

WHY I WROTE THIS PLAY-----

It was a comment I read in 1987 in an interview with Kathleen Strehlow which opened up a pandoras box of questions about collecting, collections, collectors and the interests of communities in the past and the present.

"I personally snipped the labels off 400 objects in Collection ...so it would be useless...I am the only one with the knowledge to re-document those objects"

Mrs Strehlow who became The Ingkata's Wife, was referring to her husband, TGH Strehlow's Collection of Arrernte sacred objects, which she as his second wife had inherited on his death.

I had read newspaper reports in Darwin about the controversy surrounding the Strehlow Collection, but it was not until I read an interview by Janet Hawley with Kathy Strehlow in The Good Weekend Magazine, that I became fascinated in the story and particularly her story.

I was intrigued with the parallels in the way Kathy Strehlow spoke of her guardianship of her husband's work and his memory/soul, and the way she said, he had spoken of his duty as keeper of the Aranda /Arrernte culture through his guardianship of the sacred tjurngas, regarded by the Arrernte as their life/their soul. The idea of owning someone's soul, or at least in some way having to protect and speak for it, interpret its meaning suggested interesting dramatic potential.

I was also fascinated with the idea of a central female character about whom I felt ambivalent. The challenge in writing about Kathy Strehlow would be to find sympathy for her and yet retain a keen critical attitude to the enormous cultural and political issues raised by her life and her actions. She is not in any sense an easy woman for a feminst writer to deal with.

A further challenge was that although she was to be the main character, it would be difficult to maintain my interest in her, given that her husband's life and work is so exhaustively documented I would be constantly sidetracked by him during the research. I mostly had to find out about her through him and his work and yet he must not take over the play...

In 1987, I moved to Darwin when my husband was appointed Principal Legal Advisor to the Northern Land Council. By virtue of his position and contacts, I have had a privileged access to Aboriginal culture, Land Rights politics and the opportunity to observe and reflect on the moral dilemmas attendant on the role of White Advisors in the Northern Territory. It is from this base and interest, I have developed an informed sensitivity to the complex issues the play explores. And in an essential way I could identify with Kathy Strehlow being the wife of a White Advisor myself.

WRITING ABOUT ABORIGINAL BUSINESS-----

THE INKGATA'S WIFE is essentially a play about White Australian's contact with Aboriginal society and culture. It is written from the viewpoint of a White woman about a White woman. Insofar as it "speaks for" for Aboriginal culture it enacts its subject matter, it is afterall about people who believed it was their role, indeed their responsibility to "speak for" that culture.

To tell such a story from a White viewpoint is as valid as Aboriginal people telling the story from their viewpoint. Sharing our stories is the only way an informed perspective and a dialogue between the cultures may be developed.

As Djon Mundine, the Aboriginal Arts Advisor for Raminginging remarked - "I knew nothing about this, why didn't I ?" Consultations and discussions with Aboriginal people and organisations have already been an integral part of the research, writing and workshop process.

I would also like to add that we got no flak from Aboriginal people about any aspect of the play (nor from their White Advisors) - and I think this is affirmation of the integrity of our research. I can assure you that if we had caused offence or trod on business we shouldn't have we would have heard...from the Aborigines themselves and even more loudly from their sacred watchdogs- The White Advisors.

ARUNTA, ARANDA, ARRAN'DA, ARENDER, ARUNDA, ARRERNTE:
all refer to the same group of people and culture. Baldwin Spencer called them ARUNTA, T.G.H. Strehlow called them ARANDA and today they call themselves ARRERNTE; so I have tried to retain these particular variants as a way of indicating the different historical epochs.

THE INKATA'S WIFE was researched in libraries and archives in Darwin and on the ground in Alice Springs and Hermannsburg in Central Australia.

THE INKATA'S WIFE: TREATMENT

THE INKATA'S WIFE is a drama inspired by the lives of Kathleen Stuart Strehlow and her second husband T.G.H. Strehlow called "The Inkata" (Sacred ceremonial Chief) by the Aranda(Arrernte) people of Central Australia among whom he was born and lived and whom, later he studied for the whole of his working life .

When T.G.H. Strehlow died in 1978 he left a legacy, known as The Strehlow Collection comprising his diaries and notebooks, maps, journals, photographs, films, sound recordings and his translations of the songs, stories and ceremonies of the the Aranda people as well as many sacred objects called tjurngas .

