Fred D'Aguilar's "The Longest Memory" and Tom Wright's "Black Diggers" both explore the impossibility of altering the culture of oppression within their socio-historic contexts. D'Aguilar's novel is an allegorical contemplation of the oppression of African Americans in the 19th century, set in Virginia. North America. In a similar historical period, "Black Diggers" serves as a play that voices the stories of Aboriginal Australians within the twentieth century, as they attempt to gain equal standing and after World War II. Both texts, whilst clearly advocating for change, suggest that implementation is hindered by institutionalisation, trauma, and the systematic silencing and "erasing" of those who attempt to change. Overall, both novels suggest that, with their "we can't change the past" because "why would things change?" when there is no foundation for progression provided.

The texts explore the ability of institutionalisation to sideline individuals from even considering change as a viable possibility. Within "The Longest Memory"
Mr. Whitechapel presents that he recognises the flaws of slavery, as "the lot of a slave is miserable," and yet he makes no active choice to attempt to mend the flaws of their society. This is due to Mr. Whitechapel having been institutionalised to the point where he believes slavery to be "a prodigious custom, that cannot be undone," and has "no end in sight." The metaphor infertility that the relation of slave and owner has become because of the consequences of attempting to undo it would be futile. This highlights that Mr. Whitechapel's attempts to justify continuing with slavery, despite it working against his morals, is both an act of cognitive dissonance, and an attempt to absolve himself from guilt. He states the only logical solution would be to "abandon the fabric and start again." But then argues "down that road lies chaos," suggesting that while Mr. Whitechapel could almost be considered an abolitionist, his compromise he is comfortable with the "order" of their culture of the oppressive culture, and is consequently institutionalised to the point of being
unwilling to change. This same institutionalization preventing the little attempts to change is similarly suggested explored within "Black Diggers" yet not through the oppressed, not the oppressor. Bertie's Mum, when Bertie suggests he wants to be "a fighter" too. For "Aboriginales" is opposed to the idea as she believes his efforts will be ultimately pointless. Highlighting her disillused perspective of their systematic oppression she infers Bertie that despite his attempts for equality "the world's still the world" and he "won't be allowed through the wire" a visual image that emphasizes the systematic segregation and the idea of a world that has become stagnant and impenetrable in its culture. This suggestion is mirrored by the stage directions as "Bertie and Mum vanish" and in their place is "Bertie Entangled wire". The theatrical convention of stage props suggests that paralleling the Mum's words suggests that Wright is correct in her belief that the world remains unchanging.
further emphasising that change is impossible due to institutionalised attitudes. Both texts suggest that in order for change to be possible, institutionalisation must be destroyed in order for individuals to find the momentum to advocate for progression. But how is this possible? What was the catalyst in each historical context? Originally, Daggwar and Wright additionally suggest that trauma is debilitating to the point where it immobilises people from even attempting change. Whitechapel, who endures watching his friend get engulfed to death, finds himself with a "sour face" and "dead eyes". Both images suggest a stagnant aspect to him, utterly passive, lacking in capacity for progression. Due to his trauma, he has "lines chiselled without Christ permission" on his face, "chiselled" implying a permanence as though he is a statue and will remain utterly immobile. He becomes a man whose manner has said nothing but
kept silence" emphasising that it is due to the trauma of "memory" that rises to the skin. He is unable to voice his desire for equality. The same immobility caused by trauma is highlighted in "Black Diggers" as Wright suggests trauma must be dealt with primarily before individuals can take any action. Eru as an old soldier finds himself in the midst of his "own iron harvest" as his trauma forces its way up, symbolised in "bits of shell casing" that "pierce Christ skin". The shell casing is symbolic of repressed trauma and that "trauma must come confess out. [It] must..." Prior to this, Eru's composition dealing with trauma, Eru finds himself that his body composition has been literally altered due to his trauma, as there were "seventeen pieces" of shell casing that "wound him out of his body. In a moment similar to the "dead eyes" of Whitechapel, Eru contemplates..."
that he was debilitated by the trauma and incapable of action as he states, "For a while I was dead". He also refers to his body as a "carcass", again suggesting a sense of death and decay, and suggesting he was so suppressed by trauma that he could not even entertain the idea of change, but rather just "got on with it". Pagonis and Wright appear to reach the same conclusion as they suggest that as long as there is trauma within a society that has never been voiced, that society cannot even entertain the idea of implementing change as they are too ineffectively burdened by the past to move forward.

