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Aboriginal History is a refereed journal that presents articles and information in Australian ethnohistory and contact and post-contact history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Historical studies based on anthropological, archaeological, linguistic and sociological research, including comparative studies of other ethnic groups such as Pacific Islanders in Australia, are welcomed. Subjects include recorded oral traditions and biographies, narratives in local languages with translations, previously unpublished manuscript accounts, archival and bibliographic articles, and book reviews. For more information please visit aboriginalhistory.org.au

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WARNING: Readers are notified that this publication may contain names or images of deceased persons.

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Preface

Ingereth Macfarlane

1977–2017: Aboriginal History journal celebrates 40 years of publication

The first volume of the journal Aboriginal History was published in 1977, 40 years ago. The cultural tenor of that time is evoked by remembering other events of ’77 – the publication of Helen Garner’s first novel, Monkey Grip; the first Star Wars film; the release of the Ranger Uranium Inquiry report; Premier Bjelke-Peterson’s ban on street protest in Queensland; the formation of the Australian Democrats by Don Chipp; and the passing of the NSW Heritage Act. It was the year the Apple II computer and the Voyager satellite were launched. It was a time of innovation, upheaval and consolidation of postwar social changes. Tom Stannage, on Aboriginal History’s first Editorial Board, saw the establishment of both Aboriginal History and the feminist journal Hecate in 1977 as part of a shift in the questions being asked by historians, a ‘rejection’ of ‘the older established ways of presenting Australian history’.¹

Our 40th anniversary offers an opportunity to reflect on the history and future of the journal, and to celebrate the landmark of its foundation and its continuance. This chance was embraced on 27 October 2017, in the form of a masterclass on writing and publishing for early career researchers in the field, and a symposium of past contributors. Their insights and perspectives will be published in a future volume of the journal.

¹  Stannage 1979: x. This can be seen to be building on the pioneering historical work of Beckett 1958 [2005]; Inglis 1962; Barwick 1963; Reay 1964; Corris 1968; Gale 1972; Curthoys 1973; Markus 1974; Reece 1974; and the landmark publication in 1970 of Charles Rowley’s The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, Outcasts in White Australia and The Remote Aborigines.
Bain Attwood has previously written an extensive account of the origins of the journal. As one of the journal's editors, I add some reflections here on what I think are principles and perspectives that have guided the journal's ethos, approach and content.

The possibilities for the foundation of a new journal were laid out by its prime initiator, Pacific historian Niel Gunson in 1975:

**Foundation of the Board and general policy meeting**

Thursday 4 September 1975, Staff Centre ANU

The first object of the Journal is to provide a much-needed vehicle for the publication of articles and information in the area of Australian ethnohistory … The Journal will serve as a publication outlet for the increasing number of scholars working in the field of Aboriginal history, bringing together material which now tends to be scattered and to go unnoticed in more general periodicals. The existence of the Journal could stimulate further interest and research in Aboriginal history … considerable importance will be attached to Aboriginal oral tradition, vernacular writings etc. Through its Notes and Documents section – with unpublished MSS, oral traditions, archives, bibliographies – the Journal will also serve as a means of recording Aboriginal history from its source. Another important object will be to provide Aboriginals with readily accessible information on Aboriginal history … Finally, there is increasing public interest in Aboriginal history, both in schools and in the media. In this way the Journal is likely to achieve a wider readership than other scholarly periodicals and will thus serve a valuable social function.³

Hence, the primary goals were to foster research in the history of Aboriginal Australia, bring together academic publication in the area and to make accessible otherwise difficult to find records and documents for Aboriginal and other informed general readers.

It is telling that the origins of the *Aboriginal History* journal were in the Department of Pacific History of The Australian National University. Pacific historians working in that department, in particular Niel Gunson, Harry Maude and Greg Dening, had been confidently working with missionary, government and trade documents since the late 1950s in pursuit of Pacific histories that overtly included the perspectives of the Islanders – ‘a whole unexplored world of culture-contact and pre-European history in the Pacific with its own methodology and rationale’.⁴ They saw this ‘world’ as an expansion of the more traditional historical interests in ‘colonial history and contemporary politics’, and hoped for ‘history written by the Pacific

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²  Attwood 2012.
³  Memo circulated to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies in November 1975 (letter to Shirley Andrews, 10 November 1975), and to the Research School of Pacific Studies, seeking set-up funding, Aboriginal History archives, in the possession of Niel Gunson, Canberra.
⁴  Gunson 1978: xii.
Islanders themselves’, with ‘an emphasis on the importance of Indigenous source material, both written vernacular and oral’. In contrast, at this time few Australianist historians were using parallel materials towards such goals. It was this gap in mainstream Australian academic historical work that Aboriginal History aimed to remedy.

Foundation editor, Canadian-born anthropologist Diane Barwick wrote to fellow anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner regarding his study of early settlement at Sydney, published as the first article in the first volume of the new journal, saying his paper was:

unique in emphasising the Aboriginal perception of historical events. This is precisely what we want for the journal – this perception that Australian historians have not – probably cannot – provide … I haven’t been so enthralled by a story since ‘The guns of Navarone’. It would help Aboriginal kids a lot; when they have to suffer the textbook recitals of that first encounter they must suffer an identity crisis.

In the 1975 proposal above, the emphasis was to provide historical records and scholarship for Aboriginal people, but this rapidly shifted to an emphasis on ‘self help’. By 1979, as Tom Stannage wrote in the introduction to the Handbook for Aboriginal and Islander History: ‘Already research on Aboriginal history is changing our one-sided perception of Australian history, and Aboriginal authors are giving us all a new understanding of the past’. The Handbook was ‘dedicated to the proposition that Aborigines and Islanders will write their own history, and rewrite the history of Australia. Many are already at work recording the oral history of their own communities. It is these pioneers who have prompted us to publish this manual’. The Handbook was Aboriginal History Inc.’s first monograph, republished four times to 1986. It was put together by 32 researchers in diverse fields who saw the need to set out in detail how to access and use different kinds of historical documents, from archives to museum collections to archaeological sites.

Another unfamiliar form of history-telling promoted in the journal was in collaborative papers, or ‘eye-witness accounts’ as Tom Dutton and Luise Hercus, linguists and editors of Aboriginal History Volume 9, called them. These are historical accounts given in full in their Indigenous language, transcribed and translated. These are at once a record of language, a telling of a story important to the teller in their own terms and a history with important implications made available for those who have not lived or heard it. Dutton and Hercus stated that ‘the text with the gloss is, after all, the closest we can get to what people said and thought. In the field of oral

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5 Gunson 1978: xiii.
6 Stanner 1977.
7 Letter Barwick to Stanner, 12/12/76. Aboriginal History Archives, in possession of N. Gunson, Canberra.
8 Stannage 1979: xi.
9 Dutton and Hercus 1985: 3.
history, it represents an historical document’. These are interdisciplinary historical documents that would not customarily be published in standard historical journals, and would not be readily available outside technical linguistic ones. Editor Diane Barwick commented on the article ‘Rib-bone Billy’ included in Volume 1:

I think the use of Aboriginal language texts is very important for the proposed Journal of Aboriginal History. They emphasise that there is an Aboriginal perception of history and will help show other Australians that Aboriginal languages are not mere ‘lingo’ or pidgin or doggerel, but are worthy of preservation and analysis. Texts and translations are almost unavailable except in technical linguistic journals and monographs and are almost unintelligible to the rest of us. BUT – they may be difficult to publish, technically difficult with special fonts, extra cost? Need to be consistent in orthography. Can such mss stand alone rather than being submerged in an ‘oral history department’ as somehow separate (inferior?) to white-man-history.

This is a reminder that these kinds of text are not straightforward to produce or to publish – they required a reorientation of the priorities of publication, with a clear emphasis on the primacy of Indigenous voices and perspectives. One part of this involved developing special fonts and a system of referencing that suited a mix of disciplines, which Diane Barwick and co-foundation board member Bob Reece spent a great deal of time working out, and which is still retained.

An additional form of encouragement for work by Indigenous historical researchers are the two scholarships that Aboriginal History Inc. administers – the annual Sally White–Diane Barwick Award and the Stanner Award, which was helpful to now Professor John Maynard in his early exploration of the field.

A prime characteristic of the journal’s and monograph series’s content is their diversity of theme, region and approach. And where there was a gap, a special volume was put together to fill it. This diversity was enhanced by the inherent, necessarily interdisciplinary qualities that follow from what is required to access and represent histories of Indigenous Australia. Social, cultural and economic historians, anthropologists, linguists, archaeologists, cultural geographers, sociologists, educationalists, political scientists and demographers have all contributed. The Editorial Board’s membership also reflects this diversity. Many members have had long-term commitments to the journal, but at the same time it has gained from the input of many short-term academic visitors to the ANU who serve on

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10 Dutton and Hercus 1985: 3.
12 Editorial comment 24 March 1977, in Aboriginal History Archives, in possession of Niel Gunson, Canberra.
13 For example, Volume 5 about Asian–Aboriginal contact, Volume 8 on south-eastern Australia, Volume 9 on linguistic studies, Volume 16 on Aboriginal people in the armed services, Volume 19 on international comparisons with interrelations in other settler societies, Volume 25 on the concept of genocide and Volume 30 on Indigenous forms of history telling.
the board during their residency. Reading through the lists of board members gives a panoramic view of those who have worked to bring histories of Indigenous Australia to light.

Our 40th anniversary is an opportunity to acknowledge the long-term stalwarts of the Editorial Board who helped establish the journal and have carried it through consequential changes in Indigenous politics, in university politics, in publishing modes and expectations, and a great expansion in writing and readership in the field: Niel Gunson, Luise Hercus and Isabel McBryde.

Diane Barwick so injected her energy, editorial rigour, wide network of contacts and her vision for the journal into its structure that it influence has not waned. Her husband, zoologist and artist Dick Barwick, designed the journal’s covers from the beginning until 2009. They chose the Laura rock art image, which he re-drew to form the Aboriginal History Inc. logo, because it expressed ‘protest and reaction as well as the everyday life of Aboriginal people’.14

Aboriginal History Inc. has always been independent, but has been given vital support by the Research School of Pacific Studies and the Research School of Social Sciences, initially through Peter Grimshaw, the business manager, who enabled crucial initial funding and went on to be treasurer from 1977 until 2002. The Australian Centre for Indigenous History, through board member Ann McGrath, and the ANU History Department have provided support and a home for the journal since 2003.

There has been consistent input into the Editorial Board’s decisions from Indigenous members, including Charles Perkins, Marcia Langton, Gordon Briscoe, Mick Dodson, Kaye Price (Chair), Robyne Bancroft, Bill Jonas, Frances Peters-Little, Steven Kinnane, Lawrence Bamblett, Ricky Mullett, Dave Johnson and Shino Konishi. The Heads of the Tjabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre have been on the board and generously hosted Aboriginal History Inc. meetings. The ANU is currently developing an Indigenous Heritage Trail with Dave Johnson, and Aboriginal History will be included in this.

Since 1981, Peter Read has been a board member and chair, and editor of many volumes and monographs. Maria Nugent is a creative editor with Shino Konishi, and is now chair. I have been a member of the board since 2000, and was managing editor for seven years. May McKenzie was the secretary for most of the years from the beginning until 1993. Archaeologist Rob Paton has been the secretary and then treasurer from 1994 to the present.

There has always been a dedicated team of people who volunteer or work for tiny amounts of money to produce books and journals of high quality. Bernadette Hince and Geoff Hunt have been meticulous copyeditors. Rani Kerin has overseen the publication of many high-quality monographs. Tikka Wilson, now secretary, has been on the board and typeset the journal with flair for many years. Trish Boekel and now Thelma Sims have been indispensable sales agents.

Aboriginal History Inc. has enjoyed a constructive relationship with ANU Press, who have actively supported the journal and monograph series to transition to digitisation and electronic publishing.

At a rough count, Aboriginal History Inc. has published an average of 100 articles and 10 monographs per decade. A large number of these would not otherwise be available to the world. All of these are now freely downloaded from the ANU Press website by tens of thousands of readers. To boost the accessibility of the journal articles, we have created an index of the contents of *Aboriginal History* journal from 1977 to 2016. This is available as a Word and Excel document on our website at aboriginalhistory.org.au.

All these publications have been written by authors and refereed by reviewers whose generosity and hard work keeps the discipline and its publications fresh and up to the mark. At the core of all of this are the Indigenous story-holders telling their histories in the journal so as to make them available to the world.

We look forward to the next decade of the journal's long and valuable history, and all the books and papers it will nurse into the world – a burgeoning future.

**Overview of this volume**

Volume 41 was edited by Ingereth Macfarlane and Liz Conor. Many thanks to all those involved in the production of the journal – the helpful referees, book review editors Luise Hercus and Annemarie McLaren, Geoff Hunt for his copyediting, Maria Nugent and the Editorial Board for their experience and input, and the patient team at ANU Press.

This year’s articles bring to light historical sources from the colonial frontier in Tasmania (Nicholas Brodie and Kristyn Harman) and South Australia (Skye Kirchauff) to provoke reassessments of colonial attitudes and expectations. Karen Hughes brings into focus little-known, intimate aspects of Indigenous women’s experience with African American servicemen on the World War II Australian home front. Diana Young’s study of accounts of Pitjantjatjara women’s careful productions in the Ernabella craft rooms in the mid-twentieth century deepens our understanding of a relatively neglected aspect of the art history of ‘first generation, postcontact Indigenous art-making among Australian Western Desert peoples’.
PREFACE

Nikita Vanderbyl explores records of tourists’ visits to Aboriginal reserves in the late 1800s and early 1900s, focusing on the emotive aspects of the visits, and making the links between such tourism and colonialism. Janice Newton provides a close examination of the cross-cultural signs implicated in a documented ceremonial performance in early Port Phillip. Heather Burke, Lynley Wallis and their collaborators compare a reconstructed stone building in Richmond, Queensland, with other reputedly fortified structures and find that the historical and structural evidence for this interpretation are equivocal, pointing to imaginaries of the violent frontier as much as tangible experience.

Vale

It is with great sadness that we mark the loss of two major contributors to the field of Indigenous history and to Aboriginal History Inc., Professor John Mulvaney and Dr Tracey Banivanua Mar.

John Mulvaney (1925–2016)

John Mulvaney, AO CMG FAHA, who passed away last year, was renowned as a founder of professional archaeology in Australia, but was equally amongst the first to insist that there was a continuous history of that presence into contemporary times. He was a long-term correspondent for the Aboriginal History Editorial Board. In 1985, Volume 8 of the journal was dedicated to him for his ‘outstanding research and leadership in studies of the Aboriginal past’. He contributed articles to the journal, and the monograph ‘The Axe Had Never Sounded’: Place, People and Heritage of Recherche Bay, Tasmania (2007). An obituary will be published in Volume 42.


Tracey Banivanua Mar passed away this year, so very much too early. Liz Conor, who worked with Tracey and knew her well, says:

Tracey Banivanua Mar was prolific, empathic, trailblazing, prizewinning, versatile, wickedly wry and fiercely assured of her deeply informed and located politics. She was also unstinting and altruistic in her determined challenges to other’s understandings. In her seminal contribution to Aboriginal History, Volume 37, brilliantly conceptualised as ‘Imperial Literacy’, Tracey showed her unerring eye for protest and solidarity. These were central to her analysis and to her exemplary engagement with the world she inhabited. Her work upends perceptions of the colonial archive and the critical significance of the Pacific as interconnected sites of resistance. Her analysis is an awakening corrective to the forces of colonialism bearing down on people’s will to survive. Instead, from the most unlikely sources, she showed the myriad and creative forms of defiance her Islander people and other Indigenous peoples together invented and shared to resist dispossession. Her readers
and reputation will continue to grow, not least on the basis of the central argument of her latest book: ‘Both colonisation and decolonisation are imperial projects, but decolonisation is a concept that has been configured by Indigenous and colonised peoples as an elemental and intergenerational process – a stateless and manoeuvrable site of independence and sovereignty’. She is acutely missed by all who knew her and her incendiary work.

References


Corris, Peter 1968, Aborigines and Europeans in Western Victoria, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.


Contributors

**Bryce Barker** has a series of longstanding and ongoing research projects on the central Queensland coast with the Ngaro, Gia and Juru communities. Based at the University of Southern Queensland, he has worked on historical archaeological projects on the Darling Downs in south-east Queensland, as well as elsewhere in Australia and Papua New Guinea.

**Nicholas Dean Brodie** is an independent historian. Among other works, he is the author of *Kin: A real people's history of our nation* (2015), *1787: The lost chapters of Australia's beginnings* (2016), and *The Vandemonian War: The secret history of Britain's Tasmanian invasion* (2017). This is his second article for *Aboriginal History*.

**Heather Burke** is an historical archaeologist based at Flinders University. Her research ranges from the construction of class and status through material culture to the archaeology of cross-cultural engagement and the links between cultural heritage, place and contemporary social identity. Her most recent projects have been focusing on the archaeology of Indigenous–European conflict in Queensland and South Australia.

**Noelene Cole** has been involved in archaeological research, consulting and teaching since the 1980s. Although her main interest is Aboriginal rock art research, she has also worked in cultural heritage conservation and management, community archaeology, oral history and historical and museum collections research. Her field projects of the last few years have been mainly at the request of Aboriginal corporations and ranger groups in north Queensland, particularly in Cape York Peninsula.

**Iain Davidson** is Emeritus Professor at the University of New England (UNE). He has a background in hunter-gatherer archaeology and has worked on rock art, lithic studies, cultural heritage and the public communication of archaeology. Iain worked at UNE until 2008, when he retired and was awarded the Visiting Chair in Australian Studies at Harvard. In retirement, he continues to engage in the interests he developed at UNE.
Kristyn Harman is a historian at the University of Tasmania. She specialises in cross-cultural encounters across Britain’s nineteenth-century colonies and twentieth-century Australasia. Kristyn is the author of *Cleansing the Colony: Transporting Convicts from New Zealand to Van Diemen’s Land* (2017), and was the winner of the 2014 Australian Historical Association Kay Daniels award for her book *Aboriginal Convicts: Australian, Khoisan, and Māori Exiles* (2012). In 2015, Kristyn co-edited (with Noah Riseman and Allison Cadzow) a special section of *Aboriginal History* on Aboriginal War Service and was author of two articles (one of which was co-authored) included in this section.

Elizabeth Hatte is a consultant with over 25 years’ experience working on Indigenous archaeology projects, based at Northern Archaeology Consultancies Pty Ltd, Townsville. From rock art to EIS-related cultural heritage assessments, Liz has extensive consulting experience with Aboriginal Traditional Owner groups, corporations and land councils across Queensland.

Karen Hughes is a historian and Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Studies, Swinburne University, Melbourne. She is currently a Chief Investigator on the ARC Indigenous Discovery Project ‘Children Born of War’ with Victoria Grieves and Catriona Elder. She publishes widely on Indigenous and cross-cultural histories in Australia and the United States, and is currently collaborating with the Ngarrindjeri community on a project exploring the works of mid–twentieth century Ngarrindjeri photographers.

Skye Krichauff is a historian and anthropologist who is interested in historical cross-cultural relations and understanding the enduring legacies of colonialism. Her doctoral thesis was a place-centred ethnography that investigated the absence of Aboriginal people in the historical consciousness of settler descendants. Skye has previously worked as a history researcher for an Aboriginal Community organisation and on a project compiling a register of South Australian and Northern Territory Aboriginal–settler conflict. She is the author of *Memory, Place and Aboriginal–Settler History: Understanding Australians’ Consciousness of the Colonial Past* (2017) and *Nharangga Wargunni Bugi-Buggillu: A Journey through Narungga History* (2011), a history of nineteenth-century cross-cultural relations on Yorke Peninsula.

Kelsey Lowe has over 16 years experience in archaeology, specialising in archaeological geophysics and remote sensing, ArcGIS and geoarchaeology. A Research Associate at the University of Southern Queensland, she has been involved on a number of research projects worldwide, including in Australia, North and South Americas, the Mediterranean (Cyprus, Greece and Turkey) and South East Asia.
Ingereth Macfarlane is a Visiting Fellow in the Australian Centre for Indigenous History, The Australian National University, where she is Editor of the journal *Aboriginal History*. Her background is in the archaeology and history of Indigenous Australia. Her research interests concern long-term histories of place, especially arid Australia.

Janice Newton is an Adjunct Senior researcher at Federation University, Ballarat. Her academic research spans history, anthropology and sociology, and includes nineteenth-century responses to the so-called ‘last of their tribes’ and some twentieth-century settler embrace of Aboriginality. Her general-audience publications include history from the Dandenongs – *From Tracks to Trails: A history of Mt Evelyn* (2001) and *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs* (2016) – and early Ballarat history – *Mullawallah: The last King Billy of Ballarat* (2014).

Megan Tutty is a graduate student in archaeology at Flinders University.

Nikita Vanderbyl is a PhD candidate at La Trobe University, and has tutored in Aboriginal Australian history there. Her thesis focuses on Aboriginal engagements with the transnational circulation of Aboriginal visual and material culture through a case study of Wurundjeri artist and diplomat William Barak. Nikita’s article derives from her interest in the history of the emotions and the preoccupations of nineteenth-century tourists found in visitor books. She received a Copyright Agency Limited Bursary for mentoring on this article.

Lynley A. Wallis is based at the Nulungu Research Institute at the University of Notre Dame. She has worked in Indigenous archaeology for the past 20 years, having undertaken archaeological research with Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley, south-west, Pilbara, goldfields and Great Victorian Desert regions of Western Australia, the Edward Pellew and Wellesley Groups of islands in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and in arid inland north-west Queensland. This work has typically been community driven. Lynley has also worked on a variety of historical archaeology and palaeoenvironmental projects.

Diana J.B. Young has been working with Anangu Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara since 1997. She is an anthropologist whose research is on colour and consumption in the Western Desert. She was the consultant curator of Ernabella arts 50th anniversary show at Tandanya in 1998, and she has worked on the history of the art centre with Anangu artists. She is currently the Director of the Anthropology Museum at the University of Queensland where she lectures in anthropology.
Articles
Art history is replete with works whose prior existence is affirmed only by text, most commonly through titles and descriptions in catalogues, but also by passing mentions in other sources. A significant Australian colonial illustration of this phenomenon of textually surviving lost art concerns ‘Several Paintings on Panel’, described in detail by a colonial witness, which depict scenes intended to convey government messages to Indigenous Tasmanians during the Vandemonian War. These descriptions do not match the better known and frequently reproduced Tasmanian Picture Boards, typified in Figure 1, which survive in several archives around the world and have been the subject of considerable study and commentary.¹ Their iconographical recovery is, we argue, an important correction to the imagery of frontier relations in 1820s and 1830s Van Diemen’s Land specifically and colonial Australia more generally.

¹ These boards are held within the collections of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the National Museum of Australia, the Mitchell Library, the Museum of Victoria, the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. Carroll 2014: 75–76, 78, 81, 83.
Figure 1: Tasmanian Picture Board A, c. 1830. An example of the surviving boards.
Accounts contemporary with the original use of imagery to communicate with Indigenous Tasmanians are few and relatively terse. The clearest descriptors of government action survive from newspaper reports in the *Colonial Times* of Hobart. The editor of that paper wrote on 5 March 1830 of having been ‘informed that the Government have [sic] given directions for the painting of a large number of pictures to be placed in the bush for the contemplation of the Aboriginal Inhabitants’. These pictures were then briefly described in terms reminiscent of the well-known surviving boards. They were:

said to be representations of the attacks made by the black upon the white population, and in the back ground is to be seen a gallows with a black suspended; and, also, the same consequence to the white man, whom in the other picture is represented as the aggressor.5

Ten months later, the *Colonial Times* again referred somewhat sarcastically to this ‘most ingenious plan’ concerning a ‘hundred pictures’ supposedly (and seemingly meant ironically) ‘painted, by an eminent artist in Hobart Town’, which depicted ‘black-killing whites, and white-killing blacks’. The editor had ‘lately seen these productions’, which were intended to be ‘placed in different parts of the bush’, suggesting their temporal proximity to these reports.

Curiously, however, even before these newspaper reports, it appears that such boards were already in use. Mrs A. Prinsep, a visitor to Van Diemen’s Land in January 1830 and wife of a prospective settler, penned and then published a series of letters of her journey, which included a rumination on the state of affairs between the colonists and the Indigenous Tasmanians:

During the first years of the settlement, these poor naked creatures lived in great harmony with us, came without fear into the white man’s house, and soon felt the value of a blanket and other little trifles. In course of time, however, these articles became naturally so coveted by them, that they commenced thieving; this was resisted, and one or two imprudent timid stock-keepers fired and killed some of the natives. Deadly hatred was in consequence avowed against the whites, which not even all the pictures of explanation our friend F— has hung up in the woods, depicting the governor punishing the white man for firing at the black, can lessen. Great pains have been taken with those that are caught, to civilize and educate them but, excepting learning a few English sentences, it was to little purpose, as they invariably ran back to the woods when an opportunity offered.5

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2 *Colonial Times*, 5 March 1830: 2.
3 *Colonial Times*, 5 March 1830: 2.
4 *Colonial Times*, 14 January 1831: 2.
5 Prinsep 1833: 78–79 (emphasis added).
Describing these boards in January 1830 as being ‘hung up’ in the past tense, and textually situated amid an account of her own journey to the town of New Norfolk, where she perhaps observed such images in situ, Mrs Prinsep complicates the established timelines scholars have drawn from the *Colonial Times*, but also affirms the key personality increasingly associated with the surviving boards. At a dinner of the Van Diemen’s Land Society in January 1830, Mr Prinsep was reported toasting with ‘his Friend, Mr Frankland’ a plan to inquire into ‘the character and habits of the aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land’.6 Surveyor General George Frankland, mostly likely ‘our friend F——’ was certainly one of the more vocal ‘doves’, or peacemakers, advocating relative restraint towards Aboriginal people during the Vandemonian War.7

A year earlier, in February 1829, Frankland had advocated using pictures to communicate with Indigenous Tasmanians, telling Lieutenant Governor Arthur that he had:

> sketched a series of groups of figures, in which I have endeavoured to represent in a manner as simple and well adapted to their supposed ideas, as possible, the actual state of things / or rather the origin of the present state / and the desired termination of Hostility.8

Frankland proposed that the pictures ‘be multiplied’ on ‘more durable materials’, and then ‘fastened to trees in those remote situations where the Natives are most likely to see them’.9 Because of this letter, the use of boards in 1830 has generally become accepted as Frankland’s initiative, and the surviving designs are by association connected with him.10 Certainly Mrs Prinsep seems to have accepted the association.

Yet, late in 1830, another colonial newspaper described Frankland giving an image to Eumarrah, a tribal chief accompanying a colonial mission, which does not match the surviving imagery:

> Before the departure of Numarrow [Eumarrah], Mr. Frankland presented him with a little sketch, executed with much spirit, of the consequences of the Aborigines adopting a peaceable demeanour, or of continuing their present murderous and predatory habits. In one part of the sketch, the soldiery were represented firing upon a tribe of the Blacks, who were falling from the effects of the attack. On the other part were seen, another tribe, decently clad, receiving food for themselves and families.11

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8 Frankland to Arthur, 4 February 1829, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, LSD17/1: 23.
9 Frankland to Arthur, 4 February 1829, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, LSD17/1: 23.
10 Edmonds 2011.
11 *Tasmanian and Austral-Asiatic Review*, 26 November 1830: 783. See also Bonwick 1870: 84 for a slightly mis-transcribed version.
These described images do not conform to those on the known surviving boards and, upon closer examination, nor does the logic of Frankland’s 1829 letter. There were, it seems, other images with other messages. While the surviving boards have been subject to considerable scholarly discussion and varying interpretation, this has been predicated on a generalised context derived from the above-cited sources (excepting Mrs Prinsep), which has conflated what are clearly distinct iconographical sequences. Moreover, while some historians have acknowledged the likely existence of other iconographical traditions, to date no extensive discussion of this has been forthcoming. We hope to fill this gap by recovering and investigating the alternative iconography represented in a remarkable source.¹²

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‘Several Paintings on Panel (a rather perishable material for their intended use) were executed’ during the Vandemonian War, according to the currently unknown author of ‘The Aboriginal Natives of Van Diemen[’]s Land’, a first-hand account of colonial Van Diemen’s Land, surviving in two distinct copies. A description of several ‘compartments’ within these images followed this comment, detailing a set of imagery unlike the surviving boards, but similar in tone, content and purpose to Frankland’s sketches of 1829 (detailed to Arthur) and 1830 (given to Eumarrah).

The text of ‘The Aboriginal Natives of Van Diemen[’]s Land’ survived into modern times in two variants. One original manuscript copy is held in the Allport Library at the State Library of Tasmania in Hobart and, for present purposes, will be referred to as the ‘Allport MS’.¹³ The other copy of the text is currently known only in transcription. In 1926, Tasmanian antiquarian and surgeon William Crowther described, transcribed and published a manuscript supposedly originating from ‘among the papers of the Rev. R. Knopwood’, although apparently not in his distinct handwriting.¹⁴ Because Crowther acquired the manuscript from the collection of the colonial photographer James Beattie, we have designated it the ‘Beattie MS’.

Borrowing from the manuscript analysis techniques deployed for medieval studies, we are confident that the Beattie MS and the Allport MS are not the same document, even though they reflect the same general text. The Allport MS has additional elements not transcribed from the Beattie MS. By Crowther’s account, the Beattie MS ‘ceases’ at a point before the text of the Allport MS does. Close reading suggests

¹² Independently of the project presented here, Tasmanian Aboriginal artist and writer Dr Julie Gough also visually reconstructed these images after recording the source manuscript in the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts on 28 July 2013. Her results are as yet unpublished, but were presented at a public talk at the Allport Library and Museum on 6 August 2015. The authors are grateful to the reviewer who brought this parallel research to their attention in July 2017, and to Julie Gough for allowing us to then see her images. Our commissioned reproductions were presented at the Australian Historical Association conference, Sydney, 9 July 2015.

¹³ ‘Allport MS’, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Allport Library and Museum Manuscripts, L8 Store, Box 2, Folder 1.

¹⁴ Crowther 1926.
that the shorter Beattie MS was probably a cleaner copy of the heavily corrected Allport MS. Crowther's transcript of the Beattie MS had additional grammatical marks (mostly commas), some differing capitalisation, some shifts between singular and plural forms of words, a handful of other minor syntax shifts (for instance concerning word ordering within sentences) and the expansion of ampersands into the word 'and', by which points it differs in multiple respects from the Allport MS. There are, moreover, some word differences, and in one section the tense is different, having been past tense in the Allport MS and present tense in Crowther's transcript. The Allport MS edits generally share corrected rather than redacted text with the Beattie MS, furthering the impression that the Beattie MS is a cleaner copy of the Allport MS.

This text can be broadly divided into two sections, the first providing ethnographic reminiscences about Indigenous Tasmanians, and the second ruminating on government policy during Arthur's administration. It is the second part of the text with which we are mainly concerned, and here the Allport MS offers material later excluded from the clean copy. Generally, the account is hostile to Arthur's government. The writer noted that Indigenous Tasmanians frequented Hobart in 'the earlier Period of Col[one]l Arthur[']s Government', and laments they were not captured then. Referring to 'A second Plan of Operations', with parties in lines 'traversing the country', the writer alluded to the General Movement (widely known as the 'Black Line') of late 1830. Composition therefore postdates this event. The writer then mentioned 'the Experiment of Conciliation', obliquely referring to the 'friendly missions' of the early to mid-1830s. This entire section is missing from the Beattie MS.

Following this, the writer described 'Several Paintings of Panel … about Eighteen Inches Square' in both versions of the text. These paintings were 'divided into compartments each of which represented a series of Actions admonitory to the Natives of the course intended by the Government to be pursued in future towards them'. The text details the scenes depicted on two such boards, which will be addressed shortly. From here the writer referred to 'A Proclamation [that] was issued by which the natives were incorporated with the other British subjects in the Island, endowed with all their rights to the Protection of the Laws & also made liable to the Penalties incurred by their Violation'. Describing contemporary discussion of the problem of communicating with Aboriginal people, the writer noted a contemporary suggestion that 'the Bell man should be sent through the Bush'. The town crier apparently successfully argued against this idea. Finally, it was proposed to effect 'the capture of one of the Aborigines[,] his Instruction in the general Principles of Constitutional Law & his subsequent dismissal to his Countrymen in order to impart to them in particular the matter [etc]'. Both manuscripts terminate in this section, the Beattie MS mid-sentence, and the Allport MS at the sentence's end.
Mentions of Arthur, Chief Justice John Pedder, and allusions to the ‘Black Line’ and ‘friendly missions’ seem to situate the material covered in the text to the late 1820s and early 1830s. Dating the manuscript itself is less straightforward. Crowther suggested that comments about Indigenous Tasmanians as ‘now nearly extinct’ would seem to place the writing of the text before the extinction discourse of the 1870s. We would go further, suggesting that the consistent use of the term ‘Van Diemen’s Land’ probably indicates it was composed before 1856 when Van Diemen’s Land was officially renamed Tasmania. According to Crowther, the Beattie MS was supposedly found ‘among the papers of the Rev. R. Knopwood after his death’ in 1838. This would indicate that the manuscripts were extant in the late 1830s, but some allowance must be made for the obvious gap between Knopwood’s death in 1838 and Beattie’s later collecting (Beattie was not born until 1859). The manuscript may well have formed part of Knopwood’s papers, but could have been added to that collection at a subsequent date prior to being acquired by Beattie.

Certainly the style of the composition is consistent with other Vandemonian/Tasmanian works from the middle decades of the nineteenth century such as Jorgen Jorgenson’s manuscript about the Aborigines, seemingly intended as a book for the London market, and R.H. Davies’s ‘On the Aborigines of Van Diemen’s Land’ published in 1846, similarly aimed at a British audience. It is possible that the Allport and Beattie MSS reflect a text being prepared for publication in a similar way at a broadly similar time.

Situated within an early memorialising or chronicling tradition, this manuscript offers a reflective take on the then recent past, as well as a first-hand account. The ‘Paintings on Panel’ described by the writer ‘were affixed to trees in distant parts of the Island’, and were approximately twice as large as those boards that are currently known to have survived into the present. While described to illustrate colonial failures to effectively communicate with Indigenous Tasmanians, textually and narratively situated with other communicative attempts, this mocking description remains the most detailed surviving near-contemporary account of pictorial communication attempts with Indigenous Tasmanians. Strikingly different from the series depicted on the surviving boards, unfortunately the clarity of the text is somewhat haphazard. Yet, it is clear that the writer has described two separate boards and their constituent compartments that, we argue, likely reflect Frankland’s original conception of ‘the actual state of things /or rather the origin of the present state / and the desired termination of Hostility’.

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15 Allport MS: 1; Crowther 1926: 165.
For ease of discussion, we have adopted the convention of identifying picture board designs by sequence of scholarly discovery. Board A, as shown in Figure 1, reflects the commonly known version that survives in several copies. Boards B and C are those described in the Beattie and Allport MSS. Artistic impressions of Boards B and C, based on the textual descriptions and borrowing styling from the surviving boards, are shown in Figures 2 and 3. These reconstructions were undertaken for the authors by Melbourne-based Tasmanian author, artist and illustrator Simon Barnard, who developed the style in consultation with the authors and through reference to the well-known imagery of Board A. Using a high-quality print of an exemplar of Board A from Cambridge in England, Barnard developed his version of the ‘lost’ boards, and then digitally aged his finished work ‘to create the impression of 19th century patina’.17

In Board B there are six scenes.18 In the first, Indigenous Tasmanians ‘were represented attacking an unfortunate Settlers House, reducing it to ashes & placing him in a rather unsettled situation’. In the second, ‘a terrified wight, his wig departing in one direction & his hat in another in the rapidity of his flight was depicted pursued by them’. This figure was ‘rescued by an ambuscade of Soldiers’ in the third compartment where ‘a well directed discharge checked the advance of the Enemy’. The fourth had ‘some of the Delinquents’, presumably meaning Indigenous Tasmanian aggressors, ‘in chains & the deadly grip of the Constable’. In the fifth compartment, Indigenous Tasmanians were in ‘the Courts of Law and Hobart Town’ with their ‘trial in progress’, where one of the figures resembled ‘Chief Justice Pedder’. Finally, ‘The subject of the sixth & final was an Experiment on that abstruse subject of natural Philosophy, the Oscillation of the Pendulum, the native a Native being the wight & a well known Personage whose name was Dogherty, that of the Practitioner’.19 This last part was a convoluted description of a hanging.20 The narrative sequence clearly articulated that the British responded to Indigenous Tasmanian attacks on colonial settlers with overwhelming force. As illustrated in The Vandemonian War, this was precisely the state of affairs under Arthur’s regime in early 1829, constituting what Frankland likely understood as ‘the actual state of things’.21 Board B was an explanation of, and perhaps justification for, the use of military force.

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17 Barnard pers. comm. to Harman, 24 March 2015. The authors acknowledge funding received from the Centre for Colonialism and Its Aftermath to remunerate the artist.
18 Annotations and corrections to Allport MS show the writer getting a little confused with their enumeration. What follows is an amended version to correctly reflect the sequences described.
19 Part of this is unique to the Allport MS.
20 A John Dogherty was employed in Hobart as hangman by the mid-1830s. He is referred to as ‘the common hangman’ by the True Colonist, 6 November 1835: 2, and can be identified in many newspaper reports of executions about that time.
21 Brodie 2017b: 37–70.
Board C reflected the aspiration of ‘wanting to encourage them in peace & submission’, Frankland’s ‘desired termination of Hostility’. Its precise sequence is less clearly enumerated, but this design seems to have included at least four panels, starting with ‘a Settler receiving from a Native a Kangaroo, whom he rewarded by a Portion of Damper’. It continued to articulate the picture with the subsequent three compartmentalised images:

[2nd] Again was seen the Governor in Regimentals, surrounded by a number of the Aborigines & patting on the head in the most condescending manner a Pickaninny or infant Child. [3rd] Next appeared a Minister of the Church expounding to his dusky Audience the truths of Christianity to the evident astonishment & delight & full Perception of his hearers. [4th] Lastly one of them appeared mounted on a horse & blowing a horn with a large Leathern bag affixed to his saddle by which was indicated
that in the event of their discontinuing Hostilities & adopting a peaceful & orderly Demeanour Official Rank & Station should be open to them & that in time they might even aspire to the dignified & confidential Employment of Postman.22

While no records of Indigenous Tasmanian postmen have yet been found from this period, other elements of this sequence match various colonial practices and encounters, notably those connected with the Bruny Island Establishment founded in 1828 and likely occasions when Lieutenant Governors (including Arthur) met Indigenous Tasmanians. In sequence, Board C illustrated a narrative of assimilatory progress.

Figure 3: Board C, 2015. A reconstruction by Simon Barnard based on manuscript description.
Source: © Nicholas Dean Brodie and Kristyn Harman.

22 Allport MS: 3; Crowther 1926: 168.
Significantly, both Boards B and C exhibit causal narratives stemming from Indigenous interactions with settlers. In both, unlike the surviving imagery of Board A, there is a clear narrative unity throughout the whole of each sequence. They are stories, with inceptions, causal links and conclusions. We argue that these likely reflect Frankland’s two-part imagery focused on the effects of hostility and the effects of peace. Indigenous violence was met with force and punishment in Board B, and non-violent Indigenous encounter resulted in reward in Board C. We argue that these messages, blunt and binary, open avenues for a new approach to the iconographical frontier of conflict and conciliation in the Vandemonian War, and help broaden the scholarly discussion beyond the surviving iconography of Board A.

James Bonwick’s The Last of the Tasmanians; or, The Black War of Van Diemen’s Land of 1870 essentially developed the idea of picture boards as conciliatory in intent and a failure in practice, even while quoting materials that highlighted that there were multiple images beyond the surviving boards. He sarcastically characterised such attempts to communicate through picture as part of ‘the expedition against the Aborigines on the principles of the Fine Arts’.23 Monographs addressing Tasmanian frontier relations written in the late twentieth century barely addressed the known imagery, despite sometimes using boards or their lithographic counterparts for illustrative purposes, leaving Bonwick’s characterisation largely unquestioned.24 As recently as 2015, a survey history of Indigenous Tasmania characterised the whole endeavour as ‘a ridiculous gesture’.25

More particular studies, ostensibly examining or contextualising the imagery of Board A, have reaffirmed such notions that the intended message of Board A was principally conciliatory and largely ineffectual. Julie Evans and Tessa Fluence see the boards in terms similar to Bonwick, treating Board A in parallel with Lieutenant Governor George Arthur’s proclamation of martial law, and characterising the iconographical endeavour as a straightforward and unsuccessful attempt to resolve frontier conflict.26 Similarly, while she principally focused on a detailed reading of the materiality of these objects from an art historical perspective, Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll reads the extant boards as having been crafted ‘to impart ideas of equality between black and white, Aboriginal, convict and settler’, a notion derived from earlier literature as much as from the imagery itself.27 Both articles reiterate the sense of action and failure. Evans and Fluence read in the imagery a type of official ‘fantasy, as expressing official concerns about the legitimacy of settlement …
even as dispossession was being enforced’, and von Zinnenburg Carroll highlighted ‘the falsity of the proclaimed equality in practice’.28 This contrast between Board A’s nominal aspirations and their apparent failure, itself a nineteenth-century interpretation, has seemingly become the dominant historiographical message.

In contrast, other explorations of the aspirational elements of the Board A imagery and the materiality of frontier iconography have extended beyond the immediate narrative concerns of frontier conflict in 1820s and 1830s Van Diemen’s Land. Desmond Manderson, for instance, argued that these ‘pictures trace a movement from philosophy to politics to law’, suggesting they conveyed strong assimilatory messages about the absorption of Indigenous people into colonial society, by which ‘the people of Australia would all be subject to the law’, derived from Britain, an argument about empire as well as equality.29 For Manderson, the boards were illustrative of wider conceptions about British colonial sovereignty.

Similarly focused on the global imperial context in which the boards were created, Penelope Edmonds compared the iconography of Board A with British, French and Spanish medals taken to the North American colonies, and anti-slavery tokens found in England, situating them in an imperial visual lexicon that extended across empires. Edmonds likened the depiction of the Lieutenant Governor’s handshake with an Aboriginal chief portrayed on one of the panels to the ‘humanitarian handshakes’ found on these other artefacts, and saw this as reflecting a ‘transference of iconography’. For Edmonds, the boards certainly have a pseudo-legal aspect, but they also have coded messages of empire and reflect cultural expressions of imperial humanitarianism. Edmonds has also pursued this iconographical resonance into modern times, exploring how Board A has become an icon for postcolonial artistic engagement with a troubled colonial past.30

Following the outward-looking work of Manderson and Edmonds, we argue that the imagery of the reconstructed Boards B and C also reflect wider national and international imperial concerns and colonial trends. Certainly, Boards B and C depict elements of ‘the actual state of things’ in colonial Van Diemen’s Land, and belong to a precise moment in time. Their representation of military violence, Indigenous Tasmanians in custody, institutionalised instruction and cross-cultural Indigenous actors performing colonial services all neatly match actualities of the Vandemonian War of the 1820s and 1830s.31 These cannot be dismissed as figments of any colonial imagination, or as failed aspirations. Yet, there is more to be gained from these than a straightforward illustration of the Vandemonian situation. If the imagery of Board A has become a historiographical shorthand for missed opportunities, the

30  Edmonds 2011; Edmonds 2016: 137–45.
31  Brodie 2017b.
recovered iconography of Boards B and C can serve as stand-in narrative structures for reassessing wider elements of the whole frame of frontier conflict in colonial Australia. Ironically, their own lack of ambiguity makes them useful for addressing the ambiguities of Australia’s troubled past.

The series of scenes on Board B, for instance, is certainly consistent with Indigenous experience from the early years of contact across the Australian colonies (which often continued well into the twentieth century). The first two frames depict Indigenous aggression towards and dispossession of settlers, easily understood now as resistance to colonisation, although at the time part of the logic behind strong colonial military action. The use of British soldiers described in the third frame was a regular feature of early colonial Australia, with British military regiments being regularly stationed in the colonies until 1870.32 As recently demonstrated in *The Vandemonian War*, the military regularly and actively campaigned against Aboriginal people.33 Frontier violence, however instigated, often spiralled into war.

Moreover, the iconography of captivity is deeply resonant of wide colonial experience. Aboriginal people were taken captive from the first year of settlement when in 1788 Governor Arthur Phillip issued instructions that an Aboriginal person be captured and restrained with a view to having the captive become an intermediary between the colonists and local Aboriginal people in Sydney.34 As the British incursion onto Aboriginal lands continued apace, the means through which they were restrained became increasingly sophisticated. Over time, at least 90 Aboriginal men were incorporated into the colonial convict system; in this and other contexts, Indigenous people were frequently restrained by handcuffs, leg irons and imprisonment.35 Later in the nineteenth century, groups of Aboriginal prisoners were chained together by the neck while being taken into captivity and sometimes throughout their sentences.36 Such practices continued into sufficiently recent times to be well attested by photographic records.37

Similarly, criminal trials like that depicted in Board B occurred, sometimes resulting in judicial execution. In Van Diemen’s Land, there were four known judicial executions of Indigenous men during the 1820s, most famously including the hanging of Musquito, a man transported from Sydney to Norfolk Island and then to Van Diemen’s Land.38 Although the details of the cases are quite obscure, an Indigenous Tasmanian man was sentenced ‘to labor in the gaol gang for the period of 12 months’ in February 1818, and two were sentenced to three years transportation

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33 Brodie 2017b: 30–36.
34 Harman and Grant 2014: 159.
35 Harman 2012.
36 Harman and Grant 2014.
37 Lydon 2012.
in November 1818. In the Port Phillip District in 1842, two Indigenous Tasmanians were sentenced to execution for murder and hanged. In Queensland, the execution of Dundalli in 1855 attracted significant public attention, not only for the justice meted out to a colonial enemy, but also for the botched job of the executioner.

While ostensibly representing an alternate pathway for Indigenous people, the iconography of Board C is also consistent with colonial experience across Australia. Even by the late 1810s, a strong tradition had been established by the British colonists in New South Wales (which, until June 1825, included Van Diemen’s Land) of suppressing Indigenous resistance and coercing proximate Indigenous peoples to acculturate to colonial economies. A prime example of this can be seen in Governor Lachlan Macquarie’s 1816 instructions to his crack military regiments whom he ordered out on a punitive expedition against Aboriginal people in the Nepean, Hawkesbury and Grose river valleys. As well as urging them to take the bodies of Aborigines killed in action to be ‘hanged up on trees in conspicuous situations, to strike the survivors with the greater terror’, he instructed the soldiers to ‘procure twelve boys and six girls … for the Native Institution at Parramatta … fine healthy good looking children … aged between four and six years’. Once Indigenous people were sufficiently subdued, Macquarie aimed to ‘civilise’ them through introducing the adults to agricultural labour and the children to a Western-style education. Merete Borch has highlighted a similar duality in the instructions sent from the Secretaries of State in London to various Governors in the Australian colonies. For example, in July 1825 Governor Ralph Darling was told that he must ‘promote religion and education amongst that Native Inhabitants of Our said Colony’, yet was also instructed to ‘oppose force by force, and to repel … [Indigenous] aggressions’. Imperial aggression and Indigenous assimilation were contrasting and complementary notions.

The limited evidence of the Vandemonian 1810s reveals a considerable degree of intercultural intercourse, making this decade an important contextual referent for the boards that is often overlooked in discussion focused on the immediate wartime provenance. With many Indigenous children taken into service and employed, including those later punished for transgressing colonial laws, this period saw Indigenous people living and acting within colonial society in ways that were likely under-documented, and only hinted at by anomalous documentary moments. Official condemnation of colonists forcibly taking Indigenous children from their parents points to a difficult-to-trace phenomenon, but transgressions or accidents

39 Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter, 7 February 1818: 2; 14 November 1818: 1.
40 Auty and Russell 2016.
41 Brodie 2015a: 87–89.
42 Macquarie, entry of 10 April 1816, ‘The Governor’s Diary & Memorandum Book Commencing on and from Wednesday the 10th Day of April 1816 at Sydney in N.S.Wales’, State Library of New South Wales, A773.
sometimes explicitly reveal it. When ‘a black native boy named Paddy’ was found killed in late 1817, he was identified as ‘late stock-keeper to Mr. B. Reardon at Pitt Water’ and his body subjected to a coronial inquest under suspicion of murder. In contrast to the repetitive mantra that Indigenous people were unequal before the law, there are certainly signs that some of them were, or were getting close in certain circumstances. The contingent factor was a behavioural suite, and the more assimilated to the colony, the less Indigenous they appear within the documentary record. Australian historiography has generally viewed Board A through the lens of a long history of race, but the immediate context of their production was more concerned with culture.