The collection dubbed, "The Crown Jewels of Australian Anthropology" was acquired in 1988 from his widow and second wife, Kathleen by the NT government under a secret agreement and in 1991 The Strehlow Research Centre was opened in Alice Springs to house the Collection.Since Strehlow's death the Collection has been the subject of speculation and controversy in the Northern Territory in particular and in Australia at large . Strehlow's legacy is an issue of vital importance to the Aboriginal people of the N.T. and it presents an issue to be aired and addressed by all Australians.

THE INKATA'S WIFE is an exploration of the issues surrounding that legacy - cultural survival, ownership of knowledge, the love and grief of individuals for one another and for a living culture, the contemporary politics of land rights and mining in the Northern Territory, the role of experts be they lawyers, anthropologists, linguists, and the rights of traditional Aboriginal owners of knowledge and material culture .

THE INKATA'S WIFE is a tragedy about the difficulty of reconciling White Man's Law and Aboriginal law, and it is also a love story, a story of strong passions and genuine beliefs held by individuals and groups. The play poses questions and illuminates dilemmas, it does not propose answers or make judgements.

WRITING ABOUT LIVING PEOPLE:

I began THE INKATA'S WIFE with real people, their own published works, actual events and the published commentary on them, drawn from the recent history of the Northern Territory.

But the nature of making a play is to imaginatively distill and abstract the documents on which it is based; to make characters and in turn metaphors from the real people, and to create myths and stories from actual events and moments in history. So even though documents make up a large part of the found text of the play, it is about dramatic characters who people a metaphorical landscape.

I have read all the available published material and talked to many people who have been professionally associated with the Strehlows, but I have not spoken with Kathleen Strehlow nor any members of the Strehlow family or their friends. I made this choice actively from the beginning of my research, because my task as I saw it was not to write an authorised biography but to retain an objective attitude to the people and the events.

THE INKATA'S WIFE is based on the life and circumstances of Kathleen Strehlow, but it is only during The Courtroom scenes that the real names of the historical figures are used and referred to. This indicates that the extracts from Transcript are of a different status to other text in the play.

Nevertheless, I believe that the story is an important one to tell now, while Mrs Strehlow is living and the issues are still being decided. As a playwright I want to deal with part of the story in a poetic way and part of it in a documentary way, and I want the audience to be able to distinguish between the two, the Courtroom scenes are an integral part of the whole drama. Yes the two forms do sit "uncomfortably", they are meant to, I prefer to think of them in a dialectical relationship both as theatre and as history.

In the main the play is dealing with dramatic characters—The Inkata's Wife, The Inkata, and The First Wife. The Watcher is purely an invention of the play, although at times he speaks the words of real people, including Wenton Rubuntja and Obed Raggett.

THEMES-----

The story of THE INKATA'S WIFE is the parallel between Kathy Strehlow's guardianship of her husband's memory/ reputation /work, and Ted Strehlow's guardianship of The Aranda culture and people. The crossover or pivot of the story is The Strehlow Collection - it represents for Kathy, her husband's legacy; as it represented for Ted Strehlow the legacy of the Aranda. Both Kathy and Ted Strehlow believe{d} that guarding this Legacy is/was their sole responsibility

Importance? Intention?

This story is important because I believe that to take on responsibility for the soul/mind/spirit of another, whether a "famous husband" or a "dead culture" is inherently and deeply problematic.

Such a Legacy is an intolerable, impossible burden for the psychological health of the individual even if they were expertly trained and fit to the task in the beginning. As perhaps Ted Strehlow was, and Kathy was not...Secondly such legacies are also more properly the responsibility of the community or culture which has created them - the academic community and the Aranda people.

I believe that an individual cannot properly speak for another and that

knowledge cannot be privately owned.

It is my intention to raise questions about the ownership of knowledge and reveal the consequences of the legacy of The Strehlow Collection for both Kathy Strehlow and the Aranda people.

In raising these questions in relation to the facts surrounding this particular story, these historical events, I want to raise the larger, general question of cultural appropriation by White Australia of Aboriginal Australia.

