

11. 'My sable neighbours'

Curr's ethnological endeavours had been triggered by his interest in the language of the Bangerang people, whose lands he had occupied while squatting in the 1840s. He waited, however, until the final section of *The Australian Race* (Volume 3, 'Book the Twenty-Third') to advance his theory as to why the Bangerang language differed so markedly from those of surrounding tribes. He suggested that the circumstance was 'both unusual and worthy of notice, and could not fail to have been the result of something uncommon in the past history of the population of those parts'.¹ Curr argued that the Bangerang people and their neighbours belonged to separate waves of Aboriginal migration. To help his reader visualise this process, he highlighted Bangerang territory in red on his map in volume 4. His more detailed explanation of Bangerang origins built on a similar argument that he had mounted in volume 2 regarding the origins of the so-called 'Darling Tribes', which is worth outlining briefly. Curr related a foundation narrative prevalent among the tribes of the lower Darling River, which had been recorded by a Commissioner of Crown Lands, C.G.N. Lockhart, in about 1852:

It is to the effect that in the far past a Blackfellow, whose name I have not learnt, arrived on the banks of the Darling, which was then uninhabited. He had with him two wives, named Keelpara and Mookwara. These two Eves of the Darling Adam, as Mr. Lockhart calls him, bore their lord children, and in due time the sons of Mookwara took as wives the daughters of Keelpara, and their children inherited Keelpara as their class-name; and the sons of Keelpara married the daughters of Mookwara, and their children bore Mookwara as their class-name.

Curr observed that Lockhart's report agreed with the evidence of language and custom that he had collated: 'Of the correctness of these traditions I feel no doubt'.² As to the reasons for the foundational journey of the 'Darling Adam' and his two wives, Curr guessed that he had probably committed a crime punishable by death in his tribe of origin (perhaps the theft of his two wives) and had therefore escaped to remote and unoccupied territory.

Curr's elaborate but compelling explanation for the origins of the 'Darling Tribes' was supported by both Aboriginal tradition and his own comparative analysis of language and custom. It provided a useful model for a more speculative solution to the puzzle of Bangerang origins. Unlike the Darling example, however, Curr did not build on Bangerang oral tradition, but relied solely on a linguistic

1 Curr 1886, vol 3: 568.

2 Curr 1886, vol 2: 165–166.

argument. He noticed several similarities between the Bangerang language and a language spoken more than 1,000 kilometres away at 'Mungalella Creek' in south-west Queensland:

From these circumstances and a general knowledge of the ways of the race, I am led to conjecture that, as in the case of the Darling tribes, [see Vol II, p 166] the progenitors of the Bangerang were a party of young men, who, finding themselves without wives, absconded (possibly from Mungalella Creek) with some of the young women whom the old men had monopolized. That, in order to evade pursuit, the young people travelled on over many a mile of unknown country until they reached that expansion of the Murray called Moira, where they located themselves, and where we found their descendants living. That long (perhaps a century or two) after they had settled in that locality and spread to the Goulburn, and increased and broken up into several tribes, which spoke distinct dialects, they were overtaken by the general wave of population, which for ages had been evermore rolling south across the whole width of the continent; that the newcomers, as they advanced, occupied the country on every side of the Bangerang, hemmed them in, and peopled all the lands they found untenanted, and at last completed the occupation of the continent.³

The theories Curr mounted regarding the origins of both the Darling and Bangerang tribes reveal his confidence in the explanatory power of comparative philology. Given what we now know, however, about the great antiquity of Aboriginal society in Australia, it is hard to view Curr's arguments as more than speculation. Inferences based on linguistic affinity, while conceivable within a biblical timescale, are difficult to sustain over a history of tens of thousands of years. Curr's paradigm also assumes a linear, orderly and fixed process of migration, where once a tribe is established in a particular location it remains there, only spreading due to overcrowding or young males absconding with wives. Moreover, Curr's scheme does not allow for the influence on culture and language of trade and communication between tribes in the long period after occupation of the continent was complete.