Yet that is not to deny the fact and import of institutionalisation, captured in the iconography of Board C. Across British colonies including Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the imperial government pursued what Andrew Armitage has characterised as ‘policies of instruction’, whereby indigenous people were schooled in educational institutions or on missions. Missionaries aimed to inculcate in indigenous people an agrarian and early industrial work ethic, and coerced them into wearing clothes and engaging in bodily regimes dictated by concerns for hygiene. Early missions and model villages frequently failed, with high death rates amongst the Indigenous inhabitants, as was the case at Bruny Island off the coast of Van Diemen’s Land in the late 1820s and at Flinders Island in Bass Strait in the 1830s and 1840s. However, Australian colonists persisted in their attempts to house Indigenous people separately from the settler population while they underwent training considered requisite to becoming assimilated into the lower echelons of colonial society. Notions of Aboriginal people gradually becoming incorporated into colonial society, represented in Board C, highlight the potential evident in the actual historical context. Whether the child-servants of the 1810s, the once-famed case of the Aboriginal boy George Van Diemen who was educated in England, the prominent intercultural actors of the 1820s and 1830s like Kickerterpoller and Manalargenner, or the official government propagandising of a woman of Indigenous descent as a colonial female archetype, colonial integration was a real possibility in Van Diemen’s Land, at least for some individuals.

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The iconography of these lost boards could have fitted within a wider colonial context than the particular moment of their original drafting, so they are useful both for exploring the Vandemonian situation and for illuminating a wider Australian one. We are confident these images reflect Frankland’s original sketch conceptions

44 Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter, 13 December 1817: 2; 20 December 1817: 2.
46 Plomely 1987.
47 Lawson 2013; Brodie 2014; Brodie 2015b.
and likely also reflect the sort of sketching Frankland reportedly gifted to Eumarrah. These lost images thereby capture communicative attempts that were partly sincere, stemming from the endeavours of a noted advocate of restrained approaches to Indigenous Tasmanians, but also reflective of Arthur’s tendency to propagandise about the humanitarianism of colonial policy. Textually situated between vague mention of an increase in hostilities and allusion to a proclamation, the description of Boards B and C in the Allport and Beattie MSS does not offer much chronological precision, but it is clear from these and all other sources that pictorial boards were only ever a minor element of the colonial frontier in Van Diemen’s Land. Yet, by capturing an iconographical sequence of broader import, they may speak more effectively to our age than theirs.

However, the reverse was true for the author of “The Aboriginal Natives of Van Diemen[,]s Land’, who likely wrote these accounts with a specific historical context in mind. These recollections, hinting at relative proximity to the events concerned, capture something of an understanding of events before a master narrative of Vandemonian contact and conflict was firmly established by prominent writers like Henry Melville from the mid-1830s and Bonwick in the 1870s. Lacking any specific mention of martial law (proclaimed in November 1828), not naming George Augustus Robinson in connection with expeditions to bring in the Aborigines (1829–34) and being hostile to Arthur in draft but not in clean copy, it is possible that this document was drafted very close to the period concerned, perhaps even as early as the 1830s, at a time when libelling Arthur was still a real prospect, encouraging the caution of the cleaner version of the text. These lost pictures offer little support to the standard historical characterisations of Robinson the ‘Conciliator’ or a deeply ‘humanitarian’ Lieutenant Governor Arthur. Rather than standing for ‘what ifs’, like the surviving Board A iconography of a benevolent and impartial government, the recovered images raise the question of what has been lost or even deliberately obscured from the iconography of the Australian past. Whether the uniformed Indigenous postman or soldiers firing on Indigenous Tasmanians, they represent images contrary to strong populist narratives of peaceful nationalism, and encourage continued historical investigation of the past’s complex ambiguities.

Moreover, these are not the only lost images. In 1938, for instance, the demolition of the Empire Hotel in Hobart resulted in the rediscovery of an old wall painting long covered by wallpaper. To date, a sole newspaper description appears to be the only record of this painting:

48  Brodie 2017b.
49  Melville 1835; Brodie 2017a.
50  Hobart Town Courier, 8 November 1828: 1.
Among the scenes depicted are a bushranger on horseback, an aborigines’ corroboree, an aborigine being shot by a gun, a native devil chasing a kangaroo, and a prison warder.51

While the visual archive of frontier relations remains patchy, there certainly remains hope for further discoveries, even if some needs be reconstructed from text.

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On 17 September 1849, Henry Valette Jones and Henry Thomas Morris appeared at the Criminal Sittings of the Supreme Court charged with the wilful murder of Melaityappa, a Narungga man from Yorke Peninsula, South Australia. Described as ‘pale, wasted and thoughtful’, Jones and Morris were ‘very different from the ruddy, reckless, dashing young fellows’ who appeared at their Police Court trial three weeks earlier. Jones and Morris’s incarceration and Supreme Court trial occurred during a crucial stage of Indigenous–settler relations in the 13-year-old colony’s history. Disturbing news of outbreaks of violence and fatalities on Yorke and Eyre peninsulas had been reaching Adelaide since January 1849. For numerous reasons, the trial was unprecedented. It provided a unique opportunity to test the much-vaulted, consoling perception held by many South Australian colonists that, in their colony at least, Aboriginal people were protected and treated as equals under British law. Government officials, pastoralists and newspaper editors had strong and diverse opinions on who was to blame for settler–Aboriginal violence and how conflict could be avoided. The case bought to the fore the tension – or rather incompatibility

1 Morris was also referred to as Thomas Henry Morris and Harry Thomas Morris, Melaityappa as Melappa, Malappa, Malieappa, Mallartyappa and Kit.  
2 South Australian Register [hereafter Register], 19 September 1849: 3C.  
3 For a detailed account of violent encounters on Yorke Peninsula in 1849, see Krichauff 2011: 53–93. For Eyre Peninsula see Foster and Nettelbeck 2012: 84–85 and Foster et al. 2001: 47–49.
– between humanitarian concerns for the ‘natives’ and the protection of colonists’ interests (and the interests other citizens of Britain who lived in the British Isles or at various outposts of the British Empire).

Melaityappa’s shooting is one of countless acts of violence committed by colonists against Aboriginal people. The work of scholars who conducted research in the 1980s and 1990s indicated that across Australia (including Tasmania) approximately 20,000 Aboriginal people were killed by white violence, about 10 times the number of Europeans killed by Aboriginal people.4 Colonists were rarely tried for their crimes. In the Port Phillip District between 1841 and 1851, settlers were tried for the deaths of Aboriginal people on only two occasions. In both cases they were acquitted.5 Nor did settlers in New South Wales have much reason to fear conviction for crimes committed against Aboriginal people; during the first 25 years of British occupation, only four cases involving Indigenous–settler violence were tried and, of these cases, only one European (an escaped convict) was found guilty and hanged.6 The hanging of seven white men for the Myall Creek massacre in New South Wales in 1838 was exceptional and can be understood as a direct response to the findings of the House of Commons Report on the Select Committee of Aborigines published in 1837.7

In South Australia, between 1836 and the early 1860s, Europeans went to trial for murdering Aboriginal people on five occasions. Prior to Jones and Morris’s trial, only ex-convict Thomas Donelly had been found guilty.8 In June 1849, pastoralist James Brown was tried for the murder of a blind and infirm old man, three women, two teenage girls and three babies on Avenue Range (near Lucindale) in 1848.9 Brown was released on bail, enabling Advocate General William Smillie to procure more evidence before Brown’s reappearance at the September Supreme Court criminal sittings.

Much scholarly work has been done documenting cases and investigating why British law failed to punish settlers for such violent acts.10 Detailed studies focus on specific difficulties government officials encountered when investigating crimes and the shortcomings of the British legal system.11 For example, despite there being no doubt of Brown’s guilt in the minds of government officials, various factors prevented the Crown’s successful prosecution. Brown’s station was approximately 300 kilometres from Adelaide, the murders were not investigated until at least two

6 Salter 2008: 147.
10 See, for example, Nettelbeck 2013; Pope 2011; Ford 2010; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010; Smandych 2004.
11 See, for example, Salter 2008; Patton 2006; Levinson 1993; Pope 1998; Davies 1987.
months had passed, Brown burnt the bodies and destroyed much of the evidence and no European testified against Brown. In their analysis of cases in which South Australian colonists were tried for crimes against Aboriginal people, Amanda Nettelbeck and Robert Foster additionally draw attention to the prejudice and self-interest of frontier officials (who were subject to the same culture of solidarity that influenced other officials), the ambiguities of ‘self-defence’ (a cliché utilised by settlers to justify firing on Aboriginal people), the cover-up and denial inherent in coronial inquests, and difficulties surrounding the admissibility of Aboriginal evidence in courts of law. They note that authorities who sincerely attempted to bring settlers’ violent acts out of obscurity were not necessarily ‘willing or even able to prosecute those acts with “exemplary severity”’.14

Alan Pope, Nettelbeck and Foster directly refer to Jones and Morris’s case to validate their broader observations. They draw on the unusual circumstances by which Melaityappa’s shooting came to the attention of government officials to demonstrate settler secrecy and solidarity, and they refer to the Supreme Court trial to illustrate the failure of Aboriginal evidence to convict settlers. However, Jones and Morris’s case was an anomaly. As such, it serves as an excellent means through which to illustrate other, less obvious factors that prevented legal justice for Aboriginal people. With the exception of the lack of credibility given to Aboriginal evidence, the mechanisms Nettelbeck and Foster identify (outlined in the previous paragraph) by which settler crimes could be ignored, dismissed or fail to lead to a conviction were not applicable. An exhaustive and contextualised analysis of documents relating to the case combined with knowledge of the biographies of key players provides additional nuance to previous scholarly findings and draws to light some incremental (perhaps more insidious) reasons why British law consistently failed Aboriginal people.

Broad comparative studies inevitably conclude with the observation that British law worked to protect settler interests and establish settler sovereignty. For example, Nettelbeck notes that magistrates had no formal training and, with jurors, were comprised of members of the landed classes whose interests they inadvertently represented. Those who served the economic development of the colony were unlikely to receive a guilty verdict and the law was securely bound to the maintenance and protection of settler sovereignty. Barry Patton argues that although ‘colonial law was not uniformly and monolithically contrary to the protection of Aboriginal people and their interests … at each procedural stage, simple prejudice or systematic partiality operated’. Lisa Ford points out that settler violence was ‘clothed in law’,

13 Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 324–33.
14 Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 327.
15 Pope 2011: 50; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 332.
which, in important ways, settlers constituted and controlled; ‘authority itself was enmeshed in and compromised by settler violence’ and frontier settlers were ‘seldom merely lawless’ but ‘savvy masters of the discourses and the politics of settler jurisdiction’.¹⁸ ‘This microstudy provides further evidence for these valid conclusions and, in addition, demonstrates the extent of procedural prejudice and partiality.

By using phrases such as ‘settler solidarity’ and ‘settler secrecy’, scholars who investigate the failure of the British colonial judicial system to protect Aboriginal people imply settlers were a homogenous and relatively unified group. However, astute observations made in 1849 cut straight to the heart of the ‘problem’ of settler–Aboriginal violence and starkly remind current generations that the fundamental hypocrisy and unethicalness of British colonisation was understood by some colonists at the very time Aboriginal land was being occupied. Letters and editorials that appeared in newspapers during Jones and Morris’s incarceration in gaol and government correspondence following the verdict demonstrate that neither settler violence nor the biased judicial system were ubiquitously condoned. A recognition of distinctions between and connections among settlers, the multiplicity of settler positions and the varying degrees and extents to which different groups used, constituted and controlled the law enables a deeper understanding of why British law failed to provide justice for Aboriginal people.

Setting the scene, 1849

Melaityappa was shot in August 1849, approximately two years after Narungga country was occupied by pastoralists. An awareness of the reporting of previous Aboriginal–European confrontations on Yorke Peninsula (and other districts) in Adelaide newspapers throughout 1849 provides useful context for understanding South Australian colonists’ sentiments regarding both settler–Aboriginal violence and Jones and Morris’s trial.

On 20 January, overseer George Penton shot an Aboriginal man defending nine sheep carcasses, part of a flock of sheep that had been taken from pastoralists Anstey and Giles.¹⁹ Penton notified the police and this death was reported in the *Adelaide Times* on 5 February.²⁰ No concern was shown for the murdered man; to the contrary, Penton’s decisiveness and honesty were praised. Neither the police nor Protector of Aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse, were sent to investigate. On 3 July, a party of five settlers, which included Penton and George Field (who was later charged), surprised and fired upon a group at Hardwicke Bay. A man, Nantariltarra, was shot through

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¹⁹ Observer 5 May 1849: 3; *Adelaide Times* 5 February 1849: 2D; Observer 22 October 1887: 41. See Krichauff 2011: 63.
²⁰ *Adelaide Times*, 5 February 1849: 3B.
the head and the Europeans watched as a child drowned.\textsuperscript{21} Although reported to the police, these deaths were \textit{not} reported in the newspapers. Again, neither police nor the Protector were dispatched. Contrastingly, when Narungga man Tulta speared a shepherd named Armstrong on 11 July, three days later the \textit{Register} reported:

The aborigines on Yorke’s Peninsula are becoming more troublesome than heretofore. A shepherd named Armstrong has been killed by a spear, and from the flocks of Mr Anstey no less than 200 sheep were recently abstracted by the wily blacks.\textsuperscript{22}

Colonial officials reacted speedily to the white man’s death. On 15 July, Acting Corporal McCulloch and two constables were dispatched to the peninsula.\textsuperscript{23} While they were on the peninsula, Tulta and Wilcooramalap murdered Scott, a shepherd who was present at Nantariltarra’s murder. McCulloch arrested Wilcooramalap and arrived in Adelaide on 11 August. By 13 August, this payback killing and the subsequent court case began receiving press coverage.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Accidental ‘discovery’ of Melaityappa’s shooting?}

Tellingly, the same day news of Scott’s murder reached Adelaide, Moorhouse was instructed to investigate.\textsuperscript{25} Moorhouse arrived on Yorke Peninsula on 19 August 1849 accompanied by McCulloch, a mounted policeman and three Aboriginal men (one of whom was interpreter Jim Crack). On 22 August, the party ‘came upon’ an encampment of Narungga, which included Melaityappa who ‘was suffering dreadfully from three ball wounds he had received about 10 days before’.\textsuperscript{26} Pope, Nettelbeck and Foster draw attention to the accidental or coincidental means by which this case was brought to Moorhouse’s attention.\textsuperscript{27} To the contrary, I suggest it was no coincidence that Moorhouse and McCulloch became aware of Melaityappa’s shooting.

Historical records reveal intriguing and enlightening connections between Moorhouse, McCulloch and Jim Crack. McCulloch was involved in the earlier arrests of both the ex-convict Thomas Donelly and squatter James Brown for their murders of Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{28} Jim Crack had spent several years at the Native School in Adelaide (where Moorhouse got to know him) and had been living on Yorke Peninsula since early 1849.\textsuperscript{29} Jim Crack had recently accompanied McCulloch

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} See \textit{Register}, 5 September 1849: 4AB; 19 September 1849: 3CDE.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{Register}, 14 July 1849: 3E.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Government Record Group [hereafter GRG] 24/6/1849/1527, State Records of South Australia [hereafter SRSA].
  \item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Adelaide Times}, 13 August 1849: 3G; \textit{Register}, 15 August 1849: 2B.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} GRG 24/6/1849/Moorhouse’s quarterly report, 23 October 1849, 1907½, SRSA.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Register}, 8 September 1849: 4A.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Pope 2011: 153; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 332.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Levinson 1993: 56.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Judge Cooper’s notes, September 1849, Supreme Court Note Books, NNB 27 (the letter is in a box of unnumbered incoming correspondence for 1849); \textit{Adelaide Times}, 3 September 1849: 4D. See also Krichauff 2015: 15.
\end{itemize}
on his tour of Yorke Peninsula and assisted during McCulloch’s investigation of Scott’s murder.\(^\text{30}\) A close reading of the available records, which is alert to the presence and motivations of Aboriginal people, enables the significant roles played by Aboriginal people to be acknowledged. I argue Jim Crack and his Aboriginal companions deliberately led Moorhouse and McCulloch to Melaityappa and that Jim Crack played a key role in bringing Jones and Morris to trial.\(^\text{31}\)

Melaityappa told Moorhouse (through Jim Crack) that he had been shot by ‘two gentlemen on horseback, one having a double barrelled gun, and the other a single barrelled one’.\(^\text{32}\) Moorhouse cut the ball from Melaityappa’s arm and travelled with Melaityappa and Perria\(^\text{33}\) (a 10-year-old boy who witnessed the shooting) to George Milner Stephen’s head station where Jones was identified and apprehended.\(^\text{34}\) After the group arrived in Adelaide on 28 August, Morris was apprehended, taken to the Aborigines’ location and picked out of an identity parade by Melaityappa and Perria.\(^\text{35}\)

The reporting of settler–Aboriginal conflict

In his analysis of colonial newspapers in New South Wales, South Africa and New Zealand, Alan Lester pertinently points out that colonial newspapers ‘founded by settlers to represent and further their interests’ were influential not only in reflecting but also constructing a colonial identity.\(^\text{36}\) Lester focuses his examination on papers aimed at free, propertied and respectable settlers (Adelaide newspapers fit that mould) and demonstrates how the settler press provided an anti-humanitarian discourse in response to the powerful humanitarian critique of colonialism that emanated from London in the 1830s–1840s. According to Lester, the settler press attacked humanitarian officials’ partiality and settlers campaigned against ‘the humanitarian complex as a whole’.\(^\text{37}\)

If European aggressions on Yorke Peninsula were reported in Adelaide newspapers, they were downplayed while the ‘deeply provocative’ acts of ‘the blacks’ were emphasised. Similarly, the murders of colonists James Beevor and Mrs Easton on Eyre Peninsula in May 1849 were widely reported while the (earlier) poisoning of at least five Aboriginal people in the same district by shepherd Patrick Dwyer was not brought to the public’s attention until months later. Because the Adelaide

\(^{30}\) See Krichauff 2011: 78.

\(^{31}\) For further evidence to support this argument, see Krichauff 2011: 113–18.

\(^{32}\) Register, 8 September 1849: 4A.

\(^{33}\) Also referred to as Birria, Birris, Piaria.

\(^{34}\) Register, 1 September 1849: 4D; GRG 24/6/1849/1907½, SRSA.

\(^{35}\) Adelaide Times, 3 September 1849: 4D.

\(^{36}\) Lester 2002: 30–33.

\(^{37}\) Lester 2002: 30–33.
public was largely dependent upon local newspapers for information about remote
districts, the lack of reporting of settlers’ crimes against Aboriginal people had
serious consequences and requires recognition when analysing colonists’ reactions
to Melaityappa’s shooting.

Since January 1849, Adelaide residents had been receiving news of the deaths of
several settlers at the hands of Aboriginal people. Articles and letters referring to
the natives’ ‘treachery’ and ‘brutality’ and the need to ‘teach the blacks a lesson’
had been appearing in Adelaide newspapers. Skewed reporting can be blamed on
the distance from Adelaide, the absence of government officials in remote districts,
cross-cultural miscommunication, the culture of solidarity and secrecy that existed
amongst pastoralists and their employees, and newspaper editors’ and government
officials’ uncritical acceptance and repetition of one group of people’s (i.e. frontier
settlers’) version of events. However, news of Melaityappa’s shooting disrupted this
outraged discourse and suggests a need to look for additional reasons for skewed
reporting. An awareness of the speed and tenor of the reporting of Melaityappa’s
wounding illustrates that the moderate and delayed reporting of settler crimes is,
arguably, a reflection of the news received as much as a sign of the prejudices of
editors – regarding remote districts, newspaper editors were themselves dependent
on information received. A lack of reports of European aggressions meant editors’
(and, ultimately, the public’s) perception of settler innocence may have been genuine.

Articles and editorials that appear in the Adelaide press concerning Melaityappa’s
shooting complicate Lester’s binary between humanitarians (located in Britain) and
anti-humanitarian settlers (located in the colonies) and the related tendency of some
scholars to generalise and homogenise ‘settler’ sentiments and actions. The initial
reaction of newspaper editors and government officials to Jones and Morris’s crime
appears to be one of genuine disapproval and condemnation. On 1 September, one
editor called offences by white people against natives ‘appalling’, and stated that the
charge of murder ‘deserves the most searching enquiry’ as ‘inoffensive natives are not
to be shot down like wild-dogs with impunity’; ‘humanity and justice alike demand
that if we force these poor people from their haunts and accustomed food, we should
at least protect them from further or more desperate violence’.38 On 5 September,
the *Register* published an editorial titled ‘Murderous Encounters’:

> Those settlers who are confirmed in the pastoral career have almost insensibly acquired
> the persuasion of some ‘right divine’ by virtue of which the lands included in their
> ‘runs’ and the aboriginal occupiers of the soil have become wholly subject to their
> absolute rule. They view the sable denizens of the forest as dangerous interlopers,
> or something worse.39

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38 *South Australian Gazette and Mining Journal* [hereafter SAGMJ], 1 September 1849: 2E.
39 *Register*, 5 September 1849: 2E.
Some Adelaide editors perceived themselves as representatives of liberal-thinking, humanitarian colonists; in South Australia, settlers who owned and controlled the press were not necessarily anti-humanitarian.

**Police Court trial**

On 29 August 1849, the Colonial Surgeon operated on Melaitappia and Morris and Jones appeared at the Police Court. Perria, Moorhouse and McCulloch gave damning evidence. Perria had seen Jones and Morris ride up to Melaitappia on small grey horses and shoot Melaitappia in the arm, foot and body; they then rode off, taking with them two nets and two waddies, which were later recovered. When McCulloch visited the site of the shooting, he saw the tracks of two small horses, which corresponded with the tracks of the grey horse Jones was riding when identified by Melaitappia. The marks of the ball taken out of Melaitappia's arm matched those produced by a double-barrelled rifle in Morris's possession. Bail was refused, which 'surprised' Jones and Morris's employer George Milner Stephen, who also doubled as their defence lawyer. Despite receiving 'all the assistance that medical talent could devise', Melaitappia died on 30 August.40 After the Colonial Surgeon gave further damning evidence at the Coronial Inquiry, Jones and Morris were charged with wilful murder.41

Jones and Morris's upcoming trial caused a stir in colonial society. Naïve city dwellers had their illusions of peaceful occupation shattered while experienced frontiersmen's understandings of legal sanctity were unsettled. Unlike James Brown's case (which had not been dismissed but was also to be heard in the September Criminal Sittings), the material, circumstantial and testimonial evidence against Jones and Morris was seemingly irrefutable. The Protector, Sergeant Major McCulloch and Colonial Surgeon were personally involved and appeared as witnesses. Their social position and 'respectability' meant their testimonies could not be readily dismissed. Doubly painful for the Adelaide public was the awareness that Jones and Morris were supposedly 'gentlemen' who should 'show an example of conduct worthy of their position'.42 Morris was the nephew of ex-Governor Hindmarsh. Morris's employer and legal representative, George Milner Stephen, was married to Morris's cousin (Hindmarsh's daughter).

Any convenient perception that immoral acts committed on Aboriginal people were perpetrated by uneducated men belonging to the lower classes could no longer be sustained. A sense of many colonists' disbelief and denial is glimpsed through the Register's need to point out that the Police Court jury that found Jones and Morris

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40 *Adelaide Times*, 3 September 1849: 3G.
41 *Register*, 1 September 1849: 3C.
42 *Register*, 19 September 1849: 3D.
guilty was ‘a most respectable one’. The duty of prosecuting Jones and Morris was understood by Judge Mann as ‘painful’ and ‘unpleasant’. Morris faced an additional charge of assaulting two Aboriginal women. Interestingly, it seems that men who physically assaulted women were judged more harshly by the public than men who killed Aboriginal people; Stephen requested that Morris be committed for the murder charge because the assault charge ‘was, in fact, prejudicing the public mind against him’.

Laying the blame

Publicity surrounding the trial meant government officials, newspaper editors and the general public could not bury their heads in the sand or disguise with euphemisms Aboriginal fatalities occurring at the frontiers of British settlement. The trial’s unprecedentedness, the important questions it raised and the far-reaching implications of the impending outcome inspired frank, honest and radical reflections regarding the causes of Aboriginal–settler violence. Colonists wanted someone to blame, some way to deflect attention from the real causes of cross-cultural violence. Aboriginal people were an easy target. Having outlined how he had ‘suffered from Native aggressions’, William Newnham of Gawler Town concluded ‘the conviction of a white man, under circumstances such as those experienced by the settlers on Yorke’s Peninsula, would be nothing short of murder’. Colonist ‘WH’ suggested that, during the years of Moorhouse’s official appointment, the Protector ‘might easily’ have ‘made himself a master of the dialects of these rude tribes’. (This unrealistic expectation displays an ignorance of the distinct and diverse languages and dialects of South Australia’s numerous Aboriginal groups.) Having stated ‘the best and only means of teaching refractory aborigines the sacred nature of … British jurisprudence, is to give them a severe lesson … a little cold lead, well applied’, a colonist using the pseudonym ‘Blue Nose’ perceived ‘the government and the Protectorship’ to be ‘virtually responsible for any undue cruelties towards the natives from the perfect indifference hitherto shown to the most earnest entreaties of the whites for protection’. But Moorhouse had strongly recommended the establishment of a police force on Yorke Peninsula as early as January 1848, and he was compelled to wait for instructions from the government before investigating any ‘affrays’.

43 Register, 1 September 1849: 3C.
44 Register, 12 September 1849: 3CD; 19 September 1849: 4A.
45 Register, 5 September 1849: 4A.
46 Adelaide Times, 17 September 1849: 3G.
47 Register, 19 September 1849: 2C.
48 Register, 8 September 1849: 4A.
The *Register*’s editors declared ‘the Christians’ the ‘real invaders’:

[although Christians] may be too humane to tolerate the idea of the wholesale extermination or the ‘singling out’ of the ‘black vermin’, as they are called, they nevertheless are of the opinion that a system of slavery should be introduced whereby the blacks might be subjected to a lengthy term of coercion, and thus rendered serviceable to the whites and partially civilized.\(^49\)

The editors are referring to the pending establishment of a ‘Native Training Institution’, where Aboriginal people would be educated in European habits, religion and occupations. Key advocates and supporters for the institution were Anglican Archbishop Short and Archdeacon Hale who, since 1848, had been openly critical of the natives’ condition and the ineffectiveness of efforts to ‘Christianise’ them.\(^50\)

The *Register*’s editors also blamed the government – despite receiving (indirectly) revenue of at least £750 from Yorke Peninsula colonists, ‘all the government has done is [send] three or four of the mounted police to scour the country and make some abortive attempts to restore peace’. Now Yorke Peninsula ‘has become a largely productive portion of South Australia’, the government should ‘bestir itself’ and spend at least £1,000 per year on ‘its protection and local control’.\(^51\)

### Settler diversity

South Australian colonists’ perceptions, sentiments and actions towards Aboriginal people and their treatment varied. Broadly speaking, there were differences between humanitarian government officials who attempted to follow orders from London’s Colonial Office, between frontier settlers and those who remained in Adelaide, between squatters-cum-pastoralists who leased vast tracts of land and farmers who purchased 640-acre blocks, between pastoral employers and their employees. These lines were not distinct but overlapped and blurred – government officials were settlers, Adelaide residents were pastoralists. In addition, there were differences between members of each group, which depended upon individual motives, histories, experiences and personalities.

### The position of Moorhouse and certain government officials

Moorhouse’s personal involvement in Melaityappa’s case appears to have sparked his ire and made him unusually forthright in publicly and privately voicing his empathy for Aboriginal people. In the first of two letters published in the *Register* during Jones and Morris’s incarceration in gaol, Moorhouse stated ‘it is to be hoped that those

\(^{49}\) *Register*, 5 September 1849: 2E, original emphasis.

\(^{50}\) Brock and Kartinyeri 1989.

\(^{51}\) *Register*, 5 September 1849: 2E.
who may be made murderers by their own masters will not be treadmilled on the revolver for self-defence’, 52 thus vocalising his awareness and frustration regarding the inadequacies – or hypocrisy – of British law and the reality of the pastoral chain of command. Ten days later, he bluntly stated:

The blacks were here before us … At length the white man came, and the power of civilisation has continued to monopolise and fence in the soil, and to shut out and drive away the game, and occasionally to shoot down the native tribes. All vice reacts on its perpetrators, and it is evident there is still such a thing as ‘the cry of blood’. 53

When Aboriginal people committed crimes, they were ‘revenging invasion, rapacity, and adultery’; they ‘are entitled to the sympathy of every man who would boast a generous humanity’. Moorhouse accused the settlers of being ‘blind’ to ‘their own permanent interests’ and boldly stated that although the ‘development of agriculture, mining, trade and commerce’ was generally understood as necessary for the advancement and prosperity of the colony (‘provincial locomotion’), ‘the blacks and whites, here, are antagonistic’. 54 In these public statements, Moorhouse cut straight to cause of settler–Aboriginal conflict.

He was not alone in seeking justice for Aboriginal people. Moorhouse and McCulloch promptly and decisively attended to Melaityappa before tracking and arresting Jones and Morris. Both gave clear, damning evidence against Morris and Jones and were supported by other men in high office. Police Commissioner Tolmer fully reported the charge against Jones and Morris, which he described as ‘one of the most serious kind’. 55 The Advocate General was thorough and determined throughout his prosecution. 56

Pastoralists

Wealthy colonists invested in the pastoral industry as a means of making a quick fortune. Many (such as Jones and Morris’s employer) resided in Adelaide while leaving the dirty work of occupying Aboriginal land to their overseers, managers, shepherds and hut-keepers. There is no doubt the majority of early pastoralists were aware of and took a pragmatic and mercenary approach with regard to the means by which Aboriginal land was occupied. Penton’s employer, for example, attempted to ‘conceal’ the murder of his shepherd Scott in order ‘that the shepherds might not be deterred from going out with their sheep’. 57 Overseers were the pastoralists’ henchmen; they were chosen and instructed according to their employers’ values

52 Register, 29 August 1849: 3B.
53 Register, 8 September 1849: 4B.
54 Register, 8 September 1849: 4B, original emphasis.
55 GRG 24/6/1849/1883½, SRSA.
56 Register, 19 September 1849: 4A.
57 Register, 19 September 1849: 3F; GRG 35/1849, SRSA.
and priorities. Following the murders of shepherds Armstrong and Scott (in July and August 1849 respectively as referred to above), overseers Penton and Morris armed their subordinates with guns, scoured their runs and forced shepherds to go out with their flocks. By such means pastoral employees were indeed ‘made murderers by their masters’.

As members of Adelaide’s social elite, pastoralists were used to being heard by those in the highest echelons of colonial authority. However, due to the unprecedented circumstances by which Jones and Morris’s crime was brought to several highly placed officials’ attention and the weight of circumstantial and material evidence against Jones and Morris, the pastoralists could not be certain of the trial’s outcome. Aware a guilty verdict would have numerous negative repercussions for their economic enterprises, pastoralists resorted to desperate methods. On 1 September, Stephen wrote to the Governor on behalf of ‘the Settlers on Yorke’s Peninsula’ ‘to request the favor of His Excellency’s granting them an interview on the subject of the aggression of the Aborigines’.58 Confident of securing a meeting, Stephen expressed his willingness to communicate the appointed time to the settlers. However, the Governor snubbed the pastoralists by coldly responding that any future ‘communication should be had with me in writing’.59 A sense of the pastoralists’ irritation can be gleaned through Blue Nose’s complaint that ‘the most earnest entreaties of the whites for protection … thundered against the stone walls of government house, instead of the ears of its somnolent inmates’.60

Another cause of pastoralists’ anxiety was Judge Cooper’s illness. The position of Acting Judge would ordinarily go to the Advocate General who, at the time, was William Smillie whom the Adelaide Times described as having ‘partialities and dislikes and other indications of littleness of mind’.61 According to the Adelaide Times in the days leading up to Jones and Morris’s trial, ‘the colonists would have no confidence whatever’ in Smillie’s appointment; any attempt to carry it out would ‘be met with an unmistakeable demonstration of public disapprobation’.62 For reasons that were soon to become apparent, Charles Mann was the colonists’ preferred choice.

The wider public

It is difficult to know what proportion of the settler population sympathised with Melaityappa (and Aboriginal people in general) and what proportion sympathised with Jones and Morris (and pastoralists and their employees). But the researcher gets a sense that the majority of the population refused to acknowledge European

58 GRG 24/6/1849/1634, SRSA.
59 GRG 24/6/1849/1634, SRSA.
60 Register, 8 September 1849: 4A.
61 Adelaide Times, 10 September 1849: 3G.
62 Adelaide Times, 3 September 1849: 2G.
determinants of Aboriginal–settler violence. Moorhouse found in his ‘intercourse with society that the doctrine now broached is, “shoot them down”’. When Jones and Morris appeared at their Supreme Court trial, ‘the court became crowded … An expression of commiseration for the prisoners and anxiety for the result was visible on every face’. For settlers involved in the pastoral industry, the incarceration, trial and determined pursuit of Jones and Morris was a shock. These preliminary invaders of Aboriginal land understood cross-cultural clashes as an inevitable consequence of colonialism and perceived the government’s punishment of settlers for crimes inherent and integral to the work of ‘taking up’ ‘new’ land as unfair and hypocritical. William Newnham criticised those ‘who have not gone far beyond the precincts of the city, or the efficient protection of the more populated districts, and who know nothing of the fearful risks at which the distant settlers have cleared their way’. Such people ‘have a philanthropy founded on error, and maintained in ignorance’.

A sense of the outrage and perhaps desperation that Jones and Morris’s prosecution triggered in some can be gleaned through Blue Nose’s scathing reference to ‘the Protectorship’ that ‘has ferreted out numberless pseudo murders and other barbarities perpetrated against the natives’. Blue Nose depicted McCulloch as ‘a listless policeman who sniffs no promotion from the conviction of a black-skin, but who is quickly transformed into the wily maker-up of a “case” the moment that Government urges him to “investigate” any alleged delinquency on the part of the whites’. The Advocate General and others were labelled ‘a horde of distinction-seekers’ who ‘come into court with exceedingly bad grace to prosecute the whites for no virtual offence’.

The potential for events to unfold differently

From the time Jones and Morris were incarcerated in the Adelaide Gaol until their Supreme Court trial (from 28 August to 17 September 1849), the potential existed to set the course of Aboriginal–settler relations on a new path. During these weeks, the opportunity existed to openly acknowledge the antagonism between settler and Aboriginal interests, debate the hypocrisy of ‘Christian’ goals for the Aboriginal population’s ‘civilisation’ and ‘improvement’, break the power and influence of the pastoralists, demonstrate that the lives of Aboriginal people were of greater concern than the short-term economic profits of a few and put in place policies that genuinely recognised and attempted to ameliorate the injustices suffered by

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63 Register, 29 August 1849: 3B.
64 Register, 19 September 1849: 3C.
65 Adelaide Times, 17 September 1849: 3G.
66 Register, 8 September 1849: 4AB.
67 Register, 8 September 1849: 4AB.
68 Register, 8 September 1849: 4AB.
Aboriginal people. Newspapers raised the possibility of settlers abandoning some districts on the Yorke and Eyre peninsulas. The Register's editors suggested if 'the protection of the aborigines is to be anything more than a mockery … the whole of the pastoral regulations should undergo wise and liberal revision'.

Moorhouse called for a public meeting to openly discuss 'the subject' of 'the Aborigines'.

Punishing Jones and Morris in accordance with their crime would send a powerful message. A close look at newspaper articles and correspondence between the Governor and various officials during Jones and Morris's incarceration and after their trial illustrates who in actuality controlled and constituted the law. The Governor appointed the Acting Judge on the advice of the Legislative Council, which was comprised of four government officials and four colonists. With the exception of the Governor, all members of the Legislative Council were landholders. On 5 September, the Register 'relieve[d] the public anxiety with respect to the appointment of a second judge, that appointment falling on Judge Mann'; 'indeed, the Executive could scarcely have determined otherwise, the voices of the people being unanimous in favour of the eligibility of that learned Gentleman'. The Adelaide Times stated 'we accept this appointment as a concession to the just and reasonable wishes of the colonists' as judges must 'be free from partialities and dislikes and other indications of littleness of mind … to make the administration of justice palatable'. Perhaps Advocate General Smillie's unrelenting pursuit of James Brown demonstrated his 'partialities and dislikes'.

**Supreme Court trial**

If the Advocate General's partialities and dislikes were unpalatable to many colonists, Judge Mann's were much more appetising. In opening the Supreme Court Criminal Sittings on 10 September, Mann (referring to settler–Aboriginal violence) 'regretfully' observed the 'numerical increase' in crimes of 'a more fearful nature' and stated that 'happily for the province' such crimes 'have hitherto been of rare occurrence'. Mann conveniently perceived the rarity of trials relating to Aboriginal–settler violence as evidence such violence rarely occurred. Mann provided further reassurance to those sympathetic to Jones and Morris by immediately dismissing the case against Brown and by having a dig at the Advocate General (who was responsible for pursuing the case) by stating 'the case was scarcely such as to require [Mann] to enter into any lengthened detail'. Introducing the case against the Aboriginal murderers of Beevor and Easton, Mann said these 'are cases the atrocious cruelty of which is aggravated

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69 Register, 5 September 1849: 2E, original emphasis.
70 Register, 29 August 1849: 3B.
71 Register, 5 September 1849: 3A.
72 Adelaide Times, 10 September 1849: 3G.
73 Register, 12 September 1849: 3CD.
by the undeviating kindness which the natives had uniformly received at the hands of their victims’. Mann then reminded the jury they ought not ‘allow feeling of any kind to influence’ their decision before remarking ‘a more kindhearted and gentlemanly man’ than Mr Beevor ‘never existed’. Referring to Europeans facing charges, Mann did not overlook the circumstances connected with ‘attacks on the blacks’ who appear, in many instances, ‘to have been the original aggressors’.74

Although pastoralists could begin to breathe more easily, there was no guarantee at this stage of Jones and Morris’s acquittal, with Mann stating:

> the admissions of [Jones and Morris] in the presence of their connection subject to his decease, with property that is identified as having been in his possession previous to his death, and various other similar circumstances, so strongly corroborate the testimony of the native witnesses, that your duty, however unpleasant, is, it seems to me, clear.75

However, over the next three days, the likelihood of Jones and Morris’s conviction dramatically reduced. Although the scant records allow only a speculative interpretation of events, they are nevertheless enlightening.

Successive amendments to the *Aborigines Evidence Act* (in 1844, 1846 and 1848) increasingly enabled previously unadmissable Aboriginal evidence to be heard in court. By 1848, unswnorn evidence was admitted, evidence could be presented as written statements, and unsworn interpreted evidence accepted.76 On 13 September 1849, Mann interviewed Perria, Jim Crack and Moorhouse to hear Perria’s evidence and determine Jim Crack’s suitability as an interpreter. Jim Crack could not count beyond the number 10 and had forgotten the difference between a week and a month.77 Mann informed the Advocate General that Jim Crack could not be relied on as a ‘competent interpreter’.78 The Advocate General replied by reminding Mann that the case did not rely on native evidence for dates or numbers and ‘they were bound to receive as much of the truth as the witness could impart’—although unable to tell the time or the date, natives ‘could describe an occurrence and identify and individual’.79

To date, only an ex-convict had been found guilty for the murder of an Aboriginal man. The sacrifice of Jones’s and Morris’s lives to maintain the status quo and perpetuate the illusion of the law’s effectiveness and impartiality was, however, more problematic. To hang the nephew of an ex-Governor would raise serious questions

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74 *Register*, 12 September 1849: 3CD.
75 *SAGMJ*, 13 September 1849: 3D.
76 Pope 2011: 48–49.
77 Judge Cooper’s notebook beginning ‘Civil Sittings August 31st 1848’, NNB 27. This notebook has recently been transferred from the archives of the Supreme Court to SRSA where it has been listed as GRS 13038/1/P/Vol. 6.
78 *Register*, 15 September 1849: 3C.
79 *Register*, 15 September 1849: 3C.
and draw unwanted attention – both in the antipodes and in Britain – to the means by which the British Empire was created and maintained. It would send a strong message to British citizens and colonists that economic self-interests did not override the rights of Aboriginal people and would, initially at least, hinder the economic prosperity of the colony. How was Mann – acting as the highest placed judge in South Australia at the time – to resolve this conundrum whilst keeping face regarding the superiority and impartiality of British law?

Legislation passed by the Legislative Council as recently as July 1849 made judges (or Justices of the Peace) responsible for assessing the weight and credibility of unsworn Aboriginal evidence (and meant that finally settlers could be convicted solely on the uncorroborated testimony of an Aboriginal person). However, Mann cannily chose to involve the Grand Jury in the assessment of Jim Crack's suitability as an interpreter and Perria's reliability as a witness.

Although it is uncertain exactly what discussions took place between Mann and the Grand Jury between 13 and 15 September, several clues survive. In a written report dated 19 October 1849 addressed to the Governor, Mann stated:

The answers of Jim Crack satisfied me that in cases similar to that … against Messrs. Morris and Jones … the testimony of a native by a native interpreter might be depended upon. Through the medium of the Interpreter I examined and admonished the native boy and I found that the answers of the witness were clear and distinct. Before the Grand Jury no difficulty was experienced.

Mann's statement contrasts starkly with a report that appeared in the Register on 15 September; having examined Jim Crack and Perria on 14 September, the Grand Jury found 'numerous and important' 'contradictions between the statements of the native witnesses'. Consequently, 'the Grand Jury have almost unanimously expressed their regret at finding a true bill' against Jones and Morris. However, because the trial was already fixed, its 'consummation [was] unavoidable' – it seems Jones and Morris's trial on Monday 17 September was a farce.

Like the Legislative Council, the Grand Jury was primarily made up of landholders. As such, they held 'prejudices that favored the interests of the recognised landholders and were 'potentially subject to the same culture of solidarity that influenced other settlers'. Later, on 8 October 1849, Moorhouse informed the Governor that
only two of the Grand Jury possessed favourable feelings towards [the Natives]. By including the Grand Jury in the process of assessing Jim Crack's and Perria's suitability, Mann effectively handballed the responsibility for the outcome of the case to those with vested interests.

The Grand Jury had one more trump card to play. Midway through Jones and Morris's trial on 17 September they came into court and interrupted proceedings. The Foreman, John Hallett – a pastoralist who leased vast tracts of land in the mid-north of South Australia and who had himself been implicated in 1844–45 in covering up his overseer's murder of two Ngadjuri people – read aloud from a document presented to Mann. Having 'bestowed their most careful and minute investigation to the cases bought before them' the Grand Jury found 'the examination of the Aborigines' was 'attended with the difficulties which your Honour in your charge anticipated and suggested'. Hallett then laid some blame on the colonial government by stating that the districts in which Europeans murdered Aboriginal people were not under sufficient police control or the protection of an officer whose duty it was to 'protect the savage, and to guard the settlers'.

The trial continued. Mann stated Jim Crack could 'translate matters of fact not involving time or numbers'. The defence retorted that, as the 'whole essence of the case depended on the exact date of occurrence', Jim Crack was not competent and the case should be dismissed. The Advocate General pointed out that the mass of evidence heard supported the native evidence, regardless of confusion over dates and times. When Perria provided the 'native names' for localities, defence implied the interpreter was making false statements. Perria gave the same answer to several different questions. Asked to point out Jones and Morris, 10-year-old Perria hesitatingly pointed out the wrong man to 'a volley of hisses, accompanied by a stamping of the feet' (the 'conduct of the people in the body of the court was indecorous and improper'). Sensing young Perria's bewilderment, the Advocate General submitted Melaityappa's deposition, which Mann refused to admit. Throughout, the Advocate General stood firm and 'acquitted himself admirably' despite being addressed by 'many severe, and some not civil observations'. Mann concluded the case by saying the evidence was not sufficient and the 'only safe course of the Jury … [was] to acquit the prisoners'. 'Without hesitation' the jury returned a verdict of not guilty:

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88 GRG 5/2/1849/406, SRSA.
89 Advocate General to Colonial Secretary, 5 January 1845, GRG 24/6/1845/143, SRSA.
90 Register, 19 September 1849: 3E, emphasis added.
91 Register, 19 September 1849: 3E.
92 Register, 19 September 1849: 4A.
93 Register, 19 September 1849: 4A.
On the liberation of the prisoners, the silence which had been rigidly preserved in the court during the late proceedings ... gave way to a tumultuous expression of satisfaction. The long pent up feelings of the audience found vent in a mighty volley of cheers, which completely put the efforts of the officers of the Court at defiance. The cheers were repeated outside the Court, and the traders of Hindley street were startled occasionally by a sudden but simultaneous shout from a large body of people, who had not separated even at that distance from the Court-house.94

In the court and on the streets, Adelaideans celebrated the failure of British law to convict the murderers of an innocent Aboriginal man.

The jury’s verdict appears popular. The editors of the SAGMJ no doubt represented the relief and thinking of many:

we have not the least intention of treating this matter with levity – far from it. A cruel and brutal murder had unquestionably been perpetrated upon a native, which, brought home to the accused parties, would certainly have been expiated with their lives. Fortunately, this dire justice has been avoided; and more happily still, the determination which the proceedings evinced is likely to operate as a warning to others in their future intercourse with and treatment of the aborigines, and so have the full effect of a more terrible example.95

Some colonists were disappointed; on 18 September, ‘H.W.’ wrote that the ‘result of the last trial has given much dissatisfaction to many worthy individuals in the province, who regret, with myself, the want of proper interpreters’.96 But many were satisfied; a memorial dated 17 September 1849, ‘signed by a great number of leading colonists’, requested that ‘her Majesty, in answer to the wishes of her faithful and loyal subjects in South Australia, will be graciously pleased to appoint Chas. Mann, Esq. [to the office of second Judge]’.97 Clearly, Mann had proven his ability to make the administration of justice palatable to many.

Reverberations

During the same Criminal Sittings, four Eyre Peninsula Aboriginal men were found guilty for the murder of Beevor and Easton. As with Jones and Morris, the case for the defence rested upon Aboriginal evidence. This was a prime opportunity for Mann and the jury to demonstrate the alleged impartiality of British law. However, the jury had no problems convicting Aboriginal people on the basis of Aboriginal evidence. In the same sittings, no European was found guilty for the murder of

94 Register, 19 September 1849: 4A.
95 SAGMJ, 20 September 1849: 2D.
96 Register, 19 September 1849: 2C.
97 SAGMJ, 20 September 1849: 3DE.
Nantariltarra or the death of the girl who drowned. The inconsistency of the judgments was not lost on Moorhouse and other high-placed officials who lost faith in the British judicial system’s impartiality and effectiveness.

