Introduction

These are relatively new theories, of course, and to what degree they will prove worthy of acceptance must be decided as time goes on.[1]

'Psychoanalysis', noted the Melbourne analyst Frank Graham in 1967, 'no matter where, always arouses interest, friendly or hostile … rarely is it ignored altogether'.[2] In Australia, as in many Western countries throughout the twentieth century, Freudian ideas have been alternately hailed as holding the key to understanding modern civilisation, and dismissed as fraudulent nonsense. Yet, despite ongoing controversies regarding their veracity, many of the concepts Freud developed relating to trauma, repression, defences, the unconscious, the Oedipus complex, projection and displacement have not only endured but have provided the very framework through which Australians have come to understand their own version of the Western 'self' at the juncture of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Psychoanalysis – the body of thought which brings Freudian ideas into a coherent theory – differs from other theories of the self because it takes the unconscious as its key organising principle. Unlike psychology, which is concerned with the conscious world and aspects of socialisation, psychoanalysis privileges the life of the unconscious as the way to understanding psychic life.[3]

This book is a history of Freudian ideas in Australia and, as such, it is an attempt to fill the gap in the history of the practice and ideas of psychoanalytical thought. It is also a way of adding a further dimension to our understanding of the complexity of cultural life and the history of ideas in Australian society. While some aspects of this book

have been the subject of several short studies by both historians[4] and psychoanalysts[5], this is the first time a cultural history of psychoanalysis in Australia has been written in its own right. Although Freud has never been a dominant force here as he has been in many other countries, his theories have permeated aspects of cultural life and to some extent clinical practice. I argue that there is a little known, yet important, story to tell about the influence of psychoanalysis in this country, especially in intellectual circles and within sections of the medical profession.

So why is this a significant story? A key underlying aim of this history is to challenge assumptions that Australian intellectuals and Australian culture in general have not embraced questions of inner life through psychoanalytic understandings. Australia is often constructed as a land of pleasure and opportunity: symbolised by the 'beach' – synonymous with unreflective hedonism[6] – and populated by Australian males who value independence and individualism, negate emotion and self-expression and have no care other than for immediate, material concerns. But, despite the stereotypes, this does not mean there have not been efforts to explore interiority through psychoanalytic frameworks.

While historians have interrogated the mythical images of the national 'type' to illuminate the class, gendered and racialised assumptions which inform the image of the larrikin, the noble bushman, and bohemian intellectual, they have not taken into account material which suggests that 'Australianness' embodies a psychological as well as a cultural dimension. This study will consider how Australians have reflected on the diversity, complexity and depth of their emotional lives through the insights and methods that psychoanalysis has to offer.

This book also opens up a discussion about the influence of Freud both inside and outside the medical field. Despite a great deal of resistance from many practitioners of psychiatry and psychology, these two disciplines have been influenced, at least to some extent, by aspects of Freudian thought. However, the general trend in the use of Freud's theories in medical practice has been to help identify modes of 'normal' behaviour and reinforce current ideals, rather than to offer a radical treatment alternative. In the main, it has been in intellectual circles where Freud's ideas have been most enthusiastically, albeit selectively, embraced.

Any exploration of the reception of psychoanalysis in Australia in the popular and cultural realm can be by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. For all the examples I give, there remain many untold stories. While I look at advice columns in magazines, popular radio, the

academic arena, political movements and the artistic realm, there are many more fields that warrant close, detailed examination such as literature and cinema. I hope others will take up the challenge of examining the role psychoanalysis has played in shaping these cultural forms.

When I began looking at the influence of psychoanalysis in Australia over the last century, a number of themes became apparent, and I have used them to underpin this book. The first of these themes was a gradual move through the twentieth century in both medical and general terms to concentrated listening. The second has been the way in which Freudian thought has been taken up during different periods for different temporal and cultural reasons. And, the third and final theme has been the way in which Freudian theories have been used to shape the idea of the 'self' in modern society.