Learn? Feel ? Understand?

learn:- who Kathy Strehlow is / who Ted Strehlow was- and how they see/saw themselves / the circumstances of their meeting/the background of their relationship- both sexuality and intimacy and the teacher student roles / the significance of the difference in their ages/ how they perceived the power of Age/ the significance of The Father to them both/the context in which Strehlow took on the legacy - his background and work with the Aranda/ and the circumstances in which Kathy inherited it -his divorce and his death .

Feel:-the tragedy of the story in all its ramifications for each of the characters, the pain, grief, regret, rage and passion of individuals for the people they have loved and lost set against

-the pain and grief and rage that a people feel for the loss of Land and culture and belief, the Aranda and to a lesser extent the German Australian Lutherans

- the wideness of the desert sky, the colour of the land, the heat, the flies, the distances travelled, the space of the desert as opposed to the claustrophobia and entombment of the woman in the library behind the red velvet curtains.

- the poetry and mystery of the Songs of Central Australia, the power of language, of song compared with the frustration at the obfuscation and often irrelevance of legal language.

-the weight of the burden of knowledge and responsibility and the sheer difficulty of keeping track of, and looking after so much stuff

-the trial of proving what you believe is your rightful inheritance for Kathy, Ted , Bertha, and the Aranda

Understand:-the moral dilemmas, that there are no simple answers-what the Collection is, the meaning of the Tjurungas and Sacred Law,

-the historical role of Hermannsburg Mission and the Lutherans in Australia

-the basic geography of Central Australia - The Finke River, Horseshoe Bend, the Macdonnell Ranges to animate the so-called dead heart of Australia

-something of the disciplines of Linguistics and Anthropology,

-the significance of Song and Country to the Aranda, the idea of singing the land into being and singing as a way of possessing knowledge of something or someone and of articulating power over someone or something, hence the notion of being sung (to death)

-Land claims, Land Councils and the role of White Advisors, and the importance of Aboriginal genealogy, knowing who you are and where you came from both in terms of identity per se and in terms of establishing in a White court your right to claim ownership of land.

-something about the close relationship between land rights, NT politicians and mining interests,

-the attitude to women held by Aboriginal men, and the pervasive sexism of all men in the NT,

-the difficulty of reconciling two utterly different systems of law, and two contradictory concepts of inheritance under western property law and probate and Aboriginal customary law and custodianship,

-the difficulty of translating one language into another and trying to place one culture in the terms of another.

FORM-----

There a number of forms at play here, the dream play, a tragedy, an epic with a chamber cast, the courtroom drama, the madwomans monologue, a dance/drama, the intimacy of a love story.

I like that playing with so many forms at once but are the transitions as seamless and as startling as I want them to be?

STRUCTURE-----

If I had found the right structure for this play then I would not be wanting to have the opportunity to workshop this play further. Despite an initial workshop in 1989 and a production in 1990 and considerable rewriting and rejigging of the structure I am not convinced I have found the right structure.

What I am still wrestling with is the sequenceing of images, impressions and information. As it is primarily about memory, ghosts and relationship between the past and the present I am sure that it can't be linear and chronological, but as it is also complex in intentions, layered in its meanings and necessarily ambiguous until the end.

I just don't how to resolve such basic matters as what does the audience NEED to know now, as opposed to what they might WANT to know at this point, and just how long can they TOLERATE UNCERTAINTY, and can they be expected to make all the connections which are certainly all there, or are they just getting confused and giving up...

I am sure that the present structure is better and clearer and dramatically stronger than the first production structure which saw the play end in the Courtroom in Alice Springs.

I think it all needs to flow in and out of the past and the present somehow but I don't know how to do it alone. Which is why I desperately want another workshop and the input of people who can see the desert amongst the clutter of the documents...

THE PICTURES AND THE MUSIC-----

DOCUMENTS and RECORDS:

BOOKS- the books he wrote, His 40 Black NOTEBOOKS,

MAPS- the NT Pastoral Map,

HER(Their) MAP from Songs of Central Australia,

PAPERS- HER THESIS, HER PAPERS, The Strehlow Foundation Newsletters.

The GENEALOGIES- Concertina folded continuous sheets, MAGAZINES- Stern , People, National Geographic, The Good Weekend, Oceania

INDEX CARDS, Files , File Boxes.

CONTAINERS:

SUITCASES, plastic carry bags, her bag,

TEA CHESTS, strong trunks,

HIS TIN TRUNK WHICH SHE HAS NEVER OPENED.