In a letter to the Governor dated 8 October 1849, Moorhouse asked the Governor to reconsider the sentence of death pronounced upon the four Aboriginal men from Eyre Peninsula. Moorhouse felt obliged to:

conscientiously declare my conviction, that had they been Europeans, the juries would not from the evidence produced have brought them in guilty … the chief evidence against them was given by Natives, a kind of evidence which a few days before had been rejected as dangerous and unsatisfactory when given against Europeans.98

The Governor also received a memorial headed by the Bishop of Adelaide and signed by 32 prominent and respected colonists asking for a respite or commutation of the death sentence for the four Aboriginal men. The memorialists were concerned about the ‘recklessness likely to be fostered with regard to treatment of the native population, if the machinery of the Law is found ineffectual to reach the White offender, but acts with unmitigated severity upon the Black’.99

Moorhouse’s letter and the memorial were forwarded to Mann for review. (Nettelbeck and Foster state ‘Judge Mann took the unusual step of writing to the Governor with concerns about the case’.100 In fact, Mann was compelled to provide a response.) Both Moorhouse and the memorialists made it very clear that rather than being the original aggressors (as Mann informed the jury), Aboriginal people were retaliating for ‘numerous and undoubted outrages involving adulterous abstraction of the Native women and homicide of the Natives upon the part of whites’.101 Mann, however, distinguished between Aboriginal crimes, which he described as ‘preconcerted’ and demonstrating ‘unity of design’, and European crimes (‘acts of individuals’). Mann stated this despite having been informed of the premeditated attack by five Europeans on the shores of Hardwick Bay in which Nantariltarra was murdered and a girl drowned, and despite knowing of the poisoning of at least five people on Eyre Peninsula. Mann claimed ‘the natives and the white population are dealt with impartially’. Although ‘morally speaking’ there could be ‘little doubt’ of ‘the means by which and the parties by whose hands’ Melaityappa met his fate, ‘the jury were indifferently directed to acquit the prisoners’ because the native testimony ‘was too uncertain to warrant a conviction’.102

98 Moorhouse to Colonial Secretary, 8 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1850, SRSA.
99 Memorial to the Governor, received 8 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1847, SRSA.
100 Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 333.
101 GRG 24/6/1849/1847, SRSA.
102 Mann to Colonial Secretary, 10 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1893, SRSA.
Referring to the bias of the court system, Moorhouse stated:

A most disadvantageous position in which Natives are placed appears in the prejudicial feeling existing in the minds of juries – This prejudice was forcibly displayed in the minds of jurors during the late [September] trials … The poor Natives meet with little sympathy or compassion before tribunals composed entirely of white men.103

The memorialists similarly referred to ‘the wide-spread prejudice, unconsciously perhaps, affecting the value of the defence’.104 In response, Mann obliquely stated this complaint did not ‘amount to objections in limine’ but ‘merely’ ‘suggest an imperfection in the machinery of trial’.105 Contrary to the memorialists, Mann believed his judgments demonstrated the sanctity of British law and would maintain settler respect for the law and, consequently, limit settler violence.

The fact that Mann was ordered to report on the outcome of the trials of Jones and Morris and the Eyre Peninsula men and to respond to Moorhouse’s and the Memorialists’ letters shows the Governor had concerns regarding Mann’s judgments. Having received Mann’s response, the Governor recommended Mann ‘state explicitly in an addendum to his report that the convictions were obtained (as his report implies) in due course of Law’.106 Moorhouse had stated in his appeal that if ‘His Excellency and the Executive Council’ did not show leniency and mercy to the four condemned men, he should ‘have some difficulty in believing the declaration that the Natives enjoy the protection of the British Law’.107 All relevant documents were laid before the Legislative Council on 24 October. Apparently finding Mann’s argument more palatable but recognising some gesture of compromise was required, the Council ‘resolved unanimously that the Lt Governor should not be advised to pardon or reprieve’ two of the four Aboriginal men.108

Conclusion

The circumstances surrounding the trial of Jones and Morris were unique. The trial provided an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate to South Australian colonists the much-promulgated notion that Aboriginal people were treated as equals before the law. However, despite the strength of the case against Jones and Morris, and regardless of the determined and decisive actions of government officials, the opportunity for the judiciary to show leadership (which may have altered the extent and degree of settler–Aboriginal violence in newly occupied and

103 GRG 5/2/1849/406, SRSA.
104 GRG 24/6/1849/1847, SRSA.
105 GRG 24/6/1849/1893, SRSA.
106 Governor Young to Master of Supreme Court, 9 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1852, SRSA.
107 GRG 24/6/1849/1850, SRSA.
108 W. O’Halloran, Clerk of Council, 24 October 1849, GRG 24/6/1849/1852, SRSA.
remote districts) was lost. In ‘making the administration of justice palatable’ to the settlers, Judge Mann’s dubious actions and judgments show the extent to which landholding settlers constituted and controlled the law and how, at the highest court in the colony, the short-term economic interests of a particular group of settlers and the economic ‘locomotion’ of the province took priority over the lives of the original owners of the soil.\textsuperscript{109}

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Mobilising across colour lines: Intimate encounters between Aboriginal women and African American and other allied servicemen on the World War II Australian home front

Karen Hughes

Introduction

Stationed at General Douglas MacArthur’s Australian headquarters, the famous black war correspondent Vincent Tubbs reported in the Baltimore *Afro-American*, 25 March 1944: ‘I know of 10 cases in which our boys have married Australian girls. In eight instances the girls are of mixed blood. In the other two, they are so called “pure Australian girls”’, adding, ‘They have real concern as to how they will get their wives home on one of Uncle Sam’s ships’.1

Tubbs’s reportage accurately points to the significance of marriage, intimacy and the family as a key site of political struggle. Indeed, policing intimacy, coupled with immigration restriction, was central to purveying white citizenship across Australia and the United States, both settler colonial nations with distinctive, intersecting schemes of racial governance, which collided in Australia during World War II

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1 Tubbs 1944: 1. The Baltimore-based *Afro-American* newspaper sent correspondents to cover the fighting alongside the various black American units that served in both the European and Pacific theatres. In describing the two white wives of African American partners as ‘pure Australian girls’, Tubbs makes explicit reference to the White Australia Policy, which had received sustained criticism in the African American press.
(WWII). As Ann McGrath has recently noted, intermarriage was for each country ‘a hidden plotline in [the desire for anchoring] settler sovereignty’. The narrative of White Australia in relation to both Aboriginal peoples and non-northern European migrants impacted how Australian families formed, just as, in a different context, ‘Jim Crow’ segregation policies and anti-miscegenation laws shaped American family formation and life, especially in US southern states.

Over the course of WWII’s Pacific theatre, more than 1 million US military personnel and support units were successively stationed across Australia from 1941 until 1947, when the last US bases were dismantled. This included almost 9,000 African Americans, who were mostly segregated. Alongside them, allied troops arrived from the Netherlands East Indies and Netherlands West Indies, Great Britain and colonial India, together with international merchant marines, consigned to supply the military enterprise. On the Australian home front, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and African American, Native American and other coloured servicemen were often drawn together in the face of shared experiences of colonial discrimination and oppression. From these associations, important political dialogues and activism emerged.

With an interest in enlarging understanding of Aboriginal women’s enabling roles across a number of cultural frontiers to account for broader contexts of power and social relations, I explore the multilayered impacts of relationships that Aboriginal women forged with allied servicemen on the WWII domestic front in Western Australia. Focusing on their lived experiences, working from oral history sources combined with reading the archives along and against the grain, I illuminate a larger picture of Indigenous resistance to intrusive state intervention and human rights violations, and locate these women’s stories within a transnational frame of mid-twentieth-century social and political change. The women’s stories afford new insight into one of Australia’s and the United States’ most deeply hidden and neglected histories of war. While I discuss only a few women here, mostly from Western Australia, this is part of a wider national project and the subject of a forthcoming book. This history works alongside other important histories of the military service of Indigenous Australians, African Americans and Native Americans, to counter the unexamined acceptance of stories of white masculinist experiences on the civilian home front and in combat.

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2 See Maynard 2013, 2015; Corbould 2017.
3 McGrath 2015: 2. See also Ellinghaus 2006.
5 Knoblock 2005: 343.
6 See Maynard 2015 for comparison.
7 The research comprises early work from the Australian Research Council Discovery Indigenous Project IN140100036, ‘Children Born of War, Australia and the War in the Pacific 1941–1945’, with Victoria Grieves and Catriona Elder, which examines the circumstances, histories and wellbeing for Australian children born of World War II, and in particular for children marginalised across these global colour lines. See Grieves 2014a.
The accepted historiography is mostly silent on Aboriginal women’s wartime experience and intimate relations with foreign allies. To date, Australian scholarship on transnational relations between civilians and military, and of women’s emotional labour in wartime, has paid scant attention to Aboriginal women’s participation. Research on Australian women’s changing agency, sexuality and gender expression during WWII’s ‘American occupation’, and its impact on mid-century postwar change, has tended to overlook the distinctive experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. A notable exception is Stephen Kinnane’s substantive, microhistorical study in Shadow Lines. Similarly, literature on Australian WWII war brides carries a mythic, unquestioned assumption that all of these brides were white. Some accounts refer fleetingly to the African American husbands of a number of white Australian war brides, but the trajectory of these family formations is absent from the literature. Research into same-sex relationships in WWII in Brisbane significantly includes the experiences of African American servicemen. More recently, attention has focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s service in the defence forces, building on an evolving body of scholarship investigating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander military service. Aboriginal women’s emotional contributions on the WWII home front thus require far more nuanced exploration and centrality. Their experiences connect to a wider trans-Pacific history of intimate WWII relationships, including the resulting children born with Indigenous mothers and American military fathers, as extensively explored by Judy Bennett and Angela Wanhall. They show that Aboriginal women’s intimate relationships with African American GIs bring a fresh dimension to understanding the continuum of Aboriginal engagement with African American political consciousness of the early and mid-twentieth century.

‘Defending lily-white Australia’

During WWII, Australia’s racial politics raised deep concern among America’s African public. Marjorie McKenzie wrote in the Pittsburgh Courier, ‘We must know if Negro troops will be sent to defend lily-white Australia, which refuses to

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9 Kinnane 2003.
10 Arrowsmith 2013; Strauss and Potts 1987.
11 Smaal 2015.
12 For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s military service, see Riseman 2015; Cadzow forthcoming. On Indigenous service in the defence forces more widely, see Hall 1989, 1995; Riseman 2013, 2016; Stasiuk 2008. For the Aboriginal home front in World War I, see Horton 2015; Grimshaw and Loney 2015; Furphy 2017.
13 Bennett and Wanhall 2016; Wanhall and Buxton 2013. On Aboriginal and African American engagement, see Maynard 2015; Curthoys and Lake 2005; Curthoys 2010. On earlier cross cultural connection between mariners, see Pybus 2006; Russell 2012.
harbor any Negro population but her aborigines [sic].

At the outbreak of the Pacific War, the Australian Government, gripped in the always impossible process of creating a white society, wrestled with the news of the deployment of African American battalions. The arrival of African Americans threatened to contravene the White Australia Policy and fuel populist fears of miscegenation. However, under the silence of wartime censorship, the first battalion of African Americans quietly slipped into Melbourne in February 1942. By 3 March that year, a strategic US naval submarine base was established in Fremantle, precipitated by the fall of Java. As their tight-knit units required a sophisticated degree of interdependency during dangerous missions, submarine crews were not radically segregated like most other branches of the US military. Also free from segregation, and under a blanket of secrecy, Catalina flying boat bases were located at Nedlands and Crawley in Perth, and further north at Geraldton, along with a submarine refueling station in the Exmouth Gulf. In Fremantle, the relocation of the Old Women’s Home made way for the US Navy who were provided with the asylum and grounds for use as their Receiving Barracks for the duration of the war. Certain hotels in Fremantle and Perth were leased for submariners. As did the other servicemen, African Americans pooled their resources to rent houses near the Fremantle base or in the city, and were offered hospitality by local families.

‘The war brought the world to Western Australia’

‘Like no other time before it, the war brought the world to Western Australia’, the Miriwoong Marda Marda author Stephen Kinnane notes in his multigenerational family biography Shadow Lines. ‘The Aboriginal community, usually isolated, now found themselves exposed to other peoples, if not as equals, at least in a way that had certainly not occurred before the Second World War’. Kinnane takes us into the world of his grandmother Auntie Jessie Smith’s home in inner city Perth where ‘at any one of the all-nightlong marathon card games you could find British servicemen, Dutch submariners, Aboriginal diggers and Black US sailors sitting around the table’. War temporarily overshadowed some of the Western Australian

17 The Fremantle base, tied in with the South East Asian theatre of WWII’s Indian Ocean campaign, would become the second-largest US naval base in the Pacific theatre, following Pearl Harbor.
18 African Americans were commonly employed as stewards or officers’ cooks on the submarines, although some rose to higher ranks.
19 Barker and Jackson 1996.
20 Beale 2011.
21 Knoblock 2005: 129.
Government’s larger concerns of controlling Aboriginal peoples, and relationships formed that crossed prescribed boundaries established by the White Australia Policy and the Jim Crow laws of the US south. Many young Aboriginal women and American men encountered fresh intimate possibilities that fell outside of their usual lives, considering themselves ‘kin in some way’. Through mobility into other spaces, WWII provided African American enlistees an opportunity to learn more about the political struggle in other countries, bolstering global solidarity that underpinned future activism and postwar political change. Strategically, African American correspondents’ WWII coverage linked victory over fascism in the war to the domestic fight for equality, while ultimately connecting this to the global inequality of other colonised peoples. Historian Michael Green argues that by the last years of the war ‘internationalist anticolonial discourse was critical in shaping black American politics and the meaning of racial identities and solidarities’.

Aboriginal women in Perth frequently introduced their African American partners and friends to Uncle Bill Bodney, an esteemed social and political activist of African descent, who had married into a distinguished Nyungar Aboriginal family. Thus important political dialogues fermented. Similarly, in Melbourne, Lubin Hunter, a Native American serviceman from New York on leave, described engaging with Wurundjeri civilians: ‘Being a Shinnecock, I was telling them about my part of the world, and they were telling me about their part of the world before the white man came there, and it was a very interesting experience I had’. Along with solid friendships, intimate relationships formed, resulting often in the birth of children. Hospital maternity wards overflowed to the extent that additional beds had to be placed in the hallways. Pregnant Aboriginal women found themselves the lowest priority, often having to leave the city to give birth in segregated hospitals outside at Moore River Native Settlement, or at Carrollup, where maternity admissions spiked. Some relationships were coercive; for example, Ethel Walker, a white woman down on her luck, was imprisoned for abducting underage girls from Moore River Native Settlement to be sexual partners for servicemen. But, as elsewhere in Australia, a great many Aboriginal women fell in love, had casual encounters, became engaged to, or sometimes married American and other foreign servicemen. Some sadly also lost their partners in wartime action or localised violence that went unreported under wartime censorship. Marriage, as noted earlier, was not a right

24 Green 2008: 16.
25 Van Ryn 2011; Brawly and Dixon 2002.
26 Green 2008: 16.
27 Kinnane and Marsh 1993; Stephen Kinnane, pers. comm., December 2016.
available equally to all within settler colonialism’s highly policed borders, and attempts to marry across colour lines would test the immigration laws in each of these white men’s countries, as we shall see.31

Segregated socialising

As Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon show in their study on the reception of WWII African American servicemen in Australia, the nature of race relations varied widely according to specific local circumstances. This observation also holds true of social relationships between African Americans and Aboriginal Australians, an aspect that Brawley and Dixon gloss over.32 In eastern Australia, the American Red Cross established separate social clubs for African American servicemen. The Booker T Washington Club in Sydney’s Surry Hills, the Doctor Carver Club in Brisbane and the Red Cross American Servicemen’s Club in Townsville were among those that encouraged Aboriginal women to apply for membership as card-carrying dance partners, which required a character check.33 Aboriginal women also found employment at the clubs, and two of the six Aboriginal women who joined the staff of the Doctor Carver Club married African American servicemen and later migrated to the United States under the War Brides Act 1945 (US).34

In Perth, socialising for African American troops, as with submarine battalions, was not subject to such formal segregation. The Swan Dive Club, set up by the American Red Cross in the University of Western Australia’s leafy grounds, was open to all military personnel along with merchant marines. But, for most Aboriginal people, Perth remained a deeply racially segregated town – a result of 25 exhaustive years of A.O. Neville’s tyrannical regime. Neville held the position of Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia from 1915 to 1936, and Commissioner for Native Affairs from 1936 until his retirement in 1940. Aboriginal people were restricted to certain parts of metropolitan Perth after dark under state legislation passed in 1927, when the centre of the city itself was designated a ‘prohibited zone’ that soon radiated outwards.35 Consequently, engagement with these new arrivals usually occurred in private homes, or near the Catalina squadron base at Crawley and sometimes in the Aboriginal camps along the Swan River and coastal dunes flanking South Fremantle and Leighton beaches, not far from the submarine base and receiving barracks.36

31  Grieves 2014a; McKerrow 2013: 100–02; Kinnane 2003: 322.
33  Moyna Richardson, pers. comm., June 2016.
35  Prohibited Area Proclamation, the Governor of Western Australia, 18 March, 1927, under the Aborigines Act 1905 (WA). The proclamation, along with a pass system, was in force from 1927 to 1954.
36  Kinnane and Marsh 1993; Betty Kinnane (née Smith), pers. comm., May 2017.
The US Navy for its part threatened to heftily fine personnel ‘fraternising’ with Aboriginal women. 37 Even though some Aboriginal women joined the Red Cross, volunteering as dance partners, it was made clear that they could not date the American GIs outside the club environment. Auntie Jessie Smith’s daughter (and author Stephen Kinnane’s mother), Auntie Betty Kinnane (nee Smith), just 16 at the time, recalled how her mother always ensured she was accompanied to these dances by an older married chaperone, and returned to Glendower Street immediately after. Betty was awarded a trophy for her dancing ability with an African American US naval partner who, as she fondly remembers, taught her the jitterbug. 38 Numerous Aboriginal families, including Auntie Jessie Smith’s, as noted above, set up card houses to entertain the troops and themselves (‘it was our television’ as the daughter of one of the attendees recalled). 39 Through these marathon all-night events, Aboriginal women drew African American servicemen and others into their social, intellectual, emotional and material economies.

Auntie Eileen Shang

Auntie Eileen Shang, one of the young women who attended Auntie Jessie Smith’s card nights, and hosted a great many of these herself at North Fremantle, wrote to the Commissioner of Native Affairs, midway through the war, asking permission to marry a young African American submariner from Memphis, Tennessee, the father of their soon-to-be-born son who bears his name. 40 But the commissioner had other marriage plans for Auntie Eileen Shang. Of Aboriginal and Chinese heritage from the state’s north-west, Auntie Eileen had been one of the ‘fair-skinned’ Aboriginal children abducted to the Moore River Native Settlement, Mogumber, as a baby. Eileen had been explicitly identified by Western Australia’s former Protector of Aborigines, A.O. Neville, to promote an imagined biological absorption of Aboriginal people into a presumptively white settler colonial nation. Indeed, Auntie Eileen is pictured in Neville’s infamous 1940s treatise, Australia’s Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community, in which he articulates his belief that desirable assimilation of Aboriginal people of mixed descent could only occur through eugenics: ‘breeding out the colour’. 41 Neville attempted to orchestrate biological assimilation largely via separation of Aboriginal children from their people, training in institutions and control of Aboriginal marriage. Not surprisingly, Auntie Eileen’s request to marry

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40 James Ramsey, pers. comm., April 2016.
a foreigner of colour was bluntly refused by Neville’s successor Francis Bray. With no sense of what was an absurd and crushing irony, he responded that she would likely find herself the victim of racism if she were to live in Tennessee.42

In Perth, women found to be ‘fraternising’ with coloured servicemen were frequently arrested by an omnipresent vice squad and often subsequently convicted under the ambiguous charge of being ‘idle and disorderly’. Prison sentences were meted out of between one to four months, presumably in the hope that when the women were released their men would have been sent on war patrol or dispatched to the submarine base in Brisbane, as was commonly the case.43 Reports in the Western Australian popular press and Native Affairs Departmental files corroborate the disproportionate effort put into spying on Aboriginal women during this time, with a constant flow of correspondence between the Commissioner of Native Affairs, the Vice Squad, the American shore patrol and local police. It appears that only single women served prison terms, as it was inferred that married women would be ‘dealt with’ by their husbands. Thus, in the case of single women, the state stepped in to assume the paternalistic role of ‘the husband’.44 Fremantle Prison must have been bursting at its seams with elevated numbers of feisty independent-spirited young women inside its thick convict-hewn walls.

The policies that led to the Stolen Generations and the massive eugenics experiment that was especially pronounced in Western Australia had marked most of these young women’s lives.45 Many had been removed from their families as infants and grown up in grim institutions such as Moore River Native Settlement, later to be dispensed as cheap domestic labour for white families or confined as young adults within East Perth Girls Home. They maintained friendships with one another and devised necessary communication networks, under the watchful care of older women in the city such as Auntie Jessie Smith and her compatriots, who knew the ropes. ‘It was imperative in wartime to live life to its fullest,’ as Kate Darian-Smith argues, ‘and to find pleasure where one could … War injected the experiences of youth with a new urgency.’ 46 Frequently submariners and other military personnel had no knowledge until the last minute of when they were being sent on patrol, or when, indeed if, they were coming back. Auntie Betty Kinnane later became engaged to a white US submariner from Texas, Chuck Frieze, who attended her mother’s card games,

42 James Ramsay, pers. comm., April 2016; Francis Bray, Commissioner of Native Affairs to Eileen Shang, 1944, WA Native Affairs Department files, in the possession of James Ramsay.
44 See Pateman 2006 for an understanding of how patriarchal logic differently shaped the legal status of men and women in such cases.
45 Haebich 2000; Briskman 2003.
46 Darian-Smith 1995: 125; see also Darian-Smith 2009.
but Frieze sadly died in combat before they could wed. 47 Although censorship regulations kept reports of the air raids to the near north out of the media, the danger of further attack was known and ever present.

Auntie Audrey Pearson

Auntie Audrey Pearson, another young Aboriginal women, participated in the card games at her best friend Eileen Shang’s home, drawn there by the cross-cultural camaraderie and pleasurable companionship more than the gambling. In the small wooden cottage near the wharfs, military personnel freely shared food and drink from the ships and brought wartime luxuries such as chocolate and silk stockings, along with their good manners and attention. Audrey had been born in the Salvation Army home for unmarried mothers in Fremantle in 1919. She was the daughter of 19-year-old Florence Pearson, a white woman from Menzies on the WA goldfields, and an Aboriginal man, possibly a Nyungar man from the wheatbelt, not listed on her birth certificate. 48 On her engagement to a white man, Florence relinquished Audrey, aged just two, to Perth’s St Joseph’s Catholic Orphanage for Girls as a ward of the state. Being black, and classed an orphan, was one of the most difficult positions to occupy in Australia. Unlike for the Moore River children, there was no familial bonding for Audrey among peers: stigmatised as the only Aboriginal girl among white children, from her teenage years she worked long hours in an industrial-style laundry amid steaming hot copper boilers. Upon leaving the orphanage at 21, she came under the control of the Aborigines Act 1905 (WA). With the influx of foreign serviceman into Fremantle two years later, Audrey joined the throng of other young Aboriginal women in the city to embrace life in the moment, throwing off the isolation of her childhood and early adult years. More than once, she was sentenced to short prison terms for fraternising with American servicemen.

She told part of her story later to some of her grandchildren. 49 Robert Jackson, an African American sailor stationed in Perth, had already returned to New York City when she wrote to him of her pregnancy. He replied, only to reveal that he was married and unable to support their child. Despite this disappointment, the war had given Audrey a new mobility and a different sense of identity and belonging. Having already deeply suffered the loss and subsequent death of one child forcibly taken away by the state, and of another whom she placed with a white family so he wouldn’t be ‘removed’, Audrey went to great lengths to protect her new baby, John. After John was born in Geraldton, as the last US bases closed, she made her way up the Western Australian coast, eventually crossing the border into the Northern

49 Danusha Cubillo, pers. comm., February 2015.
Territory, together with Eileen Shang and Eileen’s young son Jimmy, to escape the oppressive regulations governing Aboriginal lives in Western Australia that regained force with the war’s end.

Before reaching Darwin, they stopped in Broome for several years, benefiting from Eileen’s north-west connections there. With its rich polyethic society, built on Aboriginal–Asian relations, Broome was akin to a node in the Underground Railroad in the American south for people seeking refuge from Western Australia’s south-west. Eileen and Audrey roomed in Old Town next to the Catholic Church with the Bin Saleh family who happily cared for Jimmy and John when they worked. Eileen found employment as a cook at the Broome Hospital, and Audrey at the Roebuck Hotel. Both women were forthright, smart, strong and impeccably dressed. They radiated glamour. Audrey’s Broome friends recalled how she could ‘talk American’, something she doubtless learnt from the troops. Pearl Hamaguchi, who lived across the road from the Bin Salehs, delighted in spending time with John and Jimmy, observing that she had never seen women quite like their mothers before, shaped with sophistication and knowledge by their experiences of wartime Perth: “They were hard as nails, assertive, open, honest and alive.”

Figure 1: Audrey Pearson and Eileen Shang, Roebuck Hotel, Broome, c. 1950.
Source: Eileen Clarke collection, courtesy of James Ramsay.

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50 Yu 1999; Ganter 2006; Reynolds 2003.
52 Elsta Foy, pers. comm., December 2016.
Audrey, soon followed by Eileen, made her way to Darwin in the Northern Territory, where, as Eileen would say, it was ‘like paradise’ after Western Australia. White settlement in the Northern Territory lagged behind the Australian states and, as Regina Ganter argues, was much sparser and took longer to take hold, causing less displacement. Moreover, many in Darwin’s rich and flourishing Asian-Aboriginal population were highly politicised, and the Chinese in particular exerted economic influence. The day-to-day indignities people of colour experienced in Perth, such as being refused entry on public transport, were uncommon here. Audrey began to revise her identity within Darwin’s public spaces, calling herself ‘a Negress’ as she saw this as a pass to increased freedom and rights, just as Eileen would emphasise her Chinese identity when the situation demanded. For Audrey and Eileen, the ability to shift between racialised identities that acknowledged the multilayered aspects of their lives and experiences opened up a space for the expression of personal agency and for resisting the essentialising and exclusionary racial discourse on Aborigines. They remained, however, ever aware of the threat Aboriginal protection legislation posed to themselves and their families, which deeply impacted their life choices.

Audrey had never known what a family looked or felt like. She had not been mothered beyond the age of two, or taught to mother within the confines of the orphanage. She was abused by nuns, for which she received compensation later in life. She had lost one child. Now she found her own way of extending kin, deftly keeping family within her orbit, through the network of connections she forged with families during her time in Broome, especially with the large and influential Clarke family. Audrey arranged for Theresa Cubillo (née Clarke), an Aboriginal woman from Broome, and her Larrakia-Filipino husband Dolphin Cubillo to formally adopt John, who was now aged four, in July 1952. The Cubillos were one of the relatively prosperous foundational families of Darwin, living in the racially mixed Asian-Aboriginal area known as the Police Paddock. Audrey, as a single mother, would otherwise have been vulnerable to having John removed by the state to an institution. This way, Audrey herself was able to live only a short block away, and maintain a connection with John as best she could. Three-and-a-half years later, in early 1956, Eileen Shang settled in Darwin permanently with Jimmy and her second child Joanne, and married Joe Clarke, living in the same neighbourhood and raising a family of six.

54 S. Kinnane, interview with Eileen Clarke, Card Fever Research Project, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).
56 Kinnane and Marsh 1993.
57 See Paradies 2006, for understanding of the fluid, diverse and multiple characteristics of Indigenous identities, and Sen 2006 for a nuanced exposition of multilayered identities.
60 James Ranmsay, pers. comm., May 2016.
Placing children among extended kin-like circuits, whether informally or through legal adoption, as Audrey did, was an adept, resistant practice deployed by many Aboriginal women living in the Northern Territory with absent male partners to ensure their children were not forcibly adopted into white families or did not become wards of the state. Audrey and Eileen, each differently and together, valiantly made the best lives they could for their children at a time when there were few choices. Thus, John and Jimmy grew up in adjoining streets in Darwin’s Police Paddock, now Stuart Park, and remained in contact throughout their adult lives, both working in government jobs in Darwin.

61 Audrey went on to have nine more children after John; 12 children altogether. She placed them among other neighbouring friends so she could maintain maternal contact: Glen (dec.), Bob, John (dec.), Joseph, Irene, Rebekah, Peter, Serena, Bradley and Russell (twins), Alex and Rohan.
and Canberra, respectively. They considered themselves as ‘twins’ because of their unique circumstances and intertwined lives that began in Western Australia during the war.\textsuperscript{62} Indeed, many of the numerous Aboriginal women who bore children with American servicemen went on to raise children, like John and Jimmy, who grew to be highly accomplished people, proud of their Aboriginal and African, Native or Euro-American heritages, who advocated for change, rights and education in productive careers.

In Darwin, Audrey, who remained single, made her living in whatever way she could at a time when employment options were limited for Aboriginal women. She cleaned houses for Darwin’s prominent families and kept their secrets. In the 1970s, she put her knowledgeable life skills to good use, working as housekeeper for Judge Dick Ward who had been appointed to hear the Larrakia claims for land in Darwin.\textsuperscript{63} This arguably expanded her politicisation. Soon after, Audrey moved to Redfern, Sydney, where she became a respected elder in the Aboriginal community at a time of great political transition, living to an advanced age. In her 80s, she took up pottery and art: some of her work can still be seen in the Redfern housing estate where she lived in her later years, agitating for safer housing conditions for Redfern’s elderly residents, which she brought to the attention of the national media.\textsuperscript{64} She also pressed claims against St Joseph’s Homes for the physical and sexual abuse she experienced as a child, and won. Her daughter, Irene Yanner, who of all Audrey’s children spent the most time with her mother, describes her as ‘ahead of her time in every way’.\textsuperscript{65}

Marriage and the state

The seemingly triumphant ‘white-on-white’ story of wartime romance and marriage shadows, as we have seen, a disturbing history of many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and African American servicemen like Auntie Eileen Shang and her partner. In all but extremely few cases, these couples were not only denied the right to marry a partner of their choice, but also were cruelly excluded from immigrating to each other’s countries, even if the hurdle of marriage could be overcome. For an American serviceman to be able marry an allied foreigner, permission needed to be first obtained from his commanding officer, and a six-month cooling-off period applied. Commanding officers took into account the anti-miscegenation laws that operated in 29 of the then 48 American states that forbade marriages between white and non-white peoples, including African Americans, which would problematise interracial marriages if couples managed to emigrate.

\textsuperscript{62} Danusha Cubillo, pers. comm., February 2015; James Ramsay, pers. comm., April 2015.
\textsuperscript{63} Ward 1975.
\textsuperscript{64} 7.30 Report, 12 January 2006, Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
\textsuperscript{65} Irene Yanner, pers. comm., May 2017.
to the United States. Australia had its own racial governance around marriage that differed across each state according to local protection laws and ordinances that required Aboriginal people wishing to marry to obtain the permission of the Protector of Aborigines or the like. Within Australia, various degrees of blood quantum applied to different locales, which, in many instances, restricted Aboriginal women from marrying white men on the one hand, or African American men on the other. Moreover, overarching all of these hurdles to marriage, and impacting the Aboriginal women directly, was the US federal immigration law that forbade entry to non-white people with the exception of Chinese or African descent. Similarly, Australia’s federal *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* excluded (among many others) African Americans.

One example of how these complex legal restrictions shaped the wartime experience of marriage was alluded to by war correspondent Vincent Tubbs at the beginning of this essay. This was the case of a young Indigenous woman from Innisfail, Queensland, Auntie Stella James, who worked as a clerk at the Red Cross American Servicemen’s Club in Townsville, and Donald Carter Snr, an African American Sergeant from Pennsylvania. US military records indicate that it was made painfully apparent from the start, even though permission had been given to marry by Carter’s commanding officer, that neither partner could live in the same country as the other because of the intersecting racial immigration restrictions in each, despite recommendations by the American Red Cross. Consequently, this meant they were also refused the right to parent their only child, Don Carter Jnr, together. Such exclusionary experiences bring further nuance to the history of the Stolen Generations in Australia and beyond.

Some 15,000 Australian women, fiancées and wives of American servicemen, qualified for an official war bride scheme under the *War Brides Act 1945*, enabling them to emigrate to the United States. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women married or engaged to US servicemen could only gain access to this if they were able to prove to American consular authorities (or in certain cases to their Red Cross emissaries) that they had more than 50 per cent white, Chinese or African ancestry, or were exempted from ‘being Aboriginal’ under state regulations. Oral history testimonies and archival traces, including reports in the African American press and elsewhere, suggest less than 20 Aboriginal women from various parts of Australia were able to migrate to the United States, remaining there

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66 Ellinghaus 2006.
67 For a more detailed explanation of the many intersecting rules and policies concerning international interracial military marriage, see Bennett and Wanhalla 2016: 18–21. However, the situation for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women carried the additional barrier of state-based protectorate policies intersecting with the White Australia Policy (the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*).
68 See Grieves 2014a for a discussion of the marriage of Donald and Stella Carter.
Mobilising across colour lines and raising families. A further four Aboriginal women from New South Wales are known to have wed members of Dutch colonial forces and migrated initially to the Netherlands East Indies. While it is not possible to know the exact number of Aboriginal women prohibited from marrying, such as Eileen Shang (or, like Stella Carter, once married were unable to live in the same country as their husbands), this is estimated to be in the hundreds.

One Aboriginal woman from Perth, Auntie Patricia McManus, married a member of the British navy, permanently making her life in Leeds, England. When the HMS Victorius docked into Fremantle Harbour in May 1946, carrying Australian war brides from the eastern states, and set to collect more women from Perth, Pat McManus, 19 years old, single and with one son already born during the war years, was determined to try her fortune overseas and board that ship. Newsreel footage from that day records her at the docks; three weeks later, she wed crewmember Ronald Beetham and left for England, albeit against her mother Alice Brockman’s wishes. Pat’s son Terry remained in Perth to be raised by his grandmother. Eventually raising

Figure 5: Patricia Beetham (née McManus) with her second-born son Peter, Leeds, UK, c. 1949.
Source: Beetham family collection, courtesy of Paul Beetham.

For example, Tubbs 1944; Moyna Richardson, pers. comm., June 2016; Edith Lovegrove, pers. comm., June 2017.
three children on her own in Yorkshire, juggling cleaning jobs after her marriage broke down, Pat chose to conceal her Aboriginal identity, instead claiming ‘black Irish’ descent, perhaps fearing the kind of intervention and marginalisation she had been subjected to from birth in Australia.\(^{72}\)

**Back home in America**

When African American military personnel returned to civilian life, they faced exclusion in housing, discrimination in employment and the continuance of Jim Crow segregation, on top of the emotional ravages war brings.\(^{73}\) Many who left women and babies behind in Australia had hoped to bring them across, but were not fully cognisant of the difficulties they faced. Visiting the United States in 1947, to promote Australia’s subsidy plan for US ex-servicemen to emigrate, Immigration Minister Arthur Caldwell further reduced the possibilities for these men, making it clear that African American servicemen would be ineligible, despite the protest by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples.\(^{74}\) Thus, yet another barrier to the possibility of family unions was imposed. Although the promise of equality on the home front was still 20 years away, studies of the Civil Rights movement routinely emphasise the significance of the participation in WWII by African Americans as crucial in catalysing change.\(^{75}\)

**The Coolbaroo League**

In Perth, the wartime engagement between civilians and US military had precipitated a permanent change of consciousness for Nyungar and other Aboriginal peoples living there, as happened elsewhere in Australia. Political dialogues fomented in the card games, dance halls and along the Swan River and seaside camps impacted on the younger generation in particular. This amplified as Aboriginal veterans returned home from military service with a better understanding of their citizenship rights and a vision of what equality might look like.\(^{76}\) In 1946, the same year Pat McManus voyaged to England with her British husband, Helena Clarke (the cousin of Joe Clarke, who would soon become Eileen Shang’s husband), Bill Bodney, Eliza Barron, the Yamitji returned soldiers Jack and Bill Poland, Ronnie Kickett and

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\(^{72}\) Paul Beetham, pers. comm., April 2017. ‘Black Irish’ is a popularly used term to account for people in Ireland with dark hair or complexions, thought to be descended from the Spanish Armada. Occasionally in Australia, Aboriginal people seeking to escape widespread discrimination borrowed the moniker ‘black Irish’ to conceal their identity, particularly in the early to mid-twentieth century when state-sanctioned child removal was especially rampant. See Grieves 2014b: 31–32 for an example of this.

\(^{73}\) Kempski 2012: 2; Onkst 1998; Lewis and Lewis 2009.

\(^{74}\) *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 20 August 1947: 5.

\(^{75}\) Van Ryn 2011: 3.

\(^{76}\) Kinnane 2003: 322.
others agitated for a designated space in the city for Nyungar fellowship, education, advancement and, more covertly, for change. Thus the Coolbaroo League established its base just outside the prohibited zone. In this way, the famed Coolbaroo Club dances began, explicitly taking their cue from the mixed-race wartime dances.77 The league asserted a sense of Nyungar ownership and served as a platform to lobby for an end to segregation and other pressing matters of injustice, including against widespread deaths in custody.78

This political invigoration can be seen as a direct result of the dialogues and interventions that came into being with the creation of an entirely new contact zone when the African American troops arrived on Australian soil. The influence of the African Americans was felt everywhere. Bill Bodney’s home had been a critical meeting place for African American troops and their partners. Eliza Barron had a son, David, with African American navy man Malcolm Butler, and Leonard Keen, who served in the home garrison, had befriended African Americans in northern ports who provided chocolates and silk stockings to send to his sisters in Perth.79 Eileen Shang, too, later spoke of the ways some of the African American men encouraged Aboriginal people to resist the restrictions imposed on them, by tearing up the identity cards Aboriginal people were forced to display and by reporting Perth cinema owners to the American Command for refusing them admission.80 That same year, 1946, the Pilbara pastoral workers’ strike in the north helped power a growing Aboriginal-led movement for social justice that cascaded throughout the second half of the twentieth century.81 Later in life, Oodgeroo Noonuccal would highlight her WWII service in the Australian Women’s Army in Queensland, and the intellectual connections she formed with African American personnel, as informing the crucial role she took in catalysing political support for the 1967 Referendum.82

Conclusions: Widening of possibilities

As we have seen, policing intimacy was at the heart of reproducing white citizenship across Australian and American hemispheres. The mobility enabled by war provoked longitudinal change. Aboriginal women crossed physical and intellectual boundaries imposed by white settler colonialism, leaving permanent legacies well beyond the families they created. They also shaped the meaning of nation and citizenship through the politics of their lives. Through their agency and lived experiences, these women firmly challenged social attitudes to race, nation and settler colonial identity.

77 Kinnane and Marsh 1996.
79 David Simmons, pers. comm., December 2016; Glen Stasiuk, pers. comm., December 2016.
80 Kinnane and Marsh 1993.
82 Australian War Memorial n.d. See also Riseman 2015 for an understanding of the way Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s service experiences shaped her postwar cultural and political activism.
They asserted advocacy and fostered new avenues for their children. In bearing children with African American and Native American men, Indigenous women also staunchly defied interwar policies of biological absorption aimed at ‘breeding out blackness’, which were particularly active in Western Australia through A.O. Neville’s massive exercise of social engineering directed at assimilation of the ‘half-castes’ into the white population. For many, raising their children successfully with a sensibility of their history and heritage was an overriding act of resistance in itself, forever widening the scope of the Australian family and extending Aboriginal sovereignty transnationally. Thus, 1940s Australia has been recognised by historians as critical to the development of the Indigenous and other rights movements that gained momentum in the 1960s, arising partially from the intense mobility of the war when colonised peoples actively came together like no other time before.

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Deaconess Winifred Hilliard and the cultural brokerage of the Ernabella craft room

Diana J.B. Young

Deaconess Winifred Hilliard arrived at the Presbyterian Ernabella mission craft room in far north-west South Australia in 1954 to work as a qualified missionary. She was 33.¹ Her job: to work among Pitjantjatjara women as the ‘handcraft supervisor’ at the mission.

The art history of Ernabella (Pukatja) is arguably the last neglected narrative of first-generation, postcontact Indigenous art-making among Australian Western Desert peoples. The history of Papunya Tula artists, a painting movement begun in 1971 by men in association with a white male cultural-broker, has become ubiquitous shorthand for Western Desert art.² The beginnings and practices of the Hermannsburg watercolour artists, begun by men, has enjoyed a revival of interest.³ The influence of Ernabella art made by women remains obscure, a mere footnote to this art history.⁴ The role of its long-serving female art-broker and the influential intercultural brokerage role carried out by Hilliard is surely germane to this.

¹ According to her own CV dated 1982, Hilliard took a handcraft course after schooling at the Presbyterian Ladies College in Melbourne. During the war, she joined the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and worked as an aircraft instrument repairer and then as a handcraft adviser to those awaiting demobilisation. She trained as a Presbyterian deaconess and, after further handcraft teaching work including in a slum parish of Melbourne, she was invited in 1954 to become the handcraft adviser at Ernabella. Winifred Hilliard, CV, Ernabella Arts Archive.
² For example, Bardon and Bardon 2006; Johnson 2008, Myers 2000; Perkins and Fink 2000.
³ For example, French 2003.
⁴ See McLean 2016 for a recent example. I do not intend here to engage explicitly with the agency of the artists, which was considerable and which has been discussed elsewhere. See for example Eickelkamp 1999; Young 2001, 2011.
In 1968, Hilliard published a book called *The People in Between*, which detailed the Pitjantjatjara peoples’ experience of life before and after the establishment of the Ernabella mission. Pels and Salemink query the distinction made between academic anthropologists and other ethnographic practitioners under colonial rule. They note the importance of the practical relationships between observed and observers and their transformations by the representations of ethnography. In her role as craft adviser, Hilliard was working in the same space as Anangu and was, as she explains in her book, incorporated into their kinship system. Hilliard was not a professional anthropologist but – at least initially – a professional missionary. In publishing a book about the missionised subjects of her daily work, she was following in a long tradition of missionaries who are also ethnographers and writers. She later published many essays and gave public lectures about the Ernabella craft room, all of which are imbued with her ethnographic voice and her experience over decades of immersion in local Indigenous life of understanding and speaking Pitjantjatjara fluently.

Hilliard’s book has been cited as trustworthy ethnography by many scholars, including anthropologists. As I will argue, Hilliard’s authority as an ethnographic writer amplified her leverage as a broker.

Hilliard’s working life corresponded with significant changes in Australian Government attitudes as assimilation policy was revised into one of self-determination for Indigenous peoples. During the first half of her time at Ernabella, she was caught between the Presbyterian mission’s financial angst, which was freighted with a morally authoritative work ethic, and the need to satisfy the expanding desires and interests of the craft women – women for whom settlement life and the culture of white people were both novelties. In 1974, after the handover of the community governance from the mission to Anangu, the Ernabella craft room became incorporated as Ernabella Arts and gradually ‘the craft girls’ became ‘the artists’, although many older women continued to refer to the ‘craft room’ into the late 1990s. Hilliard’s later years were post-mission, during the struggle by Anangu for control and governance of their country, culminating in the *Pitjantjatjara Land Rights Act 1981* (SA). These years were relieved by the introduction of government subsidies for Aboriginal art and craft production and marketing. By the 1980s, the Ernabella art centre business, in addition to the cultural and social roles it played, was at last flourishing. After Hilliard’s retirement, she continued to write articles and essays, and was invited to give talks about Ernabella art. This material remains the

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5  Pels and Salemink 1999: 1, 4.
7  Toyne and Vachon 1984.
8  Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara people came in later years to call themselves Anangu, meaning ‘black people’, something that Hilliard deplored because, she told me, she understood this word as meaning all people in ‘classical’ precontact Pitjantjatjara. Hilliard, pers. comm., 1997.
primary source of information about the art movement’s history. I knew Winifred Hilliard during this period of her life: from 1997, when I started anthropological fieldwork near Ernabella, until her death in 2012.9

Hilliard’s determination, her spiritual, emotional and practical devotion to the people and institution of the craft room long after the mission had gone were seemingly a major endearment to Anangu. Most non-Aboriginal staff come and go so regularly. By the time of her last visit to Ernabella for the 60th anniversary of the art centre in 2008, those former craft girls sat at her feet, wanting their photo taken with her. Their shared life experiences mean that Hilliard represented their pasts too, a link to dead mothers, sisters, aunties.

At the time of my initial fieldwork near Ernabella, ‘Miss Hilliard time’ was frequently referenced by the women I worked with who had been craft girls in their youth or had continued to work in the art centre. Other researchers had been working with them on their art and its history.10 At the time of Winifred Hilliard’s Ernabella funeral some 15 years later, Hilliard’s time was deemed iriti (a long time ago) – a term I understand as meaning on the cusp of social irrelevance to the present.

Hilliard’s influence, as a white woman and intercultural broker living and working for more than three decades in an Aboriginal settlement in the Western Desert, has also been critically under-explored to date.11 Writing of M.M. Bennett, Holland asks how was it that she could speak for Aboriginal women’s liberation. ‘What made Bennett’s critique unique for its time was the fact that she identified and linked the gendered and racialised outcomes of colonial rule.’12 Hilliard, an admirer of Bennett, at least for her craft teaching at Ernabella, never got as far as framing this linkage explicitly in her writing, tending instead to portray a general humanitarian concern for Aboriginal peoples’ achievements and the lack of appreciation that these received in colonial Australia.

An industry

A mission station must have an industry, to provide work and help to finance the cost of caring for the natives.13

The 36-year history of Ernabella mission is a distinct one. During the 1973 preparations for handover of governance to Anangu themselves, the mission stated its five interlinked goals as spiritual, economic, educational, social and political.14

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9 I became the consultant curator for an exhibition in 1998, held at Tandanya in Adelaide, of the 60th anniversary of Ernabella Arts and I visited her at her home to research this.
10 Eickelkamp 1999.
11 But see Schulz 2011 on Christian goodness as disempowering Anangu at Ernabella.
12 Holland 2005: 150.
13 Love 1937.
14 The aims, goals and methods of an Aboriginal mission, a preliminary paper 1972, Ara Irititja Archive d90661, three pages.
The mission’s economic rationale rode in the first instance on the sheep’s back. Ernabella was already established as a sheep station when purchased by the church in 1936.

Ernabella shared over the years many of the same experienced staff, both on the ground and at management level, from the Board of Ecumenical Missions, with other Australian Presbyterian missions: at Aurukun in the north-east on Cape York Peninsula, at Mornington Island in the Gulf country, at Mapoon founded in 1892 and at Kumunya founded in 1910 in Western Australia’s Kimberley. Ernabella is, comparatively, in the vastness of central Australia, geographically close both to Hermannsburg, the first mission in central Australia, which was set up by the Lutherans in 1887, and to the United Aborigines Mission at Warburton established in 1934. Dr Charles Duguid – Adelaide surgeon, Ernabella mission advocate and policymaker – framed the Ernabella mission project within a more liberal approach to the Christian conversion of Aboriginal people and to their education than any of these missions. By offering Aboriginal people the option to become Christian, the mission saw itself as providing them with salvation in inevitable future contact with the colonial culture.

There were no dormitories at Ernabella and schoolchildren were taught in the Pitjantjatjara language. The mission opened a school in 1940. ‘Another policy’, wrote Hilliard’s contemporary schoolteacher Nancy Sheppard with some irony in her later memoir of that time, ‘– and one we especially believed justified our exalted opinion of ourselves – was the use of the Pitjantjatjara language for all day to day communications, evangelism and education.’ The mission had rules about behaviour and time. Ledgers in exercise books, of names against which hours worked and ration entitlements were inscribed, including the ‘craft room roll’ and the ‘spinner’s roll’, were kept by the craft supervisor.

Hilliard and the craft workers operated within the Board of Missions’ paradigm of skilful industriousness. ‘Training of men and women in technical skills with opportunities to use them profitably, thus leading to individual enterprise and more settled life’ was a tenet of the Ernabella staff council constitution in 1948, providing the foundation to promote the gradual introduction of commerce and consumption amongst Anangu.

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15 Kerin 2011.
16 Trudinger 2004.
18 ‘Ernabella staff council constitution’ in Ernabella mission general secretary’s visit 1948, Board of Ecumenical Missions and Relations (BOEMAR) records.
The people in between

It is through her book *The People in Between: The Pitjantjatjara People of Ernabella* that wider audiences know Hilliard and the Ernabella mission. Written in an engaging, accessible style, the book has endured rather better than Duguid's more polemical books.\(^1\) Unlike Dr Duguid, who never lived long-term at Ernabella, Hilliard, living in The Oleanders, the single women's house at the mission, had no ‘unfailing critic and help meet in a wife’.\(^2\) She wrote to Duguid in 1961 telling him of her plans (‘I want to show as much as possible of the life of the people before white contact and the effects of contact of the various types’), listing some source materials that she wished to consult for research purposes for her book; these included books by the Mission Board’s Reverend J.R.B. Love and anthropologists – the Berndts, Basedow, Spencer and Gillen. ‘Local people are keen on the idea’, she wrote of her book plans.\(^3\)

Her writing did not attempt new ethnographic theory but extolled to the reader the undisputed humanity of the Pitjantjatjara by detailing multiple aspects of their lives. In one chapter, she discusses the spiritual life of Anangu, but efforts towards pleasing God she implicitly conveyed as being more valuable in keeping with the Mission Board’s policy – which was, after all, her employer.\(^4\) She was reminded by the BOEMAR\(^5\) secretary that profit from sales of her book was mission income. The funds would not go to ‘special projects’ but to the greater good of the mission project.