Aside from his conjecturing about the origins of the Bangerang people, Curr's account of their manners and customs in *The Australian Race* is relatively short. He offers a good explanation for this brevity: 'having described their manners in a former work, it will be unnecessary to go into the subject here'.⁴ The former work was, of course, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, published a few years earlier. In his memoir Curr had stressed his extensive early knowledge of the Bangerang, while also recognising that his scientific interest developed at a much later period:

3 Curr 1886, vol 3: 569; a similar explanation can be found in Curr 1883: 305.

4 Curr 1886, vol 3: 568.

I knew well every member of the tribe, besides something of their language, wars, alliances, and ways of thinking on most subjects, but still it is a matter of regret with me now that I did not, when I had the opportunity, make myself acquainted with several matters concerning which science of late years has become interested.⁵

Short descriptions of Bangerang custom appear at appropriate points in the general narrative of *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*, but Curr also included a 77-page chapter titled 'The Bangerang Tribe'; it is more akin to a standard ethnography, although the predominantly light-hearted and entertaining tone of the book still prevails. For this reason, it is important to draw a distinction between Curr's two principal written works. Curr conceived *The Australian Race* as a scientific project, even if he recognised his limited experience in ethnology. While his methodology might be questioned and his ideological preoccupations exposed, *The Australian Race* remains, nonetheless, a scholarly work. In contrast, *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria* is more often ironic, playful or irreverent than it is scholarly and serious. It is first and foremost a diverting memoir, which frames its descriptions of Aboriginal people in a predominantly nostalgic tone.

All of the passages from Curr that were quoted by Justice Olney in his *Yorta Yorta* judgement are found in *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*. This was the principal yardstick against which legitimate Yorta Yorta tradition was measured. A detailed critique of the ethnographic content of his memoir is therefore essential, if Curr's role in the *Yorta Yorta* case is to be properly understood. Deborah Bird Rose, an anthropologist who assisted the Yorta Yorta in their claim, suggested shortly after the case that Curr 'contextualised his observations within the imperial genre of the gentlemanly account of the native'.⁶ She did not condemn Curr's account of the Bangerang as wholly inaccurate; rather, she advocated a nuanced and critical reading of his text, which recognised the genre in which Curr was writing. In his memoir, Curr positioned himself as a product of civilised British bourgeois culture, in contrast to his 'savage' neighbours who are routinely classified according to the standard tropes of colonial observation: the lazy native, the feckless native, the instinctive native, the wasteful native, the superstitious native, the brutal native, the patriarchal native or the ungoverned native. It is worth considering some examples of how these tropes play out in Curr's text.

In a statement that anticipated a key theme in *The Australian Race*, Curr recalled that he did not observe 'anything resembling government' among the Bangerang. Despite this assertion, Curr proceeded to describe a formal system of

⁵ Curr 1883: 230–231.

⁶ Rose 2002: 44.

hearing grievances at a tribal level and the application of a 'penalty sanctioned by custom'. Later, when he described the Bangerang custom of discussing 'public affairs' during or after the evening meal, Curr noted:

As regards such discussions, writers *who have not lived in the bush*, and acquired a personal knowledge of the Blacks and their manners, frequently describe in a circumstantial way, and as a thing well known, a council of old men, somewhat on the *Patres conscripti* pattern, who deliberate in company, and indeed govern the tribe. As a fact, however, as far as I could learn, nothing of the sort existed amongst the Bangerang. Usually, when matters of general interest were pending, it was the custom for anyone who chose, to harangue the camp.⁷

So, while Curr recognised structures of social organisation among the Bangerang, he resisted likening them to 'government' as he understood the term. On the question of traditional laws he gave some ground: 'though there was no government, there were certain important practices among the Bangerang which deserve to be called laws'.⁸

The Bangerang, according to Curr, lacked another crucial marker of a civilised society: 'Religious worship the Bangerang had none'. Curr observed that the Bangerang believed in a 'powerful spiritual being' characterised by its malevolence, which Curr believed had wrongly been equated with the Devil of Christian belief. He added that the Bangerang believed firmly in the existence of ghosts and that their spiritual world was characterised by superstitions such as a 'dread of being caught in a whirlwind, and other fancies of the sort'.⁹ Curiously, although Curr was inclined to belittle the spiritual beliefs of the Bangerang, elsewhere in his book he describes in detail his brother Charles' apparent encounter with a ghost: 'My brother, to the day of his death, continued to believe firmly that what he saw that night was a ghost – in which I am inclined to agree with him'. Curr anticipated scepticism from his reader and invited him 'to smile if he likes', but he concluded by suggesting that 'a belief in the supernatural is as constant in the human mind as the instinct of self-preservation'.¹⁰