Pitchis (Coolamon) a carved wooden Arrernte carrying vessel used by women for carrying (often on the head) food, water, and even babies.

NATURAL ELEMENTS:

SAND, DUST, STONES, OCHRES,

CIVILISATIONS TRAPPINGS

Silver CANDELARBRA, Candlelight, Gilt framed paintings, Acres of red velvet drapes, sheets covering furniture and objects - everything is shrouded -natural light is locked-out; no fresh air....it is stifling but comforting like the containment of the womb or the tomb...

RECORDING EQUIPMENT IN THE FIELD

Leica Camera, tripod, photographs, Projector, slides, TYPEWRITER, Reel-to-Reel taperecorder, film cans, boxes of slides, photographs. Folding table, camp chair,

CLOTHING

His ACADEMIC GOWN, His Dressing Gown, Her Nightgown, Riding Boots, Bare feet, Moleskins, Tartan Kilt, broadbrimmed hats, rings on her fingers

THE LANDSCAPE AND ITS REPRESENTATION

The painted and the real, NAMITJIRA's Landscapes, painting and seeing country, sand or ground drawings,

Dot paintings and Hermannsburg Style Watercolours.

The red earth, the white Finke River sand, the purple of the Western Macdonnell ranges and the distinctive outline of Mt Sonder- known as the Sleeping Lubra(woman).

SOUNDS

Wooden Click or Tap sticks, a pair of boomerangs struck together as the accompaniment to story and song.

The glassy crunching noise of walking in boots on the riverwashed stones in the dry bed of the Finke River

SONG- sung words as in the Songs themselves and sung text and the sounds of these songs in different languages- English, German and Arrernte

THE VOICES of The Performers, their hands , their feet...

the church Organ, Lutheran Hymns, Hermannsburg Aboriginal Choirs, Glen Miller Danceband, German opera

THE STORY-----

ACT ONE : A WOMAN ALONE- THE PRESENT

THE LIBRARY-Kathy alone with no-one to talk to and so much to say. Alone in her house with all his things around her. The library is a fortress and she is a prisoner of the Past Continuous, buried under the weight of memories, dust, ghosts, shrouds, ashes and the burdens of administration and housekeeping the information, the history. She has to keep track of it all and deal with the constant enquiries. The plots and conspiracies

Sitting down there waiting to be called on, or to call up /summon up the past, like Patience on a monument, but so impatient , pent-up , order/disorder.

Miss Haversham in a house of relics. Rituals, ceremonies, anointing and dressing to make an assault on the outside world. She feels hounded and persecuted by the press, the politicians, the Activists and her memories.

There are plots and conspiracies everywhere, she curses and vents her anger in diatribes, dreams of revenge...

ALONE in her library, she is always watched by the watcher, the Aranda Man. He hardly ever speaks and even when he does she can't hear him, she can't see him either. Does she know he's there? If she thinks there's someone with her, who is it? Her dead husband perhaps?

THE COURTROOM.....

She is summoned to produce documents relating to Aboriginal genealogies in a Land Claim hearing in Alice Springs. The Lake Amadeus Land Claim Transcripts of Evidence. She is the witness and also the accused.

The lawyer who cross examines her is also her husband, The court stenographer who takes down everything she says is also her husband's first wife. The Land Commissioner who presides over her interrogation is the judge, he is also the Watcher , the Aranda Man, he says very little but he hears and sees everything. She is a bad witness, hostile, damms herself from her own mouth, at the centre of attention, like Joan of Arc, they dance around her, accusing, sneering, poking and probing.

Relentless and trivial legal logic attacks her fragile hold on reality, it splinters and fragments her delusions /illusions leading to desperation and disintegration .

She turns on the court, the audiece and accuses them of not really wanting to know her side of things.

ACT TWO- A LOVE STORY: THE PAST

THE LIBRARY-Alone and defeated she finally summons up her ghosts, the one she yearns for her dead husband and one who comes uninvited, his first wife, her rival , now like him dead and gone- but not from her mind. A succsion of dances, couplings and uncoupling, who is the true love, the true wife? The first wife or the second?

THE DESERT- Enter Ted, Ted and Kathy, the couple, man and woman, mentor and student, the illicit lovers, the adulterers, the husband and wife, the co-respondents, the co-accused...