The book boasted an ambivalent introduction by Ted Strehlow, the son of the Hermannsburg Lutheran missionaries. Strehlow was intent on recording the secret ceremonies of men and collecting their ritual paraphernalia. In choosing Strehlow, Hilliard perhaps wished to transcend the women’s angle in her book.\(^6\) He compares Hilliard’s book favourably with Daisy Bates’s book *The Passing of the Aborigines*, the latter, he notes, being ‘riddled with inaccuracies’.\(^7\) For Strehlow, Bates and Hilliard are connected as being women who each lived with Pitjantjatara people for many years. Aram Yengoyan, who had carried out research near Ernabella, reviewed the book for *American Anthropologist*. His review was generally favourable and praised her impartial account of the mission, although he criticised her incomplete account

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\(^1\) Duguid 1978 [1964], 1972.
\(^2\) Duguid 1978 [1964]: frontis.
\(^3\) Winifred Hilliard to Dr Charles Duguid 1 May 1961, handwritten letter, BOEMAR records.
\(^4\) Hilliard 1968: Chapter 10.
\(^5\) Board of Ecumenical Missions and Relations.
\(^6\) Marcus 2001: 173.
\(^7\) Strehlow 1968: 11.
of male initiation, knowledge she would have been excluded from.\textsuperscript{26} Nevertheless, with these male endorsements, Hilliard’s research and ethnographic reportage was validated.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{ernabella-mission-handcraft-leaflet-c1963.pdf}
\caption{Page from an Ernabella mission handcraft leaflet c. 1963. Text and illustrations attributed to Winifred Hilliard. Source: Ara Irititja Archive.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{26} Yengoyan 1969.
Hilliard devoted only one later chapter—out of a total of 17—to ‘women’s work’: the craft room history and activities, with mentions of health work in the mission clinic, housework in the missionary’s quarters and cooking for the mission canteen. It is this chapter that lays the foundation for her own future accounts of the craft room—and virtually all others that follow. She had already sketched this narrative in various brochures she prepared to accompany the craft room price lists. Her tiny drawings of Anangu carrying out work embellish early examples.

Anangu informants whom she acknowledges at the front of her book are Gordon Inkatji, Watulya Baker and Nganintja, three individuals whom the mission regarded as great successes and role models for other Anangu. Hilliard uses their accounts and that of other Anangu to evoke Pitjantjatjara life before the mission. She did not, by and large, use their precontact lives to legitimise the mission project.

‘The Mission that grew with its people’, Chapter 11 in her book, describes how in manifold small and large ways the Ernabella mission was superior to others of its kind, and to government settlements and cattle stations, which also functioned as government ration stations. Although she was a little critical of the mission, the book is holier than thou in tone. Noting that the ‘native Australians’ had been ‘invaded’ in 1788,27 Hilliard spent the first six chapters detailing the European explorers who travelled through ‘Pitjantjatjara country’ to show who, in the way of Europeans, the Pitjantjatjara had encountered, thereby positioning Anangu as part of white Australian history.28

The mission is inevitable in both Duguid’s and Hilliard’s writing. She employs the oft-quoted phrase that prefaced mentions of the Ernabella mission as a ‘buffer zone’ (which perhaps came from Duguid) between encroaching settlers and the great North Western Aboriginal Reserve where Aborigines still continued their hunter-gatherer lives. The people who came into the mission travelled mainly from this reserve area.

She mentions the ‘artistry’ of the Pitjantjatjara as evident in their bough shelters, in their elegant hand signals and timber tools, and in their sense of colour. Her aim was to emphasise that the Pitjantjatjara were not just human but good and morally upright, worthy of support. They do not, she writes, lend their wives, nor eat each other. One has the sense that she was didactic to forestall criticism and ignorant questions about people for whom she had immense affection and respect. This tendency increased in her writing as the years passed.

She also needed to market the things that the craft room workers produced and, as I will discuss below, much of her writing is about educating that market not merely for monetary gain but garnering appreciation for, and advancement of, firstly the mission and latterly the Aboriginal craft women.

27 Hilliard 1968: 27.
The Ernabella craft room narrative

The story of the craft room that Hilliard relates in her book is a tightly nested narrative that recurs again and again. It is repeated in Hilliard’s own writings and in press coverage of Ernabella artists’ work throughout her time as craft adviser so that one imagines this is what she relayed to reporters. It outlived her tenure and appears long afterwards in the accounts of subsequent art advisers, and in catalogue essays. Indeed, it requires effort to write anything about Ernabella that does not borrow from it. The veracity of Hilliard’s narrative is buttressed by the accepted ethnography of her book. Its authority is augmented by the fact that the Ernabella mission refused most requests from professional anthropologists to conduct research at Ernabella. The narrative unfolds by withholding as much as it gives way.

During the early 1940s, the mission’s nurse and female schoolteacher taught the women attending bible class to knit jumpers and make raffia hats for themselves. Realising that spinning was a native skill, the mission arranged for Mrs M.M. Bennett of Kalgoorlie to visit Ernabella in 1948 for six weeks and teach four older women to adjust the tension of the fibre in order to successfully spin white wool, that novelty animal hair. Mrs Bennett also taught four younger women to weave wool on a four-shaft loom. Hilliard mentions the names of all these women – Nguringka, Nyirpiwa, Kukika and Dolly – indicative of how The People in Between is so reliant on insider knowledge. It is from this date, 1948, that the craft room is born in future accounts, though Hilliard later corrects its actual start to January 1949.29 The mission’s own 1944 records say ‘the girls are not secluded as the young men are, and they are open to our guidance and suggestion. We could at once … begin some handcraft work with them’.30

A new schoolteacher, Miss Baird (later another Mrs M. Bennett), arrived, who had knowledge of weaving and taught more young women this skill. Along with weaving, the ‘craft girls’ made floor rugs using knotted dyed wool that had been spun by their mothers and aunties from bales of Ernabella-grown wool. The designs for these rugs were chosen first by mission staff from the schoolchildren’s pastel drawings31 and later were purpose-designed by the girls. There was painting with watercolours of the distinctive Ernabella imagery, the walka (Pitjantjatjara) that Hilliard glossed as ‘design’. The cane and raffia basketry was not successful. There was moccasin making with introduced kangaroo skins stitched and painted by the craft women, and Gobelin tapestry weaving that was unpopular with the majority of craft girls. It was the men who were responsible for shearing the sheep and sorting and baling the wool before it was sent on the mission truck to the rail head 200 miles away at Finke.

30 Rev. H.C. Matthews secretary of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to Mr R.M. Trudinger, 4 August 1944, typescript, BOEMAR records.
31 Young 2011.
In an earlier chapter of *The People in Between* describing the Ernabella school, Hilliard introduced the origins of the *walka*. The teacher, a novice Pitjantjatjara speaker, instructed the children to draw with their pastels and paper ‘*kura kura*’, which meant ‘rather badly’ instead of ‘anything’ as he had meant to say, and the enigmatic *walka*, emblematic of Ernabella, was born. It is the *walka*/designs that are the distinctive component of much Ernabella art and craft work. It is these that Hilliard was to broker and promote. She traced the *walka* back to sand-drawing practices; although, at the end of her life, Hilliard doubted this as an explanation for them.32 Her earlier account is embedded in the commentary on Ernabella.33

The Ernabella *walka* was a child’s or girl’s art.34 Unlike the later Papunya Tula painting by men, it was not positioned as a statement of power, nor as culturally crucial knowledge. In the anthropological stereotype of Aboriginal women lacking ritual power, it is young women, in accounts of precontact life, who are construed as especially powerless. These young women, if thought of as art producers, were the antithesis of the Papunya Tula men, whose ground paintings and ceremonial designs are continually invoked as the basis of their mark making on canvas. In her writing, Hilliard never mentions women painting up their bodies for ceremony, although she certainly saw and participated in these events. She was dismissive of these women’s ceremonies in *The People in Between*.35 This was a crucial aspect of her understanding of the Ernabella craftwork, I suggest. As I have argued elsewhere, Hilliard underestimated the spiritual importance it had for its makers because they did not speak of it.36 She did, however, understand the cultivation of individual imagination that went into each girl developing her own *walka*.

At the end of 1971, the Indonesian technique of batik was taught to the Ernabella craft workers by another teacher – a young American man named Leo Brereton. Radically, he was not a member of the Church – a harbinger of a new era at Ernabella. The application letter to fund his visit, signed by all the leading craft women – Patjiparan, Nyukana, Tjikalyi, Yipati, Tjuwilya and Tjunkaya – explained that they aimed to produce dress lengths for the tourist trade, for export and for Australian consumption.37 In Hilliard’s later written accounts, public lectures and articles, 1971 became another critical date: a ‘part two’ of the narrative because it marked the start of batik making by the craft workers.

Subsequently, Hilliard helped the women save from their wages to enable three young women – Jillian Rupert, Nyukana Baker and Yipati Kuyata – to visit the batik research institute in Yogyakarta for three weeks in 1975, to learn directly from Indonesian batik masters. On their return, they taught their new knowledge to other

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33 For example, Ryan 1998.
34 Eickelkamp 1999.
35 Hilliard 1968: 123.
37 Letter to the Director, Dept of Education and Science from Ernabella craft workers, 22 October 1971, Ara Irititja Archive d90614.
craft room workers. Another batik teacher, Vivianne Bertelson, visited Ernabella later in 1975 and taught wax recipes and more dyeing and waxing techniques. With this added gift of skill, a new energy and freedom enabled the batik to ‘take off’ among the craft women. By now, some of the daughters of the original craft girls were employed in the craft room too, having worked there after school. There were more trips by Hilliard accompanying various batik artists – especially Nyukana Baker and Yipati Kuyata – to Africa and Japan. ‘The arts are where cultures meet’ she would write later, embodying her own experiences as well as those that she brokered for the artists.

In Hilliard’s account, these eras were created by the craft girls’ access to new (non-Aboriginal) teachers who introduced novel materials and skills. However, she was also careful, both in her book and in her later writing, to report how the craft girls owned the techniques that they learnt and wanted to pass them on to children. My own fieldwork and that of others, with the same women decades later, corroborates that this is exactly what happened. This was also the mission’s aim for Anangu: upskilling, training, enhancing their self-confidence and their own techniques to be as good as, or even better than, white women. Watching and imitating was, and is, the way in which Anangu learnt. Becoming fluent in new media gave them freedom to experiment and influenced the way that they worked in other media. These ways of knowing through making offered the craft girls the possibilities for imaginative improvisations with the new materials and techniques.

**Skill and faith**

In a craft room report written in 1966 addressed to the Board of Missions, Hilliard wrote:

> in continuing with the weekly bible study for baptized women and in organising the weekly women’s meetings I have endeavoured to bring home the ethical character of the gospel. This is carried over into the work in the craft room or in any other sphere of employment where it is essential to stress that a task well done is an act of worship.

The connection of skilful work to spiritual fulfilment was a central one for the mission’s Christianity. There is a chapter in *The People in Between* entitled ‘Spiritual work’ and, despite Hilliard’s insistence – and notwithstanding Eric Michael’s

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39 For example, Hilliard 1968: 176.
41 Bennett 1998.
42 Knowing through making is discussed in Ingold 2013.
observation that nearly all art adviser’s accounts are rife with contradictions – that no instruction was given to the craft girls to constrain their ideas, it is carefulness, if nothing else, that I suggest she transmitted to them; carefulness as spiritually uplifting. The leading craft girls were declared Christians.

From the start of the craft room until the mid-1970s, the mainstay was woollen work. The craft workers learnt to hand spin, scour, dye and weave the sheep wool. Their weaving appears mimetic of European weaving to non-Aboriginal audiences. I learnt during my own research from some of the weavers how (at least in retrospect) miraculously novel and all-consuming it was for them as they learnt to count with coloured threads to create multicoloured, patterned textiles. There were shawls woven in ‘Greek lace’ patterns, in stripes and checks and in Scottish tartans, as appropriate for a Presbyterian mission.

Enabled by Hilliard and the Mission Board, various young craft women went to improve their weaving techniques at the Sturt workshops in Mittagong with courses that lasted up to 20 weeks. It was on her furloughs, leave away from the mission, that Hilliard sought out new media and teachers, so the Sturt workshops had a long relationship with the Ernabella craft room throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s.

The craft workers’ woven wool could not, and still cannot, hold market interest because it does not apparently embody anything Aboriginal; it is seemingly an imitation without alterity. There was the demonstration of skill, but unless the buyer was a spinning connoisseur who could see the expertise inherent in the yarn fibre and weight, this too was lost. Hence, the information sheets that Hilliard created explaining that spinning, at least, was traditional. She did not, however, explain the importance of string for spiritual and religious purposes. With or without her essays, the weaving must have appeared to buyers as a clear example of successful assimilation.

Hilliard arranged spinning demonstrations by young women who spun amongst displays of the Ernabella craft room products at agricultural shows in Adelaide and Alice Springs from the early 1960s. These latter events, arranged through the Northern Territory’s Aborigines’ Welfare branch, served as both marketing for the products – evincing that they were genuinely made by Aboriginal people –
and as marketing for the mission project. But they also imbued confidence in the
 demonstrators who learnt, Hilliard noted, that white people did not necessarily
 possess these skills.47

In ‘the movement towards knowledge … in these societies’, wrote anthropologist
 John von Sturmer, these are worlds ‘without coincidence, where nothing happens
 by accident … knowledge is not so much a question of programming or instruction,
 but of attending, being present at …’.48 Hilliard and the craft workers kept up
 this demonstration template, of ‘being present at’; it was something they were
 accustomed to doing. Seeing might lead to understanding – an Anangu trope.
 They continued to demonstrate with batik in later years. Batik, too, was a complex
 process about which dealers and buyers harboured erroneous ideas, Hilliard found.

The batik ‘enterprise’, as Hilliard called it, was generated by a new era of self-
determination for Aboriginal people. Mary White was the new craft adviser on
 Aboriginal projects to the Crafts Council of Australia in 1971. She wrote of the
 Ernabella walka, ‘I noticed that the designs they paint were slightly Indonesian
 looking and it occurred to me that they could be transposed to cloth ideally by
 introducing the girls to batik’.49 Batik was the perfect portable medium for the
 self-determination era when more and more new homelands were established near
 or on sacred sites around Ernabella, some with their own craft sheds, so that batik
 could be made at home, as some artists continued to do into the late 1990s and
 beyond. Hilliard did not want to be the resident expert on batik so she never learnt
 the technique herself.50

The problem of value

In The People in Between, Hilliard captioned the colour plate reproductions of walka
 paintings by various young women with the hours taken to complete each one. She
 told me in 1998 that she subsequently regretted doing this. She was responding
 to enquiries made of her by visitors to the craft room who would ask how long it
 took the girls to complete their work as well as the habitual exclamation ‘they’re
 clever!’51 As Hilliard’s immediate successor noted, it was production not marketing
 that was her problem. There was no way of charging sale prices that took account
 of the labour that went into the works.52 ‘Productivity’ was seen by the Mission

47 Other stall holders at the 1967 Alice Springs show were from Amoonguna, Papunya, Warrabri, Areyonga,
 Yuendumu, Jay Creek, Haasts Bluff, Hermannsburg and Santa Teresa; a mixture of missions and government ration
49 Mary White quoted in 1972 Craft Australia article (vol. 2 no. 1 p. 5).
50 Hilliard 1993: 47.
51 Hilliard 1968: 208.
52 Carolyn Joske, pers. comm., 2008.
Board as the solution to the price constraints, in tandem with better marketing, and this knotty problem was often the angst-ridden subject of letters from the Mission Board to the craft adviser. The board directive ‘Craft must pay’ was the bane of Hilliard’s life.53

The ‘expense’ of the craft room was something that the board returned to frequently over the years. A 1958 memo reported on the fact that ‘the Board of Missions had serious problems in maintaining Ernabella’:

> The craft room is a scene of activity. We could not but admire the artistic touch of those who were freely painting cards and those who were working pictures in wool. In trying to do something to give women an interest it is possible that this enterprise is carrying too much overhead expense. When it is considered remember that each woman in rations, wage, dress allowance and blankets costs at least 35/- (shillings) a week the business can hardly carry those who are not fully paying their way.54

The craft room women were making goods for non-Aboriginal people to wear or decorate their homes. This positioning of their efforts as garments and soft furnishings meant that the prices charged could never adequately reflect the immense time and labour that went into each item. There was an erroneous impression, Hilliard noted, that Aboriginal people could not be innovative and Aboriginal works were expected to be cheap – but if from a mission, even cheaper.55

The emphasis on skill in Hilliard’s promotional writing created problems with value. Even though the work was made by, as her early mission handcraft labels put it, ‘full blood aborigines’, the skills that they used were introduced. Rather than being captivated by the ‘sheer beauty’ of the works,56 audiences and potential buyers glimpsed this slippage in the Aboriginality of the work. Persuading them to change their mind was a preoccupation of much of her later writing in the batik era. ‘The art from Ernabella’, she wrote in 1993, ‘did not conform to the public’s perception of ‘Aboriginal Art’ or ‘Aboriginal colours’. Aboriginal art should accordingly consist of bark paintings and have a story.

From the late 1960s to early 1970s, the craft room made increasing trading losses as it eased into a new era of government, rather than mission, subsidy. In 1968, it made a loss of $1,428 that rose to more than $11,000 in 1971 despite a subsidy of $11,500 that year. The relationship of time to money in the craft room came to a head in 1973 when the minimum wage rose belatedly in the north-west reserve and necessitated a fall in craft workers to nine at a time when plans for a new craft

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53 Nancy Sheppard in conversation with Diana Young, 2011.
building were in train. Hilliard was quoted in *The Canberra Times* in 1972 as saying that the reluctance of Australians to pay good prices for Aboriginal art was exploitative. 'The tribe depend on the sale of their art for a living.'

Continuity of supply was always a challenge, as now the craft workers had many other social and cultural responsibilities that conflicted with ‘work’. The metropolitan retailers had no inkling of the ways of the bush nor that Winifred Hilliard was working an 80-hour week and hemmed the batik silk scarves herself at night.

Exchanges between Hilliard and retailers show that transforming the value of the Ernabella craftwork was almost impossible. It possessed none of the prerequisites for value transformation that Papunya Tula subsequently had in place. That is, it had no wide market recognition nationally or internationally and no real recognition as art in terms of price. It possessed no apparent spiritual connection, although Hilliard often referenced the colours in the *walka* as like the sheets of flowers in the artists’ Country. There were few collectors of Ernabella work. There were belated acquisitions by state galleries of batiks in the early 1990s after Hilliard had retired, but little else. Art from Ernabella was not included in the influential *Dreamings* exhibition of 1988.

Marketing

Hilliard began her public writing career with explanatory labels for the goods she must market on the mission’s behalf. So much explanation was required about the skills involved in making the products because the women did not provide any explanation of the designs. Instead, the craft workers *did*; they demonstrated skill and technique.

A 1960s label Hilliard wrote says the craft room:

> aims to providing a viable industry in which the Pitjantjatjara women may be employed and … develop their own indigenous skills, to use with newly acquired knowledge, in the production of high quality craft goods.

> All wool used in the production of floor rugs and woven articles is hand spun by the women. The technique is their own ancient one.

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58 *Canberra Times*, 10 July 1972: 3. It is unlikely that Hilliard herself would have used the word ‘tribe’.
59 Austin-Broos 2009.
60 W. Hilliard to Adrian Newstead, 6 January 1982, handwritten note, Ernabella Arts Inc.
61 Myers 2000.
The original designs for which the Mission is becoming increasingly well known, has been developed over the years with no interference except the provision of new materials.\(^6^3\)

In this emphasis on industry, the mission was ahead of its time. It was only in the 1980s that there was an Australia-wide move towards Aboriginal arts and crafts as an industry.\(^6^4\) Hilliard’s label lacked emphasis on the aesthetic properties of the work, her emphasis changing only later in the 1970s with the mission gone and encouragement coming from art and craft industry insiders to resituate the Ernabella work.

Hilliard offered a bespoke service to buyers. Although she hoped to deal only with wholesalers by 1973,\(^6^5\) members of church groups and mission societies could easily write to her asking for the goods they wanted, anticipating a discount on the grounds of their faith. Winifred Hilliard replied to one such enquiry:

> The prices we charge are only possible by underpaying workers with minimum incomes for ordinary workers at around $100 per week. I think that you must admit that you get fair return for your money.\(^6^6\)

Responding both to the enthusiasm of the craft women for any particular medium and to market demand, Hilliard was continually adding and dropping ‘lines’ from the craft room. For example, ‘tjuringkas’ and ‘kadaitche boots’ (ritual murderer’s shoes), specially made for the craft room, were a memory by the late 1960s. Writing often to the treasurer of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions to explain the current state of sales, by 1967 she noted the number of floor rug commissions that the Alice Show stall received (eight), whilst the small painted cards were ‘passed over’.\(^6^7\) In 1978, the Aboriginal Arts Board advised Hilliard that selling batik and painted burlap as ‘wall hangings’ tripled the price. In her correspondence of the early 1970s, Hilliard had already realised that ‘utility lines’ commanded a limited price, though she continued marketing the long batik cloths, the ‘raiki wara’ (‘long rags’) as the artists called them, as ‘lengths’ that could be made into garments. Like the rugs and paintings, they were all priced by their size – by the metre for the batik dress lengths; ‘the old crafts-pricing criterion of so much neatness per square inch’ as Michaels puts it.\(^6^8\) Only in the 1980s were the superb batiks marketed as ‘art’ or high-quality craft for hanging on walls, but it was not until the early 1990s, after Hilliard had retired, that state galleries in Australia began to collect them.

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\(^6^3\) Undated Ernabella label text (early 1960s), Ara Irititja Archive d90642-2.
\(^6^4\) Myers 2002.
\(^6^6\) Winifred Hilliard to Enid Bowden, 17 August 1976, typescript, Ernabella Arts Archive.
\(^6^7\) Winifred Hilliard to Mr Edenborough, General Treasurer Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions, 3 July 1967, BOEMAR records.
\(^6^8\) Michaels 1994: 146.
Attempts at breaking into an international interiors market for the functional items had never materialised, but with batik there came limited international marketing success through exhibitions in Osaka and East Africa and, just after Hilliard retired, in Houston.

Towards the end of her life, Hilliard became an established commentator on Indigenous batik since she had been part of its start. The National Gallery of Victoria in 1998 held a large show of this medium and other textiles to coincide with the 50th and 60th anniversary of Ernabella Arts and produced a lavish accompanying publication. Ignoring the creeping myth that the (male) Papunya Tula artists founded the Western Desert art movement and that, by then, had all but eclipsed Ernabella’s endeavours, in her 1998 essay Hilliard referred to batik as an ‘industry’. She did, however, espouse the Ernabella works as art and ‘the first Aboriginal art form to develop beyond its old limitations into the beautiful and creative fabrics’.

Conclusion

If in the early mission days when Hilliard first arrived craftwork was a visible, tangible materialisation of mission industry, the positioning of it in this way militated against its market acceptance. As a cultural broker and ethnographer, Hilliard’s extensive efforts at offering ways for the women to further their skill, and thus expand their knowledge, were met with price constraints and accusations of a lack of authenticity for their work.

For Hilliard, a task done well equated with spiritual transcendence. A certain neatness and control of the media was a part of this ideal and came to be the hallmark of Ernabella art works for many decades. If what really engaged her was technical process, in this she happened to coincide with the culturally embedded emphasis of Anangu who deem knowledge as a series of processes that must follow in the right order and in the right way to be effective.

Papunya Tula art, like the Ernabella craft room, was an intercultural experiment. Like Geoffrey Bardon, Hilliard did not see herself as central to the Ernabella arts history, but she did position herself within the narrative using her photo albums, collections and museum donations. On Bardon’s influence among the Papunya Tula artists, Paul Carter has written: ‘What distinguished Bardon from his well-meaning ideological contemporaries was his aesthetic activism’. Hilliard’s aim was promoting an intersubjectivity for the craft women through skill acquisition. She

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69 Hilliard 1998a: 37.
70 Young 2011.
71 Carter 2009.
72 Carter 2009: 106.
herself could draw, she took good photographs, she collected outstanding pieces of batik, but she did not position aesthetics as of primary importance in her brokerage of Ernabella art and craft.

She could recognise each woman’s *walka* (if not quite as well as the makers recognise one another’s) but she did not write about this as visual style or individual style in contrast to Bardon of Papunya art, with his emphasis on ‘visual archetypes’. This lack of aesthetic emphasis is one reason that the Ernabella craft and art did not transform in value; it did not have keen wealthy collectors nor develop any widespread connoisseurship despite the quality control that Hilliard imposed upon it.73 If there had been changes in art advisers at Ernabella, there might be different voices and new energy, as at Papunya Tula where each adviser has told their own tale.74

Hilliard never attempted to suppress ‘difference’ in the enactment of her brokerage. Nor did she peddle primitivism. Later with batik she moved towards a modernist claim to universality through ‘art’.75 Post-mission from 1973–74 when the craft room became an ‘art centre’, batik as a medium erased the disadvantage of being a ‘mission product’, yet batik was still unstable in its Aboriginality as another introduced medium. Not until the 1990s did Indigenous acrylic painting transcend both nationalism and Aboriginality, according to Myers,76 but batik has not quite made it through into this new space. There is no secondary auction market for batik. The current reverence for craft and the handmade and the influence of recent writing on making in anthropology indicate that perhaps a rethinking of early Ernabella craft is possible.77

Hilliard’s account of Ernabella’s craft room is at once admirable and limiting. It left a vacuum for critical dialogue about what is a remarkable tale. The narrative of Ernabella art and craft that Hilliard constructed was based on new media and its teachers – a particular colonisation of technique that the Papunya Tula painters have transcended. The craft room was – and continues to be – stigmatised by the worthiness and stasis attributed to mid-twentieth-century mission production. The continued circulation of Hilliard’s 1968 book, *The People in Between*, and its harvest of scholarly citations, ensure that the Ernabella mission and its colonial project is not forgotten and that, rather than being seen as an innovative, intercultural creative movement, the Ernabella *walka* is associated with this. In contrast, the rhetoric surrounding the male Papunya Tula painters, positioned as realising an almost revolutionary cultural imperative to express their secret sacred knowledge, is entirely different. Aboriginal cultural production is evidently promoted and constrained by

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73  Myers 2001: 194.
74  For example, Crocker 1987; Kimber 1990.
76  Myers 2001: 194.
77  Ingold 2013.
moments of nationalist sentiment that illuminate why one form is celebrated while another is ignored. Some historians have begun to critically examine mission histories but, in their efforts to promote contemporary art as expressive purely of sacred spiritual ties to country, Aboriginal art centre managers tend to distance themselves from this history. While some contemporary artists at Ernabella, notably Niningka Lewis, are portraying ‘mission times’ in their paintings, a revisionist history of the craft room is overdue.

Hilliard did give to the craft women and girls the possibilities for self-realisation and self-expansion, an intersubjective engagement with non-Aboriginal people. As Marcia Langton writes, ‘Aboriginality only has meaning when understood in terms of inter-subjectivity, when both the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal are subjects not objects’. This engagement was not just invisibly mediated by their work but made in person at technical demonstrations. While it would be easy to dismiss these technical demonstrations as evidence of a colonial panoptic ‘making visible’, it was also a way for the craft women to engage with onlookers.

It was through art that Hilliard saw possibilities for the education of non-Aboriginal Australians who had never met an Indigenous person. Despite working mainly with women, Hilliard did not emphasise femaleness in her writing. For example, in a lecture given in Osaka, she said:

Significantly it was the Aboriginal who stepped over the cultural boundaries when Albert Namatjira portrayed his lovely homeland in European style art. It was then that the white population looked beyond its own boundaries and began to see.

According to recent data, the majority of artists working today in remote Australia are women. Some of these women worked in the craft room at Ernabella and recall this in published accounts of their lives as artists. The skills that they learnt in the craft room are relevant to the art they make today — weaving skills are relevant to tjapí (spinifex basketry and sculpture); batik techniques have been transferred to ceramics. Today, the top-earning artists on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands are senior men with their ability to access and portray their own sacred knowledge in their work. While increasingly women also position their cultural production as sacred, the price realised for it in the market rarely equals that of their men’s.

79 Langton 2003: 118.
83 Acker and Woodhead 2015.
84 For example, in the accounts in Tjala Arts 2015.
85 Young 2017.
In keeping the bureaucratic structure of the craft room going throughout the lean years and into the era of self-determination, Hilliard made employment for women an enduring success at Ernabella, whereas employment for men was more problematic. These were young women ‘born in the bush’, as they would characterise themselves to me and to other outsiders. In the Ernabella craft room and later art centre, through Hilliard’s brokerage and care, they had the time and space to create and define their changing selves in a new environment with novel materials. This was Hilliard’s major contribution, strengthened by her determination and her affectionate commitment to Anangu at Ernabella.

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On the afternoon of 16 January 1895, a group of visitors to the Gippsland Lakes, Victoria, gathered to perform songs and hymns with the Aboriginal residents of Lake Tyers Aboriginal Mission. Several visitors from the nearby Lake Tyers House assisted with the preparations and an audience of Aboriginal mission residents and visitors spent a pleasant summer evening performing together and enjoying refreshments. The ‘program’ included an opening hymn by ‘the Aborigines’ followed by songs and hymns sung by friends of the mission, the missionary’s daughter and a duet by two Aboriginal women, Mrs E. O’Rourke and Mrs Jennings, who in particular received hearty applause for their performance of ‘Weary Gleaner’. The success of this shared performance is recorded by an anonymous hand in the Lake Tyers visitor book, noting that 9 pounds 6 shillings was collected from the enthusiastic audience. The missionary’s wife, Caroline Bulmer, was most likely responsible for this note celebrating the success of an event that stands out among the comments of visitors to Lake Tyers. One such visitor was a woman named Miss Florrie Powell who performed the song ‘The Old Countess’ after the duet by Mrs O’Rourke and Mrs Jennings. She wrote effusively in the visitor book that ‘to give you an idea

1 Florrie Powell 18 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book, MS 11934 Box 2478/5, State Library of Victoria. My thanks to Tracey Banivanua Mar, Diane Kirkby, Catherine Bishop, Lucy Davies and Kate Laing for their feedback on an earlier draft of this article, and to Richard White for mentoring as part of a 2015 Copyright Agency Limited Bursary. My thanks also to two anonymous referees for their helpful suggestions.

2 Caroline Bulmer 16 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book.
of enjoyment down here would be impossible. Everyone must find out for him or herself. The happiest time of my life was spent here. The kindness of Mrs and Mr Bulmer is past description’.³

Visitors to Victoria’s Aboriginal mission stations and reserves were a growing phenomenon in the late nineteenth century, and emotive comments like the one above fill the visitor books. Beginning in the late 1870s, a steady stream of sightseers, known locally as ‘excursionists’, left Melbourne’s dusty streets for the natural wonders of the lakes of Gippsland, for example, or the giant tree ferns and waterfalls of the Dandenong Ranges.⁴ A visit ‘to see the natives’ became a popular stop on these tours wherein Aboriginal mission stations were viewed as a kind of living exhibition, regarded by the crowds as examples of ‘civilisation’ in progress or a place to witness Aboriginal primitivism apparently nearing extinction.⁵ Two surviving visitor books from the late nineteenth century reveal the diversity of these visitors and the emotions they express about their visits. Not only local colonials and religiously motivated travellers but international figures of science and government came to missions from all over the world and commented on what they saw. Published travel accounts about Victorian missions by international visitors are in fact quite numerous.⁶ The visitor book comments, however, stand out as highly emotive and uniquely capture an aspect of mission tourism. This article looks closely at the emotions inscribed therein and at the tourist’s preoccupations they reveal.

Tourist visitation to missions is an area of scholarship with growing interest in the emotive dimension of this visitation.⁷ While Peter Carolane’s excellent analysis reveals two main tourist fantasies – ‘romantic landscapes’ and ‘destitute Aborigines’ – enjoyed by excursionists at Lake Tyers in the 1870s and 1880s, it does not comment extensively on tourist emotions.⁸ Jane Lydon and Toby Martin have likewise demonstrated the ways in which mission tourism was bound up with a deep interest in nature, influencing how Aboriginal people were seen.⁹ The significance of the natural world for excursionists has a strong bearing on the emotions they express in the visitor books. To the body of literature on the emotional dimension of tourism, this article contributes a discussion of colonial-era mission tourist emotion as expressed within the visitor books of Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck Aboriginal missions dated 1878–1909.¹⁰

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³ Florrie Powell 18 January 1895, Lake Tyers visitor book.
⁴ Dow 1999; Clark and McRae-Williams 2013; Clark 2015. On the phenomenon of nature tourism see Horne 2005.
⁵ Dow 1999: 112.
⁶ For example, Baessler 1895; Trollope 1967; Comettant 1980; Clark 2015.
⁷ Martin 2014.
⁸ Carolane 2008.
⁹ Lydon 2005a; Martin 2014.
¹⁰ On imperial emotions, see Rosaldo 1989; on travel and emotion, see Chard 1999; Picard 2012; Robinson 2012.
Bringing a consideration of tourism to the discussion of imperial emotions allows for an exploration of what Ann Laura Stoler calls ‘a charged space of colonial tensions’.\textsuperscript{11} The archival material utilised here, namely visitor books, usefully combines the nexus of emotion, intimacy or friendship and tourism in the mission space. Each part of this nexus assists in the analysis and understanding of its component parts. Emotions under empire have received growing attention in a framework that broadly focuses on the intimacies of empire.\textsuperscript{12} The emotive dimension of the encounter between missionaries and Aboriginal people, for example, has recently received attention. Claire McLisky, for example, notes that in the emotional economy of one Protestant mission, Aboriginal love was in demand and missionary love was in excess.\textsuperscript{13} With a focus on written texts, McLisky and likewise Jane Haggis and Margaret Allen note much more is learned about the writer or intended reader than the Aboriginal subjects of the narrative.\textsuperscript{14} Recognition, by scholars of mission history, of the mission as a complex space where friendships developed emphasises the possibilities and restrictions for such intimacy.\textsuperscript{15} My focus here is the written expressions of emotion by visitors to two such missions, which suggest both the distancing effect of the tourist gaze and aspirations for friendship (as the opening concert description intimates). Influential in histories of emotion have been William Reddy’s formulation of ‘emotives’ (the words we use to talk about our emotions) and Rosenwein’s frequently adopted ‘emotional communities’, encouraging a focus on a group’s systems of feeling (including those expressions that are encouraged, deplored, valued etc.).\textsuperscript{16} Sara Ahmed has analysed ‘feelings in common’ through the impressions left by Others, and demonstrated the way ‘feelings rehearse associations that are already in place’.\textsuperscript{17} Following Ahmed, Haggis and Allen, and McLisky, I am specifically analysing emotions as they are expressed in written form. What can the highly effusive visitor comments tell us about relations between tourists and Aboriginal mission residents?

I argue that the visitor books are overlooked and useful sources for glimpsing the preoccupations of colonial visitors. As sources, the visitor books of Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck show us that visitors were not simply enjoying the pleasurable interruption of ‘savagery’ in the landscape, they were participants in a specifically colonial dynamic characterised by the tourist gaze or the colonial gaze.\textsuperscript{18} In addition to this, the profusion of emotive expressions by visitors demonstrates their interest

\textsuperscript{11} Stoler 2001a: 893.
\textsuperscript{12} Stoler 2001a and 2001b; Ballantyne and Burton 2009; for an analysis of the vocabulary of Victorian-era sentiment, see Stedman 2002; cf. Rosaldo 1989.
\textsuperscript{13} McLisky 2014: 94.
\textsuperscript{14} McLisky 2014: 83; Haggis and Allen 2008: 691.
\textsuperscript{15} Ellinghaus 2009; Elbourne 2010; Horton 2010; Grimshaw and May 2010; Ballantyne 2014; Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015: 165.
\textsuperscript{16} Reddy 2001; Rosenwein 2002; see also Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Dixon 2012.
\textsuperscript{17} Ahmed 2004: 39.
\textsuperscript{18} Jay and Ramaswamy 2014; Urry 2002.
in Aboriginal people, albeit through the lens of tourism coloured by the exoticism of difference and the familiarity found in representations of British civilisation as progress. Their behaviour, appropriate or otherwise, demonstrates how visitors used the space and experienced it as waiting to receive their gaze. This article focuses on the emotive expressions in two specific and very rich sources, drawing out select themes that highlight the colonial dimension of this tourism. To unpick these spaces of tension within the empire, I begin with an overview of the Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions, before outlining the nature of mission tourism and the emotions expressed in response to the missions and its aspirations for friendship. It also becomes necessary to address the other side of this encounter wherein visitors themselves become the object of scrutiny and mission residents return the gaze.

Excursioning on a mission

The visitor book from Lake Tyers was kept from 1878 to 1909 and passed from Ian Bulmer, the grandson of missionaries John and Caroline Bulmer, to the State Library of Victoria, where it resides today. The second surviving visitor book belonged to the nearby mission of Ramahyuck (or Lake Wellington) and was kept from 1878 until 1906. This book was given to the State Library by Berta Hagenauer, granddaughter of Ramahyuck’s missionaries Friedrich and Louise Hagenauer. In his early study of the visitor books, Bain Attwood found the creation of six visitor books by the Board for the Protection of Aborigines (the Board) in 1878 took place in the context of mounting criticism of their segregationist policies. The perceived objectivity of the comments of upper-class visitors, as used to legitimise the Board’s control of Aboriginal people, is therefore a factor in the significance of the visitor books then and now, and ties the activity of the tourist gaze and the emotive expressions recorded by these sources to the state administration of mission residents. Each of Victoria’s six missions and reserves was presented with a visitor book, a black leather-bound volume, embossed in gold; as only the visitor books from Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers are known to remain, they are the focus of this article.

The locations for Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions on the lands of the Gunai people (now Gunaikurnai) were chosen for their isolation from white settlement and the goldfields, and in the case of Lake Tyers its proximity to a ready supply of fish and water fowl. Both stations were established in the early 1860s, a time when tourism in the Gippsland region of eastern Victoria must have appeared a distant

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20 Campbell and Vanderwal 1994.
and unlikely prospect.\textsuperscript{21} John Bulmer, a recent missionary volunteer, was supported in his endeavour by the Church of England. Recognising the commercial benefits of tourism, he was somewhat supportive of the mobile Gunai traditions.\textsuperscript{22} Friedrich Hagenauer, by contrast, trained as a Moravian missionary from the age of 22, was far less tolerant of Gunai hunting for food or continuing traditional ceremonies.\textsuperscript{23} Both men were recently married and they raised their families on the missions, sharing the same ideals in mission management. Hagenauer assisted Bulmer in redesigning the layout of Lake Tyers ‘forming it in a square, and my house was to be at the top’.\textsuperscript{24} It was similar to Ramahyuck, which was structured around a village green with the missionary’s house as the most significant building besides the church.\textsuperscript{25} The only subject of disagreement between the two missionaries appears to be their response to the growing tourism at the Gippsland Lakes. Hagenauer, as a strict authoritarian, objected to the intrusion of excursionists. Bulmer was more welcoming to visitors; his wife Caroline’s relatives were among the first to establish a boarding house near the ocean at Lake Tyers sometime in the 1880s.\textsuperscript{26}

For the average visitor, a trip to the regions offered a diversion from Melbourne’s bustle and dust, characterised by one newspaper correspondent as ‘the endless strife for dollars, the struggle for fame or gain, the treadmill of society occupations’.\textsuperscript{27} See, for example, the photographs of Nicholas Caire, whose work was featured in prestige publications as well as popular guidebooks.\textsuperscript{28} Once hanging on the walls of middle-class homes, these photographs responded to a demand for images portraying the somewhat idealised scenic life of the bush dweller.\textsuperscript{29} With titles like \textit{Fairy Scene at the Landslip, Black Spur} (c. 1878–79), Caire emphasised the fantastical and exotic in nature.\textsuperscript{30} The landscape was the principal drawcard, featuring picnic spots, sporting activities, fishing and other appealing healthful pursuits. With the expansion of the railway network during the late 1870s, the bush became an accessible place of respite for the city dweller as well as travellers from further afield.\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[21]{Bulmer commenced work on the Lake Tyers mission in 1862 after selecting the location with the help of local men of the Gunai nation who know the area as Bung Yarnda (‘Big Waters’). Ramahyuck was established a year later, the name composed of a biblical reference, \textit{Ramah} meaning ‘home of Samuel’ and \textit{yuck}, a Gunai word meaning ‘mother’ or ‘own’. Campbell and Vanderwal 1994; Goding 1990.}
\footnotetext[22]{Dow 1999: 113; Carolane 2008: 162.}
\footnotetext[23]{Mulvaney 1971: 309; Nanni and James 2013: 57.}
\footnotetext[24]{Campbell and Vanderwal 1994: 64.}
\footnotetext[25]{Campbell and Vanderwal 1994: 64.}
\footnotetext[26]{Goding 1990: 27; Carolane 2008: 164.}
\footnotetext[27]{'Picturesque Victoria. Lake Tyers No. 2', \textit{Argus}, 27 March 1886: 4.}
\footnotetext[28]{Dow 1999: 114.}
\footnotetext[29]{Pitkethly and Pitkethly 1988: 12.}
\footnotetext[30]{For an analysis of Caire’s Lake Tyers photographs, see Peck 2010.}
\footnotetext[31]{Lydon 2005a: 182–83.}
\end{footnotes}
Tourists were most likely to pay their visits during the high summer season from December through to March. This timing allowed for the best appreciation of the environment, though some days were exceedingly hot. Studying visitor numbers and using the number of names recorded as an indication of visitor frequency, reveals visitors’ comments were most numerous during the 1880s. Lake Tyers averaged 79 visitors per year (and recorded its highest of 155 visitors commenting in 1886), while Ramahyuck averaged 28 visitors commenting (and recorded its highest of 69 in 1881). During the 1890s, when the depression hit Melbourne, visitor comments decreased sharply to an average of nine per year at Lake Tyers and four at Ramahyuck. Visitor comments ceased for Lake Tyers in 1909, after the death of John Bulmer, by which time an average of three visitors per year left comments in the visitor book; at Ramahyuck the average number commenting was two. Comments ceased in the Ramahyuck visitor book in 1906, three years before Hagenauer’s death. Notably, but outside the scope of this article, visitor numbers increased in the interwar period, as Sianan Healy illustrates, when mission tourism took off once more.

Among the names, dates and reasons for visiting, and alongside the comments, it is possible to learn from where many of the visitors came as well as their religious, personal or professional relationship to the mission. Visitors to Ramahyuck and Lake Tyers came from all over Australia, as well as internationally. The majority of visitors travelled out from Melbourne and its surrounds, as well as the other colonies (most frequently New South Wales, South Australia and Queensland). International visitors originated predominantly in England, including Bristol, Birmingham, Cambridge and London. During Melbourne’s International Exhibition in 1881, members of the organising committees from Belgium, France, Austria, England and Japan all visited Ramahyuck. International visitors were far more numerous to Ramahyuck than to Lake Tyers if the number of comments is taken as an indication, they were also more likely to have a religious or governmental affiliation with the mission. Visitors to Lake Tyers who choose to indicate their home countries form a short list consisting of America, England, France and New Zealand. Ramahyuck, by contrast, attracted visitors from England, Scotland, Austria, Belgium, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Germany, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), Japan, Bohemia (Czech Republic) and New Zealand. The diverse origins of visitors supports an understanding of the British Empire as highly networked and mobile, as Tony Ballantyne has detailed.

32 A. Kingley 10 January 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.
33 My numbers are based on legible comments in the visitor books and are estimates only.
34 Healy 2006.
35 Victory Chonberger (Austria) 24 January 1881; N. Akajame (Japan) 14 March 1881; T.A.C. Van Der Kelen (Brussels) 14 March 1881; O. Boulay (France) 14 March 1881; E. Lichture (Wien) 14 March 1881; Lieutenant Hart Prischof (Austria) 14 March 1881, Ramahyuck visitor book, F.A. Hagenauer Papers, MS 9556 Box 1, State Library of Victoria.
with missions as important nodal points. The visitor books bear out his argument. Not only local colonials and religiously motivated travellers but international colonial figures of science and industry came to missions from all over the world, as detailed below. In addition, these visits were tied to the significant events of Melbourne’s International Exhibitions in 1881 and 1888, as well as international religious networks. Victoria’s six Aboriginal missions and reserves were nodal points in a network of transnational information, artefact and emotional exchange. The two missions that this article focuses on diverged in their reception of visitors. While Lake Tyers came to be associated with pleasure-seeking tourists (receiving less ‘official’ visitors) and Ramahyuck was the destination for religiously minded visitors, both visitor books record comments with similar expressions of emotion.

In addition to the local excursionists, or day trippers (sometimes just called ‘trippers’), mission tourism included a distinguished audience of visitors, some local and some international. Among well-known secular visitors were journalists, photographers (including Nicholas Caire), sculptor Charles Summers, author James Dawson, as well as members of recently established universities and local members of parliament. Well-known writer The Vagabond (aka John Stanley James) visited Lake Tyers, Ramahyuck and Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve. A visit by Lady Diamantina Bowen, wife of Governor Sir George Bowen, and her four daughters to Ramahyuck on 14 December 1878 would have been a notable event in the mission’s calendar. Similarly, Ian Clark notes a list of international visiting dignitaries to Coranderrk near Healesville, which received hundreds of visitors annually. At another Victorian mission, Lake Condah to the west of the colony, the manager J.H. Stähle often emphasised illustrious visitors in his reports to the Board. This included the Bishop of Ballarat and the ‘official correspondents of the leading papers in the colony’. Other visitors were part of a community united by religious and humanitarian work; for example, Reverend John G. Paton, Missionary New Hebrides, South Sea Islands, wrote less than a month after a reverend from Scotland. In this way, the Ramahyuck visitor book illustrates important connections between far corners of empire, connections that were strengthened by return visits. Their comments engaged also with broader racial debates, using the opportunity to give their assessment of the condition of Victoria’s Aboriginal population or refute the claims of a contemporary, as John G. Paton did.

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37 Ballantyne 2014.
38 The influence of Christianity on emotions in the mission space should be acknowledged; it is, however, outside the scope of this article.
39 Nicholas J. Caire 2 February 1886; C.S.E. Summers 2 April 1885; James Dawson 21 March 1886; A. & V. Robertson (Sydney University) 9 February 1881, Lake Tyers visitor book.
The spiritual instruction and the deep interest taken in [the residents’] present and actual welfare is also most gratifying and attended with good results, in having many of them so to fear and serve God as to prove how premature and false [Charles] Kingsley’s statements were, that ‘the Aborigines of Australia are too stupid to understand the gospel. Poor brutes in human shape they must perish like brute beasts’ – I have not addressed a more attentive and sympathetic congregation expectantly on each visit, they have voluntarily contributed handsomely to my mission.44

Taking the opportunity to compare Australian Aboriginal people with subjects of missionary instruction elsewhere in the empire was not uncommon among visitors to the missions or, as Frances Steel notes, among early steamship tourists in the Pacific.45 Such activity became an important part of ‘doing a “Tour”’, as one visitor to Ramahyuck described their visit.46

When mission managers used comments from the visitor books to emphasise the progress of the reserve system through the feedback of important people, they were fulfilling the books’ intended function.47 In this way, the emotions of visitors were employed to legitimise the Board’s actions. The format of the books themselves present structure and order: they are ruled horizontally with vertical columns for Name, Date, Object of visit and Comments. Though Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck like all the missions and reserves received a visitor book from the Board, these government documents ended up as the property of the missions. Attwood observes that Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck were managed by two men whose force of personality and connection to the mission were unique, resulting in the books becoming important objects to their families.48 The particular emotional dynamics displayed in the visitor books must be, in part, due to these factors.