Another important trope that is evident in Curr's account of the Bangerang is his assertion of a rigid patriarchy. He focussed on the apparent brutality of the Bangerang marital union and the supremacy of the male in all matters: 'In domestic life the man was despotic in his own mia-mia or hut; that is, over his wife, or wives, and such of his children as had not relinquished parental protection'.¹¹ Characterising Indigenous gender relations in this way served

7 Curr 1883: 257, emphasis in the original.

8 Curr 1883: 244–245.

9 Curr 1883: 274–275.

10 Curr 1883: 160–161.

11 Curr 1883: 247–248.

to justify dispossession. And yet, Curr also recognised the sexually aggressive role of the former convicts who staffed the pastoral stations: 'we know that [Aborigines] had constantly very serious charges to advance against shepherds, in connection with their conduct towards the females of the tribe.'¹² Curr offered this as a general observation and did not relate it to his own experience, but the diary of George Augustus Robinson suggests that Curr's shepherds were no exception to the rule: 'Mr. Curr said the Pinejerines [Bangerang] never had venereal until one of his men brought it and gave it to seven women and they gave it to the rest'.¹³

Curr characterised gender relations on the frontier in such a way that asserted his own civilised identity. In contrast to the 'savage' Bangerang, and indeed his ex-convict shepherds, Curr appears, as Rose puts it, like 'a knight in shining armour who will rescue native women from the hardships of life with native men'.¹⁴ We might compare Curr's account of the apparently subservient Bangerang wife to the brief mention he makes of his own wife in a family memoir:

Finding in my experience, that interference on the part of the husband in little domestic concerns, frequently leads to discontent on the part of the wife, I made it my rule from the beginning that my wife should be supreme mistress in my house.¹⁵

The contrast Curr draws between gender roles in British and Bangerang society is surprisingly rigid and raises questions as to underlying cultural motivations. Rose argues that Curr and others like him were principally concerned with constructing their own gentility: 'they are writing about themselves first and foremost, and their audience, first and foremost, is a set of like minded gentlemen.'¹⁶ The implications of this bias are significant, as Clare Land has recognised: 'Curr appears blind to Koori women's cultural and political power, consistently focussing on men's culture, work, skills and authority while denigrating those of women'.¹⁷

Curr's account of the Bangerang was regularly expressed in a negative relation to the genteel white society with which he identified. Thus, when describing Bangerang forms of greeting and personal intimacy, Curr explained: 'Neither kissing, shaking hands, nor any other salutation of the kind was in use amongst the tribe, though frequently men of different tribes made exchanges of arms or articles of dress in token of goodwill'.¹⁸ Curr was not unobservant, and was

¹² Curr 1883: 120.

¹³ G.A. Robinson, Sunday 26 March 1843, in Clark 2000, vol 3.

¹⁴ Rose 2002: 41–44.

¹⁵ Edward M. Curr, 'Memoranda Concerning Our Family' (1877), SLV, MS 8998.

¹⁶ Rose 2002: 40.

¹⁷ Land 2002: 7.

¹⁸ Curr 1883: 268.

able to apprehend the meaning of behaviours not present in his own culture; nevertheless, he frequently defined Bangerang custom in opposition to his own culture, which was always implicitly (and often explicitly) marked as superior. Moreover, Curr's account of the Bangerang conveys a prevailing mood of curiosity; a fundamental aim was to describe exotic, inexplicable and peculiar elements of Bangerang culture.

In the concluding pages of his account of the Bangerang, Curr offered praise for many attributes he credited to his former neighbours: a 'tenacious' memory; a 'personal courage ... decidedly above par'; a 'remarkable' ability to navigate in the bush; and a cheerful temperament – 'Fun is a ready passport to his goodwill'.¹⁹ Curr stressed, however, that admirable Aboriginal skills were innate and instinctive, rather than reasoned or logical. The ability to 'find his way about the bush' was, wrote Curr, 'more akin to instinct than to reason' and comparable to a similar ability in cattle. Because Curr could not perceive the methods of Bangerang navigation, he assumed that the ability was 'born with him in embryo'; he was unable to attribute it to cultural knowledge passed from one generation to the next. Similarly, he concluded: 'As regards courage ... the white man has more resolution, and the black-fellow better nerve'. While Curr attributed many positive traits to an instinctive nature, he stressed that the Bangerang man was inferior to his 'civilized brother' in 'cultivation, morality, generosity, gratitude, truthfulness, steadfastness, perseverance, industry, and the power of long-continued labour.'²⁰