The listening cure

The psychoanalyst is paid not to talk too much, because talking is a good way of not listening. Being listened to - making one's presence felt through one's words, and through one's body which is making the words - at its best, restores one's appetite to talk.[7]

Some analysts have observed that psychoanalysis is not only a 'talking cure' but also a 'listening cure'. Renowned English psychoanalyst Adam Phillips says:

> Calling psychoanalysis a talking cure has obscured the sense in which it is a listening cure … Being listened to can enable one to bear – and even enjoy – listening to oneself and others; which democracy itself depends upon. Whether or not the whole notion of equality was invented to make it possible for people to listen to each other, or vice versa, listening is privileged in democratic societies.[8]

In focusing on listening I do not want to suggest that a dichotomy exists between talking and listening, or to imply that talking is not a significant aspect of the dialogue that takes place within analysis. In psychoanalytic practice, the two are intimately connected and are a part of a dynamic psychoanalytic exchange. But when considering its history over the past century, the power of psychoanalysis was often understood to be in its contribution as a listening device. Certainly this was the case in its early years when untrained doctors and enthusiastic intellectuals adopted Freudian ideas and practices in ways which were eclectic, improvised and informal. For them, it was one technique to

be applied amongst many and had not yet been perceived as a broader philosophy of the mind.

The adoption of psychoanalysis signalled a transition from the nineteenth century practice, used by the French neurologist Jean Charcot, of looking for symptoms in patients in the treatment of mental health, to the practice of listening to them and searching for meaning in their narratives, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[9] With the advent of the 'talking cure' and the analytical hour – where Freud and his colleague Joseph Breuer encouraged their patients to speak to them and perhaps even more importantly, listened to and heard what they had to say – the doctor–patient relationship was redefined. This is not to say there was equity in this exchange or that what the patient said was heard. One can hear but not listen. But the point to make here is that listening became a part of medical examination in new ways.

This shift in dynamics in the medical context was also reflected in society in general. There was a move, more broadly, from learning about the world by looking, and observing in institutions such as museums, exhibitions and galleries in the Victorian period[10] to interpreting one's surrounding by listening to the radio, conversing on the telephone and going to the cinema, from the 1920s onwards. While historians and other social theorists have focused primarily on the visual and its influence in the construction of identity, little attention has been given to the auditory in understanding the 'modern' notion of the self. By connecting technology and new modes of communication with the emergence of psychoanalysis, this book addresses Steven Connor's injunction that we consider the 'compelling importance of the auditory in the cultural, clinical and technological constitution of the modern self'.[11]

This study begins with the Victorian era, at a time when the body rather than the mind was believed to hold the answer to psychological problems. For example, the bodies of the 'insane' were scrutinised for signs of 'madness' and were believed to hold the key to understanding mental illness. A move to listening occurred during World War I when the narratives of shell-shocked soldiers were analysed in an attempt to find the cause of neuroses. In the process psychoanalytic terms were often used and psychoanalytic techniques applied.

By the inter-war years, the modern self was becoming increasingly defined and understood through psychoanalytic categories that had been both influenced and mediated by the technologies of the day such as cinema, radio and telephone. What Walter Benjamin has famously described as the search for the 'ideal listener' took place in the period from the mid-twentieth century onwards, and it was a search that was

abetted by psychoanalysis. In the 1940s, the 'therapeutic conversation' was used to treat soldiers during the Second World War and reflected the growing influence of these ideas in the medical arena; while, during the 1950s, psychological and psychoanalytic categories were used to help understand and allay the anxieties and fears of a wider listening radio public.

In the early 1960s, the introduction of telephone counselling further illustrates the continuing nexus between technology, the auditory and psychotherapeutic confession. This spilled over to later social movements, such as the women's movement, which gained a great deal of their impetus through talking and listening in consciousness raising groups. Thus it can be seen that in using the psychoanalytic technique of 'skilled listening', it has been the auditory, and not just the visual, that shaped identity in the twentieth century.

Freud revivals

Every so often there is a Freud revival.[12]

A second theme of this book is the way certain Freudian ideas gained currency at particular historical moments. I want to examine how, throughout the twentieth century, each generation adopted the aspects of Freud which spoke to specific historical moments and conditions in Australia.

In the late nineteenth century the focus was on bodily expression of insanity through hysteria as it was understood in that period that the physical, not the psychological, was the source of madness. On the other hand, at times of social and cultural change such as the 1920s and 1960s, the emphasis shifted to theories of personal liberation and repression. During the upheaval of the two world wars the focus fell on trauma, early childhood, neurosis and familial dislocation. While in artistic representation, Freudian ideas were adopted by avant-garde movements to make social and political commentary on the war through movements such as surrealism. Through the Cold War, with its climate of suspicion, disloyalty and deviance, the drama associated with the Oedipal triangle was identified as the cause of homosexuality.

In grounding the reception of Freudian ideas historically, my aim is to explore the historical contingency of concepts of inner life such as the self, emotions, and personality.[13] How has cultural and social change facilitated the adoption or rejection of ideas about repression, transference, sexuality and the unconscious? What events have led to