By approaching the mission as a charged space of colonial tensions, it is possible to observe that the positive experiences by reputable persons overruled the distress frequently communicated to the Board by Aboriginal mission residents, especially women.49 Visitors were not interested in observing the restricted mobility of Aboriginal residents, or the Board’s removal of their children, which residents so often wrote about in letters paled of emotion. Further, the Board used that which would perpetuate their control. At the same time, the well-being of Victorian Aboriginal people – as a remnant of a so-called dying race – was at the forefront of several visitors’ minds. One visitor wrote: ‘The station [is] well kept, well pleased with attendance and service in the mission Church and am glad to see that after appropriating the lands of the aboriginals some thought and care is taken of the few

45 Steel 2013.
46 M. Borgett 15 September 1895, Ramahyuck visitor book.
49 See Nelson et al. 2002.
survivors of the Lords of the Soil.' This visitor's reason for visiting was 'Pleasure', which demonstrates the tension of the mission space in which both humanitarian sentiment or concern is expressed alongside gushing appreciation of the landscape. This asymmetrical dynamic in the expression of emotion by mission tourists is a key component of their preoccupations.

The mission space reminded visitors of familiar places, whether it was England, another colony or familiar landscapes. These other spaces enabled them to make sense of Australia as a new world. For many tourists, the 'Picturesque', by definition calling to mind the pictorial in nature, was a recurring framework through which to make sense of the Australian landscape. This discourse highlighted what was familiar; for example, a report in one visitor guide from 1886 noted that Lake Tyers 'reminds one of an English village'. In one unique instance, a visitor noted: 'The arrangement of the settlement reminds me of the small Dutch towns in Cape Colony'. The idea that tourists (and surveyors as well) saw the land as a landscape (with all the familiarity and domestication this implies) has been noted by Giselle Byrnes, who argues, 'landscapes and colonial space were constructed primarily through visual strategies, most notably the panoptic and the Picturesque'. Four visitors to Lake Tyers make reference to the Picturesque, demonstrating this shared convention – this included photographer Nicholas Caire who was on a 'professional tour in search of the Picturesque'. Robert C. McKnight on 9 April 1882, as an example, wrote that he was '[d]elighted with the grand and picturesque situation of the station; and much pleased with things in general'. His reason for visiting was '[t]o gain information and for general enjoyment'. Delight, just like pleasure, was an endorsement of all that had been surveyed. Aboriginal people were rarely visible to tourists in these pleasurable landscapes surrounding the missions; as Julia Barst has noted of the work of settler colonial artists, Aboriginal bodies were rendered absent, thus sustaining the idea of an empty land, or terra nullius.

These viewing conventions were shared by visitors and could be described as pictorial colonisation, following Clark. In his discussion of Chief Protector of the Aborigines, George Augustus Robinson, as a nascent tourist in Victoria during the first half of the nineteenth century, Clark proposes this term to describe Robinson's adoption of ‘old world’ ordering systems in documenting and understanding “new world” landscapes, native settlements and indigenous flora and fauna. As with the

50 (Name illegible) 26 March 1886, Lake Tyers visitor book.
51 Cf. Lynch 2015.
52 Tanjil 1886: 66.
53 Fred Elsworth 10 April 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.
54 Byrnes 2000: 54.
55 P.C. Plaisled 27 September 1880; McKnight 9 April 1882; John Watson 26 December 1884; Nicholas J. Caire 2 February 1886, Lake Tyers visitor book.
56 Robert C. McKnight 9 April 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.
57 Barst 2008: 168.
58 Clark 2010: 565.
Picturesque, he was encouraged to see Victoria through the lens of somewhere else. Tourists and artists have famously done this in Australia.\(^{59}\) This was nowhere more apparent than in the fashion from earlier in the century of carrying a ‘Claude Glass’ on one’s excursions, a tinted piece of glass that rendered the landscape in warm tones similar to the paintings of Claude Lorraine.\(^{60}\) As these examples demonstrate, a visitor to the missions brought with them ways of seeing derived from discourses on travel and art. As we will see in the next section, such optics have a bearing on the emotions visitors chose to include in their visitor book comments. And further, how they responded to the presence of Aboriginal people in the mission space.

### Pleasure in a perfect paradise

Visitors repeatedly expressed their wishes for the Aboriginal residents in terms that overtly link wellbeing with the beauty of the surroundings and, in so doing, project their ways of seeing onto the mission residents. For example, Mrs Harding, a visitor in January 1883, writes: ‘A few weeks spent here is to forget the troubles of the world, living in peace and happiness [under] the kind care of Mr and Mrs Bulmer, which the Blacks seem to enjoy.’\(^{61}\) Mr and Mrs H.J. Robertson, who visited on 7 March 1885, wrote: ‘Enjoyed our visit exceedingly thanks to Mr Bulmer’s kindness. [The] blacks ought to be very comfortable and happy in such a beautiful place with so much kindness shown them.’\(^{62}\) Comments similar in tone verge on envy for the Aboriginal residents, one visitor exclaiming: ‘Would I were a Black!’\(^{63}\) Another comment to this end states: ‘Very much delighted a perfect paradise of lovely scenery and good management.’\(^{64}\) Here we see that the benefits of nature gave rise to many exclamations of pleasure and return visits by tourists; however, visitors also projected these positive feelings about the Gippsland environment onto the Gunai people they encountered, seeing them as fortunate.

Excursionists had such a good time they assumed the residents must also be delighting in the surrounds. By implying that mission residents also conceived of the landscape as beneficial, visitors unconsciously justify colonisation as a moral act; their dispossession was now invisible. The picturesque was equally providential to visitors and residents. The emotive comments therefore demonstrate the normalisation of the settler colonial project, which is also reflected in the experiences of tourists more broadly in their unfettered access to many parts of the mission. David Picard urges the noting of social contexts, aesthetic cultures and histories bound to the emotive

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60  Barst 2008.
61  Mrs Harding 6 January 1883, Lake Tyers visitors book.
62  Mr and Mrs H.J. Robertson 7 March 1885, Lake Tyers visitor book.
63  Sam S. Yule 12 January 1882, Lake Tyers visitors book.
64  Mrs L.P. Hulsou (approximate spelling) 27 January 1885, Lake Tyers visitors book.
reception of the landscape (as desirable or sublime, for example). Following Picard, pleasure in the mission visitor book can be seen as part of the ‘socially contextualised moral order’ of these particular destinations.65

That so many visitors found their experience positive and the conditions of the mission just, or at least said so in the visitor books, must be in part due to Mr Bulmer’s skill in displaying the station in its best light. As Carolane argues, the missionary guide made the space safe for visitors.66 The pleasure derived from viewing the missions would not have been possible without Bulmer and Hagenauer as guides. Visitors enjoyed seeing over Lake Tyers mission in particular (judging from the volume of comments), and they attributed their happiness and gratitude to Mr Bulmer and his wife Caroline, as well as the schoolteachers David and Louisa Morris. When Bulmer was not present to show them around, they expressed their regret in the visitor book.67 Like settler colonists, visitors experienced the mission as open and waiting for their gaze. They were able, as many visitors wrote, to inspect all the cottages, the church and the school.68 They were able to interview the children and comment on their educational and, by implication, ‘civilising’ progress.69

In contrast to the visitors, the mobility of Aboriginal people was diminished and curtailed by the Board and often the missionaries. The Victorian Aborigines Protection Act 1886 separated families and removed those of mixed descent under the age of 35 into the service of white families.70 Eliza O’Rourke (who sang at the gathering mentioned at the beginning of this article) was one such Aboriginal woman who experienced the removal of her children at various times. She wrote letters to the Board asking for her children to be allowed to return to Lake Tyers.71 Such details in the lives of Aboriginal women seem all but invisible to tourists, with the exceptions of some repeat visitors who formed friendships with a few of the Gunai residents (detailed below). A visitor book, however, is not the forum to express this type of intimacy. The visitor book comments instead capture the pleasure taken by visitors in the landscape.

Another source of pleasure expressed in the visitor books, and a clear preoccupation of mission tourists, is the familiarity found in evidence of British civilisation. For example, Mrs Davies, who visited with her family in December 1882, demonstrates the belief that being settled was a civilised attribute in her comment:

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65 Picard 2012: 11 fn 17.
66 Carolane 2008.
68 Mr and Mrs Croft 16 November 1879; Edward Latham and party 14 December 1879; G. Bardrelli, Member of the Melbourne Committee of the Aboriginal Society 9 April 1880; Lake Tyers visitor book.
69 R.A. Budd 21 January 1881; Sam L. Chapman 10 February 1881; S. McDoughall and group 18 November 1881; W.E. Bower of the firm of L. & A. Merchants Melbourne 30 December 1881; Mr R. Walker 21 March 1882; Herbert Veal 23 April 1882 (among others), Lake Tyers visitor book.
70 Van Toorn 1999: 341.
71 Nelson et al. 2002: 45.
'Very pleased to see that such a good home is provided for the Blacks and glad to see that they have no cause to go roaming away!'\textsuperscript{72} It is significant that settling in one place is attributed by this female visitor to the comforting and familiar activity of making a home. The settlement of the continent was, after all, a process of homemaking on a massive scale.\textsuperscript{73} Both men and women, though, comment on how well ‘cared for’ the residents appear while Aboriginal mobility is conversely associated with traditional, ‘savage’ life and therefore only its absence is praiseworthy.\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, the missions themselves are often referred to in visitor comments as settlements. For example, ‘A most interesting and admirably situated settlement’, wrote visitor A.F. French in 1881.\textsuperscript{75} Visitors repeatedly expressed pleasure in the mission as a microcosm of empire, where native space has been demarcated for civilising.

This finds particular expression in the way the tourist gaze takes inventory of the scene, deriving pleasure in the domestically familiar. The pervasiveness of the tourist gaze cannot be escaped; it pierces the privacy of the mission, putting residents on display while seeking to reconcile them with its way of seeing. A typical visitor, travelling in a group, phrases their comment as a report in the visitor book:

Visit to mission station with party of 15, visited the school, the parsonage, the Church, the garden and all of the houses, – very pleased with all I saw and heard, and I believe that much good work is being done at this interesting mission station with which Mr and Mrs Bulmer have been connected so long.\textsuperscript{76} Not only does this group gain access to ‘all of the houses’, they are eager to approve of what they find, and show support for the missionary undertaking. When visitors derive pleasure from the progress of children in school and church, or hear their singing, they also assess Aboriginal educational achievements, placing themselves in the position of objective witness, expressing what Frances Steel calls ‘unfettered White settler mobility’.\textsuperscript{77} The inventory structure of many comments lends legitimacy to their feelings of pleasure in progress.

The opportunity to compare Australian Aboriginal people with subjects of missionary instruction elsewhere in the British Empire was not uncommon among visitors to the missions or among early steamship tourists in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{78} To this end, a visitor in 1899 comments:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{72} H. Meredith Davis 27 December 1882, Lake Tyers visitor book.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} In the context of the French Empire see Ha 2014.
  \item \textsuperscript{75} A.F. French 12 December 1881; see also Fred Elsworth 10 April 1881; Jas C. Hawker 22 March 1886; W.M. Segrave (of London) 11 April 1887, Lake Tyers visitor book; John Singleton 17 January 1879; Arthur F. French 2 December 1880; Caroline Marks 22 December 1882, Ramahyuck visitor book.
  \item \textsuperscript{76} John Kennedy Macmillan 20 January 1887, Lake Tyers visitor book.
  \item \textsuperscript{77} Steel 2013.
  \item \textsuperscript{78} Steel 2013.
\end{itemize}
A beautiful day, everything looked at its best. Mr Bulmer kindly showed us the church and school and houses in which the aboriginals live but I was disappointed at not seeing more of the natives – it appears that the day of my visit was a general holiday and consequently nearly all the aboriginals were out boating. Was greatly struck by the fact that there was only one pure black girl attending the school – this foreshadows an early extinction of the race.79

Under the civilising machine of the mission, the Gunai occupied a complex position: their expected disappearance in contrast to their adaptation to the Christian lifestyle coalesced into something unique and exotic for the tourist gaze. Though comments focus on the positive – in many ways this is the convention of the visitor book – there was also an underlying belief in the doomed race theory.80 The perceived impending extinction of the Gunai made groups of tourists unapologetic about their wish to see mission residents.81 Many visitors who made the trip to Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck missions were motivated by such curiosity; when they found the mission residents absent (‘camping out’, hunting or playing cricket in nearby Cunninghame), they expressed their disappointment in the visitor books.82 The above comment encapsulates the disappointment that the object of their visit is not readily in view, this excursionist also expressed surprise on learning the Aboriginal residents had their own leisure time and spent it boating.83

Added to the complex array of emotions expressed by excursionists so far detailed was, unsurprisingly, curiosity. Alongside pleasure, curiosity is frequently listed as the reason for visiting. Curiosity appears 30 times in the Lake Tyers visitor book, but not at all in the Ramahyuck visitor book. As noted already, a pervasive desire to see over the mission, in the panoptic manner described by Brynes,84 manifested itself as emotional expressions in the visitor books. Pleasure, in particular, was both sought after and expressed effusively by both male and female visitors of different origins, predominately of the middle class. There were some rare cases, however, when this curiosity had the opportunity of being transformed into friendship. As the shared concert described at the opening of this article suggests, such intimacy was forged during heightened emotional events, such as religious holidays and concerts.

Friendships formed between Aboriginal mission residents and visitors through the wives and daughters of missionaries, this much is clear from the list of performers at the concert, who included John and Caroline Bulmer’s daughter May. Though she no longer lived on the mission with her parents, May visited each Christmas.85

May visited her parents with friends such as Florrie Powell, whose effusive comment

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79 P. Holyoake Rast (approximate spelling) 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.
80 See McGregor 1997.
82 H.R. Reamsey (approximate spelling) 1 January 1886; E. Angus Young 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.
83 See Dow 1999 for a discussion of ongoing connection to country expressed in Gunai activities off the missions.
84 Brynes 2000: 54.
that she had spent ‘the happiest time of my life’ at the mission contrasts with the known realities of mission life. In this way, the highly emotive expression in the visitor books complicate understandings of mission tourism as one-directional. The shared interests between Aboriginal women and the daughters and friends of the missionaries further testify to this.

If nature was one of the defining sources of pleasure for tourists, Aboriginal women shared this passion in one respect: fern collecting. Tourists, and women in particular, were captivated by the Victorian era’s craze for ferns, known as Pteridomania, and they saw the outer regions as ideal places to gather specimens for their ferneries (also known as glass houses).\(^86\) Letters from Gunai women to Hagenauer’s daughter Ellen Grace Hagenauer (1873–1947) suggest a shared passion.\(^87\) These women – some of whom had known each other their whole lives – corresponded after Ellen Grace’s marriage and subsequent move to Western Australia.\(^88\) Emily Stephen, for example, wrote to ask how Ellen’s fernery was progressing in spite of the very dry weather.\(^89\)

At Lake Tyers, May Bulmer went fern collecting with a friend and repeat mission tourist Mabelle F. Smith. Smith visited Lake Tyers twice during 1890s, in one comment she writes:

> Thanks to the kindness of Mr and Mrs Bulmer besides all others on the station. In remembrance of this trip are carrying away sundry small boxes, baskets, pots, misses and bundles. ‘Many were the days we say’[.] Found the Natives very willing to help us by showing us to different places, also collecting ferns and mosses. Only wish my visit were longer.\(^90\)

This comment suggests that not only did Smith form a friendship with ‘all the others’ on the station, she went fern collecting with some of the residents, most likely Gunai women, and had them act as her guides ‘showing us to different places’. Smith is unusual for mentioning the whole mission community in her comment, most visitors only thank their hosts, Mr and Mrs Bulmer, in keeping with the convention of visitor books. Her relationship with the women of the mission was formed through their shared passion for ferns, constructed as a particularly feminine and civilised or refined pursuit.\(^91\) Smith’s enthusiasm for the people of the mission can also be seen in her purchase of Aboriginal-made baskets, which were a common souvenir item (also encouraged as refined and Ladylike).\(^92\)

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88 Emily Milton Stephen to Ellen Le Souef 14 November 1903, MN 1391, 4370A/713/7/13/2.
89 Emily Milton Stephen to Ellen Le Souef 14 November 1903, MN 1391.
90 Mabelle F. Smith 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book.
91 Mabey 2016.
92 E. Angus Young also visited specifically to buy a basket, 6 February 1899, Lake Tyers visitor book.
Women’s friendships counter simultaneous narratives around presumed racial demise. In the context of mission tourism, events such as fern collecting were an opportunity to know mission residents through a shared passion. Christmas and Easter were also important markers in the year and accorded special activities, which often resulted in renewed visits by friends and local community members. The visitor books show this familiarity increasing during the festive season and at Easter.\textsuperscript{93}

As a considerable number of comments in the visitor books demonstrate, Aboriginal mission residents were not always distant objects of spectacle for visitors. They were sometimes friends, acquaintances and guides. Aboriginal residents performed alongside European visitors and shared a religious space and feeling on occasions like Christmas and Easter. These relationships, though undoubtedly few in the scale of mission tourism, and formed through the missionary families, defy the distancing tendencies of the tourist gaze. Caroline Bulmer, John Bulmer’s wife, deemed these connections important enough to write into the Lake Tyres visitor book. Women shared many things in the mission space, including pleasure from the landscape (presumably with each other for company) and religious devotion.

The strength of these friendships can be seen in the ongoing contact between Ellen Grace Hagenauer and a number of Aboriginal women with whom she grew up on Ramahyuck.\textsuperscript{94} The Gippsland tourist industry not only affected Gunai people who lived on missions, but similarly those forced to reside in local towns under the \textit{Aborigines Protection Act 1886}. Jessie Ellis, born on Ramahyuck, was working and boarding in Bairnsdale in October 1888 after being placed in service. Her letters to Ellen Grace record the impact of later nineteenth-century tourism from an Aboriginal perspective. In a letter from Ellis to Ellen Grace, by then married to Albert Le Souef and living in Western Australia, Jessie Ellis describes a typical day. It is worth quoting her letter at length:

\begin{quote}
I am kept busy the whole day and then I have to walk home every night as there isn’t any spare room, it’s all filled up with boarders, there are about seventeen or more, and when some of them leave there is always some one to take their place. I do the washing myself and it is a great difference to the home washing, far more besides … The white shirts are terrible. Seventeen and first I didn’t like Bairnsdale. I was fretting for home, one feels very sorry to part from our own dear home. Don’t you think so. I can tell you I was delighted to see Papa and Mama up, and they were awfully kind to bring us some things and I was also glad to taste the home apples.\textsuperscript{95}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[93] For example, Mabelle F. Smith 30 March 1894, Lake Tyers visitor book; Eliza Francis 7 April 1885, Ramahyuck visitor book.
\item[94] See Cruickshank and Grimshaw 2015.
\item[95] Jessie Ellis to Ellen Le Souef 30 October 1888, MN 1391, 4370A/713/8. The Mama and Papa referred to here were Louise and Friedrich Hagenauer.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Jessie Ellis and Ellen Le Souef grew up on Ramahyuck mission and regarded it as their home. This was likely the first time in her life Jessie Ellis had been away from her family and the mission. In this context, tourism must have provided both an opportunity for work, as well as a painful reminder that she had been separated from her family and the place where she grew up.

Jessie Ellis’s experiences raise the question: how did Aboriginal people respond to the tourist gaze? Some evidence can be seen in the archives. In the early phase of mission tourism, particularly in the period after the instigation of the visitor books, the Gunai practised a strategy of withdrawal from tourist attention. Hagenauer noted in a letter that excursionists were at first a source of entertainment for the residents. He wrote in April 1878:

We have had lately a great many visitors from Melbourne, who seem all to take some interest in the natives, but have sometimes very strange ideas, so that the blacks have often a good laugh about them when they are away again.96

Two years later, however, residents at Ramahyuck were less inclined to remain in view while day trippers were visiting. In February 1880, Hagenauer wrote, ‘my Blacks lock all their houses and go in the bush’ when excursionists arrive by steamer.97 In this letter to Reverend M. MacDonald, a long-time correspondent, he is determined that the public be aware that ‘this reserve is set aside for the sole use of the Aborigines and not as a pleasure ground to white people’.98

At the other end of the tourist era, in the early twentieth century when tourism had recommenced to Aboriginal missions, Kitty Johnson continued similar strategies of withdrawal, this time exploiting the situation for her and her family’s economic benefit.

[When the tourists arrived at] her house there she was sittin’ out the front with her head covered with a possum-skin rug, and she wouldn’t pull her head out from it. She sat there listening to the tourists askin’ her to let ‘em see her so they could get a photo, but she just sat there. After a good bit of coaxing all of a sudden she shoved ‘er hand out and stuck a mug on the ground in front of her and she waited till she reckoned there was enough coins dropped in, then she pulled the rug off and sat there grinnin’ away, smoking her pipe for the tourists to photograph her.99

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96  Hagenauer to MacDonald 27 April 1878, F.A. Hagenauer Letter Book (1875–85) MS 3343, National Library Australia.
97  Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.
98  Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.
This example demonstrates that some residents were, to some degree, able to manage the tourist gaze by playing on their status as tourist attractions, using humour and withdrawing from view to unsettle viewer expectations of an easily accessible exhibit.\textsuperscript{100} The sale of artefacts and souvenirs was another way to opportunise on tourist interest.\textsuperscript{101}

Visitors on display

Visitors themselves became part of the narrative of progress as they viewed the spectacle of ‘progress’ on the mission. Tourists simultaneously witnessed and performed the ideal of civilised progress; however, they did not always meet this ideal. Station managers and missionaries objected to the disruptions that visitors caused to the routine and order of the station. Meanwhile, the Board was inconsistent in its response, demonstrating potential internal division between members and their objectives.\textsuperscript{102} The objections to visitors began prior to the instigation of the visitor books in 1878 and ended up including journalists, the Board and missionaries. The debate surrounding how Europeans were to interact with the Aboriginal population was an important topic and one that ripples through multiple archival sources.

One month prior to the introduction of the visitor books at each of Victoria’s six missions and reserves, the Superintendent at Coranderrk Aboriginal Reserve, closest of the six to Melbourne, complained about the conduct of visitors. The letter is recorded in the Board’s register of correspondence as follows:

that two individuals in the garb of gentlemen and a lady visited the station, one gentleman said he came on visit of inspection … Mr [Halliday the Superintendent] considers his conduct outrageous – in patting the girls’ heads and staring at the women and sticking out his tongue and teeth. Mr [name illegible] will send his card. [Halliday] writes to know if Capt. Page knows anything of the individual and if he was sent by the Board etc.\textsuperscript{103}

Superintendent Halliday was not the only person to note the ways in which visitors made a spectacle of themselves. Hagenauer protested two years later that ‘loads of people’ visited Ramahyuck on Sundays, overrunning the place ‘entering cottages &c. and making themselves generally objectionable’. Hagenauer ‘begged that something might be done to put a stop to it’.\textsuperscript{104} The Board replied that the matter should be brought to the attention of the police; however, this proved to be a useless exercise as the police could not see that there was anything they could do.\textsuperscript{105} In the end, it

\textsuperscript{100} For further examples of challenging the gaze see Lydon 2005a.
\textsuperscript{101} Nugent 2011; Kleinert 2012.
\textsuperscript{102} Barwick has written on the Board’s internal divisions and conflict in Barwick 1998.
\textsuperscript{103} Register of Correspondence H. Halliday to Board 32 August 1878, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p.44 [microfilm].
\textsuperscript{104} Hagenauer to Board memo 28 February 1880, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p. 134 [microfilm].
\textsuperscript{105} Memo 1 March 1880 and Memo 4 March 1880, NAA CRS B 2861 /X2 p. 134 [microfilm].
was suggested that a notice prohibiting visitors be posted on the reserve, and visitors be treated as trespassers unless they obtained permission. Hagenauer’s letter book reveals the weight of this issue on his mind. Using his religious network, he spoke to Bishop Moorehouse who then wrote to Sir William Stawell (a prominent colonial figure who had been a member of the 1877 Royal Commission into Aborigines). Of these letters and strong representations that he made to the Board, none seem to have been effective. In 1881, the Ramahyuck visitor book records a high of 69 comments, suggesting that Melbourne’s International Exhibition drew yet more people out to the missions and Hagenauer was fighting a losing battle.

It should be noted that missionaries did not object to certain types of visitors, if Hagenauer’s responses to the situation are a guide. A visit from a bishop and his family was very much enjoyed, but excursionists on the Bairnsdale Steamer were an ‘annoyance’ with an ‘injurious influence’ on the order of the mission.106 Such markers of class as gentlemanly garb, however, did not guarantee appropriate behaviour, as the above letter from Coranderrk’s Superintendent demonstrates. Hagenauer had no objection to what he described as ‘respectable ladies and gentlemen visiting the place’, which suggests that civilised behaviour was just as important for the viewer as it was for the viewed.107

The Board and missionaries were not alone in their disdain for visitors. John Stanley James, a visitor himself and the journalist noted above who wrote under the pseudonym ‘The Vagabond’, gives an account of visiting Lake Tyers, criticising other excursionists for disrupting the discipline of the mission and disturbing the children at school. Interestingly, he also gives his opinion of the visitors’ book:

Here the Tom, Dick and Harry of society have inscribed their names and recorded their impressions, mostly of a supremely idiotic class. What can an ordinary Melbourne cockney know of the question of the treatment of our aborigines which has been a puzzle to philanthropists and practical politicians? Yet with a sublime impertinence Tom, Dick and Harry, and the females of their kind, scrawl their remarks over the visitors’ book, patronising Mr and Mrs Bulmer in, as it seems to me, a most offensive manner.108

The offensiveness for James appears to be derived from the numerous expressions of gratitude and pleasure for being shown over the mission. James did not, however, leave a comment in the Lake Tyers visitor book; instead, after visiting Ramahyuck in November 1885, he stated simply ‘See Argus’. His article, which expresses the sentiments above, also repeats many of the overstepping tendencies of mission tourists. As a journalist, he perhaps felt he should be treated as an insider, entitled to see the mission in all its detail, while positing that outsiders should practise more

106 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343; Victoria 1882: 47.
107 Hagenauer to MacDonald 23 February 1880, NLA MS 3343.
courtesy.\textsuperscript{109} For James, overt expressions of pleasure and gratitude are patronising spectacles; however, for missionaries and Board members it is the intrusive behaviour of visitors that must be regulated.

**Conclusion**

Visitor books are a rich source for examining the nexus of mission tourism, imperial intimacies and emotion. The Lake Tyers and Ramahyuck visitor books are revealing of the preoccupations of visitors, demonstrating a pervasive interest in Aboriginal people, which manifested as a complex entwining of tropes (exotic, primitive, disappearing and/or civilised). The visitor books are telling of a voyeuristic intimacy between the viewer and the viewed, between the coloniser and the colonised. Visitors drawn to Gippsland by the beauty of the waterways and landscape were equally curious to see the mission residents. Before the tourism of the 1920s, with its formalised structure of boomerang throwing and a gum leaf band, visitors encountered (what was called) the civilising experiment in progress. Neat cottages, school rooms and church services provided a pleasurable mix of the familiar and the exotic, which stimulated many visitors to repeat their visits. Witnessing mission work in progress confirmed the positive qualities of the visitors’ culture, while rendering invisible its unpalatable aspects (such as child removal, alcohol and prostitution)\textsuperscript{110} and the impact on the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people by the administrative surveillance and edicts of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines.

Often visitors’ pleasure in the landscape was transferred to the Aboriginal residents, whom they expected to share in their joy at the healthful surroundings. Visitor curiosity in the goings on of the mission manifested in a pervasive voyeurism, in part enabled by the missionary tour guides, wherein cottages were inspected, children’s progress at school and in church commented on and summaries of the experience written into the visitor books. Surprise was expressed by visitors who, after taking inventory of the mission, found that it far exceeded their expectations. Their surprise often led to favourable comparisons between Europeans and Aboriginal people, as a reflection of the good work of the missionaries, their families and ultimately the administration of the Board.

Some visitors made friends with mission residents, and here I have focused on Gunai women. The concert held at Lake Tyers mission in 1895 was but one instance in which the Gunai and visitors shared songs and hymns, expressing their shared understanding of religion through friendship and emotion. Another instance, more specifically between women connected with the missionary’s family and resident

\textsuperscript{109} Richard White has examined John Stanley James’s writing on China with reference to how James situated his first-hand account against a straw man of popular opinion: a similar process is executed here. See White 2008.

women, can be seen in their joint expedition to collect ferns and mosses from around the Gippsland Lakes. While these relationships do not feature often in the visitor books, their description in letters provides a necessary counter to the distance created between Aboriginal people and Europeans in visitor comments as established by an objectifying tourist gaze. Not insignificantly, the visitor books illuminate a node in the transnational phenomenon of international information exchange and show that the exchange of emotion is critical to these flows. Tourists and travellers traversed the empire, seeking information and deriving pleasure from the civilising machine in action and on display. Sometimes they inadvertently made spectacles of themselves to the bemusement of Aboriginal mission residents.

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Two Victorian corroborees: Meaning making in response to European intrusion

Janice Newton

Prologue

Soon after separation of Port Phillip District from New South Wales, in 1851 and 1852, Guardian of Aborigines William Thomas witnessed and recorded new corroborees at Moonee Ponds, west of Melbourne, and on the northern bank of the Yarra. The first ceremony in 1851 was performed by the Wathawurrung from Leigh Creek, Buninyong and Bacchus Marsh and a few Bunwurrung from Melbourne. A leader, Ninggollobin, told Thomas that it was a new ‘Sunday’ or sacred dance sent down from the clouds by Veinnee (also spelt Vienie) to the Mt Emu Wathawurrung people.

Thomas described how, when he arrived, the participants shook hands with him heartily, then shook hands with the old leading man from the Buninyong people and with each other, their hands going up near their eyes, then down to their knees. To begin the dance, the leader lit a small fire, lit his pipe majestically, then he held

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1 I would like to thank Dr Marguerita Stephens for the inspiration for this article, which has been developed from a paper delivered at the Annual Australian History Conference, Federation University, Ballarat, July 2016. The suggestions of Professor Ian Clark and journal reviewers have also been most valuable. Note: The citations from Thomas in this paper are based on Marguerita Stephens’ 2014 transcriptions of William Thomas’ journals as well as some emailed personal communication from Stephens regarding material that was found too late to be included in the transcription volumes.

2 In Victoria, Aboriginal people and the Native Police were part of the 1850 celebrations in which gifts of food and blankets were given. Curthoys 2012: 246.
a Bible at full height, kept open by his hand, while the 23 male dancers on the other side of the fire danced in a crescent formation for 45 minutes. They held small boughs in their right hand and kept their gaze steadfastly on the Bible. This Bible, along with other two other Bibles, two testaments and four prayer books, had appeared apparently miraculously to the Mt Emu people, laid out individually on pocket handkerchiefs, alongside sticks of tobacco, at a camp. The Mt Emu Clever Men, whom Thomas referred to as ‘Doctors’, talked all night and came to the conclusion that the books and items had come from the clouds:

One ‘Doctor’ took the book to a Settler who stated that the book came down from heaven to make men good happy & love one another, shake hands like messmates (friends), so the Doctors had established this dance Vienie, & were sending the dance to all parts to establish unity among all tribes.

The latter March 1852 ceremony on the northern banks of the Yarra near Melbourne was described by Thomas as a ‘Glee Day Dance Flags Flying &c.’. This ceremony made use of unusually large – 5 feet 8 inches high – bark effigies. Although such bark items were not unknown in Victoria, these also incorporated trimmed, tall gum sapling ‘flag poles’ with up to five handkerchiefs of gay colours joined together mimicking flags or bunting at each end. Thomas’s annotated diagram explains in Aboriginal English, from an informant, that King Paget of Mt Cole tribe:

Further annotations state that two males and two females led the dance. Bark figures were 3 feet 2 inches high, and there was ‘a ½ man (figure) above 20 inches on the donkey’.

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5 Stephens 2014, vol. 2: 522 [Mitchell Library MS (ML)214 Reel(R)26frame(f)245], 30 March 1852. Bracketed archive reference as per Stephens 2014; ML Ms 214 box and item numbers are identified in that text at the beginning of each year.

6 Willis 2007.

7 Mt Cole clan leaders in 1841 were Tirgomurnin (Big One Billy) and Pegetnowerrer, probably the Paget listed as King of Mt Cole in 1850s. Clark 1990: 112; Ian Clark, pers. comm., 2015.


‘Minutiae of action and context’: Re-examining syncretism

Such corroborees have been recently described as evidence of syncretism between particular Indigenous traditions and Christianity.10 In order to extend understanding of the Indigenous response to Christianity and construction of meaning in

frontier contact zones in settler colonial societies, I wish to critique and tease out an oversimplified notion of syncretism. Religious syncretism refers commonly to the union, blending or reconciliation of two or more religious belief systems into a new system. To think more critically about this, I consider the value of the theoretical ideas of Homi Bhabha and Andrew Lattas on mimicry and demonstrate the substantial scope for change and creative action in a culture that was for many years represented as changeless, or locked into ancestral lore. The evidence from the two corroborees and the microhistorical context, as reported by William Thomas, exhibit strong parallels and some points of difference with religious movements of renewal in other, comparable contact zones.

In the absence of any extant detailed Indigenous explanation, much of the meaning of the corroborees remains hidden and esoteric. A starting point for future comparisons and richer analysis of corroborees and rituals from south-eastern Australia is to look at specific nodes of performed, embodied patterns of ritual behaviour and paraphernalia. Items of celebratory and ceremonial material culture are ‘entangled objects’, which, like the performed behaviours, have multiple layers of meaning in the European and Aboriginal worlds and have been appropriated from or adapted to Western culture. Evidence on pipe smoking, handkerchief use, handshakes, the written word and Bibles in particular offer a fertile way to consider key messages and rituals of friendship, peace and meaning making in the contact zone.

This article aims to build on insights of current historiography of the contact zone by a close reading of particular episodes, a focus on the ‘minutiae of action and context’, in order to attain ‘double vision’, and appreciation of ‘mutual attempts at interpretation between the Indigenous and Western settlers’.

Lacking direct Indigenous sources, I do this for the most part through a detailed examination of Thomas’s journals. Thomas may have been surprised at this Christian turn in the Victorian corroborees, but his own journals give many clues about the deep thinking occurring among the Port Phillip Aboriginal people during the 1840s and the build-up to the corroborees witnessed in 1851–52.

11 Nicholas Thomas disputes essentialist claims about the uses of material objects in colonial situations and about the operation of gift or communal economies. When capitalist trade enters an indigenous economy, objects become ‘entangled’, creatively ‘re-contextualised’ and not always what they were ‘made to be’. Thomas 1991: 2–5.
12 Penelope Edmonds has recently published a detailed historical analysis of symbolic historical compacts, accords and covenants in contact zones of settler societies. She argues that the embodied behaviours involved in the past, and in present reconciliatory performances, offer a lens to heightened insight of settler–Indigenous experience. In North America peace pipes, wampum beaded belts and covenant chains were involved in rituals of mutual invention, thus enabling a ‘kind of peace’. Edmonds 2016: 24, 40.
Religious responses to frontier experience generally and ideas about mimicry are discussed as a basis for comparison. The scope of the change that confronted Victorian Aboriginal people after 1835, and the experiences of Thomas in his efforts to bring Christianity, also serve as important background material to an understanding of the two corroborees. The detailed explication, in keeping with approaches that acknowledge Indigenous people as legitimate actors, focuses, as stated, on Aboriginal creative adaptation and ‘mimicry’ of specific items of European material culture and everyday behavioural rites. The article concludes with an examination of Aboriginal responses to Thomas’s teachings on Christianity, evidence of innovative creativity in corroborees and an overview of the value of looking at behavioural rites and specific objects as nodes of meaning making in a situation of culture contact.

Religious movements in the contact zone

There are some pertinent similarities between aspects of the 1851–52 corroborees and religious responses to colonialism in the Melanesian islands north of Australia and Prophet movements in New Zealand. In the Paliau Movement in Manus Island and Vailala Madness of the Papua New Guinean Gulf, the villagers imitated European manners and customs in various ways; for example, sitting at tables on chairs, wearing Western clothes, handshaking, drilling their own police force. This mimicking of behavioural features of European life was usually seen as ill-founded, irrational copying. While Margaret Mead saw the Manus Island Paliau Movement as a progressive movement of radical transformation towards the brotherhood of man and peace, others emphasised the significance of the Melanesian worldview and how they understood the cosmic order. Melanesians ‘gave an autochthonous form to the civilizing processes that were transforming them’.

From 1850 to the early 1900s, after huge losses of land, which was their means of spiritual and economic subsistence, and a series of wars (1845–72), the New Zealand Māori feared extinction. Differing from Australia in its indigenous structure of settled villages, political hierarchies and a single language, New Zealand by the 1840s had missionary and Māori quickly learning each other’s languages. Conversions to Christianity proceeded apace with Māoris astounding missionaries with their memorisation of scriptures and their detailed understanding of biblical stories. They incorporated biblical symbols and paradigms into their whakapapa

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14 Russell 2008.
15 Russell 2008. See also Broome 2010.
20 Rosenfeld 1999: 3.
genealogy cultural ‘bank’ and, as the dramatic land loss occasioned by colonialism became painfully apparent, they began sophisticated reinterpretations of biblical narratives. The religious/political prophet movements, for example, aimed to have a Māori King sharing power with the British Queen, aligned the Māori with Israelite ancestors and called upon ‘god(s) to recreate their world’. European and Christian biblical renewal myths ‘were often blended with indigenous myths of return’, and prophesies were made about a Promised Land and a time of peace. The salient feature of the syncretism in these movements was not the mix of tradition and new Christianity, but the autochthonous attempt to restore the sacred by retaining power over the land.

Scholars have generally claimed that Aboriginal Australia did not experience millenarian movements like the New Zealand Prophet movements or the cargo cults of Papua New Guinea, but there is a small body of work that counters this conclusion. Swain agrees with Burridge that, from first contact, millenarian activities were possible. He argues that south-eastern Australian Aborigines clearly ‘articulated the likelihood of an imminent end to their world’ and expressed anti-white sentiment in a range of ritual activities. Similarly, millenarian type movements, some with a material goods focus, have also been reported in the north and north-west of Australia in a later frontier period. Informative comparisons can also be drawn with the American Ghost Dance Movement. Political opposition and spiritual excitement go hand in hand for much of this history of mimicry and creative religious response to the trauma of colonialism. The Ghost Dance gained its initial impetus from a Paiute prophet called Wovoka, but spiritual opposition, prophesy and reaction to the colonial yoke had at least a 400-year history. Changes and vitality in Native American religious beliefs and practices before and after colonialism belie any notion of a romanticised, static ‘precontact’ society. Native American culture incorporated notions of destructions followed by regeneration and renewal, visions, a messiah returning to restore an ‘original happy condition’, prophesy and heralding signs. New theology and ritual borrowed from Christianity but held onto key features of native traditions.

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21 Rosenfeld 1999: 3, 5, 7.
22 Rosenfeld 1999: 5.
23 Rosenfeld 1999: 96.
24 Rosenfeld 1999: 70.
26 Swain 1993: 133. See also Koepping 1988: 398, 400.
30 Irwin 2008: 133.
New prophet movements among the Native Americans in the 1870s and 1880s incorporated into their rituals and dances embodied practices such as marching in single file, shaking hands and reciting chants from writings and objects resembling Christian icons, and drew on Christian ideas. Smohalla and the John Slocum Shakers made use of Catholic paraphernalia and Western symbols, including flags, signs of the cross, a book containing mysterious characters and enthusiastic handshaking.31

The Ghost Dance was developed after a Paiute, Wovoka, experienced a vision in 1887. This vision prophesised that living and dead Native Americans would ‘be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free of death, disease and misery’,32 and also be free of the white population, who would be removed by some natural disaster.33

The strong Sioux prairie tribe took on the ritual, incorporating a ghost shirt and dress painted with symbols meant to ward off bullets. They ignored a government ban on the movement; troops overreacted, culminating in the 1890 Battle of Wounded Knee, where more than 300 dancers and fleeing women and children were massacred.34

Irwin rejects explanatory models of this religious movement that go no further than notions of misguided copying and syncretism. It is important to see the engaged, visionary creativity as well as the syncreticism; to recognise the continued vitality of indigenous practices and beliefs; and to use an ethnotheology that delves into the ontological depths of indigenous thought.35 The dance infused and incorporated ideas and paraphernalia from Christianity onto a traditional indigenous framework. The religious rituals were sites for transformation, subversion and experimental practice. ‘Rather than turning to Christianity, ghost dancers contended with it in order to turn its powers to their advantage.’36 Concepts of renewal and moral rejuvenation were indigenous ones.

Compared with the detailed testimonies available for the Ghost Dance movement and in the near absence of Indigenous writings and explanations in south-eastern Australia, attaining ontological depth in the latter context is a formidable task. Detailed examination of the minutia of ritual life is aided by a consideration of the theoretical ideas on mimesis in a colonial situation.

34 Irwin 2008: 314.
36 Irwin 2008: 255.
Mimesis

The concepts and theories of Homi Bhabha, often used to analyse and unpack contemporary literature and global situations of refugees and global movements of people, have also been shown to be fertile for understanding of past situations in border and frontier situations. The postcolonial historian of borderlands and frontier contact zones is enriched by sensitivity to cultural hybridities, the importance of the ‘migrant’s double vision’, the rites of extraterritorial and cross-cultural initiation and the often hidden indigenous narratives internal to national identities.37 I wish to attempt to think about mimicry from the point of view of indigenous people confronted with a colonial power encouraging and modelling behaviours and thoughts while their traditional political and cultural autonomy is almost flushed away and access to the new power of the colonist remains elusive.

Bhabha discusses the significance of mimicry in a colonial situation. It underpins a desire for a ‘reformed recognisable Other’, who nonetheless is never quite the same as the colonial model. This ‘not quite the same’ creates uncertainty, ambivalence and partial representation. Mimicry, within its double vision, holds within it the seeds of menace that can disrupt colonial authority, producing a ‘partial vision of the colonizer’s presence’.38 Mimicry is like camouflage and is a ‘form of resemblance’ but it carries a threat through ‘conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory “identity effects” in the play of an elusive power’.39 The founding objects of the Western world become ‘erratic, eccentric, accidently’ ‘found objects’ of the colonial discourse. Objects may appear in a different guise, thought of differently. The Holy Bible, for example, can lose its ‘representational authority’, become ‘strangely dismembered’ and be used in mundane and non-sacred, ‘profane’ ways.40

Andrew Lattas develops the concept of copying or ‘mimesis’, providing fruitful lines of thought for contact zone history. He argues that mimesis is a ‘creative way of thinking about and responding to Western processes of social change’. The people ‘exploit chance resemblances and associations to create mimetic channels and magical gateways between (their own culture) and Western culture’. The ‘miming often seems odd and out of context’ and seemed abnormal and lacking rationality to Westerners. The people try to create a new sense of self by reworking some of the ‘embodied practices of the self’; for example, ‘everyday gestures’. Religious ritual is a technology to ‘maintain the cosmic order’. More importantly, Lattas advises that it is ‘inadequate to gloss such (copying) processes as “syncretism” or adjustment

37 Bhabha 1994: 2, 5, 6, 9.
39 Bhabha 1994: 90.
40 Bhabha 1994: 91.
movements’. Intersections and misreadings both ‘embrace and evade incorporation into Western institutions’. When the particularities of the intersections between indigenous and Western cultures are studied, they are ‘never completely disordered or haphazard’. Misreadings are formed into coherent systems of ideas that feed off dominant culture. Accidental meanings can drip from the dominant culture and be used, with tradition, to contribute to a new alternative.

Supernatural interpretations of the new European order are often made because organised missions are a powerful force and provide a basis for the ‘myths of the “secret” part of Christian knowledge hidden by the whites’. In many traditional societies, religion is a technology to ‘maintain the cosmic order’. ‘Elaborate myths and intensive rituals’ are seen as essential for continuity, so even in new cults there are former conservative attitudes and concepts. Work towards the future is both secular and ritual. What initially seems, to a Westerner, weird and random mimicry, warrants double vision, deeper thought and analysis. The historical context of the 15 years prior to the corroborees discussed assist in this task.

**Shocking and inexplicable change**

The first years of permanent settler colonialism in Melbourne were truly shocking in impact for the Indigenous people. Stephens calls it ‘a time of unprecedented and unequalled turmoil and upheaval as a whole world of meaning and means came under challenge and all but disintegrated’. Lethal new diseases brought on massive loss of life and infertility, and would not respond to traditional healing methods. Most likely this provoked increasing revenge killings for deaths attributed to sorcery. Within a few years, the Victorian tribes experienced a rapid, escalating eviction from their land and from natural resources such as forests and water. Aggression against the Europeans met armed and legal reprisals of greater scope and brutality than most knew. They came to know the horror of gaol confinement and public hangings. Aboriginal freedom of movement was severely curtailed as they were prohibited access to their traditional place for meeting near Melbourne. They saw the development of townships, and rapidly developed strong desires for new addictive and strongly reinforcing substances like tobacco, alcohol, sugar and tea.

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41 Religious responses to contact with millenarian elements include the so-called 1950s Adjustment Movement described by Ronald Berndt among the Elcho Islanders and a later revival called the ‘Black Crusade’, and the Jesus cult in Western Australia in the 1960s. Berndt 1962; McIntosh 2004; Borsboom 1992: 14, 17; Bos 1988: 426, 433.
43 Worsley 1957: 248–49.
Victorian Aborigines quickly took up some new economic options. Gaining almost immediate superiority in use of the gun for hunting, many Aboriginal men entered exchange contracts with whites to hunt for them. A few travelled interstate, or even overseas, with white explorers or adventurers. Others agreed to join the Native Police, embraced horse riding, the uniform and the risk of travelling into enemy territories.46

Evidence of rupturing worldview and a society severely challenged by the invasion can be seen in the increased mobility, frequent gatherings in Melbourne, the meetings, discussions and dances.47 These ritual attempts to formulate a new future demonstrate creative responses to change, often within traditionally religious frameworks, and reflect similar circumstances for indigenous religious movements within other settler colonial contexts. In the Victorian (Port Phillip) context, key personalities interacting with the Aboriginal people were the Protector of Aborigines George Augustus Robertson and his Assistant William Thomas, whose journals are the basis for this discussion.