ENCHANTMENT: The seduction of knowledge. They meet, he talks, she listens, there is no place for questions and no need to interrupt, a Dreamtime tour with your personal guide -she is spell bound, enthralled, passive.

Promises of secrets to be revealed, her apprenticeship. Our map, our child, our love, a world unto ourselves, passion- SEDUCTION leads to DISENCHANTMENT: Accumulated knowledge leads to despair and desperate action.

A union of mutual obsession, feeding on each other's vanities and fears, true

parasites- overwhelming , overweening needs served.

DEATH is not even final. The grief is overwhelming, larger than the landscape. At The Ingkata's funeral, the first wife returns, to complete and complicate, the triangle of recrimination, Bitterness/ forgiveness, acknowledging/ denying , grief unites or makes common what is shared. The two women sing of their love and their loss, but the wailing of The Ingkata's wife goes on forever... The Aranda Man is the Pastor who reads the lesson and he has the last word: "That woman's been sung..."

We haven't the resources or the time to present the whole play, so I have chosen to focus on the two women- the Ingkata's wives and to extract and restructure some scenes and moments which show their relationship- you will have to just imagine all the rest for yourselves...

THE ROLE OF THE ABORIGINAL WATCHER AND INTERESTING DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTION OF IT:

This was the the most problematic role in the play. When rehearsals began it was not written in as such. Some lines of text for him to speak were there and I knew in broad terms what the role should mean and when he should or should not be on stage, but what he was actually to do was entirely developed in rehearsals by the director and the Aboriginal performer. Risky business for us all. The risk was more than justified. I think his role still needs further development and more working into the narrative so that his physical language of gesture and movement becomes as valid, and as coherent a part of the play as the rest of the written text. Only when this happens will the role work satisfactorily for a White audience who expect to be able to decode the physical relatively unambiguously.

But interestingly and I think very significantly, Aboriginal people in the audience had no interpretive problems with following what he was doing and why he was there. At first I thought it was simply a matter of there being an Aboriginal man present and hence genuine points of identification; for example watching Aboriginal schoolkids in Araluen being utterly captivated by him wheeling the Holey (an Aboriginal children's toy) around the stage, I assumed it was merely and significantly the recognition of the familiar object taking such prominence in a Whitefella theatre.

But the real meaning of his presence became clear in speaking to Aboriginal lawyer, Mick Dodson after the Darwin season. Mick was Counsel assisting in the Deaths in Custody Royal Commission and he has recently moved to Canberra to take up the position as the first Human Rights Commissioner for Indigenous Peoples. He told me that a powerful element that is coming out of The Report Into Underlying Causes written by Aboriginal anthropologist, Marcia Langton is the significance in Aboriginal society of "witnessing". Witnessing means every Aboriginal person is responsible for the actions of particular others in a complete and profound way. They are responsible in this capacity as witness whether in our terms they were present or not at the precise moment when the event(s) occurred, in other words a very different sense of time/ space/ causation/ responsibility. There was no question that Aboriginal audience members "saw" the play differently and in a literal/ metaphorical/ and cultural sense they saw it through and because of The Watcher.

I found Mick's comments insightful and inspiring and proof that the part was in no way tokenistic and they absolutely confirmed my own intuitions. The task in the future production is to enable The Watcher to work as powerfully (albeit differently) for a White audience.

SOURCES and PROCESS:

Making the poster for THE INKATA'S WIFE.

As the Designer of most of my own plays, the poster for a show is something I think a lot about as I write the play and many cases I have been involved in both designing and printing them myself. My preference is for silk screen printing or at least some element of handwork (eg; DRAGGED SCREAMING- the first poster was photocopied and hand coloured)

However I seize on the opportunity when the budget allows to work with a poster designer. With THE INKATA'S WIFE, there was only one artist the Director, Janet Robertson and I wanted- Todd Williams. He had produced the stunning poster for Janet's CIYT production of BLACK RAINBOW, and we both knew we wanted something as visually rich and layered as that work. We also wanted an Art poster on fine paper and were prepared to print less and place them strategically inside buildings rather than a big run and paste them up everywhere.