Despite the racial differences Curr perceived, he regularly described himself as a friend of the Bangerang. He recounted a reunion with several young men, years after he had left Tongala: 'they received me with the most enthusiastic expressions of goodwill ... in fact, there was nothing they would not do for me'.²¹ In the absence of contemporary Bangerang accounts, which might serve to corroborate Curr's view, it is worth considering Curr's strong motivation to portray his relationships with the Bangerang in this way. Obviously, Curr's apparently strong friendship with the Bangerang immediately implies their dispossession was not resented and was therefore justifiable. Furthermore, the appearance of friendship serves to establish Curr's authority as an Aboriginal administrator. Crucially, Curr wrote his account during a period when his policies as an Aboriginal administrator were strongly criticised and eventually rejected. Curr's constant references to his 'sooty friends' or his 'sable companions' also served to bolster his authority as an ethnologist. Finally, Curr's account of his relationship with the Bangerang is symptomatic of a shallow nostalgia that permeates his book.

19 Curr 1883: 294–298.

20 Curr 1883: 296, 298.

21 Curr 1883: 269–270.

Imperialist Nostalgia

Recollections of Squatting in Victoria is a good example of what Renato Rosaldo has dubbed 'Imperialist Nostalgia'.²² On the one hand, Curr's narrative displays a clear understanding of the ways in which the pastoral economy destroyed the way of life of Aboriginal people. On the other hand, his book includes passages that lament the loss of Bangerang culture and the passing of his 'sooty friends'. Curr, like so many colonists, attributed the decline of Aboriginal people to the expansion of British 'civilisation', which he viewed as an inexorable process. Certainly, Curr recognised his principal reason for occupying Bangerang lands, noting that for most of the 1840s 'money-making went on swimmingly',²³ and yet, by employing a racialised discourse he was able to deflect any sense of wrongdoing on his part. Consequently, his nostalgic regret at the loss of an ancient culture seems shallow in hindsight.

A defining characteristic of imperialist nostalgia is that it routinely deflects personal responsibility for the decline of a colonised people. Referring to the two Bangerang clans that frequented his stations, Curr noted that during his ten years at Tongala 'a large and steady decrease took place in their numbers' from about 200 to 80.²⁴ Curr's use of the passive voice is illustrative: it obscures the fact that Bangerang mortality was, in one way or another, caused by the British invasion. Elsewhere, Curr gives a valuable account of the devastating effects of the pastoral occupation. His unwavering sense of racial superiority is clearly behind his comparative honesty on the issue of Aboriginal mortality; yet it did not inhibit his sense of nostalgic regret at the 'passing' of the Bangerang.

Curr claimed that during his decade of squatting 'but two individuals fell by the gun' and he attributed the Bangerang decline primarily to disease. He did, however, argue that disease was more prevalent than it might have been due to the demoralising effect of his own occupation:

after my settlement in their country, the Bangerang gave up in great measure their wholesome and exhilarating practices of hunting and fishing, and took to hanging around our huts in a miserable objectless frame of mind and underfed condition, begging and doing trifling services of any sort.²⁵

This change in lifestyle, suggested Curr, increased the Bangerang's susceptibility to disease. It is not an unreasonable assertion, but there is a misleading implication here that the Bangerang chose to abandon their healthy lifestyle.

22 Rosaldo 1989.

23 Curr 1883: 379.

24 Curr 1883: 235.

25 Curr 1883: 235.

This is despite the fact that, elsewhere, Curr recognised the ruinous effect of sheep grazing on traditional food sources.²⁶ He also described the process by which the Bangerang learnt that, if they chose to eat his sheep, they would be shot at or imprisoned.²⁷ In another passage Curr suggested that 'a certain listlessness and want of interest in life which sprung up under the pressure of our occupation had perhaps something to do with the reduction of the tribe.'²⁸ Here Curr admitted the significant effect of his occupation of Bangerang land, but he also implied a passive Bangerang response to the new colonial regime.