William Thomas: Assistant Protector and Guardian (1839–52)

William Thomas, born in Westminster of Welsh parents, was an ‘unassuming Wesleyan schoolmaster of middle years and moderate income’ when appointed Assistant Protector of Aborigines for the Port Phillip colony in 1837.48 He was encouraged to apply by a prominent Whig, the Countess of Ilchester, following his interest in the British Select Committee of Enquiry on Aborigines (British Colonies). Thomas began his appointment and his journals in January 1839, after presenting himself to the Superintendent of Port Phillip, Captain Lonsdale. He continued to record his life and work until months before his death in 1867, aged 74.49 Protector and Guardian, he also became official visitor to reserves and depots following the 1860 creation of the Board of Protection.50 Some recent scholars have contested the widely held view (personally promulgated in his journals)51 of Thomas as a friend to the Aborigines, known for ‘his goodness of heart’ and cited as ‘more successful than any other first generation settler in attempting to comprehend and sustain Aboriginal society’.52 His journals are a useful source for Aboriginal voices as

47  Stephens 2014, vol. 1; Standfield 2012.
51  Reed 2004.
52  Mulvaney 1967.
he recorded many conversations verbatim.\textsuperscript{53} Like all Protectors of the time, walking a shadowy line between advocating for ‘his’ Aboriginal charges and supporting the colonial project,\textsuperscript{54} Thomas was hampered by his whiteness and Eurocentric eyes that may well have led to unhelpful policies.\textsuperscript{55}

From the outset, Thomas worked extremely hard to learn Aboriginal languages with a view to Christian proselytisation, and he was soon giving sermons partly in native tongue. That the Aboriginal word ‘Bunjil/Punjil’ of the preeminent creator eagle/spirit was used for the Christian God with ‘Father’ added\textsuperscript{56} gave scope for slippage in meanings.\textsuperscript{57} In the early years, Thomas was adamant about keeping the Sabbath, doing his utmost to prevent work and corroborees on that day. He attributed his own and others’ illness and bad luck to sin and failure to keep the Sabbath.\textsuperscript{58}

Thomas swung between hope and disillusion in relation to his efforts to spread and model Christianity. On balance, he was despondent and very pessimistic about his achievements, often lamenting the need to offer bread and rations in order to get any interest from his Aboriginal people.\textsuperscript{59} For example, in August 1840, he noted: ‘A man had need … if he wishes to be heard, hold a Bible in one hand & a long spear with loaves … run thro’ on the other’.\textsuperscript{60}

There were brighter moments when the children from the school learned to sing hymns and repeat catechisms, and when Thomas’s congregations were large, particularly attentive, appeared interested and asked questions. Thomas wrote in May 1843, ‘I do not know that I have ever had a more comfortable (Sunday) with the blacks’, but ‘[u]nhappily such Seasons are of rare occurrence’.\textsuperscript{61} Like Sir George Grey in the South Australian settlement, who saw Europeanisation in bodily habits as an essential part of the civilising Christian mission, Thomas was gratified when

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Standfield 2012: 3.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Nettlebeck 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Reed 2004. See also Pascoe 2014; Stephens 2014, vol. 1: i–ii. According to Pascoe (2014: ii), Thomas was ‘probably the best man any Aboriginal was likely to meet in Melbourne in 1839’ but he never wavered ‘in his presumption of the superiority of his culture and his spiritual beliefs’.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Stephens 2014, vol. 2: 240 [ML214 R3f404–6], 17 April 1847.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Swain (1993: 114–58) argues that the notion of ‘Bunjil the all father God’ was a result of Christian assimilation.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Fels 2011; Stephens 2014, vol. 1: 193 [ML214 Rlf167], 2 August 1840; 240 [ML MSS 214 R2f192], 22 November 1840; 407 [ML214 R2f373], 14 November 1841; 506 [SLV MS14624 Series 1 William Thomas Journal], 19 March 1843; Stephens 2014, vol. 2: 211 [ML214 R3f395], 13 December 1846; 246 [ML214 R3f437], 2 May 1847; 413 [ML214 R3f617], 28 October 1849.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Stephens 2014, vol. 1: 516 [SLV MS14624 Series 1].
\end{itemize}
the Aboriginal people came to Sunday service in European clothes, well-washed, shaved and with hair combed, and some Aboriginal leading men began to take up this standard for themselves.62

Thomas's weekly sermons responded to what was going on around him. As the vices of Melbourne, drunkenness and subsequent imprisonment took their toll, and there was an escalation of revenge killings after sudden deaths, his sermons reflected this. Otherwise, his sermons reflected standard Protestant Christian texts, with perhaps a small focus on God's omnipotence,63 love64 and punishment in hell.65 Of particular relevance to the argument here were the sermons, for example in 1846, on the ignorance of man without knowledge of God's book.66 In early 1851, Thomas also addressed a Brighton encampment on 'the comforts of civilized life brought about by meditating on God's word his character &c'.67

Thomas's ethnographic insights were clustered in certain areas. He developed a strong interest, understanding and, sometimes, respect for aspects of traditional Aboriginal life. He noted, in detail, healing methods (on occasion submitting to them) and explanation for sickness and death. He had an astute understanding of the political system of authority and decision-making and the legal system of judgment and punishment. He had a strong sense of the significance of spatial ordering when tribes met for meetings. He was quite 'modern' in his cultural relativism on these matters, but on other matters more blinkered. Thomas made very little mention of creation stories and no mention of kinship organisation. Neither was he 'ever willingly admitted to the higher levels of secret and sacred ceremony'.68 In general, however, his journals and letters are a very rich repository of knowledge and perceptions of the frontier situation in early Melbourne and allow us to look more closely at the Indigenous use of certain cultural artefacts. I consider the pipe, the handkerchief, the written word – in particular, the Bible – and the handshake as significant performative symbols in strategic responses to colonial invasion and Christian evangelism.

The pipe

Tobacco was often presented in early encounters as ‘a token of goodwill and conciliation’,69 and Aboriginal people quickly took up the ubiquitous custom of smoking using a pipe.70 Tobacco became widely sought after by men, women and children, highly valued in exchange for goods and labour and for trade.71 The significance of this innovation becomes apparent in three entries by Thomas.

In 1841, an old man, Tottoy, considered God’s creation on earth and said, God made ‘the Main Stars, sun, water, me’ and the tobacco pipe.72 Thomas also noted that an Aboriginal ‘greeting gesture’ (one that could not be refused) was to put one’s pipe in the mouth of the other. When a boy, Jimme, was released from gaol to the mission and led to his brother, ‘his brother run to him and shoved his pipe in his mouth’.73

On another occasion, Thomas attempted to reject this overture and risked the fragile friendliness of an encounter with a stranger.

>Among Blacks an exchange is decided friendship and fidelity. I remember once raising the ire of some strange Blacks I had never seen before in refusing to take my pipe out of my mouth & put it in his & my receiving his pipe.74

The opening of an 1851 ceremony with the lighting of a pipe thus can be read, at least partially, as an invitation to friendship in a new colonised context. The Aboriginal pipe-swapping greeting demonstrates how new items can be modified and used in different ways; a mimicry, but not quite the same. In this case, the meaning of the differing pipe lighting and sharing appeared to have enhanced the European meaning, to connote ‘friendship and fidelity’, as noted by Thomas.

The handkerchief

Handkerchiefs featured in both of the unusual corroborees described by Thomas. They held the miraculous gifts of Bibles and tobacco and, sewn together, they were remade into symbols of celebratory bunting. (European needles and thread were quickly taken up by Aboriginal Victorians.)75 By the mid-nineteenth century, the

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69 Cancer Council of Australia 2016.
70 In much of Australia prior to British colonisation, the Aboriginal people were accustomed to chewing tobacco-like substances (most commonly pituri) and in the far north they used wooden, bone and shell smoking pipes. Courtney and McNiven 1998: 51; Brady 2002; Watson et al. 1983; Cancer Council of Australia 2016.
71 Cancer Council of Australia 2016.
75 Stephens 2014, vol. 1: 181 [ML214 R1f152], 30 June 1840; 362 [ML214 R2f336], 23 August 1841.
handkerchief was already a multi-use and polysemic item of European culture. The hemmed square of thin fabric was kept in the purse or pocket and, since the sixteenth century at least, used for the wiping of the face, the hands or blowing of nose, as an impromptu method of carrying small items, as a head covering or bandage, clothing patch, footwear repair and so on. Depending on the type of fabric and decoration, it could be symbolic of social class and much more. From the late eighteenth century, white handkerchiefs were waved to demonstrate approval at public rallies, often in a colonial context. Handkerchiefs could also be decorated with flags and slogans to demonstrate political loyalties.76

Although there have been some suggestions that handkerchiefs were primarily a colonial and mission imposition bringing bodily cleanliness and order to Indigenous subjects,77 like the Europeans, Aboriginal people often desired handkerchiefs as head coverings, small containers and self-decoration for respect and esteem.78 On the Australian colonial frontier, handkerchiefs have been present at key political moments and in relation to key political figures. Bennelong asked for pocket handkerchiefs,79 Batman gave 200 in his treaty exchange,80 explorers used them for exchanges81 and Yarra leader Billibellary, anticipating his imminent death, cried into his pocket handkerchief.82

By 1847, the handkerchief had become a valuable used for Indigenous ceremonial exchange. In a ceremony establishing or re-establishing mutual friendship, the Devils River (Mansfield) people gave the Yarra people spears and a koogra (possum skin cloak) and received five koogra and bundles of pocket handkerchiefs, sashes and new European articles in exchange.83

Handkerchiefs thus had use value as well as status and symbolic value for Aboriginal people in frontier situations. In the Mt Cole–derived corroboree, handkerchiefs were used to construct bunting and thus acted as a form of mimesis of European spectacle, celebration or show. Flags were commonly flown outside early goldfield shops and bunting was likely a part of celebrations in Melbourne and beyond. They also featured in Aboriginal artist Tommy McRae’s drawings of a dance performed by Wathawurrung Aborigines, with William Buckley, in relation to a sailing ship.84

77 Davis 1986.
79 Heiss and Minter 2008: 9.
80 Kenny 2008: 38.6.
84 Koorie Heritage Trust 2017; University of Melbourne Archives 2017.
In the Moonee Ponds corroboree, the handkerchief acted as a finely crafted container for two significant items of European origin – tobacco and the Christian book – in what were perceived as supernatural or spiritual circumstances. They stood for some of the desired items of Western culture as well as for a symbol of welcome and celebration.

The power of the written word: Letters and books

Far from a pure technical skill imposed by a Western culture and acting independently on colonised cultures, Peggy van Toorn demonstrates that ‘writing never arrives naked’. Aboriginal trade routes took writing and the printed word way beyond the frontier in Australia, incorporating writing into exchange systems, ‘using alphabetic signs, paper and books in ways radically different from European norms’.85 Early on in the Port Phillip Settlement, Aboriginal people become aware of the significance of the letter as a pass or passport to allow them freedom of movement, access to Melbourne and rations and protection from arrest and gaol.86 Comparable with the Native American experience,87 ‘Many of the people were fascinated by the magic of writing and reading and were keen to learn the skills, and to have their children do so’.88 Thomas referred to requests for letters from him on a number of occasions,89 but when an Aboriginal man from the north-west begged a letter from Thomas in order to retrieve his wife, who had been absent two nights, Thomas commented, ‘poor fellows they think a letter will almost raise the dead …’90

The power of the Christian Bible/Book was often referred to by Thomas in his public and private conversations with the people. On Sunday 12 September 1847, Thomas visited the Northern Encampment on the Yarra and had a serious conversation with the men on ‘the importance of being acquainted with God, & awful state of Man destitute of knowing him’.91 He went on to remark upon King Malcolm’s son or stepson, who had been incarcerated for some months earlier in the year for severe mental illness:

85 Van Toorn 2006: 12. To demonstrate a range of responses to writing, van Toorn uses case studies such as Batman’s Treaty and the Coranderrk petitions reflecting cross-cultural use of each other’s graphic communication for varying purposes. Writing can be ‘reclotted or cross dressed’ when similarities in the sound of words has Governor Macquarie renamed as Eaglehawk, the moiety spirit that came to be associated with a superior creator god.
86 Noted also on the Kimberley frontier. Rowe 1987: 89.
87 In the vision of a Delaware Prophet in 1762, the Master of Life gave Neolin a prayer, which was carved into an Indian stick with hieroglyphs. The prophet then produced ‘The Great Book of Writing’ which was passed and copied from person to person, crossing tribal boundaries. Irwin 2008: 131.
89 Stephens 2014, vol. 1: 155 [ML214 R2f93], 18 April 1840; 278 [ML214 R2f526], 30 March 1841; 438 [SLV MS14624 Series 1]; Stephens 2014, vol. 2: 69 [ML214 R3f249], 18 December 1844; 254 [ML214 R3f446], 28 August 1847.
I was much struck with Nangkarn. On my addressing them he asked me where was God’s book (I had forgotten to put my prayer book in my pocket …) I said that I had forgotten it but could do without it, the surprise this black manifested, & his uneasiness … he said you tell Black fellow that you know nothing good, do nothing good without God’s book & now you say you can do without it.92

Nangkan had, like seers and spiritual healers in many traditional societies, experienced and recovered from a serious mental illness or challenging supernatural episode.93 It is possible that his family link to King Malcolm and episode of madness had given him credibility as a man with peculiar spiritual insight.

Writing was not an independently operating force towards ‘civilisation’. It was often clothed with power to give safe passage, effect change or bring useful food and goods. The written word of God in the coloniser’s Bible came in richer, spiritual and powerful ‘clothing’. The Bible held aloft in the 1851 Moonee Ponds corroboree had appeared under miraculous circumstances and dancers stared at it for 45 minutes. The promise of Mt Cole’s King Paget to bring book/s from above the sky in 1852, and the promised change in peace and amity among all people, also marked the power and faith put in this special, magical, written word from the Europeans, a distinct minority of which regularly preached this same truth.

The handshake

Tiffany Shellam and Penelope Edmonds have alerted us to the significance of handshaking in borders and fringe contact zones as both a physical act of joining hands and as a ‘metaphor for friendship and peace’.94 Edmonds traces the handshake to Roman times and argues that it is emblematic of the repertoire of British imperialism to effect negotiated compacts, accord and covenants between settler and Indigenous peoples, which at the same time held the seeds of betrayal.95 Whether it was an Indigenous practice in the south-west of Western Australia (the focus of Shellam’s study) or not, within a few years of intermittent contact with Europeans, as experienced on the American frontier,96 it became a shared ritual with subtle changes of meaning and intention understood on both sides, especially when the friendly gesture was denied.97

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93 For example, Reid 1983.
94 Shellam 2009: 70.
97 Shellam 2009: 70–71. Shellam also notes that as powerful as the gesture was to imply peace, it was also highly likely to have been dangerous to the Aboriginal people, given the transmission of bacteria from coughing and sneezing to a population without immunity. Shellam 2009: 195.
Thomas’s journals are liberally peppered with references to shaking hands with Aboriginal people and encouraging them to shake hands with each other. The handshakes are ‘cold’, ‘cordial’ or ‘enthusiastic’, and mean variously ‘Welcome’;98 ‘Farewell’, ‘Safe journey’, ‘I mean you no harm’;99 or ‘I am no longer angry with you’ and ‘I will argue no more’.100 They were initiated as much by Aboriginal as the European population.

It appears that the handshake was customary, or at least modified to suit Wathawurrung culture. An Aboriginal farewell handshake was described by Bunce in Bacchus Marsh, 1849. One by one, in order of closest to least close kin, the men took each other’s hand and held it firmly for about five minutes, covering their eyes with their other hand, their heads bent with genuine tears ‘oozing through their fingers’. Then with ‘two sharp jerks of the hand’, they walked off without looking back.101

Although Aboriginal people soon keenly participated in the British manner of shaking hands, one can never be really sure whether the meaning of this act was shared by both parties. There were some misunderstandings. Examples in Thomas’s journals suggest boisterous, enthusiastic welcome (sometimes mildly threatening and/or instrumental); farewells; secure and not so secure agreements; a perceived charter and agreement to undertake a revenge killing; a wish or compunction to reconcile after an altercation; and a thank you for visiting.102

At Mr White’s Station (Western Port) in 1840, Thomas was ‘followed by groops of Blacks one after the other to Tubbwubabel some ready to pull me off my horse shaking hands’.103 On a later journey in Western Port the same year, Thomas’s party camped with an Aboriginal group on the banks of the Kervan River. ‘They were all highly glad to see me shaking hands and asking tobacco at the same time.’104
When charged with outrages on the Yarra River in 1840, the Woiwurrung said to Thomas ‘that they shook hands with His Honour some time back and & all gone sulky, there must be some mistake’. At ration distribution time, ‘Capt Turnbull’ and Poleorong ‘insolently’ pointed a finger at Thomas, demanded flour, tea, sugar and rice and insisted on controlling the distribution of flour. They threatened to go to the Governor about it. Thomas was furious and gave them none. ‘In the afternoon they come & beg shake hands, I shake hands but will not give Capt Turnbull.’

In July 1840, there was a theft of meat and a gun discharged during the night at Thomas’s Aboriginal encampment. Thomas was very angry and the person responsible, Young Man Toby, was very anxious to reconcile. His handshake resonates with the traditional more than the introduced.

He rushes to me lays hold of my hand and for some time shook it … The men was desirous of shaking hands with Toby which I permitted and all seem’d pleased.

When, in 1844, Thomas brought new Aboriginal people from the north-west to the gaol to attempt to translate for a prisoner, he directed these strangers to shake hands with each other and ‘I took this opportunity of impressing upon (the prisoner) and the others that all Blacks should be Brothers, like white men’. After a visit to Melbourne in 1847, Gentleman Jemmy (Yammabook) was taken into custody. Thomas visited him and entreated him to forgive, ‘not to be sulky with white people on account of being in custody, but only shake hands & be good to them’. On this occasion, there is an element of symbolic yielding to the power of the imposed European civilisation.

In 1851, a big gathering of Yarra people near Melbourne resulted in the spearing and later death of McNoal from the encampment. Thomas addressed the encampment for Sunday from Psalm 32:8, ‘I will instruct thee & teach thee in the way which those shall go’. The Aboriginal men ‘shook hands with me heartily after service & vowed vengeance on Quondine’ (who had speared McNoal). The men’s interpretation of Thomas’s text as support for a vengeance killing was unintended. Thomas tried to reason with them that, as McNoal had appeared to be recovering after the spear wound, his death may have resulted from some cause other than sorcery from enemy tribesmen.

The Aboriginal men and women used the handshake to symbolise apology and reconciliation with Europeans and among each other as well. ‘Burreneun goes to Kermitterrewarren and gives him 3 and a half lb flour and 1 lb sugar as a starting

position for which he seemed much pleased and shook hands.” Berberry’s wife was annoyed with Thomas’s wife, Susannah, as the latter had refused to give the former a dress to wear for church and had turned her and her diseased dog out of her house. Later in the day, ‘she appeared sorry and shook hands’.

The handshaking involved in the Moonee Ponds corroboree appears to have stood for brotherhood and peace and was thus derivative of European actions and teachings, but it also incorporated new Indigenous aspects, with the touching of the eyes and knees. After some slippages of meaning and misunderstood handshakes in the early years, by the early 1850s the handshake appeared to have become a strong shared symbol of welcome, friendship, forgiveness, reconciliation and, perhaps at times, enforced submission. The reconciliatory corroborees, one described as a new Sunday dance, or dance for the Christian Sabbath, drew on the Christianity taught to the mobile groups involved by Protectors such as Thomas in Melbourne and Edward Parker in the Loddon Station, and pious settlers such as Colin Campbell in Mt Cole District. It also demonstrated engaged creativity and the reinscription of central traditional ritual forms.

Indigenous response to Christianity

Thomas was sometimes gratified and at other times dissatisfied with his Aboriginal congregations. The members of the congregation in their turn oscillated between derision, indifference and great interest in their responses to Thomas’s sermons. Sometimes the interest was so strong it resembled millenarian fervour. On one occasion, in 1842, Thomas was much encouraged when over 100 attended his service. When he finished, an officer of the Native Police ‘begged that he would address another Group whom he thought (them) anxious to hear’. Although Thomas was ill and could not say much, by their excited talk afterwards and almost all of them shaking hands with him, Thomas believed they had felt and understood Christ’s words.
On other occasions, the Aboriginal men, in particular, said that Thomas’s God was not theirs, that they did not fear hell and that he should cease frightening people. In 1848, Thomas admonished Nerrimbinek for a drunken assault and spoke of hell. Nerrimbinek said, ‘he did not care about hell or Death, my Pundgyl was not his Pundgyl’. When Thomas said that Yanki Yanki (Yonker Yonker) was living a miserable life, ‘what is his answer “[If] I like it what’s that to white man”’. Yanki Yanki went on to state to Thomas that ‘he believed there was a God but did not believe there was a hell or else white man would not get drunk & swear or they would be afraid of going there’. A few of the Native Police gathered but ‘Beruke begged that I would no speak to them, that blackfellows did not like it it frightened them, I told them that God would punish me when I was dead if I did not tell them what I knew of God & Christ’.

In 1849, Nerrimbinek was very ill, spitting blood, but refused to take Thomas’s medicine. Thomas asked him what he thought God would do to his soul and he answered, ‘no me care, go away no you talk to me, like that’. In 1850, Thomas commented about how callous and even enraged the Aboriginal people were if you spoke to them about Christianity when ‘death appears at hand’, ‘as tho’ the evil one had them more under his power then than any other time’. Even when God’s care of the soul after death was accepted, sorcery remained the explanation for sudden death.

As one who had experienced living with whites and rejected that life when returned to his people, Yonker Yonker was in a position to reflect on the enormity of changes occurring around him. When asked whether he would tell God that Thomas had taught them about God and Christ, he said with conviction: ‘We Blackfellows all want a new heart, Your Blackfellow’s hearts must be changed.’

With only limited access to deep knowledge about Aboriginal ontological responses, Thomas’s journals give at least a clear indication that the taking on of Christianity was neither uniform nor reflecting gradual, progressive assimilation. The people congregating near Melbourne oscillated or lurched between rejection, acceptance with some theological reservations and, on occasion, excited enthusiasm. The people did not give up searching for solutions for their problems. They met in large groups, talked and talked in meetings, shared experience and knowledge of the new

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white people and, during the 1840s in particular, in order to survive, they made ritual forays into the new world they were experiencing, searching perhaps for the new heart.

Corroborees and ceremony

After Thomas began as Assistant Protector in 1839, there were many intertribal gatherings and large discussions in the vicinity of Melbourne as ‘tenacious Aboriginal leaders … used Melbourne as the site of inter-tribal relationships, ceremony and decision-making.’ For example, between October and December 1839, there were eight corroborees near Melbourne noted by Thomas involving Goulburn people as well as Yarra, Western Port and Barabool. Again, in late February to mid-May 1840, there were another 13 referred to, involving most of the same groups: Wathawurrung, Woiwurrung, Bunwurrung, Mt Macedon and Goulburn. Most were associated with corroborees and many with fights or moderated judicial punishments. There were signs of creativity and sometimes millennial thought. In February 1841, when nine Goulburn Aborigines were taken into custody, a ‘Celebrated Goulbourn Doctor’ prophesised that a ‘Cloud of Blood would descend on the District’ and the residents from Thomas’s station fled.

In June and July 1841, there was a flurry of corroborees, and a couple of initiation, farewell and friendship ceremonies, some performed when there were more than 300 in the camps close to Melbourne. For a week in September 1842, there were corroborees every night for a week, one involving only women. On 13 October, ‘at noon a Singular’ corroboree combined over 400 Goulburn, Yarra and Western Port Aborigines.

On the evening of 22 December 1843, around 800 people from seven tribes gathered in Melbourne in ‘connection with the arrest of two men’. The ceremonial dance, originating in the Australian Alps, lasted six days and involved seven dances, six of which featured a war emblem and the seventh a bough, the emblem of peace. The dance included 25 pieces of bark to represent each of the new Native Police. The barks were collected together and put in the centre of the camp ‘in silence proclaiming

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125 Standfield 2012: 10.
130 Stephens 2014, vol. 1: 571 fn 238 [ML214 Box 3 item 1/R357–58].
good will to all around’. 131 Images of Native Police centred on a multiracial force that wreaked some havoc against former enemies and may have been seen as a new centre of Indigenous power.

In April 1845, near to 800 Aboriginal people assembled in Melbourne. 132 The old chief from north-west of Gippsland reiterated the mountain source of the new corroboree ‘conveyed to the Blacks’, ‘to learn what is good to sing, Gaegape (Gaggip) like white man Sundays church’, ‘big one Sunday’. Thomas noted the new sacred dances and new curious effigies, altogether new from anything that has ‘yet been heard or seen among the Aborigines of Victoria’. 133

In 1847, Thomas also took ‘copies of the Sacred dance of the Mansfield Blacks’, which resonated with biblical tales and psychological loss. A celebrated Dreamer dreamt that all the Aboriginal people were:

Together asleep, & Pundgel was very sulky, & came down and cut the left arm off, of every man woman & child. The Interpreters concocted this dance to avoid search taken [?] place, vide rude representation of a figure minus an arm. 134

Images of amputated people may, like shrinking men in Melanesia, signify loss and powerlessness in the face of British colonialism. 135

As explained at the beginning of this article, the Vienie Dance was shown to Thomas near Moonee Ponds in 1851. The following day, he found ‘much excitement among the people’ as they made their preparations to leave. 136 Then, in March 1852, Thomas described a ‘fine Glee Day Dance Flags flying &c.’ on the north bank of the Yarra. Three days later, about 100 people are lying around ‘tired after continual exertion in corroborees’. 137 Much of the innovation in this period was attributed to semi-mythical people in the north-east of Victoria in the Alps. There, celebrated Dreamers, or Clever Men, derived their creative inspiration to modify ritual through dreams.

135 Clark 1980. See also Fanon 1967.
Conclusion

There are many unanswered questions in attempting to elucidate meaning from the corroborees. The meaning of the human effigies remains obscure while the donkey resonates with Christian imagery. What is apparent is that mimesis created surprise and confusion among European observers and often was appended to an autochthonous framework. There are significant points of comparison and contrast with other settler colony renewal movements.

The dream or visionary source of new dances and rituals and their creative evolution over space and a relatively short time have parallels in North America and New Zealand. The adoption and adaptation of Christian and Western ceremonial objects, and embodied movements in a way that demonstrated internal coherence, further reflected other frontier histories. The mystique of the Bible and the book was common to North American and Australian frontier society, as was adaptation of Western ceremonial form and friendship overtures, a desire for peace and, possibly, a change towards gender inclusion for key dance roles. South-eastern Aboriginal religion already reflected beliefs about an afterlife in the sky, so Christian ideas of heaven were easily transplanted.

Unlike prophet movements in North America and New Zealand, in Victoria large numbers of followers and clear end-point prophesies were not in evidence, with the exception of the Goulburn Doctor predicting a cloud of blood. Victorian Aboriginal people demonstrate neither a rejection of Western material culture nor an obsession with acquiring it. In fact, the Bible, pipe and handkerchief/flags were foregrounded for their symbolic rather than utilitarian value. In contrast to the other settler frontier prophets, there was, at this stage, no complex reworking of biblical scripture to reflect injustice and loss of land and of game. There was, however, a desire for unity, for peace, for happiness and the hope that Bibles, school and traditional ceremonial dances could help in this direction. They appeared to be turning to Christianity rather than contending with it. The two corroborees reflected Indigenous methods of creative change and the re-inscription of a central theme of tribal unity and (Christian) brotherhood of man. The corroborees discussed reflected in a small way the miraculous and hope for transformation on earth but the lead up to them, with corroborees highlighting peace, the place of the

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138 For example, I have been unable to find references to the Tununderboolook tribe, although ‘bulluk’ means swamp in the Woiwurrung language and there is a South Australian town called Tanunda, settled in 1842 by Lutheran Prussians, that is a ‘long way’ (303 miles, 666 kilometres) north-west of Mt Cole, near Beaufort. Similarly, the sender of the sacred dance from the clouds, Veinnee or Vienie, is one of very few words in Thomas’s wordlists that begin with ‘v’, but has some associations with the verb ‘to come’ and ‘old woman’ in Latin languages. Thomas’s wordlists include vener and venerer as forms of ‘what’ or ‘which’; serra immi, climb up; svaamberdan, in; and serring, edible grub. Stephens assumes Vienie refers to a sacred figure akin to Bunjil among the Mt Emu people. Stephens, pers. comm., 2015.

139 An innovative element in Wovoka’s Ghost Dance was that males and females had visions at the same time and that both sexes wore feathers. Ostler 2004: 266.
Native Police and dismembered people, gives much stronger evidence that there was a process of autochthonous, creative and innovative effort being expended in the ritual, ontological, epistemological and religious domains, in order to grapple with traumatic change.

The contact zone is a zone where peoples, commodities and cultural ideas mingle, entangle and recombine; where cultural artefacts and patterns are borrowed or created in response to changed circumstances.¹⁴⁰ The mimesis involved in this process may be elucidated through a focus on specific nodes of contact and performative action with the colonising power through symbolic items and mannerisms. They are embodied without certainty and can operate erratically, but are ultimately a creative response to change with their own coherence, which both embrace and evade incorporation or assimilation with Western institutions.¹⁴¹ Thomas’s journals remind us that the spiritual must be treated seriously if one is to attain double vision and understanding of meaning in the contact zone.

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¹⁴⁰ Parker and Rodseth 2005: 3; Penn 2001.


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The homestead as fortress: Fact or folklore?

Heather Burke, Lynley A. Wallis, Bryce Barker, Megan Tutty, Noelene Cole, Iain Davidson, Elizabeth Hatte and Kelsey Lowe

Introduction

Houses are quintessential statements of identity, encoding elements of personal and social attitudes, aspirations and realities. As functional containers for human life, they reflect the exigencies of their construction and occupation, as well as the alterations that ensued as contexts, occupants and uses changed. As older houses endure into subsequent social contexts, they become drawn into later symbolic landscapes, connoting both past and present social relationships simultaneously and connecting the two via the many ways they are understood and represented in the present. As historical archaeologist Anne Yentsch has argued: ‘Many cultural values, including ideas about power relationships and social inequality, are expressed within the context of the stories surrounding houses’.¹ This paper is one attempt to investigate the stories surrounding a ruined pastoral homestead in central northern Queensland in light of relationships between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people on the frontier.

The stone ruins of Cambridge Downs homestead (Figure 1) are situated on the banks of the Stawell River in the Burke District of central north Queensland, approximately 30 kilometres north-west of the township of Richmond (Figure 2). Cambridge Downs was first established in 1864, at a time when pastoralists were expanding into much of north and west Queensland. The station continued to operate until the end of World War II, when it was divided and re-leased as part

¹ Yentsch 1988: 11.
of the soldier settlement scheme.\textsuperscript{2} In celebration of Cambridge Downs’s history as a foundational European settlement for the region, the Richmond Shire Council opened a replica of the homestead in the town of Richmond in 2009 (Figure 3).

![Figure 1: Ruins of Cambridge Downs homestead, 2016, looking south-west.](image)

\textit{Source: Photograph by Heather Burke.}

In an area where the vernacular architecture of pastoralism – both initially and later – was typified by timber and tin, the stone building at Cambridge Downs is certainly unusual. The public interpretive materials at the replica present the structure in a decidedly military light:

The stone walls would not be easily breached, and the windows had iron bars to defend against Aboriginal attacks. The siting of the homestead, well out on a clear flat 300 metres away from the wooded Cambridge Creek, is supporting evidence of the pioneer’s \textit{[sic]} defence strategy.\textsuperscript{3}

Other versions of this theme are more elaborate:

The need to take precautions against native attack was fundamental when the Cambridge Downs homestead was built … The walls were of local flagstone rock mostly up to three centimetres thick laid horizontally and cemented one above the other in a wall 30 to 40 centimetres thick and about two metres high. Windows were square openings without glass but with vertical iron bars two and a half centimetres thick. Doors were solid timber swung on solid timber frames.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{thebibliography}{4}
\bibitem{enumerate} Authurs 1995: 268.
\bibitem{enumerate} Richmond Shire Council n.d. (a).
\bibitem{enumerate} Tourism and Events Queensland n.d.: 106.
\end{thebibliography}
Figure 2: Location of Cambridge Downs and other places referred to in the text.
Source: Map created by the authors.
Both versions present the stone homestead, which later served as a post office and store, as a symbol of the tenacity and perseverance of pastoral settlers, demonstrating the value of the community’s pastoral heritage and this property in particular.

This interpretive material provided at the homestead replica is based primarily on a local history of the Richmond Shire written in 1995 by Julie Ann Authurs for the Richmond Shire Council. Authurs was not a historian and, at the time of writing, had only recently arrived in the Richmond community. Her work derived largely from unpublished notes prepared by a local amateur historian, Tom Staunton (now deceased), that were held by the council. Staunton had spent time in the Queensland State Archives and other repositories, but his work is unreferenced. As such, the claims that he, and subsequently Authurs, made for the Cambridge Downs homestead can be assumed to reflect a locally accepted version of history only. The version published by Tourism and Events Queensland is similarly unreferenced, but probably derives from Authurs’s work. None of the details in either version have been traced to other primary sources. In this paper, we analyse this local (and presumably largely oral and possibly quite modern) history of the Cambridge Downs structure in terms of the process of public history-making in Richmond.

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5 Richmond Shire Council n.d. (b).
6 Taylor 2013: 4.
THE HOMESTEAD AS FORTRESS

While the story of fortification attached to the Cambridge Downs homestead cannot currently be considered anything other than ‘folklore’, we are only partly concerned with whether or not the Cambridge Downs homestead could have been built for defensive purposes, and more with why the telling of such a story has arisen and been perpetuated in the present. This interest derives from a larger project to document the archaeology of the Queensland Native Mounted Police (NMP), one strand of which focuses on an examination of purported defensive elements in settler architecture across the state. The material remnants of the Cambridge Downs homestead provide an opportunity to question the dominant history of Richmond and its pastoral past, and evaluate whether the construction choices evidenced in this unusual building could have been an intentional response to anxieties about frontier violence or merely a functional outcome driven by other factors that were later reinterpreted in this way.

We first evaluate the settlement of Cambridge Downs against the background of Indigenous–European contact in the region and specifically the nature and scale of potential frontier violence. We then consider Cambridge Downs’s architecture against the form and nature of other homesteads in order to understand whether or not it was unusual for its time and place. Finally, given the form and location of Cambridge Downs homestead, we consider the connections between the cyclical nature of histories of frontier conflict and arguments for the fortification of settler structures in order to explore wider issues surrounding the ways in which the past is – and has been – remembered.

Cambridge Downs and frontier violence

In the early 1860s, squatters settled the Kennedy and Burke pastoral districts, occupying large runs on a leasehold basis.7 The first account of violence in the region was recorded in 1861 by former Queensland NMP Sub-Inspector Frederick Walker, when a party of approximately 30 Aboriginal men in the vicinity of the Stawell River was fired on by Walker’s exploring party. As a result, ‘Twelve were killed, and few if any escaped unwounded … The gins and children had been left camped on the river and as there was no water there our possession of the spring was no doubt the cause of the war’.8 Walker’s reactions were no doubt influenced by his long history with the NMP, but pastoralists were also active in the process of maintaining a zone of violent encounter.

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7 Allingham 1988: 47; Bolton 1972: 27; Meston 1895; Towner 1962.
Cambridge Downs was first settled in 1864 when Kennedy and MacDonald took up land on the north side of the Flinders River. In 1865, John Lamont Dow, then working on Cambridge Downs, sent locks of hair and an accompanying letter to his father, an extract of which was published in *The Ballarat Star*. Dow described finding the hair amongst:

things which we got in a black’s camp the other day, upon the occasion of a hostile descent, which it was found necessary to make upon about 300 of them, as a lesson for some of their tricks they had been playing upon one of the out-stations.

Dow had been sent to the Gulf country as part of a sponsored exploration group and was one of the first Europeans in the area. Although he did not elaborate upon either the degree of hostility in this encounter or the nature of the ‘lesson’, a second letter by Dow in reply to criticism expanded upon this event:

A shepherd came in one night from one of the out camps with a spear in him; his hut had been burnt by the blacks, and he almost killed. Volunteers were called for next morning by one of the owners of the station. Three of us who were engaged in shearing sheep at the Head Camp at the time, went with him, together with a black boy as tracker, overtook them on the open plains, got luckily between them and their war implements, gave them what you may suppose they would get from five men well armed and well mounted, burned about a dray load of nulla nullas, spears, coolamens [sic], &c.

Only four years later, the unstocked Cambridge Downs property was offered for sale and at that date consisted of a manager’s house, woolshed, huts and yards. The property remained unsold and was abandoned by the end of 1869, one of nearly 160 properties to be abandoned in the Burke District alone. At the beginning of 1872, when the Queensland economy was experiencing financial recovery, Cambridge Downs was purchased by William Greig and Francis Nash. Over the next five years, Greig and Nash embarked on a program of improvement, such that by 1877 the property consisted of:

a substantial dwelling house, bachelors’ quarters, kitchen, store, and meat-house, woolshed (capable of holding 130 bales wool), three men’s huts, stockyards, horse paddock, and eleven out-stations with huts and yards complete.

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9 Palmer 1903: 127.
10 Dow 1865a: 2.
11 Dow 1972.
12 Dow 1865b: 2.
14 ‘Telegraphic’, *Brisbane Courier*, 26 October 1869: 2.
Tensions with Indigenous people appear to have remained after reoccupation and restocking; as late as 1875, a Chinese shepherd, Ah Shong, was allegedly murdered by Indigenous people.\(^\text{17}\) The presence of the NMP throughout the region in the 1870s is a further indication of conflict. The NMP were a crucial force in race relations throughout the nineteenth century, a critical component of colonial strategy and the main colonising instrument across all new mining and pastoral districts in Queensland. Their role was to ‘disperse’ Indigenous people ahead of new settlement and intimidate through constant patrol in areas that were already established, as well as act as a punitive force for local settlers.\(^\text{18}\) The first NMP camps in the Burke region were established in 1865 at Burketown, patrolling as far as the Flinders River, and 1868 at Cloncurry.\(^\text{19}\) Later camps were established throughout the 1870s, including at Hughenden in 1870, Oak Park and Mt Emu Plains in 1872, Saxby River in 1874, Cornish Creek in 1875, Betts Gorge and Diamantina River in 1876, and on the Burke River near Boulia in 1878 (see Figure 2).\(^\text{20}\) Between 1877 and 1878, there were NMP detachments stationed on Richmond Downs, the neighbouring run just south-east of Cambridge Downs that later became Richmond.\(^\text{21}\) Indigenous people began to be ‘let in’ to stations from the end of 1874, so it is possible that the end of the 1870s marked the end of the period of greatest conflict. Equally likely, however, is that violence endured under the guise of working and labour conditions, since it was still used as a means of control to make Aboriginal people comply with pastoralists’ conditions.\(^\text{22}\) Moreover, studies from the Kimberley have suggested that violence against Aboriginal people on pastoral frontiers tended to last much longer than on other frontiers, and often well into subsequent decades.\(^\text{23}\)

No known contemporary oral history accounts amongst either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people reference the frontier violence that occurred in the region in the 1860s or 1870s. Within the Aboriginal community there is only one primary massacre narrative. This relates to the reprisals that followed the spearing of Henry Kaye, a white officer of the NMP, on the Woolgar goldfields (to the north-east of Cambridge Downs) in 1881.\(^\text{24}\) Although there is no documentary record to confirm the events that followed, local anecdotal evidence suggests that men, women and

\(^\text{17}\) Queensland State Archives Inquest File JUS/N48, 1876.
\(^\text{18}\) Bottoms 2013: 18.
\(^\text{20}\) Richards 2008: 30.
\(^\text{21}\) Pugh’s Almanac 1878: 111; 1879: 109. These entries, although referring only to ‘troopers’ rather than ‘native troopers’, reflect a pattern of at least one sub-inspector with large numbers of troopers, but no constables. Constable was the term applied to white police, whereas trooper was a term almost solely applied to the NMP (Richards 2008: 11). Pugh’s Almanac contains references to several such places, some of which are known NMP camps, so those with ‘troopers’ are highly likely also to be NMP.
\(^\text{22}\) Loos 1982: 36, 57.
\(^\text{23}\) Harrison 2007.
\(^\text{24}\) Pers. comm. from Allan Kynuna (now deceased) to Lynley Wallis, 2004; pers. comm. from Frank Crapp (now deceased) to Lynley Wallis, 2004.
children of three distinct Indigenous groups were murdered in retaliatory attacks.\textsuperscript{25} Similarly, a local man, Frank Crapp (a descendent of miners on the Woolgar goldfield), recounted that, prior to Kaye’s death, Aboriginal people had been spearing bullocks, but no component of his story connected explicitly to violence against settlers, nor to any events before 1881.\textsuperscript{26} The fact that Kaye’s death and its possible consequences constitute the seminal frontier violence story for the region means that there are no contemporary Aboriginal counter-narratives around the form or purpose of the Cambridge Downs homestead.

**Defensive architecture on the pastoral frontier**

White settlers on the frontier faced certain challenges within a climate of relentless pastoral expansion, aggressive defence of life and property and highly racist attitudes towards Aboriginal people – particularly ‘wild’ people who had no established relationships with Europeans. Historian Lyndall Ryan has argued that the task in this context is to understand the ‘weight of fear and the imaginary that seem to be ever present’, that may have influenced settlers’ choices about personal safety, how to control their anxieties and the appropriate responses to real and potential threats.\textsuperscript{27} The underlying hypothesis for such a connection – indeed for connections between threat and frontier violence in many forms – is that stimuli that threaten personal safety produce anxiety responses, together with a high motivation for defence that can be manifested in anger and increased potential for attack on those seen as the perpetrators.\textsuperscript{28} Historian Joanna Bourke distinguished between fear and anxiety, where fear refers to ‘an immediate, objective threat, while anxiety refers to an anticipated, subjective threat’.\textsuperscript{29} In this light, features of domestic structures that may be evidence of fortification speak to an anxiety underlying life on the frontier and the subjective nature of an anticipated attack.\textsuperscript{30}

In an archaeological and architectural context, some studies have argued that settler anxiety was manifested in features that fortified domestic dwellings and outbuildings against Aboriginal attack. Karen Burns, an architect with interests in Australian frontier housing, examined dwellings and barns around Port Phillip in Victoria and along the valleys of the Ouse and Clyde Rivers near Swanport on Tasmania’s east coast. She argued that a suite of defensive features were incorporated into these structures. Drawing on Tasmanian accounts from the 1830s, Burns argued that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Authors 1995: 203.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Queensland State Archive ID number 348676 Coronial Inquest file into death of Henry Pollock Kaye; pers. comm. from Frank Crapp (now deceased) to Lynley Wallis, 2004.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Ryan 2013: 222. See also Morris 1992, who argued for a ‘culture of terror’ created around the European perception of the unpredictability and arbitrariness of Aboriginal resistance.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Rogers 1983.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Bourke 2003: 126.
  \item \textsuperscript{30} See also Ryan 2013.
\end{itemize}
features such as ‘portholes’ (small openings), roofs covered in turf and solid log wall construction were no accident and that such choices embodied ‘a performance of a desired frontier’.31 While acknowledging that a fortified building could have a dual function depending on circumstance, Burns argued that these buildings were models for potential action and ‘built as symbolic talismans to ward off harm’.32 Unfortunately, throughout her study, and despite her architectural background, Burns failed to question whether such features could be accounted for equally well by purely prosaic or functional purposes. Assuming a fortified function therefore resulted in a somewhat circular argument. In contrast, Peter Bell, a historian with expertise in built structures, when examining the inclusion of vertical ventilation slits in a stone barn in South Australia that had purportedly been built for defensive purposes, noted that such openings were common ventilation devices within the English ‘bank barn’ design.33

Nicolas Grguric, a historical archaeologist, examined in some detail three pastoral structures in South Australia built in the 1840s and 1850s and one in the Northern Territory built in the 1870s. All of these were of stone construction and Grguric argued that a number of features may have been used to fortify them. These included ‘embrasures’ (in one case these were small square openings, at least one of which was closed by wooden shutters, in the other, vertical slits), the minimisation of window size and the absence of windows in rear and side walls.34 Grguric also considered alternative explanations. In line with Bell’s argument, Grguric conceded that embrasures may have been simply to provide ventilation in outbuildings.35 He acknowledged that the typical vernacular stone cottage style imported from Britain and widely used across South Australia was typified by blind rear and side walls unless access to rear out-buildings was required.36 Because of this uncertainty, both Grguric’s and Burns’s evidence remained ambiguous: apertures, embrasures and stone walls could have functioned effectively as defensive features, particularly when incorporated into homesteads, but may equally have been non-defensive, particularly when incorporated into outbuildings.

The Cambridge Downs homestead

The ruins of the stone building at Cambridge Downs represent the remains of the first permanent homestead built on the site. Although descriptions of the property in 1869 identified a manager’s house, there can be no certainty that this is the stone

31 Burns 2010: 77.
32 Burns 2010: 73.
33 Bell 1987: 10; see also Grguric 2008: 71; Whittaker 2001.
building on site today.\textsuperscript{37} Greig’s and Nash’s improvements between 1872 and 1877 resulted in a ‘substantial dwelling house’, which may be the stone house.\textsuperscript{38} Certainly, data for the Burke census district indicate no stone houses in 1876, but four in 1881 (Table 1), corroborating the likelihood that the Cambridge Downs house was constructed between 1876 and 1877.

Table 1: Stone houses across census districts in northern, western and far northern Queensland, 1864–86.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census district</th>
<th>1864</th>
<th>1868</th>
<th>1871</th>
<th>1876</th>
<th>1881</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennedy South</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mitchell</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>Burke</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>5\textsuperscript{*}</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Cardwell</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert</td>
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<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>Somerset</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Cloncurry</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hughenden</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{*}Specified as ‘huts’


Authurs suggested that, during the 1880s and 1890s, the original stone homestead was transformed into a post office and store, although a store was already present by 1878 and post office functions had been transferred to the property in 1875.\textsuperscript{39} It may well be that both functions were formerly located elsewhere on the property, but shifted to the stone house when a newer homestead (now demolished) was constructed in the late nineteenth century. Former owner Ian McClymont described the stone homestead as being constructed of ‘flagstones and mud with iron bars in the windows’, and Authurs further elaborated this description:

\textsuperscript{37} Sydney Morning Herald, 8 March 1869: 6.
\textsuperscript{38} Classified advertising, Queenslander, 19 July 1879: 67.
The original Cambridge Homestead had a cane grass roof, flagstone floor and one inch bars in the windows. The cooking was done in a separate building adjacent with a large stone oven. Water would have been carted from the adjacent creek. The homestead was situated out in the open downs away from trees in case of raids by hostiles. Later on when galvanised iron became available, the roof was then constructed of that.40

The floor plan shows a structure with five rooms: a large central room that spans the width of the building flanked by two rooms on the north at the rear and two on the south at the front (Figure 4). The central room had a hipped roof, but the southern rooms were built under a separate skillion. These two rooms are small and separated by a short length of hallway that functioned as an entrance lobby, with external access off the lobby. The walls are made from roughly coursed sandstone slabs with an average thickness of 300 mm. Each of the front rooms contained a small window measuring approximately 1,000 x 1,000 mm; a similar window was once also present in the western wall as shown by photographs of the homestead c. 1890 (Figure 5). When recorded in 2010, all structural timbers had collapsed. The front wall was almost complete, but only the lowest sections of the rear, side and internal walls were still intact. In 2016, the building had deteriorated still further, such that neither of the timber window frames in the southern wall remained in situ.41

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41 Archaeological work at Cambridge Downs in both 2010 and 2016 focused solely on the standing structure itself; systematic surveys were conducted around the homestead to a distance of approximately 1 km for other archaeological traces of past activities or relationships between Aboriginal people and European settlers that might either confirm or contest the folklore of settler fear and Indigenous hostility. No evidence was located.
The side walls show no evidence of the homestead having been built in stages, even though the building incorporates at least two separate roof lines. This suggests that the form and layout of the two small southern rooms were contemporary with the construction of the central and rear sections, rather than being enclosed later as additions under a verandah skillion. Like the front two rooms, the rear two rooms may also have been under a skillion roof, although this is not visible in the only known photograph of the homestead (see Figure 5) and no contemporary structural evidence for roofing survives. No glass windows are evident in the historic photograph, but traces of butt hinges on the timbering of the window apertures indicate they were sealed by a single, internal wooden shutter that spanned the width of the window opening (Figure 6). According to Authurs, the windows once had a series of vertical metal bars across the opening, which were removed along with the iron roof following World War II. There is no surviving structural evidence for bars ever having been present on the windows, or evidence of any damage caused by their removal (for example, the intact timber frames shown in Figure 6). It is possible they sat in the large gap between the timber window framing and the exterior stone walling (Figure 7), but, if so, their installation and removal have left no physical traces on the building.

Figure 5: Cambridge Downs homestead, looking north-east, c. 1890.  
Source: Courtesy of Richmond Shire Council.

Figure 6: Traces of a butt hinge for an internal timber shutter, in situ window frame, 2010.  
Source: Photograph by Matthew Moran.

This layout and form have been reasonably accurately represented in the replica at Richmond (Figure 3) except for the shutters, which were not included in the reconstruction. Instead, the bars are the main feature, inset into the internal timbering of the window apertures rather than the gap between the window frame and the external wall (Figure 8). Other alterations to the replica include a breezeway at the rear to accommodate storage facilities.

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42 Authurs 1995: 267. According to one undated source these were removed by tying them to a vehicle and pulling them out, see Burnett 1984/5: 16.
Figure 7: Gap between window frame and stone wall, western front room, 2016. It is possible that bars once sat in this gap, but there is no visible, physical evidence.