CENTRAL IMAGE

When Todd and I met I already had an idea about an image of a figure in Landscape (cf BLACK RAINBOW) the Inkgata's Wife in a dominating position in the Centralian landscape. We considered other smaller images- Strehlow leading a camel, the church at Hermannsburg but eventually decided the Wife alone was enough.

We staged a photograph of the lead actor, Jenny Vuletic dressed in a nightgown and a black academic gown with a wooden pichi on her head full of Ted Strelows books and maps. Jude Swift took the photograph, Janet directed the actor and Todd and I did the Art Direction.

This image in turn had been suggested by a photograph by Baldwin Spencer of an Aranda woman with her pichi on her head.

THE BACKGROUND

From the many books by and about Strehlow I lent to Todd, he chose a photograph from the Ward Mc Nally biography of Strehlow- "Aborigines, Artifacts and Anguish" which showed Strehlow's house at Jay Creek. Todd assured me we could blur out the house so that it would look like an uninhabited landscape. The irony of this did not escape me, as this was the first marital home of Ted and his first wife, Bertha- someone whom Kathy(The Inkgata's Wife) the second wife, would no doubt have loved to blur out..

TYPEFACE

I was interested in coming up with a way of writing the title to show the Arrernte orthography of Inkata with the long N sound and the . under the T . Todd experimented with different forms of handwritten script, none of which we were happy with. As a source I had a photocopy of a page from the Aranda-English Catechism by Pastor Albrecht, translated by Strehlow into Arrernte which included the word Inkgata meaning Lord (Jesus).

Ultimately we decided it was simpler and more effective to blow up that typewritten lettering.

BORDER

I liked the use of writing as decoration in Todd's poster for BLACK RAINBOW, so he suggested a border of writing, and asked what might be appropriate. We used the same typeface from Strehlow's Aranda Grammar which listed the Arrernte sub section names.

DREAMING DESIGN

Arrente Elder and Artist, Wenten Rubbuntja was consulted about contributing to the design for the play and the poster. Jo Boniface at Araluen and David Ritchie from The Sacred Sites Authority approached him and he met with the cast and crew in Darwin during rehearsals when it was agreed he would allow us to use his MPARNTWE Dreaming design for the poster. Through Jo he faxed it to Todd and they exchanged roughs of how it was being used. Later when we were in the final week of rehearsal at Araluen, he met with Aboriginal actor, Lawrence Clifford who played the Aranda Man and I, out the back of Araluen. And in the sand there he drew the Dreaming Design and showed Lawrence how to do it while telling us both the story of the Dreaming for the site immediately behind Araluen. I photographed it, and every night Lawrence drew it on stage in the white sand we collected from the Finke Riverbed, near Hermannsburg.

COLOURS and PAPER

We wanted recycled paper but were unable to get it, however Todd found a beautiful stiff textured paper that had the aesthetic attributes of recycled if not the ideological advantages....

The final choice of colours was the only moment where our happy collaboration came unstuck. We agreed (or at least I thought we had, though in retrospect I recall Todd thought sky/earth was a bit too obvious) on ochre red, a brilliant Centralian sky blue and smidges of sage green. But we couldn't afford three colours and Todd came up with the ochre and the bright green combination which when I first saw it, I hated. However I'm now sure he was right! And although I thought it made the Wife's eyes look positively demented, it was arresting and probably not inappropriate.

Recently, Anthropologist Jeannie Devitt told me that the poster had lived with her on the wall of her bush hut during her field work in Eastern Arrernte country

ARTISTS involved:

DESIGNER	Todd Williams
PHOTOGRAPH	Jude Swift
MPARNTWE DREAMING DESIGN	Wenten Rubuntja

SUZANNE SPUNNER, Darwin September 1993.

THE IMPULSES August 2000

My interest was sparked by her story of cutting off the labels off the sacred objects

So labels are a central image

Ted labels things, he values them and he enhances their value by labelling accurately and exhaustively

Kathy removes the labels - cuts them off, loses them - believes that they are meaningless without their labels
makes the excessive remark that she is the only one with the knowledge to relabel them

Bruce believes that a label is a story to be invented, embellished and attached, it adds value , creates provenance and cache

For the Aranda the thing itself was valued for itself and its songs and in that sense the song was the label