Curr regularly justified his invasion by characterising the Indigenous economy as unsophisticated and inefficient. He took great delight in describing the charming simplicity of Indigenous life, which he always contrasted with the complex ways of the British invaders. After recounting in fine detail the production of a bark canoe, Curr compared the Bangerang approach to boat building with that of the white man:

The first, arriving at a stream, with the aid of a stone tomahawk provides himself in half-an-hour with a boat – frail and perishable, no doubt, but sufficient for the occasion, and passes over; whilst the white man, checked for the time, sits down deliberately, and after a long delay produces an article of wood or iron which may serve him for years.²⁹

Although Curr expressed admiration for the skills of the boat builders, he nonetheless implied that the Bangerang method was less sophisticated compared to the efficient and forward thinking British way. Similarly, he argued that individual self-sufficiency among the Bangerang was a sign of their lack of civilisation. He noted that specialisation was not common: 'Each Black was master of everything known or performed by his tribe ... no one ever got another to make a shield, climb a tree, or spear a fish for him'. For Curr such a state of affairs revealed a lack of economic development: 'They used often to joke [with] me and say that I could make neither a gun, nor a tomahawk, nor sugar, nor flour, nor anything else'.³⁰

Curr's implication of primitive behaviour, according to a late nineteenth-century understanding, served to justify dispossession and define it as inevitable. Invasion also appeared more reasonable to the colonising mind if it could be shown that Indigenous people were wasteful or feckless in their use of natural resources. When describing the fishing practices of the Wongatpan, Curr noted that fish were so abundant that very little work was required to

26 Curr 1886, vol 1: 103.

27 Curr 1883: 190–206.

28 Curr 1883: 236.

29 Curr 1883: 89.

30 Curr 1883: 265.

keep the people fed: 'I often wondered how that sage people managed to pass their time before my party came and taught them to smoke.'³¹ Importantly, by focussing on the plentiful supply of food, Curr characterised Bangerang life as simplistically appealing, but also provided an economic justification for invasion. For Curr, the Bangerang possessed enviable natural resources, but did not use them productively for the advancement of their society. Not only did they lack agriculture, but 'they never abstained from eating the whole of any food they had got with a view to the wants of the morrow.'³²

In most of his nostalgic reminiscences Curr focussed on the apparent harmony of Bangerang life during the period immediately following his arrival. He did not quite replicate a 'noble savage' ideal in his descriptions, but he certainly tempered his disdain for certain 'savage' practices with a general belief that Bangerang society functioned in a healthy and harmonious way. He noted the 'simple sort of etiquette' that governed social interaction and stressed the bonds of friendship among the Bangerang: 'it always seemed to me that the bonds of friendship between blood relations were stronger, as a rule, with savages than amongst ourselves.' Reflecting his gendered approach, Curr suggested that Bangerang women quarrelled more, which he attributed to their not being related as they married into neighbouring clans. An overtly condescending tone characterises Curr's observations on these matters. Immediately following his compliment regarding Bangerang bonds of friendship, Curr is ironically nonchalant in his description of violence between women: 'Their little disagreements were settled with their yam sticks, without much injury being done, their husbands interfering with their clubs if matters went too far'.³³

In a classic example of imperialist nostalgia, Curr wrote of the Bangerang: 'I believe that, on the whole, the blackfellow in his wild state suffered less and enjoyed life more than the majority of civilized men'.³⁴ Crucially, this observation reveals that Curr's nostalgic admiration for the Bangerang applied principally to the tribe in its 'savage' state. He regularly noted the corrupting effect of contact with the white invaders, such as in the following description of Aboriginal weapons:

Their arms were wonderful productions, when it is remembered they were wrought with stone implements, pieces of shell, bone, &c.; and it is remarkable that, though their fabrication was enormously facilitated by the iron tools they got from us, they fell off in beauty, and got to have a sort of slop look about them.³⁵

31 Curr 1883: 240.

32 Curr 1883: 262.

33 Curr 1883: 264, 274.

34 Curr 1883: 298.

35 Curr 1883: 279.

Curr also noted that the Bangerang tended to grow 'corpulent' when living with the whites, which was very rare 'in their wild state'.³⁶ The ideal of Aboriginality that Curr nostalgically admired was thus untouched by white influence. This is evident in Curr's recollection of the first corroboree he observed in 1842, which 'was gone through in a very different spirit from the tame exhibitions got up by our broken-spirited tribes during the last thirty years or more'. Curr observed that there was 'but a faint resemblance between the corroborees danced by the savage in his wild and subdued state' and insisted that after 1842 he never again saw a corroboree 'danced more successfully'.³⁷