Source: Photograph by Heather Burke.
Comparing Cambridge Downs

The early use of stone in building construction is certainly unusual, although not unheard of, in the Burke District. Sumner used census data from 1861 and 1864 to demonstrate a complete absence of stone/brick homesteads in the Kennedy District, east of the study area.43 A similar pattern is evident in the Burke District, with no stone houses appearing in the census data until 1881, by which time there are four (Table 1). The lack of stone might be attributable to several factors: timber was often more readily available and required less skill to build with;44 stone required at least some skill with masonry – the construction of the Elderslie homestead complex, for example, in the early 1880s near Winton, was the result of a serendipitous combination of a German stonemason hailing from South Australia and the abundant supply of local sandstone from Mount Booka-Booka;45 and climatic conditions meant that greater ventilation and cooling was achieved by timber construction.46

43 Sumner 1974: 49.
45 Cultural Heritage Branch and the Queensland Heritage Council 2005: 33.
Stone dwellings, however, were invulnerable to rot or termite attack. Variations in building techniques as a result of previous experience and cultural background were also likely. For example, mud bricks were used to construct a dwelling on the banks of the Flinders River at Hughenden and pisé homesteads were particularly predominant in the channel country. Mud was also used as a matrix to bind rubble or flagstones, examples of which exist at Lammermoor and Richmond (The Mud Hut Hotel). For Cambridge Downs, the stories of fortification are attached to the fact that it is built with thick stone walls, the two front (southern) rooms have small windows, and is said to have had bars on the windows. The thick stone construction certainly meant that the walls would have been difficult to penetrate in an attack. However, walls constructed of heavy timber slabs, corrugated iron or mud and timber/rubble would be equally impermeable and sufficient for resisting attack. Further, stone walls need to be thick enough to support the weight of the roof. Some authors have suggested that the use of stone is ill-suited to the north Queensland climate, but a ready supply, masonry skills and ability or aesthetic preference may all have been contributing factors in the decision to construct in stone, as at Elderslie. Although there is some suggestion that the bars were originally part of the windows, there is no physical evidence of their presence. If they were present, it seems equally likely that they might have been installed when the building was converted to a post office and store, at which time a greater level of security may have been appropriate, an event authors claimed took place in the 1880s/1890s. While the use of wooden shutters was a common security device in early settler buildings, they were also essential in areas that relied on dray transport and where the successful transportation of glass panes would have been expensive and difficult at best.

Beyond Cambridge Downs, other homesteads in the region also have stories of fortification attached to them. Old Westmoreland homestead, also built in stone by 1881 near the Northern Territory–Queensland border, was located in an area with many documented instances of violence. The Queensland Heritage Register’s statement of cultural heritage significance for this site states:

The building shows clear evidence of being constructed with due consideration for possible conflict: thick walls (which would also have helped insulate the building), inward opening doors, and few windows.

48 Sumner 1974: 52; see also Sorenson 1911.
49 Bell 1984.
51 Roberts 2005.
52 Gray 1913: 130.
Anthropologist Richard Martin also noted ‘the tiniest window slits built into the sides’ of the homestead as a means of protection, although this observation has no source. The first homestead at Lammermoor (south-east of Hughenden) was built from heavy gidyeah slabs in a log hut style, which one contemporary observer described as ‘a substantial and neatly erected log hut with loopholes for rifles’.54 Cambridge Downs homestead was certainly built sturdily and from materials that are unusual in its geographic context, but it does not necessarily follow that this was a consequence of anxiety resulting from life on an uncertain and sometimes violent frontier. This conclusion oversimplifies our understanding of the building since there were possibly several other factors that influenced the choice of construction style and materials. On the balance of present data, and unlike the Queensland Heritage Register entry, we argue that there is no ‘clear evidence’ of Cambridge Downs having been fortified: there is only scant evidence of conflict on or near the property, the methods of construction are consistent with traditional principles of stonemasonry in vernacular contexts, the use of shutters can be explained as a purely functional, non-defensive choice and the window bars, if present, may well have added at a later date as part of a change in use. The fact that such ambiguity is inherent in both this and the only other previous studies of fortified structures that we are aware of causes us to question such arguments more widely.55

The homestead as fortress: Fact or furphy?

The fact that there are stories about the homestead being fortified is perhaps of greater relevance to an understanding of frontier conflict than the physical structure itself. Historical references to frontier violence, perpetrated by both settlers and Aborigines, are so numerous that it would be difficult to deny either that an atmosphere of dread and anxiety must have existed on the frontier, or that many more violent encounters took place than can be deduced from documentary records alone. Frontier anxiety would have been widespread, but it is not clear that all settlers responded in the same fashion, otherwise there would presumably be a greater number of similar dwellings, as well as dwellings that were undisputably fortified as the telegraph stations on Cape York Peninsula were. Instead, the fact that Cambridge Downs is a reasonably rare example of architecture in a region where the nineteenth-century pastoral dwelling was typified by a slab hut has likely contributed to its intrigue. In a community whose identity centres around pastoralism and pioneering endeavour – of which frontier conflict has been an integral, although probably

54  Gray 1913: 130; Bennett 1928; also Sumner 1974: 48–52.
56  White 1918. These buildings, such as that which survives as the Musgrave River roadhouse today, had turrets on opposing corners specifically included in the design for defence against attacks.
unspoken, part – it is not difficult to understand how the homestead has come to both symbolise and perpetuate local lore. It is not inconceivable, then, that the fortification of Cambridge Downs homestead is a subsequent, and probably highly localised, folkloric construct rather than direct evidence of inter-racial conflict and violence during the expansion of the pastoral frontier in the nineteenth century.

The contemporary story of Cambridge Downs is now principally filtered through its replica in the main street of Richmond. This is often the only version encountered by visitors, since the original homestead is located 30 kilometres out of town and is not a major tourist locale. The fact that the signage at the modern replica contains no accredited source for the fortification story has not prevented it from becoming taken for granted; in fact, its representation in the replica’s official interpretive signage has given it a degree of authenticity that is only bolstered by the physical presence of the bars on the windows as the material embodiment of protection. A lack of sources is typical of the circulation of such knowledge as self-evident tradition within a local community, the recording of it in secondary local histories as established fact and the resurrection of it in subsequent accounts built upon this foundation, often with little or no regard for the veracity of the links in the chain.57 The historical sequence for the property – instances of Aboriginal–settler violence in the 1860s, the initial construction of a homestead in stone c. 1876 and its possible subsequent conversion to a store and/or post office when a new homestead was built, possibly in the 1880s – is collapsed into a single set of decisions made in response to an external threat, and the visitor invited to imagine what that must have been like as they look through the bars at the world outside. In many ways, the account of fortification that has been built around the Cambridge Downs homestead ties into earlier and still persistent strands of local history-making across settler nations, since such tales of frontier structures enhance visions of ‘ordinary’ people as battlers and pioneers fighting for their personal safety. The attacks that such architecture was intended to deter are on domestic spaces, and often on the sacrosanct spaces of family, women and children. Furthermore, such accounts tell only the non-Aboriginal side of the story and are therefore automatically cast as stories of protection and as choices that were defensive (and therefore implicitly justified), rather than offensive.

Conclusion

The ‘flattening’ of history that folklore achieves obscures alternative interpretations and elides events to present a modern politics of the frontier. The US research by Anne Yentsch that we drew attention to in the opening of our paper has highlighted the folklore of frontier violence and used it to map the construction of history at a community or ‘folk’ level. In examining later folk history accounts for what were

57 For a similar chain, see Roberts’s (1995, 2003) analysis of the story of the Bells Fall massacre near Sofala.
deemed to be ‘odd’ architectural features, such as narrow staircases, high windows or small, downward-facing openings in upper storeys, Yentsch recorded a series of explanations that linked them to resisting attack from hostile Native Americans: narrow staircases prevented attacking parties from ascending in groups, allowing them to be killed one by one, small openings allowed people with guns to fire on those below and high windows were built to prevent arrows being shot into houses. In this process, she noted that houses acquired symbolic connotations as icons of superior strength and intellect that could be used to demonstrate the superiority of one group over another as part of a general process of myth-making:

Like tombstones, houses serve as historical records set in the landscape. The history of a house is the history of a family or a sequence of families … Created as mythology, the legends wrapped around houses operated according to principles of mythological thought, obeying a logic (encountered cross culturally) wherein normal boundaries of time and space, the real and the non-real, were differently manipulated than in the rational thought guiding day to day activity.58

Trying to determine whether or not such accounts are ‘true’ is far from simple and, perhaps, in the end, not all that useful. There are two poles to the debate over the contribution that local and oral histories can make to the historical understanding of frontier conflict: one is that increasing chronological distance confers a greater degree of honesty in the telling; the other is that local and oral accounts become more mythologised and less reliable over time.59 Historians Harris, Nettelbeck and Foster, for example, noted that ‘unrecorded events and community memories’ are often curated for long periods within local communities, so much so that they argue that local stories of violence at Elliston, South Australia, have survived for more than 150 years within non-Indigenous memory.60 Notably, however, they provided no evidence for the historical continuation of such memories across this time span, and did not interrogate the stories, their sources or their genealogies. On the other hand, several other scholars have pointed to the invention of detail, reworking of events and transference of elements between stories that occur as tales are filtered through successive tellers.61 Moreover, Indigenous oral histories appear to work differently. Deborah Bird Rose has noted that the further events recede from the present, the more speakers focus on intentions rather than events. She refers to this as faithfulness rather than truthfulness, since the facts become malleable in this space, although the purpose of the stories still centres on the meaning of what happened. This faithfulness represents for her ‘the moral content of the process of colonization’.62

60 Harris 2003: 89; Nettelbeck 2011: 1118; Nettelbeck and Foster 2010: 53.11–53.12.
Stories of violence attached to homesteads and domestic spaces are obviously highly ideological in that they legitimise particular constructions of historical processes and demonstrate the superiority of white settlers over Indigenous people. In the same way that stories of the white pastoralists who perpetrated violence on the Queensland frontier became stories of ‘pastoral pioneers’ in later reinventions of their activities, we would argue that stories about houses that cast them as defensible structures function similarly and may also have been invented and attached to buildings at a later date. This does not make them any less meaningful, however. Like other aspects of pioneer myth, ‘however fanciful they became, [they are] testament to the desire to remember, at least among those regional communities most affected by the resonances of frontier violence’. Moreover, there have been cycles of willingness to believe in such stories, arising in response to different political and social contexts and articulating different ideologies and anxieties. Regardless of whether the stories are true in any original sense, people’s willingness to believe in them is real, in the process revealing the cycles of response to Aboriginal people.

Shifting the story into the centre of town via the auspices of the replica has served to solidify the fortification story, in that the bars are present and incontrovertible, and disseminate its meanings to a much wider travelling audience. As such, the building has come to symbolise the pioneering spirit and endeavour that is an integral part of the pastoral heritage and identity of the region and casts this in a particular light, while at the same time remaining mute on the violence inflicted by settlers and the NMP on Aboriginal people during the process of settlement. Riggs has argued that a fundamental catalyst within contemporary political relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is the unsettling effects of the ‘anxieties of whiteness’ that are still managed through the projection of threat on to Indigenous people. Like Riggs and Augoustinos, we do not argue here that the choice to represent Cambridge Downs as a fortified structure in local histories and public interpretation is necessarily a motivated act, but that its representation exists within wider, contemporary ideological frameworks that position Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in particular ways for particular purposes.

What is required next is further careful and nuanced study of the content, genealogies and uses of oral and local histories of fortification attached to frontier structures and an analysis of their ‘faithfulness’ in Rose’s sense. Raymond Evans contended that '[h]istorians have yet to construct a cartography of the selective trails of remembrance and forgetting in Australia’s past’. We would argue that this applies not just to actual tales of a violent encounter, but also to imagined ones.

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63 Foster 2009: 68.12.
since the degree to which, and ways in which, folklore circulates can indicate how people negotiate their relationship between past, present and future. Folklore – or collective memories of things that may or may not have happened – flourishes in the gaps between lines of evidence and is not necessarily a function of ‘untruth’. Instead, it can be a dynamic and meaningful way to create individual and collective relationships to place, as well as ‘imagined, predicted or anticipated futures’ for groups of people. In this way, folk history becomes a vehicle for building communities at the local level, connecting the past with the present in immediate, and often family-based, ways.

Stories of domestic fortification and defence are part of a long tradition of representing Aboriginal agency as a threat. Without a critical evaluation of each structure and the genealogy of oral historical accounts of fortification attached to them we have no way to separate the ‘weight of fear and the imaginary’ on the frontier in the past from the ways in which such claims have been used subsequently to remember or forget the consequences of the frontier in the present. The patterning of anxiety, fear, inclination, violence and response becomes uniform rather than contextual to particular places, regions, people or choices. Moreover, tales of individual structures, like monuments, ‘allow only brief statements [and] do not tell the complex story of curiosity, resistance, dispossession, accommodation, isolation, and politicization which characterized the racial frontier in Australia’. Critical evaluation of both individual fortified domestic structures and patterns of fortification (whether real or imagined) across regions, families or time periods may begin to unravel some of the complexity of this story both then and now, and contribute to understanding the anxieties that continue to underlie cultural inter-relations in contemporary Australia.

Acknowledgements

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Book Reviews
Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances and Imaginative Refoundings
by Penelope Edmonds

Review by Alexandra Roginski
The Australian National University

‘What might an Indigenous-led emancipatory politics and a truly postcolonial sociality look like? What are its limits and possibilities within this fraught paradigm, the double bind of reconciliation?’ Penelope Edmonds poses these urgent questions in Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances and Imaginative Refoundings. In recent months, her transnational study has become pressing reading as the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’ reignites perennial debates about the relationship between Indigenous people and the settler state.

Official reconciliation narratives derive from a utopian politics that often evades history’s atrocities, argues Edmonds. A surge of good feeling cannot simply wipe the slate clean, particularly in nations without a marked decolonisation moment. In addressing the role of performance and affect in the refounding of national identity, Edmonds contributes to a body of scholarship about reconciliation discourse that includes the work of Miranda Johnson and Glen Coulthard, and draws on ideas of the cultural life of emotions developed by Sara Ahmed. Through a series of case studies, she takes us to reconciliation events in the United States, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, and threads these travels with discussions of the material artefacts created and used during contact moments and their aftermath (such as wampum belts, breast plates and ‘peace’ medals), and during the reconciliation events (such as Sorry Books, the black-and-white twine handed to participants at

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a Tasmanian event and a peace pipe smoked in an official meeting between Sioux leaders and the Governor of South Dakota). Edmonds concludes that the most successful decolonising events stem from Indigenous-led grass-roots campaigns, work across cultures and carry an element of risk. They embrace history with all of its accommodations, frictions and horrors.

The book revisits a dizzying 400 years of colonial history – treaties, massacres and skin-of-the-teeth survival. We are reminded that the term ‘reconciliation’ itself ignores the lack of ‘conciliation’ at the heart of much early intercultural contact. Particular symbols recur across sites and times, especially the handshake. It gleams from commemorative medals and coins, its shadow-side revealed in the proclamation boards of Governor George Arthur of Van Diemen’s Land, which also depict a warning image of British redcoats hanging an Aboriginal man.

Edmonds begins in present-day New York state, where two treaties forged in 1613 and 1794 between the Haudenosaunee (also known as the Iroquois confederacy) and Dutch traders and the US Government respectively are mobilised for present-day actions, including a high-profile legal case for enforcement of the latter document. Elsewhere, activist groups rework the symbolism of the Two Row Wampum belt historically used in Iroquois diplomacy, as well as the idea of a ‘covenant chain’ that binds various Indigenous groups to each other and to settlers. In 2013, members of the confederacy and their supporters take to the Hudson River for a 13-day canoe trip known as the Two Row Wampum Renewal Campaign.

Turning to South Dakota, Edmonds focuses on a 2004 clash between members of a reenactment party celebrating the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804–06 and representatives of the Lakota, Dakota, Ponca, Kiowa and Diné Nations. She then circles back to defining historical moments, including the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890. Within a thicket of South Dakota reconciliation events, the gruelling Future Generations/Oomaka Tokatokiya Ride to Wounded Knee stands out as a potent reenactment that allows Indigenous participants and supporters to access the embodied suffering of massacre victims.

In New South Wales, Edmonds considers the People’s Walk for Reconciliation that surged across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 2000, and the annual Myall Creek memorial service. Exploring the varied responses to the Bridge Walk, Edmonds assesses how what was, for many, a day filled with a sense of reconciliation and hope, rang hollow for some observers. By comparison, the annual Myall Creek service, created to commemorate the infamous 1838 massacre, succeeds because it emerges from an intimate connection to local history and will to conciliate by community members, who include descendants of both Indigenous victims and European aggressors.

Moving to Tasmania, Edmonds visits two ceremonies held in 2001 to commemorate early contact between British soldiers and Tasmanian Aboriginal people: the National Sorry Day reconciliation circle at Risdon Cove, and a cross-cultural ceremony held at
Three Thumbs Lookout to mark a stormy night in 1830 when a group of Aboriginal people broke through the ‘Black Line’ military cordon. The latter event in particular combined elements of both European and Aboriginal ritual. Edmonds argues that, unlike national reconciliation events, which run the risk of brushing away historical context and continuing structural inequalities, such local events are fundamentally decolonising because they position Indigenous experience at their heart.

The journey ends in Te Urewera, Aotearoa New Zealand, where members of the Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal arrive on a dray as part of a historical reenactment that opens a week of hearings. It is 2005. Standing before the tribunal members, Tūhoe man Tame Iti turns reenactment into activism when he fires a rifle at the national flag and spits on the soil in front of the Governor-General. Edmonds sets this action against the backdrop of the 1840 treaty’s history and its subsequent role as a foundational document of biculturalism, despite the fact that some Māori iwi were not signatories, and that others contest its terms.

The book is sharpest when discussing moments of Indigenous refusal such as Iti’s: an anger that Edmonds describes as often pathologised by the settler state. Such actions expose the fragile tissue of an official reconciliation discourse that, in striving for consensus, quivers at the slightest puff of conflict. Yet, alongside these examples of rejection of consensus politics, the book also brims with the work of figures such as Tasmanian Elder Ida West, who conceive commemoration and conciliation ceremonies full of complex emotions – embodied pain, reverence for ancestors, hope, friendship. Here hands are still shaken, but only once the past is acknowledged.

Contemporary Indigenous artists contribute new pieces to the catalogue of objects that Edmonds explores throughout the narrative, among them the shell-like shapes formed during a performance piece staged by Tasmanian Aboriginal artist Karen Casey in 2006. At the event in Adelaide, prominent Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders faced each other across a table. Between their clasped hands warm dollops of plaster hardened, to form casts, artefacts of what Casey terms ‘the space in between’ (p. 4). In its rich contemplation, Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation itself becomes a written trace of the affective contact space in which ideas of nation continue to be reworked.

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Gumbaynggirr Yuludarla Jandaygam: Gumbaynggirr Dreaming Story Collection

edited by Steve Morelli, Gary Williams, Dallas Walker

vii + 312pp., Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative, Nambucca Heads, 2016,
ISBN: 9780980840513 (pbk), $50.00.

Review by Luise Hercus
The Australian National University

This is a remarkable book. It is clearly the result of many years of work by dedicated and knowledgeable people, both Gumbaynggirr and European. The stories are from three different dialect areas of Gumbaynggirr, in mid-north coastal New South Wales.

I must admit to being one of those who open a new book and cannot help looking at the illustrations first. The illustrations in this book are ideal. They are finely and delicately drawn by Shaa Smith. They provide an artistic framework for the stories and enhance them and do not obtrude. The landscapes that are celebrated in these stories are shown in quiet scenes: there are no glossy photographs. There is a muted distinction in the colour of the pages between the general introductory material, and different muted colours for each of the dialects represented. This makes it much easier to navigate one’s way around, to look up material from the introductory section or to switch dialects. It is clear that everything imaginable has been done to make the book user-friendly.

It is current practice in editing language texts to have three lines: the text, below it the word for word translation and analysis, and in a third line the translation into English. This can look quite clumsy and the English translation does not necessarily stand out clearly. In the present work the English translation is in a separate vertical column. This means that the text and the gloss are clearly visible as a unit, and someone who just wants to know the story can follow it uninterrupted in the vertical column.
These wonders of layout and presentation are by no means the only reason why this is such a remarkable book. In sheer extent it is outstanding both in the number of stories and in their length and detail. In traditional days, Australia was covered by a network of myths and stories of Ancestors celebrated in songs and ceremonies. These were at the heart of social and religious life. With this work, Gumbaynggirr has become one of the very few languages of the wider south-eastern parts of Australia for which there is now more than a brief record of this great unwritten literature. In all the three dialectal traditions, the Ancestors are perceived as characters in a drama. There is little room for a narrator in the Nymboidan stories, and the earliest stories in the collection are entirely in dramatic form. The introduction discusses this and states (p. 21):

It is our belief that the stories would have been acted out by the storyteller. Tindale noted one long story about the Eaglehawk and Crow in Maraura, the Paakantyi language near the Murray-Darling junction, published in Tindale 1939. This is a dialogue between the two characters.

Tindale stated, ‘The principal Maraura text takes the form of a recital or monologue, in what may be regarded for convenience, as two acts. In this form it is told at evening gatherings of both sexes, around the campfire’. He mentions the ‘dramatization introduced by change of voice and tone’. One can imagine exactly the same situation with the Gumbaynggirr stories. Contributors to the Gumbaynggirr book remember having heard such recitals as children (p. 21). Tindale obviously had real insight but sadly he did not even name his informant, Peter Bonney, in his published version of the story.

Such vivid storytelling must have happened around many, many campfires while the old men who knew the stories were still alive, and it is wonderful that this has been recorded so well for Gumbaynggirr, when it must have been lost in so many places.

The detailed study of the text contributes insights into social life, such as the use of respect plurals in pronouns, avoidance words and the use of the imperative to show excitement. There is some detailed site information and an impressive list of references.

This book is a powerful work that shows an ideal way of presenting stories. The Muurrbay Aboriginal Language and Culture Cooperative and the editors Steven Morelli, Peter Gary Williams and Dallas Fenton Walker, as well as the illustrator Shaa Elaine Smith, need to be congratulated, and we pay tribute to Gerhardt Laves who wrote down Philip Shannon’s texts in 1929.

Reference


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Yijarni: True Stories from Gurindji Country
edited by Erika Charola and Felicity Meakins
ix + 246 pp., Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2016,

Review by David Carment
Charles Darwin University

The Gurindji people of the Northern Territory’s southern Victoria River District are well known because of their 1966 walk-off from Wave Hill Station that led to equal wages in the pastoral industry and federal land rights legislation. Their history before the walk-off, however, has received less attention and is the subject of this impressive book. Yijarni, the Gurindji word for true stories from the period following the Dreamtime, brings together a wide variety of accounts dealing with that history. As the first chapter explains, Yijarni aims to reveal the Gurindji people’s past from their own perspective. Transcribed oral accounts are presented in both the English and Gurindji languages. They give details of events that Gurindji elders experienced first-hand or learned about from their parents and grandparents. Evidence from other sources, such as police records and photographs are also included, as are Gurindji artworks. The editors, Erika Charola and Felicity Meakins, provide introductory sections and some discussions of particular events based on European sources.

Most of the book is concerned with the period since European occupation. Chapter 2, however, looks at what happened before then. This was a time when different Gurindji groups were sometimes in conflict over women and resources. Human beings and supernatural creatures were often in contact. Such was the case, as Ronnie Wavehill explains, when a man took a mermaid from a river. Chapter 3 moves into the beginnings of European occupation that occurred from the mid-nineteenth century until the early twentieth century. It was an era of considerable violence. There were brutal massacres of Gurindji people, like that at Limbunya Station harrowingly described by Jimmy Manngayarri. The original Wave Hill Station, founded in 1882, is the focus for Chapter 4, explaining how the Gurindji began to work and settle at the station. Of particular interest are stories of the huge 1924 flood, such as that of Blanche Bulngari: ‘We came back to the station...
[following the flood] and saw that nothing was left. Everything was gone!' (p. 112).

Chapter 5 tells how the station, under the control of Lord Vestey’s cattle business, was moved further away from the Victoria River. For a long period, as Maurie Ryan and others recount, welfare officials removed ‘half-caste’ Gurindji children from their families. In 1929, the first aeroplane appeared at Wave Hill. Also in this chapter is Vincent Lingiari’s description of events leading to the 1966 walk-off. The short Chapter 6 examines the site of what is now Kalkaringi. Ronnie Wavehill and Violet Wadrill show how Afghans ran stores there and at Inverway Station. Early policemen and trackers are considered in Chapter 7. There are several accounts of the notorious Constable Gordon Stott, including Banjo Ryan’s description of him forcing Gurindji workers at Waterloo Station to beat each other. ‘They really bashed each other … They were all battered from the beating’ (p. 219).

Great care was taken in compiling Yijarni. While each of its stories has a named author, during the recording process another elder was present as a ‘witness’ (p. 1). He or she confirmed details before a recording commenced and monitored the telling to ensure there were no errors or omissions. The book, Meakins and Charola comment, ‘is the result of an extensive collaboration between Gurindji knowledge holders, artists of Kurungkarni Arts at Kalkaringi, the Murnkurumurnkurru rangers from the Central Land Council, photographers and linguists’ (p. 2). Non-Gurindji primary source materials were researched at the National Archives of Australia, the Northern Territory Archives Service, Charles Darwin University Library, the National Library of Australia and the South Australian Museum. Many secondary sources were also used, scholars with relevant knowledge were consulted and visits were made to, and photographs taken of, historical sites. The highly regarded cartographer Brenda Thornley created maps, while an artists’ retreat was responsible for the paintings that respond to Yijarni’s stories. There is also a detailed index.

The result of all this is a significant addition to scholarship. At one level, Yijarni is a comprehensive regional study that does much to complement other recent work on the Victoria River District and the Gurindji from scholars such as Minoru Hokari, Darrell Lewis and Charlie Ward. It includes fascinating details not found elsewhere. At another level, it contributes to a better informed and more nuanced national understanding of Australia’s Indigenous history. There is an unvarnished recognition in the book that life for the Gurindji during the precontact period was at times difficult and inter-tribal warfare occurred. Although it carefully documents the European invaders’ all too frequent, appalling brutality, some Gurindji storytellers discuss frontier violence more dispassionately than might be expected. Ronnie Wavehill, for instance, while concluding a massacre description says, ‘I hadn’t recorded this story yet, and now I’ve told this story too. I showed people that place and talked about how they shot people’ (p. 53). There are also stories of ways in which Aboriginal people adapted to new situations and the extent to which they retained traditional beliefs and knowledge.
Yijarni is well written, logically organised and attractively presented. I cannot vouch for the quality of its translations, but they read convincingly. The chapter structure is sensible, with the material in each chapter being easy to follow. The excellent layout is a tribute to the graphic designers involved. Images and maps are very clearly reproduced and properly located. When combined with the stories, many of the images convey a powerful sense of place. They demonstrate, as I discovered during my own travels in the southern Victoria River District, that Gurindji country is often astonishingly beautiful and its historic sites have special qualities.

Yijarni’s creators deserve praise for an outstanding achievement.
Pictures from My Memory: My Story as a Ngaatjatjarra Woman

by Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis, introduced and edited by Laurent Dousset


Review by Diana James
The Australian National University

Pictures from My Memory is an engaging personal memoir of Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis, a Ngaatjatjarra woman growing up in the Australian desert and becoming a national multilingual interpreter. It also contains an overview of the Ngaatjatjarra language, culture and kinship system as an appendix by the anthropologist Laurent Dousset. It is a book for both the wider community and academics interested in Australian Indigenous history and culture told from an insider’s point of view.

Laurent Dousset, her friend and editor, chooses uprightness to describe Lizzie’s account of a life lived through one of the most ‘challenging historical periods of Aboriginal white interrelationships in Central Australia: the progressive rapprochement and efforts of mutual understanding after periods of complete negation and destruction by the white settlers’ (p. xiii). For Lizzie, she is returning to the pictures from her memory and seeing them critically through the eyes of a mature woman, an experienced professional interpreter and internationally travelled language teacher and university researcher. Her people were not citizens until 1967, and their lives on reserves, missions and settlements remained under government welfare control. Aboriginal people were normally not given any explanation, as there were no skilled interpreters to ensure informed consent – such as when children were taken away.

Lizzie’s story starts with memories passed down from her parents and grandparents who first saw white men in Purli Karil, the Rawlinson Ranges, in the 1950s. Lizzie was born in these ranges in 1962, in Ngaatjatjarra country just west of the border between Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Her early childhood was spent roaming the lands of her ancestors, secure in her identity, and surrounded by extended family speaking her mother tongue – and where the only presence of white
men was the Giles Weather Station built in 1956 by the Australian Government’s Weapons Research Establishment (WRE) program to monitor the Maralinga atomic testing. Here, Lizzie recounts stories without judgement in the manner of kiti-kiti wangkanyi – a traditional, indirect way of speaking – and the story is all the more poignant for this. Throughout the book, her style is not didactic or academic. Rather, she persuades through the desert peoples’ recursive storytelling style, sharing her real-life experiences of situations where language was key to cultural identity and cross-cultural understanding.

Leaving the Rawlinson Ranges at the age of five, Lizzie travelled with her family 230 kilometres south-west to Warburton mission. The family then travelled 100 kilometres west to Leonora, a small town surrounded by sheep stations, a gold mine and an Aboriginal reserve, where they stayed about a year. All school-aged kids had to live in a hostel on the other side of town from the reserve, and the police made sure they went to school. Aboriginal peoples’ lives were controlled by the state: ‘That was the time when they took kids away: the Stolen Generation. The authorities took away all the half-caste kids and trained them in cities, but they didn’t take away all the full-blood kids like us’ (p. 8).

The hostel life was hard for little kids like Lizzie who hated the teasing and fighting, but she found protection when her big cousin Dorothy arrived. People from all over the Western Desert came together in the reserve; the elders taught the children which people were family through the extended kinship system.

Lizzie learnt to read and write English at the school, and she started her career as an interpreter early, reading all the mail for her extended family. She also continued learning traditional culture – hunting, camping out bush with relatives and attending ceremonies during school holidays. When they moved about 300 kilometres north to Wiluna, her family lived on the mission and Lizzie attended the mission school for young children. At age 10, she was sent with other older children by bus via Meekathara to live at Karalundi mission about 240 kilometres north-west from her parents in Wiluna. This school was for ‘full-blood’ girls and boys, while ‘half-caste’ children were sent for training in to big towns. Lizzie and her sisters noticed this splitting up of the children but accepted it as normal.

Education provided Lizzie with the key to literacy in English, the language of governance and power. Coupled with her fluency in many dialects of the Western Desert language, she quickly became an important interpreter for many people. In 1988, she commenced working at the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs and trained as a professional interpreter. In this role, she was able to empower her people in negotiations with police, government or medical officers, though Lizzie found the role of professional interpreting difficult: one could not confuse their role with being a friend or relation, especially as Indigenous interpreters are often called to assist their own people in court legal matters involving criminal
defence or land rights, and the translation of concepts cross-culturally – for instance, human rights and the western legal system – were difficult. A poignant example here was the difficulty of translating the right of children to have an education as ‘every child can or must go to school and nobody can stop that child from going to school, even the mother or father’ – a difficult concept to grasp for people who associate school with police-enforced attendance (p. 104).

During the 1990s, Lizzie became part of a national professional cohort of Indigenous interpreters involved in the federal government’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Initiative Program, developed to retrieve and revive Indigenous languages. She attended national conferences where meeting other Indigenous interpreters was inspiring as they could share ideas and ways of maintaining languages. Lizzie became aware of the national extent of pain and dispossession felt by many Indigenous people mourning the loss of their language and cultural knowledge. Her experience interpreting has led her to understand a profound relationship between language and cultural worldviews, and that ontological concepts of people, place and spirituality can only be fully expressed in their language of origin. Lizzie’s plea to mainstream Australia is to support the maintenance of Indigenous languages and respect cultural and linguistic difference and diversity.

Lizzie also acknowledges the gradual loss of traditional Ngaatjatjarra/Ngaanyatjarra cultural knowledge and language proficiency within recent generations of her own family. Pragmatically, she realises the next generation must make their own way in a rapidly changing world. However, she believes that maintaining knowledge of their cultural heritage and language is core to identity in this multicultural world. She has ensured her two daughters, who married into white society and live in Canberra, maintain ‘a good understanding of our culture because they spent time with my family every year and participated in cultural activities’ (p. 112).

A life of embodied translation has been captured in word pictures in this book. Lizzie Marrkilyi Ellis’s memoir flows like water down a dry desert riverbed. Her voice bubbles with warmth and humour while speaking clear truths about the struggle for survival of desert languages and culture in the harsh environment of colonisation. It is a generous gift to a nation still trying to come to terms with the fallout from an often brutal colonisation process that has not yet been resolved by attempts at reconciliation. Lizzie’s voice comes on the warm desert winds speaking to all Australians. A translator mediating between the vastly different worlds of black and white Australia, she invites her readers to sit with her a while, to listen to her stories and to think deeply about the importance of maintaining First Nations’ languages and cultural identity in Australia today.
Fragile Settlements: Aboriginal Peoples, Law, and Resistance in South-West Australia and Prairie Canada

by Amanda Nettelbeck, Russell Smandyach, Louis A. Knafla and Robert Foster


Review by Penelope Edmonds
University of Tasmania

In the early twentieth century, Canada was viewed in national settler narratives as a place of ‘gentle occupation’; likewise, Australia was deemed the ‘quiet continent’, a country that had been ‘settled but not invaded’. Both were cast triumphantly as homogenous ‘whiteman’s lands’. Canada and Australia share deep genealogies and long legacies of settler colonialism and, thanks largely to persistent indigenous political activism, a present and urgent requirement to face historical injustices. Over the last two decades, both Canada and Australia have moved towards various programs for national reconciliation and redress and, more recently, national apologies to indigenous peoples.

In Fragile Settlements, it is not only the violence of indigenous dispossession that is revealed and its legacies today that are addressed, but, taking a critical historical-legal analysis, the book looks deeply at the ways that the law was used to assert a much-desired ‘perfect settler sovereignty’ (to use the terms of historian Lisa Ford). As the authors show, this desired complete settler sovereignty was (and is) in reality always precarious, and yet underpins such myths of ‘gentle occupation’ and ‘quiet’ settlement, as well as whiteness.

Fragile Settlements is a comparative study of South Australia and Western Australia with the Canadian prairies in the nineteenth century, examining the processes through which British colonial authority was asserted over Indigenous peoples. Looking at the years 1830–1914, the period of the so-called ‘settler revolution’, marked by rapid and expanded colonisation and the concurrent rise of humanitarian governance in
the first half of the century, the book seeks to highlight the parallels and divergences between these connected British frontiers by examining how colonial actors and institutions interpreted and applied the principle of law in their interactions with Indigenous peoples ‘on the ground’. The very title, *Fragile Settlements*, gestures well to the precarious nature and risk of this endeavour. ‘Settlements’ is suggestive both of European newcomers, in particular the British, seeking to make a home, and also of the extensive negotiations, deals, treaties and associated British legal and juridical procedures that were enacted by the state, the law courts, the church and through missionaries and the police and the native mounted police in bringing – or coercing – indigenous peoples under their jurisdiction. Likewise, and crucially, the volume charts the legal practices of indigenous peoples, who did not concede but sought agreement on their own cultural and political terms.

With a sweeping introduction looking at ‘British Law and Colonial Legal Regimes’ and extended chapters on policing and the courts, the authors find that legal pluralisms were ‘more alive in the nineteenth century than previously thought’ (p. 60). They demonstrate in the chapters that aspirations for a perfect sovereignty would never be wholly fulfilled. Rather, echoing scholar Lauren Benton, they find that these colonial frontiers were ‘anomalous legal zones’. One of the major observations of this multi-authored book then is the way that these legal pluralisms – where indigenous law and practices did for a period coexist with British colonial law – ultimately shifted to a legal uniformity as settlement proceeded, albeit by different pathways.

Such comparative regional histories and transcolonial studies demand extremely hard work, and require reading across complex and divergent historiographies and multiple and often different archives and source materials. For some decades, ‘comparative studies’ fell out of favour as a turn to the ‘transnational’ seemed to take its place. Yet, this volume represents a new style of successful and fresh comparative history, which not only sheds light on each site and overturns ‘pseudo-local causes’ – as all good comparative history should do – but, taking the lead of the transnational turn and new imperial studies, it also looks beyond and across these sites to interconnections and flows of empire. Here, the comparative study is embedded in an important set of transnational and analytical ideas that are currently being worked through in the fields of critical colonial legal studies, settler colonialism and the British world. These concern questions of liberal empire, the law and its encounter with diverse indigenous societies in many locales. Not only do these new transnational approaches radically transform Australian and Canadian history, but national histories are currently being radically rewritten into the histories of other countries and regions, thus palpably reshaping our understandings of the past. In this case, as the authors rightly argue, for these two sites it is ‘their divergences, as well as their similarities, make them ideal comparative settings for unravelling broader transcolonial historical processes associated with the subjugation of indigenous peoples through law, and their resistance to it’ (p. 6).
Treaty making or its absence figures highly here and, as the chapters show, the trajectories of these colonial sites have unfolded in varying ways; yet, for indigenous peoples, they ultimately faced the same fate of control, transformation and dispossession. As Nettelbeck shows in Chapter 3 in ‘Policing Aboriginal people on the frontier’, in both places policing was a key aspect of state building, but asserting jurisdiction played out in different ways. The North West Mounted Police were participants in negotiating treaties with aboriginal peoples on the Canadian Plains, leading to reserves and practices of aboriginal containment, whereas in South Australia and Western Australia, without treaties and no real reserves as such, Aboriginal people were dispersed from their lands in service to a rapacious pastoralism. Policing in Australia was then markedly different from the Canadian prairie, they argue, with policing in Australia more punitive and based on notions of ‘hard policing’ and ‘giving them a lesson’ (p. 76). The chapter on native policing shows too how at both sites indigenous men had some agency and occupied a fluid space as insider/outsiders. In Canada, treaties, even if dishonoured, meant at the very least that aboriginal people had an agreement around which to argue their rights and to make powerful claims on the state, a legacy today that cannot be ignored.

One of the key themes addressed in this book, and a matter of current scholarly interest, is the way that liberal humanitarian tenets were applied in these two sites in the dispossession and subjugation of indigenous peoples. Yet, this was short lived, and too often gave way to more harsh policies and far less equal treatment for indigenous peoples. In terms of arrest, and in the courts, we find that Aboriginal people were drawn into the legal system as witnesses and offenders; despite this, throughout the nineteenth century, Aboriginal peoples in South Australia and Western Australia ‘remained in some ways outside the legal system’ (p. 223). Unsurprisingly, the law rarely fell in their favour. As the authors of this rich and fine-grained book conclude, in this period settler sovereignty was never perfect due to myriad legal pluralisms that were far more prevalent than we appreciate. This was due in no small part to indigenous resistance in both sites as ‘Aboriginal peoples displayed a continuous ability to understand, accommodate, resist, and adjust to consequences of the strategies of elimination imposed on them through and beyond settler legal systems’ (p. 223).

This volume, an ambitious collaboration of four authors, is a challenging and important work of legal history, revealing the continuity of the settler project at two sites on either side of the Pacific Ocean, and the entwined legacies of law and dispossession that continue to challenge indigenous peoples today.

Reference

In her latest book, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire*, Jane Lydon invites the reader to think afresh about Australia’s colonial legacy and the images that have been used to tell those stories. Readers familiar with her earlier books, especially *The Flash of Recognition* (2012), will recognise Lydon’s sustained interest in making use of prints, especially photographs, to ask curly questions about Australian history. In the past, Lydon has sought to understand Indigenous perspectives by working closely with community groups as they identify and interpret historical photographs. In this book, earlier research is deepened by burrowing into archives both in Australia and abroad (the United Kingdom, Italy, France, United States) to demonstrate similarities in colonial and imperial modes of thinking around the world. Images that have been used to define Aboriginal culture and reinforce mainstream Australian histories are lifted out of microhistories of people and places into far-reaching global networks of repositories and ideas.

Central to the ideas Lydon explores is the golden and hopeful thread of humanitarianism, even within recognisable colonial typologies. Her theoretical trajectory goes back to Adam Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), with his idea that ‘moral conduct’ is grounded in ‘the experience of seeing and being seen’ (p. 4). Mindful that not all attempts to elicit ‘fellow-feeling’ or empathy are successful, Lydon carefully selects for our consideration projects often driven by humanitarian activism that are picked up in literature and the popular press.

Methodologically, her book is a series of roughly chronological case studies where discreet visual archives are examined through comparable literary tropes and newspaper and government reports.
Much of Lydon’s argument concerns the affective qualities of humanitarian images informed by personal encounters and disseminated in order to challenge prevailing social Darwinist theories. Far from endorsing contemporary assumptions of (racial) difference and later interpretations of (missionary) coercion, formal portraits from the 1860s of overdressed Aboriginal Christians at the Poonindie mission are shown by Lydon to have initially demonstrated the sitters’ ‘essential humanity and equality’ (p. 37).

Images, and especially the assumed veracity of photographs, can help in the reconstruction of history. But, as Lydon well knows, the absence of photographs that might have validated Aboriginal testimonials of massacres can no longer be the excuse to whitewash history. Lydon tackles the problem in two ways. First, she alludes to comparable atrocity images from around the globe to remind the reader of what is missing within the Australian archives. Second, she looks at other visual media, illustrations and maps, especially those sourced in Arthur Vogan’s reportage novel *The Black Police: A Story of Modern Australia* (1890). Whereas Vogan’s ‘Slave Map of Modern Australia’ (where enslaved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples occupied territories roughly akin to the areas north of the so-called Rowley Line) drew attention to abuses across large tracts of Australia’s hinterland, out of sight of white settlements in the south-east, a very recent (5 July 2017) map by the University of Newcastle corrects the history by pinpointing dozens of sites of ‘Colonial Frontier Massacres in Eastern Australia 1788–1872’. Brutality was everywhere. Lydon may be correct in observing that the ‘absence of atrocity photography’ meant that all too often accounts of massacres ‘lacked the force of proof’ (p. 76): sentimental or lurid reconstructions arouse suspicions in us all. But as inheritors of the insights of Barthes, Sontag, Tagg and Sekula, we all know that claims for photographic ‘proof’ are often deeply flawed and always up for question. Although it was not in her remit to do so, I think it’s worth acknowledging that in recent decades many Indigenous and also some non-Indigenous artists have tackled the hushed-up legacy of massacres, massacre sites, deaths from nuclear testing and deaths in police custody. Their profound works and installations are a far cry from lurid illustrations used over 100 years ago by Vogan, and suggest the extent to which themes of colonial brutality, culture and memory have impacted on the personal and collective psyche. They expand the idea of ‘proof’.

Critical readings of Australia’s photographic archive, especially as it relates to representations of Australia’s First Nation peoples, can be traced through a steady stream of exhibitions and literature from the early 1980s. But whereas so much of this literature sought to expand the critique from its colonial and ethnographic base

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to broader disciplinary and theoretical discourses, Lydon’s quite consistent goals have been to understand why the images were taken in the first place and how they have been used over time.

The occasional blooper, such as ‘1838’ for 1938 as the year of the first Day of Mourning and Protest (p. 117) does not detract from the overall impression that Lydon’s book is rigorous, impassioned, imaginative and compelling. Hers is no crude attack on colonial cruelties, but a more nuanced weighing up of not always uncompromised efforts by some observers to both acknowledge a shared humanity and name atrocities that were grossly under-reported before the law and in the press.

References


Conducting anthropological research in the Kimberley region over the last quarter century, I have been made aware of some deeply distressing aspects of contemporary social and political life there. Amongst these I count the painfully high rates of imprisonment of young Aboriginal people (currently 52 times the national average), Aboriginal families’ overwhelming poverty and critical dependence on welfare, the high levels of interpersonal violence attending everyday life and the entrenched power of the elite Euro-Australian pastoral families, both locally and in the Perth political and economic establishment. I would add to this sorry list the demoralising effect of the constantly rebranded, yet so seldom effective, legislative and policy regimes underwritten by that political establishment.

Chris Owen’s painstakingly researched (and often horrifying) history of the deeply entangled relationships between policing, pastoral interests and government policy towards Aborigines in the early period of colonisation of the Kimberley (1882–1905) adds a devastating longitudinal dimension to our understanding of how matters descended into this shocking state and why some of these issues are proving so intractable to change.

Scrutinising, analysing and contextualising the extensive documentary record of policing in the East and West Kimberley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Owen has carefully prised open a window onto a reign of terror that included illegal public executions, mass enslavement, murder, rape, violent physical and sexual abuse and dispossession created at the behest, and with the direct complicity, of the colonial pastoral dynasties including the Forrest, Emmanuel, Macdonald and Durack families, which today continue to enjoy a wildly disproportionate influence.
over political life in the west. In his analysis of the range of archival sources, Owen points out the discrepancies between the mandatory police ‘occurrence books’, which were sent to Perth and were notoriously light on detail and subject to strategic omissions, and the diaries and journals of the local police officers, which were often much more revealing. The author takes as his historical bookends the first major pastoral incursions of the early 1880s and the national and international furore occasioned by the release of Walter E. Roth's (very much understated) 1905 Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives.

Owen writes that two distinctive periods of policy and practice can be discerned across that era. The period from about 1880 until the end of that decade was generally one in which ‘European violence against Aboriginal people was the exception rather than the norm’ and during which a number of locally deployed policemen ‘conscientiously investigated allegations of abuse of Aboriginal people by colonists’ (p. 10). Some of these policemen sought to learn local languages and become acquainted with the laws and customs of the Aboriginal people in their districts. The subsequent decade saw the replacement and/or marginalisation of this type of policemen and their de facto policies by much more violent enforcers of the rule of the squattocracy in their undeclared war against Aboriginal people and the desperate and disparate Aboriginal responses to the campaign to remove them from their lands and force them into servitude. This period also corresponded with a much more terse form of police report writing. When Owen sought out these records in the police archive, he discovered a ‘very curious correlation between the absence of records and an area known to have had a large number of police involved in “dispersals”’ (p. 23).

Owen’s assessment of the existing historiography makes it plain that the Kimberley evidence on some earlier police refusals to compliantly do the dirty work of the pastoral dynasties defies an analysis in terms of a blunt ‘dispossession-resistance model’. Consideration of the impact of colonisation on levels of intra-Aboriginal violence, the fact that it was often indentured Aboriginal workers rather than ‘myalls’ who took the fight up to the police and pastoralists, the effects of intra-police hostility and killings, the hostilities between some resident magistrates, police and government, and the nature of some of the face-to-face relationships between a number of earlier-period policemen and local people adds complexity to that blunt model.

Owen’s accessible and page-turningly urgent account identifies macro-political factors influencing the unfolding tragedy of the colonial situation. The first is the period of British colonial control and the Aborigines Protection Act 1886, when much concern, even outrage, was expressed from London over the horrific treatment of Aborigines in the Western Australian colony, which was described as ‘the slave state of the Australian commonwealth’. The colony’s mistreatment of its Aborigines represented one of the major obstacles to self-rule, but metropolitan critics of colonial violence and dispossession were derided as ‘Exeter Hall types’.
This period was followed by a more overtly violent and oppressive period under the so-called ‘responsible government’ period (1890–1901), during which the dominant pastoral class very much ran their own show. This ushered in a decade of intensely violent subjection of Aboriginal people aimed at outlawing ‘wild natives’ under the guise of preventing ‘stock killings’. Here, Owen provides compelling figures to show that drought, a long tradition of cattle duffing and the industry’s generally poor management and inexperience were more significant factors. Tellingly, these combined losses did not prevent a massive escalation in stock numbers and profits from meat shipped to other parts of the colony throughout the 1890s.