DOUBLES/ TWINS/ PARALLELS

Song and story

Speaking / singing

Translation - Aranda and English
 English and German
 Aranda and German

Their songs/ my translations

Ted had two wives / Kathy had two husbands

Kathy has two champions - Ted and Bruce and they both die and leave her

True love / false love

space of the desert/ enclosure of the library

Aboriginal law/ White man's law

guardianship/ ownership

Song connects people to land / Song is evidence of people's knowledge of Land in Land Claims but first they have to prove via genealogy that that they are continuously connected to that part of land

Chatwin was obsessed with twins and believed he had a twin - part of his divided nature - Travelling/staying still , bi sexuality , marriage / promiscuity
England / the world , collecting things / shedding things

Strehlow was born under the totem of the twins of Ntarea which is Hermannsburg and hence Aranda born at the mission claimed the twins too - but it also hinted at the image TGH used of Namitjira as a traveller between two worlds
Strehlow saw himself as a double agent between Aboriginal and White world, between Germans and Australians , Lutheranism/Aboriginal belief

Strehlow and Chatwin are twins in this play
- they are the only two men Kathy champions and who are flattered by her support and endorsement, and she actively colludes to build up their egos

Young Strehlow = Bruce in Kathy's mind

Ted twins himself with his father and distinguishes himself from his father

For Ted Kathy is Mrs Elliot and she saves him as Mrs Elliot (almost) saved his father

Chatwin functions as a surrogate - the son who could have inherited from TGH a phantom lover for Kathy as if she recover's her husband's lost youth which she as second wife never had any access to....

WHO SPEAKS FOR WHOM ABOUT WHAT AND WHO LISTENS?

OBJECTS I TED can speak for the Aranda - because no-one else will and they cannot
they cannot- they are dying out, their young men are uninterested
But I am not allowed to, no-one will support me,
no one was interested then

COLLECTION I KATHY have to speak for him - he is dead
but I am not allowed to - no one wants to know about him now because now they think they can speak for themselves but really its just other wrong white people

COLLECTOR I BRUCE have spoken for them -
Nomads, Strehlows, Aboriginal business
The Nomads had no voice and no interest in being spoken for,
the Strehlows were pleased he did, with qualifications
The White advisors did not allow him to speak about Aboriginal business because either it should not be spoken about and if it was to be, Aborigines should do it themselves and really if any white was to it it should be them, because they had paid their dues

BUT NOW everyone is interested and wants to listen and believe

CHATWIN/TED STREHLOW

Songs of Central Australia / Songlines

They were both gifted "translators" but behind it all is the original, the source, Aranda Culture

Introducing Chatwin brings another parallel-

Strehlow was given stories/ songs / words and things by the old men
- he then said he owned them and could do what he wanted with them including sell them

Then everyone got up in arms about what he did do with them
But if he had not accepted their gift the oral culture would not have been written down and the genealogies and the artefacts would probably have disappeared

And the revivification of Aranda culture today might not have been possible
It was Strehlows genealogies and extensive records that made possible the
success of last years Native Title Claim in Alice Springs
Yet the majority of those successful claimants would not have been recognised
either by Spencer and Gillen or Strehlow as "true Aranda"

Chatwin was given stories, information, introductions in Central Australia
and then he wrote a best selling book and spawned Songlines . com
And everyone who gave him their stories repudiated him and his usage of their
stories
But if he had not written the book the issues and importance of the Aranda
culture might not have entered mainstream Western culture albeit in a
simplified and romanticised form.

BOOKS AND CONNECTIONS -----

Everyone knows Bruce Chatwin came to Central Australia and wrote a book about the
Aborigines and their songlines, but not many people remember the reason he came
was a book he read in the British Museum, Songs of Central Australia by TGH
Strehlow and a woman he met in London Robyn Davidson who had written another
book about Central Australia that everyone's heard about Tracks.
He came to meet Kathy Strehlow and to go to Central Australia himself armed with
introductions from Robyn Davidson.

The four most significant and well known books about the Northern Territory (and by implication the best known books about Aboriginal issues) are WE OF THE NEVER NEVER, CAPRICORNIA, TRACKS and SONGLINES

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA -----

c Suzanne Spinner 2000

In Central Australia, a man is entrusted by the tribal elders with their sacred ceremonial objects. The man dies and his second wife inherits this legacy. These things were not for the eyes of uninitiated men, much less for the eyes of a white woman. This legacy is valuable and contested.