Curr exhibited a curious sort of respect for what he viewed as the authentic Aboriginal man: 'the blackfellow has decidedly something of the gentleman about him, when out of the reach of drunkenness and town influences.' He even implied that this gentlemanly status placed the traditional Bangerang man above the white labourer in the social world of the frontier:

Like the gentleman reduced by circumstances to the necessities of menial service, he [the Bangerang man] was a good deal bullied by the white labourer, who lost no opportunity of asserting his superiority over him; whilst, on the other hand, he was generally treated by the educated squatter with a familiarity which argued something of equality, and in which the white labourer never shared.³⁸

Ultimately, of course, Curr's nostalgic admiration for the pre-contact Aboriginal 'gentleman' paradoxically served to justify poor treatment of those Aborigines who survived. Curr expressed simple admiration for the 'wild' Aborigines, but disdain for the 'corrupted' and 'subdued' survivors; in doing so, he created an illusion of sympathetic understanding while simultaneously providing a permanent justification for the pastoral occupation. Invasion became almost a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Australian settler colonial endeavour relied fundamentally on land acquisition. While Indigenous labour was often utilised, it was not always essential to the success of the pastoral industry.³⁹ The abject lives of idle and dispirited Aboriginal survivors represented a challenge to the righteousness of the British colonies in Australia; they provided an ongoing reminder of the realities of invasion and dispossession. By characterising as dichotomous the 'wild' Aborigine and the 'subdued' Aborigine, Curr created a disjuncture between the traditional owners of the Australian continent and those Aborigines who remained; thus any challenge to the legitimacy of British sovereignty was stifled.

The best explanation for the internal logic of imperialist nostalgia, at least in Curr's version of it, is his routine assertion that Australian Aborigines were a childlike

36 Curr 1883: 287–288.

37 Curr 1883: 139–140.

38 Curr 1883: 298–299.

39 Wolfe 2001.

people. Curr wrote that the mind of the 'Australian savage' appeared 'to grow but little after twenty'. Furthermore, while he exhibited 'a latent capacity, moral and intellectual', there was little chance of this being developed: 'To cultivate this capacity to the highest standard would, no doubt, require time – perhaps a century or two – and favourable circumstance'.⁴⁰ Curr's nostalgic yearning for the Bangerang made sense because he viewed them with the same sentimental paternalism commonly applied to children in his own culture. In this way, he was able to reconcile the apparent charm and appeal of the Bangerang with the fact that he 'unceremoniously' dispossessed them. Ultimately, by recalling with fondness the 'sable companions' of his youth, Curr obscured his central role in the decimation of a people. This is perfectly illustrated by a passage from the closing pages of *Recollections of Squatting in Victoria*:

But my pages are coming to an end, and I must have done with my sooty friends and their ways, of which I have, perhaps, said more than enough. So adieu, my Enbena, for I cannot even now, amidst the din of the city, forget thee, friend of my lone days. In truth, many a time when weary of books, with nothing to fill the vacant hour, right glad was I to see thee coming over the little plain at Thathumnera, with lubra, picaninni, and all thy belongings; to count with thee thy hunting spoil and listen to thy budget of small news, even though thou heldest an empty pipe somewhat prominently before me, or pressed on me thy longing for a share of the contents of my flour-bags. Many a time, too, I was glad to have thee as a companion in hunting and shooting, for a merry fellow thou wert, and a genial scamp! But our civilisation has rolled over thee, my Enbena, somewhat rudely since those times; ending alike, for the most part, thy merry ways and thy rascalities. Of thy tribe scarce one is left. Forest and swamp know thee no more. Adieu! Let the cry of the *jāaring** hurrying to the Murray to drink at sundown, and the loud laugh of the *wigilōpka*† from the towering river-gum, be thy memento; thy monument the lone *malōga*‡ grave, or the grass-grown oven which smokes no more; and the west wind, whistling through the streaming boughs of the oak, the dirge of a people who have passed away!

* Cockatoo. † Laughing Jackass. ‡ Sandhill.⁴¹

Of course, Curr's euphemistic conclusion that 'our civilisation has rolled over thee' was his own nineteenth-century version of the 'tide of history', a problematic metaphor made famous by Justice Olney in his *Yorta Yorta* judgement.

40 Curr 1883: 292–293.

41 Curr 1883: 435–436.