This period included the 1894–97 police/military operations against West Kimberley rebels Jandamarra and his associates, which resulted in at least 80 Aboriginal deaths officially attributed to police violence and larger numbers to the pastoralists’ own ‘dispersals’. The situation in the East Kimberley was even more violent: between July and November 1893 alone, police killings amounted to 81 persons in the Osmand and Ord Valleys. In the same year, Alexander Forrest asked in the Western Australian Parliament whether ‘the life of one European is not worth a thousand natives’ in the interests of expanding their pastoral empires (p. 350). It seems very likely that hundreds of Aborigines were shot with pastoralist consent and assistance. During this period, local police officers were clearing hundreds of people from their traditional lands on charges of cattle killing and also making themselves small fortunes on the side by pocketing the per-head monies provided for rations for their prisoners (a practice that, according to historian Fiona Skyring, continued to make large sums of money for local police in the Kimberley, Pilbara and goldfields under the category of ‘meal money’ right through until 1992 when the Aboriginal Legal Service made it front page news). In this same period, Premier John Forrest was lobbying strenuously for the repeal of British colonial legislation that mandated a minimal level of support of Aboriginal people rendered destitute by the expanding pastoral enterprises, thus ensuring that a workforce recruited through ‘brutal slavery’ would continue to be readily available to the squattocracy (p. 368).

Following that particularly violent decade, in 1901 the colony became part of the Commonwealth of Australia, very much against the wishes of the ruling pastoral cartels, which were then subjected to some intense scrutiny from church and union organisations over the blatantly corrupt expansion of the ‘meat ring’ owned and operated by Forrest-Emmanuel-Connor-Durack family interests. By 1900, close to a third of the surviving Aboriginal population of the Kimberley had been enslaved on pastoral stations and hundreds more had been indentured into the pearling industry on the west coast. Complementing this was a trade in sexual services to the thousands of Asian labourers being brought into the industry. Owen breaks new ground here in his analysis of the impact of these latter forms of servitude, noting that prostitution was seldom policed as it fitted neatly into the dominant racial schema.
Owen notes that any meaningful change in this epoch came from the efforts of sympathetic local magistrates demanding procedural fairness and a semblance of justice for arrested Aboriginal people, rather than from any government initiatives. These changes were furiously resisted by the squattocracy, who threatened to continue to take the law into their own hands if any such procedural rights were implemented.

Across these three periods, Owen identifies five major factors shaping the nature of colonial policing in the Kimberley: political and constitutional changes, the diversity of Indigenous groupings, environmental and demographic features, the different social context of policing the West and East Kimberley pastoral regions (with the former dominated by Perth-based investors and the latter dominated by families emerging from the earlier colonial frontier in Queensland and New South Wales) and the particular models of colonial policing being employed. The latter was very much subject to budgetary concerns based on a calculus of ‘policemen per head’ of European population (p. 17).

Owen’s meticulously annotated account of the entanglement of police violence and government policy with the pastoral dynasties in the Kimberley is essential reading for anyone with an interest in how the wider political and economic context shaped, and continues to shape, contemporary forms of Aboriginal impoverishment, disempowerment, accommodation, survival and resistance.

Reference

Queen Victoria was an important symbol for the officials of the British Empire, who frequently commented on the loyalty, tribute and expressions of affection sent to the Queen by the people of England’s many colonies. And, indeed, there were many such messages, gifts and deputations. Yet their meanings were very different for the senders – those colonised people who were trying to negotiate the rapidly changing political and economic conditions they were facing as the British imposed control on their homes.

In *Mistress of Everything: Queen Victoria in Indigenous Worlds*, Sarah Carter and Maria Nugent bring us a rich and stimulating feast of close studies from four colonies of the Queen: South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. In each of these, colonised peoples who were not of Anglo descent were confronted with the proposition that they must now pledge allegiance to a distant monarch.

In some ways, this was a historically specific interaction. It made a difference that the impact of the heaviest confrontation with the British for many colonised peoples was during the reign of a particular monarch who was, firstly, a woman – which called into play the gender orders both of the colonised cultures and that of Britain itself – and, secondly, that Victoria aged through the long years of her reign – at first unmarried, then marrying, producing children, being widowed and living to an old age – all of which mobilised the cultural tropes about the status of various ages and marital states in all of those cultures.
In other ways, this was a variation on a longer-established set of strategies. Appealing to monarchs over the heads of local authorities had, after all, been a common practice in England through medieval times and it had also been so in places like India before colonisation by the British. But, in the time of Victoria, it was complicated not only along the cultural lines of gender and age, but also by the pressures of escalating capitalist extraction and imperial military force.

So the responses of colonised, non-Anglo peoples are an important source for historians, but not for naïve and quaint native expressions of loyalty to their colonisers. Instead, as the authors in this volume show us, they are sources for insight into colonised peoples’ strategies for responding to, appropriating, manipulating and challenging the claims to sovereignty made by the British through the person and symbol of Queen Victoria. One heir of British colonialism, the Commonwealth of Australia, is currently being made very aware of the continuing Indigenous challenge to and engagement with this idea of ‘sovereignty’, and this book should play an important role in the discussions. In their Introduction to the volume, Sarah Carter and Maria Nugent have written an insightful and extremely valuable comparative analysis of the diverse case studies they have gathered. As they point out, ‘our authors are all in agreement that Indigenous expressions of loyalty unsettle the self-serving settler myth of unstinting adulation of Indigenous people for the British sovereign’ (p. 7).

There are many important chapters in this book. One of its innovations is to include Barbara Caine’s careful study of the actual attitudes that Queen Victoria herself displayed and the personal interactions with colonised people – mostly the displaced royal ones – that she initiated and pursued. Caine’s chapter makes it clear that the personality of Victoria, her ageing process and her gender opened up many possibilities in responses to her – as well as to the British regime – that would have been very different in another person, with a shorter reign and if the sovereign had been male.

Another of the book’s important innovations is to draw its authors and focal case studies from across the British Empire during Victoria’s long reign. The opportunity to look not only to what are now well-trodden comparative pathways to other ‘settler’ colonies like New Zealand and Canada but also to the far more ethnically complex colonial situations of southern Africa are valuable in allowing us to identify what themes were generated from the empire – or from Victoria herself – and what arose from local conditions, cultures and demands. Hilary Sapire’s chapter on African expressions of loyalty to Victoria and her son Alfred in 1860 is a model of careful, detailed empirical data, which is nevertheless lucid and accessible in its nuanced analysis of what ‘loyalty’ meant to very different individuals among the Xhosa, whom the British at that stage assumed to be all thoroughly defeated and compliant. The depth and care of Sapire’s chapter is echoed in that of Carter on Canada, Belgrave on New Zealand and Nugent on south-eastern Australia.
Not only do these chapters offer us a chance to consider colonised people outside those in ‘settler colonies’, but they offer important insights into the wide variety of ways that attitudes to Queen Victoria were expressed within Australia. Comparing Maria Nugent on eastern New South Wales and Penelope Edmonds on western Victoria, for example, allows important glimpses of Indigenous responses to Queen Victoria not only in different areas but over different times, including very current reinterpretations of beliefs about Victoria’s personal gifting of land and of submission to the sovereign. These two authors point to the range of expressions that need to be considered on both sides. Edmonds points to material culture, noting Aboriginal responses to the colonial stamp of the sovereign’s profile on ‘sovereigns’ of coinage as well as commemorative medals, and compares this to contemporary artists’ challenging substitutions of Indigenous women’s profiles in similar situations. This theme of material expressions is taken up powerfully in other chapters, like Amanda Nettelbeck’s work in Canada as well as Australia and Miranda Johnson on portraiture in New Zealand.

In all of these and many other chapters, authors explore the recognition that sovereignty is performed – on both sides. Colonised peoples undertook symbolic acts of ceremonial gift giving and formal submissions to convey loyalty but at the same time to advance strategic goals. The empire too – and indeed the Queen herself – used performative modes frequently to convey both superiority and power through the clearly gendered mythology of royal maternal care for colonised peoples. The performed messages of the colonised peoples described in these chapters from all four colonies were carefully crafted to negotiate as well as to communicate, and it has been this multifaceted and continually changing use of performance, words, images and material culture that has offered such an important means of recalling and critiquing empire.

In its innovations and the depth of each of its contributions, this volume will act as a beginning. The editors have brought together an exciting collection of papers, which separately and together will stimulate many more conversations across national and racial borders. They have taken us outside the ghetto of ‘settler colonialism’ to explore colonised peoples’ responses to their colonisation far more widely and realistically than is often possible. We are in a far stronger position to see the ways empires and sovereigns make their claims, how gender and power intersect and how colonised peoples’ challenges to those claims have taken shape in a range of conditions and different media, all of which have changed over time.
Into the Heart of Tasmania: A Search for Human Antiquity

by Rebe Taylor


Review by Lyndall Ryan
University of Newcastle

Rebe Taylor is no stranger to the complex debate about Tasmanian Aboriginal extinction. In her first book, Unearthed: The Aboriginal Tasmanians of Kangaroo Island (2002), she explored the history of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community on Kangaroo Island and how it was forced to ‘disappear’ into the wider white community. In her latest book, she focuses on two leading British extinction theorists of the Tasmanian Aborigines in the twentieth century, Ernest Westlake (1855–1922) and Rhys Jones (1941–2001). She not only explores their collection of evidence for the antiquity of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, she also shows how they overlooked other aspects of their findings that indicated that far from becoming extinct, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people had survived into the present.

Ernest Westlake was an amateur scientist who, in keeping with the then prevailing doctrine of the hierarchy of human evolution, was obsessed by the belief that the stone artefacts produced by the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the past were similar to the ‘eoliths’ of the Indigenous people of France. He considered that the tools were evidence that at the beginnings of human time the French and the Tasmanians shared similar cultural practices, but since then the French had progressed culturally to become the most advanced civilisation on earth whereas the Tasmanians had remained culturally static, which led to their extinction in 1876. He sought to prove his hypothesis by visiting Tasmania between 1908 and 1910 and collecting more than 13,000 stone tools. It never occurred to him that he was engaging in a major case of theft of Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural property.
In his collecting process, Westlake visited several people of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent for information about stone artefact sites, and carefully recorded their recollections of the past. Unaware that he was producing evidence of Aboriginal survival, after his death in 1922 his entire collection of Tasmanian stone artefacts together with his notebooks was bequeathed to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. There they remained untouched until anatomist Brian Plomley published a ‘severely edited’ edition of the notebooks in 1982, although he was largely disparaging of their value. Like Westlake, he believed that the Tasmanian Aborigines had become extinct in 1876 and that their ‘impure’ descendants could only have ‘contaminated’ knowledge of their ancestors. Poignantly, the stone artefacts were never accessioned, and were later returned and used to construct a rubble driveway at a Westlake family property (p. 171).

Today, the survival of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people is now accepted and, in this post-extinction environment, Taylor has read the notebooks afresh and connected their contents to the recent finding of Tasmanian Aboriginal sites along the Jordan River Valley, north-west of Hobart, dating to more than 40,000 years ago. She realises that Westlake contributed to an act of cultural genocide in removing the evidence of Tasmanian Aboriginal presence in the past. Had the stone artefact assemblage remained intact, it is possible that carbon dating taken in situ could have confirmed the dates decades ago. Yet, paradoxically, she also finds that the interviews Westlake conducted with Tasmanian Aboriginal people reveal a community filled with ‘Aboriginal knowledge: words, methods, medicines, and spiritual practices and beliefs’ (p. 10). Recognising their significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, in 2013 Taylor, together with Mike Jones and Gavin McCarthy, published the notebooks in digital form. Westlake may have removed physical evidence of the deep past, but his interviews with the survivors are an important source of information about the recent past. The irony is not lost on the reader.

Taylor’s interest in Westlake’s life after he returns to England in 1910 places him firmly among the amateur collectors who were the subject of Tom Griffiths’s groundbreaking text, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia* (1996). As she points out, the search for human antiquity in Tasmania ‘has long been a looking inwards, or downwards, from Britain’ (p. 205). However, I would have liked to see a clearer connection between Westlake’s obsession with Tasmanian antiquity as an amateur and Rhys Jones’s engagement with the subject, coming from Britain as the first professionally trained archaeologist to continue the search in the 1960s.

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1 Plomley 1991.
2 Taylor, Jones and McCarthy 2017.
The section of the book on Rhys Jones is based on the interviews Taylor conducted with him in 2000. Jones readily admits that in his search for Tasmanian Aboriginal antiquity, he tended to overlook the significance of his finding that their population at the outset of the British invasion of 1803 was at least 4,000; that is, more than double the maximum estimate of 2,000 that extinction theorists had promulgated in 1859. Rather than considering the extinction theory afresh as the estimate suggested he could do, Jones remained firmly committed to it by dismissing evidence that the Tasmanian Aborigines could make fire and focusing instead on other evidence that suggested they probably ceased to consume scale fish 4,000 years ago. Such evidence, he asserted, matched the wider evolutionary view that, after rising seas separated Tasmania from mainland Australia more than 10,000 years ago, the Tasmanian Aborigines experienced ‘a slow strangulation of the mind’, which led to their extinction in 1876.

Taylor’s book is a fascinating account of how extinction theory drove scientific research on the Tasmanian Aborigines in the first part of the twentieth century. I would have liked, however, some explanation of how it was replaced in the 1970s by new approaches to human evolution. Brian Plomley, the other professionally trained scientist and leading extinction theorist of the Tasmanian Aborigines in the mid-1960s, in his monumental edition of the journals of G.A. Robinson, also overlooked the mounting evidence that their dramatic population decline of the 1820s and 1830s was not due to human evolutionary decline but due to settler violence. Overturning the theory that dominated scientific discourse for more than a century may have been a bridge too far for Jones and Plomley in the 1960s, but their meticulous scholarship along with the campaigns of the resurgent Tasmanian Aboriginal community in the 1970s provided the catalyst that enabled a new generation of scholars – including Taylor – to finally put extinction theory to rest after it dominated scientific discourse for more than a century.

References


The Aboriginal People of the Burragorang Valley:
‘If we left the valley our hearts would break’

by Jim Smith

332pp., Blue Mountains Education and Research Trust, Lawson, 2016,
ISBN: 9780994155559 (pbk), $50.00.

Review by Annemarie McLaren
The Australian National University

‘There is a part of me that still lingers along the banks of the Cox’s beneath that dark and forbidding expanse of water’. These are the words of Owen Pearce, a descendent of old farming settlers in the Burragorang Valley of the Blue Mountains, a region flooded in the late 1950s to form Warragamba Dam and its catchment area and so satiate Sydney’s thirst. These and the words of Gundungurra woman Ivy Brookman conclude the intriguing tapestry of people, lives and places woven in this history. ‘I do not know why they had to flood our beautiful valley’, Brookman’s voice laments. This poignant theme of loss – loss of community, of country and of hundreds of important Aboriginal sites – runs throughout the volume.

This richly illustrated book, printed in A4 size by a local publisher, documents the lives of Aboriginal people in the Burragorang Valley from the 1830s, when the steady creep of cattlemen from the Nepean districts first began. It follows through to the well-known St Joseph’s Farm of the mid-nineteenth century, and ongoing ventures to strengthen connections with country today. So Aboriginal people ‘as individuals and families’ are centre stage in this work. The book considers who the Aboriginal people in this valley were: what the different (or possible) Gundungurra clans were and why; the movement of surrounding groups into the valley and movement out of it; Aboriginal people’s relationships with settlers, particularly the Catholic community (in work that resonates with that of eminent local historian Jim Barrett); and their marriages and enmeshed family histories into the twentieth century.

In assembling this extraordinary array of detail, The Aboriginal People of the Burragorang Valley has been meticulously researched, building on a large span of previous work by Jim Smith, including an earlier, smaller version of this book first
published in 1991, and, by the look of some of the maps, occasionally Smith’s unpublished PhD thesis. The volume is the result of far-reaching, tenacious and impressive research in the birth, death and baptismal records and electoral rolls (which Smith argues are generally neglected), newspapers reports and privately held documents and photographs. Personal relationships have been vital as well: oral histories, private conversations and friendships are threaded throughout the work, giving the sense that this book could only have been written by a local embedded in community.

Jim Smith’s knowledge of the country, and his dogged commitment to walking it, have borne tremendous fruit. He has mapped sites from Gundungurra creation stories and archaeological sites he has discovered, added in the stories of anthropologists and their relationships with their informants, and overlain post-contact histories and people in his search for relationships and meanings. Apart from the significance of hypotheses about clan grouping and the important biographical details included, some of Smith’s main contributions lie in his implicit discussion of how Aboriginal people made lives in the interstitial spaces of settlements – questions probed elsewhere by Heather Goodall, Alison Cadzow and Peter Read, amongst others. In tracing the history of one of the most significant farms and schools for Aboriginal people, St Joseph’s Farm, Smith also intervenes in debates about its decline and the movement of people to La Perouse, which is currently understood in terms of ‘dispersal’ and ‘eviction’. In his lengthy consideration of this school from 1876, Smith suggests that its efficacy steadily weakened after Fr Dillon left, and that most had already moved on of their own volition long before the death-knell rang in 1924.

Scattered throughout this book are many tantalising moments, including the discussion of the Burragorang farmer who was made the custodian of Red Hands Cave, and the idea that the harvests of the 1880s were so great that Aboriginal people from the South Coast area moved into the valley. Smith’s own knowledge of the country and the important sites associated with story of Gurungatch and Mirrigan, a serpent (or eel) and a quoll, has also allowed him to piece together otherwise unachievable detail: that some places could be travelled to quickly yet had few resources, and that others were resource-rich or had spiritual significances but were slower or harder travelling. The waterhole in which Gundungurra warriors bathed before setting off to enact ritual law, and the fact that placement of St Joseph’s Farm was near the intersection of two sacred waterholes associated with this important Dreaming story, are just some of the precious details Smith has been able to relay.
Ideas of the adaptability of Aboriginal society also shine through in ways that resonate with recent problematising of fixed notions of ‘Songlines’. Smith notes that there were and are dense webs of stories to navigate difficult terrain. Yet, it was a place of temperature extremes and floods that ‘wiped out whole river flats and relocated significant waterholes and river crossings’ – a dynamic landscape requiring dynamic stories (p. 20).

Jim Smith’s aim was to ‘produce a “living history” of the Aboriginal people of the Burragorang Valley’ and, in doing so, he has created a textured, peopled history steeped in place and local lore. Despite some dense writing and easily avoided errors in production value (occasional low-resolution images, mismatched fonts), it is an extraordinary achievement and a significant addition to Aboriginal and settler histories. From my reading, this book was written by and for the Blue Mountains community, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. I get the sense its pages, peppered with glossy photographs and detailed captions of individuals and places, will be eagerly pored over. Although many historians will question certain understandings, such as the belief that colonisation and the intermingling of black and white in the area was a peaceful process, it would be shame for historians to overlook this remarkable contribution to the scholarship on Aboriginal and settler histories in New South Wales.

Reference


1 For example, see Jones 2017.
Rani Kerin recounts the story of Australia’s oldest university unit devoted to research into contemporary Aboriginal issues. Founded by political scientist Colin Tatz at Monash University in 1964, the Centre for Research into Aboriginal Affairs (CRAA) has since undergone innumerable name changes, overhauls, physical moves, faculty moves, crises, contractions and expansions. It still survives. Indeed, it thrives, now under the name Monash Indigenous Studies Centre (it was the Monash Indigenous Centre when the research for this book was completed). There is also an associated support unit, the Yulendj Indigenous Engagement Unit, to which Kerin devotes part of her text, although her main focus is the CRAA in its various iterations.

Many of the figures who feature prominently in the book are leading scholars of Aboriginal studies, such as Colin Tatz, Eve Fesl, Colin Bourke and Lynette Russell, all of whom were directors of the CRAA (or one of its successors) for substantial periods of time. Kerin explains how each director stamped his or her own character on the centre and moulded its programs – with varying degrees of success – according to their own priorities. It was Bourke, for example, who began the Aboriginalisation of the centre’s staff, while Fesl flagged the strengthening politics of identity by renaming it the Koori Research Centre.

Some of the most interesting sketches, however, are of the less famous figures who helped build strong Indigenous programs at Monash. The remarkable Isaac Brown, for example, was the first director of the Monash Orientation Scheme for Aborigines (MOSA), forerunner to today’s Yulendj unit. Born in Darwin, of Iwaidja and Torres Strait Islander ancestry, Brown was, among other things, a speech pathologist who spoke with an accent that sounded like the product of the English
public school system. As his colleague Merle Ricklefs recalled, Brown’s ‘impeccable, polished, middle-class accent’ was a tremendous asset when the two ventured into the corporate world in search of funding for MOSA. They soon secured major commitments from Coles Myer, BP, Telecom, BHP and other leading corporations.

This is a history of an institution, commissioned by that institution. Perhaps inevitably, as Kerin herself acknowledges in her introduction, her appraisal of the institution is mostly positive. It is, nonetheless, astute and engaging. As in her other books, Kerin writes lucidly, communicating with her readers with an admirable directness and immediacy. Her narrative of the centre’s 50-year history is set in the context of broader changes in Aboriginal affairs over that period, although the contextualisation could have been more comprehensive in places. Nonetheless, Kerin generally strikes an appropriate balance between the history of the institution and the history of its encompassing society. Indeed, balance is the keynote of this appraisal of a centre that was no stranger to dispute and dissension.

Kerin’s book recounts the many controversies in which the centre was embroiled, both internally and with other bodies within Monash University, over the past 50 years. However, her account conveys little sense of the savagery with which university politics are normally conducted. Perhaps Monash was different in this regard – though that stretches credulity to the limit, particularly in view of the cast of characters who parade through this book. Perhaps the university archives on which she relies tell of temperate debates and discussions, glossing over personal rancour and belligerence. Or, perhaps, Kerin ranked the jostling and bickering of academics less noteworthy than their collective efforts to make a difference to Indigenous lives.
I approach these books as a lawyer with interests in history, governance and the development of law and legal systems, but very little background in Indigenous studies. My hope, in reading and reviewing this substantial body of work, was that I would learn more about Indigenous law. That hope has not been disappointed.

In the literature, including the books under review, Indigenous law is commonly referred to as ‘customary’, to distinguish it from the law of the dominant Australian legal system. This usage reflects mainstream, contemporary non-Indigenous legal theory, which understands law, at least in its central case, to be highly institutionalised, equipped with formal legislatures, executives and courts. I prefer to adopt a broader understanding of law as one of various normative, social practices.
for maximising the benefits of living in groups. Normative, social practices reflect a species-universal human capacity and propensity to interpret the world in terms of values. A distinguishing feature of law is its claim to authority over all the members of a social group. A plausible historical hypothesis is that law in this sense emerges from social and economic stratification consequent upon the growth of human social groups beyond a certain size and, perhaps, the transition from a subsistence lifestyle to surplus-wealth production. It is undisputed that at some stage during their very long occupation of Australia, its first inhabitants developed law in this sense, dealing with matters such as land use, kinship and violence. It is also undisputed that such law continued to be practised by Aboriginal Australians after 1788 and that it is still practised today.

*Indigenous Australians, Social Justice and Legal Reform* presents versions of lectures given annually between 1998 and 2015 to honour (the memory of) Elliott Johnston, lawyer and chair of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, which reported in 1991. Thirteen of the 18 lectures in this volume were given by lawyers. Ten lecturers identify as Indigenous. The lectures are diverse. Michael Kirby’s eulogises Johnston. Several draw inspiration from the royal commission’s report: Frank Brennan’s, Pat O’Shane’s, Marcia Langton’s and Martin Hinton’s, among others. Some strike a personal note – Sue Gordon’s, for instance, and Mark McMillan’s. Of course, dispossession, reconciliation, recognition, rights and self-determination receive significant attention, and, fittingly, most of the lecturers adopt an activist stance.

As for law, unsurprisingly (perhaps), there is much more in this volume about Australian law than about Indigenous law, and much more about Aboriginal people as subjects of law than as legal actors. Still, Marcia Langton tells us of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory wanting ‘minor offenders brought to book under customary law mechanisms’ (p. 64). Jacqui Katona says that ‘there must be a reconstruction of the relationships between Aboriginal people and … organisations [that exercise jurisdiction over them] and this reconstruction involves a greater recognition of Aboriginal law and culture’ (p. 78). She goes on to observe, however, that Aboriginal ‘laws should only be explained by particular traditional owners and custodians to particular people at particular times’ (p. 82). Larissa Behrendt is sensitive to the dangers of transplanting law from the non-Indigenous system to the Indigenous system without properly understanding differences between the cultures of the two systems that may affect the reception and operation of the transplants in the new system (pp. 100–01). This, of course, is one of the basic lessons and benefits of comparative law. Tom Calma raises the thorny issue of how to manage value disagreements across two legal systems and cultures rather than within one (pp. 144–45). Graeme Neate spells out the fundamental challenges to meaningful legal pluralism presented by the domination of one system over the other(s) (p. 201), and by the passage of time (p. 205).
Mark McMillan looks such challenges directly in the face. As he sees things, there never was, and there is not now, one Aboriginal nation and one Aboriginal legal system but many, living in peaceful coexistence with one another: legal pluralism in action. The British disrupted that equilibrium by introducing a new, intolerant system that overwhelmed the others by force. To the authorities of that system, he says: ‘we are still Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is your legal system that is in a state of flux … we hope that it gets better for you’ (p. 287).

Giving the point a practical spin, Jacinta Ruru’s lecture ends the volume with a cautiously optimistic discussion of ways in which New Zealand law has attempted to accommodate Māori law.

Constitutional Recognition of First Peoples in Australia presents 13 papers delivered at a colloquium in Townsville in 2015. All the authors are lawyers, but I could identify only three or four as Indigenous. For me, the five comparative essays stood out. They deal, respectively, with the United States, Canada, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand and Ecuador. Their value, I think, is that they suggest feasible models of legal pluralism and recognition of Indigenous law. Referring to American experience, Jennifer Hendry and Melissa L. Tatum carefully explain the difference treaties can make. Referring to Canada, Sharon Mascher and Simon Young explore the potential of ‘rights’ as a vehicle of Indigenous empowerment – a matter raised in several of the lectures in Indigenous Australians, Social Justice and Legal Reform. Jennifer Corrin explains how explicit constitutional and statutory recognition of Indigenous law does (or does not) work in two Pacific nations. Benjamen Franklen Gussen compares and contrasts the experience in New Zealand with that in Ecuador, within the framework of a useful distinction between the width and the dynamism of the two regimes of recognition. The one disappointment in this part of the book was Vito Breda’s valiant attempt to draw lessons from Scottish devolution, thereby (negatively) illustrating the importance of choosing as comparators systems that have enough in common to make comparison worthwhile and culturally sensitive.

Of the remaining essays in Constitutional Recognition of First Peoples in Australia, Ambelin Kwaymullina’s exploration of ‘the significance of constitutional change from an Indigenous perspective’ (p. 31) utilises a fruitful distinction between ‘holistic, relationship-focused and non-linear’ Indigenous ‘ways of knowing’ on the one hand, and ‘reductionist, rights-focused and linear’, ‘Eurocentric’ thinking on the other. Kwaymullina focuses on land law, but the contrast between worldviews surely has wide and deep significance, both theoretical and practical, for understanding and promoting legal pluralism in Australia. Jeremy Patrick’s careful analysis of common arguments against constitutional recognition of Indigenous people operates at a similar level, raising deep issues about culturally specific concepts of equality and discrimination that lie at the heart of European law and legal theory. The other essays in the volume are more utilitarian in orientation, concerned with
law primarily as a tool of social policy rather than a repository of human values. From this perspective, the basic question is not how well law expresses the identities and aspirations of Indigenous people but how law can improve their lives.

*Treaty and Statehood* is the work of a single author. This (combined with Michael Mansell’s credentials as lawyer and activist) gives it a degree of coherence and vision sometimes lacking in the other two volumes under review. Mansell paints on a large canvas with bold and creative strokes, unconstrained by current legal and political environments. Basic to Mansell’s discussion of ‘Aboriginal sovereignty’ (in Chapter 5 and elsewhere) are two crucial points. The first is captured in words of Pat Dodson, quoted by Mansell at the beginning of the chapter: ‘In 1788 Aboriginal people were a sovereign people who governed this land with a complex societal structure of law, language and culture’ (p. 74). The second point is Mansell’s: ‘Sovereignty today cannot be what it was before … Sovereignty is no longer absolute … it is now burdened by external and internal relations’ (p. 95). Law is a dynamic practice, mediating between continuity and change. The meaning of and possibilities for legal pluralism in Australia are different now than in 1788. Understanding the implications of legal pluralism in twenty-first-century Australia is hindered by the reality that most Australians know (and care) much less about Indigenous law than about Australian law, and very little about the interactions between them. These ideas inform Mansell’s discussion of the treaty as a vehicle of recognition. A treaty, he says, quoting the Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), does not involve ‘submission’ but rather an agreement ‘on rules of coexistence’ that allows each side to retain ‘their own ways of living and governing themselves’ (p. 97). ‘The starting point’, according to Mansell, ‘is to restore all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders’ rights and interests in existence in 1788, except where it is entirely unrealistic. The challenge is to examine whether, and in what form, Aboriginal interests have survived and are capable of being exercised’ (p. 144).

This is a mighty challenge, which there is no hope of meeting without a sound understanding of Indigenous law in 1788 and how that law has fared since then. As Mansell points out, for instance, ‘The notion of self-determination as a right for distinct peoples was borne [sic] out of a new international order, developed rapidly in the twentieth century, and in consequence of the war to end all wars in 1914–1918’ (p. 165). The basic question for proponents of legal pluralism is how to find an integral place for Indigenous law in twenty-first-century Australia without ignoring the past 250 years of history.

Mansell’s head-on consideration of this question is brief (pp. 227–32). He refers to the 1986 Report on Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Laws by the Australian Law Reform Commission and the 2006 report of the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia on *Aboriginal Customary Laws*, both of which saw selective recognition of customary law as an important element of recognition more widely. Mansell himself associates recognition of ‘traditional law’ with the idea of an Indigenous state within
the Commonwealth – ‘internal self-determination’, as he calls it. I would suggest that not far below the surface here lurk two quite different understandings of ‘legal pluralism’ that we might refer to, respectively, as an ‘incorporation model’ and a ‘coexistence model’.

An incorporation model, which underpins the Law Commission Reports, is exemplified by the native title regime. It involves treating Indigenous laws as (static) facts (about the past) relevant to the application of living legal norms of the dominant legal system. By contrast, a coexistence model recognises Indigenous laws (like norms of the dominant legal system) as living norms embedded within an autonomous political system. Incorporation assumes and preserves legal ‘singularism’. Coexistence, on the other hand, assumes and promotes legal pluralism.

An Indigenous state within the Commonwealth would provide a technically feasible arrangement for realising legal pluralism within Australia by creating an Indigenous political community (or ‘polity’). Legal pluralism without political pluralism would be much more difficult. Either way, significant progress towards legal pluralism is unlikely before we know much more than we currently do, not only about the past of Indigenous law but also about its living present and its possible futures. Like law generally, Indigenous law, present, contains Indigenous law, past, and looks forward to Indigenous law, future. Living Indigenous law, past, present and future, is the elephant in the room. Until it is much better understood, particularly by non-Indigenous lawyers, the prospects for meaningful legal pluralism in Australia are unknowable.
Wanarn Painters of Place and Time: Old Age Travels in the Tjukurrpa

by David Brooks and Darren Jorgensen


Review by Elizabeth Marrkilyi Ellis and Inge Kral
The Australian National University

Wanarn Painters of Place and Time: Old Age Travels in the Tjukurrpa does indeed take us into the world of older Ngaanyatjarra painters – born into a time and place that is fast disappearing – who are spending their last days in the Kungkarrangkalpa Aged Care Facility at Wanarn in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands in the Western Desert. Beautifully written and illustrated with colour plates of the paintings, this book weaves together social history, anthropology and art history. Through painting, the authors David Brooks, an anthropologist, and Darren Jorgensen, an art historian, take us into the historical circumstances that have formed the Ngaanyatjarra identity. The book describes the establishment of the Wanarn Painters program from Warakurna Arts by Eunice Porter, who was one of the directors of Warakurna Art, and others. The Wanarn painters are in their final stage of life, much of their strength and short-term memory has gone, and while this comes through in the way they paint, their long-term memory and links to Tjukurrpa (the Western Desert term for the Dreaming) remain strong because of their regular links to family, ceremony, song and dance.

Brooks and Jorgensen not only talk about the paintings themselves but they link the painters to the lives of the Ngaanyatjarra population as a whole by acquainting us with other painters, families, country and the life lived by these elderly artists. We learn of the life of John Richards, for instance, a strong culture man, and of his life’s work looking after country, when others who were also strong in culture opted to learn the white man’s ways and become vocal in government issues. The book also introduces Wanarn artist Tjapartji Bates, who is well known for painting the Kungkarrangkalpa Seven Sisters Dreaming, by describing how she only took
to painting later in her life through the Warburton Arts Project. This draws our attention to the significance of Wanarn as the location of the aged care facility, located as it is in the Tjukurrpa of the area, primarily the Kungkarrangkalpa (Seven Sisters), Kakalyalya (Pink Cockatoo) and Kaarnka (Crow) Dreamings. This location enables these elderly painters to be thoroughly immersed in the time and place of the Tjukurrpa. The Wanarn painters never attended the white man's school. Art centre managers have described the Wanarn paintings as the ‘wobblys’ with much cute laughter and serious respect for the Wanarn painters, referring to the unsteady hands that guide the tentative, almost childlike brushstrokes.

The book gives an excellent, detailed history of the setting up of Wanarn Painters as well the mission days at Warburton Ranges Mission and Ernabella Mission and Papunya settlement. In the mission and settlement days, the Aboriginal families kept in contact with their country and each other. Regarding watercolour painting at Warburton, the ones who were ‘turkeys’ (initiates) in seclusion used to do watercolour painting in secret at Herbert and Lorraine Howell’s house. There were other changes too: movement out of the desert to the Eastern Goldfields during gold rush time, followed by sheep station work, with many not to return – although others returned with new families. At this time, people were still nomadic, sourcing dingo scalps, looking after country and conducting ceremonies and rituals.

By taking a Western Desert–wide perspective, the authors allow us to discern the distinctions between the Ngaanyatjarra and their desert neighbours the Pitjantjatjara and the Pintupi. Brooks and Jorgensen state that the art of this region does not reflect the political necessity of painting from Papunya, where desperate circumstances produced powerful, iconographic intercultural communication (p. 72). Nor does it reveal the all-over, lateral compositions of their eastern neighbours, the Pitjantjatjara, whose history entailed a longer and more intense exposure to settler society through dogging, pastoralism and the missions. It is the relative isolation of the Ngaanyatjarra that has helped to form what the authors describe as a gentle friendliness to Ngaanyatjarra compositions that entail somewhat loose and eccentric forms and a sparseness in landscapes. So while they are similar to other paintings like Papunya Tula insofar as they are Tjukurrpa stories, the aesthetics are different: Papunya painting is neat and symmetrical.

Dot painting, as it is done now in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, came to this region from Papunya via Docker River. Ellis recalls how many of her family from Tjukurla first lived at Docker River and then later they continued to paint and passed on these skills to other families west of them in places like Warakurna. Through a focus on arts production, this book illuminates other major stories in the lives of these elderly painters and their country. This necessarily entails introducing the reader to the concept of the Tjukurrpa. These painters always paint their own Tjukurrpa, family's Tjukurrpa and moiety and language group's Tjukurrpa. One Tjukurrpa story told in this book is about the Quoll and the Numbat. This story is in fact about painting.
These two animals lived in the desert before the white man came with their cats and foxes that wiped them out. These ancestral beings take it in turn to paint patterns on each other. The Quoll paints a neat straight line on Numbat’s back, but Numbat in return did a poor painting job on Quoll’s back with messy dots.

Brooks and Jorgensen suggest that painting in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands is not seen as an activity that constitutes anything that could be called a career, or even part of a career, and that ambition as normally understood would not have driven anyone of this time and place to be a painter. Moreover, they suggest that, in Ngaanyatjarra social life, painting has remained separate from the core activities of Ngaanyatjarra existence both now and in the past, and that the senior painters who are the subject of this book do not rate the production of these paintings as highly as an outsider might imagine (p. 38). Yet the body of work these artists have left behind, ephemeral as it is, shows us that through these paintings we can learn to respect the Tjukurrpa, the land and the people who have maintained its power through time, as Edwina Circuitt, a past manager of Warakurna Artists, describes in the book’s Preface. All in all, this book provides a window into a vanishing world and invites a cross-cultural insight into old age as well as paying homage to a unique aesthetic oeuvre.
This book, based on the recent PhD research of the author, arrives to complement the superb local studies of the Aboriginal Sydney region by half-a-dozen scholars working in the Burragorang, Botany Bay, Hawkesbury River, Georges River and Katoomba regions. I’m thinking of Jack Brook’s *Shut Out from the World* (1994), Maria Nugent’s *Botany Bay* (2005), Dianne Johnson’s *Sacred Waters* (2007), Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow’s *Rivers and Resistance* (2009), Grace Karskens’s *The Colony* (2009) and Val Attenbrow’s *Sydney’s Aboriginal Past* (2010), in addition to first-rate work by others like Jim Smith, Keith Vincent Smith and James Kohen. For this reason, I waited in some anticipation for the publication of this book. Although it doesn’t quite match up to the others, it is a very welcome addition to Sydney Aboriginal historiography.

Despite its comprehensive title, the book is essentially a history of only a rather narrowly defined coastal region of Sydney from La Perouse to the southern shore of Sydney Harbour, and the lower Georges River.

The strongest parts of the book, and they are very strong, are those that focus on individuals. One is Mahroot (‘Boatswain’) who provided the sole Sydney Indigenous evidence to the 1845 Select Committee on Aborigines, and about whom Irish has been conducting textual and archaeological research for some years. Irish traces how Mahroot leased land in Matraville, surviving a number of attempts to dislodge him, meanwhile taking part in several whaling and other expeditions. Other identities about whom he provides fresh biographical information include Cora (Queen) Goosebery, Johnny Malone, Thomas Tomara, Biddy Giles and William Anan. Importantly, he traces how most of them developed relations with friendly white
people who became their defenders and protectors. Irish estimates that some 50 to 100 Aboriginal people were living in ‘coastal Sydney’ in 1845, this included a dozen at Camp Cove, 20 at Double Bay, 50 at La Perouse and others at Kurnell and along the Georges River. The information on the Camp Cove unofficial Aboriginal settlement, just inside South Head, and far from serious white settlement for decades, is particularly valuable. In fact, the section on individuals living between La Perouse and the southern coast of the harbour, especially in Chapter 4 ‘Entangled Lives 1850s–1870s’, is the most useful part of the book because it is the most original. Elsewhere, Irish’s history relies rather heavily on others like Goodall and Cadzow and Maria Nugent.

Irish is creditably prepared to enter controversial issues. He writes that we should not ‘replace the erroneous idea of Aboriginal absence with the equally misleading generalisation that Aboriginal people were everywhere, all the time’ (p. 145). But I believe they were everywhere – not always born in Sydney, and not always identifying as Aborigines, to be sure – but they were everywhere: living rough in rivers, creek beds, railway sidings and suburban houses, on the harbour and the Cumberland Plain, along with many other ethnic groups on the margins of society. He chides the established and critical view of Bungaree, which is that he took ‘over a leadership role among the depleted Aboriginal population despite having no local connection’ (p. 26). He reasons this on the basis of an evident lack of local opposition and Bungaree’s obvious familiarity, through his visiting rights, to the country. It’s true that the Gai-Mariagal (Cammeraygal), the dominant group at the time of settlement, would certainly have challenged a claim to local leadership – if they not been almost extinguished by smallpox. Equally important, Bungaree’s geographical compass, like that of other Aborigines, was very wide. His name has been recorded near Armidale, and doubtless he made much longer journeys than that. It seems more likely that he established himself in Sydney because that’s where the action was, and because there was nobody to oppose him. As for declaiming, as he was wont to do, ‘These are my people, this is my shore’ (p. 27), well, he may not have been the first outsider to make such a claim to speak on behalf of the Sydney lands, but he certainly wasn’t the last.

This point leads to a more serious difficulty that, although Irish has valuable sections on La Perouse people ‘marrying out’, to Blacktown, Katoomba and Sackville, he underestimates a general Aboriginal mobility in, and familiarity with, a very large area of country. Frequently he mentions the ‘affiliate’ people, especially those of the south coast. Yet the people from North Head are also certainly people from coastal Sydney, however defined, but they don’t rate much attention. (They took regular part in ceremonies at Maroubra, for example.) The D’harawal people of southern Sydney don’t appear in the index. But we have every reason to believe that the constant movement of the ‘saltwater’ people up and down the coast continued for far more than a century, and cannot be said to have ended yet. ‘Saltwater’ people had very strong connections with each other, from Stradbroke Island to Wreck Bay.
and beyond. The Black Duck and Black Swan Dreamings connected Mallacoota/Cann River people through Botany Bay, to the regions of Grafton and beyond. The La Perouse community, very many of whom had, in any case, emigrated up the coast from the 1880s, certainly shared this knowledge and took part in its requirements. Indeed, connections were strong in all directions. Auntie Fran Bodkin of the D’harawal people relates a north-eastern storyline that followed the northern banks of the Georges River through Campbelltown, crossed the Nepean and the Wollondilly rivers, and followed the Great Dividing Range ridgeline into northern Gamlaraay country. Auntie Gloria Ardler remembers periodic visits with her father to the Burragorang valley. Karen Maber, descended on one side through the Malones of Kogarah Bay and Botany, traces the other side of her family to the Liverpool clan: to an 1843 portrait of King George, whose father was chief of the Cabramatta clan.

The close focus of the book on La Perouse and the lower Georges River (including the Salt Pan Creek), then, presents a decidedly skewed view of Sydney Aborigines, while at the same time tending to isolate them within what have become today’s (European) geographical boundaries. The subtitle, ‘The Aboriginal people of Coastal Sydney’, is a serious misnomer; perhaps it was just a publisher’s puff. Sydney Aboriginal historians and storytellers like Fran Bodkin, Dennis Foley and Karen Maber don’t find a place in footnotes, while some dated and inaccurate histories by non-Indigenous historians do.

The precise eye of the local historian and archaeologist does not lead the author to speculate on some of the larger questions of contemporary Aboriginal history, which this reviewer, at least, would have liked. What were the effects of long-term immigration by other Aborigines into the city? What differences, if any, can be observed between those raised on a managed reserve, those living independently at places like the Salt Pan Creek, or those scattering themselves over the Cumberland Plain? What are we to make of younger Sydney people of Aboriginal descent whose forebears did not identify for two generations? The book, ending rather unexpectedly in 1930, does not enter these intriguing domains.

The book is a valuable addition to Sydney historiography, but it doesn’t deserve the claims of its publishers.

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This book is an excellent and accessibly written local history of the 20 years following the celebrated 1960s Wave Hill Walk-off. Perhaps surfing – as much as creating – an attitudinal shift in the mainstream Australian community, the Gurindji Walk-off came to symbolise Aboriginal resistance to oppressions as well as persistence in the face of hostility from powerful establishment interests. Elements of the non-Aboriginal Australian community (some unions, some activists and eventually the Labor Party) accepted this Indigenous aspiration and allied with the Gurindji. A wave of support promised to realise the Gurindji’s dreams. Aspirational purity was then overgrown and stunted by some political hostility allied with much more bureaucratic incapacity and incoherence. Ward is a historian who was peripherally involved in the events he describes, although he is generally even-handed in his assessments. He introduces the usual characters of settlement politics, bickering activists, robber opportunists and passing bureaucrats that still interpose between the Aboriginal people of northern Australia and the state. After the post–walk off struggle, the Gurindji themselves started to divide, so that the dreams of the old heroes of the 1960s began to be less important as social change hit their community, as it did similar communities across remote Australia.

What were these dreams? The walk-off started over equal pay, racial equality and respect and the return of their land. Through Ward’s book, we obtain a picture of Vincent Lingiari’s thinking – a separate but equal settlement, land and cultural and political autonomy. Ward’s story here is how that did not happen. There are detailed
stories of how educational, local governance and retail services rose and fell and ultimately failed to satisfy the ideals of the elder Gurindji men. These stories can be replicated in dozens of other remote settlements.

Some of the service failure was a result of confused bureaucratic objectives. Take, for instance, Murramulla, the cattle operation the Gurindji began. Various bits of the bureaucracy attempted to help and required the Gurindji to create a standard ‘efficient’ cattle company. The Gurindji apparently saw the situation differently. To them the cattle operation was supposed to provide food for the camp and employment for all the young men, as well as protecting important ceremonial and belief sites and thus serving an educational function for the younger generation. Single-use bureaucratic objectives meant single-use lines of funding. The cattle station could never be ‘economic’ under Gurindji objectives.

Ward understates the widespread prevalence of processes he describes in this book (which is why I described it as a local history). One example is that of the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign (BTEC), which is blamed for the ultimate destruction of the Muramulla Cattle Company. Ward sees evil plotting by Northern Territory Government officials as behind the malignant effects of the BTEC, making Murramulla insolvent. However, the BTEC was a consequence of the Australian Government Department of Trade’s strategy for entering the US beef market. In this ‘bigger picture’, the interests of under-capitalised Aboriginal cattle stations in the north were not even considered by the national policymakers. So Murramulla and other stations became collateral damage in achieving that national objective. (Does this remind the reader of the live cattle export ban under the Gillard Government and its similar impact on the Indigenous Land Corporation and Indigenous Business Australia–funded Aboriginal cattle stations?)

Charlie Ward’s book ends on a ringing note: ‘Their fight was over but their vision remains’ (p. 309). Similarly, his afterword – bringing events sketchily nearer the present – ends with ‘Against all odds, Lingiari’s legacy lives’ (p. 320). This marks the curious paradox of this book. It is both a foundational saga and a historical tragedy. The 1960s Wave Hill Walk-off was the stuff of legends (for both blackfellas and whitefellas). The subsequent disappointments and frayed relations with government were not unique to the Gurindji but similarly shared by hundreds of other Aboriginal communities across remote Australia.
Atomic Thunder: The Maralinga Story

by Elizabeth Tynan

xv + 373pp., NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2016,

Review by Maggie Brady
The Australian National University

This is a highly readable account of the history and consequences of the British nuclear testing program in Australia – primarily the minor and major trials at Maralinga, South Australia, and the 1985 royal commission investigation and findings. Tynan’s closest competitor, Robert Milliken’s No Conceivable Injury: The Story of Britain and Australia’s Atomic Cover-up, was published in 1986 and was thus unable to cover subsequent scandals associated with the tests, the more recent reviews of veterans’ claims and entitlements, the 2003 Maralinga Rehabilitation Technical Advisory Committee (MARTAC) report on the studies of the test site ‘clean-up’, and even the involvement of Wikileaks. Tynan addresses these developments with aplomb, and while her book covers much of the same ground as Milliken, Atomic Thunder has immediacy and verve, while successfully weaving in a huge amount of complex material. One chapter out of 12 deals with the impact of the tests on Aboriginal people: the Western Desert groups who moved between Warburton, Ernabella, Cundeelee, Ooldea and Lake Phillipson near Coober Pedy.

My main quibble with this volume is the absence of proper citations: while there are reference lists for each chapter, the reader has no way of confirming or following up on a particular quote. For a story covering so many crucial decisions, dates and events this is hugely problematic and I found it particularly so in the chapter ‘Indigenous people and the bomb tests’, where several small errors creep in relatively unnoticed. For example, Tynan claims (from an unnamed source) that the Minister for Supply ordered Aboriginal people out of Ooldea to make way for the tests at Emu, when in fact the Emu site was not approved until September 1952, months after Ooldea mission closed down due to a split within the United Aborigines Missions (UAM) organisation. The linguistic meaning of the name ‘Ooldea’ is attributed to a lawyer writing in 2006; however, she had in turn cited a secondary
source that had referenced a book written by a UAM missionary. It is surprising that Tynan has not referred to the Final Submissions to the 1985 royal commission made on behalf of all Aboriginal groups and individuals that was compiled by lawyers Geoff Eames and Andrew Collett. Their definitive volume is easily available at the AIATSIS library.

Reference

Eames, Geoff and Andrew Collett 1985, ‘Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia: Final submission by counsel on behalf of Aboriginal organisations and individuals’, AIAS R85/56, Adelaide.
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Footnote style

2. Fisher to Hassall, 20 July 1824.
4. Evening Mail, 12 March 1869.
5. Solly to Stokell, 4 March 1869, AOTCSD 7/23/127.

Footnote numbers are placed after punctuation marks in the text. Please do not use ibid. or similar abbreviations, but repeat the short citation.
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