Change progression towards a less oppressive culture is also presented as impossible due to the dire ramifications of what happens to those who do attempt to challenge their own oppression. Within "The Longest Memory", Chapel finds himself questioning the systematic oppression of his own people, and begins to believe slavery...
to be a "ship that's settled for one view," it's anchor rusts within us. It's time it withdrew. The visual imagery of this metaphor suggests that slavery corrodes the individual, through the image of a rusted anchor, implying a need for movement for change. Chapel elects to run away from the plantation effectively bringing his death "on himself." It became challenging the hegemonic structure of society is shown within "The Longest Memory" to be a death wish for the oppressed. The brutalisation of Chapel for attempting to incite change is realised through the image of the whip, consuming him "like glutons who gorge themselves to their fill only to "make room for more." The whip is symbolic of the oppressor's within society insatiable desire to indulge themselves through physically violence against those deemed sub-altern by society. This consumption of the slave's vitality, Stewart allegorically emphasised through Chapel's whipping, implies that attempting change is a dangerous and often fatal action for the oppressed. Wright presents a similar idea of the ramifications dire ramifications of
change, however, the consequences for perpetuating attempts at progression in "Black Diggers" is depicted to be ostracisation. Nigel, a highly educated character, gains momentum for change through writing to a paper about "the appalling brutality and savage burning" of Aboriginal Australians within the Northern Territory, intentionally using highly sophisticated and eloquent language to emphasise his level of education. However, due to preconceived, previously constructed ideas, Nigel's voice is silenced as the paper's team believe it to be "a howl as it's a "damn good turn of phrase for a darkie," disparaging language indicating that Aboriginal people were believed to be incapable of the eloquence of "the King's English". Due to the silencing of Nigel's voice, and consequently removing the foundation of his identity because he attempted to vocalise a need for change, he becomes ostracised. This is evident, assessed through symbolic stage directions as "Nigel [steps forward] a sad figure. Walking against the flow of a busy footpath". The theatrical convention visually suggests that Nigel
has become disconnected from society, as he walks in the opposite direction to everyone else. In a poignant moment that concludes the play, Nigel emphasizes just how estranged from society he feels he has become, due to attempting change, as he states "I don’t want to join in. I don’t belong". The extreme difficulty, harsh and debilitating consequences for those who attempt change, as communicated by D’Aguiar and Wright, indicate that for change to be viable, there must be the bravery to attempt it, since not be silenced through brutality or ignoring them, but rather should be given space to be heard. It is in this way that a change can be made in possibility, rather than a death sentence with a tragic outcome.

D’Aguiar and Wright both draw the conclusion through their texts that change within the socio-historic periods was utterly impossible. There was simply too many people, irreversible affected and imprisoned by trauma and institutionalisation as well as too many silenced for attempting to rebel. However, the texts
do suggest, through the allegorical nature of the novel and play, that if the stories of the oppressed are shared, through the voices of characters like Whitechapel, Chapel, Ern and many others, then changes can be made going forward. The episodic construction of both works intentionally advocates to the end by silencing the suppressed, through creating varied stories of in order to bring about change in today's society. Whitechapel states that "What's done is done. It cannot now be undone. It can only be understood." This poignant observation cuts to the core of both novels, that for change to be a possibility now, we as a society must understand why it was not feasible in North Virginia in the 18th and 19th century and Australia in the 20th century. It is ultimately by giving a voice to those long silenced that change can be implemented. Without a variety of voices being given a platform to be heard, our societies will be resigned to repeating the same debilitating attitudes that so adversely affected the Aborigine Australian's and the African American's.