society', *Snowy River Mail*, 29 January 1997, p.12.
- ¹⁶ M. Whitty, 'Freedom on social security', *Snowy River Mail*, 29 January 1997, p.2.
- ¹⁷ David Leser, 'Message From the Forest', *HQ Magazine*, May/June 1994, p.60.

- ¹⁸ Kendall Hill, 'Wild Thing', *Age Tempo*, 1 February 1996, p.18.
- ¹⁹ Warren Gibbs, 'Feral Aussie Families: They Live in Trees and Eat Wattle Seeds', *Woman's Day*, 13 February 1995, pp.12-13.
- ²⁰ See: Andrew Lattas, 'Aborigines and Contemporary Australian Nationalism: Primordality and the Cultural Politics of Otherness', *Social Analysis*, 27 (1990), 50-69; John Morton, 'Aboriginality, Mabo and the Republic: Indigenising Australia', in *In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia*, ed. Bain Attwood (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1996), pp.117-35; John Morton and Nick Smith, 'Planting indigenous species: a subversion of Australian eco-nationalism'. In *Quicksands: Foundational Histories in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds. Nicholas Thomas, Klaus Neumann and H Ericksen (Sydney: NSW University Press, 1999), pp. 153-75.
- ²¹ Patricia Sherwood, 'The Didjeridu and Alternative Lifestylers' Reconstruction of Social Reality', in *The Didjeridu: From Arnhem Land to Internet*, ed. Karl Neuenfeldt (Sydney: John Libbey and Co, 1997), p.150.
- ²² Yet, it must be remembered that ferals are also conscientious citizens of the planet. Indigenous to Gaia, and not especially sympathetic to nation building, it is to Earth that their loyalties ultimately lie.
- ²³ From interview conducted September 1996.
- ²⁴ For deeper ethnographic penetration into the celebration and defence of native ecology and peoples characterising contemporary Australian eco-radicals, see Graham St John, 'Ferals: Terra-ism and Radical Ecologism in Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies* 64 (forthcoming 2000).
- ²⁵ Denise Cuthbert and Michele Grossman, 'Trading Places: Locating the Indigenous in the New Age', *Thamyris*, 3.1 (1996), 23-6.
- ²⁶ Written by Alan Evans. From 'Indigina - Planet Magic' CD, 1992.
- ²⁷ Written by Desley Mackenzie-Cochran.
- ²⁸ As seems to be signified by the accreditations in the booklet accompanying 'Indigina - Planet Magic'. Didjeridu player, Sonny Copper, who is identified as Yorta Yorta, is the first of 18 contributing musicians listed.
- ²⁹ Lee Sacket, 'Promoting Primitivism: Conservationist Depictions of Aboriginal Australians', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 2.2 (1991), 233-46; Jane Jacobs, 'Earth Honouring: Western Desires and Indigenous Knowledge', *Meanjin*, 53 (1994), 313.
- ³⁰ Burnam, Burnam, 'Aboriginal Australia and the Green Movement', in *Green Politics in Australia*, ed. D. Hutton (Ryde: Angus and Robinson, 1987), pp.96-7.
- ³¹ Noel Pearson, 'Cape York Peninsula: The Land Needs its People', *Arena Magazine*, Oct/Nov 1995, pp.39-41; Ariel Salleh, 'Politics in/of the Wilderness', *Arena Magazine*, June/July 1996, pp.26-30.
- ³² From interview conducted December 1996.
- ³³ Hakim Bey, *The Temporary Autonomous Zone - Ontological Anarchy and Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), p.137.

- ³⁴ For a discussion of the process of return and authentication at Australia's principal alternative lifestyle event ConFest, see Graham St John, 'Going Feral: Authentica on the Edge of Australian Culture', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 8.2 (1997), 167-89. See also my PhD thesis on line:
<<http://www.dte.org.au/ConFest/History/history.html>>
- ³⁵ From interview conducted April 1998.
- ³⁶ Antonio Melechi, 'The Ecstasy of Disappearance', in *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, ed. Steve Redhead (Avebury, 1993), pp.29-40.
- ³⁷ Of course, for youth who abhor being 'boxed and shelved', resistance takes the form of disassociation from the label 'feral'. Distancing may also be attributable to the way 'feral': sits uncomfortably close to the pejorative (commercialised and quiescent) 'New Age' in popular mediations, and; has become a spectacular curiosity consigned to the field of leisure — thereby associated with indolence and 'bludging'. Loaded as such, 'feral' is wielded to discredit serious activism. Distancing has, however, not always proven successful. For instance, when over one hundred protesters were arrested at Jabiluka uranium mine blockade in Kakadu National Park on 3 July 1998, the Northern Territory Police Minister Mike Reed — who was 'famous for shooting feral pigs' (Elisabeth Wynhausen, *Australian Melba*, 6 July 1998, p.15) — stated: 'they're a mob of interstate ferals by and large. For those people who say they're not ferals and have got jobs, well ... if they run with the wolves, they're going to be branded as a wolf' ('Jabiluka protesters branded "interstate ferals"', PROJECT underGROUND's *Drillbits and Tailings*:
<<http://www.moles.org/ProjectUnderground/drillbits/index.html>>).
- ³⁸ Sean Doyle, 1995, 'Feral Peril: Are Ferals Our Future or Do They Just Need a Good Wash?', *Hot Wired, World Beat - Planet Wired*, available at:
<<http://www.hotwired.com/planet/95/48/index1a.html>>
- ³⁹ Kevin Hetherington, 'Stonehenge and its Festival: Spaces of Consumption', in *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption*, ed. Rob Shields (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.91-2.

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